

Cursed



Jeri Ellen



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CURSED

By Jeri Ellen

I finished my ten pm to six am shift in the bakery section of the box store. I always liked working the night shift. There was very little traffic driving to work and coming home most of the people were not yet on the road.

In my car I checked my cell phone and found a text message from Hal about the nights' graduation party. We had reserved a campsite along the river outside of town.

This party would be the last we were going to have now that we were graduated. We were headed out to either begin more schooling, start a full time job, or military service.

It was a nice quiet area. Except for a family of Gypsies in the adjoining campsite we would be pretty much alone this weekend. I texted him back an ok that

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I was going to be there. I had the night off so it was perfect timing.

At home I ate breakfast and then showered. I slept until four and then ate a light supper. The party wouldn't start until after nine but I knew most of the kids wouldn't show up until ten or so to give us enough time for setting things up.

When I arrived, there were just a few of my classmates there. Hal Carson and I fired up the two grills. We set up the two half barrels of beer as well. A little later some of my other classmates showed up with the brats and some bags of chips.

We kept the music from the boom box low since we were in a public campground and we didn't want any trouble. The last thing we needed was a visit from the local police to spoil our celebration.

It was good to be free of school. We all had a certain sense of relief I guess. No more tests or homework. There was also a bit of uncertainty as to just what might lie ahead of us. For tonight though it was just going to be the comradeship of friends enjoying each others company, music, food and drink.

I wasn't real sure what I wanted to do in life. I had been working the night shift at the bakery for about two years. Living at home I had managed to save some money but I had never found anything I was crazy about doing for my life's work.

For now I wanted to keep on working. I gave my parents money for rent, did my own laundry and ironing, and of course helped out with the lawn care and snow removal in the winter time.

Later on in the evening more classmates arrived as well as some kids from other schools. It wasn't exactly invitation only so to speak.

I hooked up with a girl I had met from another school. We ate a brat, had a beer or two and then we shared a joint. We had sex on my blanket and then I went to sleep.

When I woke up there was a different girl lying next to me. The girl I had been with was gone. It came as quite a surprise as I hadn't seen her at the party before.

She was naked and I didn't recognize her. I walked over to a nearby tree, removed my condom, and peed. I couldn't remember having sex with her and the girl I did have sex with was gone.

I came back to find her crying. She seemed sort of out of it. I helped her up but she pushed me away. I picked up my blanket in one hand, walked over to where my cooler was. I picked it up as well and then headed back to where my car was parked.

She was still sobbing as she got dressed and then walked away from me. I put my stuff in the trunk of my car and left the campground. I wasn't sure what her problem was. I thought maybe the mix of alcohol and marijuana had been too much for her.

The next morning, I returned to the campsite with Hal and we cleaned the place up. He returned the half barrels to the beer store. That night I reported for work as usual. I got busy with the work and didn't really think any more about the party. I completely forgot about the crying girl.

It was almost a month to the day of the party when I was contacted by a detective Barker from the local police department. Apparently one of the girls at the party had been raped and her parents had filed a complaint with the police department.

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Before going down to the station I called Hal to see if he had been contacted too. He said he had. He gave the detective all the information he could and then they took his picture.

Our mutual friend Bob Jacobs had called him about the inquiry as well since he had also talked to the detective and had his picture taken too.

I hadn't heard from Bob yet and I was a bit concerned as I entered the police headquarters building. This was a serious matter and I wanted to help clear it up as soon as possible.

To the best of my knowledge everybody was there by consent and anything that happened was consensual. I couldn't imagine why anyone was going to file a complaint. There had been quite a few kids attending the party but most of them knew each other. There were no strangers that I was aware of.

"Terry Manson to see Detective Clark," I said to the girl at the counter.

She picked up the phone to her right.

"Mr. Manson is here," she said.

After putting the phone down again she pointed to my left.

"Down the hall, first office on your left,"

I walked to the door and she pushed a buzzer as I turned the door knob.

Detective Clark was waiting for me in his office doorway as I approached.

"I'm Detective Clark Terry, please come in and have a seat,"

I followed him into his office and sat down in the chair opposite him.

My pulse increased. I was feeling a bit uncomfortable as he looked at the folder in front of him and then back up at me.

"We are investigating an alleged rape that occurred about a month ago at the Swanson Brothers campground. You were there at a high school graduation party were you not?"

"Yes I was,"

"How many others do you think were there also?"

