

Chapter 171

In the hushed stillness of the night, when the world lay shrouded in darkness and all was quiet, Marisol rolled out of bed. It was time.

She knew what she had to do. A sense of duty pulsed through her veins, driving her from the warmth of her bed.

Silently slipping out from beneath the covers, she moved with a stealthy grace, careful not to stir Cedric from his peaceful slumber. With one last look at her sleeping mate, she stepped out into the moonlit hallways. Her heart beat steadily in her chest as she headed back for the library and dug out the ancient dagger from its hiding place. Carefully, she wrapped it in the folds of her cloak, the cold metal sending a chill down her spine.

The cool night air brushed against her skin with a gentle caress as she finally made it outside the hidden castle. The world around her was bathed in an ethereal glow, casting long shadows that danced across the forest floor.

Slowly, she ventured deeper into the darkness, guided only by the soft glow of the moon above. The weight of the dagger in her cloak served as a tangible reminder of the task that lay before her, a symbol of the sacrifice she was willing to make to protect her pack and those she loved.

The dagger seemed to enhance the powers she possessed, and she allowed it to lead her to Guinevere. She needed to find her before her hibernation was completed.

The night shrouded Marisol as she pressed on, determined, her footsteps echoing softly in the stillness of the night. With every passing moment, she drew closer to her destiny, prepared to confront the darkness that lurked therein.

Cedric jolted awake with a start, his heart pounding violently against the confines of his chest. His wolf was anxious about something. Confusion mixed with his sleepy haze as he wondered what it was about. He hadn't gotten a nightmare of any kind, so it was quite unusual to wake up feeling so perturbed.

He stretched his arm out, seeking Marisol's warmth against him, only to be met by the cold embrace of empty sheets. Panic surged through him as he realized that she was not there.

Frantically, he sprang to his feet and scanned the room, his eyes falling upon Marisol's side of the bed again. The disheveled sheets told him she had been gone for some time, and dread washed over him like a tidal wave.

Without hesitation, he threw on his clothes, his mind racing with fear and uncertainty. The air felt thick with his fear and anxiety as he rushed out of the room, his senses on high alert.

Outside, it was almost dawn. The morning air was cool against his skin, but Cedric barely registered it as he searched desperately for any sign of Marisol. His wolf growled restlessly within him, impatient and urging him to find her, to protect her at all costs.

But as he strained to catch her scent in the wind, he was met with only emptiness, one he felt to the very depths of his being. Cedric could feel his sanity slipping with each passing second, the cold fingers of fear gripping him tighter, squeezing the breath from his lungs as he struggled to keep his composure.

This can't be happening. No, there was no way this was happening. His worst fear was materializing right before him. His airways started to close up as he began to think of the worst, making it impossible to breathe. He could feel himself slipping back into darkness, his wolf howling in agony in his head, that unexplained anger slowly starting to spread through his veins like poison.

Suddenly, a warm hand landed on his shoulder. He looks up, blinking until the figure in front of him clears to reveal Caleb. Cedric sighed, the sound shaky and bordering on tearful, Caleb's presence a welcome but fleeting distraction from his mounting anxiety. The concern in Caleb's eyes mirrored Cedric's own turmoil, and he could sense the unrest spreading through the pack like wildfire.

"Caleb," Cedric rasped, his voice hoarse with fear. "I can't find her. I can't find Marisol. She's gone."

Caleb's brow pinched in concern as he took in Cedric's disheveled state. "How? Was Guinevere here?" He looked around frantically and found no sign of infiltration. He turned back to his brother. "Don't worry, we'll find her," he assured, his voice a steady anchor within the chaos that was Cedric's mind. "Let's go find Leticia. She might know something."

Nodding in agreement, Cedric followed Caleb's lead, his mind racing through a million possibilities, each one more terrifying than the last. He couldn't bear the thought of losing Marisol, of facing a future without her by his side.

Together, they made their way to Leticia's chambers, the urgency of their footsteps echoing through the silent halls. Cedric's heart hammered in his chest as they approached the door, his breath catching in his throat at the finality they might find in Leticia's words.

With a sense of dread gnawing at his insides, Cedric raised his hand and knocked on the door, his pulse thundering in his ears as they waited for an answer.

Leticia opened the door to find Cedric, eyes bloodshot and breathing heavily. Her heart sank to the floor at the sight. His eyes blazed with desperation, and fear clawed at her chest at the damning realization of what this meant.

"Marisol's missing," Caleb said, both men pushing their way in.

"Where is she?" Cedric raised his question.

Leticia forced herself to remain calm, her expression carefully neutral.

"Maybe...." she began, her voice trembling slightly. "It's time." She finished cryptically, seeing no other way out of this now.

Cedric's gaze bore into her with a searing intensity, his expression a mixture of impatience and raw anguish. "What the hell are you talking about? Where is Marisol?" he demanded, his voice thick with emotion.

Leticia hesitated for a moment, her mind racing as she searched for the right words. "Let's go outside," she suggested, gesturing towards the door. "I'll perform a tracing spell to see if we can locate her."

Without waiting for a response, Leticia led Cedric outside, where the rest of the pack had gathered, their faces etched with worry and confusion.

