

Chapter 138

Marisol's room, the one she'd craved so badly to be away from in the earlier days, ends up becoming her sanctuary, a refuge from the dangers that unfolded in the Redwood Pack.

Her thoughts swirled with a whirlwind of confusion and fear. The vivid encounters with the red wolf had shattered the boundaries between dreams and reality, leaving her grappling with the unsettling truth.

Days blur into nights and Marisol remains in seclusion, struggling to process the craziness that surrounded her.

How was it that the same beast that terrorized her dreams was what lurked in the hidden wing? It was an exact replica, devoid of humanity, and with the same deranged appearance that sent a cold chill down Marisol's spine, after all those nights of complete terror, waking up in a pool of her own sweat, heart beating erratically, there was no way she would fail to recognize the subject of her nightmares.

The revelation of the red wolf's existence had shaken her up, so terrifyingly so. Every piece of the disconcerting puzzle looked to fall into place the deeper she dug into Redwood's unsettling secrets, and the picture it was painting was far from comforting.

The nights were long and torturous; sleep eluded her, haunted by visions of the deranged red wolf that was indeed, lurking within the hidden wings of Redwood. She couldn't shake off the images of its soulless, piercing eyes, reflecting a darkness that sent shivers down her spine.

The room felt suffocatingly small, yet stepping out of it was out of the question as she feared what unknown danger would await. Her heart pounded against her chest as she was overwhelmed with conflicting thoughts. How could she confront this monstrous entity that was terrorizing the pack? Should she even be thinking of confronting it?

A flood of unanswered questions races through her mind, each one more perplexing than the last. Was the red wolf the source of the curse plaguing the pack? Could it be the key to dispelling the malevolent magic that gripped Redwood in its clutches? Or was it merely a harbinger of impending doom?

Marisol felt the weight of responsibility bearing down on her shoulders. If the prophecy held any truth, she was somehow entwined in the fate of Redwood. But what exactly was it that she was supposed to do? She remembered everything she had unearthed. However, there was no clear indication of her actual role in all this or what exactly the red wolf stood for.

As Marisol pondered these mysteries, the shadows in the hidden wing seemed to elongate, casting an eerie atmosphere within the pack house. Her fear intensifies, fueled by the unknown.

Should she attempt to vanquish the red wolf, potentially endangering herself? Or go ahead with her initial plan of fleeing the pack? Could she trust someone within the pack, knowing that deception lurked in the shadows? She couldn't even access the so-called tunnels without meeting the same wolf.

Doubt creeps in and Marisol finds herself questioning the motives of everyone she'd encountered in Redwood. Caleb's unreadable intentions, Sophia's unwarranted hostility, and the reaction of the pack members to her made her even more afraid. Fear and confusion clouded her thoughts, making it difficult to discern friend from foe.

The confinement of her room begins to serve both as a solace and a prison. Her instincts urged her to take action, to confront the elusive red wolf and unravel the threads of the prophecy entwined with her fate. Yet, a lingering doubt gnawed at her.

She longed for the clarity she'd sought in the Library, pouring over ancient texts and maps, seeking answers that eluded her grasp. The weight of the prophecy, the impending war with the coven, and her supposed role in it all left her feeling utterly lost in the middle of it all.

Marisol had been brought to save the entire pack from an imminent threat. They'd hinted at it continuously since way earlier into her imprisonment but now found tangible reason to believe it did nothing to soothe her nerves. Trust wavered like a flickering flame, leaving her uncertain of who held the answers and who concealed the truth. She ponders stepping out to confront the red wolf but the mortification from their previous, very real encounter always had her recoiling in fear, really weighing the possibility of her making it alive like the last time.

As the days pass, Marisol continues to grapple with the internal turmoil, caught between the desire for answers and the fear of what the revelations might unfold. The hidden wing held the key to the mysteries, and knowing so much now, there was no way she could continue to remain a passive observer.

In her seclusion, Marisol contemplates her next move. She yearned for guidance, for a glimmer of hope amidst the darkness that threatened to usurp her. But in the eerie silence of her room, hope seemed a fleeting daydream, and the path to salvation for Redwood remained veiled in uncertainty.

After days of staying indoors and forcing herself to face what was going to be her new reality if she continued to sit still, Marisol decided that she was in too much danger to keep on hiding. Worse, she could not stop thinking about the Red Wolf. That strange pull, an odd interest in the peculiarity of the existence of such a creature, not just as a ghost in her nightmares, leaves an itch she can't get rid of. It felt like it was calling out to her, to rid it of its mystery, to rediscover it. Marisol was certain she'd gone out of her mind at this point and sitting still was quickly scratched out of the picture at that conclusion. She needed out.

