

Curse of the Wolves by Jane Doe Chapter 6

Chapter 5

Orion

With a wave of my hand and a quick burst of magic, I finished replacing the last of the broken wards.

Exhaustion loomed over my head, followed closely by agitation. A steady ache had taken up residency behind my eyes. Leave it to Azrael to make my job harder than it already was. Three hours it had taken me to replace the protective spells he'd so negligently blasted through.

There wasn't a single part of my body that didn't ache. My muscles, much like my heart, had all but turned to stone. I glided through the foyer lost within my own head and took the stairs two at a time.

This new girl Azrael had rambled on about for the better portion of an hour couldn't possibly be the one we've been waiting for. I'd long ago given up hope we'd find a solution to our predicament, but I knew Az hadn't.

No, he'd remained abhorrently optimistic about the entire thing.

Massaging the bridge of my nose in an attempt to alleviate a growing headache, I made my way down the network of halls, taking its twists and turns without so much as a second glance. The mansion of stars was a prison I knew like the back of my hand. Its layout had been seared into the furthest reaches of my mind. A constant reminder I could never escape.

The beast beneath my skin stopped its eternal pacing long enough to snarl in my ear. My skin crawled with restlessness. I longed for the things I could no longer have. The cool breeze flowing through my fur, the ground trembling beneath my paws. The light of my goddess shining down as my brothers and me scoured the earth.

A delicate influx of breath caught my attention, warning me seconds before a small figure turned the corner and crashed into my chest. It was

the girl Azrael blathered on and on about. The one that hadn't submitted when he'd come to fetch her. Instead, she'd attacked him with a useless mortal weapon.

Unusually bright hair hung around her shoulders in waves of sapphire. Smokey eyes widened, flooded with panic. Her scent was tainted with fear but held notes of crushed blueberries and moonflowers. The pain behind my eyes faded instantly.

My lip curled back at the sight of her. "What do you think you're doing?"

She shifted between her left and right foot, arms moving behind her back. Was she hiding something? The slight twist of her lips, paired with the way she scrunched her nose, told me the mortal was choosing her words carefully.

"I was looking for the kitchen. I'm starving." Her stomach snarled, "Obviously."

I couldn't help but notice how quickly the tang of her fear evaporated.

Heat licked across my skin as my temper flared. The mortal's cheeks warmed, reacting to the sudden change in temperature. This was not her home, yet she wandered the halls as though she belonged here. Where was her reverence?

I closed the distance between us and sneered, "Azrael warned you to stay in the room. You would rather disobey him by wandering a house that does not belong to you? One you are not welcome in."

"You must be Orion." She made a face but didn't retreat. "I wasn't aware I needed permission, your godly highness. Would you rather me die of hunger before you and your brother's can torture me in some kind of weird, family bonding exercise?"

This was the mouthy, belligerent mortal Azrael had spoken so highly of? He was a fool. An easily entertained fool.

"You dare speak to me with such disrespect?"

Crackling embers the same shade as her hair crawled up my arms.

She lifted her nose haughtily. The gentle slope of it briefly caught my eye. “Maybe try talking to me like I’m not the scum of the earth, and I might be a little bit nicer.”

“What are you then if not a thorn in my side?” Those embers gave way to flame. Its silken touch traveled up to my shoulders, coiling around my neck. The girl grimaced and stepped back, retreating from the icy heat. “You are a trespasser in my home. A mortal who has no right to make demands. You’d do well to learn your place before I turn you to ash.”

The slender muscles in her throat worked as she swallowed nervously. I tore my eyes away from the smooth expanse of skin, blaming the small flare of interest on the fact that I hadn’t felt the touch of a woman in almost two centuries. This unintelligent mortal was not the cause of my reaction.

“It’s not like I want to be here. How about you use some of your godly magic and send me back home? I’ll be able to get a decent meal, and you can continue brooding by yourself.”

Her ancestors knew to cower before us. Had my brother already filled her head with notions that she was different than them? I clenched my jaw at the thought, grinding my molars together. This girl was nothing more than a means to an end, something she and my brother both needed to be reminded of.

