

Chapter 164

As soon as Marisol's voice resonated through the battlefield, earning all their attention, Nicole released the wolf she'd been tormenting, its body dropping onto the floor with a loud thud as she leaped towards her daughter and immediately pulled her into an embrace.

Marisol's eyes immediately welled up with tears at the warmth of her familiar embrace, overwhelmed with emotion and her chest tightening with the force of it. She couldn't imagine just how much she'd missed this. Just the scent of her mother so close, mixing with hers, reduced her into a sobbing mess.

She could also feel the concern and worry of her people, her father's protective presence was like a soothing balm to her soul, but she couldn't help but feel something different about it.

Nicole finally broke the hug and pulled back to look at her daughter, her own eyes filled with tears. "My baby," she cooed, her voice trembling with emotion as she took Marisol's face into her hands. "I'm so sorry we didn't realize something was wrong sooner. We should have come for you sooner."

Marisol hugged her mother tightly at the words, basking in the familiarity of her embrace. "It's okay, Mom," she assured wetly, "I'm just glad you're here now."

Nicole nodded, sniffing loudly, "That witch's spell deceived us." She explained, shaking her head in regret. "We thought you were safe. We should have known better."

Liam's footsteps drew nearer, pulling Cedric and Caleb along as if they were rag dolls, his grip strong and unforgiving. Marisol felt a surge of fear and anger rise within her as she watched him manhandle her mate.

Unable to contain herself, she cried out, "Dad, stop!"

Liam halted, seemingly not having even realized what he'd been doing as he looked to blink back to reality before releasing them quickly, "Marisol," he said, his voice softening with emotion.

Marisol felt her lips wobble as she closed the distance between them and fell into his embrace, "I'm sorry, Marisol," he murmured, his voice hoarse with emotion. "I should have protected you better."

Marisol felt a pang of guilt as she looked into her father's eyes. She had always been his little girl, and she couldn't bear to see him in pain. "It's okay, Dad," she said, mirroring his expression, "You're here now, that's all that matters."

He forced a smile before he swiftly turned around to face the brothers who were only just picking themselves off the ground, "You bastards!" He growled, lunging at them again. He got hold of Cedric this time, fingers fisted in his collar.

"Dad, please!" she screamed, her voice trembling with emotion. "Please, you can stop now. You're hurting my mate!"

That effectively stopped Liam in his tracks, Nicole also turning to look at her in wonder.

Liam snarled at his daughter, wondering what had come over her. "What's this? Didn't they trick you? They kept you here against your will. For months now, they've kept you caged like an animal, you said so yourself!" He argued back, enraged.

"Dad!" She growled, her voice heavy with command. "Don't touch him."

It was only then that Liam realized just how much she'd changed. She was also bearing the mark of one of these two wolves.

He straightened up, still taking the bloodied man with him as he exchanged a look with Nicole.

'She's mated. Her powers have been activated too. If you go any further, she won't be able to hold back even if you're her father. Let go honey.'

"Dad, please," Marisol begged, quietly this time, "I'll explain everything, but you have to let him go first."

Liam hesitated, his gaze flickering between his daughter and wife. He was still seething with anger, but after a while, his grip finally loosened.

"Fine," he grumbled, "But they better not try anything funny, and you'd better have a good explanation for all of this."

Marisol sighed, in relief, Cedric was released. Her heart ached at his ragged look, and she itched to run to his side, but she knew she had to convince her parents that she was in her right senses first. She also worried about Cedric's pride, fussing over him right in front of everyone present would only make him seem weak.

He had to stand tall in front of her father if they were going to get his blessings. It shouldn't look like he couldn't hold his own no matter what.

Liam would never let Marisol be with anyone who he thought was weak and couldn't protect her.

She sucked in a deep breath and gestured towards the entrance to the pack house. Thankfully, there was no other argument as she led them in.

