

## Chapter 139

When Marisol finally runs back into her room, the door slams shut behind her before she collapses against it, her heart pounding against her chest as a whirlwind of emotions threatens to engulf her.

She takes several deep breaths in a quest to stabilize the erratic organ with a hand over her chest, but it does nothing to soothe the violent arrhythmic thuds against her ribcage. Her eyes are tightly shut as she prays and hopes, for once in her life, she wanted this not to be the reality, needing so desperately for this to be an extension of her nightmares taking on a more twisted form because there was no way her already puzzling life would take on such a drastic, terribly unfunny turn.

This had to be some kind of joke. There was no way that man..... that beast was her mate. Caleb said something about a spell, the one he'd used himself to lure her into Redwood. He had to have been playing that trick again. That had to have been it. At this point, Marisol feels herself trembling, down to the tip of her fingers. Anxiety mixed with bewilderment infiltrated every pore of her body.

Suddenly, like the pieces of a whole puzzle falling into place, it all begins to make sense to her. Cedric was what Redwood needed to be saved from. She'd been brought and was now being forcibly held in Redwood to supposedly tame the beast, Caleb's brother, Redwood's own true Alpha, Cedric, who was responsible for the destruction and unrest within the pack.

Just thinking about the true form of that beast and the fact that she was going to be made to confront it causes anger to course through her veins, hot like lava, enough to overpower her initial fear as she was suddenly getting on her feet, determined to tackle Caleb himself.

As she strides through the pack house purposefully, she is met with Sophia, who is also heading to find Marisol in her room. On seeing her, Sophia goes to block her path, but it was an overused trick now, one that Marisol was nowhere in the mood to entertain.

"Hey! Where are you going?" What are you doing?" Sophia splutters as she is suddenly shoved aside with a sudden burst of strength from Marisol.

A loud, overly exaggerated shriek leaves her lips as she collides with the nearest wall, shocked and thrown off by the unexpected action, but Marisol ignores it in favour of pressing on, her focus unwavering. They had successfully backed her against the wall, and she was done playing nice.

Caleb, alerted by the commotion, rushes to the scene, concerned for his mate. Worry and confusion are etched on his features as he finds her on the floor, making to rush to her aid until Marisol intercepts him, blocking his path.

Their eyes lock, and his initial reaction is even further confusion at her ugly frown. "Why?" Marisol demands loudly, her voice sharp with anger and betrayal. "You cruel bastard! Bringing me here, knowing there's a beast on the loose. Are you so inhumane, so evil that you would offer me up to him like feeding a domesticated lion?" Her accusations reverberated through the air, each word carrying the weight of her newfound understanding.

Caleb, taken aback by Marisol's sudden outburst, stutters through what was an unsatisfactory explanation, "Marisol, please, let me—"

But she cut him off, her anger unabated. "Don't you dare 'Marisol, please' me! I can't believe I trusted you, Caleb! You deceived me and made a complete fool of me by continuously playing on my emotions! You are just as sick and twisted as any other messed up opportunists I've had the misfortune of encountering in my short life. No, you're even worse!" Marisol shoots out, her voice trembling with a mix of rage and hurt.

She didn't know it yet, but her wolf was breaching its way to the surface, even angrier than she was at their new findings. Her Hazel blue eyes were slowly taking on a swirl of red and black like her mother's. Dominance wafts out of her strong enough to weaken Caleb's own knees as he continues to struggle with his words, a hand outstretched placatingly.

"Marisol, if you would just listen to me, there's so much you don't understand. Cedric, he—"

Marisol shakes her head, unwilling to hear any more excuses. She cuts his words short. "Save your excuses, Caleb. What kind of an Alpha puts his whole pack at such risk? What kind of a person plays with another person's life like this?"

The small crowd that had begun to form at the outburst, consisting of pack members, exchanged uneasy glances at the last of her words. Sophia, left alone to recover from the shock of her fall, watches the scene unfold. She hated that her mate was being held back by another woman, but the tension in the air was suffocating. Too scared to want to be caught in the middle of that, her wolf is compelled to stay still.

"I won't be a part of your twisted games any longer. You can keep your secrets and your cursed pack to yourselves because I have had enough, and I'm getting out of here!" She all but screams, turning on her heels with those resolute words and storming away.

