

## Chapter 158

The next day, Marisol woke up in her own room. In her disoriented state, she felt surprised and confused at first, the once familiar space no longer felt like hers, until the memories from the night before came flooding back, bringing the pain along with it.

As the events of the previous night replayed in her mind, so did the embarrassment and sorrow. She wanted to stay locked in her room for as long as it took for her mind to forget about it, but, a stubborn feeling of hope fluttered in her chest, causing Marisol to get out of bed, dress up and make her way to the hidden castle after breakfast.

On getting there, she found Cedric to be in a slightly better mood than last night, hope rekindling within her, until he raised his eyes to meet hers, his expression darkening before he silently walked out and away from her.

Marisol's heart fell. But she decided to stay. Only if she did would they work out whatever it was that was going on between them. However, it only got worse to the point where Marisol began to feel like a pest, an unwanted disturbance to Cedric.

Just like that, Marisol found herself caught in a whirlwind of conflicting emotions in the days that followed Cedric's sudden withdrawal. Anger, hurt, and confusion warred within her, each vying for dominance as she struggled to make sense of what had transpired between them.

She felt foolish for allowing herself to be swept away by the intensity of their connection, only to be left standing alone in the aftermath. Her pride smarted at the thought of being rejected and ignored, yet beneath the layers of hurt, there lingered a nagging sense of longing.

It went on for the next few days until one day, Marisol angrily stomped back to her room, tears threatening to spill and that was when she made the decision to return the favor and ignore his existence too.

She berated herself for losing sight of her ultimate goal, which was to regain her freedom and return home. But try as she might, she couldn't shake the sense of care and affection she now held for him. Marisol couldn't deny the glaringly obvious truth that Cedric was her mate. The bond between them, though strained and frayed, still tugged at her heartstrings, refusing to be ignored.

Within the next few days, things did not improve, and worse, it began to feel like only Marisol suffered from the strain of their connection. Cedric's avoidance and refusal to acknowledge her presence only served to deepen the wound, leaving Marisol feeling more isolated and alone than ever before as she grappled with the bitter irony of being bonded to someone who seemed determined to keep her at arm's length.

As the days turned into weeks, their strained relationship slowly became the talk of the pack. Rumors began to spread like wildfire, fueling the whispers and speculation. Unfortunately, Marisol once again found herself at the center of unwanted attention.

Everybody had questions, and since they wouldn't dare go to Cedric with them, they targeted Marisol for their answers. While this was happening, she struggled to maintain her composure and dignity in the face of Cedric's cold indifference, but with each passing day, her resolve began to waver. She longed to reach out to him, to break through the walls he had erected around his heart and find solace in his arms once more.

However, her pride held her back, stubbornly refusing to allow her to make the first move. They were locked in a vicious cycle of avoidance and resentment, each waiting for the other to break the silence that hung heavy between them.

And so, Marisol found herself caught in limbo, torn between her pride and her longing for connection. She knew that something had to give, but the question remained: Would it be her resolve or Cedric's stubbornness that finally shattered the fragile barrier between them?

As the days passed and the tension between Cedric and Marisol continued to simmer, another significant development unfolded within the pack. Cedric's restraint on the full moon night did not go unnoticed by the pack members. For the first time in what felt like an eternity, he did not succumb to the curse that had plagued him for so long. This was a sign of hope, a glimmer of possibility that perhaps he was on the path to breaking the curse and regaining his former self.

The realization that the prophecy might indeed be true and that Marisol had a pivotal role to play in it spread like wildfire among the pack. It filled them with a newfound sense of determination and purpose, igniting a spark of hope that had long been extinguished. They began to prepare themselves for the looming confrontation with the Ember Coven, buoyed by the belief that victory was within their grasp.

Amidst the flurry of activity and anticipation, Marisol found herself consumed with a different kind of preparation. While the rest of the pack had now begun training tirelessly for battle, she delved into the depths of research, scouring ancient tomes and scrolls in search of information about Guinevere and her formidable brand of witchcraft. She was determined to uncover any advantage she could use to tilt the scales in Redwood's favor.

As she immersed herself in her studies, Marisol still found it impossible to shake the nagging sense of uncertainty that gnawed at her core. She had always known that she was no ordinary werewolf; her unique lineage, born of a witch-bane mother and a powerful hybrid father, had set her apart from the rest of her kind. Marisol was a rare blend of supernatural lineage, a super hybrid with the potential for great power. She had trained for it her whole life.

Yet, despite her prestigious heritage, Marisol had never manifested any of the supernatural abilities that were said to be inherent within her bloodline and birthright. She had lived her life as an ordinary but powerful werewolf, her powers lying dormant within her, waiting to be awakened.

Now, faced with the daunting task of confronting Guinevere and her powerful coven, Marisol couldn't help but question her abilities and worth. Was she truly capable of fulfilling the prophecy and leading Redwood to victory, or was she merely a pawn in a larger game she could only hope to understand?

The weight of her doubts set heavily upon her shoulders, leaving Marisol with a desperate wish for someone to confide in, someone who could offer guidance and reassurance in her darkest hour. A part of her mind muttered Cedric's name at the occurrence of such a thought, but with his distance and the growing tension between them, Marisol is left at a loss, forced to withdraw into herself more and develop an almost desperate need for distractions.

