

# Curse of the Wolves by Jane Doe Chapter 2

## Chapter 1

### Blakely

I awakened to the sound of birds singing in the distance, and to the cool touch of dew on my brow. A chilly breeze raced by, rustling the grass until it tickled my neck and cheeks. The scent of rich earth surrounded me. The events of last night flooded my head in a sea of emotion and color, the current pulling me down under.

When it was all said and done I shot up off the ground, my eyes wide open and adrenaline pumping. I slapped a hand to my chest, right over my thundering heart, and felt the weight of the deal I made.

I was no longer wearing that cursed dress, and I hoped the god had burned it to cinders. The parka, jeans, and hiking boots I now wore all seemed brand new. My body was clean, no longer splattered in Felix's blood. Even my hair had been brushed.

There was something hard in my pocket, and as I pulled it out I realized the god truly had pulled through on his end. There was a brand-new ID and passport, a photograph of my family, and the compass dad had given me on Christmas a few years ago.

It had belonged to his sister, who succumbed to the curse and vanished on her twenty-first birthday. Supposedly, it had been spelled by a wolf mage to lead its user back home—wherever home may be.

Surrounded by unending forest, with nothing more than the clothes on my back and a curse looming over my head, I followed the rising sun to what I hoped would be a new life. Perhaps it was my imagination, but it seemed to shine just a tad brighter, almost as though it were spurring me on.

The life of Blakely Yarrow didn't end with a bang, rather the whisper of the wind curling through the trees.

In her place Anna Carson was born.

That was two long weeks ago. Fourteen days since I stumbled into the horrendously small town of Avalon. With a population of four hundred and twenty-six, everybody knew everybody.

If it hadn't been for Agatha Hart, I would've had no choice but to keep on moving. The little old lady with a spirit of pure fire didn't hesitate to rent out her cabin to me. When I told her I had no money, she all but insisted I work at her little hardware store in town.

The way Aggie looked at me, often with a mixture of sympathy and joy, gave me the feeling that she knew I was running from something, and that she herself could relate. Maybe that's why she was so nice to me, giving me everything I needed to make a life for myself, or maybe it was simply the compass's magic at work—leading me to a place I could make my home.

As the days inched closer to my birthday, I found myself thinking of my family.

There was once a time where I was close to my parents and little sister, but the curse quickly ruined that. It poisoned our relationship over the course of a few years. I was no longer their child, but a burden. A ticking time bomb that would someday explode.

Standing in front of the antique mirror in Aggie's cabin, I could still see traces of them within myself.

Dad's grey eyes stared out at me; a bit too large for my soft face. Mom's sharp brows and angular nose gave me a bit of an edge, but not much. The cobalt blue hair that hung down to my breasts in soft waves was entirely my own. It was by far my favorite act of defiance against my parents.

I tried not to smile as I remembered how red mom's face had turned. She'd demanded I get rid of it, but what did something as silly as hair color matter in the grand scheme of things? Malina, my bratty little sister, called me a blueberry for weeks. Even Felix hated it, which made me want to keep the color even more.

The first couple of days in Avalon I debated on changing it back to my natural chestnut brown. I couldn't risk someone finding out who I was, and blue hair seemed a pretty good identifier.

I'd almost gone through with it, until I saw the article.

It took me two days to find a computer with a strong enough internet connection to search up my old pack. Once the page loaded, I found myself staring at an article with the headline, "Alpha Felix Gannon and his bride-to-be slain in house fire."

Felix hadn't made it, and I had the sinking feeling it wasn't the toaster that did him in. My family thought I was dead, and there was nothing I could do about it.

Somehow, the god created sufficient evidence of my death because there was no question in the article that Felix and I were deceased. I spent the next week and a half hating myself for making that deal, while also fighting the terror of the curse.

Today was the day I'd been waiting my entire life for.

By midnight tonight, I'd be dead. I wondered how the gods of our kind would do it. Would it be instant, or would they tear me limb from limb? Perhaps they'd scatter my body across the continent. I couldn't imagine they'd deliver my corpse to my family for a proper burial. More than anything I wondered if I'd get any answers.

Why was my family forced to suffer this curse? Who had placed it on us?

I allowed myself to mull over every question as I cooked a pitiful dinner of boxed macaroni and cheese, only to waste it staring out at the horizon. The sun was quickly traveling below the tree line, leaving a stream of watercolors in its wake. Even the big ball of flame knew what was coming, and it wanted no part of it.

Fear lived in my every breath, coursing through my veins as I stood from the rickety kitchen table and made my way into the living room. The

faded plaid couch carried the lingering scent of tobacco. It was a sliver of the life I knew, and I held onto it with every fiber of my being.

Tonight, however, I'd be forced to let go.

I grabbed my journal off the coffee table and plopped down. When I first moved in I found it sitting in one of the drawers in the bedroom. Its empty pages spoke to part of my soul, and I decided then and there that I'd tell it my story. Each day I plied it with my thoughts and memories. All of the wishes and dreams that slipped through my fingers over the years.

