

## Chapter 127

Marisol springs back to consciousness with a start. Her chest heaves as panic immediately surges through her in waves. The darkness surrounding her did nothing to ease the now erratic beat of her heart.

Where was this place, and what was happening?

She tries to move but finds that she is stuck in place. Her body feels less like a part of her and more like a dead weight, tying her down. Struggling against unseen restraints, she finally manages to force her head up, and it finally clicks with the muffled sounds of her struggles that she'd been bound and gagged.

Getting the feeling back in most of her body parts, Marisol realizes her jaw, feet, and hands hurt. She wondered how long she'd been left here, wherever this was. Where was she? How did she get here? What happened after the annual ball?

She struggles fruitlessly to set herself free. She seemed to be in some kind of compartment, narrow and suffocating and terror overtaking her senses. Could it be that they were attacked? With newfound determination fueled by the surge in fear and anxiety, Marisol resumes struggling against her tightly knotted restraints, the bindings digging into her skin painfully and enough to cut into her wrists. Each labored breath sent waves of terror through her as the confines of her prison seemed to grow even smaller and all the more suffocating.

Suddenly, an ominous growl cuts through the air, echoing through the darkness. The menacing sound has her freezing in place in fear, breath-catching.

Another growl comes after the first one, and from somewhere deep within the darkness, the growls only continue to emanate. With bated breath, Marisol seeks the source of the terrifying sounds only to regret it almost immediately as it manifests right in front of her eyes. It was here again. The same ominous distorted beast plagued her nightmares. The creature seemed to defy every possible law of reality and existence.

Suddenly, lights flicker on from all around the room, and as her eyes adjust to the new change, Marisol lets out a piercing scream at the sight of what stood before her.

The wolf before her was colossal, its fur a tangled mess of red, adorned with wounds and festering sores. Arrows protruded from almost all sides of its massive form, evidence of whatever past battles had left it battered and scarred. Its teeth laid bare, large and sharp, gleaming in the dim light. Its eyes, which were void of any semblance of humanity, gleamed with a haunting emptiness. The creature's soulless gaze locks on Marisol, sending a shiver down her spine.

Despite the terror raging in her, she finds this creature oddly entrancing. That curiosity and need to figure it out begins to find a home in the mostly muted part of her subconscious again. She was drawn to it, almost feeling its pain, its anger, its strife.

The glass chamber that confined her seemed to shrink, enclosing her in a claustrophobic nightmare. The beast finally moves to circle around her almost curiously, grunting softly as it tries to sniff at her. To Marisol, it seemed as if a clawed hand was squeezing her heart and lungs.

The beast, towering and fearsome, suddenly struck at the glass with a ferocity that reverberated through her bones. Each impact threatened to shatter the fragile barrier that Marisol only just realized had been separating her from the monstrous creature.

Marisol's screams reverberated within the narrow glass room, her pleas for help stifled by the oppressive silence that surrounded her. The monstrous wolf continued with renewed vigor, vexed at the barrier and its inability to reach Marisol no matter how much it tried. It lunges at the glass again, striking it with unrestrained force. Marisol's legs almost give way in panic as she is forced to watch helplessly as the beast grows more and more impatient.

The glass finally begins to give in after minutes of relentless assault. Fractures spread like ominous tendrils, crawling across the surface as the creature's assaults grow more ferocious. Marisol's screams reach a fever pitch, a symphony of terror echoing in the confined space.

Her heart raced with terror, flooding her veins as the cracks spread like a tumor, all too telling of the fact that she would soon be exposed to whatever terror this creature was about to unleash the second it laid hands on her. The air in the room grows heavy with impending doom, and Marisol's pleas for help become desperate cries lost in the void.

With a deafening crash, the glass shatters into a shower of shards that rains down upon her, a terrified scream is ripped out of Marisol's lungs in the roar that follows.

Just as the shards seemed poised to pierce her skin, she jolted awake, her body drenched in a cold sweat. Gasping for air, her wide eyes frantically scanned the unfamiliar room she occupied, her heart still thundering in her chest.

The remnants of the dream cling to her like the damp cloth stained with her own sweat stuck to her back, the vivid images still haunting her waking moments. She sucks in a lungful of air, attempting to dispel the lingering fear. The surrounding room was bathed in the soft glow of the moonlight.