As soon as her parents were comfortable, with James and Garrett standing around stiffly and refusing to take a seat, Marisol dove into the story of all that had happened.

She started from her arrival by finding out about the prophecy, Guinevere's curse, and her time at Redwood. She spoke quickly, her words tumbling out in a rush as she tried to convey the urgency of the situation.

Her parents listened intently, their expressions shifting from shock to concern as they absorbed her words. When her story ended, there was a tense silence as they processed everything they had heard. Marisol's heart pounded in her chest as she awaited her father's reaction.

She finally understood what felt different about her father's presence. She had looked to him for protection her entire life. Now, she finds that she feels the safest with Cedric.

It was a slow process of acceptance, but it was true. Right now, her wolf was going wild inside her head, feral at the fact that her father had disrespected their mate right in front of her. Marisol knew that his protectiveness had always been a little too much, but this time, she couldn't entirely fault him. At least now, he knew the whole story.

Suddenly, Liam's thoughtful demeanor changes. With a ferocious growl, he leaped to his feet and grabbed both Cedric and Caleb, knocking their heads together before unleashing a brutal beating upon them. Marisol's eyes widened in horror as she watched her father's violent outburst.

"Stop!"

"You fools!" Liam growled, ignoring her protest, "You dare take my daughter out of the safest place for her and bring her here to endanger her?!" His voice was filled with rage and contempt as he delivered a series of blind punches at them.

Marisol's stomach churned with fear and anger as she witnessed the merciless assault on her mate and his brother.

"Stop!" she rushed forward, hoping to grab him out of his hold, but, her father was a lot faster than she could ever be.

Unable to bear it any longer, Marisol attempted to use her powers on her father in a desperate attempt to stop him. But her efforts were in vain. Over the years, her mother's witch-bane powers had partly extended to him and her mother's mere presence shielded him from Marisol's powers.

"Stop it, Dad!" Marisol screamed, her voice echoing through the room. Tears well up in her eyes as she watched the brutality unfold before her.

For a moment, Nicole watched in silence, her expression unreadable. Then she stood up and approached her husband. Gently, she wrapped her fingers around his arm, her touch calming him instantly.

Liam released Cedric and Caleb with a scowl, his anger subsiding as he moved to settle back into his chair; Marisol rushed to Cedric's side, her heart aching with guilt and frustration.

"Oh Cedric," she cried, taking him into her arms, "He didn't do anything! He was under a curse! Why are you taking it out on him!" She lashed out at her father, voice shaky and tight with emotion.

Cedric, bloodied and bruised, laced their fingers that laid on her lap, "It's okay, Marisol. It's all my fault. I'm sorry," he muttered, his words barely audible amidst the chaos.

Marisol couldn't bear to hear his apologies, tears streaming down her face uncontrollably. She faced her father, her eyes blazing with defiance. "No, Dad," she declared, "I told you earlier that he was my mate, how could you attack him like that!"

"Stop it, Princess. We deserve worse than this. His anger is not misplaced."

Marisol's vision was now blurry with tears as she held her heaving mate. She hated seeing him in pain, and she longed to take away his suffering.

"I won't let anyone endanger my daughter," Liam finally spoke up again, his voice firm. "Say goodbye to all of this right now. We're going home."

"No," Marisol declared, eyes red with fury, "My home is with him and I have told you all that you need to know. You can either accept who I am now and join us in preparing for the war, or leave and forget that you ever had a daughter."

With that, Marisol helped Cedric to his feet and practically dragged him out of the room, leaving her parents stunned in her wake.

Marisol's heart was both heavy and razed with anger as she led Cedric to their room in the hidden castle.

'What if he blamed her for all this?' Marisol thought tearfully.

He let out a pained groan as she set him down and Marisol hissed like she'd been the one in pain.

"I'm sorry," she said, wishing she could at least feel his pain, but for some reason, their bond had dulled since the arrival of her parents.

