

Chapter 7

DarkWater Motel

Struggling to stay awake, I staggered down the road toward the city limits.



RAINE MONDAY

The tunnel that led through the mountain was closed. Sighing, I tried to look through the tunnel, but all I could see was darkness. I flicked on my flashlight, but could only see a few feet. I had no idea why the tunnel was closed, and I wondered what it might mean for a guy alone on the road with night fast approaching near DarkWater Falls.

Backtracking a bit, I decided to pitch a tent, but there wasn't a decent area back from the road I could camp. A neon sign beckoned in the distance, advertising a motel with vacancies if it was to be believed.

I didn't really have enough money for a hotel room, but I remembered what someone had said about motels here. Something about being for free?

Sighing, I made my way to the office. It wouldn't hurt to at least ask what the rates were.



I went into the office and a young woman was slamming her hands down on a computer keyboard.

“Ooh, this damn thing!”

“That’s about how I feel about most technological items,” I said.

DARKWATER FALLS

“Oh!” She looked up at me. “So sorry. Welcome to DarkWater Falls Motel. How can I help you?”

I smiled. “I’m just inquiring about your rates for tonight.”

She sighed, hitting the side of her monitor. “Well, usually I’d say it was eighty-five dollars...

“But not tonight?”

She banged it again. “Tonight, I can’t get my damn computer to work.”



“Well, I know a thing or two about computers,” I said. “If I made it work, could I get a room comped for tonight?”

“Hell, if you can make this thing work, I’ll comp it for a *week!*”

“Deal!” I said.

She smiled, and opened the office door.

“So what’s it doing?”

“Nothing!” The woman said. “Absolutely nothing at all.”

I tried to move the mouse, which was frozen on the screen. I hit `ctrl>opt>delete` and the option manager window spawned open after a few moments.

RAINE MONDAY

I saw a few unresponsive programs and exited them, then ran a disk scan from the command line. After that was completed, I rebooted the computer.

After the chime, she logged in.

“It works!” She said, happily. “Oh, my God, you have no idea how frustrated I’ve been!”

“Oh, I have some idea.” I chuckled.



“My name is Joyce, by the way.”

“Sean,” I said and held out my hand.

“Oh my God, are you Trans?”

I smiled softly, my face flushing.

“That’s a horrible thing to say, isn’t it? You don’t have to answer, I apologize.”

“It’s okay. And..well, that’s why I need a room. Apparently, I’m in transition right now.”

“Ahh, you met Mei, then.”

I nodded. “Seems like everyone knows about her.”

“Yeah, she has a thing. We all do.”

“Does that mean you want to feast on my flesh, drink my blood, or consume my soul?”

She grinned at me. “No, nothing like that. But this hotel is cursed.”

“Damn, that’s what I was afraid of.”

“Yeah...ghosts, spirits, you name it, we got it. They’ve been quiet lately, but no one wants to stay here.”

“I’m surprised you’re still managing it.”

“They’re relatively harmless,” she said.

“Relatively?”

She nodded. “Yeah, most of them are just poltergeists, but Wanda...well.”

“Not your friendly neighborhood ghost?”

“Um, no.”

“Gotcha. So if I stay here, I risk running into the ghost named Wanda.”

Joyce nodded. “But she’s not terrible. I mean...”

This time her face flushed a bit.

“What happens?”

“Well, she sorta...*possesses* you for a time. She doesn’t do anything bad, but she likes to...”

“Likes to what?”

“Well, have sex.”

“Ahh...”

“She never possesses male bodies, but I’m not sure what she’d do with a trans person, which is why I got excited.”

“Does she keep the bodies she possesses?”

“No, it’s usually only for twenty-four hours.”

I sighed. “Well, fore-warned is fore-armed.”

“So you’ll take the room?”

I shrugged. “Why not? Beats sleeping in a tent in the woods.”

“Great!” She said, grinning. “This makes me really happy, Sean. I haven’t had someone actually stay here in weeks!”

“Well, thank you for telling me about the curse.”

“Yeah, I usually don’t do that for newcomers. But since you fixed my computer, I thought it only fair.”

I nodded as she handed me the key.

“You know, you could have quite the business here in DarkWater as an IT person.”

“Think so?”

“I *know* so. The last IT guy we had in town got annihilated by a Cthulhuan horror.”

I shivered at that. “Good to know.”

She smiled. “Say, you wanna get cleaned up then head over to the diner—”

“I’ve already had enough of Mary-Beth, too. She told me to get out of town, but the road is closed.”

“Yeah, the tunnel is flooded *again*.”

“I wondered what had happened. Guess I’ll have to try to go over the mountain.”

“Yeah, might not wanna do that either. There’s trolls.”

I rolled my eyes. ‘Dammit!’

“Look, when I said, ‘diner’ I didn’t actually mean Mary-Beth’s. By the way, her bark is worse than her bite, if you know what I mean.”

I sighed. “I wondered that.”

“Anyway, go put your stuff in the room, and meet me at the diner across the parking lot, Asmore’s. I just have to lock up here.”

“Are they going to be putting *me* on the menu?”

She laughed at that. “Not if you’re with me, honey.”

I thought about Mei, and not saying goodbye...but I was also tired, and ravenously hungry. “Sure, we can do that. But I’m exhausted, so may not be good company.”

“Don’t worry, baby,” she said, walking me to the door. “I’m just happy we’ve met.”

I smiled. “Say, do you happen to have any clothes around that I might be able to fit? My um...boy clothes, don’t fit anymore.”

She grinned at me. “We have an entire lost and found section, honey. People tend to leave this place in a hurry and leave everything behind! I’ll bring some stuff over to your room.”

“Sounds good.”

And as I made my way to room 213 in the DarkWater Motel. I sincerely hoped my luck had changed.