She had looked around the room enough times to confirm the beast wasn't here. She was safe, yet the echoes of the distorted beast and the sound of glass shattering lingered, a chilling reminder of the terrors that had invaded her subconscious mind.

She takes a deep breath as she tries to reconcile her reality, and abruptly, her memories begin to take shape.

Everything suddenly starts to click into place. She was in Redwood. Caleb wasn't really her mate. She had been tricked and put under a spell. The shock of this discovery filled her with fear and a tinge of pain. Looking around the room, she suddenly feels drained, exhausted by it all. She just wanted to go home, back to the Dark Moon, where she felt safe.

But her energy was slipping away fast. Trying to move was like trying to lift a dead weight. She collapses back onto the bed, coming to the dreadful and alarming realization that only her mind is willing to escape while her body is nowhere near getting the memo.

The room grows darker, the moon most probably having been veiled by a cloud, and the already alien room feels even colder, causing goosebumps to rise on her skin. Redwood, a place she'd come to with high hopes, was definitely proving to be nothing more than a nightmare.

Marisol's eyes darted around the room, hoping to find anything that could be of help, but it was mostly empty. The loneliness echoed her fear. She wanted to leave. To return to her real home was all that she wanted at the moment, but that would be very far from what her captors wanted.

The truth about Caleb's deception and the spell she'd been put under had drained her completely. It was clear as the day that she was in danger at that point, but even the sense of danger was not enough to get her body moving.

Every attempt to rise from the bed was met with resistance from her own body. Breathing was slowly becoming a struggle, too, and the weight of the situation pressed down on her belatedly.

Despite her confusion and agitation, one thing remained clear – she needed to get out of here. She knew that much, but instead of feeling motivated by her determination, her body and mind alertness continued to take a downward spiral. It was quite obvious she wouldn't get anything done, no matter how desperately she wished to.

Now, she could only cling to the hope that someone would lend a hand and help her out of this unfortunate predicament. It doesn't take long for the fatigue to set in, and she slips back into unconsciousness once again.

When Marisol stirs awake again, it's unsurprising to find herself in the same spot as earlier, with nothing really changing. She was still so, so inexplicably tired and unable to move.

In her desperation, she tries to connect to her parents through their bond, but it is like an invisible force is blocking her off. She was isolated and powerless.

Suddenly, distant voices and footsteps began to reach her ears. A flicker of hope rises within her as seconds later, the door swings open and a number of people let themselves in, chatting amongst themselves and Marisol quickly snaps her eyes shut, making them out to be members of the Redwood pack.

"Why is she still not awake yet?" One of them questions, and she hears a hum from another corner of the room.

"Sleep spell. It'll wear off in a few days." Came a languid reply.

After a beat of silence, another voice is heard. "So, this is the almighty Marisol Hallows..... I have to admit, she is beautiful as they say."

A scoff follows the remark, "Beautiful, but weak. Foolish, greedy, and easily manipulated."

They all laugh at that.

"And so overly dramatic too. I mean, look at the way she responded when she arrived."

Snickers are heard around the room, and Marisol breathes harshly out of her nostrils, disbelieving at their condescending words.

Annoyance bubbles within her, but her weakened state keeps her silent and immobile. It wasn't like her lips would move to manage a response or anything.

"What was she thinking Redwood would be like? She's a spoiled brat, obviously."

Just as frustration threatens to overwhelm her, a familiar voice is heard. Caleb's voice cuts through the conversation. "What are you all doing here?" He demands, tone dripping with authority.

"We're sorry, Alpha." The chorused answer came.

"Get out!" He growls, and shuffling is immediately heard around the room.

Anger surges through Marisol, but she is forced to remain unmoving. The brief encounter with those judgemental voices left her with a lingering sense of vulnerability, too, and she longed to break free from whatever it was that bound her and confront the betrayals surrounding her, but alas, there was nothing she could do except wait it out. Maybe, as the voices said, it would wear out in a few days. That was an awful long time to remain powerless and vegetative, but her options were nothing if not limited.

The sounds of footsteps fading reach her ears once again before she is pulled back into the dark, cold arms of the inky darkness.