

## Chapter 155

“Cedric, stop!” Marisol called out, running after Cedric, who was idly walking back to the hidden castle, getting nothing in reply or even in the way of acknowledgment.

She ran until she bumped into him, hearing as he sucked in a sharp breath before turning around ever so slowly.

“Yes, Marisol?” He asked in a tired drawl, and Marisol fought back a confused splutter, blinking.

“What do you mean ‘Yes, Marisol?’! What was that about? What are you doing?”

He looked away, then sighed “So many questions. Which one do I answer?”

Marisol rolled her eyes impatiently. If Cedric was trying to get on her last nerves, he was doing an impeccable job, “You know exactly what I want to know, Cedric,” she fired back, tone firm, “What happened in there?”

Cedric raised a brow at her, then simply shrugged, “I’m keeping to my end of the bargain. I know not everyone can say the same. And now, I’m going back to my chambers.”

Marisol frowned, “Are you really going to keep using that against me? Plus, do you actually believe that forcing them to apologize is going to cut it?”

Cedric stepped closer, his expression not giving away anything as he said, “I’m aware that it won’t. But it’s a start in the right direction, isn’t it? I’ll get them to do something that will satisfy you sooner or later. Don’t worry, your pretty little head about that.”

Marisol groaned, wondering if the man had completely lost his communication skills from spending such a long time in solitude. “You’re not getting it. You don’t just force people to do things they clearly don’t want to.”

Cedric dons a thoughtful look at that before he shrugs again, “No, actually I can. And I made it clear that the only person I have no intention of forcing into anything is you, so now that you’re done with your little questioning session, may I leave? I’ve got a curse to break, and with the rumors spreading around the park, I know that Guinevere will not sit idle for too long.”

Without waiting for a reply, he simply turned around and continued on his way.

Marisol watched him go, her shoulders drooping in exhaustion. She wasn’t sure what to make of his last comment, and that only worked to frustrate Marisol even more.

“Now that you’ve been outed to the pack, keep in mind that you’re not safe anymore,” Cedric spoke up again, now a few steps ahead, his voice bringing Marisol’s attention back to him. “Don’t loiter around the pack alone. I would prefer you remained in my sight at all times, or at least indoors. But, I have no right to take away your freedom, so all I can do is warn you. Be alert and make sure you’re with someone at all times.”

With that, he finally walked away and out of sight.

Marisol stood rooted in her spot as she processed his words before finally starting the walk back to her room, her mind a whirlwind of questions and uncertainties. She’s unsure of how to feel about the sudden change in Cedric’s behavior.

Seeing him actually do everything he could to try and make her feel better caused a fluttery feeling in her stomach and she tried to convince herself that it was that way because that was the nicest thing Cedric had done for her since their encounter, but it was all lies. There was a giddy smile on her face as she took a seat at the table and began to update her journal, the fluttery feeling stubbornly remaining.

A thought formed in her head as Marisol finished her last sentence, causing her to worry with her lip between her teeth. If Cedric was going to be serious about their deal, shouldn’t she be doing the same? That would only be fair, wouldn’t it?

She’d been warned by Lily and even Cedric that she might be in danger, but Marisol had never been one to cower and hide in fear. She was going to need some more information about this new enemy of hers.

Who was Guinevere, and what had driven her to cast such a malevolent spell?

She’d read of the wars between Ember Coven and Redwood Pack, but there was no mention of a ‘Guinevere’. The only place she’d come across her name was in the prophecy. The same one that mentioned that war was coming to Redwood.

After spending some time lost in thought, Marisol resolved to seek out Cedric once more, hoping to find some answers amidst the silence of the hidden castle. But to her surprise, when she arrived, the castle was eerily empty, devoid of any sign of Cedric’s presence. Panic rose with each second as she began to frantically search every nook and cranny, even the ones a person of Cedric’s size, let alone his wolf would fit in, her heart pounding with fear at the thought of what might have become of him.

As she scoured the castle for any sign of Cedric, Marisol couldn’t shake the nagging feeling of apprehension that gnawed at her insides. Since she had begun staying with him, Cedric had exhibited a newfound sense of control, refraining from the reckless behavior that had once characterized his actions. But now, with his sudden disappearance, Marisol couldn’t help but wonder if he had regressed in her absence, succumbing once again to the wild impulses that had plagued him before. Had he lost control once more?

