

**A tale of horror and surrealism,**

**Catherine:**

**Forever with Love**

## Chapter One: Present - It Awakens

A drop of blood stumbles off the reservation. Down the neck it goes. Down and down. It meets the chest.

She tries to slap it away. She succeeds.

But a second drop soon follows. A third, a fourth, and a fifth. Then, a sixth! Always more. Always more, more, more, more, more!

It's the one constant fact.

Blood travels through the veins, arteries, and capillaries. This is whole blood. A mixture of about fifty-five percent plasma and forty-five percent blood cells. It is said there's two gallon's worth of blood in the body.

But he never stops to measure. He acts. But he never stops to measure and never keeps count.

She, the woman, her name, of little importance. They rarely pay too much thought to names or identities. The victims have no recognition, no prominence, or significance whatsoever; they're superficial sustenance, a means to their survival. Until the time they do. Matter, that is. Which is fine, they like the challenge of a prey willing to fight back.

There are rules. Or, not rules, but precedents. A means to make it fairer. A means to give a chance.

It screams muffled words, the lady; however, screaming isn't something they were looking for.

Not yet, at least. Screams only serve a purpose for the ritual's end. A mirthless melody contrived by the onyx orchestra.

"You'll have to excuse the restraints; while it makes formal conversation imbalanced, it is imperative for such occasions." The voice speaks with sporadic inflection, sounding neither angry nor cool, deep nor soft. The pitch varies from high to low with each word. An equilibrium not unlike splicing together unique, unconnected dialogue to form new sentences.

The rays of a streetlight rain down on the woman's face and illuminate her enough to be distinguished, but other-wise, all around her is darkness and fog.

The figure that spoke steps from the shadows, bringing itself into the light. The woman's words are muffled by the fog's hands, their smoky touch cupping over her mouth. Her eyes look up and down at The Haze, the main offspring of The Miasma. The puppet master, the conductor. The final stroke of the paint-brush.

The woman's screams, muffled, remain persistent. She is panicked; in absolute shock over what welcomed her into its clutches.

The Haze takes comfort in control. The foundations of its existence built on its simple and contrived principles. Fairness, but never allotting the chance for failure.

The woman gawks at The Haze's appearance; stoic and calm in disposition, but no foretelling of its emotions. It wears a peculiar ensemble, like an old suit of armor, one might term, but it looks like no armor she has ever lain eyes on before. Its helm brought to mind that of a wolf, and its armor looks desolate and wrecked. Worn and blackened, like it had been carried out through the depths of Hell.

Hands dirty with soot, the tips of the fingers sharpened at the bones. Skin ripped off. Its bones carved like claws.

There is an aura about The Haze, one that's smoky and green, a different color, but not unlike what engulfs her body and forces her to remain still. The smoke is thick and it cups the woman's mouth like a glove. She couldn't spread open her lips, could only grind her teeth with a humming scream. It drapes over her like a blanket, wrapped snug.

The Haze speaks on: "It would seem as if someone has made an enemy." The Haze's hand rests on the cheek of its new playmate. The woman can smell the death on the figure's finger-tips. The Haze can feel the beating of her heart with absolute definition. Beating faster and faster, like a drum. Another sound in the composition. "Do you know why you're here?"

The smoke leaves her lips and permits her to speak. But she doesn't; at least not with actual words, instead, she screams incoherently and cries nonsensically. The Haze places its hand on the woman's jaw and lifts up, through the wolf-helm, a glowing red aura is visible in the eye holes. "It's time for words now," The Man with the Wolf Head barks.

She can't stop sobbing, however. Unrelenting tears in a manic hysteria, unable to fathom her own intense amounts of phobia.

"Others have allowed the fear to kill them. The simple shock of what's before them. Always a pity." The Haze lets her jaw loose from his grasp and throws his hand out like a stage-performer, segueing into the darkness, presenting something. "We ALL want to see you suffer. I ask again, do you know why you're here?"

"No!" She screams, and as she does, more tears fall down her cheeks. She couldn't breathe; hyperventilating.

"Then, allow me to remind you."