

Curse of the Wolves by Jane Doe Chapter 5

Chapter 4

Blakely

Without elaborating Azrael plucked a little black bag from his pocket and tugged at the draw strings. A finely ground powder sat inside, sparking in a rainbow of hues the moment it hit the open air. I shifted back a step when he caught me gawking.

“This is stardust. It’s a very rare concoction Orion created. It’ll transport us into the mansion of stars. Since I can’t trust you not to go bounding off into the forest, we have no choice but to use it. He’ll be rather angry when he finds out, so I’d steer clear of him once we arrive.”

The shard of mirror was unusually cold in my hand. Even though I had almost been sucked inside the thing, having a weapon provided me with a small sense of comfort. It grazed my collarbone as I folded my arms over my chest. “Does Orion have a stick up his ass or something? This is the second time you’ve mentioned his bad attitude.”

Azrael’s lush, but messy hair fell back as he laughed. I was momentarily stunned by the musical sound.

“That is exactly the thing you’re not going to say to him unless you want to die. Which, given the events of this past hour, I just reckon you might.” He winked, and my stomach started to tap dance. “This powder negates the wards he has over our home. He’ll be forced to redo them all once we arrive.”

Traveling via stardust was not the euphoric, magical trip I thought it would be.

He tossed a handful of the powder into the air and the world around us vanished. A nebula of dazzling color exploded in front of my eyes. I went from standing in the dewy grass of Adira’s Forest to kneeling in the entryway of a gothic castle. Nausea replaced the butterflies in my stomach. I repressed a burp that could’ve easily been vomit.

The room hadn't yet stopped spinning when a large, and very cold hand captured my face. Its fingers dug into my cheeks, but that wasn't what stole the gasp from between my lips. It was the magic lapping at my skin, and the two starburst eyes staring into my own, that rendered me speechless.

They danced with endless amusement.

"Tell me, little wolf. Do you need to be restrained from harming yourself, or can you listen to me for just one night?"

Oh my actual god.

Why did that sound so sexual and why was I secretly liking it? I only had an answer to one of those questions. It was mental illness, clearly.

"Definitely restrain me." I froze, mouth open as I realized what I'd said. "Or I'll strangle you in your sleep." Nice save there, Blakely.

Dizzy and hot in all of the wrong places, I yanked myself out of his grasp. Azrael flicked my nose a second time. Out of instinct, I snapped my teeth at him. His mood improved drastically from earlier because he hadn't even threatened to kill me.

I stretched out my limbs and froze. What the hell? He healed me. There wasn't a single scratch on my body. Even the soreness in my muscles had vanished.

The melody that was his voice faded into the background as I took in the sheer luxury of the wolf god's home.

Billowing drapes in cool tones, flecked with swirls of silver, framed arched windows and elaborate entryways. The metallic chords that tied them back matched the small stars that speckled the domed ceiling. Light spilled from each one, bathing the room in a pale glow. It bounced off the obsidian marble beneath our feet, creating a mirror image of the night sky.

"I am so not in Kansas anymore."

Azrael's head fell to the side, his lush lips parting in confusion. "As I said, this is the mansion of stars. What is a Kansas?"

Was he being serious right now?

"I have no idea how to answer that question."

He led me up one of the curved staircases that outlined the cylindrical room. Ivy clung to the railing, its leaves a vibrant emerald green. A chandelier hung in between the two, comprised of both silver and gold. The two metals were twisted around one another before branching off in opposite directions. Where the silver half was molded to form a crescent moon, the gold created a perfectly round sun.

Every time I slowed, too busy gawking at the elaborate artwork lining the walls, the wolf at Azrael's side nudged me with its snout. First of all, the paintings moved. How could I not stop and stare? Second, the legends always said that Orion was the most powerful of the wolf gods, but it wasn't until now that I actually believed it.

It was oh so comforting that he also happened to have the worst attitude.

When the wolf bumped me for the fourth time I grunted, "Can you tell your pet to stop pushing me along? Don't let my perky ass fool you, I'm not cattle."

Azrael spun around so abruptly that I nearly ran into his chest. I stumbled back at the power rolling off of him. His starburst eyes were wide, lit with iridescent flame.

"My pet? What on Dhara's earth would make you think he's my pet?"

I made the mistake of looking down. The wolf was definitely glaring at me. Oops.

"Um, do you call them something different here?"

The chandelier above our head flickered, splashing shadows along the walls. Azrael coughed into his hand, clearly trying not to laugh. "Allow me to introduce you to Draco."

“Draco...” My mouth went dry, “As in the god of the Lycans?”

“Yes, that is the one.”

This was it. After twenty-one shitty years, my time on this earth had finally come to an end. The least I could do was take my fate with a bit of dignity.

I squeezed my eyes shut and waited for the inevitable. Seconds passed, and nothing happened. Why wasn't I dead yet? I cracked one open to find both of them staring at me. Yeah, because I was the weird one in this situation.

“Are you not going to maul me to death?”

The wolf ceased its glaring long enough to roll its eyes. I almost wanted to laugh. Azrael gestured at the stretch of hallway ahead and we resumed our walking.

“You're a pessimistic little wolf, aren't you?”

I was debating whether or not I should dignify that with a response when a mouth full of razor-sharp teeth jabbed me in the ass. Pain spiked up my beloved left cheek and I yelped. What little common sense I had flew straight out of one of the arched windows because I turned and snarled at the massive, domineering wolf.

Unfazed by my outburst, it stared back at me.

“Draco likes you.”

Hah! No amount of magic could hide my disbelief. I planted my hands on my hips and narrowed my eyes. “Really? Him impaling my left ass cheek says otherwise.”

