

Chapter 154

On getting to her room, Marisol is struck with another dilemma. She paced around the length of the room, guilt and anxiety weighing down on her. She worried about Lily's wellbeing and wondered if an apology would cut it for putting her through what would no doubt be one of the most, if not the most, terrifying experiences of her life.

Coming to a resolution, Marisol took a deep breath, she hoped Lily would see her sincerity and she knew she was going to do whatever it took to earn her forgiveness. However, just as she stepped out, she caught sight of Lily making her way into the pack house.

Lily, preoccupied with hastily making her stroll down the corridor, does not notice Marisol at the far end of the hall and, stunned, Marisol quickly follows after her.

Marisol couldn't believe her eyes as she watched Lily move about the pack house with an air of ease and normalcy. It was as if the events of the previous night had never occurred, as if Lily hadn't been thrust into a dangerous situation that could have cost her life. The sight left Marisol feeling utterly bewildered, her mind struggling to reconcile the image before her with the harrowing ordeal Lily had endured.

"You seem surprised to see me." Lily giggled on seeing Marisol's expression.

Marisol shook her head in disbelief, unable to comprehend how Lily could be up and about so easily when even Marisol herself had shut herself away following her first encounter with the beastly wolf.

She'd imagined any other person would, too. "B- but last night....." she stammered, her words tumbling out in a rush. "You were attacked, Lily. You could've been seriously hurt. How are you here?"

Lily's laughter filled the air, a musical sound that echoed off the walls of the pack house. "Oh, Marisol," she said, her eyes twinkling with mirth. "You worry too much."

Marisol did not see what part of their conversation was amusing, her brows pinching as she whisper-yelled with a sense of urgency, "You were attacked, Lily! There's nothing funny about that."

Marisol felt a pang of frustration at Lily's nonchalant attitude, unable to restrain her friend's carefree demeanor with the gravity of the situation. "How can you be so calm about this!?" her voice is tinged with exasperation.

Lily's laughter subsided, replaced with a gentle smile as she reached out, placing a gentle hand on Marisol's shoulder. "Because," she started, meeting Marisol's gaze and holding it confidently as she continued, "I know that Cedric wasn't planning on hurting me. He did what he did to lure you out. It was so obvious."

Marisol's mind reeled at the revelation, struggling to make sense of the conflicting emotions swirling within her.

"Trust me. I'm okay now. Sure, I was scared out of my mind when I thought he was really going to rip my head off, but I thought about it through the night and even discussed it with the gang. I realized that it was a hoax. I was being stubborn, so he knew to step his whole 'interrogation method' up. He wasn't going to actually harm me." She finished, leaving Marisol's jaw slacked as she stared back at her.

"W- What about me?" Marisol finally gets out, a little tentative, "Are you mad at me? For making you a scapegoat? I'm so sorry, if it weren't for me, he wouldn't have targeted you. It's all my fault."

Lily shook her head regarding Marisol with fond eyes, "Oh don't be like that, Marisol, you have nothing to apologize for. I'm not angry at either you or Cedric. Why should I be? I watched you worry about him every other second you spent in hiding, and it looked like he was just the same for you. It's all just really cute if you asked me." She finished with a dismissive wave of her hands, leaving Marisol to nod dazedly, her mind awash with conflicting thoughts and emotions. But despite her lingering doubts, she couldn't deny the truth in Lily's words.

"Now let's talk about something more interesting!" Lily chirped, the amusement returning to her voice, "The pack is abuzz with some interesting information that you should know." Lily exclaimed excitedly.

"What is it?" Marisol asked, her eyes widening slightly in curiosity.

"You've got to follow me to find out," Lily said instead, eyes glinting with mischief.

Intrigued, Marisol followed her.

As she trailed after Lily, Marisol began to notice a subtle shift in the atmosphere, especially with regard to the pack members around them. There was a noticeable tension in the air, a sense of unease that seemed to follow them wherever they went. Marisol couldn't quite understand what had caused this sudden change.

As they walked, Marisol found herself stealing glances at the pack members this time, instead of the other way around. Instead of narrow, accusatory eyes trailing after her, Marisol found them avoiding her gaze entirely, their whispers not even loud enough to be picked up on at a fair distance. It felt as though they suddenly became afraid of her, like she was some kind of dangerous predator lurking in their midst.

