

Cursed Wolf Chapter 17 - Tips

Rex held the door for Luna as she walked into the bakery next door to her shop.

A dark-haired, beautiful woman, who Rex could sense immediately was a shifter, walked towards them with a big smile and open arms.

“Who’s this?” she asked Luna as she approached and took his mate’s hand.

“River, this is my mate Rex,” she said with a wink.

“And look at him, so tall and handsome. You are one of the Winter wolves, aren’t you?”

“Yes. We’ve been staying with the Doolittles.”

“Word travels fast in a small town,” Luna said. “We came by for a bite to eat before dusk.” Luna bit her lip and Rex could sense the anxiety rippling off her. She was unsure about the potion. He wished that he could take away all her worries right there, but the truth was that he felt the same.

They shared a large meal of soup and savory pastries and sandwiches, followed by delicate sweet pastries and heaps of tea. It wasn’t the heartiest meal, but it was satisfying. Rex was happy to chat with Luna’s new friend.

The two of them seemed close, even though they’d just met, and it warmed his heart to know his mate had a confidante already. She had wanted this kind of closeness in her life, and he wanted the same.

He longed to go home with her and turn out the lights in the bedroom above the shop. To wake up in the morning and drink tea and talk about books and potions. He could see the wonderful vision of their life together, and it was so close, but still so far away.

He watched the sun dipping towards the horizon and knew that it was time to return to the Doolittles’ property.

He thanked River for the meal and the company. The women gave each other a warm hug and he took his mate’s hand, walking with her outside.

“I could go back alone,” he said as they faced each other on the sidewalk.

“You promised you would claim me tonight. Don’t tell me you’ve already forgotten.”

“I haven’t forgotten. I just want to protect you.”

When they finally arrived at the Doolittles' house, the sun had almost set. They walked through the house and out onto the back porch where he found his brothers watching the fading light in the west, glowing yellow and orange in the treetops.

"Do you feel anything?" Felix asked.

"We'll be wolves again in seconds," Thorne ground out.

"I feel fine," said Tate. "I think it worked. We'll get to go back to playing our game."

"How can you think about games at a time like this?" Thorne asked.

"We are in the hands of fate now," Damian said. "As we always have been. The fate of the damned."

"We aren't damned," Rex said. "We are blessed." He held Luna's hand. She was shivering as he pulled her into his embrace.

"We should go inside," he said.

"I want to be here with you and the others," she said. "This is my journey now too."

One of his brothers growled in the fading light, and as dusk settled on the land, Rex let out a deep, angry yell. Pain wracked his body and his wolf let out a piercing howl inside his mind.

He doubled over, gripping his temples as the scorching pain brought him to his knees. His brothers fell as well. He couldn't think, he couldn't rationalize anything, but he hadn't shifted. He fell to the ground, nearly vomiting, saliva dripping from his mouth.

In the depths of his torment, he remembered Luna, his mate. She screamed for help above him. The Doolittles scrambled out onto the porch, pleading to know what was wrong. Rex pulled himself to his feet, panting desperately as the pain destroyed him.

"So much pain," he ground out. "Not shifting."

He felt as if every bone in his body was broken, and he was running the highest fever of his life. The wolf cried out in despair, demanding that he shift and let his body return to its beast form.

"The curse. Trying to force a shift."

"Maybe you could take more," Luna said, through trembling lips. It was what Louisa had suggested.

Rex pulled the bottle out from his pocket and dropped the entire dropper full into his mouth.

He convulsed and coughed, doing everything he could not to vomit up the potion. But finally, the pain lessened and the howling in his mind quieted. He was able to stand up, and his brothers followed suit.

“Rex. Are you okay?” Luna pleaded. He could see the tears streaming down her cheeks.

“I think you should go home, Luna,” he said.

Not only did he feel pain, but violence and torment as well. It was as if every moment of every kill he’d ever made was coursing through him. All his adrenaline, all his bloodlust, it was all he could see. Despair descended on him. He should have claimed her already. He could not do it like this.

“Rex...”

“I can’t be with you when I’m like this.”

