

Cursed Wolf Chapter 13 - Tips

Luna couldn't keep her eyes off the six-and-a-half-foot bodybuilder standing in front of her. She'd never seen a man that big and that handsome in her entire life. No question whatsoever. She didn't have football star supermodels walking into the corner bookstore every day.

She knew she was meant to be with this person. He was her fated mate, and they were meant to be together. She felt lightheaded as she took him in. The photographs on mate dot com had not done him justice. He also smelled absolutely amazing. She didn't know if it was just his cologne or something deeper in his personal musk, but her head swam when she inhaled the air around him.

He looked at her, questions in his eyes. She could tell that he felt nervous about tonight, and she could understand why. He was a hundred-year-old wolf shifter who'd experienced something beyond words that she could never understand.

As they walked out the door of the shop and she closed it behind her, Rex put his hand on the small of her back and guided her out to the car.

She almost tripped on the sidewalk in her nervousness, and he was there to catch her, wrapping his arms around her body as she fell against his chest.

Luna took a deep breath, feeling herself swoon. The feeling of his arms around her was ecstasy. It was like the most potent drug known to humankind. He helped her steady herself and slid his arm around her waist as they walked to the car. He opened the door to a newer model truck, and she climbed inside.

"The Doolittles have been very helpful," Luna said, guessing the truck belonged to them, as he buckled his seatbelt.

"My brothers and I owe them everything." He looked over at her in the dim car light.

"It's crazy that Rebecca was my lawyer."

"Fate works in perfect ways."

He drove the car out onto the street. A gentle rain started as they drove, and he turned on the windshield wipers. The sound of the swishing echoed the beating of her heart. She bit her lip, not knowing what to say. The truck was filled with his scent.

"So, how are you finding Alaska? I understand you just moved here recently," he said, taking a turn at the stop light.

"I love it here. Although I haven't been here in the dead of winter yet." She laughed.

"Winters in Selkie are mild," he said. "We should have come long ago. But you wouldn't have been here yet." His husky, deep voice gave her goosebumps.

Her heart went out to him. She could never imagine what he and his brothers had been through all those years in wolf form. It made her want to cry as she sat beside him. Meeting him truly for the first time, she could sense he was a beautiful soul. Even after all his suffering.

They turned into the parking lot of a fancy-looking restaurant with big windows on the deck that looked out over the bay. The sign said, "The Captain's Gratto." They climbed the stairs, and he opened the door for her.

She slid through, looking up into his glimmering blue eyes. If there had ever been a man who could be described as a god, Rex Winter would be him. She tried not to think too much about it as the hostess greeted them and then showed them to their table.

She could see the woman snatching glimpses at Rex, but since he was her fated mate, she didn't have to worry about any other women. Not ever. He would always want her, always be faithful. At least, that was what River had told her.

They sat at their table and the hostess told them the specials while giving out the menus. Rex ordered a bottle of wine that arrived a moment later, along with a breadbasket and butter.

Luna sipped the Chardonnay and popped pieces of buttered sourdough into her mouth while looking across the table at the hunkiest person she'd ever seen in her entire life. He looked around him, as if he was overwhelmed by the light and movement. But he was acting like a complete gentleman.

He'd made all the arrangements and ordered the wine. She was sure he'd had plenty of help from the Doolittles, and it was certainly paying off. She felt safe with him. Like he really cared about taking care of her needs.

"I heard that you inherited your grandmother's shop," he started, taking a sip of ice water. "Was it a difficult decision to move all the way to Alaska from your home?"

"Not really," she said with a humored sigh. Thinking about her old life now, it all seemed so small and petty compared to everything that was in front of her.

"I just got out of a relationship. It wasn't very serious, I guess." She laughed. "I tried not to be bitter, but I was sad, and then I learned that my father had been keeping the truth about my grandmother from me all of my life. I knew then that I needed to go."

"He betrayed you?" Rex asked.

"For years and years, it seems," Luna said, looking at her hands and picking at the tablecloth.

"That's abominable." He shook his head. "My mother and father would have done anything for us. But, alas, we lost them both."

"I lost my mother when I was little, too," Luna said.

They simultaneously reached across the table, taking each other's hands.

She let out a soft sigh and smiled, looking into his eyes. His shoulders relaxed, and so did his jaw. He gave her that bright gleaming smile, the kind where she could see his wolf in his grin.

She was so enchanted by his cuteness that she had to draw back and giggle. At that moment, the waiter arrived to take their order. They both got the special—lobster and shrimp fettuccine Alfredo.

"What is your first impression of Selkie, compared to the big city?" he asked while they ate their salads.