Caleb takes a few slow seconds to pick his jaw off the floor before he springs back to action, "Wait!" His loud call echoes in the hallways he leaves behind to chase after her.

Marisol, however, only moves with more speed, fueled by determination. She finally makes it outside and heads towards the forest. Her wolf was feeling a very violent mix of emotions, and the last thing it needed was to remain trapped behind those walls stained with the suffocating stench of their deceit. It needed space.

"Marisol, please, wait! Where is all this coming from!? What happened!?" Caleb's confused voice continued to ring in her ears as he got closer and closer, unrelenting in his chase.

The mere sound of his voice grates against her nerves. If she'd listened to her very ugly thoughts against him at the moment, his entire face would have been smashed against a wall.

She stops, scowling as she turns to glare at him. "You must really have a death wish," She growls.

"You can lash out at me and call me whatever names you'd like, but I will not let you take my sacrifices for granted and not hear my side!" Caleb returned with a growl of his own, his earlier calm and placating tone melting away.

Marisol could only scoff in disbelief at his audacious words. Oh, so now he wanted to tell his side of the story, and what sacrifices did he speak of that could be enough to cancel out the fact that he was going to make her food for that unforgiving beast?

"What happened?" He repeats, softer this time, "Sophia tells me that you had gone to the hidden castle just a few moments ago. Did something happen there? Is that what this is about?"

With another scoff, Marisol's tone took on a more sarcastic edge, "You're asking me what this is about? Well, I'll tell you.... The fact that you'd been hiding it away from me this whole time that you brought me here to, what? Tame that soulless beast you let roam around in there!? I'm supposed to be deceived by his human form until he decides he's had enough and tears me apart like the beast that he is?"

"Wait.... W- what!?"

At Caden's dumbstruck expression, Marisol grows even more irked, her teeth bared in annoyance as she barks out, "What do you mean 'what'? Are you going to pretend you're not aware of everything I just said, that beast -"

"I'm sorry, did you just say h- his human form? Cedric was human when you saw him?" He stutters out, cutting her off this time, and Marisol pauses, her frown deepening.

"You think I'm lying? Why don't you go check for yourself then? Aren't you supposed to be the big bad Alpha of this pack?" She mocks, but her words do not look to have the expected effect on Caleb, who looks even more stupefied, his chest heaving as he breathes out slowly.

"Wow." He mutters, suddenly out of breath, "That's just... I can't believe this!" His expression suddenly morphs into one of relief before he was snorting out relieved laughter, coming out in short gasps of breath. "I can't believe this!" He howls loudly, elated. This causes Marisol's brows to hit her hairline, now more confused than angry.

"You're insane." She snaps, and that draws his attention back to her. With wide, excited eyes, he regarded her brightly.

"No, Marisol, you.... You don't know what you've done, do you!?"

With an irritated scowl, Marisol glares him down, "Go be a lunatic elsewhere and leave me alone."

"You don't understand," Caleb exclaims, delirious. "Cedric, he..... he's never turned human since Guinevere's curse. It was you, Marisol! Whatever happened between both of you yesterday changed something and made him return to his human form! You're telling me he's finally in human form after all these months!"

For some reason, Marisol felt her heart break a little at his words. Cedric was cursed? Why? What did he do?

But before she could get a word out, the madman in front of her suddenly spins around and hightails it back to the pack house.

Caleb's words had roused her curiosity, and knowing how the people of Redwood behaved around the topic, she knew no one else was going to tell her what she needed to know. Caleb had disappeared somewhere into the packhouse too. This left her with only one option, and she hated the idea of it.

So, instead of going for her intended run, she finds her way back into the packhouse. Navigating the hidden tunnels until she finds the castle again. Surprisingly, there was no beast, and Cedric was still in the exact same regal position she'd left him a while ago. He remains still, but his eyes rake over the expanse of her body, curious and interested as she approaches cautiously, causing tremors to run down her spine. His eyes follow her every move, and at that point, she realizes that he most definitely is just as aware of their bond as she was.

He was so relaxed in his position, almost like he'd been waiting, like he was sure she'd be back, and the fact was proven by a small smirk that tugged a corner of his lips upwards.

His smug expression irritated Marisol, but her wolf seemed to share no such sentiment, captivated by his presence, yearning to be closer. Marisol hated that she was warring with herself over the soulless creature who was sprawled leisurely on the throne that he owned with just his aura. She couldn't tear her eyes away from him for so much as a second.

