

Eliza

“The Awakening”

[Book One]

by

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The Curse of the Werewolf

The werewolf originated in the times of ancient Greece when their gods reigned supreme. During one fateful festivity, Lycaon, the son of Pelasgus, was in need of a meat to serve. Too lazy to go hunting for wild game or to slaughter a lamb, he served the Greek god, Zeus (*who was the ruler of the sky and of all gods and mankind*), a meal made from the remains of a sacrificed boy. This severely enraged Zeus. As punishment, the angered god turned Lycaon and his sons into wolves. They were to be looked upon by the rest of humanity as something to abhor.

Zeus' lover Selene (*who was the goddess of the moon*) took pity on Lycaon's family. She felt it unfair to make them pay for a sin that they had no part of. After much effort, she convinced Zeus to shorten the curse and allow them to enjoy humanity until they were of age to wed and breed. (*This age, at that time, was their early teens when their hormones took over and a girl became a woman and a boy became a man*). Instead of the curse being a constant, it would activate only during the hours of the full moon. All other times they were allowed to be human.

Although she campaigned for the pain that was involved in the shift to be eliminated, she was only able to have it become lessened over time.

As for humanity's viewpoint on the werewolf, she was able to do nothing to change it.

As centuries passed, new gods came into play and Zeus' power faded enough to allow certain branches of Lycaon's bloodline to breed out the curse enough so that it often skipped generations. In some, it would afflict only one or two per generation. In others, it remained dormant unless they were exposed to a werewolf's venom or scratch.

Because humanity abhorred and hunted them, they kept to themselves and hidden as best as they could. This meant that many with a dormant werewolf curse in their genes never encountered a werewolf. They had the good fortune to go through life never knowing their true selves.

Those who were less fortunate and encountered a werewolf had the curse awaken in them. As did those of a generation that followed one that was skipped, leaving them without others nearby to aid them in their shift.

Such is the curse of the werewolf.

Chapter 1

It felt like someone was swinging a hammer against the inside of Eliza's skull. The early morning dew caused a damp muskiness on the earth that blended with the mold and dust that burrowed beneath the thick layer of leaves where she lay her aching burden; assaulting her nose and adding to her misery. Her chocolate colored eyes felt pinned shut, but her hearing was abnormally acute. By the sounds around her, she sensed her surroundings were familiar ones. If she was correct, she was near the small cave that was nestled in a knoll that began the acres of woods at the far end of her family's farm. It was a place that she'd discovered at a young age and had frequented whenever she required alone time. Her surroundings weren't the greater mystery. How she got there was.

As her faculties returned to normal, she sat up and realized that how she got there wasn't the biggest mystery after all. It was superseded by the fact that she hadn't a stitch of clothing on.

None of this made sense. How did she get there and what happened to her clothes?

Straining her mind, she reached into the fog for a replay of the night before. She'd gone with her best friend, Reba, to a newly opened dance club. The place was packed, and dance partners were plentiful. The exertion from

dancing combined with the excessive body heat made the air feel so stifling as to be practically unbearable. She remembered stepping outside for a bit of fresh air. Did Reba join her? She struggled to remember, but the visions in her head showed very little.

Squeezing her eyes shut almost to the point that it hurt, she forced her mind to function. She needed to remember the chain of events that led to her waking up naked in a field at the edge of the woods. Had she gone home from the club and sleepwalked? Or had something sinister occurred? She just didn't know.

Although sleepwalking wasn't completely out of the question, it had been years since she'd done it. It was a regular occurrence for her up until the age of fourteen when her parents took her to a therapist to help her stop. Now, ten years later, she might have started up again. The difference being that, although she'd end up in the field near that very same cave in her early years, she'd always retained her clothes. She'd also not suffered with a headache like she was this time.

The question of foul play crossed her mind. Had she been drugged, abducted, and dragged there to be raped? Common sense told her that the possibility was miniscule. Why would a rapist snatch her from the nightclub in a city twenty miles away and then drag her to the cave at the edge of her farm to rape her and steal her clothes? The more

probable explanation was that she'd sleepwalked. Even so, why didn't she remember going home?

With a scowl of frustration pasted on her face, she picked herself up off the ground and did her best to wipe the dirt and grime from her tender flesh. A rustling in the overgrown shrubbery about twenty yards away caught her attention. Peering into the thick greenery, she spotted a pair of eyes looking back at her. When she didn't move, the head of a wolf slowly eased out from between the twisted branches with their abundant leaves. Had her mood been different, she would have taken the time to admire the beauty of its rich, white coat. As it was, the glow of the rising sun behind it created a sinister silhouette around the scene that made her shudder and worry for her own wellbeing.

An immediate rush of adrenaline surged through her veins. Abandoning her quest to remember the chain of events that led her there and mindless of the fact that she was stark naked, she forced her long, lean legs into action.

The pounding of her heart as she pushed her body to its maximum capacity competed with the hammering in her head. She slowed down enough to look over her shoulder to scope for the wolf. She didn't see it, but she wasn't about to take any chances. Wolves weren't known to attack humans in her area, but there was always the possibility of a rabid one wandering about.

As they aged, her parents had slowly, but steadily downsized the operation of their farm until it was a mere

shell of what it used to be. Had their land been less, they could have easily dubbed it a gentleman's farm with only a few cows and goats for milk and homemade cheese, a pair of plow horses to maintain a rather large vegetable garden, some chickens, and a few pigs. Even so, having grown up on a fully functioning dairy farm and being surrounded by a variety of livestock exposed her to far too many perils that befell both beast and human. She'd kept alert and aware of them but tried not to become so preoccupied as to be obsessed and paranoid.