Mind racing with worry, Marisol rushed out of the castle in search of Lily, hoping that her friend might have some insight into Cedric’s whereabouts. Just as she is about to enter the pack house, she collides with another body, the unexpected encounter catching her off guard.

"M- My apologies," Marisol muttered hastily, attempting to sidestep the person who turned out to be Sophia and continue on her way and she'd done that successfully, already rushing away with hurried steps when Sophia called out to her, her voice stopping Marisol in her tracks.

“Wait!”

Reluctantly, Marisol turned to face Sophia, her eyes narrowing with suspicion as she awaited an explanation for the interruption.

"Cedric is in a meeting with the council," she explained hurriedly, almost like she was afraid of being cut off or walked out on as she added, "They're deliberating whether he's fit to reclaim his position as alpha."

Marisol's heart skipped a beat at the news, her thoughts racing as she processed the implications of Sophia's revelation. Why would the council be questioning Cedric's fitness to lead? And what did it mean for his future - and hers? Wasn't it too rushed? It was still too early to make a decision, wasn't it?

He may be cognizant and seemingly stable right now, but there was still a chance that he could regress at any time. Did they think that the curse was broken because he was back in human form? Couldn't they feel the darkness lurking within him?

“Thanks,” she finally muttered, turning around to walk away, distractedly wondering why Sophia would want to help her, especially unprompted after everything that had transpired between them.

“Before you go,” Sophia called out again, and Marisol could not help a tinge of irritation at being continuously held back, “I just wanted to make one thing clear,” Sophia said, quietly this time. “I really am sorry about everything. I wasn’t pretending earlier.”

Marisol regarded Sophia with cautious scrutiny, her mind buzzing with suspicion. If Sophia was truly remorseful, perhaps there was more to her than met the eye.

Gathering her resolve, Marisol decided to put Sophia's sincerity to the test. With a tentative step closer, she regarded Sophia with narrowed eyes, "What do you know about Guinevere?" she inquired, “And who gave the prophecy?”

At Marisol's question, she watched Sophia's solemn expression relax, and then her lips pressed into a thin line before she beckoned her closer, "Come with me," she said conspiratorially.

Intrigued by Sophia's invitation, Marisol fell into step behind her, her mind buzzing with anticipation as she followed Sophia into the depths of the pack house, eager to uncover the secrets that lay hidden beneath the surface.

Sophia led Marisol out of the bustling pack house and into the quiet streets of the town, the cool evening air brushing against their skin as they walked. Eventually, they arrived at a quaint little café nestled in a corner, its warm lights and inviting atmosphere beckoning passersby.

Marisol groaned unconsciously as they entered the café, the sight and pleasing smell of freshly brewed coffee and baked goods overwhelming her senses. The familiar aroma stirred something within her, a longing for the simple pleasures of life that she had been deprived of for so long.

As they made their way to a secluded corner of the café, Marisol took in the cozy ambiance around her, the soft hum of conversation, the gentle clinking of cups, and the comforting warmth of the surroundings.

It filled her with nostalgia and longing. It had been so long since she had visited anywhere beyond the confines of the pack house, and the prospect of indulging in the familiar comforts of coffee and conversation excited her despite herself. Everything about the café reminded her of simpler times before the chaos of Redwood had consumed her life.

Sophia walked until she was sure they were away from prying eyes and curious ears, settling into a seat at the far end of the café, and Marisol followed suit. Next, they placed their orders, and as they waited for their drinks to arrive, Marisol felt a sense of anticipation brewing within her. An eagerness to hear what Sophia had to say ignited within her.

When their orders finally came, Sophia was first to take a sip of her coffee, clearing her throat almost nervously before she started.

"I was once like you. I'm fairly new to Redwood myself. When Caleb and I returned here to the first time, it was supposed to be a joyous occasion, a chance for Caleb to introduce me to his parents and for Cedric to ascend the position of an Alpha. Instead, we were met with tragedy."

Marisol listened intently, taking little sips of her latte.

"Caleb and Cedric's parents had been brutally murdered, not even their remains could be salvaged." Sophia continues, her voice growing heavy with sorrow. "And Cedric, consumed by grief and anger, had become a shadow of his self. We heard that he was cursed and that the curse fed on his rage and made him lose his mind, carrying out the task of destroying the whole of Redwood instead of Guinevere doing so herself. Nothing made sense anymore."

Marisol's heart squeezed at the mention of Cedric's parents, her mind reeling at the sheer wickedness of it all. To lose one's family in such a violent way was a fate too cruel to comprehend, and she couldn't imagine the pain and anguish that Cedric must have endured in the wake of such a devastating loss.

