



# Just Crumbs (Not-So-Grimm Retellings #1)

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**Category:** Fantasy

**Description:** The children of Greenbell grow up hearing tales of a witch who lives within the Whispering Woods. Fantastical stories are woven of the witch who lives in a house made of sweets and lures naughty children to their demise. Of course, no one has ever seen the witch and lived to tell about it, so the forest is left relatively untouched.

That is, until Hans and Gerrit begin their journey.

Despite the rumors they have heard, Hans and his stepbrother, Gerrit, have no choice but to travel through the woods and seek the witch out when their father falls suspiciously ill.

But the woods keep their secrets, and the biggest one is about to be exposed.

When the brothers stumble upon a broken Briar, living alone and starving in a prison made just for her, they begin questioning all the tales they've been told and wonder who would benefit from the vicious lies about the gentle witch they meet.

To help Hans and Gerrit, Briar has to find a way to escape her prison and the mysterious Banisher who put her there. Time is running out, and outside forces are working against the three, but Briar is more determined than ever to snatch her freedom. She's done living on just crumbs, and maybe, with the help of two brothers who have suddenly worked their way into her heart, there is hope for her yet.

This grown-up Hansel and Gretel retelling is short, spicy and sweet, with a whole lot of heart. Just Crumbs is an MFM menage, where the FMC does not choose between her love interests.

**Total Pages (Source):** 27

# Page 1

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## Chapter 1

### Everybody Talks

#### HANS

It's been ages since we've stopped moving, my legs leaden as we trudge through the forest's depths. I shoot a sidelong glance at Gerrit, catching sight of his stern profile.

Sensing my gaze, he turns his glare on me. His voice is rough when he asks, "Tired already, Hans?"

I scoff, attempting to hide the weariness that feels damn near permanent in my bones. Flint, my wolf familiar, nuzzles against my leg and lets out a low whine. He's giving me an out. I ruffle his agouti fur in silent thanks.

"Not me, I could go for ages still," I exaggerate. Flint nips my thigh, silently telling me to roll it back some. "But I think Flint is ready to make camp."

We've been wandering in these Gods-forsaken woods for weeks now. It's not getting any easier. I'm nearly ready to give up hope. I would have already if we had any other options.

But we don't, so we're stuck trudging along, hoping to find a fairy tale.

A legend.

At this rate, I fear we'll forever be on an uphill journey.

Gerrit gruffs out a sound akin to agreement and turns, hands on his broad hips, to survey the land. With his arms perched like that, he somehow manages to look even bigger than he actually is. He's barrel-chested, with a shock of bright blonde hair that cascades to his shoulders in soft waves. Black tattoos stretching up his arms and throat stand out against his pale skin. He's a formidable foe, and in the number of times I've gone up against him, I've only come out on top a handful.

"Here will do," he mutters, quickly busying himself by gathering wood for a fire. He's not one to idle.

I squat in front of Flint and nod toward the woods. "Catch us some dinner, will you boy?" He's off in a bound, unable to ignore my command.

That's the thing about familiars. They're as much a part of you as you are them. Sometimes, I wonder just how intertwined my fate is with that of the wolf.

After Gerrit gets the fire roaring, we settle around it, stretching our legs towards the warmth and loosening our tense muscles. Gerrit has a good head on me in height, so his feet are closer to the flames than my own, even though I am far from short.

He is all brute strength, loud, and brash. Growing up, the village would call us the Brain and the Brawn. It was meant to be cute, chiding two young boys about the mischief we were getting into. As we aged, it took on a darker spin.

I, the Brain, can manipulate and connive anyone I meet to get my way. And if they can resist my charm, the Brawn is behind me to force the issue.

Gerrit and I are brothers in every way but blood. My mother died when I was young, and eventually, my father married his mother, joining us as a family. We were in

school together and knew each other well, so we were ecstatic about the marriage. It was almost a nonstop party, having two best friends under the same roof.

That is until Gerrit's mother turned on me.

I look over the fire at him, locking his blue eyes with mine. He's been regarding me for some time, quietly contemplating something he has yet to share.

Just because I am the Brain does not mean Gerrit is without. His intelligence lies in strategy, which is easier to hide from outsiders. I always enjoy implementing his plans; it can be quite a rush.

He sometimes lacks care for physical safety, but Flint can help me out of most of the sticky situations Gerrit gets us into.

Flint comes bounding through the woods with a large hare in his teeth, his eyes triumphant. "Good job, boy!" I boom, standing to greet him. He drops the hare at my feet and sits, looking at me with warmth and expectancy in his eyes. I ruffle the fur on his head again.

Flint may act like a trained house dog with me, but he is not to be underestimated. He is a formidable wolf and more than loyal. His shoulders come to my waist, and I have seen him gut a grown man who attempted to attack me from behind.

I do quick work cleaning the hare and tossing the entrails to Flint. He happily gobbles them up while the beast roasts.

Gerrit is a man of few words, so it surprises me when he speaks around a mouthful of meat.

"I think we're nearly there." He sniffs the air, looking around us.

“How can you tell?” Despite the lack of seasonings, the meat is juicy and satisfying. I rip pieces off the bone and shove it in my mouth.

He taps the side of his nose knowingly. “I can smell her.”

We left the city of Greenbell weeks ago in search of the legendary witch of the Whispering Woods.

As children, we grew up hearing fables of a woman who built her house out of sweets to lure naughty children in and eat them. I never once believed the tales, but Gerrit fell for them every time, convinced this witch would get him the moment we stepped into these woods.

Because of these stories, we have long avoided the woods, choosing not to explore the land further.

Until now.

“What could a witch possibly smell like?” I wonder aloud, picking at the meat I have skewered on a stick.

He shrugs, taking another deep inhale of the forest air clouded with smoke from our fire. “She smells like sweetmeats.”

My laugh shakes some birds from the limbs of the trees. “Get off it, Gerrit. You still believe those childhood tales?”

“Why wouldn’t I? If we’re going to her to ask for help, and we truly expect to find her, who’s to say she isn’t exactly who we think she is?”

He has a point, though I am loathe to admit it. “If she is real, we still don’t know if

she will help us,” I murmur.

Having finished his meal, Flint comes to me and puts his head on my thigh. It’s a comforting gesture, but as I look down, I see the glimmer in his eyes that heralds his desire to speak to me.

I hold up a finger to pause Gerrit and feed my hands through Flint’s fur. With my skin firmly anchored on him, I can feel the magic between us flow more easily. While I could hear him without touching him, it is like trying to listen to a quiet conversation in a crowded room. If I can connect with him physically, the process is much easier.

“I still worry this witch will be unable to help you, Master.” His voice is deep, carrying centuries of knowledge.

I ruffle the fur around his neck. “I know, boy, but we still must try. She’s the only hope we have of saving Father.”

Flint whines, and I hear it with my ears instead of my mind. He’s as upset about what’s happening to Father as Gerrit and I are.

Flint joined our family when I turned fourteen, and the first glimmers of magic began to show in me. A familiar is not like a normal animal. He is made of magic. A familiar does not die. They simply choose a different vessel to inhabit. While rare in Greenbell, magic feels very much alive in the Whispering Woods, and he seems to thrive here.

Whether fortunate or un, I have been blessed with powerful, unexpected magic. But it alone is not enough to heal father/

And thus, the search for the witch.

“Big Boy is correct. You are nearly at her doorstep.”

I snort at his nickname for my brother. “His name is Gerrit, Flint. Not Big Boy. And how do you know?” Gerrit narrows his eyes at my familiar.

“The creatures talk. They fear her.”

“Rightfully so, I would imagine.” Let’s hope the rumors about the witch detailing her consumption of children were incredibly far off from the truth.

“Hey, asshole, I’m still here, you know,” Gerrit complains, pulling me out of my trance with Flint. Flint grumbles a weak growl towards Gerrit but curls up in a ball at my feet.

“Flint says we’re nearly there. We need a plan.”

“That’s what I’ve been trying to tell you. I have one.”

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:46 am*

### Chapter 2

#### Hungry Like the Wolf

brIAR

I fucking hate gardening at night.

It's something I will never stop complaining about.

Not that anyone hears me.

I wish to cultivate gorgeous flowers to brighten my home and life. I want to bring joy to the land and attract the birds and the bees to my doorstep. So, at night, when it is safe for me, I toil under the moon to bring life instead of death.

For once.

I've been trapped here, stuck in this house, for millennia. It's been lifetimes upon lifetimes that I have been unable to exit the fairy circle around the perimeter. If I could convince someone, anyone, to help me break it, I would be free.

I could finally live.

Very few adventurers end up on my doorstep, but I beg their help when they do. None have been able to break me free of this prison.



Unfortunately for them, they've not gone free, either.

It's not intentional. I try to control myself.

But I'm just so hungry.

Hunger changes a person on a fundamental level. If left to starve long enough, even the worst decisions seem justifiable.

I sit back on my heels and stare up at the prison I have called home for all my life. The glamour is fading, and rotten boards and broken roof tiles intersperse the image of sweet candies and treats.

The house could use a makeover.

Waving my hand, the glamour fades momentarily, only to be replaced by one knitted out of shimmering strands of purple magic that makes the home look like a multi-tiered cake. The frosting is the color of the sky at sunset, with purple flowers dotted over it.

I've never had sweets. I have been told all about them by travelers who stumble upon me, though. I beg them to tell me stories, to describe what the outside world is like, and they acquiesce. Once I learned about sweets, I couldn't stop asking questions, going as far as getting the travelers to sketch what they looked like in the dirt with a stick so I could create the first glamor for my home.

A lovely woman was with me when I created it, and she gave me pointers to make it look more authentic. I miss her sometimes. Her memory is one that fills me with regret, but I cannot erase it.

If I ever get out of here, I hope I can find someone with sweets. I would like to try

them someday, even if human food never seems to agree with me.

I wipe off my hands and stand, happy with the evening's work and drained from the use of my waning magic. I should have saved it for something of substance, but a little joy in my surroundings feels necessary.

If my magic is a spring, I am scraping the bottom of it with my shovel, trying to extract water from the packed and drying mud.

Walking inside, I can almost ignore the gnawing hunger that claws at me every second of the day. How long has it been since I've had a proper meal? Whenever a creature wanders through the fairy circle, I can trap them, but they do not satisfy me like humans do. The creatures of the woods must talk because they no longer visit frequently.

And it's been so long since one came to me. The ache in my gut grows at the thought of the last one I had. A pretty man with rich dark skin that was the softest I've ever felt. I quite enjoyed playing with him.

He satisfied more hunger than one.

Unfortunately, I lost control and drained him all at once. I like to think if I had only sampled him, I could have convinced him to stay with me.

I think he enjoyed fucking me just as much as I enjoyed feeding from him.

The sun is getting close to rising. I can stay up to see it, safe in my home, but what is the point? I cannot go outside and warm my skin in it, which makes seeing it taunting me through the glass of my windows infuriating.

I throw my body across my couch, wallowing in self-pity. My head hits the bottle of

ale I finished last night, and I groan, remembering I drained my most recent batch and need to check if the wort for the next is fermented enough yet.

I cannot make myself move from the couch. The weakness in my bones is settling in, and I know the only thing I'll be able to do is sleep soon. I have so few productive hours anymore. Every day, my energy gets depleted faster and faster, and I sleep more and more.

Eventually, when I sleep for good, never waking again?

If I'm lucky, maybe a handsome adventurer will stumble through my door and trip and fall in my pussy so I can fuck and eat at the same time with no effort on my part.

A witch can dream, huh?

\* \* \*

I stretch with an obscenely loud groan, my back on fire from sleeping on the couch that must be as ancient as me instead of my bed. I see the sun's rays through the window and grumble at it for having the audacity to be up still.

Looks like I'm stuck indoors for a bit.

The tepid water I filled my tub with for last night's bath lay in wait for me. I meant to take advantage of it and clean myself off before I slept, but I was too weary to put in the effort.

Dirt from the garden is still caked on my hands and under my nails. I know I'm on my own here, with no one to look nice for, but I haven't hit the point yet where I wallow in filth.

Give it another few centuries, and I bet I'll end up there.

I use just the smallest amount of magic, scraping the dregs running through my veins to warm the water under my touch. It has been too long since I've eaten, and I am too depleted to generate enough magic to leave it steaming.

My simple red dress and white cotton panties, threadbare from use, pile on the floor haphazardly as I slide into the bath. My bones are weary as I slip under the water into a tepid bath that feels like a fire on the other side of the forest warmed it.

As my eyes drift shut, I imagine what it would be like if I could stay just like this, slowly losing breath until I sink to the bottom and die. What would my Banisher say if he returned and found me dead, my corpse waterlogged and bloated? Would he rage that his punishment had been thwarted?

Would he find a way to bring me back so my torture can resume?

Unfortunately, that stupid reflex that makes my body not want to die kicks in, and I jolt to the surface, gasping for breath.

This reflex brings into question if I even can die. I've been here for, from what I can tell, all of time, and I barely eat. And yet, I never get sick. I never starve to death.

Am I immortal?

Gotta be honest, I sure fucking hope not. Being here is curse enough. To not allow me to die and escape it? That's just cruel.

My hair sticks to my back in dripping clumps, the water making its usually soft lavender shade dull and brassy. Much to my chagrin, the purple hair is not glamour but a fluke of my magic. It clashes with everything I own clothing-wise.

Sometimes, I think my Banisher brings me ugly clothes on purpose. It's just adding insult to injury, making it so I can't even look cute for myself.

The Banisher, as I've come to know him, has no face. He appears in the night, cloaked in shadows, and every twelve moons, he brings supplies to keep me in the barest of health. Last year, he brought me a beautiful new dress, but it was in the most obnoxious shade of buttercup yellow.

I took it despite the garish color because new clothing is a rarity. I made a dye from the hyacinth I had growing in the garden, hoping for a rich blue, but now I have a ghastly shade of green that reminds me of sick.

If I knew when he would come this cycle, I'd wear it just so that he had to see it.

But he is late, and I am too hungry to be petty.

The water grows colder by the minute, my nipples constricting with the audacity of it. I flick one of them with my nail, the bite of it barely registering.

After centuries alone, playing with yourself gets tiring. There are only so many ways to rub your clit, and I think I've found all of them. Up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right... none of it works for me anymore. I've even tried my asshole a few times, but that button ended up as useless as the others. Unfortunately, my own sexual desire does nothing for my hunger.

As I stand, I watch the water slide down my figure back into the tub. I'm thinner than I should be, with collarbones and hips that jut out of my flesh. My skin is milky from lack of sun exposure. I think I may have passed as attractive in another world, but here I am, just Briar.

A monster trapped in a house alone for eternity.

After my bath, I slide on a worn black dress with thin straps that constantly fall down my shoulders. I hate this dress and would throw it away if I had the means to procure more clothes. For a while, I would exist in nudity, but I began to feel a bit too much like a wild animal, so I returned to dressing regularly. It helps me keep whatever is left of my humanity.

Maybe not humanity. That is probably the wrong word. Because I don't think I'm human. A human couldn't live this long. And they certainly don't eat how I do.

The skirts of the dress barely caress the middle of my thighs, and with the straps threatening to revolt down my arms, my breasts are trying to abandon ship and escape the top as well. It makes me wonder why I even bother dressing if my clothes won't stay the fuck on my body!

If I could have one meal, I would probably fill the dress out better and rid myself of the annoyance.

In the distance, I hear a wolf howl, and my ears perk up. I don't get many wolves around here. If it gets trapped in my circle, I may do okay. They have almost the same amount of blood as humans, and wolves have magic simmering in their veins. I once fed from a few humans with small amounts of magic, which made the meal much more satisfying and long-lasting.

Reinvigorated, I leap from my chair and fling open my door, pleased to find the sun has just dipped below the horizon. My eyes scan the woods, searching for movement or a flash of fur. Branches snap to my left, and I leap from the porch, running to the edge of my prison to intercept the wolf.

Imagine my surprise when I find not just a wolf but two large, dreamy men.

Dinner is fucking served.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:46 am*

### Chapter 3

#### Should I Stay or Should I Go?

##### GERRIT

Standing before us is a wild-eyed woman barely older than me. She's beautiful and shouldn't be out here. It briefly crosses my mind that she could be in trouble and need help, but when my eyes track behind her to the house that looks just like a cake you'd see at a wedding celebration, my steps falter.

I throw my arm across my stepbrother's chest, halting him from approaching her. His honey-brown eyes meet mine, full of confusion, and I jerk my eyes toward the house. He takes it in with a deep inhale, then turns his gaze on the woman standing a handful of lengths from us.

Her hair is the color of flowers, nearly matching the frosted ones on her home. It's long, wrapping around her waist, and unruly. She's wearing a dress that is barely staying on, the curves of her small breasts threatening to spill from the top. She's slender, breakable, and barefoot. If I didn't know any better, I would think she'd been lost in the woods for a long time.

"Hello, travelers," she croons in a voice husky from disuse. She clears her throat awkwardly and hits her fist on her chest twice before speaking again. "Come in, you look weary." She motions to the house as she takes another step towards us.

My body tenses, ready to defend us if need be. I've heard the stories. I know how this

is going to end.

She'll lure us into her home, trap us there, and eat us. If the stories were right about the house, they're probably right about that part, too.

Hans thought it was stupid to believe, but I knew better. And here's the sweets house to prove it.

I'd be smug and give him shit if we weren't in so much danger.

"No fucking way, witch," I holler towards her. Her thick bottom lip forms a pout, and she rests her fists on those bony hips. The action makes the straps from her dress fall down her arms, and I catch a glimpse of the milky skin of her breasts.

Just a little movement, and I'd be able to see...

"Gerrit," Hans hisses. I turn to look at him, my eyes catching on the thorned vine he has tattooed on the side of his skull. He never takes his eyes off the witch. "What was that plan you said you had again?"

I cough, and he turns to face me fully. I nearly melt under the strength of his gaze. "Wing it."

He gapes openly at me. "I'm sorry, I think I had a little bit of a stroke there and thought you said we should wing it. But that can't be right."

"I did say wing it. How are we supposed to know how to win her to our side when all we know are the myths told to unruly children," I say out of the corner of my mouth.

Hans groans, his hand ruffling the longer side of his hair. With a sharp inhale, he steels himself and takes a small step forward. The witch's eyes light up, and her



mouth breaks into a grin that takes up half of her face.

“Witch, what is your name?” Hans calls across the clearing, his voice firm and commanding.

“Briar,” she responds, surprisingly. I didn’t know witches just gave up their names like that. Couldn’t we trick her or trap her with it? Is that a different legend?

Also, Briar is a very human name for a ferocious witch.

“Witch Briar,” Hans begins again.

“Just Briar!” she interrupts.

Hans rubs the skin between his eyebrows. “Briar, my brother and I are here to seek your help.”

Confusion flicks across her face. “You came here on purpose?”

Just before Hans can reply, she stomps her foot. “Well, that just takes all the fun out of it then! Fine, fine, come inside, we’ll chat.” She stalks off towards the house.

We’re frozen for a moment, unsure how to process what just happened.

“Do we go?” I ask, turning towards my brother. He likes to say I have brains in the form of strategy, but this isn’t about strategy. This is about magic. And I am not the one of us blessed with it.

Hans rolls his shoulders back, stretching the linen shirt he wears, it’s collar unlaced and gaping, tight across his rich brown skin. I tend towards more practical clothing, but Hans has always been a bit flashier.

Maybe that will help us today. She is a female witch, after all.

Casting a gaze to Flint, who ducks his big furry head in a nod, Hans turns to me. “We need her help. I think we must go.” He steps forward and winces before bringing his other foot to join him. “Wait, was that...”

I don’t give him a chance to finish what he was going to say because I’m stepping as well, and I feel like I’m pushing through water. When both feet are firmly on the ground again, I look at Hans. “What the fuck was that?”

He kneels and pushes back some branches of a bush, revealing small rocks placed side by side. “That, my dear brother, was a fairy circle.”

The words sound familiar. “What does that mean?”

“It means we’re trapped.”

\* \* \*

I pace outside the steps to the witch’s porch, grumbling. I’m hanging on by a thread, and Hans can tell. He’s leaning against the railing above me, enjoying every bit of my frustration. After learning we were trapped, he decided we needed to embrace it and was ready to waltz into the witch’s home.

So much for being the Brain. He may as well stuff an apple in his mouth and lay out on a silver platter.

“Gerrit,” he implores, “this is what we came here for. We need the witch’s help. We’re stuck here. We may as well talk to her.”

I shake my head, unable to articulate how much panic is rising in my chest. I could

never tell my stepbrother about my fear of this witch. Seeing the confectionary house awakened all those stories my mother told me to force me to behave and I can't get them out of my head. I turn and look at the door, arms crossed firmly over my broad chest.

"Hans, going in there is death. She will eat us."

"Only if you ask me to!" comes the witch's voice from inside the home.

Hans chokes out a laugh.

"That is not fucking funny," I grumble.

He steps off the porch to stand beside me, resting his hands on my shoulders. "Gerrit, we have to go in. If she were going to kill us, she probably already would have."

"I would've!"

I groan again. Not only do we have a people-eating witch on our hands, but she thinks she's funny, too.

"We're coming in!" Hans shouts, moving behind me to push against my lower back. I walk up the steps like I'm swimming through molasses, my brain revolting against my body's motions. Still, I make it to the door, and it creeps open slowly in front of me.

Up close, the witch is prettier than I expected. Her eyes are the color of rust, with heavy lids that make her look seconds away from falling asleep. Her lips are pouty and soft, and I briefly wonder what capturing them between my teeth would feel like.

She tracks my line of sight and licks her lips, giving me a glimpse of two very sharp

teeth hiding in her mouth. My stomach drops with fear, and I attempt to flee back down the stairs. Hans catches me and pushes me through the doorway.

He's strong for a little guy.

Well, not little in the everyday use of the word, but compared to me.

The witch steps to the side and crosses to a table, where she sits expectantly. "Sit, sit." She flaps her hands at the other chairs. "You said you had a favor you needed from me?"

"Well, we didn't quite say that," Hans replies.

"You whispered to each other that you need me to help you. That's the same thing as a favor." She taps her finger on her earlobe. "Superior hearing." I look sideways at Hans as he slides into the chair across from her. I opt to stand as close to the door as possible and remain part of the conversation.

From my position, I notice how she wrings her long, bony fingers in her lap. I spot the purple bags under her eyes. But the thing that gives me the most pause is the trembling all over her body. I can see the effort she is putting into fighting it.

Is she afraid of us?

What could she have to be afraid of? We're not the people-eating witches here. That's her.

"We do need help," Hans begins. "And I think you may be the only one who can. I'm Hans, and this is my stepbrother Gerrit. Our father, the Duke of Greenbell, is dying. We believe he was cursed. My stepmother, Gerrit's mother, is behind it."

The witch's eyes are glassy as if she is not listening to a word Hans is saying. Before I can call her out on it, she slumps and falls from the chair to the floor.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:46 am*

### Chapter 4

#### Hunger

brIAR

“O h, fucking fuck,” I grumble, rubbing the back of my head. My body is aching like I just fell off the roof.

I’d know. It’s happened before.

Well.

Fell, jumped - is there a difference?

Before I can open my eyes, I feel very large hands on my back and under my knees, carrying me and then sitting me gently on the couch.

My eyes flit open, and I stare at a dreamy man with dark, sexy tattoos. His bright blue eyes are stern and bore into me, but I catch a tinge of concern. My mind is hard to corral, singularly focused on the sheer size of his hand as it provides steady support to my back.

Just one of those fingers...

I shake the thought from my head. Next to him, an equally gorgeous but strikingly different man is kneeling front of me. All I can think about is what it would be like to

be wedged between them, all large hands and plush lips on my -

Wow, I am starving.

His eyes are the color of fresh honey and remarkably kind. One of his hands rests on my knee. I don't miss that they're more than enough to satisfy. Not as large as the other man's, but still.

"Briar, are you okay?" Mister Kind Eyes says, his voice soft and calm like water. I still wince a little at the sound. It echoes in my pounding head.

