

Curse of the Wolves by Jane Doe Chapter 1

A curse so deadly,
bestowed to thee.
Has turned thou into a living key.
Await the gods,
who claim thy soul.
Break the curse & fulfill thy role.

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I stared down at the sea of glittering crimson, trying to process the fact that it wasn't my blood that stained my hands and clothes, but that of my Alpha's.

My mate.

Its metallic scent permeated the air, mingling with that of vomit. Staring into my eyes, I watched the scene unfold again and again. The events that led to this very moment. The mistakes I'd made that turned me into this. It had been two weeks since dad helped me move into Alpha Felix Gannon's flashy, three-story home. The man claiming to be my mate had been thoughtful and kind, catering to every one of my requests despite how odd.

He didn't question why I wanted my own bedroom, or why I insisted on sleeping in it every night rather than staying at his side.

The entire pack was in a constant state of celebration. There hadn't been a single pair of mates in almost three hundred years. Everyone was too excited to question how odd the situation was. They even threw a parade in our honor. This was the return of our kind's good fortune, they claimed. Oh, how wrong they were.

After seven days of love-bombing his true colors began to show, but at that point it was far too late.

We'd just gotten home from Beta Prescott's wedding. Felix had been drinking more and more over the last week. He said it was to cope with my lack of affection, but that sounded like a load of crap.

Once inside the darkened house, I let him pull me into his arms. I waited for the spark, the mind-numbing rush of euphoria that came when touching your mate, but there was none. His lips claimed mine with a drunken ferocity that bordered on sloppy. Black ice swept across my mind as his hands roamed the bodice of my dress. A gown he claimed

made me look like the perfect trophy wife.

I pulled away, fighting a hold that only seemed to tighten. He dug his fingers into my arms hard, only to pull away with a growl building in his chest. The vase of flowers he'd gotten me earlier that day were thrown against the wall, the crystalline pieces raining down over my head.

"Come on, Blakely! All that I've done for you and not once have you thought to return the favor."

His moods had a tendency to shift, which is what happened next when he rushed forward to cradle my face in his hands.

"I shouldn't have said that. You know I didn't mean any of it, right? I was just so angry, baby. You have no idea how crazy you make me. Let's just start tonight over, alright? We're going to spend the rest of our lives together. I'd do anything to make you happy, and I know you want me happy too. Don't you?"

Were the lies that once tasted sour on his tongue now sweet as truth, or had he merely gotten used to the taste?

'Say yes,' my wolf whispered. This was the first time in months that she had spoken to me.

I gave him the answer he wanted and watched as his emerald eyes lit up. He asked me if I trusted him, and despite the truth hovering on the tip of my tongue, I said yes.

He kissed me harder this time. His hands didn't wait to wander, picking up where they had left off. Fear soaked me in its icy waters, right down to the bone. Only when his fingers tugged at my zipper did I break free from its hold.

"I'm not ready for this, Felix."

Those hands moved faster, swatting away my words like meaningless insects. He swallowed my refusals, drowning them in alcohol-tinged breath. Fingers dipped into my dress, and all that fear melted away, boiling into embers of adrenaline.

I growled against his lips, "I said no."

He caged me against the wall with his arms. Arms that I'd once ogled at, tracing the muscle with wandering eyes. I could feel his hardness pushing into my thigh. The disgust that rolled through me was a tangible thing. A voice whispering in my ear that something about this was so terribly wrong.

"The bond won't snap into place if you keep refusing to touch me." I didn't dare tell him that wasn't how it worked. "What would our people

think if they knew you didn't want your mate? What would your parents think?"

Venom boiled in his eyes. Eyes that now seemed too bright. Too green. He smashed his lips against my own in a brutal kiss, using the cage that was his arms to maneuver me further into the kitchen. The sharp edge of the counter dug into my lower back, the sting of pain providing a dose of clarity.

"You're so beautiful in that dress." A groan of stale whiskey and lust invaded my mouth. "Can't wait to put my mark on you."

Tears burned in my eyes. I wanted to scream, but my voice was a shriveled husk in my throat. I wanted to lash out and fight, but his iron-clad fists held me in place. Something clattered to the floor as he ripped open the back of my dress.

It was the zipper. He'd torn the zipper completely off.

I bucked against him, and he groaned in a way that made my throat constrict as vomit threatened to rise. My mind went blank. I lifted my knee and kicked as hard as I could, crushing his grape-sized balls with grim satisfaction.

He let out a growl, slamming me against the counter as I tried to evade his grasp. The stupid dress he'd forced me into tangled around my legs, making me stumble. Smooth hands that had never seen a day of hard work grabbed me by the hips and spun me around. The counter rose up, crashing against my skull. Pain rushed through my nostrils, becoming the very air I breathed.

"You're a terrible mate. What did I do to deserve someone like you? Someone who won't let me love them."

Numbness crawled through my limbs like brackish ice water. I craned my head, my cheek pressed against the marble, and caught sight of my reflection in the microwave. Hollow eyes of sterling silver stared out at me, begging someone—anyone—to help.

A tug in my chest drew my eyes to the left, to the shiny toaster he'd replaced three days after I moved in. The first one ended up in pieces just like the vase. I inched my fingers closer, praying he didn't notice. Cold metal bit into my fingertips, and I nearly cried out with relief.

