

Fierce Wolf Chapter 16 - Tips

Heather couldn't believe how nervous she felt preparing for Thorne to meet her grandmother and daughter. It had been a fast romance, and she was ready to fully commit to him tonight.

But first she needed the most important people in her life to meet him too. Everything had gone so quickly, but Heather was sure about Thorne. She knew she wanted to be with him. She knew that he was her future and that they would be happy together forever.

Heather pulled the rack of lamb out of the oven and smelled the sweet scent of the meat. She pulled it out onto a cutting board and sliced through the ribs to create perfect little pieces for her guests. The salad was tossed, and the mashed potatoes were fluffed. She set everything at the kitchen table when she heard a knock at the door.

Maggie pranced into the kitchen with wide eyes and a smile on her face. "They're here!"

Heather hurried to the door, her heart racing with excitement. Gran was on the other side holding a fresh peach pie. She took the pie and opened the door wide for her grandmother. Heather placed a kiss on Pearl's cheek and closed the door.

"Is he here yet?" Pearl asked.

"Not yet," Heather said with a smile, heading to the kitchen with the pie.

She placed it on the counter and wiped her hands on her apron before taking it off. She headed back out into the living room where Pearl and Maggie were laughing together about something Maggie had just said.

Heather's heart swelled with pride at the sight of them. There was another knock at the front door, and Heather bit her lip before hurrying to open it. On the other side stood her tall, gorgeous man with piercing blue eyes. He smelled of expensive cologne and looked good enough to eat.

"Come in," she said breathlessly, holding the door open for him.

"It smells delicious in here," he said, rubbing his belly.

"I made a rack of lamb."

"Lamb. My favorite," he said with a low rumble of anticipation.

"Gran," she said as her grandmother rose from her chair.

"This is Thorne Winter. Thorne, this is my grandmother Pearl."

He walked around the couch and approached Pearl. He gallantly held out his hand and she took it. She covered his much larger hand with both of hers and gripped him softly, smiling as she looked up into his eyes.

“You are a handsome one, aren’t you?” she said.

“I’ve been told that.” He looked satisfied.

“Heather’s been gushing about you.” Pearl let go of his hands and placed hers on her hips with a smirk.

Thorne glanced at Heather with a smile. She blushed, but it didn’t matter. They were as close as could be and tonight was the night, she intended to let him claim her.

“Maggie, this is my boyfriend, Thorne,” she said to her daughter. Maggie hurried over and stared up at the tall man.

“You’re going to be my new daddy,” she said matter-of-factly.

Thorne’s eyebrows rose and his lips parted. Then he knelt down beside her and looked into her eyes.

“It would be my deepest honor to be your stepfather.”

Maggie giggled and twirled around. When she came back to face him, she clapped her hands together.

“Now I can have a baby brother.”

Everyone laughed and Thorne stood, clearing his throat.

“Let’s eat,” Heather said, feeling slightly awkward.

She picked up Maggie and carried her into the kitchen where she placed her in her seat. Everyone sat around the little round table that was set beautifully and covered in delicious food. They all dished up a meal and talked pleasantly between bites.

“This lamb is so delicious,” Thorne said, taking another big bite.

“I’m glad you like it. I learned everything I know about cooking from Pearl.”

“That’s not completely true. Your parents were good cooks.”

“They were. But they didn’t have the time to teach me, like you did.”

“I love cooking,” Thorne said. “Because the result is always food.”

Everyone laughed at that, and Heather felt glad that the evening was going so well.

“So, the two of you have gotten pretty serious,” Pearl said to Thorne. He wiped his mouth with his napkin and looked at her earnestly.

“Heather is my mate. My one and only. I would do anything to make her smile. My life, my hope, my fate is to protect her and love her and watch her grow.”

Heather placed her hand over her heart and a tear formed in the corner of her eye. Hearing him talk that way to her grandmother was like a fairytale come true.

“You seem like an honest man. And I am a good judge of character.”

“Thorne is registering to go to college next fall to study Wildlife Management,” Heather said.

Pearl’s eyes widened, and she looked at Thorne as if with new eyes.

“Very ambitious,” she said. “It’s good for a man to have ambitions.”

“I want to give something back to nature. Plus, I get to be on campus with Heather every day until I graduate, which is just a bonus.”

“And me too,” Maggie said.

“You’ll be going to kindergarten when Thorne goes to school,” Heather corrected.

Maggie frowned and crossed her arms over her chest.

“I want to be there with you too.”

“We will all get plenty of time together,” Heather said. “We’re going to be a family.”

Maggie clapped her hands together excitedly and wiggled in her seat.

“I told Mommy she needed a husband so that I could have a baby brother. I’m so happy. I always wanted a baby brother.”

“Let’s not get too far ahead of ourselves,” Heather said.

“Under normal circumstances, I would be concerned that you two were rushing into things,” Pearl said. “But considering Thorne is a shifter, I understand that you can make a different kind of commitment.”

“Heather is my life. She is my fated mate. There is no other,” he said, staring Pearl in the eye. “I am here for her no matter what she wants.”

Pearl patted his hand on the table. "I believe you, son."

Thorne was almost twice Pearl's age. That idea made Heather giggle behind her napkin. When they were done eating, Heather cleared away the dinner dishes and cut everyone a slice of peach pie. Then she added a scoop of vanilla ice cream on top. The four of them enjoyed their dessert, laughing and joking and talking about the future.

"Is there going to be a wedding?" Pearl asked, taking a bite of ice cream. "I always loved a wedding."

"I don't know. We haven't talked about it," Heather said, looking to Thorne.

"It isn't something that shifters need, but if it's something that Heather wants, it's something that I want too."

Heather's eyes filled with tears, and she had to dab them away. The unexpected emotion caught her off guard and she sniffled. After dessert, they all watched a family-friendly comedy with Maggie laughing and joking and dancing in front of the TV.

Heather and Thorne sat together in the loveseat while Pearl rocked in the rocking chair. Having them all together in her home felt so good and so right that Heather felt herself relaxing, nearly nodding off on Thorne's shoulder.

Pearl put Maggie to bed while Thorne and Heather cleaned up the kitchen and washed the dishes. When Maggie had dozed off to sleep, Pearl stood with them by the front door. Heather gave her grandmother a big, warm hug and kissed her cheek.

"I'm so glad that you like him. It makes me so happy for us to all be together like this."

Pearl cupped her cheek and smiled at her granddaughter. "I haven't seen you this happy in a long time," she said.

Then she took Thorne's hand and grasped it with both of hers. "Welcome to the family, young man. I know that you are going to be good for my granddaughter. If she loves you, then I love you too."

Pearl and Thorne embraced quickly, and Heather could tell he felt happy and satisfied that Pearl approved. They walked her out to her car and watched her drive away into the night.

With Pearl gone and Maggie sleeping, the house was quiet. Thorne took her in his arms and held her gently against his chest. She relaxed into him, taking in the scent of his cologne and the feeling of his body.

"I think that went well," he said.

“I had no idea how good this would feel. It’s like everything fits together just perfectly.”

“I always knew that it would.”

“Did you really?” she asked.

“Not really,” he said with a laugh. “I was ready for you to reject me. I had all kinds of terrible plans for what I would do with my life if that came to pass. Let me just say dinner with your daughter and grandmother was a far, far better option than what I had planned.”

“What were you going to do?” she asked.

“It doesn’t matter. All that matters is that we are here together now.”