My voice was sharpened steel scraping against stone, imbued with power that had my addled mind throbbing. “You do not make demands of a god, but you will learn to respect them.”

Her eyes widened a moment too late. I lunged at the small beast, aiming for her arm. A bleating sort of yelp left her pink lips. She stumbled back, or that’s what I thought until she swung at my face. Time slowed and with my enhanced reflexes I plucked her wrist out of thin air.

Inches from my face was a shard of glass. No, not glass. A shard of mirror. How dare this creature attack me?

Feeling nothing but disgust for the unruly she-wolf before me, I leaned in and growled. She bared her teeth, cheeks flushed as she struggled against my hold.

“This,” I plucked the shard from her hand, “now belongs to me. You won’t be needing it where you’re going.”

“You’re not taking me anywhere, asshole.”

She raised her leg and kicked me in the balls, joy glowing in her silvery eyes. Molten pain encased my cock, burning hotter than my magic. My hold slipped and the mortal tore her arm out of my grasp. She raced down the hall, cobalt hair flying out behind her.

Swallowing my grunt and the urge to flay her alive, I flung my arm out and released a tendril of compressed flame. It sparked as it wrapped itself around her waist, yanking her back mid run. A kernel of dark pleasure thrummed in my veins at the sound of her terrified squeals. I willed the flame back to my side, dragging her down the long stretch of hallway until she lay at my feet.

Flicking my hand, I sent wisps of the same flame around her wrists and ankles, binding them together. They were hot to the touch but wouldn’t sear through flesh unless I wished it so. For the time being, we needed the girl alive.

I flung the snarling, mortal beast over my shoulder. “Let’s see how defiant you are after spending the night in the basement with the shadow demon. Don’t bother begging, either. You’ll find I’m not as easily charmed as Azrael is.”

“Like I’d ever give you the satisfaction of hearing me beg.”

A different kind of heat pulsed through my veins. It began to travel lower when I snuffed it out. Clearly, I was in desperate need of a night’s rest, though that wouldn’t be happening any time soon.

This one was unusually stubborn, I thought to myself as she squirmed against my hold, grunting every time my shoulder dug into her stomach. I

didn't bother keeping my steps light as I sauntered down the hall and back to the lower level of the mansion. The girl was lucky I didn't burn her alive.

"You say that now. I bet you'll be screaming within the hour."

She craned her head back to glare at me, practically spewing her scent in my face. "Maybe you should hold your breath until then."

"Asphyxiation will not kill a god." I laughed without humor.

A short stretch of hall located in between the curved staircases on the main floor led to a servant's nook behind the kitchens themselves. The room hadn't been used in hundreds of years. Not since the curse took hold.

"What will? I'll make sure I come prepared next time." That insolent little—

A singular wooden door led down into the basement. I flipped the girl over my shoulder and slammed her against it. Flames danced along my arms, curling up my shoulders and into my pale hair. Fear flashed in the mortal's abnormally large eyes. She smothered it quickly, with deft hands that radiated experience. The way she thrashed, searching for a way out, reminded me of a caged animal with nowhere to go.

It reminded me of myself.

I began to contemplate what this mortal had experienced in her short life to garner such a physical response, then stopped. Judging from the swell of her hips and chest she was clearly well-fed. Apart from the remnant of shadows in her eyes, which were easily ignorable, she appeared rather healthy. It was a foolish thought. This girl had never known suffering. Her past didn't matter in the grand scheme of things. She, like all of her ancestors, was here for a reason.

Her pupils dilated as I leaned into her personal space. I watched as my scent hit her, not at all surprised when she proved too stubborn to fall

under my spell. Mortals had a tendency to fall for anything they deemed beautiful, but not this one.

The basement door creaked as it swung open, pushed by a current of my own magic.

She took one long look at the pulsating darkness waiting for her down below and narrowed her eyes. “Yeah, it’s a no from me.”

Foolish, ignorant girl thought she had a choice.

“Sweet dreams, mortal.” I purred cruelly, then shoved her inside.