

Chapter 149

Marisol rushed to her room, her heart pounding violently in her chest with each step, the weight of the pain it bore washing over her in waves. She was overwhelmed with pain, both physically and emotionally. Fear and regret course through her. She had acted on impulse, blurting out a lie to Cedric in a moment of desperation, and now she was paying the price for her deception.

She collapses onto her bed, the weight of the consequences of her lies bearing down on her like a crushing weight.

She had told Cedric that they were not mates, that everything she'd been doing was only because she wanted to get this over with and return home, and he had agreed in the blink of an eye, without even needing convincing, his unreadable expression not betraying even the slightest hint of mere confusion as he accepted her falsehood.

As she lay there, trying to catch her breath, the door to her room swings open, and Lily hurries in, her eyes shining with excitement. Seeing this, Marisol forces a pleasant expression onto her face, not wanting to have to reveal the turmoil raging within her.

Lily, oblivious to Marisol's inner turmoil, takes a seat beside her on the bed, her excitement palpable as she launches into conversation immediately, "Marisol, you won't believe what's been happening," she exclaims, her words tumbling out in a rush. "First, what happened between you and the Alpha and Luna?"

Marisol shrugs, the recent happenings too complex for her to even try and articulate just yet, "It's complicated," she confesses, her voice barely above a whisper.

"You've got to be kidding! The whole pack's talking about it. What do you mean 'complicated'?"

Marisol sighed loudly, her body sinking even further into the soft mattress and massaging her temples, feeling the makings of a headache brewing behind her eyes.

Lily seemed to study her for a bit before continuing, her tone more questioning this time, "Well, Sophia has been going around telling everyone that you sent Cedric to attack her."

"What!?" Marisol exclaims, sitting up in shock.

Lily nods, ever so slowly, "Yeah, according to her, Alpha Caleb had been the one to subdue him and rescue her," She shivers slightly, "That must've been terrifying."

Marisol laughed dryly, she couldn't believe what she was hearing. Her stomach churns at the thought of Sophia's accusations, her heart sinking with a sense of dread. She had known that her encounter with Caleb and Sophia would not just be forgotten, but she would've never imagined that they would stoop so low as to spread such lies.

"That's not true," she counters, her voice trembling with anger and frustration. "Caleb and Sophia ambushed me and began questioning me about ludicrous things. Cedric was the one to come to my rescue."

Lily listens intently, her brow furrowed in concern as Marisol recounts her ordeal. "But why would Cedric bother to help you?" her voice is filled with genuine confusion as she asks, "He isn't someone that cares, or is even sane enough to care."

Marisol shrugs, her mind still reeling from the events of the day. "I don't know," she admits, her words tinged with uncertainty. "But whatever his reasons, I'm grateful for his intervention. Without him, I don't know what would have happened."

Lily nods in understanding, her expression thoughtful as she considers Marisol's words. "It makes me even more curious about the meaning of the prophecy. Maybe you're bonded in some sort of way," she muses, curiosity lacing her every word. "Maybe there's a reason he's been acting the way he has."

Marisol felt her heart lurch. She couldn't risk the pack members connecting the dots or even guessing that there could be any other sort of connection between them.

"He's acting that way because he's cursed and unpredictable, Lily." She quickly replied, her voice coming out rougher than she'd expected.

Lily stares wordlessly at her, the wheels in her head turning and Marisol is prompted to continue with her defence. She'd seen what Lily and her group of friends were capable of. If even a sliver of doubt was left in her mind, that could lead to a curiosity that would be perilous to Marisol herself.

"Cedric has become spontaneous lately. Maybe he did it to get on his brother's nerves or who knows, maybe his wolf was trying to reassert his dominance."

Lily nods and there's a pregnant pause before she adds, "But we cannot deny that your presence in Redwood changed something about him. He seems to have become more stable since you started visiting the hidden castle. That counts for something. Maybe the prophecy is more straightforward than we think."

Marisol couldn't help but wonder if Lily was right and if there was more to Cedric's behavior than she had initially thought. She had sensed a darkness within him, a pain that ran deeper than she could comprehend, and she couldn't shake the feeling that there was something more hidden beneath the surface of his Stoic facade.

