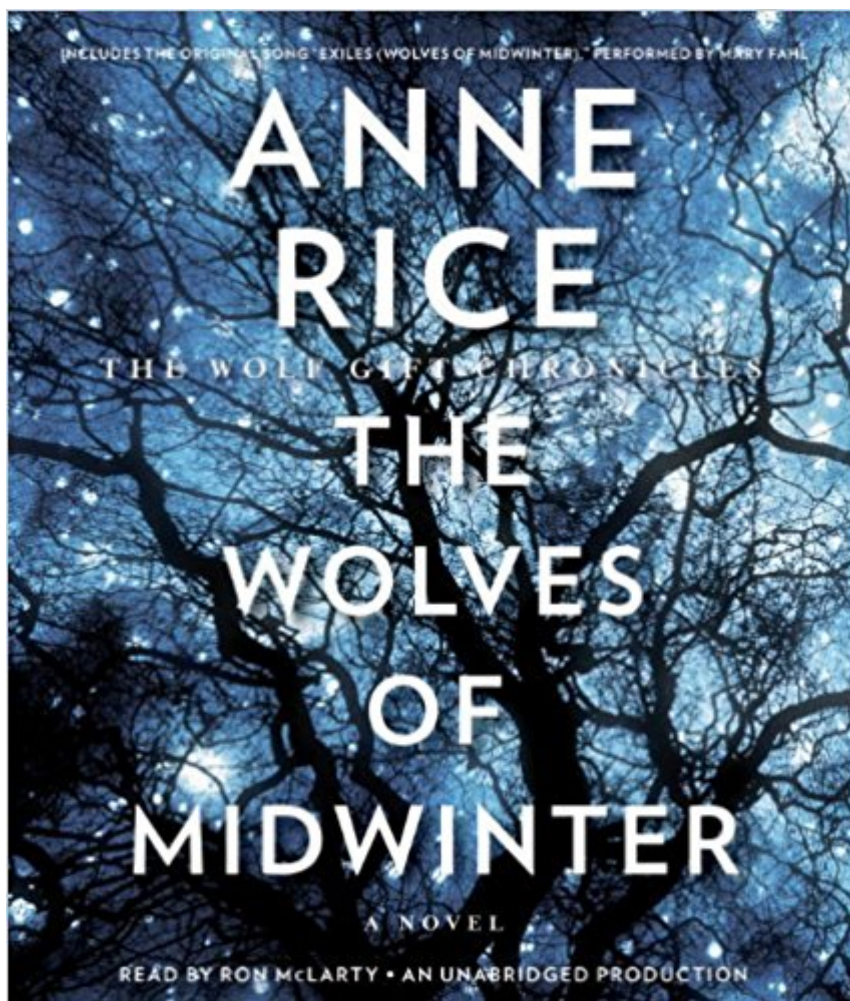


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# The Wolves Of Midwinter: The Wolf Gift Chronicles



## Synopsis

The tale of *The Wolf Gift* continues . . . In Anne Rice's surprising and compelling best-selling novel, the first of her strange and mythic imagining of the world of wolfen powers ("I devoured these pages . . . As solid and engaging as anything she has written since her early Vampire Chronicles fiction" •Alan Cheuse, *The Boston Globe*; "A delectable cocktail of old-fashioned lost-race adventure, shape-shifting, and suspense" •Elizabeth Hand, *The Washington Post*), readers were spellbound as Rice conjured up a daring new world set against the wild and beckoning California coast. Now in her new novel, as lush and romantic in detail and atmosphere as it is sleek and steely in storytelling, Anne Rice takes us once again to the rugged coastline of Northern California, to the grand mansion at Nideck Point, and further explores the unearthly education of her transformed Man Wolf. The novel opens on a cold, gray landscape. It is the beginning of December. Oak fires are burning in the stately flickering hearths of Nideck Point. It is Yuletide. For Reuben Golding, now infused with the Wolf Gift and under the loving tutelage of the Morphenkinder, this promises to be a Christmas like no other . . . The Yuletide season, sacred to much of the human race, has been equally sacred to the Man Wolves, and Reuben soon becomes aware that they, too, steeped in their own profound rituals, will celebrate the ancient Midwinter festival deep within the verdant richness of Nideck forest. From out of the shadows of Nideck comes a ghost •tormented, imploring, unable to speak yet able to embrace and desire with desperate affection . . . As Reuben finds himself caught up with •and drawn to •the passions and yearnings of this spectral presence, and as the swirl of preparations reaches a fever pitch for the Nideck town Christmas festival of music and pageantry, astonishing secrets are revealed; secrets that tell of a strange netherworld, of spirits other than the Morphenkinder, centuries old, who inhabit the dense stretches of redwood and oak that surround the magnificent house at Nideck Point, "ageless ones" •who possess their own fantastical ancient histories and who taunt with their dark magical powers . . . Includes the Original Song "Exiles (The Wolves of Midwinter)," Performed by Mary Fahl

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Q: It's been almost two years since *The Wolf Gift* was published. What has been the most fun for you about writing this new series? A: The new cosmology is terrific fun. Since this is a brand new series, I'm able to evolve a whole new type of supernatural character—the morphenkind, or man wolf—and make up an origin story for the species and work with what powers these creatures have and so forth. I've loved that. But as always the novels are about character, and I do love the new cast—Reuben my youthful hero, his family, and the contemporary setting. As always I like blending a family story with a supernatural story. I've done this with the *Mayfair Witches* and to some extent with the vampires. But the very most fun? I guess the new cosmology—that Reuben the Man Wolf is a comic book hero, living a double life as a reporter and a man wolf.

