

Witty Wolf Chapter 6 - Tips

Dalia couldn't believe she'd kissed Tate on their first date. She'd planned to move slowly. The moment had seemed so right. She'd wanted it to happen. Was she crazy? Was she betraying herself?

Tate was sweet and charming and funny. Hank had been the same way in the beginning. She couldn't trust her intuition anymore. The whole date had been amazing. She'd never been kissed like that before. She felt it from the tips of her toes down to the tips of her hair. It was like her whole body was on fire.

She lay back in her bed and let her book drop into her lap. Garfield was curled up at her feet, snoring heavily. She didn't know if she was going to be able to sleep tonight with all the thoughts running through her mind.

She wanted to enjoy this experience with Tate. If he was her fated mate and things worked out in the end, then this would be the beginning of their lives together—the story they would tell their children one day.

She didn't want it to be full of doubt and fear.

The next day, Dalia drove to Four Winds Gallery to deliver her latest painting. Marsha was desperate for anything more from her, and Dalia wanted to speak with her friend about what had happened on her date.

Dalia didn't really know Tate yet. He could be hiding a terrible secret. She didn't want to believe that about him. When she arrived at the Four Winds Gallery, Marsha met her at the door with a wide grin and an excited h.u.g.

"How was the date last night?"

"It was good. I brought you this."

Marsha gazed down at the landscape. Her mouth dropped and her eyes widened.

"How do you do it, Dalia? Every piece is a masterpiece."

"You are too kind, Marsha," she said, blushing.

"It's true. The other galleries in town are jealous that I have you working with me."

"You're blowing smoke, Marsha," Dalia said with a laugh.

She appreciated her friend's enthusiasm for her work. She was grateful every day to have Marsha in her corner.

They walked inside the gallery and Marsha immediately found a spot for Dalia's new painting. Patrons would see it upon entering.

"This one's going to fly off the wall. Bring me more."

"I have plans for at least three more paintings this week. But I'm a bit distracted."

"What was he like? Absolutely handsome I assume."

"He was all that and more. Really sweet and charming. He took me to the Captain's Grotto, and we had a delicious meal. Then after that, we went for a walk and..."

"And?" Marsha asked, raising her eyebrows.

"He kissed me," Dalia said in a rush.

Her body flushed with the same desire she felt the night before.

"I'm guessing it was amazing by the look on your face." Marsha giggled.

"That's the problem. I like him too much, and things are moving way too fast."

"A kiss on the first date isn't moving too fast," Marsha said. "Now get out there and make me some more paintings."

Dalia laughed and hugged her friend one more time before leaving the gallery. On her way out the door she almost ran smack dab into her worst nightmare. His face was a cool mask, with a smirk bordering on a sneer.

"Hank! What are you doing here?"

"It's a free country. I can go anywhere I want."

"You aren't supposed to be within a hundred yards of me," she said, taking a step back.

"The restraining order reversed this morning. I can go anywhere I want now."

"What do you want from me, Hank?"

"You went on a date with another man last night. You belong to me, Dalia. No restraining order or bullshit breakup is going to change that."

"You were cheating on me the entire time we were together. With three other women."

"You were supposed to be my wife. The mother of my children. And you let a little misunderstanding come between us."

"How dare you? I never want to see you again." She stormed past him, but he grabbed her and flung her around.

"Do I need to call the police?" Marsha said, stepping out of the gallery with her phone in her hand.

"It's not going to make any difference," Dalia said, ripping her hand from Hank's grasp. "Don't come near me. I have a gun."

She stomped back to her car and flung herself inside. She heard Marsha yelling at Hank on the sidewalk as she drove away. Tears streamed from her eyes. She had been so foolish, so blind. Her doubt crept into her heart and squeezed it like a vise.

A notification pinged on her phone. It was from Tate.

"What's up?" it said with grinning emoji.

She let out a sigh and shook her head. Tate wasn't Hank. She wanted to love again. She wanted to let herself get swept up in the romance of the moment. But she had done the same thing with Hank.

She didn't feel like painting when she got home. She went inside and curled up on her bed, letting her tears flow freely onto the pillow. Garfield snuggled up beside her, purring like an engine and licking her hand.

