

## Chapter 144

Marisol walked without purpose until exhaustion set in, but it did nothing to ease her disbelief which was slowly morphing into anger. She refused to bear the blame for the turmoil in a pack that had kidnapped her on her birthday and went ahead to trap her against her will due to a convoluted prophecy no one understood.

"No, this is not my fault," Marisol muttered to herself, each step now echoing her determination.

The more she dwells on it, the more her anger melded into a resolve. She refused to be a scapegoat for the misfortunes within the pack. The responsibility lay with the pack members themselves, with Caleb and Sophia, who had deceived her. It was also on Cedric, the one causing chaos by harming his own pack members.

She concluded angrily that Cedric was the one to completely blame. How was he her mate? In what world were they compatible, and what exactly did Sophia even mean by asking her to 'get to work' like she was supposed to be some slave?

Seconds later, Marisol finds herself standing at the entrance of the hidden castle. The desire to confront Cedric clashed with the responsibility Sophia had attempted to thrust upon her. Should she unleash her fury and give him a piece of her mind, or accept the blame as Sophia had suggested, and maybe try to make sense of the matter and unfold the reason for his newfound hobby?

The decision crystallizes in her mind. Marisol chose both. She would confront Cedric, demanding answers and holding him accountable for the chaos he had unleashed. At the same time, she would take responsibility, ensuring that the wolf within him remained contained, atleast for the night.

She wanted to know what was so crucial that he had to harm innocent pack members in his relentless search. Perhaps, she thought, helping him find whatever he sought could bring an end to the senseless destruction for everyone's sake.

As Marisol steps into the hidden castle, a wave of shock and surprise washes over her at the sight she is greeted with. The once desolate and dimly lit corridors had been transformed. The air was fresher, and the castle bore signs of meticulous cleaning. It was not just clean; it was beautiful, a stark contrast to the gloom that had pervaded its halls before.

Her hands trace the transformed walls as she makes her way to the throne room. Cedric, the source of the chaos that had engulfed the pack, the chaos they had still been grappling with, lay there, lounging on his throne, appearing indifferent to the turmoil he had caused.

Anger bubbles within Marisol, and she is unable to stop her tongue as she unleashes a torrent of words, her voice carrying the weight of her frustration. "Do you have any idea what your wolf has done to the pack? People are out there fighting for their lives, and you're here lounging like it's your royal spa day!"

Cedric, seemingly unfazed by her outburst, pays little attention as he continues to occupy himself with whatever thoughts he has been consumed by, even prior to her arrival. His indifference only works to fuel Marisol's anger, pushing her to escalate her tirade against his recklessness.

"What is so important that you're willing to destroy your own pack to find it?" Marisol demands, her tone cutting through the charged atmosphere.

When he finally raises his head to meet her gaze, Marisol is momentarily stunned by the transformation in his appearance. He had cleaned up well, and the change was remarkable. The disheveled, wild image she'd associated the man with, upon their first encounter, was now replaced with an appearance that would rouse no questions about his royal descent. He looked..... different and that took her off guard.

Struggling for her next words, Marisol stumbles over a variety of choices, each one falling short, or just deemed unworthy to maintain the force of her rebuke. Cedric, in response, lets out a dry laughter that bounces off the walls, finally breaking the silence with an order that feels eerily calm.

"Get out."

The command is delivered with an air of authority that momentarily silences Marisol. The abrupt dismissal had her standing there, grappling with a mixture of emotions.

"What the hell do you think you're doing, Cedric?" Marisol retaliates, refusing to just back down.

Cedric's gaze met hers, a flicker of surprise in his eyes at the defiance. Marisol continues, her words laden with frustration and a determination to unveil the truth.

"First, tell me what drives you to such madness, Cedric, and maybe.... just maybe, we could find a solution that doesn't involve the senseless destruction of your own home, but either way, I won't let you continue like this."

Cedric looks bored at the end of her words, unimpressed eyes meeting hers. "What brings you here, Marisol?" He questions like she hadn't just gone on a whole rant airing the exact reasons why she'd taken the trip here. She sucks in a breath as if to reel herself back in before speaking.

"I won't take the blame for your wolf's rampage. Innocent pack members are getting hurt because of your inability to control it."

Cedric's expression suddenly hardens but Marisol presses on, her tone unwavering. "You need to figure out what's so important to it that's driving it crazy. And I suggest you do it fast before more harm is done."

Cedric sighs loudly at that, like a rebellious teenager that just had to listen to his mother's stories about life and pushes himself off the bejeweled throne. She hears his joints pop when he stretches with an obnoxious groan and then he moves. Marisol waits for what looks like a physical confrontation as he draws nearer. Closer, closer, closer, until he just breezes past her like he had on their first encounter.

"Wait what," Marisol blurts in confusion and disbelief, a bit dazed at the sudden close proximity - after watching him make a show of stretching-, that ended almost just as abruptly as it began. She'd been doing a good job of pretending that the chemistry between them wasn't off the charts, but now, catching a whiff of him so close and seeing him look so unlike he had before, unleashed an almost primal need within her. She wanted to be close to him, to stay close to him and the thought of it, unnerved her.

As if he could hear her thoughts, Cedric lets out another peal of laughter, jolting Marisol back to reality.

Albeit a bit flustered, Marisol follows after him. The evening was closing in, and she had no intention of letting him out of her sight.

They arrive at the Library, and Cedric retrieves the same book that had unraveled the secret of his curse.

Shoving it toward Marisol, he poses a question that hangs heavy in the air, "Do you think I'm in control of my actions?"

Marisol finds herself speechless, almost feeling stupid for her own actions and not having realized this earlier. He was under a curse, and blaming him for the chaos seemed unjust. Just as the weight of her accusations begins to settle, he swiftly turns around and begins walking off in the other direction. Quickly returning the book to its place, she hurries after him.

"What then do you think it is searching for? Why is it suddenly searching for it?" She asks as she catches up with him.

He didn't seem like he was having the best day with Marisol persistently on his tail, but neither was she. She needed the answers that he definitely wasn't providing and ignored her until, once again, they were in the throne room, where he seemed to snap, turning around to give her an annoyed look.

"If you're so interested in knowing, why not just question my wolf personally? Since he's the one doing the searching?"

Marisol's heart skips a beat at the mention of his wolf. The menacing and terrifying creature that had haunted her dreams and the last thing she wanted was to see it again. Fear creeps into her thoughts as she sees images of her nightmares right in front of her eyes, her fingers balling into fists.

There's a heavy blanket of silence cast over them as she contemplates before snapping her eyes shut. Shaking her head, Marisol decides it wasn't worth it and doesn't say a word as she begins to walk away.

"That's what I thought. You know, you shouldn't have bothered trying if you knew you were so fickle-minded." Cedric mocked from behind her.

Marisol spins around, irked by his taunting. "I'm not afraid." She asserts and Cedric meets her gaze, holding it with an intensity that only seems to pull her in, lulling her into a sense of safety that would be questionable in their current situation and that is when he says his next words, bewitching, like the call of a siren.

"Prove it then. Prove that you're not afraid."