"I... yeah, I am. Sorry. I just haven't eaten in a while."

The large hand is removed from my back, and he stalks into my never-used kitchen, slamming open cabinets. "Why is there no food in here?" His banging around sets my teeth on edge, and I groan before grabbing a pillow to wrap around my ears.

"Because I don't eat food, asshole."

Damn, I'm mean when I'm starving.

He stops searching my kitchen, and if I were looking at him, I am sure he would be just as rigid as his brother in front of me. Mister Kind Eyes is currently Mister Surprised Eyes, and I can see the questions swirling in his mind.

I sigh and pull my legs up underneath me on the couch, making sure my skirt covers enough not to show my underwear but just enough so they see my thighs, and maybe they'll start to crave me. "Get in here, Big Boy, so I only have to say this once."

Surprised Eyes chuckles quietly and darts his gaze to a large wolf that somehow has been in my house all this time, and I did not notice.

Big Boy comes over and stands in front of me, arms crossed and sneering at me.

I roll my eyes. “So intimidating. I just collapsed on my floor, and you feel the need to threaten me with your delicious brawn? A strong wind could take me out at this point.”

“Delicious brawn?” He quirks an eyebrow.

That looks hard to do. I’ll need to practice that when I don’t have their attention searing into me.

Surprised Eyes is back to Kind Eyes, and he sits beside me. “What do you mean you don’t eat food, Briar?”

I forgot I told them my name, and now I feel bad calling them Kind Eyes and Big Boy. “Who are you guys?”

The brothers exchange a look, and Kind Eyes takes my hand. “We told you. Do you not remember?” I shake my head. He points at Big Boy. “That is my stepbrother, Gerrit,” he tells me, and Gerrit wrinkles his nose and pins me with a glare. “I’m Hans,” Kind Eyes finishes.

“Okay, those are much nicer names than Kind Eyes and Big Boy.” Hans lets out an audible snort, and if I didn’t know better, I would swear that the wolf just chuffed out a laugh. “And the wolf? Which, by the way, are you always so rude to bring an animal into someone’s home without asking?”

Hans has the decency to look sheepish. “That’s Flint, he’s my familiar. Unfortunately, there is no keeping him out.”

I wrack my brain for mentions of familiars but am too fuzzed to remember. What I do



remember is that familiar means magic. My mouth waters at the thought.

“The food, witch. What do you eat if not food?” Gerrit implores.

“Why, little children, of course,” I say, wiggling my fingers at him. He blanches and stumbles backward. I howl with laughter, which causes a stabbing pain in my head. Worth it to see the fear on his face.

I ask Hans, “Is he always so easy to rile up?”

He grins. “Literally always.”

Provoking Gerrit may not be a good idea. He’s huge. I’ve never seen someone as strong as he is. His shoulders are broader than the door frame, and his arms look like a normal person’s thigh. My starving body aches to find out just how proportionate he is, and my eyes flick to his crotch momentarily. He catches my glance, and I briefly register a look of triumph on his face before he schools his expression to his omnipresent scowl.

“I do eat people, though,” I say quietly. “I mean. Kind of. I sustain myself with blood. There have been... accidents, though.” Embarrassment heats my face, and I duck my head. “I just get so hungry sometimes that I can’t stop. I don’t mean to, I swear. It’s just that I have been going so long without food. When food wanders into my prison, how am I supposed to turn it down?”

The men exchange indecipherable looks, and I feel left out of a secret. “A prison?” Hans asks, eyes concerned. “This is a prison?”

I can’t look up. I can’t bear to see their disgust when they learn how monstrous I am. “I’ve been here for centuries. I’m not even sure why I’m here. Maybe at one point, I knew, but now it’s so far gone that I cannot remember anything but being here. The

fairy circle keeps me from going out, but sometimes, it can trap me a meal, so I guess it's not all bad. My Banisher comes once every twelve moons and gives me things like clothes, books, or pitchers of blood, but it's never enough."

I hate how whiny I sound, but I can't help it. I've been miserable for ages, and now I've got two very sexy men here, and the first thing they did was ask me about myself. Who wouldn't unload all the angst that they keep inside?

Gerrit suddenly lowers himself onto my couch, which creaks with his weight. I worry it will snap, and I'll be stuck without a place to sit for eternity, but I would never tell him that.

"So, you've been here, trying to survive, for centuries?" His tone is softer than I've heard yet.

"Well, yeah. This is my life. It's lonely, and I go so long between meals that I'm almost glad people no longer wander into my circle. I worry I will lose control again. Better to starve than risk it. It's not like I can die." I wrinkle my nose. "I mean, I don't think I can die, but to be fair, I haven't done thorough testing."

Hans scratches his arm in contemplation. "How long has it been since you ate, Briar?"

"Snacks, like small mammals, or a full, real meal?" My skin feels tight, and I shuffle uncomfortably on the couch. I haven't talked this much in ages, and about myself, no less. This conversation feels unexpectedly intimate.

"An actual, satisfying meal," the kind man answers.

I try to do the math, counting the moons, wracking my brain back to the beautiful man who got trapped here last. "Maybe fourteen moons or so?" The brothers blanch,

and clearly, I said the wrong thing. “What?” Gerrit shakes his head and stands, motioning to Hans. Wordlessly, Hans rises, and they walk out the door.

It’s an effort not to run after them. For the first time, I’m glad for the fairy circle. I’m not ready to be alone again.

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:46 am*

### Chapter 5

DONTTRUSTME

HANS

“I know what you’re thinking, and I won’t allow it,” Gerrit hisses.

“Why not?” I throw my hands out, imploring him to understand. “She’s of no use to us if she dies, Gerrit. She cannot help us in her current state.”

The image of Briar sliding out of the chair, unconscious, will haunt me. When I first sighted her today, I thought she looked unwell, but I had no idea it was this dire.

Over a year without a meal? How is she even alive?

“She said she has killed those she fed from because she was so starved!” he growls at me. “What do you believe will happen to you after so long without sustenance?”

“Good thing I have my big, strong stepbrother here to pull the waif of a witch off me before I perish,” I say, patting him on the cheek.

As soon as I cross the threshold of the home, Flint is in front of me, begging to talk. I sink on the couch next to where Briar still sits, with an odd expression on her face. She doesn’t flinch as the cushions move beside her. Flint follows me, perching dutifully at my feet.

The witch opens her mouth, about to speak, when I hold up a finger. “One moment, Briar.” I bury my hands in Flint’s fur and close my eyes, embracing the magic that ties us together.

“I am unsure it is wise to have her feed from you, Master. Big Boy is right. She could kill you.” His voice is a cacophony of snarls that my brain somehow translates into the common tongue.

“Between you and Gerrit, nothing will happen to me, Flint. I know you’ll take care of me.” I choose not to respond aloud, instead pushing my words to him psychically. For some reason, the idea of Briar knowing that we doubt her doesn’t sit right with me.

I pull my hands away, unwilling to have someone else talk me out of what I know I need to do.

Briar’s rust-colored eyes are dull as she gazes upon me. She looks like a broken doll, and I long to put her pieces back together. Whatever life she is living cannot be one of quality. She said she’s been here centuries but can’t have aged more than thirty years. I wonder if, on top of the pain of living alone and in starvation, there is some sort of stasis charm on this house to where she will never find the relief of death.

I can hardly imagine another fate so cruel.

In my perusal of her figure, I am drawn to the curve of her breasts as they threaten to fall out of the threadbare and oversized dress, and her nipples press desperately against the fabric. When I raise my head to meet her eyes, she dons a smug smile, and I know I’ve been caught gawking.

Turning sideways to face her entirely, I steeple my hands in front of my abdomen. Gerrit has stomped into the house by this point, grumbling nonsense that I tune

out. “Briar, tell me what your feeding entails.”

Her eyebrows skyrocket to her hairline. “You’d let me feed?” She trembles with poorly restrained excitement.

I hold out a hand. “I’m not sure of that yet. I need to know more about the process.”

She nods eagerly, and I don’t miss the hope that flashes through her expression. “Before you ask, I don’t know why I need to feed on blood. I also don’t know why I can be in my house in the daytime, but if I step outside, it feels like my skin is being pulled off.”

Flint whimpers at my feet.

“I digress. I try eating berries and the meat of rabbits and other animals that get trapped in here with me every so often when I’m really hungry, but it all just turns to ash in my mouth. So, blood it is. Animal will do, but I prefer human. Especially magical blood. I can go a little longer between meals without feeling weak with magical blood.”

She rambles when she speaks, which is typically a habit that I struggle to entertain. But then again, she must never have had anyone to talk to. I try to stay patient, but I can see Gerrit’s frustration buzzing beneath the surface at her inability to answer a direct question.

“Tell me what feeding looks like for you,” I try again.

She’s worrying her nail in her mouth, and I have half a mind to slap it away. “Okay, so like. There are two ways to feed. Way one, I bite a neck or a thigh - a nice hearty vein is best for comfort and speed. And I drink from there. That gets the job done.”

It was as I suspected, then. For some reason, I could not see her willingly cutting someone to bleed into a cup and then sipping it down. “What’s the other way?”

Her face flushes, and for the first time, I realize that feeding may be an intimate activity for her. It makes sense if I think about it logically. She is taking someone’s life force into her body. There are bound to be some emotions attached to that.

She’s still chewing on her thumb, and this time, I pull it, albeit gently, away from her mouth. She squeaks a little in shock. “The second way, Briar?” I say, eyes locked on hers.

“Sex.”

Gerrit’s throat clearing turns into a coughing fit. I think that is the last thing he expected her to say. I attempt to keep my composure, but now I am imagining her splayed out in front of me on a bed, and the image is more alluring than I expected. “Explain.” My voice is as tight as my pants.

She narrows her eyes at me, “You need me to explain sex? Aren’t you, like, a grown man?” She moves her hand to wave me away, and I snatch her wrist. My fingers overlap, and though I want to squeeze to get her attention, I know she is too fragile for that.

Briar whines and attempts to pull her hand away, but I hold firm. Eventually, she slumps with a resigned sigh. “Okay, okay. If I drink from someone, I can feel fine for, like, two weeks? Three if they have magic, sometimes four. If I fuck them, I get maybe a week. But if I feed while fucking? That can get me two moons before I want to die sometimes.”

Having cleared his coughing fit, Gerrit finally moves to sit on the other side of Briar. “What do you mean by feel fine?”

She shrugs. “My mood is better, and my body is stronger. My magic isn’t at full strength the whole time. That only lasts a day or two, kind of like how any living creature has to eat. But for a bit there, I feel almost normal.” She chews on her lip and looks at the ceiling of her prison. More talking to herself than us, she continues. “I always have wondered what I’d be like if I got to feed more. It’s not like I’ve ever had regular meals. I’m just doing what I must to survive, you know? But what would I be like if I could eat when hungry? I’ve tried to do that several times, but I’ve always been too hungry to pace myself, so none of my friends survived long enough to find out. I’ve tried just sex a few times, but I always lose control and go for the blood. I fantasize about who I want to be but know I’ll never get there. I think this is all there is for me.”

Her words finally reach her ears, and she sits straight up, realizing what she admitted to us. Shame radiates off her in waves.

I exchange a glance with Gerrit, whose eyes give me a look that needs no translation. He does not want me anywhere near this witch. But this isn’t about him.

“Okay, Briar. You can feed from me.”

She looks up at me, eyes wide. “Wait. Really? I could kill you. Aren’t you worried I’ll kill you?”

I jut my thumb toward Gerrit. “He likes to watch.” He reaches over and smacks me on the back of the head, and I choke out a laugh. “What I mean is, he’ll make sure to stop you if you look like you are losing control.”

Her eyes bounce between us, and the hunger I see in her eyes looks familiar. I’ve seen it in the tavern when the women have just enough ale to get brave. “Just the blood, then?” she whispers, tongue darting across her lips and toying with her sharp canines.



I gulp, the feeling growing in my belly a potent mix of fear and arousal.

I wonder if this is a bad idea.

The odds are not insignificant that I won't survive.

But if I want to help Father, I need her. And if she is to help me, I need to feed her.

"Where do you prefer to feed?" I ask, trying to calm the waver in my voice.

"Here is fine," she mumbles, moving off the couch and kneeling before me. My cock twitches at the sight, and I remind myself that this is just a feeding.

Clinical.

Before I can question what she's doing, she gestures to my pants. "The thigh, please?" Her voice is so small and desperate that I stand and step out of my trousers reflexively. I don't even think of questioning why that vein is the one she desires rather than another. I stand before her in my boxer shorts, and she runs her hand up my thighs slowly, searching for the spot her teeth crave. She finds it quickly, her fingers stopping just below my balls at the top of my thigh.

She gestures to the couch, and I sit down, letting her push my knees apart. My cock goes rigid against my undershorts, but she does me a kindness by pretending not to notice.

Her pointed pink tongue darts out of her mouth and licks her lips, and her eyes gleam with a nearly feral hunger that almost has me second-guessing this decision.

Then she lowers her face to my leg, and I feel her hot breath against my flesh as her teeth penetrate my skin. The pain is quickly followed by the most exquisite pleasure

I've ever experienced.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:46 am*

### Chapter 6

#### Desire

#### GERRIT

From this angle, I could almost convince myself that Hans is getting his dick sucked. It wouldn't be the first time I've been present for that.

He wasn't lying when he said I like to watch.

But she's not sucking his dick, even if my cock doesn't understand that. When they started, I moved to a chair across from the sofa. I didn't want to be beside him when it happened, unsure if I would be able to allow her to continue if I saw the blood.

But that leaves me with a perfect view of Briar on her knees in front of him, her ass poking out as she bends to reach her preferred vein. I can make out her curves under the dress, and I am confident she has no panties on.

Hans's head is thrown back in ecstasy, and soft moans escape his lips.

It seems like getting fed on isn't so much of a sacrifice anymore.

I'm not sure how I will know when to stop her or even how to do it. Just ripping her off him doesn't seem like the right call, so I'm biding my time and keeping an eye on the situation.

I tell myself it's solely for my brother's safety, but I'm fucking fooling myself. I can't look away.

My hand strokes my cock through my pants. I may as well enjoy the view, right?

Her head darts up from between his legs, and she turns to me, eyes glowing bright red as blood drips down her face. She sniffs the air before zeroing in on where my hand grips my dick.

"I can smell your desire, Gerrit." Her voice is otherworldly, reverberating in my chest. I drop my dick reflexively at being caught.

Hans is panting, looking at Briar as if she is royalty and he is her most adoring subject. I think he's close to begging her to keep feeding from him. Before he can, she straddles his lap, her hand stroking through the outside of his undershorts. He groans, lifting his hips to thrust into her hand.

"Greedy..." she murmurs, gripping his cock through the fabric.

I attempt to catch his eyes to make sure he's feeling okay. He does not look distressed or pallid. In fact, his face is flushed with arousal as he pants after her.

Briar lowers herself onto his lap, grinding against his shorts. Instinctively, Hans's hands go to her waist, and he rocks her back and forth against his length. She leans and whispers something in his ears. I can't make it out, but he's nodding quickly.

"Yes, absolutely yes," he begs.

What did she say? Before I can think much about it, she frees his cock from his shorts and lowers herself onto it in a smooth motion as she plunges her teeth into his neck.

Holy fuck.

I was right.

No panties under that dress.

My cock is angry, straining against my pants at this point. I did not think this was something I would feel jealous over, and yet here I am, wishing that it was my flesh in her teeth, my cock sliding into her warmth.

Briar breaks from Hans's neck and turns to me, looking at my hand as I grip my cock over my pants. "Take it out. Even if I don't touch you, your desire helps feed me."

She doesn't need to tell me twice.

I pull out my cock and fist it roughly, trailing my hand up and down in the brutally slow pace she has taken as she rides Hans. I gather some of the wetness from my tip to make the glide on my shaft easier before spitting in my hand when it's not enough to satisfy.

What I wouldn't fucking give to be dripping in her essence right now.

Briar's teeth are back on Hans's neck, and I can hear his breathing slowing. Each inhale seems to be getting more labored, and I know it's time to intervene.

I'm on my feet, crossing the room swiftly with my pants hanging open and off my hips, my cock standing at attention as I yank the witch by her hair. Her teeth slide smoothly from Hans's neck, and the tips drip blood as she glares at me. He's slightly pale, but his eyes are open, and his face is awash with pleasure.

"I wasn't done," she growls, looking like fury as my brother's blood drips down her

face.

“You are now,” I hiss at her. My cock is still throbbing, undeterred by my inattention, and her eyes latch onto it. She stares at me hungrily and licks her lips.

“If you don’t want me to feed on him, you should keep my mouth busy.”

The challenge she raises has its desired effect. I lift her off Hans’s cock and spin her around to face me. Roughly, I push her back to his lap, where she wastes no time impaling herself on him again. She grinds down into him, resting her hands on her knees, and I know if he weren’t recovering from a loss of blood, he’d be a more active participant. As it is, his hands rest loosely on her hips, gently encouraging her movements.

I twist my hands in her hair again, yanking until she’s staring down my cock. I tap the head against her panting lips. “Open up, witchy. And don’t you dare bite, or you’ll pay for it.” Her eyes glitter, and she opens her mouth, sticking her tongue out expectantly.

I push my cock past her lips slowly, struggling not to immediately jam myself down her throat. She takes it well, hollowing her cheeks and twirling her tongue on the underside of my head.

I can tell she’s holding back. I assume it must be fear of losing control after her little display, but I have to believe the amount of blood she’s already consumed, plus fucking Hans, will be enough to keep her from losing control.

I have to believe that because my hands are on the back of her head, and I’m roughly fucking her mouth. It feels so good I don’t think I’d stop even if she tore into my veins. She gags around my length, but I continue, enjoying how pretty she looks with wet tracks of tears running down her face.

I hook my finger into the side of her mouth and slow my thrusting. “You like that, witchy?” I murmur as I drag my cock across her tongue. She whines.

Hans seems to be gaining some of his strength back because Briar’s grinding has been replaced with bouncing and jolting as he thrusts so hard that his hips slap audibly against her ass.

“Make him come, witchy, and I’ll let you suck my cock again.”

Her eyes flash violence for a brief second, but it fades, and determination takes over. My stepbrother’s blood mingles with her tears and spits as it paints her chin and chest. I see blood caking his leg, but luckily, he seems no worse for wear, with an arm wrapped around her shoulders as he chases his pleasure.

I drop to my knees and slip my hand between her thighs, seeking her tiny spot of pleasure and circling it with the softest touch I can. She groans and attempts to guide my pace, so I pull my hand away. “Oh no, witchy. First, he comes. Then you.” I tickle her clit again, and she throws her head back with a moan that is half pleasure, half frustration. Hans isn’t quiet either, groaning and huffing as he wraps his hand in her hair and gropes her breasts that have fallen out of her dress.

It’s only two more thrusts before I hear him call out and empty himself into her.

She pulls off him, hovering over me like a goddess of destruction. “My turn,” she hisses, her face alight with greed and voice dark with desire. Slowly, I move to the couch on the opposite side of Hans and pat the space between us.

She’s a good listener, quickly climbing between us and turning those wide eyes on me and quivering expectantly. “Present yourself to him and finish the job you started with me,” I command. I tangle my fingers in her odd, pale purple locks and gently push her head down.

After a slow lick around my tip, she takes me in her mouth with a soft hum.

From behind, Hans reaches his hands between her thighs. His face is blissed out as he strokes her. I can tell the moment he plunges fingers inside her, her moans creating the most delightful vibrations on his cock.

She's so keyed up that it doesn't take long for Hans to push her over the edge. Her body bucks against his hand and her mouth goes slack around me as she becomes overwhelmed with pleasure.

Watching her writhe on Hans's hand brings me to the edge. I'm too eager to wait for her to come down from her high and finish the job, so I stroke myself roughly several times before shooting my cum across her slack face and gaping mouth.

She collapses between us, her face on my lap, her eyes wild as she stares at the ceiling.

She doesn't look tired. Not in the least. Her coloring is bright, and her eyes are wide open instead of hooded. She is glowing and looking healthier already.

"What are you? I murmur, running my hands through her hair.

"Satisfied."



## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:46 am*

### Chapter 7

#### Dead Inside

brIAR

It turns out I can die because that's the only thing that explains what just happened.

I've died.

I'm dead.

This is the afterlife.

Whatever I did to deserve this prison of a house has clearly been atoned for because I am living my actual dreams. I have never felt as full or as energized as I do now.

Laying between the two men who stumbled into my life, basking in the afterglow, I cannot imagine being elsewhere. I feel boneless, the picture of relaxation as Gerrit strokes my hair lovingly like he didn't just try to suffocate me with his dick.

Turns out, it is in proportion with the rest of him.

I lean my head up to look at Hans, and he's smiling down at me with a sleepy expression. I'm sure he's exhausted. I was able to control myself, with a minor assist from Gerrit, when I was consuming his blood. It was the tastiest blood I've ever had. It tasted like sunshine and earth.

I could drink it forever.

But I didn't, and I'm glad. I'll get to feed on him again, hopefully.

Regrettably, I need to clean myself up, so I extract myself from between the two men. My dress hangs sloppily over my body, giving me some semblance of modesty, but I am still sticky with blood on my throat and chest and cum between my thighs.

Before I leave, I focus on Gerrit. "Hans is going to be very tired and need lots of fluids and food."

He narrows his gaze. "You don't have any food."

I prop my hand on my hip as I stare at him. "You traveled through the woods, didn't you? You should have provisions. I've got some berries in the garden, too. Water is in the jug over there. I'll be back after I get cleaned up."

Getting through my depressing little bedroom and into my bathroom doesn't take me long. When I close the door, I slide to the floor against it. In the quiet of this space, I can hear my labored breathing.

I feel as if every part of me is on fire. I cannot remember ever being this satisfied.

I'm so overwhelmed by it all that I burst into tears.

Maybe it's the first orgasm from another person in ages or just the feeling of finally not being hungry. Whatever it is, my body has betrayed me, and I am sobbing on the cool tile floor.

I feel the door nudging my ass, and I scamper from it, hiding in the corner by the tub like a little rat. It's Gerrit, of course, since Hans is still too spent to function.

“What’s wrong?” His voice is rough but not aggressive. I’m starting to think this brutal, big, strong-man thing is an act. He seems like a secret softy.

“Take care of Hans.” I shoo him away.

“Hans is fine. Flint is watching over him, and he’s got some of our rations and water. Now.” He crosses those massive arms over his chest and stares me down. “What’s wrong?”

He’s towering over me, and I attempt to shrink further into the corner. With one swoop, he gathers me in his arms and plops me unceremoniously into the tub. “Stay.”

I couldn’t move if I tried. I’m still sobbing, arms wrapped around my knees, unable to even figure out why I’m crying.

A few minutes later, Gerrit re-enters, balancing my wash bin in his arms. “It’s cold, sorry,” he grumbles as he pours the water into the tub.

I shriek and nearly jump out of my skin. “Mother fu-”. I stop my quick exit of the tub, remembering my magic should be at capacity now, and lay my hand on the water. It immediately warms to steaming hot, and I sink into it with a relieved sigh.

He raises an eyebrow at my magic but doesn’t voice the questions that clearly wait on the tip of his tongue. He watches my face obsessively as I luxuriate in the water and let relaxation take over me.

“I’m waiting, witchy,” he says, arms crossed over his broad chest.

“What for?” I ask, slipping my shoulders under the water and rubbing the caked blood on my chest with my hand.

“For an explanation about the tears.”

I slide under the water, doing everything I can to avoid him. I feel like I’ve barely been under when he rips me through the surface. “What the fuck, Briar?”

I shake my head as I attempt to dislodge him. “What?” I sputter.

“You trying to kill yourself right after we feed you?”

I suppose I did not think through the optics of this particular situation. I feel bad for worrying him, but I can’t stop the silly giggle that bubbles up inside me. “Oh, no. I don’t think I can die, remember? I was just trying to avoid answering your question.”

