

Chapter 167

Marisol found herself standing in the middle of a desolate desert, surrounded by twisted, dead trees that seemed to reach out with gnarled fingers. The air was heavy with the stench of decay, and a sense of foreboding hung thick in the air. She knew immediately that she was trapped in a dream.

This was new. Leticia had told her that her powers were unquantifiable and that she should embrace everything that came with it but she couldn't shake the sense of unease that settled in the pit of her stomach.

Resigned to her fate, she began to navigate through the twisted landscape, her steps echoing against the barren ground. Every step she took seemed to echo ominously in the stillness of the desert, and she couldn't shake the feeling that she was being watched. A sense of dread slowly began to claw its way into her mind, but she pressed on.

Eventually, she happened upon a cloaked figure, sitting cross-legged on the ground. Upon further inspection, Marisol found it to be a woman, her eyes closed in deep concentration. Dark energy seemed to emanate from the woman, enveloping her in a malevolent aura.

Marisol felt a chill run down her spine as she approached cautiously, unsure of what to expect.

The woman remained motionless, her hands suspended in the air as though she were channeling some dark power. Marisol couldn't tear her gaze away from the eerie spectacle, her heart pounding in her chest with a mixture of fear and fascination.

"Well, look who finally decided to wander into my territory." A voice sneered suddenly.

Marisol's head immediately snapped around at the sound, her blood running cold as she looked around in search of the source of the voice. The figure before her remained unmoving which made everything even more terrifying.

"You thought you were strong enough to fulfill the prophecy?" A bitter chuckle. "You were nothing but a pawn in my game. Your time was almost up, and you were destined for destruction." The voice taunted.

"Who's there? Show yourself!" Marisol growled, squinting as she tried to make out where the voice was coming from.

"You don't need to see me to know that I am your worst nightmare. You are no match for me, little hybrid."

Despite her fear, Marisol scoffed, "I'm not the one handing out threats whilst staying hidden, now am I?"

"Foolish girl. The power I wield would be too much for your tiny brain to handle. You'll end up crushed beneath my heel like the insignificant insect that you are."

Marisol opened her mouth to speak, but her throat closed right back up, phantom fingers tightening around her throat.

"No... I won't let you win..." She gasped out, scratching at her neck.

"Struggle all you want. It'll make it more satisfying to snuff the life out of your pesky self." The voice sneered.

The unseen force squeezed tightly, cutting off her air supply and panic surged through her veins as the struggle to break free became even more desperate, tears welling up in her eyes.

"You are weak, Marisol" the voice said, "You always have been, and you always will be. It will do you well to keep that in mind."

Like a flip switch, everything fell dark and Marisol jolted awake, drenched in her own sweat. She looked around frantically, her heart pounding violently in her chest and at finding nothing, she exhaled shakily, reminding herself that it was only a nightmare. Despite her trials at pushing it to the back of her mind, the chilling words of the voice replay in her head like a broken record, filling her with a sense of dread.

Whatever that was, it couldn't have been just a nightmare. Something was wrong. Whatever she had been doing with Leticia did not hold a candle to what Guinevere had planned. They needed to speed things up, or they would all be doomed.

Just then, the door to her room burst open, and Cedric rushed in, concern etched deeply into the furrow of his brow.

"Marisol!" He called, taking her into his arms the next second. "What happened? Are you alright?"

"I felt your distress through the bond," Cedric's words were laced with a sense of urgency as he quickly began to gently inspect her trembling form, his eyes searching hers for answers.

Marisol blinked, her mind still reeling from the nightmarish visions that had plagued her sleep. She struggled to find her voice, the words caught in her throat like shards of broken glass.

Sensing her distress, Cedric's concern only deepened. "It's okay. I'm here now. I won't let anything happen to you. Whatever it was cannot harm you now. Please tell me. What was it?" He coaxed softly, lacing their fingers together.

"Guinevere," the name escaped Marisol's lips in a shaky whisper, the mere mention of it sending a chill down her spine. She was unable to voice the full extent of her turmoil.

Cedric's eyes widened in tandem. He knew all too well the threat that Guinevere posed, and the danger she presented to Marisol and their pack.

"Okay, let's go."

He did not press any further and with gentle hands, Cedric helped Marisol to her feet, his touch a comforting presence amidst the turmoil of her thoughts. Without a word, he led her outside, knowing instinctively where she needed to go.

She loved that he didn't badge her with questions. He didn't even need her directions to know that she needed to speak with Leticia immediately. Something was terribly wrong. It seemed like they were navigating through a cobweb of lies and even more lies until the truth was now hidden too deep to even be accessed.

But Marisol knew one thing for certain. They were not at all prepared for whatever was coming. Not even in the slightest.

Outside the pack house, Marisol's parents stood anxiously, their expressions mirroring Cedric's as they caught sight of the couple.

Nicole rushed forward, her motherly instincts on high alert as she enveloped Marisol in a tight embrace. "Marisol, what's wrong? I felt your distress. Are you hurt?"

Marisol swallowed hard, steeling herself to reveal the truth that had been weighing heavily on her heart. With both of her parent's expectant eyes on her, she sucked in a deep breath, hoping her voice did not carry the weight of the fear that still lingered within her.

"I need to tell you something," Marisol began, her words measured and deliberate. "Remember those nightmares I used to have before I um.... Before I came to Redwood?"

