

Cursed Wolf Chapter 4 - Tips

The drive from California to Alaska was long and harrowing. Luna had never traveled so far alone. Or with anyone else for that matter. Road trips to Disneyland in LA did not come even close. She drove hundreds of miles and spent over a week on the road, passing through two international borders.

Her car was packed to bursting with her personal things like clothing and her favorite books. The rest, including all the furnishings from her apartment were quickly sold off or thrown out.

By the time she made it to Juneau, she was so over being in the car, she thought she may never travel again. After an overnight stay in a hotel, she boarded a ferryboat that would get her to Selkie by the end of the day.

Riding along on the ferry, watching the water and collections of islands off the southern coast of Alaska, the reality of her new life began to sink in. It was so remote, so raw.

As a city girl, Luna was not used to such intense, deep stretches of wilderness. Traveling through the sparsely populated archipelago with its dense black forests and snowcapped mountains gave her a true sense of where she was going.

The pictures of Selkie online showed a bustling tourist town and fishing industry. But she would never suspect it from the vast empty sea and even emptier collection of islands along the southern coast.

She ate lunch in the ferry's cafe and reread *Wuthering Heights* for the fifth time. The dark islands and deep silver water outside the windows of the ferry created a similar mood to the Gothic setting of the novel.

By the time they made it to the Selkie docks on Fate Island, it was four in the afternoon. The sun was already beginning to tip toward the western ocean. Daylight was so much more limited in the Far North this time of year. She wasn't sure she would ever get used to such short days.

She drove her car off the ferry with the other passengers, grateful as could be that her used Honda had made it all the way here without a hiccup. Out on the street, she found a place to park while tapping directions into her phone. Luckily, she was able to get service, and was guided through the quaint old town full of restaurants, gift shops, and tourist attractions.

She drove into an art district with multiple galleries, showing local artists, and a small community theater. Finally, she parked on the curb outside the address of her grandmother's shop and apartment.

New Moon Books sat on the corner, on a wide sidewalk. The exterior shingle siding was painted a rich burgundy red, similar to many other buildings in town. Its construction was a simple late Victorian style, and had probably been built when the town was originally settled over a hundred years ago.

She climbed out of her car, her stomach dancing with anxiety and excitement. She gripped her keys and walked around to the sidewalk. The smell of pastries from the bakery next door filled her lungs as a customer stepped out onto the street, clutching a white to-go box. The mouthwatering scent of cinnamon and powdered sugar filled the air.

Luna had eaten lunch on the boat, but she was compelled to start toward the bakery nonetheless. When she was just about to open the whitewashed front door, she heard her name called from behind her.

Updated by Jobnib.com She turned, finding a pretty woman in her early forties standing on the sidewalk.

“Rebecca Doolittle?” Luna asked.

“It is you,” the woman said, stepping forward to shake her hand. “I’m so glad you made it in one piece. It’s a long drive from California.”

The woman’s smile was infectious, and Luna instantly relaxed. She wasn’t sure why she felt so anxious. Perhaps it was because up until this moment, it had all been just an idea. Now that she was really here, this new life would become her reality.

“I brought the keys and all the necessary documents to get you started. I’m so glad you decided to stay in Selkie and run the shop. New Moon has been here for decades. It’s a local staple in the community.”

Rebecca opened the front door of the shop and flipped on the light. Luna stepped in behind her, taking in the brightly painted main room.

What struck her first was the nature of the items on display. The shop was only about fifty percent books. The other fifty percent seemed to be all sorts of crystals, herbal concoctions, tarot decks, mystical figurines, and other such objects.

Luna stood with her back to the closed door. “I had no idea the store had so many witchy items in it.”

“Is that a problem?” Rebecca asked, turning back to her with a look of concern.

“I guess not. I’ve been running a bookstore for over six years. I know retail. I just don’t know about all of these sorts of things.” She picked up an amber bottle. The label read,

“Blinding Passion Love Cream.” Luna’s eyes widened and she put the bottle back down.

“Those work,” Rebecca said, with a wink.

“Did Luisa make these herself?” Luna asked.

“She did. But all her recipes are safely tucked away in her books upstairs. They were itemized in the will.”