He growls and puts me back in the water. He searches the room for something and must find it lacking because he stomps out, muttering to himself. Moments later, he drags a chair from my dining table into the bathroom.

“Talk. Now.”

I groan and reach for a cloth to finish scrubbing my skin. “You ever been with a woman, and she came so hard she cried afterward? Like that rush of good feelings was all-encompassing and overwhelming, and then, oh no, now it’s gone, and I’m back in my body?”

His lips twist up in a smile. “What do you think?”

“You’re right, silly question. Well, it’s kind of like that but more. I... I have never felt so full before. So complete. For the first time I can remember, I don’t feel the ache of hunger and desire.” I feel tears springing in my eyes again and turn away from him, busying myself with scrubbing my already clean body.

He's quiet, and I can already tell Gerrit is a man of few words. His hulking frame takes up most of the bathroom as he rests his elbows on his knees. He doesn't speak. He just lends his presence to me.

And for today, that's enough.

\* \* \*

After my bath, I join Hans, who looks surprisingly well, considering how much blood I took from him, on the couch. He's changed into a different shirt and cleaned himself up, with an ankle crossed over his knee as he reads a book from my side table. Gerrit sits down in the chair across from my sofa.

Why this room has so much seating, I'll never know. It's not like I'm throwing parties in here with the rats.

"You said you don't know why you drink blood? Do you know what you are?" he asks me.

"That book you're reading talks about succubae. They're demons, feeding from sex. I can feed off sex, and I got banished to this prison, so I was thinking maybe I am some kind of demon. Doesn't explain the sensitivity to light or bloodlust, or even most of my magic."

Hans chews at his lip in thought, which is surprisingly endearing. After a quiet moment, he nods and puts the book away. "Regardless of what you are, we need help and think you can provide it."

In my bloody sex haze, I forgot that's why they came here. They didn't feed me out of the goodness of their hearts. But after that kind of showing, there is no way I'll deny helping them now. If only I could get one more good feeding.

Maybe I can feed from Gerrit this time. I wonder if his blood tastes as good as his cum.

He clears his throat, and I realize I've been staring at his crotch. I watch as he adjusts himself from my gaze before I bring my attention back to Hans, who greets my returned attention with a wry smile.

"Our father is the Duke of Greenbell," he begins, resting his elbows on his knees. "My stepmother, Gerrit's mother, does not want me to succeed my father."

I wrinkle my nose. I don't like where this is heading. Power corrupts. In all of the books that I've read, it's been very clear that those who long for power are the ones who shouldn't have it.

"She tried to convince my father to send me away, to marry me off to the future Duchess of Brindal so I would have to relinquish my title. When he didn't, she took matters into her own hands. She attempted to have me cursed."

I balk. "But why would she do that? Didn't she practically raise you?"

Hans nods sadly, but it's Gerrit who answers. "She wants me to take over. I'm not Father's blood, so I could only succeed him if I'm his sole heir."

My face must say, "You'd have your brother killed?" he stares at me like I know nothing.

"I don't want this, of course. She was doing this for her, not for me. Flint protected Hans, but the curse found its way into our father. He's dying."

I reach down and ruffle Flint's fur. He happily leans into my touch. Maybe I could grow to like this wolf.

“What type of curse is it? How could I possibly be of assistance? We don’t even know what I am.”

“It’s some sort of binding. His life force appears to be tethered to a plant growing outside his window. The intention must have been to bind me to it and pluck the plant out by its roots, and no one would be wiser. But for all her faults, my stepmother loves Father, so she is trying to stave it off. But the plant is dying, and so is he.”

Gerrit’s eyes are downcast, staring at the floor. I can practically see the shame shimmering around him. But why would he feel that way? She may be his mother, but her choices are her own.

“I may be able to help. But I tend to make curses, not break them. Or, at least, I think I do. I can feel more destruction than healing in my magic. Whenever I have some energy stored up, I try to figure out how to get out of here.” Memories of every failed attempt at leaving my fairy circle assault me, and I push them down.

No need for me to get so negative right now.

“Anyways, my magic doesn’t feel like a problem solver. It feels dangerous.”

He nods. “Rumors have it your curses are so powerful no one can undo them.”

I preen, even though there is no way anyone would know what my curses are like because I’m stuck here in the middle of the fucking woods and haven’t cursed anyone.

That I know of.

“Why, who said such a thing?” He laughs at my egotistical fishing.

Gerrit speaks without looking at me. “We were at a tavern near the border to Brindal, and a man was whispering about you. Said in the Whispering Woods a witch lived who could curse with a gaze.”

I wrinkle my nose in thought. No one has ever escaped my home before, and I certainly am not standing around glaring at people as they pass through the woods. Who could be spreading such stories? And for what purpose?

“I thought it was a continuation of the children’s tale about you,” Hans adds.

I balk, swiftly looking between both of them. “What children’s tale?” Both appear sheepish, but Gerrit is flushed red. “Gerrit, what children’s tale?”

Hans clears his throat. “You better tell her since you’re the true believer and all.”

His eyes sheepishly meet mine, and for the first time, he looks vulnerable. “When we were growing up, my mother would tell us stories of the witch in the woods who had a house made of sweets, meant to lure children in so she could eat them.”

My face is rigid in shock, and before I can reply, Hans adds, “But it wasn’t just our mother. All the mothers in the town would tell the story. It was meant to keep naughty children from exploring the woods.”

I feel sick to my stomach. “Despite the joke I made when we met, I have never fed from children,” I whisper, burying my face in my hands. “My house looks like sweets because I’ve never had them, and I badly want to try them even though I definitely won’t be able to eat them. I like to imagine it because some of my visitors told me stories about them, and they sound so good, and one nice lady helped me craft the illusion and...”

“Told you,” Hans says to Gerrit out of the corner of his mouth.



Where are these tales about me coming from? “The man you heard talking about me in the tavern, what did he look like?”

Hans leans back, hands resting behind his head. “No idea. He was wearing a hood so high his entire face was shadowed.”

My Banisher.

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:46 am*

### Chapter 8

#### Tear Me to Pieces

HANS

Briar showed surprising restraint for someone accustomed to living off just crumbs when presented with a full meal. I wasn't sure how it would end up for a brief moment. It felt like she was sucking my soul from my body.

When she asked if she could fuck me with that breathy whisper, there was not even a second thought in my mind before I agreed. I hadn't expected Gerrit to join in, too, but I'm not sure why I was surprised.

He's always been so good at sharing.

Briar lays sleeping on my chest now, all three of us piled in her bed. After the revelation of the lore surrounding her and feeding from us, she fell asleep quickly.

I'm not sure what I expected when we arrived here, but it was not this. I look at Gerrit and see the same expression of curiosity and concern on his face.

"What is going on in this cabin?" he mutters, eyes locked on her sleeping face. She looks better, but she's still too thin. She still has that fragile bird look despite the newly healthy glow of her skin.

I shake my head. "I have no idea. And who is this Banisher? That's who we saw in

the tavern, right?”

“Briar seemed certain,” he answers.

I barely know Briar, but I cannot imagine what she could do that would warrant banishment to this type of prison. Even thinking about the devastating hunger she must have felt all those years fills me with a fury I cannot put words to.

Why would someone hurt her like this?

“Do you really think she can help Father?” Gerrit’s voice is soft and vulnerable, barely audible to not wake the fragile witch between us.

“Absolutely, I do. I can feel the power buzzing through her veins. My magic is singing just being near her. Even Flint notices.”

Gerrit’s eyes dart to my familiar sleeping in front of the door peacefully. “How will she help him, though?”

My magic is nature-based. Plant life, animals, and even the earth itself are open to my manipulation. I take the responsibility seriously. I was giddy when we realized Father was tethered to the plant, thinking it would be easy to break the link. Unfortunately, my tampering somehow sped up the process. The plant withered and decayed under my direct magic.

“I think if she and I merge our magic, imbue her curses with my skills for vegetation manipulation, she may be able to sever the tie while preserving the plant.”

Briar stirs on my chest.

“Not going to work like that,” she mumbles.

I run my hand down her soft purple hair. “What do you mean?”

She rolls over and stretches like a cat in the sun. One of her breasts pops out of the red dress she changed into after her bath, and I fight hard to swallow the hunger that rises in me again.

Though the little witch must sense the desire in me because she grabs my hand and rests it on the swell of her breast.

“My curses don’t work on plants. Only on people. The better chance is for me to curse the caster of the spell. Hopefully, that can weaken their magic and break whatever magic holds the spell in place, leaving you free to entangle him from the plant.” Her voice is husky with sleep, but her words are clear.

Gerrit tenses beside her. “What would a curse on her look like?”

“Your mom cast it?” she counters, finally opening her eyes and turning to face Gerrit. Her ass rubs into my thigh, and I turn to pin it on my crotch. She gives me a saucy look over her shoulder but turns back to him.

“I think so. She doesn’t have any natural magic, though. Is there any way she could have purchased a curse?” As Gerrit answers, she grinds against me, my cock swelling and pressing hard against her cheeks. I start to twist and flick her nipple.

Briar nods animatedly, somehow giving both of us attention. “I think so, yeah. I mean. I haven’t done it or seen it done because, hello, prison.” I pinch her nipple, and she moans loudly. Gerrit narrows his eyes at me.

After several deep breaths, she continues. “The mechanics are there for it if attached to an object or something.” I can hear excitement creep into her voice. “It would be easier to break that way, too, I think. Unless the person who gave her the curse is an

exceedingly powerful witch, I should have no problem getting it off your father and onto her.”

Gerrit balks. “Onto her? She’d die?”

Briar lowers her brow and stills her body. “Well, magic has to go somewhere, doesn’t it? I can’t just send it into the ether.”

A charged silence weighs between us, and then he nods solemnly. “Then it’ll be done. The consequences are mine to bear.”

My heart aches for my stepbrother. His mother may be horrible, but she’s still his mother. I attempt to meet his eyes, but the way he’s steadfastly avoiding me tells me he doesn’t want to talk about it, giving me no choice but to drop it.

For now.

The air in the room changes as the conversation drops, the only sound Briar’s soft little sounds as she rubs against me like a cat. I groan and wrap my hand around her chin. I tilt it up to me so I can snarl in her ear, “Are you hungry again already? Greedy.”

I hear an amused snort from the other side of the bed, Gerrit enjoying how I am mirroring her words from earlier. She continues to dig her ass into me while pulling Gerrit closer to her, and I feel like if I don’t get some relief soon, I’m going to explode.

“Can I taste you?” she murmurs, her lips just barely touching Gerrit’s.

I sense his trepidation and attempt to lighten the mood. “Hey, gotta be less dangerous than when she fed on me. She’s just being a glutton now.”

Despite his hesitation, Gerrit turns his head and exposes his neck to Briar. He wraps his arms around her, and she slowly sinks her teeth into him.

He dwarfs her like a tree attempting to hold a squirrel.

Gerrit's eyes roll back in his head as she sucks softly, barely managing to stifle a groan. "What..the..fuck..is..this?" he pants.

She pops off his neck with a soft suctioning sound and grins. "I've heard it's quite pleasurable. I think that there must be magic in my teeth or something. Otherwise, there is no way I'd be able to get people to let me feed on them more than once."

I try to think if I noticed any magic flowing during the process, but my mind was a haze of pleasure, so I cannot be sure. She's swiftly back on Gerrit's neck, writhing against him. Despite having his arms banded around her, she manages to keep her ass firmly planted on my cock.

I reach between us and pull my pants down, freeing my aching cock before I hike her dress up.

Still no panties.

I trail my fingers along her slit, and she moans into Gerrit's neck as I collect her wetness and use it to circle her clit. She's so sensitive, so responsive to my touch, that her back arches seemingly involuntarily, presenting her ass to me.

Briar gasps as I spread her cheeks with my hands. I circle her back hole with my fingertip as she bucks against me. "Uh-uh, keep still. Let me see how well you listen." I push my finger gently through the tight ring, and her sounds, though still muffled by blood and flesh, have me feeling lightheaded with desire.

I grab my cock and line it up, spooning her as I slide into her hot, wet cunt. I fuck her ass with my finger as I thrust into her from behind. Gerrit grabs her hips, holding her still for me.

Briefly, I catch Gerrit's gaze. I can see it in his eyes as clearly as if they were my own - we're fucked.

Briar has us completely fucking ensnared already.

How could we push away from her when this feels so right?

My hips roll as her internal walls grip me. My balls are growing tight, and a tingle is spreading throughout my limbs. I know I'm close, but she doesn't seem to have gotten enough.

Yet.

"More," she moans, fingers clutching the blankets on her bed tightly. "Please."

Her begging is so pretty, even if it is unnecessary.

I'd give her anything right now.

Slowly, I work a second finger into her ass, and she keens, purple hair spilling over her back as she throws her head back. Gerrit wraps a hand around her throat, squeezing lightly.

He crashes his lips against hers, the blood that was dripping from her chin smearing on his face. He slides his hand between her legs, and I can feel her clench around me as he works her clit. When she breaks with an orgasm that has her body shaking, it rips my release out of me unexpectedly. I pump furiously into her, letting her milk

every drop from me as pleasure whites out my vision.

I slip my finger and softening cock from her and press closer to her back, sandwiching her tightly between Gerrit and me.

After a long beat, where her breathing slows and her body falls limp, she sighs, brushing Gerrit's hair from his face. "I feel incredible. You taste like currants and saltwater. And you," she turns to look over her shoulder at me, "taste like sunshine and earth." She stretches her body out and groans in pure satisfaction. "Gerrit, are you sure you're not magical? You're so fucking tasty."

He laughs. "Nope, Brains over there got it."

I roll my eyes, but the truth is the truth.

Briar props herself up on her elbow, looking out the window. "Oh goody, it's sundown!" She extricates herself from between us and slides on her dress before bolting out of the room, still dripping with my cum.

Without Briar between us, my brother and I gaze at each other awkwardly, so we both flop on our backs and stare at the ceiling.

"Brother, I think we've gotten ourselves into a fucking mess," Gerrit says, a hint of amusement in his voice.

Warmth blossoms in my chest as I listen to the happy sounds of Briar bounding out the front door. "I think you're right. This centuries-old woman is going to devour us."

"And we're going to beg for it."



### Chapter 9

#### I'm Not Okay (I Promise)

brIAR

Sundown is my favorite time of day. I lay stretched out on the grass, letting the last fading glimmers of the sun tighten my skin. In the full sunlight, my skin feels like it's peeling off, but it's just a slight discomfort during sundown. Spending any amount of time in the light is worth it.

The rich pinks and oranges that trace the sky have always brought me hope. There is beauty in the darkness, and the light seems to chase it, welcoming it wholly. It makes me feel like my darkness can be accepted one day, too.

I'm not naive enough to think that the boys will ever care about me. I'm a means to an end. I'll save their father and give them a couple of good fucks, and then they will be on their way. But at least for a moment, I can pretend I am worthy of being loved.

The wolf, Flint, trots down the stairs to my side. He's a massive creature with mottled fur that reminds me of a rabbit. He'd be as tall as, if not taller than, Gerrit if he stood on his hind feet.

He stretches his body beside me, his head beside mine. I reach out to stroke his head. Looking into his eyes, I can see the intelligence that lives within him. I wonder what it would be like if he could talk. I imagine he would be hilarious.

“I am not known for my sense of humor.”

I sit up with a start. “Did you just... did you talk to me?”

“Yes, I suppose I did.”

“But how? How are you talking to me?”

“I have a theory that maybe drinking Master’s blood gave you some of his powers. But that’s just a theory.”

I shake my head. This can’t be happening.

I cannot talk to a wolf.

I turn to face him, and he’s risen to sit on his haunches. I stare into those clear blue eyes, so inhuman yet captivating, and stroke his head. “Why are you talking to me, though? Why show yourself to me like this?”

“Master is very special to me.”

Is this wolf acting like a protective brother? The thought of that sends a giggle bubbling up through me. Or maybe it’s that I’m conversing with a wolf in the rapidly increasing darkness.

“I do not wish to overstep my place. But witch, the creatures in this forest speak of you. Most with fear, because they know you hunt and consume them. But some sing songs of sadness.”

I wrap my arms around my legs, burying my face in my knees. “That’s not fair, though! I don’t hunt them down. If one wanders into my circle and gets trapped with

me, I... I'm always so hungry. I cannot let it go to waste."

Flint nudges my hand with his nose, trying to re-establish a connection. I intertwine my fingers with his fur, and he nods.

The wolf actually nods at me!

"You do not need to justify yourself to me. Many animals in the forest fear me, too. I have heard stories about you from them. Of what happens after the man you call the Banisher arrives."

I wince, squirming uncomfortably under his unnatural stare. "They know about that?" Flint circles me before lying on top of my feet. I like to imagine it's his way of hugging me.

"If I could embrace, yes, this would be an embrace."

I glare at him. "Quit reading my thoughts, wolf." He chuffs.

Can a wolf laugh?

Clearly, he can.

"The Banisher hurts you."

It's not a question, but I still manage a weak nod in affirmation, overcome with an inexplicable embarrassment. I am a witch. I should be able to defend myself. But I am always weak and hungry and unable to fight him. "He is a very powerful mage, I think. Some of the spells he has cast... they're rough." My voice is small and meek.

"The creatures hear you crying for days after he leaves. When does he come again?"

I wrack my brain, thinking about the last time I saw him. It must be getting close to his visit again. “Less than a moon cycle, I think. He’s never left me alone this long before.”

“I must inform Master and Big Boy. We cannot be here when he arrives. There is more to this Banisher than any of us know.”

“Wait, do you know who he is? What aren’t you telling me?” Maybe he can figure out a way to get me out of this if he knows something.

I let myself get optimistic for about two seconds before Flint smashes it.

“I cannot tell you more than I have. The woods keeps its secrets, and I cannot betray it as one of its creatures. But I vow to protect you the best I know. If I cannot speak to you, I’ll tell Master to let you feed from him when I need to talk to you.”

Flint stands to leave, and I put my hand on his shoulder, halting him. “Flint, do you think you could find a creature willing to come be my familiar? I... I’ve never had someone to talk to before. I’m going to miss it when you guys are gone.” I see a flash of sadness in those intelligent eyes.

“My dearest witch, familiars are a part of your soul. If you are meant to have one, one will find you. I wish I could help, but alas, I cannot.”

I feel tears prick the corner of my eyes as he walks away. Between Flint and the boys, my home feels so full. I can imagine what it would be like to have a family and companions.

But I am not meant for companions. I am a monster, locked away in a prison, forever unable to leave because I am so dangerous.

Who could ever love a monster such as me?

\* \* \*

It's quiet inside when I return, my face swollen from crying. I stayed outside longer than I typically would have, unable to face the boys. I find them sitting at the table, chewing on stale bread and dried meat. Crumbs litter the table from the bread. It strikes me how normal this looks, someone sitting and eating at the table.

I've never done that before. It's not like plastering myself to someone's throat is a civilized way of eating. I need a bed, not a table.

They look up when the door slams behind me. I wince. I should've closed it quietly. Instead, it's an alarm that I have arrived, and their attention is now undivided on me.

"Briar?" Hans says, squinting his eyes at me. "Are you okay? You look like you've been crying."

I shake my head, "Oh no, just residual effects from the sundown." I feel awful lying to them, knowing they can sense my untruth. Flint raises his head from under the table and presses his nose onto Hans's knee. Hans weaves his hands through the wolf's fur. I wonder if he has to make contact to communicate. I don't think I was connected to him the whole time.

"He doesn't have to. He chooses to as a way of showing me I have his attention. It's less of a strain on me, and I can communicate for longer periods."

Hans stares at me, mouth slack. "Can you hear Flint?"

I nod sheepishly. "He thinks it's because I drank your blood." Comprehension flashes on Hans's face.

Gerrit, through a mouthful of bread, looks slighted. “Now I’m the only one who can’t hear the wolf? Bullshit, Flint.” The wolf gives a playful growl and licks Gerrit’s hand under the table.

Hans turns his attention back to Flint, and Flint does not choose to let me in on their conversation. I move to the couch, sitting with my back to the men. I’m still feeling raw, unable to look them in the eyes.

I am so fucking tired of being alone. For the first time in my entire memory, I feel truly alive. I am fed, yes, but it is more than that. I have people to talk to, and my magic is pulsing under my skin at full power. Typically, my power is only completely full for the first day after feeding, but I can tell this is different.

I feel the couch depressing on both sides of me, and the men are there, tree-trunk thighs touching mine. Each reaches to grab a hand, and I look over my shoulder to where Flint lay under the table. “Fucking traitor,” I hiss at him.

“Don’t blame him. I asked,” Hans says.

“And I made Hans tell me,” Gerrit adds.

Their proximity, the warmth of their skin flowing through me, threatens to spill tears from my eyes again. “I can’t talk about it. I don’t want to,” I say, reading the conversation they want to have in their eyes.

I think for a minute that they may ignore me and push their questions through anyway, but instead, Hans gathers me into his arms. “Okay, but we’re here.”

I bury my face in his chest, and this time, I cannot stop the tears from falling.

### Chapter 10

#### Let Me Out

#### GERRIT

Briar cries for longer than I would think is possible. Her tears aren't earth-shaking. They don't demand attention. They trail down her face, tracing patterns of sorrow across her neck. Eventually, she seems not to realize she's still crying. She stares blankly forward as Hans rubs his hand between her shoulder blades.

Flint told us the gist of what happened to Briar during her time in this confection-patterned prison—the extended hunger, the brutal beatings when the Banisher finally arrived, the crippling loneliness. Like a flower, she is small and fragile, in danger of being trampled underfoot.

“I think I can talk about it now,” she says quietly. She still is not making eye contact with either of us, but that does not surprise me. Briar reaches a hand out to my stepbrother and me, and we both clasp it tightly.

“I know you don't know me. We just met. But I have been so alone for so long that you two are the closest thing I have to friends. So, I need to tell you about the Banisher. If I am going to help you, you need to know what I'm up against.”

Stroking the back of her hand with my thumb, I nod encouragingly.

“We're listening, Briar, Whatever you want to tell us,” Hans says in that soft timber

of his.

A weak smile crosses her face. “Flint, you could come listen too,” she calls over her shoulder, and the wolf pads over and sits in front of her.

She wrings her hands in her lap, looking at all of the dusty corners of the room rather than at us. “There is no memory of arriving here. One second, it is black, and the next, I am looking into the darkness of the Banisher’s hood. I have never seen his face. Once every twelve moon cycles or so, he comes to me and offers me comfort items. He’ll bring a new blanket, dress, flower seeds, or paints. He’s even brought pitchers of blood. Anything that could make my time here just a bit better.” Her voice is bitter and rough, unshed tears caught in her throat.

“But those things come with a price. I could reject them and face his wrath at the denial of his generosity. Or I could take them but pay for them in ways other than money.”

My grip on her hand tightens. “You don’t mean...”

Her eyes dart to me, as she shakes her head sadly. “No, not like that. He never touched me sexually. He was probably afraid of feeding me.” She barks out a bitter laugh. “It started with manual labor. Just moving things around, carving stones, things of that nature. Prices I was willing to pay for an extra blanket or some bottles to make ale in. But it morphed. Every time he came, he was angrier and angrier. He’s a powerful mage, and his spells are brutal. Eventually, I became the test subject for them.”

Hans winces at the revelation. “What kind of spells?” he asks quietly.

Her eyes are glassy as she answers. “Torture spells. Since he monitors me, he must be a warden of sorts, and I am sure he has less docile prisoners who need a firmer hand



than I do. The Banisher would test the new spells on me and record my reactions and recovery time.”

Anger thrashes in the pit of my stomach, imagining anyone wanting to trample this delicate woman.

She shifts on the couch and slides closer to my side, pulling her feet to the sofa. Reflexively, Hans grabs her around the ankles and rests her legs across his lap. “Flint says he’s due to arrive here soon,” Hans says, his fingers rubbing circles on the bottom of her feet.

Her body tenses against me. “It has to be soon. It’s been ages since I’ve seen him.”