Although Marisol was perplexed, she pushed the thought aside, focusing on Lily instead, now that the other had fallen into step beside her.

"So, Marisol," Lily started, her tone relaxed as she looked around, "You noticed anything yet? The change within the pack?" When she looked at Marisol, it was to find her features twisted into a confused frown, so she finally added, "They're terrified of you, Marisol."

Marisol's brows shot up, her voice rising as she repeated, "Terrified of me?" Lily offered her an unsettling smile, "What's going on, Lily?"

Lily broke into a grin at that, clearly enjoying the opportunity to share the latest gossip with her friend. "Because of what happened between you and Cedric," she explained matter-of-factly, the amusement never leaving her voice, "It would seem that your little altercation with Cedric has made quite the impression on the pack."

"How do you mean?" Marisol asked with a tired groan. She was beginning to get an idea of what Lily meant, but she needed confirmation.

"Let's just say that your display of power back there revealed that you are not on their level. They now see you in a different light... you're an Alpha wolf."

There it was. Marisol's fingers go up to massage the space between her brows as she sighs tiredly. She remembers the heated argument with Cedric, the way he'd gotten her so riled up that her self-restraint slipped loose and her wolf surged to the surface. She hadn't meant to reveal her true nature to the pack, but in the heat of the moment, she had lost control.

However, Marisol felt a lick of satisfaction, albeit a little displeased. For so long, she had been treated like vermin and even worse than an omega. Now that the pack members finally recognized her strength, things were finally going to change. What kind of change? She was sure she'd just gotten a glimpse of it. She just didn't know if she was ready for that change.

It seemed, however, that Lily wasn't done with her revelations just yet. With that mischievous glint still in her eyes, she leaned in closer to Marisol, her voice dropping to a conspiratorial whisper. "But that's not all," she chirped, Marisol's ears perking up to catch every single one of her words, "There's another rumor circulating in the pack."

Marisol waited with bated breath, her curiosity piqued, and she almost screamed in frustration when Lily did not continue, her lips pulling up to a smirk. "What rumor?" she urged, leaning in closer to her, and Lily looked to almost be bursting with excitement as she announced cheerfully.

"The rumor says that you and Cedric are fated mates!" She looked to see Marisol's eyes widening to the size of saucers before she added with a giggle, "You said a couple of convincing things that afternoon."

Marisol's heart was thudding violently against her chest, her mind racing as she processed the words and the implications of such a rumor.

Before she could voice her thoughts, Lily added, "Of course, not everyone believes the rumor. Many are more interested in the prophecy and what it might mean for the pack's future. It seemed someone leaked that information to divert their attention. So not only are they scared of you, they now see you as some sort of Savior too."

"Oh wow," she muttered, suddenly breathless.

Lily hummed in understanding, "Yeah.... Although, I'm not happy that the prophecy got leaked. I preferred it when we kept it a secret because, now that the whole pack knows about it and your role in it, I'm certain that trouble is nearby. If the whole pack knows, then it's only a matter of time before Guinevere is aware, too, and trust me, she'll react soon..."

Lost in her thoughts, Marisol barely registered the rest of Lily's words, her voice fading into the background as she grappled with the implications of the rumor. It was clear that her life was about to become even more complicated, and she had no idea how to navigate the uncertain path that lay ahead.

Marisol blinked back to reality when they were just a few steps away from Caleb's office. She picked up her pace, silently urging Lily to follow suit, hoping to avoid any confrontation. She breathed a sigh of relief as they approached the end of the corridor. But her hopes of evasion erupted into smoke when Caleb's head suddenly popped out of the doorway, "Hey, uhm Marisol!" He called, causing Marisol to abruptly pull to a halt, Lily stopping just before she could bump into her.

Marisol noticed that instead of the usual haughtiness she was used to, his expression was composed yet expectant.

"Hi," she responded. The sound was so awkward it almost had her gritting her teeth.

"Can you come into my office for a bit?"

Marisol exchanged a worried glance with Lily but ultimately nodded, silently reassuring her friend before stepping into the room.

To her surprise, she found Cedric already seated inside, accompanied by Sophia, whose complexion seemed visibly pale and strained. The sight of Cedric instantly worked to calm Marisol's nerves, the familiar scent of his presence washing over her like a comforting embrace. Marisol felt safe.

