

## Chapter 141

When Caleb heard Cedric's voice echoing in his head, he nearly stumbled over in shock. Fear gripped him tightly, memories of their father's voice resurfacing after such a long time. Cedric's voice held a chilling resemblance, stirring both emotion and dread within him.

Especially with the suddenness and unexpectedness of it. Cedric, on the other hand, didn't seem to register the fact that the sudden reconnection after months of dead silence was bound to take the other totally off guard. He just continued to speak like he would during any other normal conversation, except, this wasn't exactly normal, at least not for Caleb.

As the messages flooded in, Sophia took note of her mate's tense posture until it seemed to end, and he collapsed into the closest chair.

"Are you okay, Caleb? What's wrong?" Sophia questioned, concern etched into her features as she rushed to his side, voice laced with worry as her eyes searched for answers.

Still, in a daze, Caleb could only manage a single word, a mutter of "Cedric" escaping his lips.

Sophia's eyes widened in alarm. It was only normal at this point that she would assume the worst. "He attacked again?" she questioned, fear evident in her voice.

Caleb shakes his head, attempting to compose himself. "No, he didn't attack. He... he just asked for food through the mindlink. And he wants his living space cleaned."

Sophia's eyes seemed to grow even wider at that, now mirroring Caleb's initial shocked state.

Since the curse had befallen Cedric, he had remained in wolf form, never communicating with anyone. All parts of the new revelation were shocking, and she struggled to find even the right questions to be asked.

"He wants food? And the mind link reopened!? And how are we supposed to get food to him!? No one would dare go down there after seeing just what he's capable of. It would be a death wish!" Sophia voices worriedly, a sense of foreboding settling over her.

Her intuition, sharp as ever, warned her of impending danger. What scared her most was the sinking certainty that Caleb would volunteer to go.

Caleb, sensing Sophia's unease, tries to reassure her. "He's my brother, Sophia. If anyone has to go down there, it should be me. And if he's reaching out after all this time, then something is definitely different. We need to understand what's happening here."

Sophia squeezed her eyes shut at that, shaking her head in refusal, in no lifetime of hers would she offer up her mate as bait for an unpredictable beast, selfish as it was, she sucked in a breath, "Send Marisol," she continued quickly, not missing Caleb's disbelieving gaze, "She's the one who triggered his recent shift as much as we know. You've seen how she's escaped him unscathed once, too. Maybe she could talk some sense into him."

Caleb hesitates before responding, "Marisol's not our best bet at the moment, too. After her encounter with Cedric, she's been unpredictable. I doubt she'd be willing to help us."

The anger emanating from Marisol's quarters was palpable, a result of her unsettling encounter with Cedric. Caleb knew it wouldn't be wise to push her into any situation, let alone one involving Cedric.

Sophia huffs loudly at that, her frustration evident as she begins pacing the room. "We can't risk anyone going there. What if this is just a trap? What if Cedric is baiting us? What if he comes up with a new trick to mess with our minds!"

Caleb nods in understanding, sharing her concern. "I understand your point, which is exactly why we need to tread carefully. Aggravating either Cedric or Marisol could make things worse for all of us."

Sophia stops her pacing, her expression troubled. "What if... we send a message, ask him why he suddenly wants cooked food? Get more information before we decide on anything."

Caleb hummed, considering the suggestion for a second before nodding slowly. "It's worth a shot. If there's any chance that we could understand his motives better without putting anyone in immediate danger, I would not hesitate to take it."

Sophia nods in agreement, visibly relaxing at being able to stop Caleb from blindly running into danger, but the wheels in her head continue to turn heavily, seeking a way that would guarantee the pack's safety while unraveling the mystery behind Cedric's unexpected communication.

"But I fear that it might annoy him, Soph," Caleb added, after a short beat of silence.

"You can not go there!" Sophia screamed, surprising herself. But it looked like there was no other way to get her point across. "I can't lose you!" her chest heaves, and Caleb's eyes visibly softened at that, his lips parted, the words still trapped in them when the door suddenly burst open, announcing the unexpected presence of Leticia, the witch.

Alarm shoots through Caleb as he recognizes the gravity of her appearance. She was the most dangerous secret he had kept hidden. If anyone in the pack were to find out the fact that he'd been housing a witch within the pack, it'd be over for him.

Leticia laughed, a mirthless sound, as if sensing Caleb's alarm, and raised a hand, signaling for Caleb to calm down before he could speak. "No need to be so uptight, Caleb. I'm not here to harm anyone. Just pay attention."

Caleb, tense and still edgy from the turmoil of emotions he'd been made to sort through for what had just been a little over five minutes, took a step forward, brows pulled together, "Leticia, you should be in your quarters. This is not the time for you to wander about."

Ignoring his presence and queries, Leticia looks at Sophia instead, eyes soft, "What's going on, dear? You look like you've seen a ghost."

Sophia swallows at that, her chest still heaving from their previous conversation and trying to avoid the woman's inquisitive gaze.

Leticia only grows more persistent, her gaze becoming even more intense. "What's gotten into you, Sophia? You're more unsettled than I've ever seen, and you've been harsh to Marisol. What's the deal?"

Caleb growls at the interaction, his mate's visible discomfort pushing him to seek an end to Leticia's probing. "That's enough, Leticia. Return to your quarters. We were in the middle of discussing some very important matters, and your interference isn't helping."

Leticia continues to ignore him, pressing on with an unrivaled determination, "Come on, spill it. Why are you acting this way? Did something happen to Marisol?"

Sophia's breathing seemed to grow heavier, listening to those accusatory words. She stirred her body away from Leticia's eyes, looking like she'd rather be anywhere else.

"Tell me, Sophia. Why are you so afraid? What's going on inside that head of yours?"

Sophia's fear, carried by her pheromones, had now spread through the entire room and with Leticia now stubbornly holding her gaze, staring into her soul, she looked to shrink further into herself and Caleb decided he'd had enough of Leticia's harassment. In long, quick strides, he physically intercepts the one-sided conversation, putting his body between both ladies.

"Leticia, stop it. Can't you see you're upsetting her!?"

Suddenly, Leticia turned to Caleb with a hard expression. "Caleb, you need to do what Cedric asked. Immediately. Lead them to Cedric's lair. Stop wasting time. Except you've had a change of mind over the last few days and have decided to take on the responsibility of Alpha permanently."

Annoyance creeps into Caleb's voice as he deciphers the command in her tone, followed by what sounded awfully like an underlying threat, "You don't get to order me around, Leticia. Like I said, we have things to discuss, and we'll handle this our way."

She huffs out a mocking laughter at that, and in a moment of frustration, Caleb growls and swipes at Leticia. To his astonishment, she turns into smoke, fizzling out like mist, leaving behind a lingering sense of her magical presence.

Finally, rid of her unwelcome presence, Caleb turns to his mate, eyes softening in concern as he gathers her into a soothing embrace. That seemed to be the final push she needed as she let out a loud, wet cry until she was sobbing profusely in his arms, seemingly overwhelmed by the emotional turmoil unleashed by Leticia's probing.

"Sophia, it's okay. She's gone now."

Sophia, caught in the whirlwind of emotions, could only manage a shaky response, "What... what just happened?"

Caleb, holding her close, makes another small shushing sound, cradling her head close, "Leticia is unpredictable, but we'll figure this out, okay? Right now, we need to address Cedric's request. It might be the only way to prevent further chaos."