But before she could voice her thoughts, Lily's attention shifted, her gaze darting towards the door as if she had heard something outside. "I should go," she says, her tone tinged with urgency as she springs to her feet, "I'll talk to you later, okay?"

Marisol responds with a nod. Lily's presence and their conversation had done nothing to ease her inner turmoil. Now she felt an even larger weight crushing down upon her as she watched Lily leave.

Marisol goes back to her lying position, staring up at the ceiling for long enough that she loses track of time and for the confines of the four walls to start feeling suffocating. Evening approaches, casting long shadows across the room, and Marisol feels a restless energy coursing through her veins. After tossing and turning, she realizes that she couldn't bear to spend another moment indoors.

She needed to get out, clear her head, and try to confront the chaos swirling around her.

With a shaky sigh, Marisol pushes herself off the bed and trudges to the door. By now, the evening had completely descended upon the pack grounds, casting a golden glow over the landscape as the sun dipped below the horizon. Marisol hesitates for a moment, her hand hovering over the door handle before she steels herself and steps outside.

Slowly, she makes her way out of the pack house and onto the grounds, her steps hesitant as she weighs her options. She knew she should go to the hidden castle, fulfil her duty to watch over Cedric and keep his wolf in check, but the lie she'd told just a few hours prior remains fresh in her memory, disturbing her conscience. Marisol felt like she'd betrayed herself, and now she didn't know if she could face Cedric again. Plus, the frustration that bubbled inside her, drove her to seek out Sophia or Caleb instead.

As soon as she emerges from the pack house, Marisol is met with the familiar murmurs of the pack members. Their whispers follow her like a shadow, curious gazes trailing after her as she makes her way across the grounds. Marisol chooses to ignore them, their antics were no longer surprising or new to her and instead focused on her mission to find Sophia or Caleb and confront them about the rumors they were spreading.

She sights Lily from afar, the other's features morphing into one of confusion and concern as she sees the accusatory eyes following Marisol and as she draws closer, holding a large bag of groceries to her chest, she stops for a second, Marisol considers just continuing on her walk, but Lily speaks before she can make that decision, pulling her short. "Hey Marisol, what's going on?"

Marisol forces a smile, almost trembling with the need to keep moving as she answers, "Just going for a walk," she struggles to keep her tone casual despite the tension coiled in her chest. "Need to clear my head."

Lily nodded, though she still looked unconvinced. "Alright, well, be careful out there,"

"I will." Marisol murmured, with a nod of her own. She made to continue on her way when Lily spoke again, sounding hesitant.

"Do you.... maybe want to meet up with Maya?" She offers, sensing Marisol's unsettled state, "I could mindlink her to find you."

Marisol shook her head with a small smile, genuinely appreciative of the gesture, "That's okay, I'm not planning to spend a lot of time outside. It's just a walk. I'll be back as soon as my head feels lighter."

"Oh." Lily mutters, supporting the grocery bag with her free hand before adding quietly, "Okay then. Be safe."

Marisol nods in acknowledgment before she is finally allowed to continue on her way. She didn't have time to dwell on Lily's concern; she had a place to be, and she wouldn't rest until she had confronted Sophia and Caleb about their lies.

As she walks briskly, Marisol's mind races with thoughts, conjuring up images of how she would imagine the confrontation to go, what she would say to them, and how they would react when confronted about their deceit. She rehearsed her arguments in her head, anger fueling her want to set the record straight.

Finally, she spotted Sophia in the distance, her figure silhouetted against the fading light of the rising moon. Marisol's heart skips a beat as she picks up her pace, fueled by determination. Finally, her steps falter slightly as she nears where the other woman stands.

"Sophia!" Marisol calls out, her voice sharp with anger. "We need to talk."

Sophia turns to face her, her expression guarded as she regards Marisol with wary eyes. "What do you want?" she asks, her tone cold and dismissive.

Marisol sucks in a deep breath, trying to calm the storm raging inside her. "I want to know why you've been spreading lies about me," she starts, keeping her voice steady despite the anger bubbling beneath the surface.

