

## Chapter 150

The next morning, Marisol wakes up feeling surprisingly light, like a weight had been lifted off her shoulders. The events of the previous day seemed distant now, replaced by a sense of clarity and determination. She decides to start the day fresh and have breakfast in the pack house, something she hadn't done in a long while.

After freshening up, Marisol makes her way to the kitchen, her footsteps light with newfound optimism. But before she could reach her destination, she was intercepted by Lily, who looked to be on her way to find Marisol, a tray of food in her hands.

"Hey, Marisol," Lily greeted, with a wane smile. "I was just coming to find you."

"Oh really?" Marisol questions, returning a smile of her own as she lets her eyes roam over the contents of the tray, "Breakfast in bed? When was the last time that happened?" she says lightheartedly, but Lily gave her a solemn look, her lips drawn into a thin line.

"We need to talk, Marisol."

Marisol paused a brow, raising at the urgency of the other's voice. "What's up?"

"Let's get this to your room first," Lily says instead, and Marisol feels a prickle of unease at Lily's serious tone and demeanor.

She ends up nodding, turning around, and leading Lily back to her room. Once inside, Lily wasted no time getting straight to the point, setting the tray down on a table.

"Sophia's been spreading more lies about you." Lily starts, growing more unsettled than serious now as she begins pacing the length of the room.

Marisol couldn't help but roll her eyes at the information. Does Sophia really not know when to stop? "I couldn't care less about what Sophia says," she resorts to saying, her tone impassive, and Lily swirls around so fast that Marisol worries about her wellbeing.

"It's not just idle gossip, Marisol," Lily adds, brows pinched. "Sophia's convinced Caleb that you attacked her."

Marisol resisted the urge to groan loudly and facepalms instead. "And here I was thinking she couldn't get any more ridiculous. Could she atleast get a little more creative with her lies?" Lily could see that Marisol wasn't taking this as seriously as she should. This shouldn't be taken as lightly as Marisol is currently doing.

"Sophia's got bruises and wounds to show for it, Marisol." Her expression was grim, and her words finally seemed to attract Marisol's attention. She sees her eyes widen as she adds, "And Caleb's bought into her story."

"Excuse me?" Marisol exclaims, open-mouthed, "This is insane!."

"It's confusing," Lily said.

Marisol felt her hackles rise, and now she was the one pacing. "I can't believe this! I need to go find Caleb. I need to talk to him and set things straight."

Lily shakes her head at the end of Marisol's words, "It's not safe for you to confront them right now. Sophia's got him convinced that you're out of control. He's very angry at the fact that you would attack his mate, and," Lily leans in closer, her next words whispered, "I think they're planning on putting you under a spell, or some kind of drug to put you to sleep."

Marisol wouldn't say she was entirely shocked, but her words are laced with disbelief as she mutters in realization, "Like they did when I first got here."

Lily nods, solemn.

Marisol's fingers ran through her hair, and she lets out a heavy breath. She really could never catch a break in this place. She is stumped at the fact that Caleb could be so gullible. Was he really going to make such a decision whilst letting his emotions get the best of him?

Does he not know what drugging her would do? She'd stayed away from the hidden castle and Cedric's Wolf the night before, both out of spite of the people of Redwood and her own building anger, but under the influence of a spell, she would be out of it and away from the wolf for even more nights. Was it really worth it to put his entire pack at risk to appease his insecure mate?

"Did Cedric go on a rampage last night?" Marisol asked, tentative and almost breathed out in relief when Lily shook her head.

"No."

"I can not be put down again," Marisol said urgently. "I need to talk to Caleb."

"No. You should keep your distance for now. Instead, leave the pack house for now," she suggests in a rush, "Spend the day with my friends until things cool down a bit. Maya, Jake, and Ryan would be happy to be with you."

Marisol groaned, thinking how absurd it was that she would be the one running when she'd done nothing wrong. It was unfair, but Lily was right.

"Alright," Marisol agreed reluctantly, her shoulders slumping with resignation. "I'll go."

Lily's smile reached her eyes for the first time that morning. "Thank you. You need to leave now. They'll meet you halfway. I already informed them of your coming."

"And you? Aren't you bound by an oath? How will you hide this from them without breaking your oath?"

Lily hums, "You're right, but I'm not spending the weekend here. My shift ends in a few hours. I just have to avoid everyone until it's over, and then I'll meet you guys. I'll be away from here until it blows over."

"Okay," Marisol nods, "Let's do this."

Marisol follows Lily as she stealthily leads her out of the pack house, grateful for her quick thinking. Just as Lily had promised, her friends were waiting for her a short distance away, their smiles warm and welcoming.

Without asking, they begin walking away leisurely with Marisol in tow, each person seemingly comfortable and relaxed. It helped Marisol feel a little at ease and less like a fugitive who's being taken to a safe space. Maya and Jake chat eagerly as they walk, their discussion centered on their latest training techniques while Ryan listens quietly, his eyes scanning their surroundings with a thoughtful expression.

"So, Marisol, how have you been?" Maya finally asked, falling into step beside her. "It feels like ages since we last saw you."

Marisol smiles, grateful for the distraction and feeling included. "I've been okay," she replies vaguely, trying to push aside the thoughts of Sophia and Caleb that threatened to consume her. "Just trying to keep busy."