As she emerges from her room, Marisol is surprised to find Sophia standing right by the entrance. Sophia's eyes gleamed with a knowing satisfaction, a slow clap echoing through the once silent corridor, prompting Marisol to push away her initial surprise.

"Well, well, well. Look who's finally decided to come out of hiding. I was starting to think you'd decided to stay holed up in there for the rest of your days." Sophia draws, her voice dripping with sarcasm.

Marisol rolled her eyes, a surge of annoyance bubbling within her. She was not in the mood to deal with Sophia's taunts. Choosing to ignore her words, Marisol attempts to walk past her, but Sophia is quick to sidestep, effectively blocking her new path, a corner of her lips lifting slightly.

"Going for a little stroll, are we?" Sophia continued, amusement was evident in her tone.

Marisol shoots her a glare but opts to remain silent, not wanting to give her the satisfaction of a reply.

Sophia suddenly leans in, causing Marisol to lean away, her voice lowering to mutter her next words in a conspiratorial tone. "You know, it's a wonder you're still in one piece after poking around where you shouldn't."

Marisol blinks at that, feigning innocence. Raising an eyebrow, she replies, "What are you talking about?"

Sophia chuckled, relishing the opportunity to enlighten Marisol about the dangers she had narrowly escaped. "Oh, don't play dumb with me now. We're well aware of your little midnight escapade. Surprised actually that Cedric didn't tear you limb from limb. You really think we didn't know about your newfound obsession with the hidden castle?"

Marisol tries to keep her expression schooled, but her pulse quickens at the last of Sophia's words. She thought she'd had it all under wraps, not expecting to hear that her actions had been under such scrutiny. And Cedric? Where had she heard that name before? It sounded awfully familiar and there was a bit of silence as Marisol wracked her brain until it finally clicked with the context Sophia's words had provided.

Cedric was the red wolf, the malevolent force that haunted her dreams. The one whose existence she was still struggling to accept and hearing Sophia's words adds a little bit of clarity, but not quite. A name meant that creature wasn't always like that, or was he? Who was this 'Cedric' and what could've caused him to transform into such a monstrous entity?

With a false air of composure, Marisol keeps her shoulders high as she asks, "Who is Cedric, and why is he like that?"

Sophia laughs at her confusion, a sound that echoes through the desolate corridor, seemingly finding amusement in Marisol's poorly concealed misery. "Cedric is a ticking time bomb, and your curiosity just had to push you right into the danger zone, didn't it? Consider yourself lucky to even stand on your own two feet right now. Real lucky." She snarks like Marisol couldn't already see the malicious undertones of her words.

Marisol's mind races with the new discovery, trying to piece together the fragments of information she had. Cedric, the red wolf, was evidently a menace, but the particulars of his transformation are, once again, another mystery, the word now synonymous with Redwood itself.

"But..." she started, but Sophia had already whipped around with a scoff, deeming the conversation over and leaving Marisol to stand alone with the added weight of the new revelations settling heavily on her shoulders.

After Sophia was long gone, Marisol resumed her journey to the hidden castle, as Sophia had called it. At the back of her mind, she thought that the name sounded quite peculiar and wondered why.

She arrives at the same secret entrance and peers in, the dimly lit corridor stretching before Marisol, casting shadows that seem to dance with every flicker.

The alarm bells in her head began to go off the longer she stood at the entrance that held no good memories, Sophia's words bouncing around in her head, but Marisol forced herself forward, determined to find her way out of this.

Her steps were cautious, echoing softly in the eerie silence. It was bright outside, the sun sitting high in the sky, yet the hidden wing held a terrifying atmosphere, the air stale and hallways almost looking to push against the light offered by the weakly flickering torches. She walks until she is almost at the end of the corridor and her jaw almost hits the floor at the sight she is greeted by. She immediately understands now, why Sophia had called it a castle.

Marisol stood in what she thought was the heart of the hidden castle, her eyes wide with awe as she took in the grandeur that lay dormant beneath the layers of dust. The sunlight streamed in through narrow windows, casting a soft glow on the regal architecture that surrounded her.

The castle was a magnificent display of forgotten splendor, its walls adorned with faded tapestries telling tales of a bygone era. Dilapidated chandeliers hung from the ceiling, suspended in midair like ghosts of opulence. The once-polished marble floor now bore the scars of time, covered in a thin layer of dirt and neglect.

