

Upon the Shores of Jenifer

By: Bob Macumber

The moment Jenifer opened her eyes; she was thrust into an unconceivable nightmare. Her fear was swift and powerful. It overwhelmed her, burying itself deep into her heart. Her mind raced. Her thoughts were bleak and macabre. A whirl wind of emotions whisked Jenifer within a razors edge of a mental breakdown.

There was something sinister concerning the landscape. What she observed was natural and familiar to her, but the place was shrouded in a cloud of malignity. To her right and left were miles of rocky shoreline, complete with ancient cliffs and eroded rock formations of various sizes, directly behind her stood a dense forest of massive spruce trees. In front of her was an immense body of dark blue water that seemed to stretch beyond the horizon and into unknown realms.

The placid waters were threatening, giving one the impression of fathomless depths which held terrifying secrets and unimaginable horrors. The very thought of what lurked beneath the still water chilled her to the bone.

The atmosphere was sombre and oppressive. The sky was overcast with dark grey clouds that periodically illuminated with flashes of lightning. A distant rumble of thunder forewarned the likelihood of a storm.

Jenifer desperately tried to sort through the clutter of unanswered questions. Her arrival to this place had been a mystery. She fought valiantly to unlock her memories and force some logic into the situation. But there was nothing logical about her situation. It was though her life had just begun. No birth, no childhood, no awkward teen years, no success, no failures, no love or loss. She suddenly, existed.

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Jenifer's memories betrayed her. She felt like she was part of a harsh joke. A joke started by a cruel jester who thrived on pain and suffering. The situation was beyond her control; beyond any semblance of rhyme or reason. It was this grim realization that scared her the most.

A cool breeze caressed Jenifer's silky, white skin, causing a tingling sensation to creep over her naked body. During the chaos and confusion she had become desensitized towards her physical presence. She instinctively clasped her hands over her exposed private areas. She felt humiliated and vulnerable, but a small part of her was deeply aroused.

She stood up and began to carefully survey the area. Her long, auburn hair danced and fluttered in the breeze. She neatly tucked her hair behind her ears and sauntered towards a flat rock that lay higher on the shore. She sat on the rock, her emerald eyes fixed upon her shapely body. She began to curiously study a tattoo of a Tiger Lily that was above her left breast. The tattoo brought an overwhelming sense of comfort to Jenifer and for a few seconds she was lost in her thoughts. She didn't know where she got the tattoo or who the artist was, but she vividly remembered the pain. It was the memory of pain that ensured Jenifer she had existed outside of this place.

Her brief moment of tranquility was shattered by the neighing of a horse. A jet black stallion reared and snorted angrily. Mounted on top the beast was an ominous looking stranger who appeared to be more monster than man. The rider was draped in a sleeveless coat made of wolf pelts. His muscular arms decorated with deep and hideous battle scars. He wore a helmet that was a mesh of iron and bone. On the front protruded the elongated jaw bone of a grey wolf, froze in a perpetual snarl. The mighty horns of a ram were lodged into the iron hood, finishing this grotesque headdress.

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Jenifer was frozen in terror. She stared blankly as the rider advanced from the forbidding darkness of the forest. The wild eyed stallion halted inches from where she stood. The moist and acrid stench of the beast's breath turned Jenifer's stomach. She desperately wanted to flee, but knew the rider could catch her within seconds.

A violent crack of thunder sent Jenifer sprawling to the ground. She covered her head, anticipating the defining moment when the rider would swoop down and end her life. After several agonizing seconds of silence, she gathered enough courage to stand up and face her assailant. The rider removed a silk nightgown from his saddle bag, tossing it at her feet. Jenifer warmly welcomed the opportunity to clothe herself.

A mournful howl emanated from within the dark, endless forest. The howl was answered by another and another and another. Soon, the entire forest was alive with a steady chorus of bloodcurdling howls. The jet black stallion neighed and reared repeatedly. The rider had a hard time controlling the rampaging beast that furiously snorted and stomped its powerful legs. The rider seemed undaunted by howling or his horse's unruly behaviour. He calmly pulled on the reins until the horse settled itself, then steered the angry beast towards the forest. He coaxed the horse into a trot, gradually forcing an all out blitz.

Jenifer screamed for the riders return. She felt a cold chill attack her nerves and in that moment, she knew death was upon her. Like a slug from a .45, she exploded into the forest, determined to pursue the rider to safer accommodations. It was a worthy, but fruitless effort. The rider had vanished and Jenifer was left alone.

The howling had stopped. The only sound to be heard was Jenifer's rapid heartbeat pounding in her ear drums. She slumped against a wide spruce tree to catch her breath. The wet, sponge

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moss felt pleasant beneath her bare feet. The fresh, clean scent of spruce enchanted her senses.

A low pitched growl cut through the silence like a straight razor. From behind a fallen tree crept a large, grey wolf. Its savage eyes reflected an insatiable lust for flesh.

Jenifer had run out of options. Every muscle fibre in her entire body screamed for her to run. A profound urge to survive had clawed its way from the depths of her subconscious and presented an ultimatum: live or die?

The wolf had its own intentions. Before Jenifer could move, the beast rushed her. Its muscular jaws tore a chunk of flesh from the back of her thigh, tearing the nightgown. Blood streaked across the mossy earth.

Jenifer shrieked and stumbled a few steps, but a surge of adrenaline kept her moving. She sprinted through the forest, narrowly missing trees and low branches. She could feel the wolf behind her. It was only a matter of time before it moved in for the kill.

A broken branch stuck out from a spruce tree. The end was sharp and pointed like a carved spear. Jenifer collided with the branch face first. It slashed across her eyebrow, ripping open a massive gash. The impact snapped her head back, stopping her dead.

Jenifer was laid out like a broken doll. The wound across her eyebrow filled her eye socket with blood. There was no getting up this time. She had nothing left.

The forest had come alive. Packs of wolves gathered around Jenifer, drawn by the scent of blood. They were stirred into a wild frenzy brought on by the promise of a fresh meal. The pack engulfed her. They ravaged Jenifer's body with bestial fury. The pressure from their jaws tore

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through soft tissue and shattered bones with a sickening crunch. Before Jenifer's mind could register the pain, she was dead.

The room at the Shallow Creek Mental Health Institute was claustrophobic in size. It had a tall, unreachable ceiling with a small window and a single sized bed.

Jenifer Lace sprung up in bed, soaked with sweat and tears. The walls in this hell hole never seemed so tight. They closed in like a noose around the neck.

She tried to warn others, but no one would listen. Psychiatrists identified it as paranoid delusions. Now, the beasts were free to spread their brutality upon an unsuspecting world.

The ghostly cry of wolves echoed throughout the empty corridors of the institute. A tidal wave of fear washed over Jenifer. They had escaped her dreams.