Her parents nodded instantly, the worried glances they exchanged not going unnoticed.

"They were about Cedric. I kept seeing Cedric..... his cursed wolf. It tormented me, but I was somehow always drawn to it. They stopped the moment I met him. And now I have a different one. I saw a woman. I know I sound crazy, but I swear it was Guinevere. She's inside my head again and whatever she's planning.... It's terrible."

At the end of her words, Leticia rushed into the gathering, her breath coming out in short puffs, "You saw who?" Leticia demanded.

Marisol took a deep breath, her mind still reeling from the vividness of her dream. "Guinevere," she repeated.

"Recount your experience. Tell us everything you saw." Leticia urged, her eyes frantic. "And leave nothing out, not a single detail."

"How can you-" Nicole started to protest.

"It might be difficult, but please do it for all our sakes. I'm almost certain that you've never crossed paths with Guinevere up until this point. So I need to know if it's an apparition, a warning, or a trick."

Marisol hesitated for a moment, still picking apart the scattered images in her head.

"Marisol, please, tell us everything you saw. Every detail is crucial. And every second lost can never be regained." She pressed and Marisol licked her lips nervously.

"It started with me in a weird dark place. I ...I think I was lost. I walked a little, trying to find my way out, but instead of an exit, I saw this woman sitting there on the ground. She seemed frozen in place, she was wearing a dark cloak, I couldn't see past it...."

Leticia leaned in, her chin jutting "Go on, Marisol. What else did you see?"

"Not much, it was all dark, but I knew I could sense danger and there was this overwhelming feeling of... of dread. Suddenly, a voice started speaking to me from nowhere. Saying I walked into its territory. It called me weak and threatened to destroy me.... To kill me. I couldn't find the source of the voice anywhere and the woman in the cloak was still not moving. I woke up when something started to strangle me. I thinkI think it wanted to go through with the threat."

Leticia's eyes widened in shock, her expression one of profound disbelief. "How did you manage to gain access into Guinevere's realm?" she exclaimed.

The question hung heavily in the air, a sense of unease and apprehension washing over everyone present. Marisol shook her head, more in confusion than in answer. She had no idea what Leticia meant.

"What... I didn't..."

"That wasn't a dream, Marisol" Leticia cuts in, her voice solemn and her gaze piercing as she met Marisol's wide-eyed stare. "You somehow wandered into Guinevere's realm while she was in hibernation."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Liam finally spoke for the first time that night, frustration heavy in his tone. "Speak in clear terms."

Leticia visibly flinched. Everything about Alpha Liam terrified her.

"I will when I understand better, Alpha," she said, grabbing Marisol's arm.

"Marisol, Luna, come with me." She spoke, already starting to walk away with Marisol and Nicole in tow. "We need to investigate this further."

She paused at the sound of heavier footsteps behind them, turning around to regard Cedric with a raised brow. "I'm going wherever she goes." He growled and Leticia rolled her eyes.

"You had better keep off for now, Alphas. Your mates are safe, and you should listen to me if we're ever going to get to the bottom of this."

Cedric's lips pressed into a thin line, but he said nothing in the form of argument, so they continued on their way.

Leticia dragged Marisol all the way to her quarters, her steps quickening as she led them away from the gathering. "This is worse than I expected," she muttered under her breath.

They arrived and settled into Leticia's quarters without speaking. Marisol had a lot of questions bouncing around in her head, but she waited patiently for the right time. Leticia looked more troubled than she'd ever seen and that did nothing for Marisol's nerves.

"There's no time to waste," Leticia began. "I've been approaching this all wrong."

Marisol's heart sinks as she processes the implications of Leticia's words. She had known deep down that something was amiss, but hearing it spoken aloud only served to confirm her worst fears.

"What is it? What have you been approaching all wrong?"

"The state you met Guinevere in is called Hibernation. It means that Guinevere is nearly ready for battle," Leticia explained. "For her to already be hibernating means that she already has every single aspect of her plan mapped out and is now drawing energy to unleash her full power. Tell me, did you see some sort of dark matter surrounding her?"

Marisol shook her head and Leticia sighed in relief.

"Not around her, but her hands ...like between her fingers." She answered and Leticia nodded.

"This gives us a lot more time. It means that she'd just begun hibernating. When she completes that ritual, she'll become invincible."

Nicole looked to be trembling in fear for her daughter as she stood wordlessly to a side, her hand over her mouth in horror.

But Leticia wasn't finished yet.

"I've been going about teaching Marisol in the wrong way," Leticia admitted with a regretful shake of her head. "She's not like other witches. She doesn't need spells. All she needs is to think.... Think about it and it happens."

Marisol's mind raced as she also seemed to only just realize the truth in Leticia's words. The incident with the door and Cedric are now replaying in her mind.

"You were probably curious about Guinevere. It makes sense, since you've been thinking about the looming attack for a while now." Leticia surmised, her gaze fixed on Marisol. "That's what led you to stumble into her realm."

Marisol's heart pounded in her chest as she struggled to come to terms with the magnitude of what Leticia was suggesting.

"We're lucky that she hadn't harnessed enough power and that she couldn't risk breaking out of hibernation. Or she might have done something worse to you, Marisol. Both of you had the chance to end this before it even started."

"Oh Goddess,"49. Nicole exclaimed.

"That's why we must be vigilant. The dangers she encountered there are only a fraction of what awaits us in the coming battle."