She laughed at his bristly tongue. He always made her feel better. There was another notification on her phone, and she turned over on her bed to pick it up.

"I was wondering if you wanted to catch a movie with me at the theater. They have a comedy matinee playing."

A funny movie sounded like exactly what she needed right now. They could sit in the dark, laugh, and eat popcorn. She could relax.

"When?"

"It starts in an hour."

"See you then."

She set down the phone and went to the bathroom to check her face. Her mascara was smudged from her tears. She tidied up and brushed her hair.

Things with Tate were easy and comfortable. She was already starting to see a difference between him and Hank. They had never gone out to an afternoon matinee to eat popcorn and laugh.

She fed Garfield and hurried to her car, and when she made it to the theater she sat in the parking lot, trying to gather her thoughts. This was just a friendly date in the middle of the day. No big deal.

She walked into the entrance of the theater and saw Tate standing near the ticket booth. He waved to her, his grin making her smile. He approached looking like he wanted to hug her, but he kept his distance.

"I'm glad we're here together. I'd be stuck at home with my little brother or have to see it alone."

"You live with your little brother?" They moved toward the ticket booth.

"Temporarily," Tate said, rolling his eyes.

He bought them two tickets and handed her one. Then they went to the refreshments stand where he ordered a huge tub of popcorn and several different types of candy and two large sodas.

"What's his story?" she asked, filling her cup with soda and ice.

"He is angry that the rest of us vetoed his vote about selling our parents' property. Nobody wanted to stay there anymore, and we all got an even split. He won't let it go, and he won't use the money to get his own place."

"Tragic," she said, taking a sip of her soda.

"That is a perfect description of Blake."

He raised his eyebrows to his hairline and they both laughed. They then found a spot in the theater, in the middle, near the aisle. They shared popcorn, waiting for the previews to start.

"He needs a purpose in life, direction. All he ever talks about is going back home and killing the Snow Queen."

"The Snow Queen?"

"It's the name of a mountain on our property. He never got a chance to climb it."

Dalia studied his face. She could tell he wasn't being honest. Was the Snow Queen another woman? She sat back in her chair as the previews started, trying to banish her fears from her mind.

She would need to spend more time with Tate to figure him out. There was something he wasn't telling her and that didn't sit right with her. But she'd picked up on it immediately. That was progress.

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Tate couldn't believe how stupid he'd been. He'd mentioned the Snow Queen and then had to make up a preposterous story. What was she going to think of him now?

What if she asked him about it again? Saying it was a mountain seemed plausible enough. He only hoped that she'd believed him. He was so anxious about it the entire movie that he could barely enjoy it.

When the movie finally let out, Tate tossed their garbage into the can. She was going to have to learn about the curse eventually.

"That was really fun," Dalia said, looking up at him with a bright smile on her lips.

"The movie lived up to the hype. That doesn't always happen."

"We should do this again sometime."

As they walked out up the theater into the warm afternoon sunlight, he asked her if she would like to go for a walk, and maybe go check out New Moon Books and meet his brother.

"I'm not sure," she said, looking hesitant.

"Is it too soon?" he asked. A seagull squawked overhead, and something dropped to six inches from where he stood. She giggled and covered her mouth.

"It missed me," he said, looking up into the sky. "It's supposed to be good luck if it hits."

"Seagull poop isn't lucky," she said, laughing again. He liked the sound of her laugh and could listen to it all day.

"If you don't want to meet my family, that's totally fine," he said, rocking on the heels of his feet.

"I suppose it couldn't hurt. It is just a bookstore."

"It's a really nice bookstore. And they have other things in there like candles and tarot cards."

"You believe in that sort of thing?" she asked, eyeing him skeptically.

"Sometimes," he said as they walked towards where they parked their cars in the lot.

"Only sometimes?" she asked, opening her car door.

"It depends on what it says," he said.

She burst out laughing and covered her mouth.

"I wonder if we can get our cards read?"

"We can ask Luna. I'm sure she would do it for us."

"It could be fun," she said with a wink before sinking into her car.