As I plucked the pen from between its pages, I realized this would be the last of my entries.

Over the course of an hour I confessed everything. Every second I spent with Felix was written on those pages, along with every bruise to ever kiss my skin at his hands. I even wrote about the god that had come to my aid, and how foolish I'd been to make a deal with him.

I included everything, apologizing for how my very existence plagued them. The only thing I left out was the year I'd spent with the blood mages, the most vicious of our kind. Mom had heard a passing rumor that they might be able to help break the curse and didn't hesitate to ship me off to their remote village deep within the snow-capped mountains.

Some cruel part of me wanted to reveal the torture I'd endured in hopes it would hurt them, but I promised myself long ago that I'd never, ever speak of that terrible year.

I even wrote a page for Lina, thanking her for those rare moments where we truly were sisters and not bitter rivals. When I was finished pouring myself into the journals weathered pages, I added in the names of my parents and where they could be found. Afterwards, I settled into the couch and watched the sun continue to set through the two windows on either side of the front door.

When the sky darkened with streaks of charcoal, the stars winking into existence, I flicked on the lamp beside the couch and continued to wait.

The grandfather clock against the far wall told me midnight was coming. With each tick of the pendulum, my heart rate increased.

Tick, tick, tick.

11:58...

Tick, tick, tick.

11:59...

I jumped as the clock chimed, the sound reverberating throughout the entire house. There was a thick air of silence before the boom of a fist hammered at the front door. My heart fell to the pits of my stomach. I leapt to my feet, eying the baseball bat propped against the recliner. What would that do against an angry god? Nothing, that's what.

"...just kick it down, man." A muffled voice said.

There was some glimmer of recognition fluttering in my chest but the fear of being torn limb from limb kept me from reaching out to grab it. A deafening crack split the air as the door was kicked in. Bits of splintered wood flew in all directions. The wind sent a plume of sawdust unfurling into the house.

Standing in the open doorway wasn't the three gods of our kind, but a gaggle of human men I recognized all too well. They'd come to the hardware store at least three times a week and never once failed to harass me.

Duncan, the one at the lead, smoothed a hand over his flannel and down his potbelly. His bald head glistened under the moonlight. He whistled, "Well lookie here, boys. The lil' blue haired witch was up waitin' on us."

Baldy, as I called him only in the safety of my own head, was by far the worst. He'd come in the store reeking of deli meat and sweaty socks, hell-bent on getting me to accept a date with him. He and the rest of his buddies were as human as they came, and often made moves on the werewolves and lycans in town.

They didn't mess with the mages, but that was the usual for most humans. Rather than try to understand our magic wielding cousins they condemned them as witches.

I knew baldy could get nasty, but I had no clue how nasty until this very moment. One of his buddies—Earl, I think—stepped into the house. He spat a wad of tobacco-stained spit onto the floor, and I cringed. Alcohol permeated the air around us, as sharp as their individual body odors.

My disgust quickly morphed into fear when Earl lifted his arm and brandished a shotgun.

“Look, Duncan. She ain't so snooty now, is she?” He guffawed, his stubble-coated cheeks lifting in a toothy grin. The others snickered, their lewd comments pelting my skin like sharpened stones.

“Cocky witch's got another thing coming.”

“Ain't so high and mighty now, are ya?”

I spared another glance at the baseball bat, weighing my options. Shifting was too risky. I'd never been able to control my wolf, and there was always the chance she'd charge into town and attack on sight. Still, I had to do something.

The only thing I'd ever wanted for myself was the chance to live, and I would not let these pathetic human men take that from me.

Within seconds I had made up my mind, but before I could act Earl wheezed. His entire body went rigid as though ice had been injected into his veins. The rosacea across his cheeks and nose lost its coloring as he paled. Unable to breathe, I stared into his bloodshot eyes and knew at my core that something had gone terribly wrong.

In one swift movement he pumped the shotgun, turned to Duncan, and pulled the trigger.

The blast was deafening. My ears rang as chaos descended. Duncan collapsed to the ground clutching his stomach. Two of the others charged Earl, their mouths open in silent screams. A second shot rang out, hitting

one of the guys square in the chest. Earl slammed the butt of the gun into the third's head, and he crumpled like a stack of cards. Crouched behind the recliner, the baseball bat all but forgotten, I watched as Earl cocked the gun a second time and turned it on himself.

I couldn't look away, and boy did I regret it.

Earl's body fell forward. The gun slid across the hardwood, slamming right into my kneecap. What pain emerged was short lived. I was speechless, staring down at the carnage when someone stepped through the open doorway.

A God—more specifically, the god I made the deal with.

The fragments of wood littering the ground were crushed beneath the thick sole of his combat boots. With the confidence only an immortal could possess, he stepped over the corpses of the fallen men and entered the house.

Those eyes, like starbursts plucked from the night sky, took in the room. They landed on me and he paused, cocking his head like a predator who found himself cornering a very interesting type of prey.

“Oh, it's you.” Genuine surprise flickered on his ethereal face before melting into something dark, something that set my insides on fire. “Hello again, rabid little wolf.”