She inhales sharply, and then she’s rigid, leaping to her feet. “You can’t be here when he gets here. Ask Flint. It’s dangerous for you to be here. I can’t let you stay. You have to find a way to leave the circle.” I stand and gather her in my arms, pulling her tightly against my chest. Her body is shaking with fear, teeth chattering aggressively. I run my hands down her light purple hair, smoothing it against her neck.

I surprise myself when I tell her, “We could never leave you behind.”

\* \* \*

Briar went to bed shortly before sunrise. Hans and I could not dream of falling asleep and leaving her awake and alone with her thoughts.

We slip from her bed and wander into the main area of the cabin, rifling through our things for rations. Even Flint is stuck in the fairy circle, so our supply of fresh meat is gone. “I raided her garden. We’ve got some berries and vegetables. It’s something,” Hans is saying. My mind is still on Briar and on how broken she was in our arms.

“How are we going to get her out of here?”

My stepbrother’s eyes light up at my question. “How indeed. I’ve got several ideas.”

We spend the next few hours discussing ideas and their feasibility with Flint. The wolf is brighter than I knew and has knowledge about the Banisher that he gained from listening to the creatures of the woods.

As the sun starts its journey down from its peak, Briar tiptoes out of the bedroom. She’s changed her clothes, now wearing a high-necked, sleeveless dress that falls to barely above her knees. The fabric is thick and corded and hardly appropriate for the warm summer weather we’ve been having.

“Hi, guys.” Her voice is scratchy from the tears of the prior day. She looks at Flint, and a playfully annoyed smile crosses her face. “That’s not very nice of you, Flint. I’m sure that Gerrit had plenty of good ideas.”

Hans stifles a laugh while I toss a pillow at the wolf. “You’re becoming a real asshole, Flint.”

She sits on the chair across from where Hans and I lounge on the sofa, and the hope in her eyes is close to breaking my heart. “Do you know how we can get out of here?” Her voice is barely above a whisper, as if she is afraid speaking it aloud will ruin her chances of leaving.

Hans looks down at the pages on the coffee table in front of us, reading through the notes we took all day while she slept. “I think we have a good idea,” he says, shuffling through to find the right paper. “I’m assuming you’ve tried the standard methods to get out. Displacing the rocks, breaking them, mixing them up?”

Briar nods emphatically. “Yes, I’ve tried all of that. The rocks just go back to where

they were. I've even tried to use magic to blow up the ground around them, but that just made holes in my yard. They sat perched on little patches of dirt with craters around them."

Hans's smile widens, and he leans forward. "Your magic – what's its basis?"

She sucks on her teeth, and for some reason, that single action makes my cock twitch. I adjust my stance, crossing one leg over another and leaning back onto the sofa. I swear Briar shoots me a knowing glance. "I think it's psych magic," she says, chewing on her lip. "I haven't gotten much chance to use it, obviously, but I can create glamour and illusions easily. Oh, and this." She flicks her wrist, and a pitcher of water pours itself into a glass and then floats towards her.

"But you've never been at full power, have you?" I ask, leaning forward to rest my elbows on my knees.

"No, I haven't. I may be close now, but who knows if the fairy circle inhibits my powers." Flint barks at her. "Oh, apparently it does."

Standing, Hans thrusts a sheet of paper towards her. "Then you haven't tried this. We're going to bury the circle. And not just a little. I'm going to smother it in so much dirt that we'll have to use a ladder to get out of here."

She snatches the paper from him, reading his notes on the spell and the process. Her face lights up, and I swear it is the most soothing sight I've seen in ages. "This could work. It could actually work." Her excitement is contagious, and I'm on my feet, too, pulling her into my chest.

Briar buries her nose in my neck, inhaling deeply. The act feels so intimate that a chill of excitement runs down my spine. Her nose trails up my skin, stopping with her lips ghosting across my ear. "I can smell your desire, Gerrit."

## Chapter 11

### Tear You Apart

HANS

Gerrit's body tenses as Briar whispers in his ear, and a shiver courses through me. I recognize the darkness that has expanded in his eyes at her words. She pulls her face away from his ear and looks me in the eye. "You two have taken such good care of me. I should return the favor."

I can't tell if she's waiting for my permission or for me to urge her on. I lower myself into a chair, spreading my legs wide and resting my elbows on the arms. "Don't let me stop you," I purr, eyes trailing up her body.

Now that I know what she can do with that body, with that mouth of hers, I am eager to see it happen to my brother.

Briar hooks Gerrit by the collar of his shirt, pulling him toward me. She sits on my lap, facing away from me, and wiggles her hips tightly against me. Gerrit's eyes are hooded as he looks down at her, palming his cock through his pants.

Her small hands work his pants down, and from my position over her shoulder, I can see Briar freeing his arousal. She grabs it, dragging her hand slowly from base to tip, and he groans, stepping closer to where she sits on my lap.

Briar reaches down and taps Gerrit on the calf. He peers down at her, his face

wracked with confusion. “Put your foot on the arm of the chair,” she coos, pushing my arm from its position. I snake it around her waist, grinding her closer to my cock. Gerrit does as requested, and Briar bends forward and licks down his inner thigh.

I can’t see her face, but I can hear the desperation in her voice when she says, “Can I feed?”

If he doesn’t say yes, I sure as fuck will.

Gerrit nods, and Briar dives into his thigh, keeping one hand on his dick. He lets out a very long, uncharacteristic moan as she pierces his skin and sucks. My hands creep to Briar’s breasts, where I knead circles in them. A throaty hum comes from her in approval.

She’s drinking languidly, no longer in danger of draining us from starvation. I trail my fingers down her body and play with the hem of her dress. She wiggles her hips forward, urging me to keep trailing my hands up her dress. “Oh, greedy,” I purr, diving my hands fully under the hem of her dress.

My finger rubs up the front of her panties, and I can feel moisture soaking through them already. I shoot my brother an incredulous look. “Brother, she’s so soaking wet for us already.”

Gerrit matches my look with one of his own, a feral desire I’ve seen on him only a handful of times. Briar’s hand has stopped moving on his cock, and he reaches down and grabs her under her chin. “If you want to keep eating, do not neglect my cock, witchy.”

As she groans and resumes pumping him up, I slip a finger under her panties and drag it through the slickness that waits for me. Her skin pebbles as I circle over her clit, soft pants coming from her in between the gulping sound of her drinking from Gerrit.

He looks down at her, wiggling under my touch, and snaps in front of her face. “Look at me, witchy. Are you done eating and ready to play?”

She pulls away from his thigh, blood dripping on her chin. “I want to play.” He pulls his thigh down from the arm of the chair and leans down, arms on either side of the both of us, boxing us in.

My finger lazily strokes up and down her clit as she stares at my brother, and he meets her gaze. “Rip her panties off, Hans.”

I am all too happy to oblige, and with a quick pull, I’ve broken the panties and tossed them to the side.

“Hey! I don’t have limitless clothes, you know, asshole!”

I rub my nose against her ear. “Shhh, we’ll get you new ones,” I whisper as I slam a finger into her tight pussy.

Gerrit kneels in front of us and grabs Briar’s legs. The movement pulls my fingers from her pussy, and she grumbles in frustration. It passes quickly as he tosses her legs over his shoulder, forcing her to lay back into my chest. Without hesitating, he slams his face against her cunt and drags his tongue up the slit, and my fingers pluck at her nipples.

The feeling of her writhing against me could undo me on its own. Watching Gerrit feast on her has my cock straining against my pants, and her wiggles on top of me show me that Briar can tell what it’s doing to me. I turn her face up to me and lean to kiss her, capturing her mouth hungrily. She melts underneath my kiss, tongue acquiescing to my demands for entry.

Briar’s body begins to quake, her moans filling my mouth. Gerrit pulls from between

her legs, mouth, and face, glistening with her arousal. “Are you ready to come, Briar?” She whimpers as she vigorously nods. “Use your words then, witchy.” His voice is gravelly and deep, his arousal coloring every word he says.

I trail my lips down her neck, nipping and biting the skin as I go. Her breathy pants make it hard for her to answer Gerrit, and she wiggles uncomfortably on top of me, chasing the release that Gerrit has denied her.

“Just ask him, Briar. He’ll give you what you need,” I whisper encouragingly.

With her eyes on the fingers Gerrit has been slowly thrusting into her sex, she pants out, “Please let me come.”

A malicious smile lights up Gerrit’s face, and a shiver runs down my spine. I love seeing him get like this over a woman. “That’s what I thought, witchy.” He pushes two of his large fingers into her and leans down to suck on her clit. I continue biting and sucking on her neck, my hands rubbing her nipples through her dress.

Her muscles go rigid, and her head is thrown back over my shoulder. And with her eyes squeezed shut and her hands clawing at the neck of her dress, Briar comes undone. Her body goes slack, and Gerrit slides his fingers out of her before walking to me. “Want a taste?”

I pull my lips away from her skin, opening my mouth for him as he shoves his fingers into it. I suck off the most exquisite-tasting cum I have ever had. “Godsdamn... Briar, you talk about how we taste, but you taste like life itself.”

The taste of her off my brother’s fingers has my cock aching for release. I buck my hips into Briar’s back, and she turns to me and grins widely. Slipping down, she kneels between my legs and pulls my pants down to my ankles. In a swift movement, she dives onto my cock, sucking the tip into her mouth hungrily. My eyes roll back

when she takes more of me into her hot little mouth, her tongue stroking the underside of my dick.

Gerrit moves behind her to kneel. He places his hands on her hips and yanks them up, getting what I am sure is a full view of that gorgeous ass. She stumbles for a moment before she rights herself into a comfortable position that gives all of us what we want.

“I’m going to fuck you now, Briar. I don’t want to see you drop his cock. Keep it in your mouth. You say you’re hungry? Well, we’re going to fill you up.”

She groans around my dick as Gerrit slides into her, and I see his head fall back in ecstasy. She looks so tiny compared to him but takes him like she was made to. She took Gerrit’s message to heart, though, and has not stopped sucking my dick with all that she has.

Her mouth goes all the way to my hilt, her nose tickling my pubic bone, and when Gerrit slams into her particularly deeply, her moan vibrates all of me. “Fuck, Briar,” I breathe, wrapping my hands in her hair and pulling her off of me. “I’m going to fuck your face now. Tap my thigh twice if you need a break.”

Her eyes light up, and an eager smile stretches across her face. “Do your worst.” I push her back onto my dick, thrusting as far as I can down her throat before the last word is out of her mouth. I anchor her head with both hands as I furiously fuck into her mouth, groaning at the obscene noises that manage to escape around my cock.

It doesn’t take me long to be near the edge, threatening to fall over. All it takes is Gerrit reaching around and rubbing her clit, eliciting a deep, pleased sound from Briar around my dick, and I am spilling, gripping her head tightly as I thrust my hips up and pump my cum down her throat. She pulls off my dick, specks of cum and spit joining the dried blood on her chin, and gives me a half-lidded smile. Before she can recover from taking my load, my stepbrother slams into her so hard she almost flies



forward into the chair.

A squeal of pleasure rips from her throat as Gerrit takes a firm grip on one of her ass cheeks as he thrusts. I grab her by the chin and turn her face up to mine. “You’re going to look at me when you come on my brother’s dick.” I can see her gulp, and her eyes widen with pleasure. Gerrit pinches her clit in just the right way, timed with a deep thrust, and Briar is vibrating in my hand, mouth falling open in pleasure. I stick my finger in her mouth and pull her cheek open, spit dripping from her mouth as she pants and twitches.

It doesn’t take long for her body to thrash with a brutal orgasm, and Gerrit follows behind her, groaning into her back as he finds his release. She slumps, and I quickly remove my finger from her mouth, gather her in my arms, and rest her on my lap. “You did so good. Such a good little witch. How do you feel?”

Briar looks between Gerrit and me, and the biggest smile tears her face in two. “I feel so fucking alive.”

## Page 12

*Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:46 am*

### Chapter 12

simp

brIAR

I have never felt so good.

When I wake up, I feel like I could conquer the world.

Sleeping peacefully on my left is Hans, shirtless and showing the expanse of his warm brown chest. His hair flops to one side, leaving a perfect view of the green, thorned vine that adorns his skull.

On my right is Gerrit, the gentle giant of a man whose bark can be intimidating but whose bite is delicious. His long, bright blonde hair got tangled in mine as we slept, and I do not mind one bit.

I slip from the bed, careful not to wake the men, and nearly trip over Flint, who must have been sleeping at the base of the bed. He looks at me and cocks his head to the side, but I don't hear anything. I place my hands on his head the way Hans sometimes does, and very faintly, I hear,

“It appears our connection is waning. You'll need to feed from Master.”

I glance at Hans, mouth watering at the thought of tasting him again. “I can do that,” I say to Flint, unable to stop the grin that stretches across my face.

“Hurry, please, because I have news I need to share.”

I peek out the window in the bedroom to see it's just before sunset and marvel at how quickly the men adjusted to my sleep schedule. Slipping into the bathroom, I give myself a quick clean with the bucket of water I have set aside for hand washing. The sticky residue of our prior tryst warms my chest, reminding me that for once in my life, I can fuck for fun and not just in desperation for sustenance.

The peeling yellow paint of the bathroom walls could use a glamor, but I cannot bring myself to spend the energy when there is a possibility I could leave this shithole soon. Glamoring it would feel like accepting this place is my home, and I refuse to accept that. Off the side of the bathroom is the door leading to my closet, and I slide into it, gently sorting through the clothing I have to pick the outfit I may be wearing when I finally break free from my confines.

It feels like a lot of pressure to put on an outfit.

Eventually, I slide on a pair of black panties and my only pair of pants. The pants were left by the beautiful dark skinned traveler that I unfortunately could not control myself with. It didn't feel right to let such lovely trousers go to waste. I slip them up my thighs and dig through my clothing to find a string from a corset dress to wrap through the waist loops and secure them tightly around my middle. The pants are large, almost comically so, but they're comfortable, and the string helps them stay put.

That same traveler left behind a solid black vest, which I was able to alter by cutting and tying the back to fit my body well. I snag the too-large boots in my hands and head back into the bedroom, feeling like a warrior who can conquer anything.

Dropping the boots on the floor stirs the boys, and two pairs of sleepy eyes, one set vivid blue like a morning sky and the other set honey brown and warm, lock onto me

and crinkle up with a smile.

“You look cute, witchy,” Gerrit says, his voice thick with sleep. He turns over on his side and pulls the pillow to his chest in an effort to fall back to sleep.

Hans, on the other hand, slides from the bed and walks to me, wearing a half-asleep erection and nothing else. I gulp at the sight, and when he takes my face in his hands and kisses me deeply, I swear I almost melt into a puddle on the floor. “Good morning, butterfly.”

My heart flutters at the pet name. I’ve never had a pet name before, never had anyone around long enough to give me one. The emotions that those simple words evoke in me threaten to choke me, and I have to move past it, or I will be a blubbery mess again. “Flint says I need to feed from you. I can’t hear him anymore, and he has something to tell me.”

Shock courses through me as Hans slides his hand down my arm and entwines his fingers in my own. If I didn’t know better, I would think the affection is real and not from a place of convenience to get my help with their father. He tilts his head to the side, clearly listening to Flint, and then turns to me with a nod. “He’s right. You need to feed from me.”

Hunger fills my body at the thought, but I feel greedy. “I just fed from Gerrit last night. I don’t need to feed again. I can...”

Hans cuts me off with a kiss, soft and gentle but impossible to ignore. When he pulls away, with dark eyes and that half-asleep erection now fully awake, he whispers in my ear, “You’ll do as you’re told, butterfly, and you’ll feed from me. I want you to forget what hunger feels like because you will never know it again.”

I do not have time to process my thoughts or feelings as Hans lifts me into his arms

and carries me into the living room, sitting in the same chair he inhabited last night. He situates me on his lap, rubbing his hands down my thighs. “Oh, now you wear pants?” he asks, his voice shaking in amusement.

“I can take them off if you want?” I say, but it’s more of a question. I do not want to be presumptuous with either of these boys, afraid that if I am, I’ll lose what is happening between us.

“I want.” That’s all he says, his dark eyes boring into mine. I slide off his lap and slip out of the pants, tripping as I do and landing half on his lap. His laugh sounds like a warm breeze, caressing every part of me and wrapping me up safely.

I rearrange myself on his lap, straddling him as I do. “Neck?” I ask, hands on his shoulders. He’s silent, but how he looks at me says everything I need to know. I wait to extend my teeth until my mouth is already over his skin, sinking in deep and sucking softly. Hans shutters and moans beneath me, his cock pressing against my center in such a way that I reflexively start to grind against him.

Hans wraps one large hand around the back of my neck, pinning me to his as I drink lazily. The other hand slides into my panties and pulls them to the side forcefully. The smooth head of his cock strokes my clit before he slams himself fully into me with one thrust. I moan against his neck at the feeling of him filling my body up in such a delicious way. Hans’s desire swirls around me, falling gently onto my skin and soaking into my bloodstream with no effort on my part.

We stay like that, me alternating drinks of his blood and heady moans and Hans thrusting into me with a desperate need until Flint trots into the room.

“I said feed from him, not fornicate with him.”

The sound of Flint in my head has me jerking off Hans’s neck, and Hans is growling

over my shoulder. “Get out, Flint. We’ll address this later. You know better.”

If a wolf could huff and stomp off like a petulant child, Flint just did.

My embarrassed blush has reached my hairline, and I duck my head back into Hans’s neck. “Are you done eating?” he asks softly. I nod wordlessly. “Are you done having sex with me?” I ask him.

He chuckles and shakes his head, bucking his hips up into me at a rapid pace. I anchor my hands on his shoulders, bouncing with him as he moves inside me, groaning at the delicious stretch.

Hans ducks his head, pulling my nipple into his mouth and sucking and nipping at it as I grind against him. His cock starts to thicken and grow harder than before, and I know he’s on the cusp of his release. I speed up my movements, circling my hips as he drives into me from below. He thrusts into me again and again until he spills inside me with a deep groan.

I collapse on top of him, face buried in his neck and panting.

Damn, a girl could get used to this.

His hand slips between my legs, no doubt to return the favor, and I bat it away.

“My clit got bruised enough last night. I am quite good for now.”

A deep chuckle sounds behind me, and I turn to see Gerrit leaning in the door frame, boxers slung low on his hips and thick arms crossed on his sculpted chest. “I’m not apologizing for that, witchy.”

Extracting myself from Hans and trotting over to give Gerrit a quick kiss, I laugh.

“Wouldn’t expect nor want you to.”

When I get back from cleaning myself up (again!) and I get my pants slid on, the three of us sit side by side on the couch with Flint in front of us.

“Who’s going to tell me what he says?” Gerrit asks. If I’m not mistaken, I hear a smidge of jealousy in his voice that makes me feel so protective of him.

After Hans promises to tell Gerrit everything Flint says, I lean forward on my elbows to look the familiar in the eye. “Alright, Flint, what do you have for me?”

“Well, first, I apologize for interrupting the coitus between you and Master earlier.”

I laugh, and Gerrit looks at me expectantly, but Hans leans behind me to whisper to the familiar. “Already forgiven, Flint.”

“Next, the forest creatures are talking. They say the Banisher is on his way.”

“How would they know? He just appears in the circle. It’s not like he travels here.” The idea of the Banisher just walking up to the fairy circle is laughable. He’s a horrendously powerful mage. He would not need for a prolonged journey through the woods.

“Whatever he has done in the past, this time, the forest has been made aware of his intentions. He will be here by moonrise tomorrow.”

When Hans relays this message to Gerrit, I feel his large hand tighten on my waist protectively. I do not have time to process what that could mean between us because Flint speaks again.

“They say he is angry and coming to ensure you stay put.”

Wincing, I look between the boys. “He knows you’re here. That’s the only explanation.” Flint nods his large, furry head.

“Yes, I believe the Banisher has been made aware of the presence of Master and Big Boy. There must be a rat telling him things.”

“Did you just use a metaphor?” Hans asks, incredulous. The wolf cocks his head to the side, looking surprisingly confused for a creature that can’t make facial expressions.

“I did no such thing. The home has rats and they are notorious gossips. It’s an easy deduction to make.”

The ridiculousness of the situation takes over, and laughter bubbles up in my throat and spills from my mouth and my eyes. The tears streak down my face, and I fight to get words out through laughter.

“You mean to tell me that a rodent has been feeding information to my Banisher all this time? That’s why he always seems to know what I’ve been doing since his last visit?” I don’t wait for an answer from Flint. I fall into Gerrit’s lap, hysterical laughter and tears pouring from me simultaneously.

He pats my head awkwardly, and I hear him whisper to Hans, “What do I do here?” Hans grabs me around the waist and pulls me back up to a sitting position, holding my hand tightly before nodding at Flint to continue.

“Finally, your plan to escape the fairy circle will not work.”

Flint’s words knock the laughter out of me, and Hans’s face collapses. “How do you know?” he asks, defeat lacing his words.



“I have been speaking to the fairies.”

“Fairies! They’re real?” I interrupt. I swear the wolf rolls his eyes at me.

“Yes, of course they’re real. Who do you think built your fairy circle? The Banisher tricked them into doing it.”

I sit back, a little sliver of pleasure that the Banisher is not as all-powerful as I thought he was coursing through me. “So what did the fairies say about getting her out?” Hans asks the critical question I neglected to ask myself.

“The fairies say to leave you cannot touch the ground near the circle. So your burying idea is good, but using the ladder to escape is too close to the ground that will hold you in.”

“We need a tree,” Gerrit says once Hans relays the message.

“A tree?” I ask.

He sits back with a smug look. “Oh, I’m the only one who sees it?” Hans huffs at Gerrit, and Flint growls a little, gazes fixed on the large man. He holds up his hands to placate the aggression being sent his way. “Okay, okay, I’ll tell you. We need to call a tree down large enough to be angled onto the dirt to climb up like a ramp. We’ll be far enough away from the circle that we won’t touch the ground near the spell’s radius.”

He crosses his arms across his chest in satisfaction, and I turn my head to Flint. “Will that work?”

“Yes, I believe Big Boy’s plan has a high probability of working.”

I throw myself into Gerrit's arms and kiss him deeply. He pulls away eventually and sighs, "Not that I'm complaining, but what was that for?"

"For setting me free."

## Page 13

*Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:46 am*

### Chapter 13

#### Broken

#### HANS

The sweat on my brow drips into my eyes, and I relish the burn that is the evidence of a hard day's work.

The three of us worked through the night to set up for our escape, but when the sun rose, and Briar could not be outside any longer, Gerrit and I were on our own. Now it's sunset, and Briar is exiting the house with our bags on her shoulder and a small one of her own. It couldn't possibly hold much, but I imagine I wouldn't want to take a lot with me from my prison either.

Flint is pacing nonstop, stressing me out with his nonstop rattling about the Banisher's closeness. It appears the forest animals are keeping him regularly updated, which is helpful but also ramps up the urgency I feel, making it hard to focus.

I want nothing more than to free Briar from this awful prison she's been confined to. At this point, I wouldn't even care if she left us as soon as she got out and didn't help us with Father. As much as that would hurt, she is a butterfly about to spread her wings, and I will not fault her for the result.

As I'm scratching sigils in the dirt, she approaches me and peers over my shoulder. Her hair is vibrant in the sunset, like lavender blossoms in the wind. Her skin looks red and tight, but she warned us that it happens in the sun.

“I’m drawing sigils to channel magic.”

She chews on her lower lip, scratching at the skin on her arms softly. “Never seen one of those before. My magic is just in me, I guess. It runs out if I don’t feed, obviously, but when it’s there, it’s just there.”

My laugh feels intrusive in the quiet woods. “You are a magical creature, butterfly. I am a human. I have to pull from the earth.” Her face warms and a sad smile flashes across her face momentarily before she turns away.

What was that?

I sit back on my heels and wipe my hands on my pants. “There. Ready as we’ll ever be.” Like my words summon him, Gerrit appears, arms full of useful things he’s pilfered from the house and surrounding areas. He slides the bags from Briar’s shoulders and proceeds to stuff them full of candles, knives, a small pot, and what looks like a bundle of fabric.