She closed the door and gave him a little wave before he turned and hurried to his own truck. Things were looking up. Daliah thought he was funny and wanted to get a tarot card reading with him and meet his brother. Maybe his slip up about the Snow Queen wasn't so bad.

They both parked in front of New Moon Books and met on the sidewalk in front of the store.

Tate held the front door open for Dalia, allowing her to walk inside. The shop smelled like incense and honey, and Tate took a long inhale of the fragrant scents. Luna was standing at the counter, her red hair tied up in a loose bun on top of her head. She gave them both an animated smile.

"Tate, what brings you to New Moon?" she asked, coming out from behind the counter to give him a h.ug. Luna was just starting to show a rounding baby bump on her belly.

"We were just catching a matinee. This is Dalia. We were matched on mate dot com."

He was careful not to call her his mate. He didn't want to scare her off by being presumptuous. Luna knew exactly what that meant. She went to Dalia and took her hand.

"What a lucky man you are, Tate. Dalia, you must tell me everything about yourself."

"There's not much to tell. I'm not really that interesting."

“That’s not true. Dalia is an amazing artist.”

Tate had looked her up online and had scrolled through her Instagram feed for hours the night before. She was exceptionally talented, and he couldn’t believe he’d been matched with someone with such a gift.

“Oh wonderful. What medium do you use? What is your subject?” Luna asked

“I paint landscapes in acrylics and sell them through Four Winds Gallery.”

“You know what? I think I’ve seen your work. I was going to buy one of your paintings last week, but it sold before I got a chance to come back to the store.”

Rex walked in the back door of the shop and approached them.

“Rex, this is Dalia. Tate’s mate,” Luna said. Tate cringed. He didn’t want Luna to be too forward about their mate status. But Dalia didn’t seem to mind. She was looking at Rex and then back at Tate. She shook her head.

“The Winters certainly have excellent DNA,” she said with a laugh.

“They certainly do,” Luna said with a wink.

“Tate said you might read our tarot cards,” she said, looking around the shop and all the eclectic offerings.

“I would love to,” she said, guiding them towards the back of the shop where a little round table was set up, covered in a moon-print tablecloth.

“Rex, can you watch the front of the store?”

“On it,” he said, leaning down to kiss his mate on the cheek and give her an affectionate squeeze.

“It was wonderful to meet you, Dalia. I hope we get to spend more time together soon,” he said. “You should introduce her to the rest of the family, Tate.”

“How many of you are there?” she asked, looking to Tate.

“There are six Winters,” he said. “I’m in the middle. Me and Thorne, who’s just older than me. The youngest are Blake and Damien.”

“Don’t forget Felix. He is the second oldest,” Rex said.

“We have to all get together at someone’s house for a big meal. Damien has the biggest house of all of us right now, but I don’t know how much of a cook he is.” Luna laughed.

Rex hurried to the front of the store to take care of some customers who had just walked in while Luna shuffled the tarot cards.

“Cut them once each,” Luna said.

Tate cut the cards first and then Dalia. Luna shuffled a few more times and then began to place cards out on the table in front of her. The first card she laid down showed two n.aked people: a man and a woman holding hands as a rainbow spread out overhead.

“It’s the Lovers card,” she said with a sly smile. “I’m assuming that’s the two of you.”

“What does it mean?”

“It means that you are perfect mates,” she said.

Tate watched Dalia’s face as Luna delivered the news. She seemed reserved and closed off. Dalia drew the next card and placed it over the Lovers.

“The Three of Swords,” Luna said, shaking her head.

The image was of a heart pierced with three swords. That did not look good.

“What does that mean?” Tate asked.

“This card represents what stands against you. There’s been heartbreak in your past. You were really hurt, almost beyond repair.” Luna looked up at Dalia, whose face had fallen. Her eyes had gone watery. She covered her mouth with her hand and didn’t say anything.

Luna drew the next card and placed it above the Lovers card. She continued to draw and place the cards until there were ten on the table. Tate had no idea what any of it meant.

“I get the impression that there is something from one of your pasts that could make it difficult to get where you want to be, which is here.” Luna tapped a card of a family with ten goblets spread out overhead.

