

## Chapter 117

The beast looked like a product of pure rage, forged in the image and likeness of wickedness personified. Its eyes were a pool of red, fangs bared and ready. A loud growl pierces through the air as it lunges, its claws tearing at the air. Marisol could feel its power, its anger, its hatred aimed at nothing she could currently make out, but she couldn't look away.

That pull was there once again, a strange and irresistible itch that blocked out any chance for rationality. She knew she should be afraid. Everything about this entire encounter was terrifying, but still, she felt drawn to its energy, raw and untamed as it was. A need to explore and possibly understand its nature bubbling within the constraints of her chest.

She had enough time, considering that they seemed to be trapped in a room that looked to be floating in no particular direction. And it looked as if the beast hadn't taken note of her presence just yet. She hoped for it to remain that way because, as much as she was intrigued by it, she knew just what would be waiting the second it sensed another presence. Maybe it would even recognize her from all their previous encounters, making it even more determined to end it all this time. She shudders, shaking the thoughts away.

Going back to watching the creature, she squinted, trying to make out its exact size and maybe shape, anything that could hint at what exactly it was. She was staring right at it, but it looked to be just another failed attempt. No matter how much she glared and squinted at this beast, she still couldn't tell what it was. It was all distorted, like a blurred, pixelated image. Distractingly, she finds herself wishing she could go closer, inspect this creature from up close, maybe even feel it under her own palm, but it did not look like this creature would appreciate any of that.

Its growl was packed with anger, but she wasn't mistaken about the whimpers that this same creature let out, sounding like a wounded animal, one that she strongly felt she could heal.

She scanned the room they were in once again, just like the recurrent encounters with the creature, this location felt too eerily familiar. It was a wide expanse, all white with no doors or windows. There suddenly seemed to be a shift in the atmosphere, the hair at the back of her neck standing on edge as she slowly turned around to find the beast only to find its eyes now locked on her, an angry growl already tumbling out of its chest and the now familiar scent of her fear wafts through the room, her breath catching.

It lets out a terrifying roar before taking a big leap in her direction. She should run, but she remains frozen in place, eyes widening in fear. She wanted to scream, but not a single part of her body seemed to want to cooperate.

Was it a wolf?

It dove through the air, and in what felt like less than a second, it was on her, pinning her to the floor in a sickeningly familiar way. Its claws dig into her skin from where it holds her down before it raises a limb and swipes at her neck, immediately drawing blood.

Marisol lost the ability to breathe as blood began to pour out of the open gash like an uncontrolled waterfall. Tears brimmed in her eyes, her mouth opening and closing like a fish out of water. Like always, she starts to claw at any and everything in one final attempt at escaping, wanting to survive.

Marisol wakes up in a cold sweat once again, her heart pounding in her chest. It was the same nightmare again, except it was different this time. Although there was a difference in the scenery as one part of her nightmare seemed to be picked at random, it was the same beast that haunted her dreams. This time, it was closer than I had ever been. Holding her gaze, its touch was cold and icy against her skin as it finally succeeded in taking a swipe at her.

It was still dark out, and that did nothing to ease her nerves. Her wolf was going crazy. It wanted to be let out. It wanted her to take the back seat this time, wanting to reach into the pack bond, to get them both the help they so obviously needed, to protect her and to feel safe itself.

Marisol's grip on the sheets tightens as she stubbornly fights back the need to shift. Everything felt too much, her room was too small, and her body was too hot. She gasps for breath, her hands flying to her neck as it becomes harder and harder to breathe.

It seemed like the dream had succeeded in following her back to reality this time too, the walls feeling like they were closing in on her as dark spots began to flood her vision, her heart threatening to explode.

With what felt like the last of her strength, she forced herself to her feet, dragging herself to her wrenched open window to stick her head out of it in a quest to find some clean, unpolluted air. It didn't help. She was wheezing now, coughing so hard it felt like her insides were right at her throat.

Her mouth remains wide open. She felt as if it was draining her of her energy, her strength. Her wolf raged. It fought and struggled to free them both. Her grip on the window ledge turns vice, struggling to keep it together. Her wolf was going ballistic, it seemed, needing freedom.

But she couldn't let that happen, not now. She couldn't allow her wolf to take charge because the first thing it would do would be to reconnect with the pack. Even if it didn't, it would want to go for a run.

It was way too early for that, not knowing what could be waiting in the depths of the woods, blending in with the night. That was also sure to draw her parents' attention, and that was the last thing she needed at the moment.

She forces her feet in the direction of the bathroom, still wheezing but trying to do it as silently as possible. She bends over at the sink, splashing some water on her face, but that only looks to make things even worse.

This was why she'd cut herself off from the pack in the first place. She felt like she was dying and didn't want to share that feeling with them because it would rile them up and make them feel way worse with worry.

But the nightmares were getting worse, and their effects had grown alongside. This was the weakest she'd ever felt after surviving another night of terror. Her legs wobble, and she finally drops to the floor. Terrified, she crawls back into the room.

Was she really dying?

The worst part was that she had yet to figure out what exactly was leading up to her seemingly imminent death. Still had no idea what it was that visited her in her dreams, leaving her with just enough anxiety and fear to last until the next night. She was in pain, everything hurt, and her wolf that'd been struggling and growling to break free was now whimpering pitifully in her head.

Her heart squeezes in fear, every ragged breath feeling like the last, finally has the reality of the situation dawning on her. She couldn't die like this. This would be too unfair, to her, to her parents and to the future she wanted for herself.

Realizing she needed help, she tried to reach out with the scattered remains of her strength, trying to reconnect to the pack bond, but the result of her own stubbornness and the repercussions of her actions chose this exact time to catch up with her as the desperate calls for help seemed to bounce off the very walls she'd put up herself.

For the first time in a long time, she wanted her parents, wanted to be seen and heard. She screamed for them in her head, but nothing was getting through.

Having finally drained the very last of her energy with the futile attempts, Marisol finally collapsed onto the floor.