Draco clacked his teeth, his tail swishing across the glittering marble. I had no clue if that meant he agreed with Azrael's statement or not. I kept an eye on both gods as we continued down the hall. My fingers trailed along the silver molding until we came to a halt.

Standing just a few inches shorter than the door frame, Azrael lifted one of his leather covered shoulders in a shrug. “Lycan’s are a bit wilder than your average wolf. Their favorite prey is the one that fights back. Trust me, if he didn’t find you interesting, he would’ve ripped your throat out for that comment alone.”

Pretty sure his eyes sparkled when he said that. Me, on the other hand. I was busy trying not to wet myself.

“It would be best if you stayed in the room tonight. Should Orion catch wind of you, things won’t go well. Either Draco or I will come fetch you in the morning.”

He began to walk away, the massive wolf lumbering at his side. Nervousness fluttered in the depths of my stomach.

“We have this lovely invention in the mortal realm that would work wonders for his attitude problems.” I’d always been a rambler, especially when I was nervous.

Azrael paused, cocking his head in genuine interest. “What might that be?”

“Mood stabilizers, and a psychiatrist.” I deadpanned.

“I will look into those inventions, as you call them. Oh, one last thing. This mansion is imbued with Lunette’s magic. You’ll find it has a certain sentience. Should you require anything, simply ask.”

They continued down the hall, curling around the stairs until they faded from view. I stood there contemplating whether or not I should book it and try to escape. My left ass cheek throbbed, and I took it as a sign to wait until morning. Hopefully the magically enchanted house wouldn’t object and try to keep me here.

All of my scheming came to a halt when the door opened (on its own, I might add) and I caught a glance at the massive suite inside.

Both my eyes and exhausted body were drawn to the bed at the far end of the room. The mountain of cool-toned pillows and silken comforter

crooned a lullaby that had me shuffling closer. All along the floor were overlapping rugs, each one speckled with hints of silver and gold. A canopy of cobalt and plum drapes fell from the four poster frame, dancing in the subtle breeze that trickled in through two open windows.

I jolted as the door swung shut behind me and spun around far enough to notice a small seating area nestled on a raised platform. Hints of deep crimson were scattered throughout the room, providing a splash of much needed warmth.

I was just about to make my way to bed when I caught a whiff of myself and cringed. Sweat and fear clung to my skin. After spending fifteen minutes scouring a closet that somehow had clothing in my exact size, I made my way to the bathroom.

“I’ve decided that I’m perfectly fine with being murdered, so long as I get to use this bathtub first.” I declared, marching inside and kicking the door shut behind me.

Obsidian tile covered every inch of the room, sparkling with strips of silver grout. A gorgeous vanity stood against the far wall, with a toilet close by. Taking up most of the space was an infinity pool, something I’d only ever seen in movies and television shows. A stone structure curved around the side, spilling steaming water into its basin. It came to a stop at the opposite end of the bathroom, where the wall had been knocked out, providing a breathtaking view of snowcapped mountains and a sky dappled with colorful stars.

Despite the otherworldly magic and sheer luxury of this place, the loneliness was quick to settle into my bones. The thought that dad was the only one mourning my fake death had tears welling in my eyes. I stood beneath the waterfall and let the stream of warmth rain down on my head.

Mom had started pulling away from me many years ago. Hardening her heart was her way of protecting it when the curse finally claimed my life. That was why she poured all of her love, time, and care into Lina. Dad had tried to do the same, but he’d always had a soft spot for me. Those

fleeting moments of affection were all I had left, but they weren't enough.

Every one of Lina's cheerleading competitions, every award ceremony, my parents were there for it all. The rare times where I expressed wanting to do something more, I was met with cold expressions and disdain.

"Blakely, you know why that can't happen. Summer camp, swim teams, that book club you went on and on about last year. There's no point in doing those things. Your sister plans on joining a collegiate cheer team once she graduates. If you're lucky and we somehow find a way to fix your situation, then we can talk about your future. Until then..."

Until then, I didn't have a future.

As sinfully comfortable as the bed was, I couldn't force my nerves to unwind enough for me to fall asleep. It didn't help that hunger twisted my insides into knots. When was the last time I'd eaten anyway? I couldn't remember.

Hours passed when the snarl of my stomach had become too much.

I rolled out of bed, my feet sinking into the plush expanse of carpet. The buttery soft t-shirt and shorts I'd fished out of the closet clung to my sweat slicked skin. I brushed the strands of my drying hair from my face, the cobalt hue vibrant in the moonlight.

"Um, house? Mansion?" A groan slid past my chapped lips. I was talking to a damn house. "Could I possibly get something to eat? I'm absolutely starving. I'll eat anything—well, almost anything. I don't eat meat, so there's that."

I waited in silence for something to happen. For a platter of fruits or some other food to magically appear at my feet. Azrael claimed the mansion was sentient. Could it refuse my request? It hadn't made fun of me for being a vegetarian, so that was a plus.

I'd just decided to repeat my question when the bedroom door swung open, revealing a dimly lit hall. Pursing my lips, I looked around at the empty room. "Is that your way of telling me I need to get it myself?"

The door opened wider, and I sighed. Azrael had warned me to stay out of Orion's sight, but that was hours ago. Surely gods had to sleep at some point. A sharp hunger pang clenched my stomach, ultimately making up my mind.

"Lazy magical house." I shuffled back over to the bed and began to rummage beneath the mountain of pillows, feeling for the cold bite of broken glass.

With my shard of mirror in hand, I took a deep breath and tiptoed out into the hall.