“This is the Ten of Cups. It means living in complete love and happiness. It’s an auspicious card. This is your future. But first you have to get past the devil card.”

“This is the Four of Cups. You see the figure here is sad that one of the cups has spilled. She’s not looking at the cups in front of her. Then we have the Tower. Everything must come to a head before you can find you happily ever after.”

Dalia did not look relaxed. Anxiety was all over her face.

“Do you have any questions?” Luna asked.

“What is does the Tower mean is going to happen?”

Luna looked over the cards and considered them again. “If I had to guess,” she said, rubbing her chin, “there could be a confrontation with the devil.”

“Who is the devil?” Tate asked, feeling very concerned.

“I think I know who it is,” Dalia said in a small voice.

“Who?”

“My ex-boyfriend.”

Luna looked from the cards to Dalia. “He broke your heart, but you have to be grateful for what you still have,” she said, pointing at the Four of Cups. “Because your future could be amazing. Full of abundance and love.” Luna tapped the Ten of Cups.

“That was very enlightening,” Dalia said, standing up abruptly.

“Are you okay?” Tate stood beside her.

“I’m fine.” She laughed nervously.

“There are beautiful things ahead of you. The Tower can tear down all the wrong things that were built. It doesn’t mean an end to goodness—it just means an end to something that wasn’t working.”

“I broke it off with him months ago.”

“Don’t take this too seriously. It’s just mumbo-jumbo,” Tate said, trying to defuse the situation.

“Don’t worry about it, Tate. But I’ve got to get going.”

She hurried out of the shop without giving him a kiss goodbye. He felt disappointed as he stood next to Luna.

“She had her heart broken,” Luna said. “You can’t rush these things.”

“I just want to protect her.”

“You will,” Luna said, drawing another card. “The Fool.”

The card showed a jester and a little dog practically walking off of a cliff.

Tate looked at the card and frowned. Then Luna drew another card. “This is the King of Wands. He is powerful and passionate. He’s not afraid to act. This is who you are becoming.”

Witty Wolf Chapter 8 - Tips

Dalia had always believed there was something beyond the ordinary world. It was what allowed her see the beauty that she captured in her artwork. The world was alive with magic and mystery. Without that magical quality, there would be nothing to paint.

Every card in the tarot reading made perfect sense. The second she’d seen the three swords piercing through the bleeding heart, she knew what that meant. The Tower card scared her. It said something had to be broken down so that she could get to her happily ever after.

She’d had her tarot cards read right before moving to Alaska. It had confirmed that moving was the right decision. Dalia was the happiest she’d ever been in those first few years in her aunt’s house.

She’d painted every day, even while snowed in during winter. Took photographs outdoors and brought them back to her studio.

She’d painted of forests covered in snow with icicles hanging from the trees. It took on a magical quality that she hadn’t been able to capture in LA. It had changed everything for her.

When she got home, she went straight to her studio and began looking through all her photographs on her computer. There were so many wonderful things to paint. She found a series of photographs from last winter, around the time she ended it with Hank.

The light and shadow in photographs had an eerie radiance. She could feel the emotions in the trees, snow, sky, and cliffs on the ocean.

She picked out a photo of a moody ocean with the gray cloud-filled sky hanging ominously over the freezing water. It was a perfect representation of that moment in her life.

She printed it out and pinned it next to her studio easel beside the massive canvas she’d stretched a month ago. She wanted to pour her emotions into this piece. Let it be the Tower card inside her. She wanted her past to break down and be torn apart.

She squeezed paint onto her glass palette—grays, blues, and greens with just the slightest hint of red and yellow.

She drew out the rough lines of the landscape in graphite and stood back to stare at the canvas. She stepped forward and placed her palms on the fabric and closed her eyes. Her palms felt the tight stretch of the canvas when she pressed slightly, trying to feel what the painting wanted to tell her.

She stepped back and placed a round brush into the water and then dabbed it into a mixture of blue and gray. She ran a wash across the sky and through the sea.

She painted intensely, vigorously, with complete focus until the areas of sky and sea and land were beginning to take on distinct dimension. She swished her brushes in the water and stood back, assessing what she had done.

