

## Inner Demon

Clouds stalked around the sky like a hungry panther, waiting for its prey to weaken or look the other way. The silken black clouds rolled in powerful waves as though rippling muscle, raw and intense. From no single direction, the storm breathed out its early chilled winds. They rustled leaves and fought anything in their unfortunate path. I could see an older woman trying to hurry to her weathered blue sedan. Her scarf flapped across her face and she had to catch ahold of her car to stop from falling over. A tree branch the size of my thigh fell blocking off part of the road. A few cars swerved around it trying to hurry home.

The hard on the back of my neck pricked as I stared at the people. I stood under a leafy oak tree that creaked and swayed bending to the will of the wind. A fresh scent of pine and rain fled down from the mountains that surrounded the town. I breathed in deep, trying to calm the unnerving sensations that warned of danger close at hand. Like most, storms were not new to me. They came on heavy most springs and bathed the world in crystalline dewdrops that rejuvenated all it touched. But this was different. The storm was angry, or more like furious. It howled like a wild beast. It hungered for blood.

I noticed out of the corner of my eye, a large black shape standing beside me, facing the oncoming storm. I turned to see a large black wolf with eyes the color of amber stones staring out at over the town. My eyes locked on him and he turned his large head to face me in a nonchalant manner. I stared, puzzled at the large beast and curious as to why where he had come from.

“Do you see the flaw?” the creature asked in a clear scholarly voice. I nearly jumped out of my skin.

“What?” I barked out the question on reflex.

“The flaw,” it repeated.

“Oh um, I'm not sure what you mean.” I stared out at the brick buildings and gathering storm. The flaw? I puzzled this over in my mind. I wasn't sure exactly what it was talking about or why it was talking for that matter. “Is this a dream?”

“Does it matter?”

“Well,” I started, “to some extent yes, but I'll humor you for now.” I didn't feel like arguing with a talking wolf, nor did I think it would get me anywhere. My mind returned to its first question and I thought it over for a minute. “Do you mean the storm? The flaw in the storm?”

The large black head nodded.

“It doesn't feel like other storms,” I began, “it feels like a hungry, angry beast. No offense,” I added quickly, “and it feels more like a racing pulse than a gathering rain storm.”

“All true,” the wolf replied, “but how does that make it a flaw?”

I leaned against the sturdy oak, feeling its slight sway. The wind pulled at my early spring jacket and I pulled it closer. I turned, observing my surroundings, and tried to see if there was another giveaway as to what was going on. The park, where I stood, was surrounded by the shopping district. It was a square shaped area of buildings with roads and small parking areas in front of them. Though, now I noticed that now the area was devoid of all people and even animals, except for us. All hide from the power that swooped down from the opalescent mountain tops. The prickling feeling of worrying tingled along my limbs as I scanned the area around us. A rumble of thunder engulfed the town and sent a shiver down my spine. The worry and fear gathered inside of me. I spun back to see the large creature was nowhere to be found. I remained alone in the solitude of the trees against the brewing black clouds.

“The flaw? The flaw, the flaw...” I repeated to myself over and over again. The words contorted into burst of nervous irritation. I rung my fingers through my loose hair and gazed at the chestnut strands intertwined around them. More emotion piled on like the winter’s snow, but boiled to the surface quick and hot. My breathing labored and I noticed my fingertips began to quiver. Lightning flashed and struck the far side of the town like an avenging arrow. I ducked behind the oak with frantic eyes. The call of the wind rose into a howl as it sped over the land at a feverish pace. Things were not looking good. I sank to the base of the trunk and held my face to the gnarled bark. My mind froze when I tried to think on the wolf’s question again.

“Dammit! I’m the flaw. I can’t think. I can’t do anything about it. At this point, I am flaw!”

A continuous rumble sounded as though the skies were trying to split the earth beneath me. And I got it. *I am the flaw*. A large black form stood inches from my head. I glanced up to see the black wolf from earlier.

“You see the flaw?” His words rang as crisp as the raindrops that now fell all around.

“Yes,” I answered, “It was important that it was a dream. I was right before too. But, I am also right again. It is my inner self. My own beast that dwells in me.” The wolf managed a small toothy grin and bowed its head once. My eyes fixated into the creatures glowing amber eyes, “Or are you my inner beast?”

Then, the wolf did something that I did not expect, it laughed.