

Lost Wolf Chapter 5 - Tips

Blake shot up in his sleeping bag at the sound of his phone ringing. He grabbed at the phone, knowing it must be her. He hurried to answer it, but when he did, the line was dead.

He blinked, his mind still hazy. He'd been so stupid last night, telling her they couldn't meet. What was he thinking? His mate was everything. His whole life.

Could he walk away from his revenge for her sake? He didn't know. Maybe he could. He turned off the phone and climbed out of the tent.

His head was pounding, and he felt dizzy. He'd been dreaming about running across a sandy beach toward Wyn. She was dressed all in white, reaching out to him. But when they were within reach of each other, the Snow Queen emerged from the ocean and cursed them both.

Blake rubbed his head and then pulled on his shoes. He built a fire in the pit and made himself a cup of coffee.

As he sipped the brew, he picked up his phone. The caller that had woken him that morning was in his call history. He'd assumed it was just a spam call or a wrong number. Now he wasn't so sure.

He looked up the area code and found it was from San Francisco. His eyes widened, and he dialed the number before taking another sip of coffee.

The phone rang. And rang. He was about to hang up when the ringing stopped, and he heard someone's breath on the other end of the line.

"Wyn?"

"How did you know it was me?" she said.

"I looked up the area code."

"Smart."

"I'm sorry about last night. There's just something really big happening in my life right now. And I don't feel right dragging you into it."

"You aren't a criminal or something are you?"

"Ha. No. Nothing like that." He laughed and took another sip of coffee, his headache slowly abating.

"I have something big happening in my life as well. If truth be told, I wasn't sure if I should even sign up for matedotcom."

"I'm glad you did."

"Are you?" Her lovely voice turned accusatory.

He didn't blame her. He'd been an idiot.

"Of course. Finding you changes everything. That's kind of the problem. I just don't know how I can do what needs to be done knowing I'm matched with such a brilliant, beautiful woman. You deserve better."

"Maybe I do. I have issues of my own that need to be solved. Dangerous, ancient things that I alone can conquer. It's my responsibility. Having my head turned by a wolf is not going to help in my mission."

"We seem to be in quite a bind," he said, his heart sinking.

He should have agreed to meet her then and there, last night. He could have hiked to Trapper's Landing and got the next bus to Anchorage. Instead, he'd hurt her. And he didn't know if they would ever recover.

What had possessed him to speak that way to his mate? He must be insane. The Snow Queen really had cursed him.

"What do you suggest we do?" she asked.

"I just want to get to know you."

"I'm not sure it's worth it for me. This conversation is already distracting me from my mission."

"What is your mission?"

"Why would I tell you that?" she mocked.

"I don't mean to pry."

"What is so important to you that you would reject your own mate?"

Blake's face burned with shame. "You'd probably think I was crazy if I told you."

"Try me."

"Maybe later."

“Fine. Be that way.”

She hung up the phone before Blake could reply. He stared at his phone in his hand. He was striking out big time. Blake scrubbed his hot face and covered his mouth with his hand.

His inner wolf screamed at his mistake. Blake sighed, knowing that he was to blame for everything that was happening.

He thought of his family. His mother and father. His brothers. He thought about the life that had been stolen from them. He had a mission too. To take out the Snow Queen.

But Blake wanted Wyn. He wanted to know her and get the chance to love her. But perhaps things had happened this way because fate knew that he would die soon. If she hated him, she wouldn't mourn him when he was gone.

If he was able to remove even a shred of power from the demon witch, he would have succeeded in life. It had been his intent and calling for decades. He couldn't stop now.

What if he'd told Wyn what he was doing? He wasn't sure why he hadn't just done it. Part of him was afraid she'd try to talk him out of it. Or even worse, try to help.

The last thing he wanted was for Wyn to be endangered because of his vendetta. She didn't need to know his foolhardy plan.

Why would he drag a beautiful princess into the dark mess of his curse and his past? It wasn't right. It was better for her to hate him than for him to mix her up in his baggage.

“I'm sorry. I don't know what's wrong with me.” Her text message came up on the screen.

“We both have things we're dealing with right now. Maybe we just have to accept that it's not a great time.”

“You might be right.”

“I'm sorry too, Wyn. I wish I could change course. You have no idea how much. I just don't want you to get mixed up in this. It's dangerous.”