"Yeah? Okay. Well, since we didn't get much of a chance the first time, how about you tell us about yourself now?" Jake chirps in, "We'd like to get to know you better."

Marisol shrugs, not entirely sure how to reply to that, "Well, there's not much to tell," she replies modestly. "I'm just a girl trying to find her way in this crazy world."

The group laughs at that, and Marisol feels relaxed a little more. For the next few minutes, they chatted amicably about trivial things, their conversation light, and easy. They didn't discuss what was happening in the pack, instead opting to talk about other things as they walked towards the training grounds. Marisol couldn't help but feel grateful for their company, even though she was still weighed down by worry for Cedric.

When they reached the training grounds, Marisol watched as Maya and Jake began their training session, their movements fluid and graceful. Ryan, on the other hand, leans against a nearby tree, his eyes focused on their swift, perfected by practice actions.

Marisol stands awkwardly in another corner, worrying her lip between her teeth. She contemplates joining them in training but is unsure of how they would take that. She feels out of place, the thoughts of Cedric and Sophia still making rounds in her head. The snide remarks and snares of the pack members would no doubt only grow too, and the thought of that only worked to fuel her hopelessness.

As she stands there, feeling increasingly anxious, Ryan approaches her with a sympathetic smile.

"You look like you could use a break," his tone was gentle as he regarded Marisol, who looked at him with wide eyes, "Why don't we take a walk? I know a quiet spot where we can talk, or not, if you'd rather just think. It's whatever you want."

Marisol nodded, relieved to have some time away from the prying eyes of the other pack members. Together, they venture into the forest, the sounds of nature growing louder, surrounding them like a comforting embrace.

Ryan leads her to a secluded part of the forest that Marisol hadn't explored before. The air was filled with the soothing sounds of nature, and Marisol found herself relaxing in the tranquility it presented.

Ryan glanced at her, his tone soft and soothing, "I noticed you'd been a little fidgety. What's been troubling you, Marisol?"

Marisol hesitated, unsure if she could reveal her plight and, if so, how much she could reveal. Coupled with the relaxed ambiance, there was something about Ryan's quiet empathy that pushed her to want to open up.

He looked like he would listen and not judge. Marisol was aching for just that right about now, tired of being fixed with only accusatory glares and judgmental looks from people who didn't know half of what she'd been put through.

"I don't understand what's happening with Sophia," she finally admits, her voice tinged with frustration. "And I'm worried about Cedric."

Ryan nodded, thoughtfully. "I can imagine that it's been tough for you," he said, his tone sympathetic. "I'm sorry about everything."

Marisol sighs, her shoulders feeling a little less heavy. He was the first person to offer an apology, sounding truly sincere.

"Thank you so much for that. I didn't know how much I needed to hear that."

He gives a crooked grin, and they resume walking, a comfortable silence falling over them. "Are you still mad at us for tricking you? By us, I mean Caleb and Redwood," Ryan says, breaking the silence with a topic Marisol would've never expected. "And how much do you miss home?"

Marisol blinks, taken aback by the unexpected question. She hadn't given much thought to her home in a long time, her focus consumed by the challenges of life in Redwood and Cedric. "I... I don't know," she finds herself stuttering in answer, "I guess I've been too caught up with trying to find a way out of here to think about home." she confesses quietly, not missing as Ryan nods, encouraging.

"It's been a whirlwind since I arrived at Redwood," she continues, "But I'm slowly starting to let go of my anger towards Caleb and focus on finding a way out of this mess."

Ryan nods in agreement, his gaze steady and reassuring. "I'm sure it hasn't been easy, but you're strong, Marisol," he says, his voice filled with conviction. "And you're not alone. You're unofficially part of our friendship group now."

Marisol giggles, "Thank you. But how do you know so much about me?"

"We have our ways," he shrugs playfully.

Marisol feels gratitude towards Lily, Ryan, and the others. Somehow, knowing that she had their support gave her a little boost, one she hadn't known she needed. She finds herself opening up to Ryan in a way she hadn't with anyone else, their conversation flowing effortlessly as they delve into more, less serious topics.

Ryan suddenly freezes, his eyes flashing gold as he receives a message from someone. Marisol watched him curiously. Seeing him like that strikes something in her, making her miss home. It was the first time she'd been so far away from home and left so completely alone.

She misses being a part of something and not some outcast to be pointed at and sneered at. She misses the dull thrum of the pack bond and the way they were all interconnected. Now, more than ever, she regrets ever shutting her family out and keeping secrets.

When Ryan was done, he looked at her with a grave expression, and Marisol's heart sank. Whatever news he had just gotten could not be good.

"We need to return to the training ground immediately," Ryan says, and without waiting for an answer, he grabs Marisol's hand and pulls her along with him, their steps quickening until they were fully sprinting.

As they ran through the forest, Marisol's mind races with possibilities. What could be so urgent that they needed to return to the training ground so urgently? Had something happened to Lily? Did Caleb get her? Was Sophia making a fuss?

"What's the problem?" Marisol asks, her voice tight with anxiety as it is carried by the wind.

"Cedric." came the short, stiff reply that had Marisol's heart skipping a beat.