Her body, mind, and every part of her she could offer yearned pathetically for him, and Marisol finds it a struggle to uphold her own weight. Clearing her throat, Marisol tries to regain a sense of control, remembering her mission. "Who are you?" she asks, her voice surprisingly firm.

Cedric chuckled at that, a haughty undertone to his response. "Don't you know that much?"

Ignoring his cryptic answer, Marisol presses on, "What happened here?" she inquires "What happened to you? Caleb said.... that you've been in wolf form for months."

Cedric huffs at that "Caleb? Not Alpha, hm? You're not a pack member, yet you disrespect another Alpha." he notes, casually dodging the question again, and Marisol feels her brows twitch.

"Can you answer my questions?" she grits out, but he only shrugs, that indifferent air still around him as he scratches at his beard, looking displeased at the volume he finds.

"Get me a mirror and a razor, maybe I'll consider answering then," he says, throwing in a self-assured grin for good measure.

Marisol grows more frustrated with every passing second in his presence, "Do you know what you did the last time we met?"

Cedric stretches his muscles before answering, testing out the flexibility of his own limbs, unaware of Marisol's small gasp as he says "I've done many things, firecracker."

Marisol couldn't comprehend his cocky demeanor or the fact that he was acting like he hadn't posed a major threat to her life just a few nights ago.

"You owe me an apology," she asserts, giving herself a pat on the back for not stomping her feet like a petulant child.

In response, Cedric pushes himself off the throne and walks, slowly and purposefully toward her, leaving Marisol frozen in wait, anticipating his next move until he brushes past her with a grumble of "You're useless." Breezing past her ear, leaving Marisol seething with a mixture of anger and confusion.

Marisol couldn't believe what had just happened, highly infuriated and angered by his attitude. She decided there and then that she did not care. She was completely done. There was no use in anything, and this was all her fault for focusing on anything other than escaping this asylum.

With Cedric out of sight, seemingly having disappeared into thin air, Marisol threads deeper into the castle to find the so-called tunnels. However, it looked like this was another dirty Redwood trick.

She searched and searched for what ended up being the whole day in the tunnels and ended up with nothing. Every single trail led to a dead end. By the end of the day, she was seething with frustration as every attempt at finding an escape route failed. The route to the tunnels she sought was mysteriously blocked.

Desperation leads her to try digging around the force field that confines her within the castle, but her efforts are in vain. The invisible barrier stood resolute, thwarting any attempts to break free. The invisible walls around Redwood were impenetrable.

In the following days, Marisol's sense of dejection only deepens, the confusion surrounding Cedric's behavior only adding to it. His nonchalant attitude, coupled with the memory of the menacing wolf from their first encounter, only works to fuel her hatred. She couldn't fathom how he could act all high and mighty, regarding her with no respect or human courtesy whatsoever.

That little interaction bounces around in her head, leaving her with a deep-seated hatred for him despite hardly knowing him. The idea that the moon goddess had designated such a savage as her mate felt like a cruel twist of fate.

During this time, she made sure to avoid everyone; Sophia, Caleb, and his mate. Her desire to return home resumes burning more fiercely than ever. She yearned to be back with her family, away from the chaotic mysteries of Redwood. But as days passed and her attempts to escape remained fruitless, she was reminded of the aftermath of all her previous thwarted efforts, the depression and hopelessness that followed after. She felt trapped, both physically and emotionally, unable to find a way out of the perplexing enigma that was the Redwood Pack.

Marisol's emotions were in disarray, torn between anger, fear, and a longing for freedom. She spent her days in a constant state of restlessness, haunted by the idea of being stuck forever in a place where she felt so utterly lost.

Despite her resolve to escape and her anger towards Cedric, she couldn't shake off the lingering sense of curiosity about him and the secrets buried within Redwood. A part of her was compelled to unravel the mysteries, to understand why this place was enveloped in such ambiguity, and why she, in particular, was entangled in its web.

Yet, as each day passes with no progress whatsoever, Marisol's hope begins to wane.

In this isolated, confusing bubble that was Redwood, Marisol's feelings were a jumble of resentment and yearning, yet, there were the only things that were hers, the unanswered questions and the seemingly insurmountable obstacles making her ache for her home even more intensely, craving the familiarity.