"Well I really can't say for sure. I would guess somewhere between two and three dozen,"

"Do you know the names of all of the people who showed up?"

"No. There were kids there from at least two other schools, friends of friends, you know,"

The detective nodded and showed me a picture. It was the girl who was crying when I left the party.

"Do you recognize this girl?"

"No. I don't know who she is,"

"Did you have sex with her?"

"No I did not. I did have sex with another girl who was at the party,"

"Okay. Do you know if this girl had sex with anybody at the party?"

"I don't know. There was plenty of beer, brats and marijuana. Some one might have walked into the campground that wasn't known to any of us. It would be pretty hard to tell,"

"I see. One more thing,"

The detective held up a camera and took my picture.

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"Thank you for coming in today Terry. That will be all for now,"

I got up and he followed me out of his office and down the hall to the doorway.

Back home I began to wonder what this was all going to lead to.

Another month went by and I hadn't heard anything from the detective. I called both Bob and Hal and they hadn't heard anything either.

In my mind I knew I hadn't done anything, and I was pretty sure that neither Hal nor Bob had either. With all the kids at the party I wasn't sure how the detective was going to find out anything to make an arrest.

Everyone there was present by consent, knew about the alcohol and marijuana. It was certain that numerous couples would be pairing off to have sex too.

If one of the girls had been raped it certainly wasn't by me or any one of my friends. I had used a condom and I was certain all the other boys would have too. In this day in age you can never be too careful.

Detective Clark looked across his desk at the couple and their attorney in front of him. He could see and fully understand the concerned look that he saw in their faces. He knew the DA was looking at a very difficult case to prove someone's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

"Mr. & Mrs. Grayson I have concluded my investigation. I am very sorry this has happened to your mildly retarded daughter Greta."

"We have interviewed as many people as we could find who were at the party. Some of them stated that they had seen your daughter there but she was a will-

ing participant in the consumption of the food and alcohol that was being served there,”

“At the hospital an exam indicated she was not raped or abused in any way. Apparently she did have consensual sex with one or more boys but we were not able to obtain any DNA evidence that would help us narrow the list of boys down to the ones she had sex with. They must have used condoms,”

“The blood analysis showed traces of marijuana in her system as well as a level of alcohol just below that of being drunk,”

“When we showed your daughter pictures of as many of the boys as we knew were there she couldn’t positively identify any of them. There were apparently three she remembers seeing there but there is no evidence to bring charges against them. I am very sorry but there is nothing more we can do,”

“Thank you, Detective Clark. I guess we will have to handle this in our own way,”

“Let me caution you both Mr. and Mrs. Grayson. Taking the law into your own hands will not undue what happened to your daughter,”

“We have no evidence to implicate any of the boys at the party and your daughter can’t identify any specific boy who might have hurt her. You don’t know for sure who is responsible. You could be placing yourself in danger or if you succeed in taking some sort of revenge on your own both of you could wind up in jail and you still wouldn’t be sure if you punished the right persons,”

The couple and their attorney got up and left the detective’s office without saying another word.

Detective Clark made note of the Grayson’s remarks and then closed the folder in front of him. He

got up from his desk and put it in the filing cabinet behind him. Checking his watch he saw it was four thirty and time to go home.

I was looking forward to the Labor Day Weekend. We never went anywhere just barbecued in the backyard. No traffic jams to fight to and from some wondrous vacation spot where you will find the whole city has come along with you.

Sunday night I got a call from an exasperated Hal. He sounded more than a little concerned.

"Did you hear about Bob?" he asked.

"No. What happened?" I inquired.

"Bob was on his uncle's farm helping clear some land. He was up in a tree using a chain saw and apparently lost his balance. He fell about twelve or fifteen feet but the running chain saw was between his legs when he hit the ground. His body was nearly cut in two when his uncle found him. He bled out before the paramedics could get there. The funeral is day after tomorrow,"

"Good grief. I'll see you at the funeral,"

At the funeral I paid my respects. I knew Bob had always been a careful guy. He was tops in both the woodshop and machine shop classes in high school. I couldn't imagine him being careless with a chain saw or any thing else. It was a horrible way to die that was for sure.

Two more weeks went by.

On my break a co-worker came up to me on break with a very serious look on his face.

"You know Hal Carson don't you?"

"Yes, why do you ask?"

"I thought you might like to know he is in the hospital,"

"What happened?"