I wrapped my hand around the hunk of metal. With a cry of pure mania, I twisted around and sent my arm flying in an arc.

Crack!

Felix's weight vanished from my back. His grunt was swallowed by the

thud his body made as it hit the tiled floor.

My parents thought he would protect me. They thought that when the curse took hold on my twenty-first birthday, he'd spare no expense to keep me safe. I looked down at Felix's unconscious body, my hands trembling.

No one would believe me. I had no proof to clear my name and even if I did, this man was beloved by his pack. It was my word against his, and he would win. I didn't stand a chance. The injustice of it all made me want to scream.

There was one other option, one even a fool would run from. Only someone so desperate for life, so starved of its touch, would even think to take this route.

Someone like me.

I'd live this last month in peace, and when my birthday finally came around, the curse looming over my head would take hold. The same curse that claimed the lives of my ancestors, of every firstborn female in each generation.

On the night of my twenty-first birthday, they would come.

Three Harbingers of Death—the gods of our kind.

Even now, sitting in Alpha Gannon's once pristine kitchen, I could hear my grandma's voice as though she loomed over my shoulder. She would've scolded me for this. Ushering me inside to pepper me with herbs and anointed oils, anything she could think of that might protect me.

Never make deals with the gods, she'd say with unwavering certainty. I focused on the blood cooling against the tile floor and stared into the eyes of that little girl. A shudder held me in its iron grasp, tearing through my lungs as I inhaled. My lips began to move, forming the words that would both act as the bars to my prison cell, and the key that could set me free.

"I call out to the ancient ones. To the gods of old. To any that are listening. Let the mist carry my voice on its ashen wings. Let my cries be heard! I don't care who you are or what you'll ask of me. I'll do anything—give you anything you want. I beg of you, help me." I squeezed my eyes shut, "Please, help me."

I felt the god that answered my call long before I saw him.

Silence stretched into oblivion, the seconds ticking by until the air itself began to thicken. My nerve endings quivered as a current, wild and

untamed, slithered over my flesh. My heart thundered in my ears. A phantom hand coaxed my eyes open, and I knew that I was no longer alone.

The lights overhead flickered and as my head snapped up, there he was. Leaning against the counter with his elbow propped up on the marble, he spun a wickedly sharp blade.

Every inch of him, from his broad shoulders to his tapered waist, dripped with seduction and power. Hair as dark as the inky fog that rolled across the floor, with eyes that felt like a contradiction. A kaleidoscope of color set over iris's almost as pale as his milky skin.

Beneath his leather jacket and frayed t-shirt were tattoos that trailed up his throat. Mythical beasts, and dancing maidens, creatures I'd never seen before all ending at a jawline sharp enough to break skin.

His pouty lips thinned as I gaped at him, but I couldn't help it. He was mesmerizing.

Some things in life you could prepare for. A test, getting your driver's license, losing your virginity. Murdering a narcissistic Alpha and staring down a seven-foot-tall god who could easily crush you beneath his boot was not one of them.

I was reduced to nothing more than a puddle, a thrashing soul trapped in a mortal cage. He broke his stare from my face to scan the kitchen and my shoulders slumped, a weightlifting from them.

"Well, well, well. What a mess you've made, rabid little wolf."

Oh, that voice. Impossibly deep, yet sharp with wit and a touch of cruelty, and was that amusement I detected? Wait a damned second—did he just insinuate I had rabies?

Before I could inform the god that shifters could not get rabies, he moved with an inhuman grace and dropped down to a crouch. With the flick of his wrist he spun the knife on its head, the tip digging into the tile.

"Cat got your tongue?" He purred, lifting his hand. The blade continued to spin, held in place by magic. "You're the one that called. A very, very foolish thing to do by the way. With the broadcast you made, you're lucky I showed up and not someone else. That being said, I don't have all day. I assume you want this mess of yours cleaned up, yes?"

I pushed through his suffocating presence. This was my second chance, and I could not let it go to waste.

"No—I mean, yes, but that's not all I want."

One of his arched brows lifted, "Oh, that's not all you want. By all means

state your demands, little wolf.” There was a sharpness to the nickname that told me it was not said out of endearment. It was an insult, a reminder of how powerless I truly was.

I dug my teeth into my lip, barely feeling the sting. “I want out of this place. I want—I want a new life somewhere else...anywhere else.”

He popped up on his feet and walked around the length of the counter. In one swift movement, he pulled himself onto the island. As he sat there, looking like a king of darkness atop a throne of marble, he knocked his combat boots against the drawers.

“What will you offer me?”

“Anything.”

The god tilted his head, then dragged his iridescent eyes down my half-naked form. With impenetrable coldness, he shrugged. “You have nothing I want.” My breath hitched. “But that doesn’t mean I can’t call in a favor later on.”

He slid off the island, returning to a crouch mere feet in front of me. I could only stare as he held out one of his hands palm side up.

“I give you a new life, and you give me one favor of my choice. Do we have a deal?”

My own hand shook as I placed it in his. Skin as soft as velvet and ivory brushed against my own. Crackles of magic danced down my nerve endings.

“We have a deal.”

The god’s rosy lips turned up in a menacing smile. “Wonderful.”

As my vision blurred and the world around me faded to black, I could still hear that voice. I could still feel that gods wicked magic sealing my fate.