Cedric let out a soft chuckle and Marisol released him completely to go find the first aid box and an ice pack, but a soft grip on her wrist stopped her.

"Don't go."

Swallowing, she nodded and sat next to him, cleaning up his wounds with one of her clean dresses. Tears threatened to spill from her eyes as she kept them glued to his wounds. She couldn't bear to look at him right now, not with how guilty she felt.

"I knew they were coming. I'm so sorry. If I'd spoken up, it wouldn't have gotten this bad."

Cedric nodded, huffing a pained smile, "It's okay, princess. You tried to warn me, didn't you?"

"Yes. But I'd known the moment I crossed Leticia's barrier. I just didn't expect them to cause all this havoc. And I was afraid that you'd think that it meant I'd made my decision."

Her hands began to tremble as she cleaned him up. Her eyes blurred with tears of all the emotions that she'd been hiding from him.

Cedric gently stopped her, cupping her face in his palm. His touch was tender despite the pain he was in. "Don't cry, Princess. This is nothing." He reassured softly, "In fact, it feels good to feel mortal again. I haven't felt physical pain in a long time now." He laughed and Marisol's brows furrowed in frustration, finally meeting his gaze.

"It's not funny," she insisted, her tone filled with frustration and anger. "My father had no right to treat you like that. You'd been suffering the entire time too, and you only just broke free."

Cedric sighed, his thumb wiping the tears that stained her cheek. "I understand how you feel, but you can't completely blame me, can you? I had a part in it as well and we can't change what already happened, be we?" He said, his voice gentle but firm. "And now is not the time to dwell on that. We need to focus on what's ahead."

Marisol blinked in surprise, a little taken aback by his calm demeanor. "What do you mean?" she asked, her curiosity piqued. He seemed to hold no grudge.

Cedric's tongue poked out to lick his busted lip, gathering his thoughts. "I've been thinking," he started slowly, "...about relinquishing my position as Alpha to Caleb. That way, I can be with you, and we can go back to your pack together."

Marisol's eyes widened in astonishment. "You would do that for me?" she asked, her voice laced with disbelief.

Cedric nodded, his expression relaying his sincerity. "I would do anything for you, Marisol," he breathed out.

Marisol shook her head, her heart overflowing with emotion. All the anger in her heart vanished without a trace. "No, Cedric. I've already made my decision," she said firmly. "I'm staying with you."

Cedric's shoulders sighed slightly, "Marisol, I don't want you to be hurt or have any regrets. Your father is right. You were coerced and tricked into coming here. If I were in his shoes, I would have done worse. Don't let your anger cloud your thoughts. Really think about it, yes? I know you miss them. You've been trying to hide how difficult this decision is for you to make. Shouldn't I be making things easier for you?"

Marisol smiled, reaching out to touch his cheek. "Is that what made you think up such nonsense?" she asked softly.

Cedric grumbled something under his breath which made her smile widen.

"Don't worry about that, Cedric. I know in my heart that this is where I belong. I'm sure that my decision is the right one. You don't know this, butlong before we met, I used to dream about you."

Cedric's eyes widened in surprise, his heart skipping a beat at her words. "You dreamed about me?" he repeated, his voice filled with wonder.

Marisol nodded, a blush of was creeping onto her cheeks. "Yes," she admitted shyly. "They were terrible nightmares.... of you as a beast. You called to me as I called to you. Before now, I'd always felt like something was missing in my life, and now I realize it was you. It has always been you."

Cedric's heart swelled with emotion as their eyes locked, feeling more connected to her than ever before. "I love you, Marisol," he confessed, his voice barely above a whisper.

Marisol's eyes sparkled with joy and elation as she leaned in to kiss him, her lips meeting his tenderly. "I love you too, Cedric," she whispered back, her voice filled with warmth and affection.

Marisol was more than certain that this was the right decision. She was finally where she belonged; right here, with Cedric. What was left now was to speak to her parents and to inform Leticia that she was ready to prepare for battle.