

## **Skinwalker Cabin**

### **Part 2**

**By**

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I didn't realise I had even drifted off, until I felt the warmth of the sun stroking my cheek, and winced, squeezing my eyes tight, preparing myself to open my eyes. When I did, I could see it was fighting its way through the thin, cloth curtains (he chose), filling the room with a pale, lilac hue.

I checked my phone to find the time, only to see I had three percent of battery left, and even worse, the alarm wasn't set for another five minutes. It was 06:55, and the last time I had checked, before I dozed off, I saw it was 03:30, and I had been scrolling for a while after that. So, I had very little sleep to last me for a long day of driving, and delving into new experiences, and meeting my potential in-laws for the first time... not ideal, by any stretch of the imagination.

I lay still in bed, awaiting those five minutes, which, whenever you wanted them to last as long as possible, seemed to race by at such blinding speeds, purely to spite you, and you alone. His alarm went off, and I prepared to get up, only to be pulled into a sudden little spoon position... I shrugged and accepted it.

But, with my mind slowly waking up, I began to reflect on the stories I read the night before, and wonder just why, oh *why*? I had gotten myself into this position. I've never been a big believer in the supernatural; of course as a child I'd tremble in fear at the local 'boogie man' that every neighbourhood has, somehow surviving generation after generation. But, the older I got, the more real life had to take priority over the supernatural facets a younger mind has the leisure of homing.

It wasn't the stories of Skinwalkers, or witches, or rituals, or unexplained disappearances, bizarre sightings or unidentifiable creatures that spooked me. It was the real life murder cases that seemed to rack up in high numbers over the years. One article went as far as stating that you couldn't walk more than five minutes without potentially passing wildlife that was nurtured by the blood of an unnamed victim.

These woods, it seemed, were notorious for the 'last known location' of many hikers. Some of which had videos as they went in, giddy with excitement at facing Skinwalker Woods, and wanting to hit some level of internet fame amongst the avid hiking community afterward... only to never be seen again.

But, even outside of that, there were many on the opposite end of the scale. A lot of bodies found, who were never identified. Some, were left to the elements and curious wildlife, but were stumbled upon in a condition in which their features and dental records should be some identifier – yet, no-one claimed the lost souls. But, others, lacerations, eviscerations, mounds of coagulating pulp, viscera, bones stained a ghastly-pink? They- they were beyond recognition, and DNA testing was at a loss to give their families, or memory, any peace.

I just don't get why- why would this be a destination anyone would purchase a cabin? Why would this be a place-

"Best get up," his voice croaked from the nook in my neck, and I yelped with the sudden snap from my horrid rumination.

The two of us tore ourselves from bed. He went to check we had everything in order before we got ready to leave, whilst I made my way to the bathroom. Whilst showering, I stood

learning with my arm against the glass wall, and letting the almost-too hot water drench my body, wiping clean the griminess of a poor sleep, and hoping it would sluice the building anxiety in my mind.

This was just what I did sometimes. I'd let myself focus on any negative aspect (to put it lightly) of anything that I'm tentative about. There were also a lot of people who went on the trips to the woods I was going to, and had experienced nothing, much to their maniacal dismay.

I was going to be going with the man I loved, with the family he loved, in a house they'd stayed at without event multiple times, all of whom could boast varying levels of wilderness training. It wasn't as if I was going to be air-dropped in the middle of some desecrated, impossibly dense thicket with a loin cloth and my blunted wits, then survive for the full time. I was going for a cute getaway, where I could stroke a family dog, make awkward small talk with his family, rest on an old, probably moth-eaten couch, as I read or pretended I liked hard whiskey in front of a snap, crackling and popping fire. Why was I letting my ever-unwelcome, but always-attending anxiety to taint what could, possibly, one of the best trips of my life?

There was a little *rap-rap-hurry-the-fuck-up-in-there-baby-rap* at the door, which once again, snapped me back into function, and I realised with the fug of steam that had begun billowing about the room, condensing on the shower walls, fogging up the mirror, and causing the ceramic tiles to sweat, I had been in for a little longer than the ten minutes I was allotted.

I popped out as he walked in, and had the quick, near tacit transaction of, "All good?"

"Yep," he replied, clearly hiding the fact that he was slightly irked at my overstepping the schedule, but well aware we had a long, long, *long*, drive together, and bickering wouldn't at least double that, even if just in perception. "You?"

"Yep," I replied, knowing that his question held the subversive order to be fully dry and ready to go by the time he was out, and, if I wanted to earn brownie points that were just docked, that I'd also have his Americano waiting in his reusable coffee cup.

Of course, I did.

We were on the road before long, and it suddenly hit me just how little of the country I'd seen. We'd visited Salt Lake City for one weekend work trip, but only got to see very little outside of smiling faces ill-fitting on motivational speaker's mouths. And that was also with three others, so the journey there (which was, perhaps an hour at most) was mostly focused on spinning every plate of precariousness pattered we could all manage as well-meaning, uniform work friends.

I was lucky I made him the coffee, because he seemed to be in a good enough mood by the time we had left our little town behind, giving my kneecap little reassuring squeezes as if to say, without having to actually let the words slip his mouth, "This is fine, this is going to be *fun!*" But, by the fifth little affectionate pincer motion, I couldn't ascertain whether it was my bubbling nerves he was trying to assuage, or his own.

- ◆ Travel, and describe urbanity to country.
- ◆ Conversation about his family not knowing, but when the bf brings it up, the protagonist thinks he's going to talk about the murders or whatever else.
- ◆ "This woods?" I asked, after a long silence. He was already on the back foot, and had to work extra hard to make sure I didn't eject from the car. "Is it, like, a camping ground, or a wildlife reservation, or... an *old hiking route*?" "No, no! It used to be, like I said, but ... .. abandoned." "Oh, any particular reason. There weren't any, say, disappearances or anything insidious?" "No!" quick reply.

- ◆ They get close to the woods by the time it's getting darker, and he sees some animal – cat/crow(?) – watching as they get onto the official location, and then again as they enter the woods, and then one last time, he hears the sound of it in the distance, just before he's about to meet the family.