“Can I help?” Briar asks. The sadness from earlier is gone now, replaced by a steely resolve.

Scratching the back of my head, I turn towards Flint. “Could she push some magic into the sigils? Would that work?”

“In theory, yes. But her magic is relatively untested.”

“Hey! That’s not my fault!” she interjects, startling me. I’m still getting used to someone else being able to hear Flint.

“I never said it was, witch. It is the truth.”

She huffs and crosses her arms across her chest, the pouty look on her face driving me insane. “You ever going to use my name?”

Gerrit chuckles despite not hearing Flint’s side of the conversation. “Doubtful. I’ve been Big Boy since he came around.”

Briar grumbles under her breath but still moves to my side. “Then let’s give this a shot,” she says, eyes on the sigils.

Standing beside her, I chant low, the spell pouring off my tongue and into the ground. The sigil glows green underneath my hands. She looks at me, her rust-colored eyes now a rich, healthy red, proud and wide. My heart aches a bit looking at her, at how her skin has filled out, and the bags under her eyes have receded. Just a handful of regular feedings has changed her physically.

I can’t imagine what it’s done to her magically.

As the dirt begins to rise, burying the rocks of the fairy circle, Briar stares at the sigil with confusion. She reaches down, hand extended, only to be pulled back by Gerrit as my chanting continues. “If you break the sigil, you break the spell,” he says, holding her to his chest.

She struggles and breaks free, “No, I won’t. I don’t know how, but I know what I’m doing.” She crouches at the sigil again, holding her hand over it. I try to watch her as my chanting continues, but I only catch flashes of it. One moment, her hand is over the sigil; the next, it’s beside it on the ground.

When she breaches the circle surrounding the sigil and places her hand in the middle, I feel a rush through my body that is unlike anything I’ve ever felt before. Magic explodes from me, throwing me back on the ground as a mountain of dirt encircles the home, burying the fairy circle under six feet of solid soil.

Panting, I sit up, weaving my fingers into Flint's fur so he knows to speak just to me.  
"Flint, what was that?"

"Unsure, Master. She appeared to alter your sigil to receive her magic."

"Are you saying what I felt was... her? That was Briar's magic?"

"Yes, Master. I believe you just experienced a fraction of what she is capable of."

I look to Briar, my sweet butterfly, sitting on the ground by the sigil and smiling at me with pride.

And yet, I cannot stop the fear surrounding me when I look at her.

Someone locked her up, but the question remains: Why? Or rather, what will they do to get her back?

She is powerful. More powerful than any magic user I've ever met before.

What will this Banisher do to get her back?

I stagger to my feet, and Briar is there, hands on my elbow, tears in her eyes that I didn't notice before. "I'm so sorry, Hans. Did I hurt you? I didn't mean to. You told me to help, and I thought I was helping. I am so, so sorry." Her rambling makes my heart ache, and I grasp her hands and pull them to my chest.

"You did not hurt me, Briar. I am just not used to channeling that level of magic." She wraps her arms around my middle, resting her head under my chin.

I can hear her sniffles and feel her body move with quiet tears against me. "When you were talking to Flint, the way you looked at me... I thought you were upset with me."

Sometimes, I forget that while the words said between Flint and me can be private, that doesn't mean my facial expressions are. "I was not upset with you. I was upset, though."

Gerrit, who, until this point, was sitting silently on the porch, stomped over. "How could you be upset? She helped, like you asked!"

"I said I'm not upset with her! I'm upset because the power she channeled through me is unlike any I've felt before. If she was locked up because of it, whoever did that is going to fight like hell to get her back. I'm scared for her, not upset at her!"

Briar stumbles back at my words, her eyes wide with shock and her body crumpling to the ground. Both of us are on our knees next to her in a second, but she has her knees pulled to her chest as she sobs heavily, blocking her face from view.

"Witchy, what's wrong?" Gerrit asks, snaking his hands around her shoulders.

"I'm sorry, Briar. I didn't mean to upset you." I kneel in front of her as she raises her head to look at me, tears tracking down her cheeks and converging in the hollow at the base of her neck.

Her hand, nails dirty from the spell, reaches out to me, and I grasp it within both of mine. "You care." Her voice is small, a quiet squeak that I have to strain to hear. "You care about me," she says again, her voice stronger.

I look at Gerrit, and his face is scrunched with confusion. I meet Briar's eyes again, watery with tears. "Of course, I care. We both care." She shakes her head, and the tears fall again, hitting the dirt beneath her. Flint comes up and rubs his head against her arm, and she moves it around him, touching his head with hers.

"She is not upset with you, Master."

His words echo in my head, and I know Briar can hear them, too. She shakes her head as Flint speaks again.

“Her emotions are too strong, so she cannot speak. But she has permitted me to share.”

I wave Gerrit over to whisper the words to him, removing the embarrassment Briar may have by hearing me shout them.

“Miss Briar has never had anyone care about her before. She has been alone her entire life, with her only contact being with someone who sought to break her. When she did find a human, years of starvation caused her to kill that companion, which broke her even more. The cycle was long and brutal, leaving a lasting effect on her.”

Her sobs are loud now, shaking her whole body, but she holds onto Flint, and he lets her, soaking up her tears with his dappled fur.

“She thought you were just kind because you needed her magic. She didn’t imagine you would care about her. She never imagined anyone would.”

The words get caught in my throat as I relay them to Gerrit, whose fists clench in anger at a world that allowed someone as special as Briar to be so broken.

Briar shakes her head rapidly, pulling on Flint’s fur as he looks at me again.

“I’m sorry, Miss Briar, but I must.”

“Do not tell me anything she doesn’t want me to hear, Flint.” Rarely do I give my familiar commands like this, but this feels important. Still, he pushes her body into a sitting position with his nose, and she buries her face in her hands.



My stubborn familiar paws her hands down to look at Gerrit and me. When she does, her eyes are rimmed with red, snot drips from her nose, and her skin is mottled and red. Despite all of it, she is still such a beautiful creature.

“Miss Briar’s spirit is broken, but you are healing it, Master. Big Boy is, too.”

The words hit me square in the chest and I move towards her, wrapping her up in my arms. Gerrit lowers himself beside us and rests his hand on the small of her back, rubbing smooth circles in her skin as he hums lowly to calm her.

After some time, her tears stop, and she composes herself enough to look up at Gerrit and me. When she speaks, though, it isn’t to us.

“You called me by my name, Flint.”

Wolves can’t shrug, but this one may as well have, and the sight of it gets us tentatively smiling. I grab her face and kiss her, pulling away momentarily to say, “If you ever doubt again that you are worthy of care and affection, we’ll be here to remind you.”

### Chapter 14

#### Break Free

brIAR

My messy, embarrassing breakdown put us behind schedule. I didn't want to become a snotty, crying mess in front of the boys, but I thought I was dreaming when I realized Hans cared for me. While Gerrit didn't say the words, his actions spoke for him.

"We've got to get moving," I say, sniffing up the last bit of snot that threatens to drip down my face.

Hans nods, looking up towards the sky. "Didn't Flint say the Banisher would be here come moonrise?" I nod, and his face pales. "Then we don't have much time." He works to scratch in another sigil.

Gerrit gathers all our bags and slides them onto his back. "We have to be ready to run, witchy. Can you do that?" My power levels feel okay, but I could use a bit of a top-off after helping Hans.

I don't have to confirm this. Both of them seem to read my face and know. Gerrit strides across the clearing to me and wraps a hand around my waist, pulling me close to him. My hips fit perfectly within his and I wiggle happily against his chest. He bares his throat to me, and a hungry growl sneaks out between my lips.

I know we don't have time, but I want to savor this the best I can. My teeth sink into his skin smoothly, and I immediately feel his cock harden against me. Gerrit grunts, thrusting his hips forward, riling me up and making me crave his body as well as his blood.

The warm summer air caresses my ass as Hans pulls my pants down from behind. I nearly pop off of Gerrit in surprise.

"Feed our girl," Hans whispers to his stepbrother.

Gerrit's massive hands slide his pants under his cock and then wrap under my knees, lifting me in a single smooth motion. I don't even have to unlatch from his throat.

His cock fills me in an effortless thrust, my pussy wet and dripping for the big man already. From this angle, he hits a spot inside me that has me seeing stars, my toes curling with the sensation.

He pounds into me relentlessly, his thick cock stretches me tight around him, and that feeling, combined with his heady blood dripping down my throat, has me exploding around him. My cunt throbs, pulsing with the aftershocks of pleasure.

"There we go," he whispers in my ear. "I love to watch you shatter, knowing I'm the one that gets to pick up the pieces."

A few hard thrusts have him emptying himself into me, leaving me messy and panting but satisfied and refilled from my earlier power expenditure.

Gerrit helps me back into my pants after he gently sets me back down and rights himself, and I take a moment to get my head back into the game.

I'm going to break free of my prison today.

My heartbeat calms and my body relaxes as my magic flares through my veins. I cross the clearing to where Hans is kneeling on the ground.

“This one will pull a tree towards us?”

Without breaking his concentration or even looking at me, Hans answers. “Yes, this one,” he points to a smaller sigil to the left of the one he’s working on that I previously missed, “will pull a tree down to us. And this one,” he taps the larger one, “will increase it’s size so we can use it as a bridge and get out of here.” With a flourish, he finishes scratching in the dirt and sits back, wiping his hands on his pants.

Hans rises to his full height and begins to chant softly under his breath. “Does he need my boost?” I whisper to Gerrit as we both watch on.

He shakes his head, blonde hair falling over his eyebrows, “Not for this one. He does stuff like this all the time.”

It kills me to watch his hair clump with sweat and not help him, but I respect his ability to handle this and watch on, impressed at his discipline.

Green swirls of magic fill the air and a loud crack has me wincing. A tree falls onto one of the dirt piles, barely touching the ground beside it. “We need this bigger. We have to be farther from the circle,” he mutters under his breath, moving towards the larger sigil.

I crouch, reaching my hands out to push my power into it when a sound behind me makes my blood run cold.

A cruel, merciless laugh encircles the clearing, amplified and freezing me to the spot. “Now, Briar, I’ve heard you’ve been quite naughty.” The voice is cold, devoid of all emotion, and unnervingly deep.

My head jerks, scanning the clearing, but I find we all are still alone. Flint is growling, the hair on his body standing up as he sniffs the air.

“He’s almost here. Master, we’ve got to move. Once he enters the circle, it may be impossible to get Miss Briar out.”

Hans looks at me pleadingly to help with a power boost, but I am frozen, fear flowing through my veins as if it belongs there.

“Briar... come out, little demon. All will be forgiven if you just come to me now.”

Gerrit appears behind me, hand on my shoulder, squeezing reassuringly. “We will not let him get you, witchy. Give Hans some magic, and let’s run.” I look up at the hulking form of Gerrit, his touch calming and centering me slightly.

“Now, Miss Briar, you have to do it now.”

Flint’s words are a final encouragement I need to push through, placing my hand on the center of the sigil. My power ripples through Hans, and the tree’s growth speeds up, rapidly expanding to fill the yard of the place I’ve called home.

“I smell magic,” his haunting voice taunts, echoing around me. “You know better, Briar.”

His words sound closer now, and bile rises in my throat. The memories of his spells cutting into me cloud my head, blurring my vision. The ground spins underneath me, and I am grateful to be already on my knees, but it suddenly doesn’t feel like enough.

Two giant hands grip me by the shoulders, steadying me. Gerrit leans and whispers in my ear, “Just a few more moments. It’s almost big enough.” His words don’t register, the fear of my Banisher clogging my ears like cotton.

Just as Hans stops chanting and shouts, “We’re good, let’s go!” a figure appears on the other side of the clearing.

His body is wrapped in a black cloak that drags behind him, billowing around the sleeves. As always, the hood is up, shrouding his face in shadows. The only bit of his skin I can see are his weathered hands, a creamy peach shade marred by shining silver scars.

He points at me, and I freeze, invisible chains trapping me to the ground no matter how hard I fight.

“You two, leave and forget you ever saw her. If you refuse, not only will your deaths be slow, but so will hers. Go now, and everyone lives.”

Tears spring to my eyes, but I hold them back as I look at the two men who showed me more joy in three days than I have felt in my entire life. “Go, please. I cannot have your blood on my hands. Please, leave me here. I’ve made it this long. I can do it again.” With those words, I lose the battle with my tears, and they flood my face, soaking the ground below me as if they seek to drown me.

Gerrit’s anger is a living creature as he reaches for me and attempts to throw me over his shoulder. I stay planted on the ground, the spell cast by my Banisher rooting me like a tree. I can just make out the purple strands of magic that float around my ankles. “Hans! He’s got her trapped with magic somehow!”

The Banisher is moving slowly, unhurried in his pursuit of me. Hans leans down, lips beside my ear, “I will not leave you. You have to throw your magic towards his. You can do this, Briar. Think of something warm, happy, and kind to counteract his darkness.” He entwines his fingers with mine, tightly wrapped along my sides.

Looking into his eyes, I can see he truly believes I can do this. I squeeze mine shut

tightly, ignoring that the Banisher is increasingly closer, having reached the house. At this point, he's two minutes away from us.

I focus on what Hans said about thinking of warmth and happiness, and my mind drifts to Gerrit, lifting me and pouring me into the bath, dumping a bucket of cold water on top of me. I think of Flint, hugging me the best a wolf can, wanting to continue having a mental connection with me. And then Hans, the selfless way he immediately offered to let me feed from him, the words he gave just moments before that helped me realize how much he cared for me.

Those feelings drip through me, warming my bones like a roaring fire.

I rip my eyes open to see Hans, whose face is split in half with a smile. I look down, and the strands around me unravel from my legs. "Move, butterfly. It's time to fly," Hans whispers, grabbing my hand.

I'm on my feet, sprinting towards the tree, when the Banisher calls out. "You do not know what you boys are unleashing on this world! Leave her to me!"

It takes effort to ignore the Banisher, and I feel his spells whipping around me. I call upon my own magic, letting it wrap around us like a shield, leaving his magic unable to take hold. Gerrit is over the tree and on the other side of the circle, hands out to catch me as I leap from the roots of the enlarged wood.

As fly through the air, he holds his arms out, catching me and dropping me just as quickly to help Hans safely down from the tree. Flint is the last to join, and then we're off, running through the woods as fast as our feet can carry us, the shouts of the Banisher fading with every step.

"You boys have doomed us all! She's dangerous! Do not trust her!"

Hans scoffs, looking towards me as we run, branches scratching and roots tripping us.  
“You’re no more dangerous than me, Briar. Don’t let him get in your head.”

Despite his assurances, my stomach cramps. “If I’m not dangerous, why isn’t he coming after us?”



## Page 15

*Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:46 am*

### Chapter 15

#### Dangerous Woman

HANS

I t's not a bad question.

I don't want to voice it myself, but it seemed surprisingly easy to slip from The Banisher's grasp once Briar used her power. What did he see that we didn't?

Was that display of power enough to scare him off from forcing her to stay?

We've slowed our pace, her exhausted pants fill my ears, and her sweat drips down between her breasts. Her oversized trousers are stained with dirt and slung so low I can see the hollow that malnourishment has created between her hips.

Gerrit, still high and reeling from the adrenaline of the escape, has not spoken of the words from the Banisher, choosing instead to just coo platitudes at Briar. But ignoring the words altogether doesn't seem wise.

As much as I have enjoyed my time with Briar, we have always had a right to be wary of her. What if she is a spider weaving a trap for us? She convinced us to free her. Who's to say she won't turn on us now?

She peers over her shoulder at me, and I am marveled by her beauty. Her wide, red eyes and lavender hair are inhuman but breathtaking. Her smile breaks my heart

enough to push down any worries I have about her.

Of course, Briar is dangerous – anyone with that amount of power would be. What kind of person would I be if I believed her abuser over her? She has shown us, several times, who she is.

Her hand is on my arm, and I realize she slowed her pace to walk beside me. “Hey, Mister Kind Eyes,” she croons, making me roll said kind eyes.

I snort and hit her with my shoulder. “You trying to butter me up with sweet names?”

“Fine, you caught me, Hans . You seem worried.”

Where do I begin? How do I tell her that for the last hour, I have been questioning her motivations, questioning her , all because of a few words from the man who cared for nothing but destroying her?

“The interaction with the Banisher shook me,” is all I manage to say.

Her body shudders at the mention of his name, her eyes glassy with fear. “Me too. I’ve never heard him like that before. He’s never called me dangerous.” I look at her, trying to detect the veracity of her words. Flint stays near her feet, walking alongside Briar rather than me in an odd turn of events.

“I say I spent my whole life in that prison, but I don’t know if that’s true, Hans. I have no memories outside of that circle. That’s the only place I’ve ever known. But what if I had a life before then, and I did something to earn that home? What if I really am a monster?”

“She’s not a monster, Master,” Flint speaks into my mind, and I know it is only for me.

“How could you possibly know?” I make my face appear relaxed, casually intertwining my fingers in Flint’s coat so Briar is unaware of our conversation.

“Have I ever steered you wrong? Haven’t I always led you home?”

I absorb his words, and the realization hits me that Flint has always been my guiding path, and this is the first time I’m truly questioning him. “You said at the beginning you didn’t think she’d help us.”

“I didn’t think she would. But after meeting her and talking to the forest’s creatures, I know she’s not dangerous or evil. She was trapped and desperate.”

“You said the creatures feared her.” I feel like a petulant child, trying hard to avoid my fate, but I cannot help it. The doubt is consuming me, made worse by the sheer amount of raw power she channeled through me.

“You, too, would fear the one who brings evil into your midst.”

Gerrit stops ahead, looking around a clearing within the twisted Whispering Woods. Despite my affinity for natural magic, he’s grown more comfortable in the woods than I am. “This is a fine place to make camp,” he says definitively. The clearing is canopied by gnarled branches, reaching towards us like spectral fingers.

Briar shivers, bothered by an unseen breeze. Flint wraps around her legs, and she entwines her fingers in his fur. I watch her face relax, and a soft smile plays across her lips. Her bottom lip is plush, swollen and red from how she chews it when nervous. Her upper lip is thin. It almost disappears when she smiles, showing a mouth full of teeth that take up most of her face in that moment of joy.

I can tell Flint is talking to her, but he’s choosing to keep the words from me. A wave of jealousy fills me. Flint has always been my companion, my familiar, my friend,

and now he's sharing himself with someone else using the magic from my blood.

"Master."

My head jerks up, and I find Flint staring at me, his yellow eyes digging into my soul. Gerrit has been making the campsite, building a fire, and dragging logs over for seats, but I have been standing, staring blank-faced at Flint and Briar.

Briar meets my gaze with hurt and fear in her eyes.

I feel my chest tighten as I look at her, guilt dropping my stomach to my feet.

It is imperative that I get out of this spiral and get my mind on something else. "We spent ages in the woods, going over it section by section, trying to find your home. Now that we have you, it won't take long to get out and back to Greenbell," I tell her. "And then we can see what you can do for Father."

She drops herself on one of the logs Gerrit set up, patting it beside her. Her shoulders are tense, but her tone is kind as she speaks. "Yes, of course. Your father. We also need to plan what we will do when the sun comes up."

"What exactly happens when you're in the sun for too long?" Gerrit asks as he flops down on the other side of her. "Do you just burn really badly?"

She snorts and kicks the toe of her too-large boot in the dirt. "Yeah, that's an understatement. My skin boils and sloughs off. It takes ages for me to heal."

Flint wedges himself between my and Briar's knees. "What if that was a curse of the fairy circle?"

"You think that's possible?" Briar answers as I tell Gerrit what the wolf said. "I

mean, weirder things have happened, I'm sure."

"Plus, you'll heal faster now that you can eat from us regularly, right?" My brother asks. "Is it possible you could travel during the day if you could feed from us regularly to heal any damage immediately?"

Briar's eyes go wispy and far off. She tilts her head back, her face towards the full moon as if sunning herself. "It would be amazing to feel the sun again. I tried several times, but it wasn't worth the pain. But if I could live in the day?" She sighs and leans her head on my shoulder. I melt under her touch. "I could maybe begin to feel a little more human."

"But you're not, human that is," Gerrit reminds her clumsily. "Not that there is anything wrong with it, of course."

"You're right, I'm not," she muses sadly. "But there are parts of me that long for a human existence. I have had centuries to decide who I want to be." The stars twinkle in her eyes, and the campfire flame caresses her skin. "Do you want to know? In my wildest dreams, who I hoped to become?"

I nod at the same time that Gerrit answers in the affirmative. Even Flint gives an accepting little woof.

"Then I'll need to tell you who I've been."

## Page 16

*Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:46 am*

### Chapter 16

#### The Dead Come Talking

brIAR - FOREVER AGO

My stomach hurts.

It's the only thought in my mind. I can't even remember my name.

All I can conceptualize is that my stomach hurts.

"Awaken, demon," a gruff voice shouts. "On your feet."

Demon? Is that my name, then? It's not very pretty.

I pull myself to my feet, my eyes adjusting slowly to the room I'm in.

The home I'm in.

It's cozy, with several plush places to sit in the large room I'm in the middle of. I don't know how I know this, but I can tell that this is the home of someone with a decent amount of money.

A man sits at the table, wearing black from his head to the floor, only showing the peachy pink skin of his scarred hands.

“To me, demon,” he barks. I scramble across the room, stopping in front of him.

I can’t see his face in the blackness of his hood.

“Welcome to your new home,” he says in that dark voice of his. It feels like it’s coming from everywhere and nowhere. “This is where you’re going to live from now on.”

“It’s a nice home,” I say, resuming my perusal of the space. “Why are you giving me a home?”

“I’m not giving you anything. You earned this.”

A broad smile crawls across my face. “I did? Wow. I can’t remember anything, but I must’ve done something good.”

“You’ve done something, alright. Tell me what you remember.”

His tone is harsh, and I can’t deny him an answer if I tried. “My stomach hurts. And I think it hurt before I got here. I don’t know my name. I don’t know what I look like, but I have pale skin. And,” I pull a strand of my long hair, “purple hair? That’s certainly odd.”

I think he’s watching me as I speak, but I can’t be sure since I can’t see his eyes.

“What else?”

“Nothing. I have this vague feeling of loss, but that’s it.” It’s a little more than vague, but I’ll keep it to myself. I feel like a part of me has been removed and scattered around the universe. Something vital to my existence is missing.

The man folds his hands together, resting them on the table. “Your name is Briar. You are an ancient demon called a succubus.”

“That’s a pretty word. Succubus.” As soon as I say it, warmth washes over me, and I know it to be true. “What does it mean?”

“It means you feed off of lust through blood, sex, dreams... it’s such a nasty habit, and you went too far this time.” His voice is harsh, and my already queasy stomach drops. “You killed someone, someone important, which is why you’re here.”

“This ... this is a prison?”

“It’s not just any prison. It’s the ultimate prison. You will not age. You will not die. This is your eternity.” He reaches across the table, grabbing my hand. “And if you’re not learning your lesson, we’ll start it over again.”

He pulls his hood down, and I am shocked by how beautiful he is. When my eyes are drawn to his, I notice how red they are, like fresh blood.

And everything goes dark.

\* \* \*

My stomach hurts.

It’s the only thought in my mind. I can’t even remember my name.

All I can conceptualize is that my stomach hurts.

“Awaken, demon,” a gruff voice shouts. “On your feet.”



Demon? Is that my name, then? It's not very pretty.

I pull myself to my feet, my eyes adjusting slowly to the room I'm in.

The home I'm in.

"I don't have the time today. Come."

I stumble across the home and find a man sitting at the table, wearing black from head to floor, his pale, scarred hands sticking out from his sleeves.

"Who are you?"

"Fuck, I always forget how annoying this part is," he mutters.

What part?

"Have we met before?"

He waves his hand dismissively. "Hundreds of times."

"Why?" My voice sounds strange. Is this my voice? Is this who I really am?