Q: A defining element of your werewolves is that they are sentient during transformation, but also that they can detect and hunt out evil. How does *The Wolves of Midwinter* begin to blur those clear lines of good vs. evil for your main character, Reuben? A: Well, Reuben and Stuart—both young man wolves—are coming to see the obvious, that there is no real objective standard in the world of what is good or evil, much as we all wish that there was. And in some situations, they do not see clearly what to do. They transform into powerful beast men and can easily kill and punish evil doers, but what happens when the evil doer is contrite and becomes a victim himself? Do they stop in their tracks? Their powers put an immense burden on those human beings who know what they are. Is it moral for a good man to contact Reuben and ask for his help with despicably evil murderers, knowing full well that Reuben has the power to transform into a Man Wolf and bring immediate death to the evil ones? In *The Wolves of Midwinter* they confront this problem for the first time.

Q: What was it about the unfinished nature of Reuben's relationship with Marchent that inspired you to bring back her ghost in *The Wolves of Midwinter*? A: Marchent was a very strong character and she left the narrative early. She died violently. I thought

what if she lingers, confused, uncertain, an earthbound spirit in need of guidance to the light? I think it was her character and how strong she felt to me in the first book that prompted me to bring her back. When I write I believe the old cliché: there are no small parts, only small actors. And so even if a character is going to be in a book for a very short while (as Marchent was in the first book) I'll go deep into that character, seeking to make that character very real, and then when the character is dispatched, well I miss the character. That's what happened with Marchent.

Q: The Wolves of Midwinter features the emergence of other "Ageless Ones," like the Forest Gentry, and the strange servants who serve the Distinguished Gentlemen. How do these new characters allow you build upon the werewolf mythology you've created? A: It's flat out unrealistic to present a universe in which the morphenkinder are the only preternatural inhabitants. It's a failure of imagination to not ponder what other supernatural or preternatural beings they might know or interact with. I thought it only natural that immortal morphenkinder would know a lot about spirits, ghosts, and so forth, and other immortals. It was fun to imagine new species. And I love writing about ghosts. I am doing it in other books now as well as in The Wolf Gift Chronicles. I have a mythology of ghosts and spirits that transcends any individual series I've written and I just love it. With Reuben and his friends, I feel like I'm just getting started on their world. I may bring in other elements soon. For now though the Forest Gentry and the "strange servants" are really delighting me.

Q: The Wolves of Midwinter also introduces new members of other werewolf packs, suggesting a much larger world exists beyond the Distinguished Gentlemen. Will we learn more about the past history of the Morphenkinder as the series continues? A: Yes, as the series continues we will learn much more about the history of the Morphenkinder. I already have a big surprise brewing for book three. And of course we have only begun to see in this second book how morphenkinder from other parts of the world can make serious trouble for Reuben, Felix, Margon and the inhabitants of Nideck Point. I feel that in these two Wolf Gift books I've opened many doors and I want this to develop into a huge fantasy series.

Q: So much of the setting and atmosphere of The Wolves of Midwinter is tied to traditional Christmas holiday rituals. What experiences and research did you draw from to create such a rich setting? Were you inspired by European holiday festivals? What was your favorite part of creating the Festival in Nideck Point? A: I am enthralled with Yuletide customs the world over but particularly those of Europe and America. I did intensely research them, seeking for material everywhere. I have used intense Christmas symbols and mythology in The Witching Hour and in Lasher, and I am very interested, as you can see, in delving into it with the wolves. I am intrigued as to why our heritage includes belief in ghosts walking at Christmastime and