Racing into the house, she rushed past the kitchen where her startled parents sat at the breakfast table with wide eyes and gaping mouths.

Slamming shut the door to her room, she leaned against it while she caught her breath and waited for her heart to calm down. Then, grabbing a robe, she left her room and headed for the one bathroom that she and her parents shared.

As she stepped back out into the hall, she could hear her mother beginning to ascend the stairs while bellowing her name.

"I'm okay," she bellowed back. "I'll be down in a minute."

Stopping mid-stairwell, her mother called out with concern, "Where are your clothes? Why were you out naked? How did you get so filthy!"

“I’ll be down in a minute!” Eliza impatiently shouted as she rushed into the bathroom and locked the door behind her.

It was a logical question for her mother to ask, and understandable for her to be concerned, but it still irritated Eliza.

The only child of Viviane and Arthur Eaglesworth, she’d grown up feeling stifled by her mother’s attention and excessive affections. After experiencing the freedom of single life in the city, she’d had her doubts about moving back in with them a few months earlier, but the work and financial setbacks that she’d experienced after the veterinarian she’d worked for since graduating high school died earlier that year had left her no choice. Now, she’d have to deal with their one-hundred questions until they were satisfied with her explanation.

The problem was that she had no explanation. Not yet, anyway.

Reaching into the medicine cabinet, she grabbed the bottle of headache pills and popped two into her mouth. Bending so that her lips met the stream of water coming from the faucet, she sucked in the cool liquid to aid in swallowing the pills. Then, after splashing some onto her face, she turned off the faucet and removed the robe. Hanging it on a nearby hook, she eagerly stepped into the shower.

With any luck, once she was clean and fresh with a head that didn't feel like it harbored a runaway jackhammer, she'd be able to decipher just what had happened.

Chapter 2

Feeling a little more like herself after cleaning up, Eliza took her time descending the narrow turn of the century farmhouse staircase. Her slender fingers absent-mindedly played with a small section of torn wallpaper as she stopped for a moment to listen to the faint words of her parents' as they floated up toward her. They were whispering, but in a loud, argumentative way that made their words clear to someone with the abnormally good hearing that she possessed.

“We need to tell her,” her father hissed.

“I don't know, Arthur,” her mother adamantly replied. “It could upset her. Don't you think having that nice doctor Rosenthal die and losing her job has upset her enough? She was very fond of that man and her work. We both know that moving home wasn't something she wanted to do. Besides, we have nothing to prove it's true. It skipped you. Perhaps it skipped her too.”

“She's older now. If she's doing it again, we need to tell her,” her father insisted.

“No! Don't do anything foolish,” her mother vehemently spat. “Those are just speculation and rumors. You know how much Ruth loves to spread them. Wait to see what Doctor Blair has to say.”

Curiosity urged Eliza down the rest of the steps and into the kitchen.

“Tell me what?” she asked as she grabbed a mug from the cup tree that was on the counter next to the coffee maker and filled it with the rich, aromatic liquid.

“What?” her mother asked with faux innocence.

“I heard you two arguing about telling me something,” she continued.

Her parents looked at each other long and hard before her father heaved a sigh and said, “You were mistaken. It was your aunt Ruth we were discussing. She’s eating wrong again and has the gout.”

“Why would you argue about that,” Eliza asked with surprise, “and what would Dr. Blair do about it? She’s a therapist, not a general doctor.”

Her father filled his lungs with air as he continued his lie with, “Viviane and Ruth disagree on her diet. Your mother wants to talk to Dr. Blair about the best way to approach her.”

Since Dr. Blair was the therapist who they’d sent her to when she was young and sleepwalking, it made sense that her mother would trust what the woman had to say.

“I think I’m sleepwalking again,” Eliza blurted as she sat in an empty chair at the table, propped her elbows on its surface and held the mug of coffee to her lips with both hands.

“Why?” Vivian asked. “What caused that to start back up?”

Having no reply, Eliza shrugged and gulped down an unwise amount of the hot liquid. Tears welled up in her eyes as the burning sensation traveled down her esophagus.

Seeing her daughter’s condition, Vivian leapt from her chair and raced to the sink. Looking over her shoulder at her husband as she raced to her daughter’s side to present the cool water, she scolded, “I told you that coffee pot makes it too hot!”

“It’s the latest and the greatest...” Arthur began.

“All we needed was a simple coffee maker,” Viviane complained. “I’d just as soon go back to using the French press. That contraption’s dangerous.”

Grateful to have the focus off her mysterious naked rendezvous in the wild, Eliza joined into the conversation. “It’s a nice coffee maker, pop. I like my coffee hot like this. I just didn’t put enough cream in it to cool it down just a bit. Don’t get rid of it.”

Lifting his chin as he addressed his wife, Arthur defiantly said, “I have no intention of it.”

“Well, I’m going back to the French press,” Viviane insisted.

“Do as you wish,” Arthur grumbled. Then, looking at Eliza, he asked, “Are you hungry? The hens are laying good eggs these days. There’s still a few scrambled in that pan.”

Since she normally woke up ravenous, Eliza was surprised to realize that she actually felt full. Not wanting to bring any more attention to her that might renew their questions about where she'd been and why, she smiled and made her way to the stove. Lifting the cover off the fry pan, she lowered her face over the eggs and sniffed long and deep. They smelled especially delicious that morning.

“Did you do something different with them?” she asked. “They smell great.”

Arthur grinned as he proudly said, “I think it’s the new food I switched them to.”