

Chapter 136

First thing in the morning, Caleb hurries to the hidden castle, his mind filled with dread and unease.

The hidden wing, also known as the hidden castle of the packhouse, had been closed and sealed off after Cedric's turning as a means to protect the pack members. Although it'd proven to be quite futile, seeing as Cedric -or what was left of him now,- often found ways to bypass the guards and find his way out whenever darkness was upon them.

It was still a mystery how he almost always managed to do that. Night after night, no matter what new method they devised to keep him in, he'd find a way out to wreak havoc. More often than not, and it usually never happens during the day. It was like he became a ghost lurking in the walls of the hidden castle.

Last night, Caleb had known when Marisol wandered into the hidden castle, but he figured the hidden castle to be the least of their problems at nighttime, focusing on the more important task, which would be keeping the pack members safe. Cedric should be somewhere within the pack already, and if not, he was probably finding his way up to it, not still being holed up in his designated home that doubled as a non-functional prison, but how wrong he'd been.

He hurries on, each step laden with the burden of impending disaster. The echoes of Marisol's terrified screams from the night before were seared into his memories, the sound replaying in his head on a haunting loop.

Sophia's insistence that he could get hurt, coupled with the escalating strain on their relationship due to Marisol's presence, had held him back from immediately rushing to her aid. Yet, the guilt gnawed at him, a relentless reminder of his failed duty to protect the pack, even from his own kin.

What scared him the most was what would happen if Marisol truly died. With trepidation gripping his heart, Caleb braces himself for the gruesome scene he anticipated. He steels his nerves, preparing to confront the aftermath of the wolf's rage, convinced that Marisol would have borne the brunt of the attack.

However, as he cautiously enters the hidden wing, his breath hitches in disbelief as he takes in the sight presented in front of him. There was no trace of the grisly sight he had envisaged. No bloodstains drying on the hallways or splattered against the walls, no shredded remains of what was supposed to be Marisol's outfit. Overall, there was nothing that hinted at an attack the night before. It was as though the night's ordeal never happened, or, had been erased completely, leaving behind an eerie void.

Shock and bewilderment play across Caleb's features as he scans the desolate chamber like he is missing something very important, his mind struggling to reconcile the absence of the expected carnage. Sophia rushes in after him seconds later. He heard her feet pull to an abrupt halt a few steps behind him.

"W- what?" she stuttered out in a confused whisper.

He turned to Sophia, his expression of disbelief and confusion mirroring her own astonishment.

Sophia's wide-eyed incredulity mirrored Caleb's feelings of bafflement. Their shared surprise at the inexplicable absence of any remnants of violence lingers in the air, casting a pall of uncertainty over their thoughts.

For a brief moment, the weight of impending doom seemed to lift, replaced by a disconcerting void of unanswered questions. Caleb's mind raced with conjectures, struggling to provide a viable explanation for the mystery that lay before him.

He was certain he hadn't dreamed the piercing screams that were no doubt Marisol's the night before. Hell, Sophia had heard it too.

What had transpired in that darkened wing overnight? How was it possible that Marisol had escaped the ferocity of Cedric's wolf unscathed? The absence of any traces of the anticipated mayhem only worked to deepen their confusion, leaving Caleb and Sophia teetering on the edge of bewildered disbelief.

"Did... what if he took the body to kill her off somewhere else?" Sophia breathes out next to him and a growl rumbles from somewhere within, causing her to swallow her next words.

Sensing her horror-stricken stance, Caleb pulls his mate into his arms with habitual ease.

No. He says through their mind link, certain. Cedric's wolf has never been big on patience.

Another growl reverberated through the air, causing the couple to break away from the embrace. Cedric had sensed their presence and didn't like it.

The mind-boggling turn of events still had Caleb's mind swirling with a maelstrom of perplexity. He wasn't sure what would be the appropriate thing to do next.

"I'll go see if she's back in her chamber," Sophia voices as soon as they are out of the hidden castle.

Caleb swallows thickly before nodding stiffly. He took a while to find his own words, "I'll go check in with pack members. Maybe you're right, maybe he carried the body elsewhere."

The wheels in Caleb's head continue to turn uncomfortably as he watches her nod and turn around before he stirs his body toward the pack house, going beyond it in search of any signs of the expected aftermath.

With every turn he takes, every corner he spins, Caleb braces himself for the grim confirmation of his fears, expecting to find traces of his brother's wolf prowling the night before. Yet, the morning presented an unexpected image of peace and tranquility, one that unnerved Caleb terribly.

As if to add to his state of turmoil, the pack members moved about in peaceful harmony, no groups were hauling wounded, bleeding relatives or neighbors into the infirmary, and no panicked shouts of an almost lifeless pack member being found almost bleeding out on the grass.

The infirmary, which would typically be abuzz with activity after the night of Cedric's wolf being unleashed, looked to be in an oddly reposeful state too, with hardly any new entries.

Caleb couldn't reconcile this newfound discovery with the anticipated devastation he was used to. Normally, he would have been bombarded with complaints and requests the second he stepped foot out of his chambers if he wasn't woken by their incessant knocking. He stood astounded. It was as if the very fabric of Redwood's twisted normalcy had shifted overnight, leaving him grappling with the perplexing turn of events.

His wandering thoughts were interrupted by Sophia's presence once again, rushing to his side, her eyes wide with urgency.

"Marisol is unharmed and sleeping peacefully in her room," she informed him with heaving breaths, the weight of those words lifted a huge burden that had lingered since the harrowing sounds from the previous night. Relief washes over Caleb mingled with an incredulity that demanded further explanation.

If he were to be honest with himself, Caleb knew he was more befuddled than relieved. His eyes remain locked on Sophia's, searching, like he expected to find the answers to the heap of questions making rounds in his head within them.

"Are you sure?" he queries, a tinge of hope coloring his words. Sophia nodded, her surprise reflected in her features.

"Wow." Caleb breathes out. He couldn't fathom how Marisol, unarmed and vulnerable in the face of Cedric's wolf, could have survived the night, untouched and whole.

"If you were not with me last night, I would have begun to doubt the credibility of my own senses. I mean.... That commotion we heard?"

"Me too." Comes Sophia's agreement, running a hand through her hair.

"Look around," Caleb gestures at their surroundings, "For some reason, no one was attacked last night either."

Sophia choked on her breath, only just taking a note of her surroundings for the first time since that morning, "H- how is that possible?" She muttered in disbelief.

"I have no idea. Something must have happened when those two met last night.... something phenomenal." Caleb says breathlessly, his heart expanding with barely concealed elation.

At that moment, Caleb almost feels his doubt physically melt away, leaving behind an overwhelming sense of reassurance. Slowly, but surely, it also begins to weave a new thread of hope in his troubled heart. Marisol's encounter with his brother seemed to have been oddly smooth, fascinatingly so, disrupting the usual patterns of Cedric's chaos.

This was wonderful news and his sleepless night, that was a restless wait until the light of day seemed to have warped into an eventful morning, eventful in the most unexpected sense. He didn't know how or why, but this was a step in the right direction.

Sophia, sensing the change in Caleb's stiff demeanor, spoke with a tentative optimism. "Maybe Marisol truly is the answer."

Caleb's gaze lingers on his 'mate, his features lifting in amusement "Well, I'd be damned!" He exclaims lowly.