"Doesn't fucking matter, you won't remember this conversation, anyway. I have to spend my energy resetting your memory and the spell because a human was stupid enough to stumble in here." He takes a pouch off his waist and sets it on the table before pulling several small items from it: crystals, tiny bones, and rocks.

What's he doing?

"I knew there was a risk of one coming across you, but I figured with your unfed

bloodlust, you would drain them dry. But no, you managed to bond them to you as a Complement.” He’s talking to himself with no concern about if I hear him at all.

I don’t understand everything he’s saying.

Wait - was he serious about me not remembering this?

“How many times?” I ask, my voice shaky.

“What?” He doesn’t even look up at me.

“How many times has this happened? You coming here and erasing my memories?”

“I’m not erasing them in full.” If I could see his eyes, I bet he’d be rolling them. “I’m just altering them a little before I give them back. And twelve. But really, that’s not bad considering how long you’ve been here.”

My stomach cramps, and I lower myself into the chair across from this dangerous man. “How long have I been here?” I’m afraid to know the answer, but I can’t stop myself from asking.

An unseen smile warps his voice into something from my nightmares. “Seven thousand, five hundred and twenty-two years.”

My head is spinning. I feel faint. How can anyone live that long? What did I do to deserve this?

“I suppose you won’t tell me why I’m here?” I say weakly, knowing he won’t answer.

“You made enemies, Briar. Important ones. When you found your Complements, you

became too powerful. We had to prevent that from happening again.” He’s arranging the bag’s contents into a strange symbol on the table.

“My Complements?”

“The people who temper your powers and help you channel them. Every succubus has one, but for some reason, you had two. When you bonded with both of them, they anchored your power. You went from being chaotic and wild to a honed weapon.” He stands up and looks at the symbol from above. “I couldn’t have a weapon like you out there messing up my plans, could I?” He tsks and looks up at me.

Or, I think he does. I still can’t see his face.

“Killing the Complements was easy, but you could always find another. It’s not like it’s just one person. It’s an emotional bond, a choice you both make. But the fact that you can bond two Complements? I can’t let that happen.”

“So this is about power? You didn’t like that I was more powerful than you?”

He slams his hands on the table. “No one is more powerful than me! No one! But you are a liability. And so I took care of the problem.” A scarred hand sticks out of his sleeve, and he moves it in jerky motions over the symbol on the table.

“Why not just kill me?” I shout. Tears are running down my face. I lost someone. Two someones, that were important to me.

I have been in this place for millennia.

“Just because I need to remove a weapon from the fight doesn’t mean I won’t keep it in my back pocket.” He throws his head back, shaking the hood off. “Now, Briar, it’s time to forget.”

He slams his hand down on the symbol, and everything goes black.

\* \* \*

My stomach hurts.

I open my eyes, and all I see is red.

Red all around me.

Sticky red on my face and hands.

Sticky red on the floor around me.

I sit up slowly, my body stiff and foreign.

What the fuck happened?

When I push my back against the wall to hold myself up, and I get my first glimpse of the room, I scream.

In the middle of a pile of blood is the beautiful, dark-skinned traveler who stumbled into my fairy circle three days ago. His eyes are lifeless; his throat is nearly ripped out.

What did I do?

What the fuck did I do?

We were friends!

Why can't I remember his name? I remember talking to him. He slept here. He kissed me. He touched me.

He made me feel like a person. Like I was worth something.

What did I do?

Why am I like this?

I don't wanna be like this. I don't want to be a fucking monster.

I thought I was doing okay. I felt okay. I felt like I was keeping it together.

But I must've blacked out and gone into a frenzy because the evidence is right in front of me.

He's dead, blood pooling beneath his mutilated body. Coating my hands and chest. Clinging in my hair from where I collapsed into it.

But I don't feel flush with magic like I should. I feel drained.

There is a gaping hole in my stomach, screaming for food.

My hindbrain reminds me that I do not know when my next meal will come.

That I can't save my friend, and letting all of this food go to waste would be a travesty.

My stomach hurts.

Am I really going to do this?

I know I was hungry before, but I wouldn't have lost control like this, would I?

I grab his body, pulling it through the puddles of blood that I'll collect into glasses later, and hoist him into my lap.

My stomach hurts

Tears fill my eyes as I lower my mouth to his throat, latching on however I can and start pulling what remains of his blood into my mouth.

Maybe I deserve this prison, after all.

### Chapter 17

#### Now That We're Alone

#### GERRIT

Even the chattering of the woods ceased as Briar told the story of how she woke up in a pile of a traveler's blood, how she consumed his blood from his corpse and scooped what she could from the floor into containers to save for later.

I feel green after listening to it.

It's hard to picture this beautiful, gentle woman as a monster that would go into a frenzy, blackout, and leave someone brutally slaughtered.

And then to drink from his corpse?

I can't suppress a shiver at the mental image.

"You have to know who I was to believe me when I tell you who I want to be," she says quietly. "I don't know what I did to get locked up, but if that situation happened regularly, I can see why I was."

"You said you lost control," Hans says quietly.

"Well, what is that if not losing control?" she snaps. He winces. Neither means to hurt one another, but confusion blankets us like campfire smoke.

None of us know how to proceed. It's clear that we were in greater danger than we knew the first time Hans had her feed from him.

Now that she's eating regularly, are we in a better position? Is it less likely to happen?

"Who do you want to be?" I ask, dying to know.

"I want to be a person. I want a little cabin, a big garden, and friends. Maybe a lover or two, with a family, whatever that looks like for us. I want the most boring, average life you can imagine." She wipes one of her eyes with the back of her hand. "I don't want to be a ruler. I don't want to call attention to my magic. Maybe I could use it to help people, if possible, but ultimately, I want to be human."

Flint nudges her knee with his nose, and she weaves her fingers into his fur. She says nothing, but I can tell he's speaking to her. Even though I can't hear it, sometimes it feels like the atmosphere has a charge of magic when he does.

"Should we get moving?" I ask abruptly. I don't know how to acknowledge her emotional declaration. "We don't know if she's going to be able to be in the sun, and even though we're exhausted, we should travel as much as we can." Hans and I have been working since last night getting ready, but Briar slept during the day. I doubt she'd rest now, so we should try to be productive since we don't know if we'll lose the sun."

"What if Briar and I combine our magic to weave the trees tighter tomorrow for sun cover?" Hans asks, not moving from his log. "A little may get through, which will allow us to gauge how much she can take." He scoots a little closer to Briar and leans his head against her shoulder. "I just honestly don't know if I have it in me to go much farther, brother. After using all that magic, I need to recuperate. And we should let Flint hunt us some fresh meat. It's been days."



He makes a good point, but it still makes me queasy to be close to her circle, even if I would love some fresh food. Briar reaches her hand out, and I take it. She smiles softly and squeezes my hand. “I think we’re okay with stopping for now. Flint can scout us a way out of here while he hunts for you two, and we can make a plan for your father.”

Eventually, the two of them convince me to settle in for the night and Flint bounds off to catch us some dinner.

“Are you hungry?” Hans asks Briar.

She pales at his question. “After hearing that story, you still wish to feed me?”

He shrugs, snagging her around the waist and pulling her into his lap. “You’re dangerous, just like the Banisher said. That story makes it clear. But it also doesn’t change the fact that you have full control over yourself with us. I haven’t felt unsafe under your teeth once.”

She hums softly, nuzzling his neck, and nods. “I am hungry. But you expelled too much magic. I can’t feed from you until you’re replenished. I worry I take some of your magic when I do, and I won’t leave you without.”

I wrap my arms around her hips and pull her over to me, landing her in my lap. “Then use me.”

“I’ll ask you the same thing. Are you sure? After hearing that horrible story, you wish to share your blood with me?”

“Yes, witchy, I am sure. Because I know you won’t hurt me. You wouldn’t hurt a fly.”

I believe the words in my core.

She says she lost control and slaughtered that man, but can that be true?

I cannot align that version of Briar with this one.

It just doesn't make sense.

Nothing about her banishment makes sense.

The rumors spread about her around Greenbell to keep people from discovering her in the woods.

The power-sapping fairy circle.

The continued starvation.

"He's trying to keep you weak," I say quietly, the idea hitting me like lightning. "He's trying to keep people away from you, reduce your power, and starve you so you're not strong enough to escape."

"I mean, yeah." Hans's voice is rife with confusion. "Of course he is. It's a prison. He won't want her powerful."

"Right. But he wants to keep people from knowing the truth about her, so he makes up these horrid stories so they don't go near her." I grab Briar's chin and whip her face toward me. "Because he knows that if people know you, they'll want to save you. He needs you completely isolated."

She nuzzles into my hand, red eyes half-lidded. "Why is this important?"

“Because you’re no longer contained. You’re no longer starving. And you’re no longer alone. You have everything he was specifically trying to stop you from having.” Hans is scratching his upper arm as he thinks about what I say. “What if you never killed that traveler? What if the Banisher did? Because that person was too close to you. What if the traveler could’ve saved you?”

“Oh, shit,” my brother’s eyes open wide, and he grabs one of the packs. “Wait a fucking second.” He finds the book that was in Briar’s home and starts to flip through it. “Here it is!”

He jumps to his feet, holding the book open in front of him, and he starts to pace in front of the fire. “It was there all along, right in front of our noses.”

“What is it?” Briar asks, sounding more hopeful than she ever has before.

He begins to read. “A succubus can feed in several ways, be it dreams of those around her, sexual energy, or life’s blood. However, those feedings are unsatisfying unless the donor has agreed to become a Complement to the succubus. A succubus’s Complement is a bond formed through emotional attachment with one person who can temper the harmful effects of a succubus’s magic. Without a Complement, a succubus is more likely to maim or injure the person she has chosen to feed from. It has been rumored that some of the more powerful succubae have taken two Complements, but it has never been confirmed. Without a Complement, a succubae can be so overwhelmed with their magic that it becomes hard to direct, making them markedly weaker than their bonded counterparts.”

He closes the book with a snap and drops to his knees in front of Briar, holding the book out to her.

“Don’t you see, butterfly? No one near you meant you couldn’t feed off of dreams. No one visiting you meant you couldn’t form emotional connections. The Banisher

was afraid you'd form a Complement and be able to use your powers to break free of the circle." He drops the book and takes her hands. "I bet you didn't kill your friend. I bet your Banisher did because you were close to forming a Complement."

My mind whirls at the information, but a rightness settles in my chest. "And he didn't care to visit you until he got word that we were there. He wanted to make sure you couldn't bond to us."

Briar's mouth gapes open. The night has stilled entirely around us, the moon high and bright, illuminating our quartet. I can't take my eyes off the beautiful woman beside me. "You don't think I killed him?" Her voice is soft and hopeful, her eyes lined with tears.

"No, it makes sense," I answer for Hans. "If you are forming an emotional connection, it would help make your power more manageable, and it makes sense he'd want them gone. Up until you met us, how was your magic?"

She pulls her hair over her shoulder and plays at braiding the ends. "It wasn't friendly. I could do small things, illusions, heating water, things like that, but anytime I tried to do something that could be considered big or impressive, it wouldn't listen. I always thought it was not being fed enough. Do you really think my magic just needs to be grounded in a person?"

"Or persons," Hans whispers. "What if you need two Complements?"

### Chapter 18

#### Dangerous Hands

brIAR

Every part of my body heats at his proclamation.

“Two? Do you think... both of you?”

Hans slides onto the other side of the log. “Why not? We’ve felt attached to you from the beginning, even when this whole situation has made us nervous. Do you feel drawn to us?”

My heart clenches. Of course, I have. I’ve wanted them both from the moment I saw them. But that can’t mean anything, right?

“I have an idea,” Gerrit says, pushing hair away from my neck and kissing along the skin there. “What if we power you up? Get you good and flush with it. And then you try to do something your magic would’ve never let you do before.”

Hans’s hand rubs across my belly before turning north and sliding between my breasts. “And they call me the Brain. Great idea, brother.”

I whimper as Hans makes contact with my nipple through my shirt. Gerrit grabs my chin and tilts it up, kissing me sweetly. Our tongues tangle together as I hear Hans drop on his knees to the forest floor. His hands grapple with my boots, but he gets

them removed and yanks my pants off shortly after.

My bare ass on the log is not comfortable, and I'm wiggling around, trying not to scratch my ass up, when Gerrit chuckles against my mouth. "Lay out the bedrolls, brother," he says huskily. Moments later, I'm being lowered to the ground, laying on soft fleece.

Both men stand over me, gazing down at my half-naked body. I can see the bulges straining against their pants, and my mouth waters with the need to touch them. To taste them.

"Dinner or dessert?" Gerrit asks Hans conversationally.

The dark-haired brother hums to himself. "Dessert, I think."

"That means I'm dinner, witchy," Gerrit says with a lecherous grin. He drops to his knees and crawls next to me on the bedroll before laying on his back and rolling me over on top of him. A hand on the back of my head forces my face into the crook of his neck.

I can practically hear his pulse and smell the blood running in his veins. My whole body aches for them, from my fangs to my cunt.

"What are you waiting for?" he whispers.

That's all he has to say. I bury my fangs into his neck, my eyes rolling back and my pussy clenching as the first hot taste of him splashes across my tongue.

There is something different about this time. The blood is richer and more satisfying than before. Not that it didn't satisfy, but this time it's more . Like the difference between a bath in cold water versus warm. Both get you clean and achieve the same

goal, but one feeds your soul and relaxes your body.

I'm so distracted consuming Gerrit that I lose track of Hans. He makes himself known, though, when he buries his head between my legs and begins to devour my pussy from behind.

His broad tongue laps at my entrance, gathering the moisture there before circling my clit. Pleasure rockets through me but I feel empty, hollow.

My body cries out that something is missing.

When Hans shoves two fingers in me as he suckles my clit, I groan and clench around them. Gerrit thrusts from below me, his hard cock rubbing against my stomach as I feed from him, and I know what I need.

"I need you to fuck me," I say, popping off of Gerrit's neck. "Both of you. I need you both to fuck me."

Hans stills his fingers and pulls his plush lips from my clit. "You sure?"

"Very. Please," I beg.

"Oh, you're so pretty when you beg," Gerrit says from beneath me. "We may have to make a habit of that."

I'm so distracted by Gerrit that I let out a little squeak when Hans enters me from behind. He pumps in and out of me several times, leaving me panting and grinding my clit against Gerrit's hard cock. After way too short of a time, he pulls out.

But I am not left bereft for long before Gerrit frees his dick from his pants and pulls me down onto it. Immediately, I clench around him and roll my hips, chasing

pleasure.

“Be still, butterfly,” Hans says, putting a hand on my back. He pushes me flush against Gerrit again. I hear the sound of his spit just before I feel it land on my back hole.

He massages it into me, gently pressing one finger inside and then another, stretching me. Just the idea of having him and Gerrit in me at the same time has my body threatening to fall apart. The anticipation is close to killing me when he spits on me again and wedges three fingers inside me.

At this point, I’m a fucking wreck. I can’t keep feeding from Gerrit because I’m mewling and wiggling on top of Gerrit, begging for release. But he’s keeping his hands to himself, seemingly happy to lay there with me on his cock and nothing more.

When the smooth head of Hans’s cock finally pushes against my back hole, I’m ready to cry in relief. He moves at an agonizingly slow pace, but I know it’s so he doesn’t hurt me.

Just as I think I’m going to lose my mind waiting for him to enter me fully, Gerrit reaches between us and gives my clit a few rough rubs. He leans up and whispers in my ear, “Bite me.”

I sink my teeth into the opposite side of his neck, and he pinches my clit. My release rolls through me, and Hans pushes entirely into my ass as it does. I’m barely sucking down any blood, my moans loud enough to wake the birds.

“Fuck, Briar,” Hans swears, his hands spreading my cheeks as he watches where I take him. “You feel so fucking good.”



Gerrit snarls from beneath me. “You better move, brother, and soon. I’m about to fucking explode.”

Hans pulls out and then pushes back in at a steady pace, his length filling me up in a way I’ve never been before. He drags against Gerrit’s cock, only a thin piece of flesh separating them, and the dirtiness of it has my head spinning.

Gerrit, pinned beneath my body and teeth, can’t do much but wrap his arms around me and thrust shallowly from below.

Every one of their touches lights me on fire, and I feel like I am going to explode with pleasure. I am full of it from my toes to my ears, dancing with the magic that lives inside me. It’s heady and right, the three of us being together like this.

I pop off Gerrit’s neck, blood trickling on my chin, and reach behind me blindly. “I need your blood, Hans,” I say through panting moans.

He bends his body over mine, shoving his wrist in my face, and as soon as I see that delicate vein, my vision whites out, and pleasure overwhelms me again as I bite down.

“Shit!” Hans shouts, his hips thrashing wildly. I keep drinking him down, relishing in the desperate and uncontrolled sounds he’s making as he ruins me. He thickens and comes with a shout, stilling as he fills my ass with his hot pleasure. I lap gently at his wrist as his orgasm triggers a sweet, gentle release within me.

His blood tastes like salvation as I take it into me.

Gerrit groans, his hips thrusting and his hands squeezing my hips so hard I know he will leave bruises. I rock my hips, grinding against his pelvis, and he throws his head back on the bedroll, his blonde hair fanning behind him in the picture of pleasure.

With a gasp, he thrusts up and pulls down on my hips before he finds his release within me as well.

We lay in a sticky, sweaty pile, both of their softening cocks still inside me, their blood on my chin, basking in the moonlight.

Something grows in my chest, something I'd forgotten.

Something that was kept hidden from me.

My magic dances inside me, eager to be let out to play like a youngling.

So I let it out.

## Page 19

*Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:47 am*

### Chapter 19

Savior

HANS

Briar stands up, dripping our cum, and throws her head back.

A haunting melody fills the air as the wind kicks up. It dances around us, leaves and sticks riding the breeze as it circles her. When we lock eyes, hers are entirely white.

“Think about where we need to go,” she says. Her voice is more resonant than I’ve ever heard it. Gone is the woman who rambled, who made herself smaller.

A transformation is happening right in front of us.

I picture Greenbell and the house Gerrit and I share. I think of the tavern across the street from it and how Father’s house is just a short walk away.

When Briar touches my hand, I startle at how cold they are.

“Gerrit, take my other hand.” My stepbrother doesn’t question anything. He gathers our bags and Briar’s pants in one hand and takes hers with the other.

“Wait, Flint,” I say, looking around. No sooner do I get the words out than the familiar comes bounding out of the woods. He has no food, but that’s not my concern right now.

Briar exhales heavily, and the trees in front of us move as if running out of our way. She takes a step, and we follow, but each step seems to cover the ground of hundreds, and each breath clears our path.

We continue like this for fifteen minutes before Briar pulls us to a stop right at the forest's edge.

Right outside of a sleeping Greenbell.

“We covered so much ground,” I murmur, looking around with wonder. “How?”

“My magic is interesting. I was able to draw some of your earthen magic to encourage the land to clear our path, and I was able to multiply our steps with no effect on our bodies.” She drops our hands, eyes returning to the striking red color they've become since she started feeding regularly. The succubus takes her pants from Gerrit and slides them on while looking at the darkened buildings on the outskirts of Greenbell.

“This is a town, huh?” she asks quietly.

“Part of one. Not as many people live on the edges. It gets denser the further inward you go.” I reach down and pet Flint, opening my mind to see if he has anything to say.

He doesn't, surprisingly.

His intelligent eyes sparkle as he looks at the three of us.

“When should we go see your father?” Briar asks both of us. “I don't know for sure, but I think I can handle the sun now. My magic will protect me.”

“My mother will be sleeping at the house with him. Do you need access to her or...?”  
Gerrit trails off, suddenly looking green.

It is suddenly sinking in that we are probably going to have to let his mother die to save my father.

It was one thing to discuss in theory, but now that we see what Briar can do, that seems to be the likely outcome.

“Hm,” she muses, leaning against a tree. “What do you think, Flint?”

My familiar perks his ears up and quirks his head to the side before projecting to Briar and me. “If she is there, you will likely have to fight her off to break the curse. Better to first attempt without her and then wait for her to return if it turns out you need her.”

After relaying the response to Gerrit, Briar nods solemnly. “I think you’re right, Flint. We’ll see what we can do tomorrow when she is not home.”

Gerrit swings her arm over her shoulders and begins to steer her towards our home. “Come, we all need some rest. We can figure the rest out tomorrow.”

\* \* \*

Briar is a vision in the royal blue dress I found for her at the market this morning. I slipped out before she woke and found the nicest one I could afford and a pair of hard-bottomed slippers.

The ‘V’ of the neck is scalloped, and the bell sleeves are made of a gauzy fabric that falls to her wrists. It hits just above her shoes and moves like water around her. Gerrit gave her a bejeweled hairpin, and her lavender locks have been pinned away from her

face.

She looks every bit the proper lady. You'd never know she was a demon who had been trapped in a prison in the woods for an undefinable amount of time.

I knock on the wooden door of my childhood home, nerves curling in my gut.

I love my father. I don't want him to die, and my stepmother, for all her faults, doesn't want him to, either.

I was the original target of this curse.

It's why I have felt so responsible about fixing this and saving him from this fate.

His butler, Walter, opens the door and steps back with a smile. "Master Hans! Master Gerrit! What a wonderful surprise." His gaze lands on Briar, who blushes and ducks her head. "Who is this lovely creature?"

We walk in, Flint sticking beside Briar, and I pat the old man on the shoulder. "That's Briar. She's quite special, and we wanted to introduce her to Father. How is he doing?"

Walter's face falls. "The Duke has had a rough few days. Master Gerrit, your mother just left if you'd like me to send someone to call her back."

"No need," Gerrit says with a wave of his hand. "We'll catch up soon. We'd like to see Father now."

Walter leads us down the long hallway lined with art and family portraits. When he opens the door at the end and we step in, my heart sinks.

My father has always been a formidable figure, but he looks weak and small in that bed. His skin is nearly translucent, cracked, and drying all over. His once lustrous dark hair is flat and greasy.

When he opens his eyes and sees us, the whites are yellow.

But he still smiles broadly and manages to sit up. I rush to assist him.

“My boys, this is such a surprise. I heard you were out on an adventure.” His voice is raspy from disuse, and it makes my heart ache.

I know we had to leave, had to find Briar, but guilt still fills me at leaving him when he is so sick. What if we hadn’t made it back in time?

“We’re back now,” I tell him, resting my hand on his.

“Flint brought you home, I see. From the moment I met your familiar, I knew you could always trust him to take where you needed to go.” Flint squeezes against the side of the bed and noses my father, who gives him an affectionate little pat.

“But Gerrit, you brought back something, I see.” His eyes land on Briar, where she stands next to my stepbrother. She chews her bottom lip, looking nervous and slightly overwhelmed. Gerrit places a hand on her lower back, hauling her closer.

“Yes, Father,” he says, “this is Briar. She’s very special.”

“She must be for you to bring her to meet me.” His face breaks into a heartbreaking smile that is undoubtedly how he convinced my mother to marry him. “Tell me about yourself, my girl.”

We discussed this before we came.

We all want to be honest with father. We want to tell him the truth of why Briar is here and what we think is happening to him.

When Briar perches on the side of the bed and takes his hand, I hold my breath and hope he believes us.



### Chapter 20

#### Risk

#### brIAR

The Duke of Greenbell looks so much like his son that seeing him makes my chest ache, Hans's image superimposed over his father.

Seeing him lying in this bed, imagining that it could be the man I have grown to care about so much? It's become personal for me.

I have to save this man.

"Have you heard the story of the witch in the Whispering Woods?" I say softly, holding his cold hand in mine.

"Well, of course, my dear." He's got a soft, trusting smile on his face.

I hope that sticks around.

"I hadn't until I met your sons. They stumbled upon my home and told me they had been looking for me. That was the first time I heard that there were stories about me and people to hear them!"

His eyes widen. "What are you saying, young lady?" Gerrit snorts softly at his stepfather calling me young but tries to play it off by rubbing his nose with his hand.