Her palette was almost empty and so were her energy reserves. It was a massive canvas, but the painting was well underway. Marsha would be so happy.

She washed her hands and walked out into the hallway. There was a sudden knock at her door, and she thought maybe she had received the package of art.

She grabbed the door handle and swung it open, expecting to see a lovely package of paints and brushes. Instead, she saw him.

“What are you doing here?” she asked.

Hank brushed past her into the house. “I left some of my things here. I want to get them.”

“Get the hell out of here, or I’m calling the cops.”

“I have a right to get my things.”

“I’m asking you to leave.”

He looked into the studio, his eyes landing on the painting. She shuddered. He walked into her cozy living room and started searching her houseplants and bookshelves.

He knocked over a pewter statue of an eagle, and it fell on the floor. She rushed forward, hoping it wasn’t chipped. She picked it up and found the wing had broken off. She clenched the broken pieces in both fists.

“Get the hell out of here,” she said, stomping her feet.

“I need my lighter. That thing cost me a hundred bucks.”

“If it belonged to you, I threw it out.”

“You shouldn’t have done that.” He stepped toward her.

She pulled her cellphone out of her pocket and began to dial 911.

“Get the hell out of here now.”

“You owe me for that lighter.”

“Get the hell out.”

He grumbled and made his way to the front door. She quickly closed and locked it behind him.

Dalia let out a deep breath and turned off her phone. She didn't want to involve the police in this. He'd left. That was all that mattered now. Now that the restraining order was up, she had to deal with him being within one hundred yards of her house. She sank into her couch and Garfield hopped up beside her.

“What am I going to do, Garfield?” she asked, snuggling her cat to her chest.

He purred loudly and nuzzled against her. She patted him affectionately and sank her cheek into his thick orange fur. “I don't want to be by myself right now.”

She thought about Tate. Maybe he could come over. Hank wouldn't pull something like that with another man around.

Witty Wolf Chapter 9 - Tips

“So, what's the deal with Yetis?” Tate asked. He groaned to himself and ran his hand through his thick blond hair. “No...”

He crossed the line off his notepad a second before his brother Blake charged into the room.

“What are you doing? I told you to stay out of here.”

“There's nothing in the fridge to eat.”

“Then go out and get something,” Tate snapped.

Blake bristled and closed the door. Tate collapsed on his bed, feeling his inspiration completely sapped. His brother was getting on his last nerve. Blake was going to have to get out of here before Tate snapped and bit his head off.

How was he supposed to practice his comedy routine with his irritating brother interrupting him every five minutes? Besides, he hated every joke that he wrote. Suddenly he didn't feel funny at all. Why was it so hard to be funny on demand? It didn't make any sense—it always looked so easy for the great comedians.

He needed a break. He'd been practicing all morning. He grabbed his coat and hurried out the door and down the stairs. He found Blake on sidewalk, charging toward the market.

"I thought I'd come with you," Tate said.

"We could've taken the truck."

"It's a nice day," Tate said, looking up at the clear blue sky.

They walked into Selkie Harbor Fish and Chips and made two orders at the counter. They were given their baskets moments later and took it all down to their table. Tate spread malt vinegar all over his fish and squirted a hefty portion of ketchup on his fries. Blake tentatively nibbled a piece of fried fish with an irritated look on his face. "Why do they have to ruin it with all the breading?" he asked.

"It's good," Tate said.

He devoured his plate and looked up to see Thorne, Heather, and little Maggie walking through the door. Tate waved at them and caught his brother's eye. Thorne c0cked his head and then motioned to Heather, pointing over to the table. Heather gave them a wave and the three of them walked to the counter to order. Moments later, the five of them were sitting together at the table.

"It's so nice to see you," Heather said, helping her four-year-old daughter with her food.

"There isn't anything to eat in the house," Blake said, finally digging into his meal.

"I've been busy." Tate took another bite of fish.

"Rex told us about your mate," Thorne said with a knowing look.

"My match," Tate corrected. "We haven't mated yet."

"Have you told her about the curse?" Heather asked, breaking her fish apart with a knife and fork.