so many Christmas ghost stories, like those written in Victorian England, for instance. I'm intrigued with the ancient European custom of people dressing as beasts and in animal skins around Christmastime with customs involving bonfires and echoes of human sacrifice. Clearly the feast of midwinter was serious business in our past, a time when we celebrated the cycles of the earth, the desperate hope that the warm spring and summer sun would return, in spite of the ice and snows, and that we would see light and growth and possibility again. That's in our blood as human beings. And to me all this is related to the very idea of the man-wolves that we humans remember on some level when we were very primitive and closer to the animal world than we are today, that our nature is always animal and divine mixed together, that we are mammals with souls. Christmas is the great feast at the very heart of our cultural experience of these mysteries. God becoming man in the Christ Child in the dark of winter is a potent symbol for all of us human beings who are spiritual as well as physical and for our great need to control our animal nature while never forgetting it. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Reuben Golding is a new werewolf (following the events of 2012's *The Wolf Gift*). He now lives in a Northern California mansion with his mentor, Felix, and other shapeshifters, occasionally killing evildoers as the vigilante called Man Wolf. Readers expecting urban fantasy action will be surprised: this is mostly a moody family drama, as Reuben plans for the birth of his child by his ex-girlfriend Celeste and copes with the transformation of his new lover, Laura, into a shapeshifter. Reuben and his brother, Father Jim, a priest, also struggle with issues of faith, justice, and the afterlife. Meanwhile, Felix plans a giant Christmas celebration for the entire village and frets about his ghostly niece, Marchent. New conflicts and antagonists are introduced and dealt with in a late rush, and Reuben's forays as Man Wolf are perfunctory, taking up fewer pages than the party planning. Still, the book is not without charm: Reuben and Felix are sympathetic protagonists, and the series mythology, suggesting that the fair folk may be evolved human ghosts, is fascinating. (Oct.) --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Absolutely Brilliant! Morphenkinders are a brilliant breed in this paranormal world that Anne Rice has created. They are not only very intelligent but sensitive with a big heart. The story captured me throughout the whole book. I didn't want it to end. It was the perfect book to read during this time of year as winter comes on and some of us celebrate Christmas or the pagan Winter Fest. The story continues from the first book "The Wolf Gift" and the reader learns of other paranormal creatures

that exist amongst the mortals like the Ageless ones. The drama dealing with family members, the other morphenkinders who come forward, and the Ageless Ones absolutely mystified me. The ending was perfect and left me with a smile. I really didn't want this book to end, I want more more more and look forward to the next book in the series. Excellent!

Over the course of reading this novel I determined that Reuben is either Sir Galahad, or that girl from the Youtube video who gets emotional about cats and is trapped in a man's body. I say this because his capacity to love others almost requires a suspension of disbelief and yet it is the very reason why you find the character so likable, he is pure of heart. Another thing I found amusing about this book was how extravagant a life Reuben and the rest of the pack live and how if you throw enough money at a problem it'll just sort itself out. There was one bit of dialogue where the leader of the pack spit out in frustration, "This is reality!", no sir, I'll have to disagree, nobody lives like you do, not even the ultra-wealthy. I was able to put things like that aside since it is indeed a fantasy novel and Anne Rice makes up for it with her rich description of the setting and wonderful development of the characters. There is a lot less action in this book than the previous, but the bits that we do get are really great. The targets picked for the attacks are well chosen and relevant, you get a personal satisfaction when they are finished. It seems the this sequel was more about the state of the relationships after the events of the first and how Reuben must come to terms with how things are going to carry on now that he's immortal. Just like the last book, this one also deals with what the definition of evil is, what happens when we die and other philosophical matters that we deal with in life. There are great character developments with two specific characters, Reuben's brother, Jim, and their father, Phil. I have to say that Phil's development is what pleased me the most about this book and it is something that he deserved in my opinion. I don't think this part will be to spoilery since it is in the summary of this book, but a new race (new to Reuben) of immortal beings are introduced and they are fantastic. They play a central role in this book, but I don't want to get into it that much, you'll have to read it. Overall I believe it is a worthy sequel to the first book. Anne Rice clearly knows how to write an engaging book with substance, unlike a lot of the popular supernatural books out there these days.

As usual, Ms Rice plunges into her legendary theme with plenty of blood and guts and hot sex, and a little theology. Probably not a spoiler to note that bad guys won't just be killed, they'll be eaten! Rice fans won't mind some outrageous plot twists, and she does create characters that we can care about.

Book one, *The Wolf Gift*, introduced us into the world of Man-Wolves and how the phenomenon influenced unknown human history. Now, Rice continues the exciting journey as young Reuben finds his true purpose and love as he and The Distinguished Gentlemen, aka Man-Wolves Team get ready to open their secrets and transform Nideck Point with their own form of magic. Toss in Forest spirits and intrigue and you have another amazing novel. I would love to read a Third Book!

I loved this sequel to *The Wolf Gift*, and look forward eagerly to the next installment of the series. New characters and mythology are introduced in this volume, and the narrative advances in a fun and intriguing way. I will offer one criticism. Stuart, the young gay werewolf in the pack is portrayed as gorgeous and virile, but with not much interest in sex or even that much attraction for the above average men that surround him. In fact, he actually chooses to mate with a female werewolf while in animal form. That is inconsistent with reality for most proud openly gay men living in current times. Considering that the author's son is gay, and probably many of the fans, friends, and work associates that surround her, I would expect her to know better. (And animals do have gay sex all the time.) There are so many fascinating characters in this saga, and their original and interesting histories and origins have only been hinted at. This could be a long and very entertaining series.

Michael Travis Jasper, Author of the Novel *To Be Chosen*

I have been an Anne Rice going back many years, and I am always surprised as how she manages to come up with another set of wonderful complex characters. She is able to give each character flesh and blood reality. I love her ability to move the pace of reading until I am engrossed into the book I completely lose time and reality. I am in a new world exploring a whole new way of understanding a new type of werewolf. I loved the books like I love all her books. She has never disappointed me and I look forward to another sequel. Well Done!

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