She entered the room, a little surprised at the fact that she consciously tried to catch his eyes, trying to get him to acknowledge her presence somehow. However, he seemed to be avoiding just that, refusing to look her way or even acknowledge the addition of a new presence, his jaw locked. That hurt more than Marisol would like to admit.

She wondered if he was still upset. Or maybe he was trying to prove to her that he meant everything he said. She bristled at the thought of it but swallowed down her questions, making her way to find a seat at the round table instead.

"What's the meaning of this, Caleb?" Cedric suddenly said, his voice sharp, and there's a hint of annoyance in there.

Startled by the sound, Marisol almost missed her chair.

"Why'd you invite her? I don't remember sending for her."

Marisol's eyes widened in realization. Was he really talking about her? In that manner.

"I-I thought it would be beneficial to have her input." Caleb, clearly flustered by Cedric's abruptness, stuttered out an explanation, stumbling over his words, his gaze nervously darting between Cedric and Marisol.

"We don't need her here," Cedric stated bluntly, his eyes narrowing in irritation.

Marisol felt a surge of indignation at Cedric's dismissal, her confusion and offense growing with each passing instant. She wondered what Cedric was playing at and why he was treating her with such disdain in front of Caleb and Sophia after the stunt he pulled in front of the entire pack just a few days ago. Was it a ploy to end the rumors?

The room fell into an eerie silence. Marisol could feel Caleb's discomfort and Sophia's fear rising with each second until Cedric spoke up once again.

"Well, since she's already here." He started, leaning into his chair and folding his arms. His expression softened into a smirk this time, confusing Marisol with the sudden change as he added, "Don't you think now would be the perfect time to do what I asked of you?"

Marisol, utterly lost and confused, looked from Cedric to Caleb, trying to make sense of his cryptic words. A hint of annoyance flashed across Caleb's face, but he sighed and followed with a single nod.

Then slowly, Caleb and Sophia rose to their feet, their expressions contrite as they started to move to her side of the table. Marisol felt all the alarm bells in her head go off, the situation confusing and disconcerting in every sense of the word.

"Wait!" She protested, pushing further into her seat to put some distance between them, "What's going on? Did something happen?" Marisol rushed out as they both stopped right in front of her. She turned to Cedric for help, or some sort of explanation, but the man continued to ignore her, his eyes now fixed on his brother and his mate.

"We're truly sorry, Marisol." Caleb started, his tone earnest. "We never meant to cause you any harm, and we didn't think our plans through. I'm sorry for everything you've been through since the moment you arrived here. I apologize for troubling you with something as important as a mating bond, trapping you here, and for every injustice you've experienced."

Marisol narrowed her eyes, the words sinking in. Oh. Are they apologizing? She thought, her nerves relaxing. She wasn't sure what she thought initially. First, she'd thought she'd been led into some kind of ambush, and then, looking at their solemn expressions, another thought that something bad had happened to either her family or her pack crossed her mind. But definitely not this.

"I'm sorry. I let fear and jealousy cloud my judgment," Sophia confessed next in a mutter, "And then I took it too far. I failed to realize and understand the extent of the situation, and we let our emotions cloud our judgment."

"Our actions were misguided, and we deeply regret any pain we may have caused." Caleb finished animatedly, and Marisol found that she could only blink dumbly, perplexed by what had just happened. What game was Cedric playing, and where did she fit into his plans?

"Uhhh... Okay?" She finally drawled, feeling flustered. "Where's all this coming from?"

Caleb exchanged looks with Sophia and Cedric, who had remained silent through their apologies. His expression was stoic and unreadable as he watched the exchange unfold. This time, Sophia cleared her throat before speaking.

"We..... we've taken time to consider our actions and the impact they may have caused."

"Yeah. The other day, when you argued with--"

Cedric did not let Caleb finish, his voice low and commanding as he interrupted, "Thank you for your apologies," he said, his tone carrying a note of finality. "But there are more pressing matters to attend to."

With that, he rose from his seat, his gaze lingering on Marisol for a moment before he turned and walked out of the room, leaving Marisol to ponder the implications of his words and what had just happened.

She was still staring in the doorway when she noticed that Sophia was suddenly perched next to her.

"I'm really sorry," Sophia said, breaking down into sobs. "That wasn't me. I can not recognize who I have become."

Marisol swallowed as her emotions began to hit the surface. "Okay." She croaked out with a sense of urgency, and before Sophia could utter another word, she pushed up from her chair and dashed out after Cedric.