“I am the witch from the Whispering Woods.” I let my words hang in the room. It’s a lovely bedroom with high ceilings and wood-paneled walls. The bed is massive, with luxe fabrics of red and gold spread along it.

Lounge chairs sit by a window with a bookcase full of hardbound volumes.

But as beautiful as it is, it smells like death.

Death and magic.

“That’s preposterous,” he sputters, yanking his hand away. “That’s a child’s tale.”

“Many parts of it are, for sure,” I assure him. “But I am very much real. I’m not a witch, though.”

He tries to wedge himself higher but struggles, and Hans has to assist by propping him up with pillows. “Well, what are you?”

I look anywhere but him. Even though I do not know him, his opinion of me still matters because the boys care so much about him. I don’t want to see the judgment on his face. I know Hans and Gerrit support me, but that doesn’t mean anyone else will. “I’m a succubus—a type of demon. I don’t have magic. I am a magical being.”

“You brought a demon into my home? Are you mad?” the Duke yells at his sons. “As if I am not cursed enough with this illness, you condemn me with a demon?”

“It’s not like that, Father,” Hans pleads. “And the curse is why we brought her.”

“Mother tried to curse Hans,” Gerrit insists. “But there was a mistake, and the curse latched onto you. That’s why you’re dying. We think Briar can help. That she can save your life.”

The Duke sputters in indignation. “Your mother would never. She loves me. She loves Hans.”

Gerrit shakes his head sadly and sits beside the bed, reaching for his stepfather’s hands. “She wanted to get rid of Hans so I could succeed you. That’s why she tried to marry Hans off so he’d lose his title. When you wouldn’t agree, she tried to curse him. But instead of tying Hans’s life force to one of the plants outside the window, she tied yours. When that plant dies, so do you.”

The Duke shakes his head. His eyes are narrowed on me, and I know this is hopeless.

He doesn’t trust me.

He never will.

My chest aches as I slide off the bed, preparing to be ejected from his home.

“If your words are true, what makes you think she can help me?”

It’s not what I expected him to say.

Hans holds out his hand, and a small flower begins to bloom in it. “You know what my magic looks like, right, Father?”

“Of course,” he says sweetly. “I’ve always been so proud to have a son blessed with magic.”

“Briar, can you show him your effect on it?” Hans holds his hand out to me, and I take a few steps forward. Reaching my hand out, I place my palm on the back of his hand, cupping his fingers that gently hold the flower.

Green and gold swirl around the flower as it expands, growing double, triple, and then four times its previous size. But it's not just growing larger. Its petals are changing colors, and its fragrance is filling the room.

“Her magic is wild and strong and chaotic. But Gerrit and I have chosen to become her Complements. We can temper the magic, help her focus it, and achieve incredible things together.”

We didn't talk about them being my Complements, but as soon as he says it, I know he's right. After that moment we shared in the woods yesterday, I feel tied to them in a way I hadn't before.

They're mine.

And I am theirs.

The Duke still doesn't look convinced, but the initial suspicion that hung over him is significantly reduced.

“How do you expect to heal me if I am cursed as you say?” The skepticism is firm in his voice, but I don't take it personally.

He doesn't know me.

“Utilizing Hans's magic, we'll bring the offending plant next to you. We will work together to extract your life force from that of the plant, essentially dissecting you from the plant. If that doesn't work, if you are too entwined, I will need to remove the curse from you. In which case...”

“In which case, you'll have to go to sleep because there is more of a risk of damage,” Gerrit interrupts.

I narrow my brow at him. We were supposed to tell his father that his mother would have the curse returned to her.

He must worry that his father would refuse if he knew that was what would happen.

And as much as I am loathe to lie to the man, he is not my father. I will let Hans and Gerrit decide how they approach this delicate situation.

“It seems simple,” the Duke says, looking between me and Hans. “Why can’t you do it on your own?” That’s directed at his son.

Hans kneels at the bedside, his olive green tunic stretched tightly across his fit chest, clashing against the red bedcover. “I tried before I left, and it made it worse. It sped up the death of the plant.”

For the longest time, the five of us, including Flint, exist in silence. Then, with a heavy exhale, the Duke nods. “I suppose it cannot hurt to try. Are we to do this now?”

Eager to get started and save the man, I cross to the window. Throwing it open, the offending plant immediately makes itself known to me. “Hans, that one,” I say, pointing at a green stalk with browning yellow bulbs of flowers on it. It doesn’t look healthy, and it would be easy to rip it out of the ground and be done with it. “I’m going to boost your magic. I need you to pull the entire root system and the soil out. I’ll get it in here.

Hans nods with determination, and I cup his elbow. In just a few delicate moments, the plant is removed from the ground, soil clumped around its roots. I push some of my magic to move the air, levitating the plant and bringing it inside the room, where I land it in a wash basin.

The Duke watches on in curiosity, one that I share. I don't know how my magic works. I may never. But I do know that it works best with my men beside me.

"Let's see this curse," I mutter, waving my hands over the plant. I push my intentions forward, revealing the curse and the life force of the Duke and the plant, all glowing around the plant in purple, green, and red shimmering strands.

I swear, walking around the glowing ball of magic.

"Fuck," I say quietly, just so Hans and Gerrit can hear. "This is worse than I thought."

"What do you mean?" Gerrit replies, looking over his shoulder at the plant.

"Can't you see the strands?" I ask, pointing at the tangled mess in front of me.

Gerrit shakes his head, but Hans takes a step toward the plant. "I can see what look like green threads, all tangled up. I have never seen that before. What is it?"

It never occurred to me that others couldn't see the magic. It must be a perk of being a magical creature versus a human with magic. "My power boost must be allowing you to have visibility. I see the life of your father and the plant and the curse all tangled together. They are all so knotted that I'm unsure if I can get them out intact." I reach out and poke the writhing mass of life. It's like a bundle of snakes, all tangled and tied together.

"Anything you can do?" Hope is a living creature in Hans's voice.

"I can try to cut the curse instead of unraveling it. But that's risky."

Flint's by our side quickly. "Tell all of them the risks. The Duke included," he

projects into my head.

Sometimes, I think Flint knows more than he lets on. It's almost like he can see outcomes and guide us toward the safest one. It must come with being an eternal spirit.

"Duke," I say gently, taking a few steps from him. "Your lifeforce, that of the plant, and the curse are so intertwined that I cannot weave them apart."

"What does that mean?" he says, eyes bouncing between us before landing on me again. "Do you mean there's no hope?"

"There is a small amount of hope," I say, looking at Gerrit and Hans, ensuring they're paying attention to me. "The curse and the plant are intrinsically combined. If I cut the curse, there is the possibility that it will release you from it and the plant."

"Why wouldn't you just do that? It sounds easier," Gerrit asks.

I wince, wringing my hands together. "To do that, I have to weaken the curse significantly so it doesn't tear your father's strands on the way out."

Hans grabs my hand and squeezes, and Flint begins to whine.

Gerrit hasn't figured out where this conversation is going yet because confusion still mars his face. "How do you do that?" he asks quietly.

The door at the back of the room slams open.

"By killing me."

### Chapter 21

#### Shadow

brIAR

The woman is beautiful. Ethereal, even.

Her blond hair falls down her back in waves, nearly hitting the back of her knees. She's got wide blue eyes and a pointed nose. Her shapely body is wrapped in rich green velvet that cascades down to the floor. Gold threads weave through it.

She looks like a dream.

"Mother," Gerrit says through gritted teeth.

"My baby," she coos, sweeping across the floor and gathering him in her arms. She's barely shorter than him, and despite the conflicting feelings I know he holds for her, he melts in her arms. "It's been entirely too long."

"Are we just going to ignore that you swept in here and claimed this curse?" Hans spits out. "That you admit to cursing my father?"

"Oh Hans," she says in a chiding tone. "You know I love your father. I would never do such a thing."

The Duke coughs loudly into a kerchief as he attempts to sit up straighter, his posture



regal despite everything. “But my love, if killing you would weaken the curse...” His eyes fixate on the writing mass of magic in front of me. “Then it is your curse.”

She releases Gerrit and perches on the side of the bed. “Yes, my dearest, I purchased the curse. But I did not create it, and I did not intend to curse you. It was an unfortunate accident. I have been searching for a cure since it happened.”

His eyes brighten at this, but mine narrow.

I have not met many people in my long life, but my instincts are screaming.

I do not trust her.

I wouldn’t drink her blood if I were starving.

“And have you found one?” he asks, clutching her pale hands in his rich brown ones. “Did you bring me a cure?”

“As a matter of fact, I did!” She kisses his fingers and stands up. “While our sons were off chasing a myth, I found someone with enough magic to excise the curse without harming either of us.”

“Impossible!” I snap. “Whoever promised you that is a liar. It has been left to fester for too long. They are intrinsically linked.”

She makes a dismissive noise and turns her back to me. Hans touches my shoulder, and Flint bumps up against my knee. My chest warms at their support.

Gerrit takes a step closer to his mother. “Mother, Briar is possibly the most magical being on this plane. I believe her when she says that the risk is too high without weakening the curse.”

His stepmother spins around, hands on her chest. Her eyes are lined with silvery tears. “You would let her kill me?” she whines. “Your mother? You’d choose that creature over your mother?”

Silently, I beg that he not take the bait. That he does not grow agitated. She is trying to sew discord between us. I do not believe her sweet act one bit, but the Duke seems to buy it readily. He has not taken his eyes off his wife.

“She’s not a creature,” Gerrit says, crossing his massive arms over his chest.

But I am, aren’t I?

A succubus. A demon.

“She is ours,” Hans says, sliding his hand down my arm and clasping mine. “Just like we are hers.”

“Miss Briar!” Flint’s voice is frantic in my head. Hans must hear it, too, because he freezes at the sound. “Run, Briar. Run.” The fear in Flint’s voice is unlike anything I’ve ever heard, and as soon as I register the words, I take several steps backward toward the window.

I don’t know why he wants me to run, but he wouldn’t steer me wrong.

“I…” I whisper, looking at Gerrit. He couldn’t hear Flint. “I have to go.”

Scrambling towards the window, to the disparaging words about my worth from Gerrit’s mother, my mind is reeling.

What could be so dire that Flint would encourage me to run?

The wolf is behind me, nose under my ass, trying to push me out of the window when the door to the bedroom explodes open.

Wood shards go flying, and smoke fills the room, making me cough. A firm hand grabs the back of my dress, hurling me back into the room and onto the floor. My teeth crash together with the impact, and my body aches.

And standing above me is the man of my nightmares.

My Banisher.

He's dressed as he always is, in head-to-toe black with his face obscured. His hands, pale peach with copious amounts of scarring, are clasped in front of his waist. I don't have to see his eyes to know the venom he glares at me with.

I can't look away from him, but I hear shouts from Hans and Gerrit and barks from Flint, but they sound as if they're underwater.

"Oh, my little demon, you have made a mistake leaving your home," he purrs. "Did you not learn your lesson on taking on a Complement last time?"

"Last time?"

He laughs loudly, but it is hollow and chilling. "Right, you don't remember. No matter. It's time to go home, demon."

I scramble backward, pressing myself against the wall under the window. "I'm never going back there. I served my time for whatever crime you think I committed. I deserve to live!"

Looking over the Banisher's shoulder, I see Hans and Gerrit banging on an invisible

bubble surrounding us. They're still yelling, and Flint is snarling. His snout is pointed at Gerrit's mother, keeping her trapped on the bed.

He follows my line of sight. "Oh yes, your two Complements. Only you could manage to find not one but two willing partners while trapped in the middle of the woods. I'm almost impressed. And I am so benevolent that I will let them live with their memories altered." He grabs my chin, wrenching my gaze to him. "Aren't I generous?"

"You won't touch them!" I shriek, lunging for his knees.

It was an emotional mistake to put myself so near his boots, one that becomes abundantly clear when they connect with my sternum and I go flying backward.

My magic roils inside me, wanting to be let out. But it feels like my flame has been smothered. I cannot command it to come to the surface to save me.

The Banisher steps outside of the bubble and cocks his shrouded head to the side as he regards me. "Please, demon. You may be powerful, but you are untrained. You cannot best me."

I throw myself against the bubble, screaming and pounding on it. I do everything possible to command my magic to get me out of here, but it's as if I haven't fed in years.

He is draining me, somehow.

I can feel my body weakening, my magic abandoning me.

I watch in horror as the Banisher uses purple magic to restrain my men and Flint in the air. They're thrashing and shouting, fighting against his restraints but failing to

get anywhere. I can barely hear their voices and Flint's mournful howls.

The Banisher then whips some magic towards them both, wrapping their heads with a sparking cage of stars and silencing them. He empties the contents of a waist pouch on the floor and arranges them in an artful symbol.

The Duke and his wife are still, their eyes closed as they recline against the headboard of the large bed.

Did he put them to sleep?

I don't have time to contemplate it because the Banisher stomps on the symbol, and my loves - Gods, I never told them I loved them - fall to the ground in crumpled heaps. The Banisher turns his attention to the writhing magic mass of red, green, and purple, and with a wave of his hand, the red extracts itself from the purple and green.

It must be easy to undo your own curse. Somehow, she must have purchased this curse from my Banisher.

Tears fall from my eyes as I look at my men and Flint in sleeping piles on the floor.

If I'm lucky, the worst thing that will happen to them when they wake up is they won't remember me.

All the fight drains out of my body.

I melt into a puddle of tears and curl into a ball on the floor. The bubble around me pops with a soft sound, and my Banisher scoops me up in his arms.

"Shush now, little demon, let's get you home."

## Page 22

*Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:47 am*

### Chapter 22

I Love You, I'm sorry

GERRIT

My stomach hurts.

I stretch out, back cracking, eyes crusted over with sleep.

Where the fuck am I?

It takes several tries to get my eyes unstuck as I blink, trying to make sense of my surroundings.

Why am I asleep on the floor of my parent's bedroom?

Movement next to me has my eyes landing on Hans. He looks equally wrecked.

"What happened last night?" I ask, my voice rough. "Why are we on the floor?"

"I don't know," my stepbrother answers, rubbing his eyes with his fists. "Last I remember is finding out father was getting sicker."

"Did we go out drinking?" I ask as I stumble to my feet. "Why do I feel so fucked?"

My vision zeros in on my mother and stepfather curled up in his bed. The morning

sun casts pretty rays across their faces, and I smile.

They're so in love.

I hope nothing happens to him.

It would destroy her.

Hans stands beside me, watching them as well. "Is he going to be okay?"

"He looks better." It's not a lie. Last night, his face was sunken, his eyes foggy, and his skin pale. Today, he looks like himself, with his rich brown skin reflecting golden tones in the sun.

As we stare at them, my mother begins to stir awake. She flicks her eyes open, and for a moment, shock and fear flash across her face. "Oh! Goodness, you startled me," she says as she sits up. "What are you doing in here?"

"We slept in here," I tell her, leaning against the wooden post of the bed. "We were worried about father." That's the only explanation I have for why we're in here.

"He seems much better," Hans remarks, circling the bed and climbing on it to touch his father's face. "He's not warm anymore."

The Duke's hand swats at his son. "He's just fine, thank you very much. I told you both I would be fine."

Flint is pacing the room behind me, growling low under his breath. Not for the first time, I wish I could understand the familiar. He seems out of sorts.

"Well, isn't this fabulous news," my mother says tightly. "All is well in our family

again.” She heaves herself from the bed, her green velvet dress wrinkled and bunched.

Why would she sleep in such fine clothing?

She gently kisses my father’s cheek before striding to the door. “You must forgive me. I have something urgent to attend to.”

Hans and I exchange curious glances before turning back to our father. Though he looks well, something feels wrong about this situation.

There is something we’re missing here.

“Well, my boys, don’t just stand here staring at me. You can see I am back to my best self. Go, do something productive with your day.” He heaves himself out of the bed, and his legs nearly buckle as if he hasn’t stood in weeks. Hans catches him and slowly lowers his back to the plush surface of the bed.

“Easy, Father. You seem to have not regained your strength,” he says gently. Flint makes a distressed sound behind us. “Get more rest. We will go check on the village.”

Our father nods and urges us to leave, and when we exit his earshot, I question my brother. “What is wrong with Flint?”

“I’m unsure,” Hans says, feeding his fingers through the fur on the wolf’s head. “He’s not making much sense.”

We exit the home and begin to walk the cobblestone path to the village square. My body is stiff, as if I’ve been in a fight or walking for ages, but that is obviously not the case. I must be too old to be sleeping on floors.



“He said that we’ve forgotten something,” Hans tells me. “Something important.”

“Well, where can we find it?” I ask the wolf. Just because I can’t hear him doesn’t mean he can’t hear me.

“He cannot say, because he has forgotten as well. All he can say is that we must find it and that he thinks your mother knows where it is.”

I grind to a halt. “My mother? Why would my mother know?”

Hans stops with me, and his face scrunches up. “He can’t say.”

“Can’t, or won’t?” I snap. Sometimes, the riddles Flint speaks in frustrate me to no end. I will not have a wolf accusing my mother of malfeasance.

“Can’t. He says it is a feeling he has.” My brother places a hand on my arm. “You know we can trust Flint. He always looks out for us.” The wolf nudges me with his nose, and I reach down to stroke his nose. “He also says we need to head to the woods.”

“The Whispering Woods?” I shutter. I don’t care if it’s all just rumors and stories. Those woods hold secrets and danger within them.

But, we listen to Flint.

Familiars are neither born nor do they die. They are eternal. If he says that is where we need to be to discover what we’ve forgotten, then that is where we will go.

After a quick stop at our small home to change into clean clothing, gather supplies, and eat a quick meal, we stand at the edge of the woods.

“Think the witch is going to get us?” Hans teases. “Just gobble us right up?”

“That’s not funny,” I snap. “You know as well as I do that all rumors have a kernel of truth.”

“Well, she’s said to be an incredibly powerful witch, right? What if we find her and see if she can tell us what we’ve forgotten?” Flint lets out an enthusiastic woof, and I cringe.

“Really? The witch of the woods?”

My brother steps into the tree line. “Do you have a better idea?”

“Fuck, I suppose not.”

\* \* \*

It’s been ages since we’ve stopped moving, my legs leaden as we trudge through the forest’s depths.

“Can we make camp?” Hans asks, panting softly. “Flint is worn out.”

Sure, Flint is tired. We’ll go with that.

“Fine. I think we’re nearly there.”

I grab a fallen tree and drag it into a clearing before setting up a campfire. The moon twinkles overhead, mostly full but on its way to a crescent, giving me ample light to stack the branches by.

“What makes you say that?” my brother asks as he throws himself on the tree. “Flint,

go get us some food, will ya boy?”

“The air smells like sweetmeats,” I reply, shrugging. “I assume it’s her home.”

He snorts out a laugh. “You cannot possibly believe that part of the tale.”

“I believe all parts of the tale,” I remind him. “I’m still not convinced we’re making the right call here.”

“Well, there is no harm, right? If she’s not real, we just head back.”

Loud footfalls and branches cracking have me on my feet, spinning around.

My mother stumbles out of the woods with twigs in her hair and her black dress ripped and snagged.

“Mother!” I shout, running toward her. “What are you doing here?”

“Oh, my son,” she says sweetly, pulling me into her arms. “I’m so glad I found you. It’s not safe here.”

“We’re grown men, Mother.” She’s constantly treating me as if I am a child. “We’re in no danger.”

Her hands shake as she releases, reaches towards her waist sash, and unties her small pouch. “Be that as it may, I am your mother. I purchased a protection spell for you from a psych mage. Let me place it on you two.”

“We’re just fine, Mother.” Hans’s voice is strained, and he’s looking around the clearing. Probably for Flint. “We don’t need a charm from a low-level mage.”

“Humor me.” There is a bite to her words that can only come from a mother. “Sit.”

I lower myself to the tree, and Hans rolls his eyes but stays seated. She empties her pouch and begins to line up the items from inside it into a strange shape. Hans narrows his eyes as he watches her work.

He uses sigils for more complex work, but this is different. I’ve never seen the addition of objects, and if the way Hans is looking at it, he hasn’t either. My mother waves her hands over it, her mouth moving slowly, when Hans starts to cough. I pat him on the back, but he waves my hand away.

My mother doesn’t look up from her sigil.

A coughing fit overtakes Hans, and he falls to the ground, unable to catch his breath. I follow him, shoving my waterskin into his hands. He takes a sip, but the coughing doesn’t stop.

My mother still does not look up from her sigil or stop her mutterings.

Hans narrows his eyes on her and begins to sketch his own sigil. When he slams his hand into it, powering it up, vines explode from the trees around us, wrapping around my mother’s arms and legs, heaving her into the air.

“What the fuck, Hans?” I shout, leaping to my feet. “Put her down!”

“I can’t,” he says between coughs. “She’s cursing me.”

“You foolish boy, I’m protecting you,” she says, but her voice wavers. “It’s just a simple protection charm.”

Flint comes barreling through the woods, howling. He runs underneath my mother

and begins to snap and snarl at her feet.

“It was not a protection charm.” More coughing from my brother. “You’re trying to kill me. Why?”

“That’s preposterous. Your father will be so upset when he hears how you’ve treated me.” Her haughty tone doesn’t carry the bite it usually does.

I don’t know who to believe or trust. Something is wrong with Hans, and it started when my mother began to put together that strange sigil. But does that mean she did it?

A vine snakes down her arm and wraps around her throat. It tightens just enough that she begins to wheeze. “Tell the truth, Mother,” Hans snarls, wiping a trickle of blood from the corner of his mouth. “You’re trying to kill me.”

Her eyes narrow at my stepbrother, and a chill runs down my spine.

In my soul, I know that I will not like the words that will leave her mouth.

“It’s not personal, Hans. Gerrit is the better choice to be next in line for Duke.”

My stomach does a flip.

“The only way I can be next in line is if I am his only son,” I say slowly. “Since we are not blood.”

The look my mother gives me could melt glass.

Oh.

“So you decided to kill me?” Hans coughs, blood flying from his mouth. When he looks at me, I see the whites of his eyes have yellowed. “Is this what we forgot?”

Whatever this curse is, it is fast-acting. He is getting weak, and the vines are starting to sag. Even though I don’t think my mother finished the casting, whatever part of the curse latched itself to him may still spell his doom.

“How could you?” I ask her, taking a slow step forward. “How could you do this to my brother? To our father?”

“I said it isn’t personal!” she screeches.

“Those words don’t absolve you of guilt!” I shout, feeling like my chest is cracking in two. My mother did this. My mother tried to kill my brother right in front of me and thinks I’ll be okay with it.

Bile rises in my throat.

She thrashes against her restraints. “This is the only way to protect myself and ensure I am always taken care of!”

“Because if Father dies,” cough, cough, cough, “I become Duke, and you worry I won’t support you.” Hans stumbles and slams onto the fallen tree, barely remaining upright. Flint immediately props my brother’s body up with his furry one. “Greed. That’s all this is. A bigger piece of the pie for you.”

“I don’t want to be the Duke!” I shout. “I love my brother. And you try to take him from me?”

Despite being suspended, her face curves into a wicked grin. “It’s too late. Part of the curse took hold. It’s only a matter of time now.” Her smile is sickly sweet as she

stares down at Hans. “All you did by stopping me was take a fast death and make it excruciatingly painful and slow.”

Anger boils my blood, pure animosity running in my veins.

There must be a way to weaken the curse and give me time to save him. I cannot have a life without him.

There has to be something I can do.

Flint growls in my direction, and I run over to him and Hans, dropping to my knees in the dirt. Flint buries his face in the crook of my neck.

For the first time in my life, in the faintest of whispers, I hear the resonant voice of Flint in the back of my mind. The amount of magic that must be required to allow me to hear him without us being bonded is unfathomable.

“Weaken the curse by killing the caster .”

I stumble backward, tears brimming in my eyes. “No,” I whisper, not taking my eyes off the wolf. “I can’t.”

He makes a soft sound in his throat like he’s sympathetic to me.

Kill my mother to maybe save my brother?

What if I kill her and I still can’t save him?