"No. I don't know how. I don't want it to scare her off." Tate wiped his mouth.

"My advice: don't blurt it out the first time you meet." Heather laughed.

"Are you wolves too?" Maggie asked Tate and Blake.

"We're Thorne's brothers. We are all wolves. Would you like to see?" Blake asked her.

Maggie's eyes brightened, and she clapped her hands together. "Can I, Mommy?"

"Maybe some other time," she said, looking nervous.

"Has she seen your wolf, Thorne?" Blake asked.

"Maggie has met Thorne's wolf. It's something we're introducing slowly."

"Very wise," Tate said.

"Don't you think you're being a bit overprotective?" Blake asked. "The child wants to see the Winter wolves in all their glory. It probably wouldn't be too much for her delicate sensibilities."

Heather set her fork back on her plate and stared at Blake, slowly raising her eyebrows as she turned to Thorne.

"Please forgive my brother," Tate said. "He has a screw loose." Tate pointed at his head and twirled his finger.

"I'm the only one who's thinking rationally," Blake said.

He took his half-finished meal to the counter, threw his things into a to go box, and scurried out the door.

"I'm sorry about that," Tate said.

"You don't have to apologize for him," Thorne rumbled.

"I feel responsible."

"Blake is responsible for himself. He needs to deal with his own burdens."

"I am sorry, though, Heather," Tate said.

"It's okay, Tate. Everything's fine. I knew what I was signing up for," she said, patting Thorne's hand.

"That's good to know."

"I hear your mate is a famous artist," Heather said.

"I don't know if she's famous. She has 20,000 followers on Instagram. Whatever that means," Tate said. "I looked at every single one of her posts, and I think she's amazing."

They made small talk about movies and comedy and Heather's work at the college. When they finished, Heather took Maggie to the bathroom to wash up.

"How are things with you and the new family?" Tate asked Thorne.

"Couldn't be better. I love those two. Heather is an amazing woman. She blows my mind every day. I never thought that I could love for someone else's child so much, but I love Maggie like she's my own daughter. You wouldn't believe a four-year-old could be so fierce."

"I'm glad things are working out for you."

"They will work out for you too." Thorne gripped his brother's shoulder.

Tate made his way home, hoping that Blake had decided to go somewhere else. Tate turned into the parking lot of his building and his phone rang. It was Dalia. He answered and pressed the phone to his ear.

"Hi," he said lightly. "It's nice to hear from you."

"Would you like to come over to my place to hang out?" she asked.

"I would love to."

"There's a new comedy special on Netflix. I thought you might want to watch with me. I have two pints of unopened ice cream in the freezer."

"How could I resist?" He smiled.

She sent him her address and he entered it into his GPS. Moments later, he was standing at the front door of Dalia's house with roses and chocolates in his arms. He knocked and she answered.

She smiled with surprise at the gifts. She took the fragrant bouquet of spring blooms into her arms and inhaled deeply.

"Thank you. They're gorgeous. Come in." She stood back and invited him into her house. "I'll get these in some water."

Plants dominated the space, lining the tops of bookshelves and surrounding the picture windows on the far wall. She had eclectic, mismatched furniture in prints and patterns from all over the world, her bookshelves were packed with books and figurines. A big rose quartz sat on the coffee table.

Tate looked closer at her bookshelf. He'd seen the same titles in the witchy section of Luna's store.

“Would you like some tea?” Walked back into the living room with the bouquet in a glass vase.

“Tea would be great,” he said.

He followed her into the yellow cedar kitchen and sat on the gray granite island. Dalia filled a tea kettle and put it on to boil. He loved watching her walk around her kitchen with the light streaming over her wild red hair.

She poured hot water into two earthenware mugs.

“Would you like cream or honey?”

He said yes to both. When she handed him the cup, he sipped the spicy sweat flavor with delight. She lead him back into the living room.

“Ready to watch the show?” she asked.

“Yeah.”

They sat down together, and she turned on the show he’d come over to watch. It started with a blast and he was cracking up on the first joke. Dalia giggled beside him.

The show was a collection of five different comedians, all with different personalities and routines. By the end of the show, he felt lightheaded from laughter. Dalia eyes glistened with humor and her smile filled her whole face.