“I see.”

Luna hadn’t read over the entire will. She’d been too excited and busy packing for her trip. She imagined it had just been full of a bunch of legal language that wouldn’t make a whole lot of difference in the end. Now she realized the will might have helped her understand what she was in for.

“I suppose I can learn.” She narrowed her eyes, not sure she was up to the task. She’d never been very crafty. But maybe she just hadn’t found the right craft. “Where does she get her ingredients?”

“Suppliers lists are organized alphabetically in the office in the back of the shop. As I understand it, Luisa made her potions in the kitchen upstairs.”

“Okay.” Potions?

Rebecca handed over all the keys and paperwork as she finished showing her the important areas of the building. The water heaters, the electric panel. She quickly went over information about the property taxes and utilities before showing her upstairs.

There was a door near the office that led to a narrow staircase that took them to the second floor.

Upstairs, they stepped into a light filled room, decorated in cozy shades of pink and green.

A white stone fireplace dominated one wall while several large windows looked out onto the busy street below. She had a view of the park across the street and a tiny glimpse of the ocean at the bottom of the hill.

Lush green plants hung from the ceiling and were tucked in every corner. The furniture was sturdy and old fashioned, looking to have come from an antique shop. But the artwork and throw pillows brought everything up to date.

Luna had been worried about leaving all her furniture in California. What if Luisa had absolutely horrible taste? But, in truth, the apartment was exactly the kind of

environment that Luna loved. She'd had to leave behind her own houseplants, giving them away to neighbors and friends from the bookstore. She hadn't thought they'd fare well on the trip, even if they could have made it across the borders.

Standing in Luisa's apartment for the first time, Luna knew that she'd made the right choice in coming to Alaska. It was all like a dream come true. As if the perfect place had been constructed for her in anticipation of her arrival.

"The kitchen is through here," Rebecca said, walking through a narrow arch into a substantial kitchen that was larger than she'd expected to find in the space. There was ample space on the butcher block counters, and a large free-standing island in the middle of the room.

There was an industrial quality gas burning stove and a black side by side fridge. If she was going to learn to make herbal products, this was the place to do it.

Through another archway, she found a large pantry, full of labeled bottles. Bundles of dried herbs hung overhead.

"The recipe books are here," Rebecca said. "The will makes it clear she intended you to learn from them and to continue her work."

"Oh..." Luna felt stupid for not reading the will now. But now that she was here, she could dedicate her whole attention to learning everything about the woman who'd given her so much, so suddenly.

Rebecca checked her watch. "I'd better get going. I've got to pick up my daughter from ballet. Do you have any questions?"

"Not right now," she muttered, trying to take it all in.

"You have my home phone number if you can't reach my cell. Call me if you need anything. Any time. I'm here to help."

"Thanks."

"I can show myself out." Rebecca smiled and shook Luna's hand again, wishing her luck settling in.

The apartment door clicked shut and Luna walked out into the open living room/dining room area. It was such a pretty place. So full of art and plants and beauty. The big windows even looked out at a beautiful view.

A tear slid down her face and she wiped it away. She could barely believe that just a few weeks ago, she'd been worried about paying her bills. Now all of that stress was

gone. The cash her grandmother had left her had paid off her debts. As far as she understood, the shop was profitable, both from local sales and the online store.

It was all too much. Her head was spinning. Luna sat down on the massive green velvet armchair and looked at the pleasant fireplace. There were half-burned logs in the hearth. This fireplace actually worked. It burned real wood.

Luna suddenly burst into tears, covering her face with both hands. "Thank you, Grandma Luisa. Thank you."

You're welcome, child.

The words spilled into Luna's brain. She gasped and looked up, thinking she'd heard someone speak. There was no one in the room. She was alone with her silly tears and smudged makeup.

She wiped her face with the back of her hand, knowing that she was just tired. What she needed was to wash her face and to get some delicious-smelling pastries before the bakery next door closed.

She hurried to the bathroom, splashed water on her face, and looked in the gold leaf-framed mirror.

"Everything is going to be better from now on," she told herself. She smiled and took a deep breath. This time she believed it.