"It's different. I don't have a lot to go on, truly. I've only been here a few days. But from what I see, I can say that I already love it here. It's so picturesque and cute. Everyone has been lovely to me. And there's this beautiful sense of place here, with all the fishing boats on the water and the snowcapped mountains beyond the town. I loved the Bay Area, but more and more it was starting to all feel the same. Everyone struggling to keep up with the rat race. I don't think I was a very good rat."

"You don't have many rats when there are wolves around," Rex said, showing a bit more of his grin. Luna giggled again. She hadn't expected him to be so cute and funny in such a roguish way.

"If I ever have a rat problem, I will know who to call. It's too bad you weren't around a few weeks ago, I could have used your help." She envisioned Rex's wolf chasing Gavin into the forest.

"I'm here for you now," he said. His eyes penetrated her soul.

She knew in the depths of her being that he meant it. It tingled in her core. Her mouth dropped open with a little inaudible gasp.

As they ate their main course, she savored the delicious five-star meal. She had come from a place with world-class food—world-class everything—but most of the time she'd eaten microwave burritos or peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

It had been a long time since she'd been treated to such a feast. With her stomach singing a celebration, her whole body, heart, and mind aligned with hope and excitement. Luna had to pinch herself a little bit to make sure she wasn't dreaming.

But of course, she wasn't dreaming. She couldn't taste food like this if she was asleep. She wouldn't be able to smell the aroma of his cologne or see the silver raindrops swirling down the dark window outside.

For dessert, they had the most delicious chocolate cream soufflé. It melted across her tongue with creamy sweetness. They'd finished the bottle of wine and she was brimming with happiness.

Forgotten were all her concerns about herself, the wolf, or the curse. She was just there in the moment with him. He paid the bill and they walked outside into the night. It had stopped raining and the air was warm and light with fragrance from the ocean.

"Do you want to take a little walk?" he asked, offering her his arm.

She nodded in agreement and took the offered elbow. She slid her arm through his and they walked close together along the pier. The moon was high overhead and the stars shone in the clear night sky. Even so close to town, the sky above was a display of twinkling light and blue-green colors.

They walked through a public space to a quiet pier with a fishing spot and leaned against the railing, listening to the ocean.

"It is magical here with you," she said, reaching up to run her hand over his chest.

She couldn't believe she was being so forward. Her hand lingered on his shoulder. He caught it in his and kissed her knuckles, breathing in her scent. They stood together as she gasped, and he pulled her towards him.

"Luna," he said, leaning down to whisper into her ear.

She could feel his lips brush over her neck. Her hands wrapped around his waist, and she tilted her head up toward his. Time stood still as their lips met, as soft as a butterfly's wings.

He said her name so gently, so softly. She could feel his body tense and harden, and she let out an impatient groan and pressed her lips hard against his. He moaned as if he were eating dessert, kissing her gently and lovingly as he held her in his arms.

His tongue slid into her mouth, tasting her, caressing her, loving her. He held her like a treasure, so small and delicate against his mass. Luna had never felt so embraced, so held, so able to let go.

He was all power, all hard planes. Strength and protection. She melted into him, gripping the neck of his jacket as their tongues slid passionately over each other. Her body melted as he pressed her against him, and she gasped as his thigh brushed her se.x and his hand slid lower onto her as*s.

He took a step back, breaking their embrace.

"I want to court you appropriately," he said, still holding her hands. "I would ask your father for your hand in marriage if this were my time."

"My father doesn't get to decide who I marry," Luna said.

She laughed and shook her head, resisting the urge to roll her eyes. Right now, she wanted to take him back to her apartment to explore this feeling. She didn't care what anyone thought, least of all her dad. She wasn't usually the DTF kind of girl on a first date, and maybe she shouldn't be now. She bit her lip, coming back to her senses.

"We only have one night together for the entire month. Before I have to go away again," he said.

"I know," she said, letting herself fall back into his arms.

He held her against his chest and stroked her hair. "You understand the conditions of the curse?" he asked.

"Patrick and Rebecca explained it to me. It's broken when you claim your mate. When you claim me."

"You know what it means to be claimed by a shifter?" he asked, kissing the top of her head.

"I do. I don't think I'm ready for that tonight," she said.

"Nor would I expect you to be." He held her just a little bit tighter. "I don't want my curse to be the reason for any of your decisions. I want you to know me as a man. To know that I am the one you want to be with despite everything. That is the only way to start a true pair bond."

Luna had never heard a man, human or shifter, say anything like that outside of the movies. It made her heart feel like a bubble that might burst.

"But that doesn't mean that we can't spend more time together," she said. "Why don't you come back to my place?"