

Return to the world of GUARDIANS OF GA'HOOLE

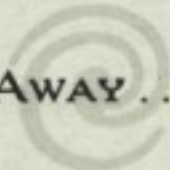
WOLVES OF THE BEYOND

OF THE
LONE WOLF



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 SCHOLASTIC



AWAY...

BEFORE SHE FELT EVEN THE FIRST twinge in her belly, the she-wolf set out to find a remote birthing den. She knew somehow that this birth would not be the same as the others. She had been traveling for days now, and she could sense her time was near. So far she had seen nothing that would serve as a den. There were several shallow pits, but those wouldn't do. Pits offered no shelter, and though it was almost spring, the weather could turn treacherous in a flash. The pups could freeze. The sound of their fresh hearts beating so fiercely would grow dim under a thin glaze of ice until the hearts stopped, and there was only silence. This had happened before to the she-wolf. She had licked those three pups until her tongue was dry and bleeding from the cold shards, but she had not been able to keep up with the ice.

This was her third litter. And this time, she knew she had to get far away from the pack, away from the clan, away from her mate, and most of all, away from the Obea.

Finally, on the night of the fifth rising moon that now hung like an ice blade low on the horizon, she found a crevice under a rock ledge. She smelled it before she saw it. The scent of fox was distinct. She hoped it wasn't a whelping den. *Just the fox, dear Lupus.* She sent up a silent prayer. She did not want to contend with fox kits.

And it had been just a fox — a fox waiting to give birth. The she-wolf routed her and took the den, settling in for her time. The fox smell lingered. *Fine, she thought.* It would provide another layer of concealing scent. She rolled in the scat that she found nearby and then snorted to herself as she imagined what her pups would think of their mum. No matter, they would live — and if need be, live away from the clan.

Then they came. Three pups, two tawny like their father, the other silvery gray. They were perfect in her eyes. Indeed, it took her a while to discover the one little flaw on the silver pup — a slight splay to his front paw. When the she-wolf examined it more closely, she saw that this paw had a dim tracery of a spiral, like a swirled star, on its footpad. It was odd, but certainly not a deformity.

And she told herself the splay of that paw was minor. He was not *malcadh*, the ancient wolf word for "cursed." It was such a slight flaw, and she had hope that the splay might lessen in the days that followed. The toes that pointed out might rotate back, and the tracery was so dim it wouldn't leave a print even in soft mud. The silver pup was strong. She could tell by the way he sucked on her teat. Still, she was glad she had taken the precaution of finding a birthing den far away.

She dragged the pups one by one into the deeper recesses of the crevice, which thankfully had two or three tunnels that extended into a nesting chamber. Here she planned to stay wrapped around her pups for several days, nursing them in the quiet darkness as long as she could. She knew that soon enough they would become restless, and when their eyes finally opened, they would seek that pale thread of light that gleamed feebly at the den's opening, drawn to it as strongly as they were drawn to the milk from her teats, as strongly as they would later be by the scent of meat. But if they could remain concealed, they would survive and the silver pup would grow stronger and stronger so that the threat of the Obea would begin to fade, like an old scent mark scoured away by wind and rain and snow.

From *New York Times* bestselling author Kathryn Lasky

A DESTINY WRITTEN IN THE STARS . . .

IN THE HARSH WILDERNESS BEYOND THE OWL world of Ga'Hoole, a wolf mother hides in fear. Her newborn pup, otherwise healthy, has a twisted paw. The mother knows the rigid rules of her kind. The pack cannot have weakness. Her pup must be abandoned on an icy riverbank—condemned to die.

But alone in the forest, the pup, Faolan, does the unthinkable. He survives. This is Faolan's story, the story of a courageous wolf pup who rises up to change forever the wolves of the Beyond.

Praise for *WOLVES OF THE BEYOND: LONE WOLF*

"[In this] enchanting first installment of a new series . . . the author builds a captivating world of forest, snow and volcanoes populated by intelligent animals and weaves a compelling story sure to bring readers back." — *Kirkus*

"This is a soulful, searching read consumed with the spiritual journeys of animals and the ethereal connection between slayer and slain." — *Booklist*