“We never got the ice cream,” she said.

“We’ll have to watch another show so we can eat it.”

“Sounds like a plan,” she said, disappearing into the kitchen.

She came back a few moments later with two pints of rocky road ice cream and two big spoons. She handed one to Tate and dug in to her own.

“I have a Monty Python and the Holy Grail DVD.” She started to look through her collection on her bookshelf.

“Nice! Let’s watch that.”

She smiled gleefully and placed the DVD in the player. She sat closer than before, their thighs touching.

The smell of her skin overwhelmed him. He was intoxicated by her scent.

“I’m glad you invited me over,” he said.

“So am I. This has been really fun.”

She looked down at her ice cream and poked at it with her spoon several times.

“The truth is, I didn’t want to be alone. My ex-boyfriend came over earlier and it scared me. I had a restraining order against him, but it just got lifted. So, unless I file another one, he can come around any time.”

“What did he do?” Adrenaline coursed through Tate’s veins.

“He walked in the house and started looking for his lighter.”

“He just walked right through the front door?”

“He knocked and I opened it. Then he pushed past to get inside. I threatened to call the police, but he ended up leaving on his own.”

Tate gritted his teeth. “I’m glad you called me. That man needs to be taught a lesson.”

“I hoped you could stay with me a while. Just in case he’s still lingering around.”

“You think he’s watching you?” Tate said, standing up.

He headed to the door and gripped the handle. Dalia grabbed his shoulder.

“It’s okay. Please just stay with me. You don’t need to go after him.”

Tate turned back to her. She had a pleading expression in her eyes. For now, he would leave the man alone. But Tate would not allow the man to cross that line again.

Witty Wolf Chapter 10 - Tips

Dalia took Tate’s hand and led him to the couch. She was so grateful to have him there with her. She had loved spending the afternoon together, watching DVDs and enjoying each other’s company. It was something she had longed for all the time.

“I’ve been thinking about the tarot card reading,” she said, taking his hand and leading him back to the couch. They sat down together, still holding hands.

“You believe tarot cards can predict the future?” Tate asked.

“I believe in all sorts of mystical things.” She giggled.

Tate’s eyes widened. “Really?”

“More than you can imagine.” She loved the feeling of their fingers intertwined. Hank had never believed in the mystical. He’d criticized her about it all the time.

“I have been affected very deeply by the mystical,” he said, looking at the ground.

“What do you mean?” It was refreshing to find someone she could share her experiences with.

“I’m not sure if I should tell you this yet,” he sighed, grasping her hand more tightly.

“It’s okay. You can trust me.”

She could tell that there was something weighing on his shoulders. He needed to let it out.

“It sounds pretty crazy when you say it out loud,” he said, looking into her eyes.

“I’m the last person to call mystical experiences crazy,” she said, trying to reassure him.

He took a deep breath and let it out. “I am much older than I look.”

“How old are you?” she asked carefully. She didn’t want to offend him.

“I’m over a hundred years old.” He gritted his teeth. His expression betrayed his doubt that she believed him. He looked like he expected her to blow up at any second.

“You don’t look a day over thirty.” She laughed, trying to break the tension.

“Seventy-five years ago, my family was cursed by a powerful witch. We were forced to remain in wolf form except on the day of the full moon. Our theory is that we only aged on that day.”

“That’s incredible,” she said, leaning back on the couch.

“You don’t believe me.” He sighed.

“I’m just trying to let it sink in.” She sat in silence for a moment. “Today isn’t the full moon.”

“Luna is a witch herself. She brewed a potion that allows us to remain in human form for the rest of the month.”

“Is it possible to break the curse?” She bit her lip, thinking of his suffering.

“When we claim our fated mates, the curse is lifted. It worked for three of my brothers, so I know it will work for me too.”

"I see," she said.

"I hope you don't think I'm making this up so you'll feel obligated to be my mate."

"I don't think that. I feel safe with you, Tate. I don't want to have to second-guess myself because of it."

"That is really good to hear."

"It's not right that I should lock my heart away forever because of what I've been through. I have to trust my own feelings again."