Sophia went on to explain how Caleb had been thrust into the role of Alpha against his will, the burden of leadership weighing heavily on his shoulders as he struggled to navigate the turmoil that engulfed the pack.

"It was during this time that I realized that we needed a way out. Caleb and I do not belong here. We've always known that ourselves. I mean, we've done a terrible job so far, and I don't think it will get better with time. That would just be us lying to ourselves. We had to find a solution if we wanted to leave and go back to our own lives, so, I began to uncover the truth about Guinevere," Sophia explained, “I discovered that she was a powerful witch who blamed Redwood for the death of her brother, the former leader of the Ember Coven. In her quest for vengeance, she sought to destroy everything we held dear."

Marisol listened on in silence, her mind racing with the implications of Sophia's revelations. Guinevere's thirst for revenge had set into motion a chain of events that had torn apart the fabric of their lives, leaving devastation in its wake.

The fact that a single witch could wield such power and wreak such havoc upon an entire pack was almost incomprehensible, but Marisol knew better than to underestimate the depths of darkness that lurked within the supernatural world.

"And now," Sophia added grimly, "Guinevere has risen to power as the leader of the Ember Coven, wielding her formidable magic against us with ruthless determination."

Marisol's stomach churned with unease at the thought of facing such a formidable adversary, her mind grappling with the enormity of the threat they faced.

Seeing as Sophia was no longer speaking, Marisol leaned forward, heaving a sigh as her eyes searched Sophia's face for any hint of deception or trickery, but so far, her words had pretty much tallied with what Marisol had found herself.

"That is a lot to take in. I'm sorry you had to go through that. I can not imagine being thrust into something so chaotic and unexpected. By the way, I think you and Caleb have done a decent job. Because if you didn't, I wouldn't be here right now, and the pack wouldn't be as protective of you as they are."

Sophia exhaled heavily, a tired smile stretching onto her lips as she nodded, “Yeah. Thank you so much. I really needed to hear that. Everything so far has just been crazy, and I can't lie and say it hasn't taken a toll on me.” Marisol spared a nod in understanding before adding.

“But then, how did you come about the prophecy?”

Sophia bites down on her lip at that, shifting uncomfortably in her seat as her fingers start to trace the rim of her coffee cup. "I..." a pause where she gives Marisol a nervous glance. "I can't tell you about that yet," she replied cautiously, her gaze avoiding Marisol's penetrating stare.

Marisol frowned, her brow furrowing in frustration. She knew that Redwood's longstanding feud with the coven had made them wary of any dealings with witches, and the fact that Sophia was being secretive only fueled her suspicions further.

"But why me?" Marisol pressed, "Why am I the one who's supposed to help Redwood and Cedric?"

Sophia hesitated, her lips pressing into a thin line as she selected her words carefully. "The witch who delivered the prophecy... she didn't offer much in the way of explanation," she admitted reluctantly. "She was evasive, cryptic even. All she said was that you held the key to Redwood's salvation. That's all we've had to work with so far."

Marisol's frustration boiled over at the vague response. "That's not good enough," she snapped. "We need answers, Sophia. We need to know how to prepare and how to fight back against Guinevere and her coven if an attack is really underway."

Sophia only sighed, her shoulders slumping in resignation. "I know, Marisol," she replied wearily. "But for now, all we can do is trust in the prophecy and prepare as best we can."

A frustrated grunt left Marisol's lips, her mind whirling with thoughts of the impending threat looming over them. "Well, thank you for telling me what you could," she said begrudgingly, her tone softened slightly by gratitude. "At least, I now have more insight into what I'm up against."

Sophia nodded, and they finished their drinks in silence. As they prepared to leave the café, Marisol struggled to keep her focus on her surroundings, the wheels in her head turning as she tried to come up with plans and strategies. There was so much work to be done.

As they stepped out into the cool evening air, Marisol turned to Sophia with a determined glint in her eyes. “You have to use your authority as Luna to get the pack to start training vigorously for war,” she said firmly. “We need to be ready for whatever comes our way. Redwood is too relaxed.”

Sophia nodded solemnly. “I’ll pass on the message,” she promised, her voice tinged with determination, too. “We’ll do whatever it takes to defend Redwood and ensure its survival. Maybe then, Caleb and I can be set free.”

“Yeah,” Marisol agreed “You’re chained to this pack just like I am. Let’s set each other free.