He turned away and stumbled down the patio stairs into the darkness. His brothers moved with him. Several of them had shifted, rejecting the potion and allowing the curse to take them over. His body screamed to go back into his beast form. He and Felix walked together, growling low and tripping over stones until they reached the forest.

“Perhaps we should take more,” Felix said.

“I shouldn’t have sent her away like that. I can’t believe I spoke to her that way.” The pain raged through him again and he let out an enraged howl, clenching his fists and tightening his jaw.

“You were right to send her away. You would tear her apart.” His brother pulled the vial from his pocket and dropped two more droppers full into his mouth.

Rex grabbed his own bottle and drank the entire thing. For a moment the pain was gone, his mind was clear, and he was a man again. He wanted to run back to Luna and apologize and beg her forgiveness, but as soon as he stepped towards the house he collapsed in a heap.

Rex woke in the morning in his human form. The pain and internal torment were there, but he could bear it. Felix sat beside him in the dim light of the woodshop and stared down at him from above. Rex climbed into a sitting position.

“You had the right idea, brother, but it’s important to be more methodical about these things,” Felix said, holding up the bottle. “I took a careful drop by drop analysis of the

appropriate dosage. At approximately three drops, I was able to sustain my form with a limitation to the pain. As you demonstrated, going beyond that threshold results in immediate incapacitation.”

“This is intolerable,” Thorne said.

“I think I would rather be in wolf form,” said Blake.

The brothers looked as miserable as they’d ever been in the cold nights back in the cabin. They were wrapped in blankets and furs, huddled together in the cold.

“Where is Luna?” he asked.

“Rebecca took her home.”

“Is she okay?” Rex asked, accepting a cup of coffee from Tate.

“She was shaken up. But her main concern is you. She feels like she failed,” Felix said.

“This isn’t on her,” Blake said. “She just got here.”

“But she was left with the responsibility of restoring our souls,” said Damian. “She is part of this now.”

“And not just because she’s Rex’s mate,” said Felix. “We all should do what we can to help. Tell her of our findings.”

“She has a friend who is learning alchemy with her, but they are at about the same level,” Rex said.

“It’s unfortunate, but we must believe that, together, we are capable of solving this,” Felix said.

“What other choice do we have?” Blake asked.

Rex climbed to his feet, letting the blankets that had covered his shoulders drop to the ground. This morning was a world away from where he had been yesterday morning, in the soft bed with his beautiful angel.

He feared he would never get back there. Never in that soft quiet place with her again. He had been short with her. He vouched that, no matter how bad the pain ever got again, he would never behave that way to her for the rest of his life.

He went in to use the Doolittles’ phone and dialed her number. She answered on the first ring.

"It's me," he said.

"Rex, you're still human," she said. "I want to come see you right now."

"I think we should keep our distance for now. I can't run the risk of growling at you like that again. But I want you to know I'm all right. Felix found the right level of dosage for us to take before we pass out. It's three droppers full. We thought that that information might help."

"Okay. I'm meeting with Teal today. We will scour Louisa's notes and discuss her suggestions of where the potion should go from here. Whatever happened to you last night, I can't bear to see you that way again."

"I can't tell you how sorry I am for this. I'm just holding on to my temper now so that I can speak to you. But I would never forgive myself if an unkind or angry word came out of me in your presence."

"I'm worried about you. You were in so much pain."

"As long as I know that you're here and you love me, I can withstand anything. I believe in you. I believe that you can solve this riddle and we will be together."

"I believe in you too, Rex. I'm going to find the cure."

"And when you do, I will claim you. I'll come home to you, my love. I promise."

"I know, Rex."

"I need to go now, Luna. I love you and I'm sorry."

He hung up the phone, unable to say another word. He could feel the rage overtaking him again. He had to get out of the Doolittles' home in case one of their children got in his path. It seemed that three droppers of the potion lasted a limited time.

He stood on the porch and squirted three more droppers full of potion into his mouth. Felix approached him and Rex asked, "How long does this last?" The pain slowly subsided, and he let out a heavy sigh.

"Approximately three hours."

Rex shook his head. He knew how much potion was in the bottle. It would never last.