Then I am alone in this world, having to tell my father what I did.

But if there is a hope of saving him... Mustn’t I?

My stomach hurts.

My vision starts to blur at the edges as I stare at my mother.

My chest aches.

The woman who gave birth to me.

Who wiped my tears.

Who kissed my scrapes.

My breathing slows.

What motivated her to do this?

Why has she become this?

I resent her. I resent her for making me do this.

My resolve firms.

I take a step towards her, caressing her cheek with my hand.

“My boy,” she says softly. “You know everything I do, I do because I love you.”

I shake my head. I don’t believe that, but no need to call her out on her lies - not now.

What good would it do?

“I love you, too, Mother,” I say quietly. “I truly do.”



I pull my hunting knife from my waistband and slide it between her ribs.

“And I’m sorry.”

## Page 23

*Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:47 am*

### Chapter 23

#### Killing Time

brIAR

“Quit moping,” my Banisher snaps. “I let them live.”

I’ve been crying for two days. Two days since he stole me from my Complements and trapped me in my prison again.

And he didn’t make the same mistake he did last time.

I am well and truly trapped here. I can practically hear the magic binding me to this place.

I don’t know what the fairies did for him this time, but I don’t think I’ll be able to climb over the circle’s boundaries again.

Not that I want to.

What will I do, run into the village and try to convince Hans and Gerrit they know me?

That they care for me?

No.

They deserve better than me, anyway.

I will miss them.

I will ache for them.

But I can do nothing about it.

My body is heavy with grief at the death of a memory that is not my own.

I roll over on my side, pulling my knees to my chest. Quiet tears fall down my face.

My body has given up. I have no desire to move, no urge to speak.

Not even the idea of being outside in the sunset appeals to me.

“I wish you would kill me,” I say quietly.

“I understand that you’re unhappy with me,” my jailer says, not looking at me. “But this is the way things must be. You are a danger to everyone. A weapon that someone worse than me could try to wield. We cannot have that.” He stomps around the home, muttering and drawing sigils. No doubt to further ruin this life I don’t want to live.

“Then fucking kill me!” I shout. “Slit my throat. Bury me alive. Anything. If I am so dangerous, get rid of me. There is nothing left for me to live for.” The ache I feel knowing that my men cannot remember me is slowly drowning me.

Let it sweep me away.

Let it render me unrecognizable.

Let it fucking ruin me.

There's nothing left for me to live for. Eternal nothingness is better than eternity alone in this prison.

"I'm making some changes," he continues as if I didn't just flay myself open before him. "You'll have to understand that I can't have you seeking them out. It's just too risky. I toyed with the idea of having you keep your memories, letting you have that piece of them, but I no longer believe that to be the right call."

"Take them," I sob. "If you will not kill me, take my memories. Take my consciousness."

He kneels before me, the black shadow of his hood bottomless, and I wonder if I am alive. He has shown no signs of being able to hear my pleas.

Do I no longer exist, or is he just cruel?

I wish to look upon my torturer.

Does he even have a face?

I have the strangest urge to push his hood back. What would I find?

What if he's just a bunch of rats stacked on top of each other?

I can't hold in the giggle at the image, at the idea that I've been scared of a bunch of rats all this time.

I reach out to touch the hood, peel it back, and finally see who he is.

He doesn't stop me.

It falls to his shoulders, and my breath catches.

He is so beautiful.

His pale skin makes his red eyes, so much like mine, stand out. His hair falls in waves to his shoulders in a cool, blue-toned lavender.

He looks so much like me that I stumble backward.

"Hello, sister dear," he grins. "I wondered when you'd get brave enough to see my face. You know this is only the third time?"

I know all of the words he's saying, but they don't make sense when put together. "The third time? What do you mean?"

He sighs, sitting back on his heels. "We have lived this life a thousand times, my dear Briar."

My stomach is in knots. "Why are you doing this to me?"

"I've told you," he says, his frustration evident. "You are here for the safety of the realm. You are a weapon, and I cannot allow anyone to wield you."

"Then why not just kill me? Why the beatings? The starvation?" Every bad memory, every time he hurt me, comes roaring back to the surface. Every bit of fear that used to drip down my spine at the thought of him returns anew. "You'd do this to your own kin?"

He rolls his eyes. "Kin means nothing in this world, Briar. I did what I did to ensure

you stayed here. And yet you still escaped. You still sought more.” He huffs, pushing to his feet. “And I can see it’s time to start over again.”

“No!” I shout, pushing myself to my feet. Though I desire sustenance, I am used to living on crumbs. The weakness I feel right now is nothing compared to the places he’s forced me to. My magic screams within my veins, wild and unchecked, without my Complements to steady me.

My Banisher.

My brother.

He doesn’t seem worried as he stares at me.

“You know I gave that wretched woman another curse. I imagine that little mage of yours is dead by now.”

His words are a pebble on the glass window of my soul. They will not break me.

I would know if Hans was no longer on this plane.

But my magic still reacts to the words, fueled by my righteous anger and desperate desires.

Memories flood me. Hans’s laugh. Gerrit’s gruff stare. Flint’s soft fur.

I can practically taste their blood on my tongue. Feel their hands on my skin.

Laying in the setting sun and being overwhelmed with emotions, with love for them.

That’s what this is, right?

If I've been in love before, my brother has wiped it from my memory.

But this feeling in my chest cannot be anything but pure, aching love for those men.  
My family.

My body heats as if it is on fire. A wind whips around my little home, and a window shatters as something slams into it.

My Banisher is losing control, yelling, and throwing spells at me. But I can't hear him, and I don't feel the magic.

A scream rips from my throat, and with it, flashes of colored magic.

A strand of purple psych magic.

A writhing mass of red blood magic.

A flowering patch of green earth magic.

A flashing brilliant ball of white light magic.

An undulating shadow of black dark magic.

All of it, pouring from me, from my mouth, my fingers, and wrapping around the Banisher.

My Banisher.

My tormentor.

My brother.

And I will be his downfall.

They weave around his life force, becoming one with the strands as he struggles against their confines.

It's so bright that my eyes begin to ache.

But I don't look away.

The red from his eyes begins to rust. His cheeks fall hollow.

"Sister," he shouts over the chaos of my magic. "You do not want to do this."

"You're right. I do not want to do this." The magic dies down around me, leaving just the strands surrounding him, pulsating rapidly with his heartbeat. "I need to."

And with just a thought, I snap the strands of his life and watch his body crumple to the ground.

My vision gets spotty, and my head starts to spin.

I'll just take a short break.

Just a little rest.



## Page 24

*Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:47 am*

### Chapter 24

#### I'd Do Anything

brIAR

The mournful howl of a wolf jolts me awake.

It takes a moment, but my memory slams into me, and I rush out the door, hurling into my flower beds.

I killed the Banisher.

Who was my brother.

Who kept me trapped for millennia because he was afraid of my power.

Bile is all that comes up as I retch off the side of my porch. I'm somewhat thankful. Puking blood would suck.

It's sundown, and I feel my skin tightening in the fading rays.

This home is cursed.

Outside the fairy circle, with Hans and Gerrit by my side, the sun did not hurt me.

Another thing I have lost.

The wolf howls again, closer than before, and something familiar tugs in my chest.

I know that howl.

“Flint!” I scream, running towards the tree line. “Gerrit! Hans!”

I scream their names so many times my throat goes sore.

I throw myself on the circle’s boundary, summon any magic I can find within myself, and try to bring it down.

But I am depleted from killing my brother.

And though my throat is sore, though it feels fucking pointless because it may not even be Flint, and they wouldn’t remember me anyways, I scream their names still.

I fall into the dirt, tears wetting the ground around me, as I wail their names at the top of my lungs.

Cracking branches and a howl draw my attention to the other side of my clearing, and I take off running. As the two brothers and the familiar enter the clearing, I hit the boundary and fall to my knees.

“Witch!” Gerrit shouts. “I come requesting assistance.” He’s supporting Hans with his arm as he stumbles towards me. Hans looks terrible, blood caked around his lips, his eyes fogged over. His hair is slick with sweat, and his pallor is sickly.

Something is wrong with my mage.

“Anything! Anything you need. Come, Gerrit, cross the boundary and come into my home. No harm will come to you.” I’m on my feet, trying but failing to reach through

the boundary to them.

Gerrit looks distrustful, taking a step backward. “How do you know my name, witch?”

It breaks my heart to no longer have his trust, but maybe I can restore his memories now that the Banisher is gone. There has to be a way.

But first, I have to help Hans.

“Your brother is sick. Let me heal Hans. Come through the circle.” I swing my gaze toward the wolf. “Flint, please. You may not remember me, but you know me. You know me.” Tears crack my voice, and I am begging, desperation removing every ounce of shame I have within my cursed body. “Let me save him.”

Something I say reaches Hans. His head lolls over as he looks at me. Weakly, he says, “Let her try,” and my heart breaks in two.

If he dies, I fear I’ll go with him.

Gerrit and Flint pass over the boundary, the former dragging Hans, and I beckon for them to follow me to the house.

Where the dead Banisher lays in the middle of my floor.

“What the fuck?” Gerrit shouts, stumbling backward.

“I know this looks bad, but there is an explanation. Let me save Hans, and I’ll answer all your questions.” I reach out and grab one of Gerrit’s hands. His eyes flash with something akin to remembrance, but it fades quickly. Still, he lays Hans down on the couch and kneels beside him.

A part of him still trusts me.

“How will you do it?”

If only I fucking knew.

But I kneel beside him and run my hands over Hans.

I can feel the buzz of the incomplete curse under my fingertips. I call forth the magic and watch as it rises about his chest, the thin purple strands lightly clinging to the red lines of his life.

“Okay, okay, that’s good. It’s not a strong curse,” I say to myself. “I can do that.”

But the magic flickers in my weakened state, and nerves rush through me.

I need more power.

“Gerrit,” I say gently. “You’re not going to like this because you don’t trust me and think I eat children, but I need some of your blood.”

“What are you going to do with my blood?”

“Drink it.”

He startles, scuttling back from the sofa. “Yeah, fuck that.”

“Do you want me to save your brother?” I snap. “I know you’re scared, but I think your heart tells you you can trust me. Give me your wrist.”

The blonde man swears under his breath but shoves his wrist in front of my face. “I

don't know why I'm doing this," he grumbles. "You better save him."

The bite is clinical, almost. Purely to get enough power to be able to save my Complement.

This is not for pleasure.

His rich blood, tasting of currants and saltwater, rushes into my mouth and fills me with power. I don't drink my fill. It's not time for that. I get just enough to give me what I need.

The twisted magic solidifies over Hans's chest, and I slowly untangle the strands. The curse comes easily now that I am powered up. Once it is untangled, Hans's coloring immediately starts to improve.

I hold the curse in my hands, unsure of what to do with it now. My eyes land on the Banisher, and I push it into his chest, hoping for the best.

Maybe it'll stick to him even though he's dead.

A bitch can hope.

I watch the curse weave through his body. As it does, the sigils he drew around my home begin to light up, strands of magic waving from them like broken spiderwebs.

Without delay, I'm on my feet, running through my tiny home and disabling all of the sigils. When I do, my brother's body begins to seize.

Did I not check to see if he was really dead? That seems like a very important step to miss.

But I snapped his life threads.

Was this some sort of failsafe? Was he being held alive by the magic connecting him to these sigils?

With all of the sigils deactivated, the curse planted in the Banisher's chest, and Hans healing, the weight of the day catches up to me. I slump into a chair at my table, burying my face in my hands.

"Briar?"

I'm hearing things, obviously. The stress of the day and wishful thinking have me imagining Hans calling my name.

"Witchy." Oh, cool, I know how to imagine Gerrit, too. The mind never ceases to amaze me.

"Miss Briar." Imagining the wolf speaking in my brain is strange, but my grief over losing them is so strong it only makes sense that he's included in it.

A large hand hits my shoulder and pulls me fully upright. "Briar," Gerrit says softly. "Briar." A sob catches in his throat, as he spins me around, and I hurl myself into his arms.

"You remember me?" I wail, burying my face in his neck.

"Even when I forgot you, I knew you were missing," he replies, peppering my face with sweet kisses.

After stealing several desperate, heart-wrenching kisses from my big boy, I shove out of his arms and throw myself across the couch into the lap of a still-recovering Hans.

“I thought I lost you forever.” Tears are flowing from my face like waterfalls, and Hans swipes one away as he smiles down at me.

“One of the first things we did was decide to come find the witch of the woods,” he says softly. “We will always return to you.”

When he bends down and captures my mouth, I melt into his arms. The couch sinks beside me, and Gerrit lifts my legs, squeezing close to Hans and cuddling me between them.

Flint rests his head on Hans’s knee. I’m surprised I heard him in my head earlier since it’s been so long without Hans’s blood. He must’ve really needed me to listen to him. I stroke his nose and blow him a kiss.

I sigh happily, snuggling into my guys. I’ve never felt more free.

### Chapter 25

Forever

HANS - ONE WEEK LATER

“I ’m hungry,” Briar whines, crawling across the bed and waking me from a calm sleep. “You’re going to starve me.”

“You’re so dramatic,” Gerrit replies, smacking her on the ass. “You ate last night.”

“I’ve got thousands of years of starvation to compensate for!” She pouts. Her small hand touches my cheek. “You understand, don’t you, my love?”

I grin, pulling her onto my lap. Anchoring her hips with my arms, I grind my hard cock into her lower belly. She moans and plunges her teeth into my neck without warning.

My hips buck up, and a garbled groan tears out of my throat.

It feels like she’s touching every part of me when she feeds from me. It sensitizes my entire body and has me aching to bury myself in her.

And here, in our little cabin in the woods, where we have no responsibilities, nothing can stop me from doing it.

I clumsily remove my cock from my pants and hike her dress up. She props herself



up on her knees, never breaking the grasp her fangs have on my neck.

“Brother,” I pant. “A little help.”

He rolls his eyes but walks around the bed and grabs my cock, lining it up with her soaking entrance. Gerrit places a hand on Briar’s shoulders and pushes her down, forcing her to take me in one smooth motion.

She cries out, popping her fangs from my neck, and I wrap my arms around her waist as I thrust into her from below.

“Fuck,” she pants. Blood drips around her mouth in a way that shouldn’t be sensual but definitely is, and I lean forward to capture one of her nipples in my mouth. Rolling the tight bud with my tongue, I absorb all of the ways she clenches around me and how her body moves when I bite the tip of her nipple.

How could I have forgotten this?

When my hand finds her clit, a muffled noise escapes her.

I look up and see Gerrit standing on the side of the bed, Briar’s hair in his hand, and his cock shoved into her mouth. “There you go,” he grunts, thrusting his hips forward. “You’re doing so good. Take all of me.”

She twists and grinds on me, and I buck up to meet every movement of her hips. I gently circle her clit until her knees are shaking and her walls are clenching around me. When her orgasm crests, she pops off of Gerrit’s cock, panting, with spit and blood dripping from her mouth.

“Need you both,” she pants, leaning down and pressing her chest against mine. “Please.”

Gerrit climbs behind her on the bed, knocking my knees farther apart with his. “You want me in this tight little ass?” he growls, dragging his finger between her cheeks. He sucks a finger into his mouth before circling it on her tight hole and pushing it in a little. “You want me to fuck you here?”

She moans, nodding furiously. “Yes, yes, please,” she chants. “Please fuck me.”

“What about...” he drawls, pulling the finger out. “What about I fuck you here?” He slides his finger alongside my cock into her cunt, and she buries her face in my throat with a beautiful groan.

“That one,” she pants. “Let’s do that.”

He grins over her shoulder at me and sheds his pants. “You good, brother?” he asks me as he grips his cock and lines up his head at her hole.

“I’m good,” I tell him, banding my arms around her torso and squeezing so she can’t move. “Butterfly, you’ll have to stay still for him, okay?”

She mumbles her agreement, and I feel him push into her slowly. His cock drags along mine, and I pant through the sensation. The feeling is intense, the pleasure of it indescribable as her pussy squeezes us tightly together. He works himself into her with short thrusts, pausing every few movements to let her adjust to the feeling.

Briar is a mess of moans and pleas, unintelligible sounds spilling from her mouth. She tries to buck into him, to force him deeper, and he swats her on the ass every time. I reach between us to rub her clit again, and she whimpers beautifully. When Gerrit is entirely inside her, her cunt clutching us together in a furious grip, I begin to move my hips slowly. He matches my movements, entering her when I’m exiting, and we develop a pace that has her losing her mind with pleasure.

When I pinch her clit, and she clamps down on us, screaming our names and going boneless between us, I nearly lose my head. It takes everything in me not to explode at that moment. But I want to claim one more of her releases. I want to give her one more explosion of pleasure before I find my own.

“Her ass,” I pant, trying to lock eyes with my brother. He understands my intentions, and I watch Briar turn into a weeping mess between us as he slides a finger into her tight back hole. She throws her head back with a cry, and then her fangs latch into my throat with a groan as she explodes.

Succubus benefits, I suppose.

I am a mere mage, unable to hold myself back any longer. The pleasure of her bite combined with the ecstasy of her warmth has me losing myself inside her in stuttering thrusts.

Gerrit roars out his release right after me, and when we both pull out of her, she drips our pleasure all over the sheets. We collapse into a sweaty heap, letting the morning light wash over us as we fall back into a sweet, lazy sleep.

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*Source Creation Date: July 26, 2025, 5:47 am*

### Chapter 26

#### Snake Bite

#### GERRIT - ONE YEAR LATER

“N ope!” Briar shouts, running away from me and laughing. “I refuse!”

“Get back here, you little witch!” I growl, chasing her around the clearing.

It’s time for us to try to get her out of the fairy circle again, but Briar refuses.

She says she likes it here now that we’ve replaced all the bad memories with good ones. We have spent the past year rewriting every bad memory with ones of our love.

And made this prison a home brimming with joy and happiness.

Flint, Hans, and I can leave the circle, but Briar is still trapped. We’ve been trying to determine what keeps her here, but we have been unsuccessful as of yet. I believe we need to find fairies to assist us now.

Honestly, I don’t think she’s trying that hard to get free.

“Father would like to have dinner with you!” I say, snagging her arm and pulling her to my chest. “You’re the future Duchess of Greenbell. The people need to know you.”

“The people would riot if they knew their Duchess was an immortal demon succubus. I propose Flint be the Duchess.” She slips out of my arms again, taking off across the clearing. “Besides, we know none of us age in the circle. What if I leave, and I start to age rapidly and die?”

“You’ve left before!” Hans shouts from the porch. “And you didn’t age then.”

“Well, sure,” she calls back dismissively, “but what if every year is like a hundred, and then you’re stuck bonded to some red-eyed, half-blind old crone? What if I mess up and shove you in the oven instead of the mincemeat?” She skips around the clearing, pulling up flowers as she goes. “Better not risk it.”

“Is that truly your concern?” I ask softly. I’m no longer following her. She looks up, sees my serious expression, and stops moving. “Are you afraid of your aging or of ours?”

“Yours,” she whispers. “Here, in the fairy circle, we can be together forever. If we live out there, I’ll watch you die eventually. You’ll die, and I’ll be alone.”

“You’re truly immortal, aren’t you?” I ask her. “Not just fairy circle immortal.”

“I think so.” She clears the distance between us and throws herself in my arms. “It seems to be the case based on my readings.”

Hans has left several times to travel around the land and locate books on succubae. I knew she had been reading them, but I didn’t realize this was one of the results.

I’ve never thought about immortality. I’ve always known I was going to die. Mages like Hans tend to live an extra twenty or twenty-five years, but I’m a human. I expected to die well before him.

Neither of us expected to fall in love with an immortal being, that's for sure.

The idea of leaving her behind to mourn us makes my chest ache. I can't do that to her.

"Okay," I say gently, taking her face in my hand. "We'll live here. But we will still visit the village and be with the people when possible."

Her face lights up, and she smacks my lips with a kiss. "You mean it?"

Hans comes up behind her, wrapping his arms around her waist. "Do you think we'd leave you? You're everything to us, Briar."

Tears rim her beautiful red eyes. "I love you both so much," she whispers. "What was once my prison has become my favorite place in the world."

### Chapter 27

#### Die With A Smile

#### brIAR - ONE HUNDRED YEARS LATER

“Y ou look beautiful, Miss Briar,” Flint says, nuzzling his nose against my leg.

“You don’t need to call me Miss, Flint. It’s been an entire century.”

He chuffs, but I know he won’t stop. We have this conversation almost daily.

I spin away from the mirror, watching my black lace dress fall around me in waves. My lavender hair is pinned up in curls, and I’ve rubbed a little rouge on my cheeks and lips and lined my eyes in kohl.

He’s not wrong. I do look beautiful.

Gerrit pokes his head in. “Holy shit, Briar.” His voice is breathy. “You look so beautiful. So fucking beautiful.”

My face heats, and I throw myself into the arms of my big man. He’s dressed up in an ivory shirt of rich silk and a pair of black trousers. “So do you! I could eat you up.”

He exposes his neck to me where the small bites from this morning’s feeding haven’t faded yet. “I think it’s a little late for that.”

I follow him out of the bedroom and into the courtyard around our home.

Over the past few decades, the woods have been trimmed down, and the town of Greenbell has expanded closer and closer to our little haven. We have never kept secrets about who we are or what I am, but now that the town is more aware, we have visitors often.

They don't know our whole story, nor that Gerrit and Hans have conditional immortality that comes at the cost of living in the fairy circle. We fear that if they did we'd end up with a lot of squatters.

Of course, there have been situations where some have called us and our lifestyle unnatural and tried to eradicate us, but we have squashed that swiftly.

Today, there is a wedding. Two of the townspeople are swearing themselves to one another and have asked to have it done magically.

A magical binding is not something to enter into lightly, and I require that the lovers undergo a lot of questioning and examinations to ensure it's the right thing to do.

But these two?

Oh, they deserve to be together through life and death.

The men stand beneath a flowering tree, hands clasped together. They don't look away from each other as I walk up, which is how it should be.

They only have eyes for one another.

Hans stands beside the tree in olive trousers and a rich brown shirt. When he sees me, his face breaks into a massive grin. He peels himself from the bark and wraps me in a hug before giving me a soft, sweet kiss on the lips.



“You look incredible,” he whispers. “I can’t wait to see what is under that dress.”

I swat him playfully and step back. Flint is at my feet, a red ribbon in his mouth. I take it from him, giving him a little ruffle and a peck on the snout.

He may be Hans’s familiar, but he loves me best.

“I don’t pick favorites.”

“Get out of my head, mutt,” I grumble, tickling his chest. I stand and walk towards the happy couple.

Townspeople are all around us, chattering away, but they quiet down when they see me standing beside the men of the hour.

“Good afternoon, citizens of Greenbell,” I say softly. “We are here together to bind Killian and Redrick in life and death.”

I take the men’s clasped hands in my own, wrapping the red ribbon tightly around their wrists, tying them together. “This red ribbon represents the life that we lead. It is one thing to pledge your life to someone, but another to offer them your death as well. While none of us know what happens when we leave, Killian and Redrick wanted to ensure that whatever it is, they embark upon it together.”

My magic rises within me, purple strands dancing around the two men. The gathered crowd gasps, as they always do, at the sight of the magic. I’ve figured out how to make the strands visible during the ceremony. I don’t care that it drains me - I think it’s important for everyone to see it during the moment two become one.

The strands weave between the two lovers, twisting and turning and binding itself to their life essences.

When the purple fades and the ribbon around their wrist glows, I know it took.

“Where one goes, the other will follow,” I say loudly to the cheering crowd.

They echo me, “Where one goes, the other will follow!”

“Where you go, I will follow,” Hans whispers in my ear.

“Where you go, I will follow,” Gerrit says in the other.

“I love you both so much,” I tell them as I step away from the happy couple. “You too, Flint.”

The familiar doesn’t have to project his thoughts to tell me he feels the same way. I can practically feel it radiating off of him.

Hans takes my left hand, and Gerrit takes my right, and we walk away from the celebration of love, life, and death and onto our forever.