

## Cursed Wolf Chapter 2 - Tips

Luna Linwood stared at the stack of bills on the coffee table in front of her. She was behind on absolutely everything. Since her boyfriend left to pursue his dream of being a travel photographer without inviting her along, she hadn't been able to keep up with anything.

It was hard to hate a man who was following his passions, but Luna had really believed that Gavin was the one. One moment, you can be posting goals-level couple photos on Instagram, and the next, you're no longer in them.

Luna was used to being left behind. First, her mother had died when she was six years old, leaving her alone with her distant father, and then her strict stepmother. Then, even they'd left, retiring to Florida to fish in the warm water and get tanned in their old age.

She scrubbed her hand over her face and covered her mouth. The bills didn't open themselves and then disappear, no matter how long she stared at them.

Luna worked hard every day at the local indie bookstore around the corner. She'd been the manager there for years. But as much as she loved the bookstore, her income had barely changed in all that time, while the cost of living in the San Francisco Bay Area had only increased.

She didn't want to curse Gavin's name. He deserved to go after what mattered to him, even if that wasn't her. She tried to be a positive person. To look on the bright side. But when he'd told her he had something big to discuss with her on Thanksgiving, she'd really thought it would involve a diamond ring.

At twenty-eight years old, Luna felt like her life had slipped through her fingers. She'd tried to be the kid her dad and stepmother wanted, but that had ultimately resulted in her dropping out of dental school and becoming a bookstore clerk.

Luna loved reading. She loved all kinds of books. Biographies, thrillers, romance, self-help, mysteries, art books and even comics. She loved to help customers find what they wanted and needed. She seemed to have a sixth sense when it came to helping people make new discoveries about themselves through books.

She'd always had that sense of people. Ever since she was a little kid. When her mom was still alive, she'd told her she was an empath. After she was gone, Luna's dad never talked about that kind of thing. He scoffed at it, in fact.

It had made Luna shrink in on herself, back then. She'd believed she'd gotten over it. She'd grown so much, working in the old store and making relationships with all the customers. That's when she'd believed she had a future with Gavin. Now that future was gone, and Luna had no idea what to do next.

She would call her dad and ask for a loan, but she knew better than going there. Besides, what would a loan do for her? She knew the bookstore owners really couldn't afford to pay her more. The store was barely staying afloat. Even if she could find a slightly better paying job, she would probably have to move anyway.

She sat back on the couch and groaned. This wasn't how life was supposed to go. Gavin had a successful freelance photography business. He was making a name for himself. She had a comfortable job in a neighborhood landmark. The two-bedroom apartment was big enough to start a family. There were good schools nearby.

But those dreams were gone now. She had to just accept it and stop cyber-stalking Gavin's social media accounts. She was only torturing herself and delaying the inevitable.

Luna tore into the mail, hardening her stomach against the nausea of late credit card payments. She stacked up a few piles. The "oh sh!t, I'm going to die," pile, the "what the hell have I done with my life," pile, and junk mail.

When those piles were all sorted, she was left with a large white envelope with a faded paw print business logo in the return address area. She squinted and picked up the package.

"Bear Legal," it read. "Barely legal," she snickered.

At least she could still make stupid jokes to herself, alone in a room, at one of the lowest points in her life. She slid open the package and pulled out a stack of papers. She began to read the cover page, and with each passing sentence, her eyes widened until they were watering.

The cover letter was from a lawyer informing her, in short, that she'd inherited an entire building, including a business and an apartment from her grandmother Luisa Pleasant, her mother's mother. Luna had no idea she even had a grandmother. Her mother's parents had supposedly died a long time ago.

Luna flipped through the last will and testament, her heart pounding and her blood pressure rising. Her emotions swung like a pendulum between excitement and rage.

All this time, she could have had a relationship with her grandma. She could have had someone who could connect her to her mom.

Luna stood from her couch and began to pace the room. She looked out the window at the dark sky over the bay. Her emotions roiled like the incoming storm off the ocean. She whirled around and grabbed her phone, tapping her dad's number. It dialed and rang. Her heart raged, and she pursed her lips together, trying not to cry.

"Luna. How are you holding up since Gavin left you?" her stepmother asked sympathetically.

"Where's Dad?" she growled.

"Hold on, don't get all riled up." Luna heard the sound of the phone being handed off.

"Luna?"

"Dad..." She sucked in a breath. She didn't have the words. Tears slid down her face and she covered her mouth, unable to speak.

"What is it?"

"Why?"

"Why what, Luna?" He sighed, exasperated.

"Why didn't you tell me about her?"

"Who?"

"My grandmother Luisa?" She nearly screamed it into the phone. The tears poured down her face and her throat was so tight it hurt.

"Her? That crazy woman? How did you find out about her?"

"Crazy! She just left me her entire estate in Alaska."

"That junkyard isn't worth anything."

"Dad. All these years... I could have known her. I could have been closer to Mom. Why?"

Sobs caught in her throat, and she tried to hold them back, feeling like a fool for allowing herself to show such strong emotions in front of her father. He was an old-fashioned tough guy and hated any sign of weakness. And he'd raised his daughter to stuff her emotions down just like he did. But Luna wasn't like him. She felt everything, all the time. She was feeling so much in that moment, she was afraid she might have a heart attack.

"Your grandmother was crazy. Your mother and I both decided to keep you away from her."

"I don't believe you." She blurted it out. She knew in her gut that her mom would want her to know her grandmother. "It was her, wasn't it? She wanted to keep me away from my family."

"You think it was your stepmother's idea? Luna, you really need to get a grip. You should sell that run-down old place in Alaska and get yourself some mental help. Maybe that will help you finally land a husband."

"Dad..."

"I need to go now, Luna. Try to take care of yourself."

He hung up and Luna gasped. She stood there with her mouth open, staring at the screen. She wanted to call him back and scream at him, but that would just prove him right about her.

She sank into the couch and stared at the decorative fireplace in front of her. The hearth was cold and useless. It was nothing but a facade. She felt like her entire life had been like that.

Luisa's will sat on the coffee table looking back at her. An entirely new life had opened up, and she was still sitting in the wreckage of the past.

Alaska was a long way away. She didn't know anything about the place. The town was called Selkie, on Fate Island to the south. She grabbed her phone and looked it up.

To think, all this time, her grandmother and her entire family history had only been a few clicks away. She was able to find a street view of the address of her grandmother's store.

As soon as she saw the lovely old fashioned store front, she was in love. Big windows framed a sheltered door. It sat on a street full of art galleries and B&Bs, next door to a bakery.

If there was one thing Luna loved more than books, it was pastries. In that moment, she decided. She picked up her phone and dialed the number on the lawyer's letter.

A few moments later, she was on the line with the attorney herself.

"This is Luna Linwood, granddaughter of Luisa Pleasant. I'm coming to Alaska to claim what's mine."