“I assure you I can take care of myself. However, I understand your position. I feel the same way about my own situation.”

“Let's just set it aside for now.”

“Okay. Then what?”

"I don't know. Can we still talk? My inner wolf is freaking out pretty bad about not meeting you. I'm not sure I'll be able to concentrate if I can't at least speak to you."

"I'm having the same experience."

"Then we'll just get to know each other over the phone and text for now. When we've completed our missions, then we can revisit the possibility of meeting."

"I can agree to that. For now. Who knows, I might change my mind about the whole thing and just ghost you."

Blake smirked. "I wouldn't blame you. This isn't how it usually works between two shifters."

"Honestly, I would have expected an explosive celebration. An instantaneous mating. New pups born within nine months. That sort of thing."

"Same," he said, thinking of all the things he was missing out on because of his vigilante vengeance. "I suppose that's not what fate has in store for us."

"I guess not. I have to go."

Blake rubbed his forehead, a lingering throb still behind his eyes.

It could have been so different if he'd just agreed to meet her when she'd asked. But he couldn't go back and change it now, no matter how much he wanted to.

They were locked into whatever was between them now, and he had no idea how to change it.

He ate a protein bar for breakfast and put out his fire. He had plans for the day that didn't involve beating himself up for his stupid mistakes.

Blake left the cave and started out into the snowy world. When he stepped onto the trail that led higher into the mountain, he had a view of the lake in the basin below.

To his utter shock, he spotted several newly constructed buildings. A plume of smoke drifted from the chimney of what looked like a luxury home.

Whoever had bought the land hadn't wasted any time building new construction. He gritted his teeth, feeling anger in his chest. This was his family's land. It never should have been sold. He wanted to go confront whoever was there. Tell them off for stealing his legacy.

Blake knew these thoughts were utterly insane. The new owners of the property would be within their rights to shoot him then and there.

He wasn't interested in getting himself murdered today. He had more important things to do. Once he'd defeated the Snow Queen, he'd decide what to do about the land.

There was no way Blake could afford to buy it back, even if the new owners wanted to sell.

He brainstormed ways he could come up with the money while he hiked through the deep snow.

The hike up the mountain was harrowing and steep, made worse by the newly fallen slush.

His clothing was adequate for the weather, but halfway up the mountain, Blake wished he'd taken off in wolf form. The hike was too treacherous for his clumsy human feet, even in snowshoes.

Blake knew he either needed to go back down to the cave or shift into his wolf form. He hated to leave his human mind, body, and clothing, but there was no way he'd make it up to the snow palace in human form.

Blake was not one to admit defeat. He needed to see if the snow flower had bloomed, and he would not go back down the mountain until he had.

He unzipped his jacket, pulled off his snowsuit, and untied his boots. Moments later, he was naked in the snow, shivering like a man who'd never known subzero temperatures.

He shifted into his wolf form, his deft paws moving swiftly over the snow. The dispersion of his weight on four feet made for a much easier climb.

Blake came to another outcropping with a view down into the valley. He was even higher above the new buildings now. He could see a figure walk out of the house and into the pole barn next door.

He grimaced. His lips pulled back over his sharp teeth in a growl. He could snap the human's neck and take back his territory.

The wolf's thoughts were primal and illogical. Blake's human mind had to force the animal to turn away from the figure of the human in the valley and continue on.

When he arrived at the top of the mountain, the wolf was panting. His heart raced in his chest from the arduous climb.

Walking into the Snow Queen's territory was not something Blake took lightly in either form.

A buzz of electric fear radiated all around him. He felt like he was being watched. The wolf ducked into the shadows, keeping himself hidden behind trees and snowbanks.

Then he came to the edge of the Snow Queen's garden. The snow flower would bloom right outside the front entrance to the palace. He growled, ready to rush into the garden and snap it from its stem and wolf it down whole.

Then the Snow Queen could not eat it herself. She would not receive its magic. He hoped it would weaken her so much that she died.

His body coiled, ready to pounce into a run. A buzzing noise overhead distracted him, and he looked up, expecting to find a bird. It wasn't a bird.

The wolf barked at the machine hovering above him in the air. It drew closer, and he snapped at it.

He barely missed the drone before it ascended higher above him. The animal began to panic. He jumped at the machine, wanting to take it down like prey.

The drone flew down the mountain and over the side of the cliff, hovering just out of reach. Watching.

Blake watched right back.