She reached out to him and cupped his cheek. His eyes met hers and widened with surprise. She leaned toward him, and he met her lips with his own.

As soon as their mouths touched, an electric shock sparked through her being, radiating from her lips down into her core. She opened her mouth and gasped.

He wrapped his arm around her waist, pulling her to him. She groaned as she thrust her tongue into his mouth, tasting the sweet flavor of his tongue.

They hungered for each other, their mouths consuming one another in a desperate attempt to taste what had been missing for so long. There was so much passion and tenderness between them. A tear rolled down her cheek, and she pulled away.

"I feel so much more than I've ever felt. I don't know what to do." He wiped away the tear on her cheek.

"We should feel everything. All the joy possible. All the love and passion and tenderness that we can. That's what makes life worth living."

"You're right," she said, claiming his lips again.

"I want you to make love to me," she said between kisses.

"I want that too."

She climbed into his lap and felt his hardness between her legs. It made her shiver. She gasped and breathed into his mouth.

"You feel so good," he said, gripping her ass and pulling her down against him. "Do you like this?"

"So much."

"I want to taste every part of you." He kissed her neck, running his hands under her shirt.

He pulled her shirt up over her breasts, looking down at her chest as he pulled down her bra. She shivered with excitement as he sucked her nipple into his mouth. She tilted her hips against his erection, feeling the hot flood surge through her core.

She threw her head back as he licked and sucked at her. She gripped his hair, groaning with pleasure. He held her close and devoured her with his mouth.

"Where is your bedroom?" he asked, picking her up in his powerful arms.

"Down the hall." She giggled.

He carried her down the hall, through the door, and into her bedroom. He laid her on the bed and stripped off her clothes until she was naked. His hands gripped her legs, holding them open. She quivered and mewled. Slowly, his tongue slid up the length of her inner thigh.

"Yes," she moaned.

He pressed his tongue deeper into her folds and caught her clit with the tip of his tongue. She ran her fingers through his hair, gasping and moaning as he twirled his tongue on her pleasure bud.

She tilted her hips up against him and covered her eyes with her hand. She couldn't believe how much pleasure was coursing through her, or that she had allowed a new man into her life.

She shoved away all her worry and sank into the enjoyment of the moment. She didn't have anything to fear. She and Tate were the Lovers card. Tate wouldn't hurt her.

She believed that now. He was her mate, and they were meant to be together. She sank into ecstasy as he slid a finger into her channel and hit her g-spot. She gasped loudly and asked for more. He added another finger to her pussy, rubbed her clit, and kissed her on the mouth.

She reached out and stroked his erection. "I want you inside me."

He slipped on a condom and pressed the head of his cock against her entrance. She opened her mouth against his, and they shared each other's breath. She gasped.

She hadn't believed she'd ever make love to anyone again, but as he slid into pressed deep into her core, she knew that this was right. She opened to him, their eyes locked on each other.

Her pussy pulsed around his cock, and she went soft and pliant. He ran the pad of his thumb over her forehead. She bit his bottom lip, running her hands down his back. He tilted his hips and slid deeper inside her.

She gasped and arched her back, tilting her head back as she accepted his thrusts with total abandon.

He moved into her in erotic waves of passion, pushing her up the peak and over the edge. She didn't know if her mind and body could even survive so much pleasure. It was incomprehensible. He gripped her jaw and ran his sharp fangs over her neck.

"I want to claim you so bad," he growled in her ear.

"Please wait."

"I will."

She could feel another orgasm coming on as his cock grew harder and thicker inside her. He growled and thrust frantically into her core, sparking her orgasm again. He exploded inside her, his body going rigid. She clung to him, panting as the orgasms radiated between their sweaty bodies.

He let out a deep breath, his body relaxing. His weight sank into her. She held him for a moment before he slipped away and turned on his back. He threw the condom in the garbage by the bed. He lay panting on her pillow, staring at the ceiling.

She giggled and rolled into him. "That was wild."

"Grrr," he growled into her ear and kissed her neck.

"I didn't know I could come so many times."

He kissed her forehead. "You make me so happy, Dalia. I never want this to end."