"He stopped to help at the scene of a one car roll-over. When he approached the car in the ditch the car burst into flames. He was badly burned from the waist to his knees,"

"Thanks for telling me I will go up to see him,"

The next morning after work I went to the hospital to see Hal. He was drugged with pain killers and barely acknowledged me. I couldn't begin to imagine the pain he must be in despite the drugs that they were giving him. Seeing him like that really shook me up. I left and went home.

A week after he had been discharged from the hospital he went into the back yard with his deer rifle and shot himself. He had been progressing as well as could be expected considering the severity of his burns and the fact that he could have been killed trying to help the people who were trapped in their car.

Like everyone else who knew him I was stunned. At the funeral home I learned that his most severe burns had destroyed his manhood. Apparently he couldn't live with the thought of never again being able to be a man and satisfy a woman.

Loosing two friends in a short period of time was a real shock. Young people think death is for old people. Everybody thinks they will have a long and prosperous life. It is sort of expected that it will only be some time later in life when you are much older that you will get sick and die.

The month of September was coming to an end. The weather got cooler which I liked. The heat of the summer was not for me. September, October and Novem-

ber were my favorite months. Not hot, not cold, and low humidity.

The deaths of my two friends were no longer in my thoughts. People die every day. Death happens to all of us I kept telling my self. Live each day as best you can, whatever happens is going to happen. Don't worry about things you can't control.

It was a Monday morning, the second week of October. I was walking to my car when a black van drove past me in the parking lot and stopped a few feet away. An elderly woman got out and walked up to me.

She had long, straggly grey hair and was wearing some well worn old clothes. There was no expression on her face as she stopped in front of me. I wasn't sure just what to expect so I smiled at her.

"Can I help you ma'am?" I asked.

She didn't answer me as she raised her right arm with a single finger extending from her right hand. She poked me in the chest twice, once over each nipple. Next she raised her left arm and extended a single finger from her left hand over the single finger of her right hand to form an "X". She held her crossed fingers just below my belt line and said two words:

"Girly boy,"

I just stood there stunned and a little bit confused. She turned around and walked back to the black van.

She got back in and the van drove away with me just standing feeling pretty funny.



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After getting in my car I just sat there for a few minutes trying to figure out what had just happened. It made no sense whatsoever. It was just so weird.

Then it hit me that I had neglected to get the license plate number off of the van. That would have been some valuable information if something happened to me in the future.

I started the car and drove home. In the shower I thought back to the death of my two friends wondering if they had experienced something similar. If they had was something like this been a precursor to their death? Had this woman just put a curse or a hex on me?

That seemed to be a remote possibility. The only connection between the three of us was the fact that we had all attended the graduation party. I wondered if the alleged rape of that young girl might possibly be a connection.

The best thing to do was to try and put this crazy thing out of my mind. The world is full of crazies and sooner or later all of us were bound to meet one. I guess today was just my day.

One week later as I was showering I noticed a lot of hair on the bottom of the tub. I rinsed myself off and scooped up several clumps of hair. I deposited them in the toilet and flushed it. After I dried off I noticed several spots along my legs and arms were now hair free.

This had never happened to me before. I had about the average amount body hair for a young man. I always shaved my face before going to work. It seemed that my facial hair was getting a little sparse as well.

I thought maybe it was just nerves. The sudden death of two friends and that encounter with the old

woman and her weird antics could be the root cause of this.

Another week went by. There was now more hair in the bathtub each time I showered. I turned my clothes inside out and found more clumps there too. In the full length mirror on the back of my bedroom door I saw my naked body had many more hair free spots.

My face had fewer whiskers too. I seemed to be shaving less and less facial hair before going to work. I wondered if I contracted some sort of illness or maybe it was a result of something I ate though my diet hadn't changed at all.

I decided to make an appointment with our family doctor. There might be something new going around that nobody had heard about. I didn't want to take a chance by waiting too long to have myself checked out.

Maybe it had been something in the marijuana but if it was it shouldn't have taken this long to show up. After he gave me an exam and ran some tests he stood in front of me and just shook his head.

"There is nothing wrong with you that I can find though your testosterone level is quite low. Since you haven't changed your diet or lifestyle I can't find a reason for this unusual occurrence. Make an appointment two weeks from today and I will check you again,"

I left his office not feeling particularly pleased. If the doctor couldn't find anything wrong just what was I going to do? As a layman I didn't think that there were many options open to me if current medical science wasn't one of them.