Leticia pretended to cast a spell while she tried to figure out how to break the news to them. She couldn't concentrate, though. Cedric's impatience grew with every passing second. His eyes never left her as he waited for answers.

"Where is she?" he demanded once again, his voice edged with desperation.

Leticia sucked in a breath, steeling herself for what was to come. "I'm sorry, Cedric," she said quietly. "Marisol... she's gone."

Cedric blinked. The words refused to register, and at the same time, he felt his world shatter into a million pieces. His heart clenched with a pain unlike anything he had ever felt, and a primal rage surged through him, threatening to consume everything in its path.

"What do you mean?" He gritted out, his steps threatening as he closed in on Leticia.

"I... I told her the truth," she admitted, her voice barely above a whisper.

"What truth!" Caleb asked this time. He feared for Cedric, but he was more than terrified of what Marisol's parents would do when they found out they'd lost their daughter again.

"I.... I told her that the only way to kill Guinevere is now that she's vulnerable in hibernation, and the only thing that can destroy her for good is a dagger. I told her where to find it."

"So you sent her to her death?" Caleb all but cried out. Leticia was at a loss for words, scrambling for what would be an appropriate answer at a time like this.

"Marisol is the only one destined to wield the dagger, but no one who wields it survives the aftermath. I told her to think about it. I guess she made the decision to go through with it."

Cedric's reaction was immediate and violent. He roared with fury, his rage consuming him like wildfire. His hands clenched into fists, his muscles tensed with the urge to lash out.

In a fit of madness, Cedric fell to the floor, his anguished roar thundering as his fists pounded against the ground. His wolf howled in pain, echoing his torment as he struggled to come to terms with the reality of Marisol's disappearance.

By the time the truth had fully sunk in, Cedric was a whirlwind of fury and grief. He turned on Leticia, his eyes blazing with a primal rage as he grabbed her roughly, his grip like a vice around her throat.

"Cedric, stop!" Caleb's voice rang out, his tone commanding. "This won't bring Marisol back."

But Cedric was beyond reason, his mind consumed by the darkness, that was all he knew without Marisol by his side. Caleb struggled to set Leticia, who was suffocating free. He fought against Caleb's hold, his muscles straining with the effort as he struggled to save her from his outburst.

Finally, with a guttural roar, Cedric released Leticia from his grip, his chest heaving with exertion as he glared at her, his eyes swirling with a mixture of hatred and despair. "You... you betrayed us," he growled, his voice trembling with barely concealed sadness.

Leticia coughed, holding onto her bruised neck as she scampered farther away from him.

"Fix this!" Cedric snarled, his voice dripping with venom. "Or meet a fate far worse than death in my hands."

Leticia watched him with a heavy heart, knowing that she had failed him in the worst possible way. But they had no other option. Unless...

It was finally time to reveal her final secret.

Leticia's heart pounded with fear as she broached the delicate topic. "There's... there's one other option we haven't considered," she began hesitantly. "We could suppress Marisol's witch side temporarily. If we time it just right, the moment Guinevere is killed, there's a chance Marisol might survive."

Cedric's eyes narrowed with intensity as he absorbed her words. "Do it then," he commanded, his voice tinged with primal urgency and loathing of Leticia.

He didn't care about the risks or the consequences. All that mattered was getting Marisol back safely.

"We don't have time to waste." He growled, seeing as she struggled to get off the floor. "I'm going to get my mate back." He turned to leave, his mind already racing with plans of his own to retrieve Marisol from Ember Coven.

'Useless' He seethed as he made to walk away. They were all useless.

Suddenly, Caleb entered his line of sight, blocking his path. "I'm going with you," he declared, before Cedric could lash out at him, his voice firm with resolve.

Liam moved to block Cedric's path too, his gaze steely with determination. "I'm going too." he offered, the anger radiating from him matching Cedric's own.

The sight of Liam sent Cedric reeling for a while. He hadn't heard or seen him arrive. But that much was understandable, seeing as he was wholly blinded by rage.

Cedric regarded Liam with surprise. He wasn't sure what to expect after losing Marisol, but it was definitely not this. "Thank you," he said, his voice filled with genuine appreciation. "We'll need all the help we can get."

Meanwhile, Leticia scurried to her chamber to prepare the spell. Time was of the essence.

Just then, a sudden blow struck her head, sending her crashing to the ground in agony. With a groan, she looked up to find herself surrounded by Lily and her friends.

Lily's eyes blazed with fierce possessiveness as she glared down at Leticia. "You're not going anywhere until you finish that spell," she spat, her voice dripping with venom.

Leticia struggled to push herself up, her head throbbing with pain. "I was going to do just that!" She cried, "Besides, I'll need some help preparing for the spell," she managed to gasp out, her words strained.

They immediately looked apologetic and helped her up.

With Lily and her friends closely monitoring her every move, Leticia hurriedly began to gather the necessary ingredients and materials for the spell. As she worked, she could feel their eyes boring into her, their impatience palpable in the air.

Finally, as Leticia completed the spell, she realized she would be needing a vessel to channel its power, and she told them just that. Without hesitation, Lily stepped forward, "I'll do it," she declared, her voice firm and resolve unwavering.