

## Cursed Wolf Chapter 16 - Tips

Luna unpacked the box full of vials as Rex and his brothers lined up on the other side of the kitchen island. She gave each one of the brothers a little amber bottle with a dropper lid.

“My grandmother Louisa believed that you should start with one drop.”

Luna looked at each of them in turn. They were each more handsome than the next, with her Rex being the most handsome of all.

The brothers all had a similar quality, as siblings do. Most had blonde hair and light eyes. She was still trying to remember each of their names and to place them with their wolves.

“Should we take it now?” asked one of the brothers she believed was Blake.

“Now is as good a time as any,” said Rex, unscrewing the lid of the bottle.

“It was just bottled today. My grandmother had a very specific brewing schedule. This iteration is ready now. We will have to see if it works.”

She bit her lip and glanced at Rex. She wanted it to work so badly she could taste it. She was determined to have him claim her, no matter if the brothers were taken back over by the curse.

She wanted him to be with her—her husband, her lover, her friend and her mate. This new strange world was her home. She belonged here. It became clearer to her with each passing moment. Not only did she belong, but she was a leader.

She had a place here of importance. She had wanted a community and people to support and help her all her life. She had tried to find that in San Francisco, but it just hadn't worked out.

Everything had been so distant, so dispersed. Here, it was like every ideal she had for a community had come together. And Rex was at the center of it. She belonged with him, and she knew it.

After her experience with Gavin, of just being left like nothing, the gift of love and commitment and loyalty of a man like Rex was something she was going to pick up and claim with both hands.

“Here goes nothing,” said Rex.

He dropped a single drop onto his tongue and then each of his brothers followed suit. She watched Rex as he took the droplet, studying his every gesture and expression.

"Do you feel anything?" she asked.

No," he said, shaking his head and returning the bottle labeled with his name to the counter.

I don't feel anything either," said Felix.

"I feel like this is bvlshlt," said Thorne.

"We probably won't know until dusk," said Felix. "That's when we usually shift back."

"From dusk till dusk one day a month," Rex mumbled. "That is the time when we are alive."

"We aren't alive," said Damian.

"I found my mate, little brother. And she has brought you a gift. Perhaps it's time to see the light instead of the dark," Rex rumbled.

Damian turned away but he took his bottle with him. The other brothers dispersed, but Felix and Rex remained.

"What else did your grandmother say about the potion?" Rex's brother Felix asked.

"She had been working on it for quite some time. This was the third step in the iterative process. She only knew what was coming through dreams and visions, and she was led to create this concoction from what she understood.

"Louisa had a long life of study and practice as an alchemist and a seer. From what I understand, she was the best of the best. Few other people have any morsel of the understanding she did. Even she was unsure if this iteration of the potion would work."

"But you are her granddaughter. She left everything to you," Felix continued.

"Yes, she did," Luna said, picking at her cuticle.

"That means the seer believed that you would be the one to complete the potion," Felix said.

"I guess she did," Luna said, giving the brother a weak smile.

"We are going to spend the rest of the day together and will return before dusk," Rex said, taking her hand.

"Have fun," Felix said, nodding his head and meeting his brother's eyes.

Rex led her out of the house and they both climbed back into Patrick Doolittle's truck.

"I want to be alone with you. I want to get this time to be together just in case," he said, starting the car.

"I feel the same."

"Patrick told me of a nice drive we could take."

Rex pulled the car out of the driveway and drove deeper into the countryside below the mountains. The island was fifty miles wide and one hundred miles long, but it was still limited. The landscape was rugged and thrust against the shore. It was in this isolated place that Luna knew she had found her person.

"The last day with you has changed my life," she said, glancing up at him from the passenger seat of the truck. They drove through the thick wooded pine forest as the black concrete road wound through the trees.

"You are everything to me," he said. "Everything and so much more."

"I think you should claim me," she said, her lips trembling.

"You are human. You need time."

"You have my permission."

She could feel herself gushing with moisture just thinking about his sharp teeth penetrating the flesh of her neck and depositing the mating venom in her veins. He sniffed the air and rumbled low in his chest.

"I will claim you at dusk."

"Okay," she said, biting her lip.

They drove around the mountain and turned onto the highway along the shore. They drove past the rugged cliffs that descended into the sea and watched the seabirds fly in the pale winter air. They stopped on a turnout overlooking the ocean and Rex opened a thermos of hot chocolate. He handed her a cup and took a sip of his own.

"I want you to know me as a man. I want you to know who I am."

"I know what I want. I also know what I don't want. My father's betrayal and my boyfriend leaving me like it was nothing. I've searched all my life for a place where I would belong, where everything makes sense, and I can be myself."

“Coming here might have seemed crazy to some people, but I knew this was where I belonged as soon as I started packing my suitcase. When I found out I was matched with you, I admit I was a little scared, but it’s only because everything up until now told me that I didn’t deserve to have someone like you. To have all my needs met.

“Or that I could truly help and matter and mean something. I know that I can have that with you. And to the very bottom of my soul, I don’t care that I’ve just met you. I am my grandmother’s heir. I can sense it deep inside me. I know that we belong together.”

Good for you, dear.

She heard her grandmother’s voice in her mind, and she smiled.

“Louisa agrees,” she said with a giggle.

“Hearing you talk about your past with such passion, how you know that we are right for each other, shows me that I can trust you to understand how I feel about you.

I have been waiting for almost a hundred years to find you and have you in my life. Decades and decades of time trapped inside the body of a wolf with my only hope being your love, your kiss, your loyalty.”

A tear slipped down his cheek and he squeezed his eyes shut as he took a quivering breath.

“Rex,” she said, leaning across the car toward him. They held each other and he shed more tears as she opened her heart to his suffering.

“I thank all the gods that you are here. Even if I only have this day, it was enough.”

“We will have much longer than a day, Rex,” she said, taking his face in her hands. She had never seen a man so vulnerable, so open, and her entire being—every wall, every doubt, every heartache shattered, and all that was left was the very most pure honest real truth of who she was. No more disguises or masks; just her heart and soul.

“I am here for you. Always.”

He looked into her eyes and held her face and they lingered for a moment in the light of their pure transparency.

“I believe you,” he said, giving her the gentlest kiss that lingered so softly on her lips. She pressed her hand to his chest and he to hers. The ocean waves crashed against the rocks below and the seagulls flew outside the window.

“Thank you,” he said. “Thank you for being here, for being in my life.”

“Thank you for the same,” she said.

They sat there together, sharing their most intimate truths until Rex admitted he was famished.

“Let’s go back to the bakery. I have someone I’m dying to introduce you to.”