

Cursed Wolf Chapter 11 - Tips

After hanging out with River, Luna spent the rest of the afternoon trying to get the lay of the land inside the shop. Customers would stop outside the windows and look inside, and Luna felt bad for still being closed.

Her grandmother had been dead less than a month. It was like the floor was still warm from her footsteps. For Luna, the shoes felt too large to fill.

She thought about Rex, the powerful alpha wolf who had showed her so clearly what he felt about her. As she went through paperwork and dusted off shelves, she imagined what it would be like to be claimed by a man that powerful.

Gavin certainly hadn't been like that. She hated to think badly about Gavin—he'd had some qualities she'd admired at the time. But compared to Rex, he was like a tiny pup. Rex was a man hardened by decades in the wilderness, a man who had endured an endless supernatural darkness.

She'd only seen a few photographs of him in human form. Even in his wolf form, she'd felt instantly connected to him. It was as if the beating heart of his essence had reached out to her through his touch and intertwined with hers. She could feel it in his wolf's nuzzle and see it in the glint in his eyes.

On one hand, it was strange to have met his wolf before the man. On the other, the wolf was the form he'd inhabited for the majority of his existence. By all rights, Rex was more wolf than man.

A shudder went down her spine. Could she love a wolf? She had no idea. The life of an underachieving bookstore manager hadn't prepared her for this. Luna had one thing going for her—she'd read a lot of books and that meant she had a vivid imagination.

She could imagine what it would be like to have a happy, healthy relationship with a wild beast. A wild beast who seemed to want her with every drop of his lifeblood.

She sat down in one of the armchairs beside the window and tried to catch her breath. She wasn't sure she was prepared for a life with a wolf man any more than she was prepared to fill her grandmother's shoes.

There was a knock on the window above her. She looked up, finding a tall, dark, smiling man. He was pushing an elderly woman in a wheelchair with an extravagantly crocheted blanket across her legs.

Luna jumped to her feet, knowing the coven had arrived the instant she looked into the older lady's gray eyes.

The group around the handsome man and elderly woman looked like a mixture of a few families, old and young, although there weren't any children.

Luna counted about ten when she hurried out onto the street. "It's you, isn't it?"

"She's catching on quick," the older lady said. "I'm Marta. This is Harvey." She motioned to the man pushing her chair. "And his wife, my granddaughter Ella." The pretty redhead standing beside him said hello.

Luna invited them in while Marta introduced the rest of the group. At the back of the shop, they gathered around the crystals and talisman section.

"So, you understand who we are and why we're here?"

"You're Louisa's coven."

"Very good. I understand you've been matched with the cursed shifter. This is indeed fate."

"I did just learn about all this magic stuff like two seconds ago. I don't know anything about potions or alchemy or anything."

"We're here to help, dear. Louisa wouldn't let you go through this alone."

"That's a relief. So, you know how the potion works?"

"It needs to be tested."

"And then?" Luna looked up at the collected assembly, hoping to see reassurance in their faces.

"Louisa was the head of our coven and the only alchemist. She's left her notes and her lineage with you."

"Wait. Can't you help me figure it out if it doesn't work?"

"Perhaps it will work on the first attempt. Finding the answer will be part of your training."

"But..." Luna put her hand to her forehead. She hadn't signed up for this.

"Fate will work itself out in the end." Marta patted her hand. "We are here for all the support you need. Teal has training with herbs. She can help you interpret Louisa's texts. It may be an education for both of you."

A young woman with hair the same color as her name smiled and waved awkwardly.

"I can come over to help you strain the potion if you want," Teal said.

"The completion date was the day after tomorrow. So we can meet up then?"

"Great!" Teal seemed overjoyed, as if helping Luna strain a potion was her greatest achievement of the year.

The coven began to file out, informing her that they usually met for a ceremony at Marta's house the night of the full moon, and that she was welcome to join them when she wasn't otherwise engaged.

Luna chuckled nervously as she held the door for the party to file out. The northern sunlight was fading over the harbor, and dusk was taking over the world.

She'd made some progress on the shop today and had a better handle on how things were run. Louisa had been organized and efficient in her management systems. Although most of it was a bit old fashioned, it was still easy to understand how to run the shop. The supply orders and schedules, financial balance sheets, and tax information were prepared, filed, and clear.

She was stepping into a tidy turnkey business that was already running at considerable profit.

Selkie was a very popular cruise ship destination. Several came in a day throughout most of the year. In the depths of winter, tourism slowed a bit, but Selkie was one of the most temperate places in the state, so they enjoyed tourism when many other places were blanketed in snow and businesses were shuttered.

At least one aspect of her new life was easy. She locked up the shop and went upstairs. She hoped to open the doors tomorrow morning. There was no sense in waiting any longer.

The business hadn't been hurt by being closed for a month, but there was no sense in keeping it that way.

Upstairs, she changed into her comfy sweats and slippers and made herself some tea. She kind of regretted not bringing home more pastries, but she'd gone to the grocery store before working on the store and had stocked the fridge and cabinets.

She had money now. Louisa had left her all her savings and investments as well as the business. Without it, she wouldn't have even made it to Alaska. It was such a strange feeling to be totally supported and taken care of.

She said a grateful prayer for Louisa's soul, feeling overwhelmed at the sight of stocked cabinets.

She made grilled salmon and rice with a side of microwave broccoli, and settled into the dining room table to enjoy her healthy meal.

It was good to have a homecooked meal in her new home.

Looks delicious.

“It is delicious,” Luna said aloud. She had come to the conclusion that the voice in her head was Louisa and that she’d hear it whenever she truly needed help.

She waited for a reply, assuming the voice could hear her thoughts, but it didn’t respond. She sighed and took another bite of lemon and butter drenched salmon.

Selkie had the best seafood she’d ever tasted in her life. She’d started with the salmon because it was something she recognized. Being from San Francisco, she wasn’t foreign to seafood, but the clean cold waters around the island produced a catch that was on a whole other level.

Next time she went to the store, she’d splurge on some lobster, shrimp, or crab. She sat back in her chair and chewed the last bite of her homecooked meal.