In the quiet solitude of her room, Marisol wrestled with her inner turmoil, grappling with the uncertainty that threatened to engulf her. She knew that she needed to find answers, to uncover the truth about her abilities and the role she was destined to play in the coming conflict. But as the hours stretched into days, she couldn't shake the feeling of unease that clung to her like a shadow, a constant reminder of the daunting challenges that lay ahead.

One afternoon, she decided to go out for air. Recently, she'd become less sociable and preferred to remain isolated, but she could only stay locked in for so long before she started to go stir-crazy. She was starting to feel suffocated, having to stare at the same four walls day in and out.

Making her way out of the pack house, Marisol walked until she was at the training ground, and that was when she stumbled upon Ryan, who was practicing alone; none of the other members of the 'gang' looked to be anywhere near. Marisol watched in awe for a few minutes, admiring his skill and determination and nodding in appreciation as her eyes followed his movement, fluid and precise, a testament to years of dedication and discipline.

Gathering her courage, she approached him and cleared her throat. Ryan paused mid-swing, turning to face her with a curious expression on his face.

"Ryan," she began, her voice tentative. "Do you have a moment?"

His features visibly softened at that, his chest rising and falling quickly as he replied, "Of course, Marisol," setting his sword aside, he nodded at her. "What's on your mind?"

Marisol hesitated, unsure of where to begin. She had never been one to open up easily, but something about Ryan's calm demeanor put her at ease.

"I've been... thinking a lot lately," she finally admitted, rushing out the rest of her words lest she retreated to her shell, "About who I am, and what I'm supposed to do. I feel like I'm on the verge of something big, something important, but I don't know what it is."

Ryan nodded in understanding, his expression thoughtful, "It sounds like you're grappling with a lot," he sympathized, and Marisol let out a heavy sigh.

Just then, Lilly walked in, accompanied by Maya.

"Hey girl," Maya said, waving, "Where have you been hiding? We don't see you around anymore."

Marisol gave her a small smile and missed, as Lily raised a brow at the same moment Jake bounced in.

"What's wrong?" Lily finally asked, seeking Marisol's eyes, "I didn't want to intrude, but you've been off lately. It seems like you're withdrawing into yourself. You know you can talk to us about anything, right?"

Marisol exhaled heavily, her shoulders slumping at the worry evident in Lily's tone, "I know, it's just..... I've been thinking a lot about everything that's been happening," she confessed, her voice tinged with uncertainty. "About Guinevere, the prophecy, ..... my heritage."

Maya immediately pulled her into a hug, cooing, "You know you're not alone, right? We are all here for you. Heck, Redwood wouldn't be feeling so hopeful if it weren't for you."

"Thank you, Maya," Marisol said gratefully. "I just... I don't know where to start. How to unlock the powers I supposedly possess."

Ryan gave her a reassuring smile. "It may take time, Marisol," he said, "But trust in yourself and your abilities. You'll find a way."

Marisol nodded, feeling a flicker of hope ignited within her. "I hope you're right," she said softly.

Jake rolled his eyes at the gloomy tone of her voice, "You may not realize it, Marisol, but you possess a strength within you that is unlike anything we have ever seen," he started, stepping closer before continuing firmly. "Do you know how many people Caleb and the council had brought in to cure Cedric before you arrived? They were seances, spells, rituals, and sacrifices. Nothing worked. And then you arrived and changed everything."

Marisol stared wide-eyed at him just as Lily stepped up next to him.

"Yeah," she added, "It was part of the things Caleb tried hiding from the pack."

"I don't think you understand what you did. And don't downplay it by thinking that whatever is happening is because you might be mates." It was Maya who spoke now, and Ryan joined in too.

"They're right. You have an effect on him, and it's not just about a mating bond. Your heritage may seem like a burden, but it is also a gift. Embrace it, and trust in yourself. You have the power to change the course of our pack's destiny."

For the first time in weeks, Marisol felt a glimmer of optimism, their words almost bringing tears to her eyes.

"You are stronger than you realize, Marisol," Lily assured her firmly. "You may not have unlocked your full potential yet, but I do not doubt that you will rise to the occasion when the time comes."

"Thank you, guys," Marisol said sincerely, a faint smile playing at the corners of her lips. "I needed to hear that."

"Anytime," they all said in a chorus, laughter erupting among them at the suddenness of it.

Marisol spends some time with them before wandering off on her own. She needed time to absorb their words.

She took a walk into the depths of the forest, loving the sound and feel of nature around her.

'Yeah. They are right.' She nodded to herself. 'I can do this. I can rise to whatever.'

She repeated, thankful for the involvement of Lily and the others as it'd helped lift her spirits even in the slightest.

However, she longed to hear her father and mother's advice. She missed them so much.

As she continued to venture into the woods, Marisol suddenly paused, her wolf beginning to itch with a sense of foreboding. She spun around several times, trying to find the cause of her wolf's apprehension, but there was nothing. She would have liked to stroll for a bit more, but her wolf was starting to get restless, so she decided to save it for another day, starting to find her way back.

Just then, Marisol heard a twig snap to her left, her heart jumped as her head snapped in the direction of the sound, and at that moment, Marisol felt her heart drop as several figures began to emerge from the shadows. Rogues.

Marisol did not need anyone to tell her that she was in danger. She had walked right into a trap.