She wondered how she hadn't noticed before. But then who could blame her? Anyone would believe it to be an abandoned part of the packhouse and the appearance of the red wolf hadn't given her much space for exploration.

She treads further in cautiously, the dust crunching beneath her feet, echoing through the silence of the abandoned castle. As she meanders through the castle's corridors, Marisol feels the hairs on the back of her neck stand on edge, that feeling of being watched making another unwelcome entry. The portraits on the walls seemed to follow her every move, eyes on faded canvases bearing witness to her intrusion.

The fear of the wolf dissipated when her senses assured her that she was alone, in between deep, controlled breaths.

Determined to find the tunnel that could lead her out of Redwood, Marisol retraced her steps, unintentionally returning to the room where the red wolf had attacked her. She marvels at it, now getting the chance to actually take it in.

In the center of the vast room stood a grand throne, its ornate design commanding attention despite the decay that surrounded it. Marisol couldn't help but imagine the room in its prime, filled with the vibrancy of werewolves who once inhabited this regal space. The grandeur of the space now held an ominous undertone.

The more she explored, the more questions arose. Castles and thrones were not part of werewolf culture. The history of this place seems intertwined with mystery, and Marisol finds that she grows even more curious with every new secret she finds Redwood entangled in. There is a steady stream of questions in her head, only thickening with time. Why did Redwood have a hidden castle, a symbol of monarchic history, when werewolves were creatures of a more primal nature? What events had transpired to lead to this duality?

As she takes tentative steps closer to the throne, Marisol's eyes widen in realization, the room's significance becoming clearer. It wasn't merely a werewolf residence, but a symbol of power and authority. Yet, the questions multiply, forming a labyrinth of uncertainty in her mind.

With each step, the dust beneath her feet seemed to whisper the forgotten stories of Redwood's past.

Like a pinch back to reality, Marisol is suddenly reminded of her mission to find the tunnel and get out, yet here she was, letting herself get sucked into the enigma that was Redwood yet again. Maybe, just maybe, she should press a bit more. Not only did she find the malignant creature that terrorized her dreams to be true, but now there was a name to it! Marisol swears to herself to get to finding the tunnel once she finds out who exactly Cedric is. Or was.

Just as she turns toward the Library, a sudden flicker catches her attention. Something had disturbed the open flame of the torches. It was swift and elusive, darting across the grand throne room.

Her heart immediately picks up speed as her eyes dart after it. She spun around chasing after it until her eyes finally lay on something that had her jaw slacking in astonishment. A man now occupied the once-empty throne, an image of casual arrogance. Clad only in pants, he exuded a raw, untamed energy that drew Marisol in.

Without thinking, she takes a cautious step forward, her curiosity overpowering her fear. As she draws closer, squinting a bit, her brows furrow at his features, growing clearer with every step. The man had an uncanny resemblance to Caleb, but there was something more captivating about him. His physique was larger, his dark hair untamed, and his piercing eyes, even from a fair distance, seemed to bore deep into her soul. His face bore the signs of a prolonged time in wolf form, his beard overgrown just like his hair.

Marisol was spellbound, frozen by the inexplicable allure emanating from him. Her eyes wandered hungrily over his naked chest, a perfection that almost seemed unreal. Yet, beneath the surface, she senses something dangerous.

Then, an unexpected surge courses through her, stirring her wolf. It was an intense connection she'd felt. Her instincts roared with excitement, sensations running down her spine, urging her closer. The connection was unmistakable—this..... he, was her mate.

As the realization settles, a surge of conflicting emotions sweeps through her. Her body yearns for closer contact, the magnetic pull between mates intensifying the desire. However, the disheveled state of his appearance hinted at the danger that lurked beneath the surface.

But then their gazes finally lock into the other's and Marisol swears she hears the loud thump of her heart dropping to her feet. Those eyes. She would recognize them anywhere.

Her wolf recoils, the realization hitting her like a wave. The man in front of her was the Red Wolf. Unmistakably so. The one that had attacked her in this very room just a few days ago. The one that frequented her dreams, bringing such bone-chilling terror with himself.

Just as swiftly as the connection ignited, Marisol felt it shatter like glass. The red wolf was her mate.

Before she could begin to piece her thoughts together, he spoke, his voice hoarse from lack of use and filled with recognition. "So it was you." He rasps, his words sending a chill down her spine.

A chill that had the same effect as an icy bucket of water tipped over her head, dousing her with its contents. Like her consciousness had just been reactivated, Marisol spun around quickly enough to almost miss her footing, not sparing another glance behind as she bolted for the door and out of it. Away from him and as fast as her legs could carry her.