Sophia scoffs, her lips curling into a sneer. "I've done nothing of the sort," she defends, her tone dripping with disdain. "All I've done is tell the truth about the nature of yous and Cedric's relationship."

Marisol feels her anger threaten to boil over at Sophia's unrepentant words and attitude. "That's not true and you know it!" she snaps back, her voice rising with frustration. "You know Cedric rescued me from your ambush, yet you somehow made yourself out to be the victim. What is your problem with me?"

Sophia's expression darkens, her eyes narrowing into slits as she glares at Marisol. "Don't play innocent with me," she spits, her voice laced with venom. "You can try to fool everyone around here but not me, I know the truth." She accuses, "I know you're just using Cedric to get what you want!"

Marisol feels her anger flare, her patience wearing thin. What was it with the people of Redwood and their baseless accusations, "I am not using anyone!" she snaps, nails digging into her palms from the force of her clenching them. "I'm just trying to survive, like everyone else, why is that so hard for you to register when you're the one who brought and is keeping me here against my will in the first place!"

"Oh please, Marisol," Sophia scoffs, rolling her eyes so hard. Marisol is surprised they don't stay at the back of her head, "Do you think anyone believes your pathetic attempts at innocence? They know the truth."

"And what truth would that be, Sophia?" Marisol shoots back. "That you're so desperate to hold onto an imaginary grudge because you feel threatened by me, that you'd stoop so low to peddle lies about me?!"

Sophia's face contorts with anger, disbelief and shock evident in her tone, "You dare speak to me like that?" she spits, her voice rising in indignation. "You, who has no place here?"

"Yes!" Marisol growls, her grip on control almost slipping. She saw Sophia's eyes widen for a fraction of a second.

"I don't belong here, Sophia. I never have and I never will." Marisol's voice is cold and steely as she grits out the rest of her words, "But I'll be damned if I let you or anyone else dictate my place in it. Especially since you're holding me against my will."

Sophia's nostrils flare with rage, her fingers balling at her sides. "You think you're so clever, don't you." She says, more of a statement than a question, "You're nothing but a wolf in sheep's clothing, Marisol. And mark my words, the pack will see you for what you truly are."

Marisol feels her control slipping again. She ached to put Sophia in her place so badly, but something held her back, reminding her that the time wasn't right.

"I don't have to prove anything to you, Sophia. It's obvious that your delusions have driven you to the brink of madness." Marisol says, her voice steadier than she expected.

Sophia's eyes flash with rage, she's almost shaking as she takes a step closer to stand right in front of Marisol. "You don't belong here," her voice is low and threatening but the only thing Marisol feels is anger and irritation. "You're nothing but trouble, and you need to leave before you cause any more damage."

Marisol struggles to stop her jaw from dropping at the words, rendered completely speechless for a sliver of a second before she all but cries out. "Then let me go! Go ahead and remove that forcefield and see if I won't walk out of here and away from your lives without a second thought. But you can't do that, and you won't." The challenge was clear in her eyes as she stared at Sophia. "You want to know why? Because whether you like it or not, I am like your freaking savior. And it looks like I'm not going anywhere yet." She declares, her voice ringing with defiance. "If you have a problem with that, then you're going to have to handle that on your own because I am sick and tired of dealing with your tantrums!"

With that, Marisol turns on her heel and storms away, her heart pounding in her chest as the distance between her and a frozen Sophia grows wider and wider.

What annoyed her the most was that she still couldn't understand Sophia's stance or accusations. How could she trap her and then turn around to blame her? She could smell the jealousy oozing out from her, it was eating away at her and making her bitter, it looked like she was losing her senses too and Marisol almost felt pity for her. Almost.

Marisol decided that she was done pretending. The next person who would dare to cross her would feel the brunt of her anger and in a split second, she makes another decision. Instead of the hidden castle, she storms back to her room.

Everybody in Redwood be damned. She wasn't going to stand in for the safety of such dubious and gullible people that night. And she couldn't put up with Cedric's insufferable attitude either. He could wipe all of them out for all she cared. That night, she wanted to be on her own until her anger wore off.