The Watching Moor Chapter 1

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Contents

1. The Black Moor Inn 1

Chapter 1
The Black Moor Inn

Dusk's creeping over the Dark Peak like a bastard when I trudge up from the posh git's cottage job. Legs are screaming, hands rough with brick dust—been humping slabs all day for that London twat who calls this shithole a "retreat." Cash in hand, fifty quid stuffed in me jeans, so I ain't moaning too loud. Moor's gone all shadowy out there, wind rattling. The landscape's stretching out endless, heather turning black as the light fades, clouds hanging low. Pub's ahead—The Black Moor Inn—squat stone dive, sign flickering, paint peeling. Looks proper grim, but fuck it, I need a drink.

Shove the door open, wood creaking loud—smells like stale ale and fags, even though you ain't supposed to smoke in here no more. The stink's soaked into the walls, decades of rollies and pints and blokes who ain't seen soap this century. Low beams, sticky floor—every step makes that disgusting ripping sound when me trainers unstick—handful of locals nursing pints like they've got nowhere else to be. Old codger in a flat cap squints at me from the corner, face wrinkled, eyes sharp though, following me. Reckon I'm the youngest in here by twenty years. The yellow light makes everyone look sick.

Barman's a big lad, beard like a hedge, arms thick, slides me a Bell's when I slap a fiver down. "Neat," I mutter—ain't faffing with ice or Coke, not tonight. Bell's is shite whiskey, truth be told, but it's what's on offer and I'm not about to ask for anything fancy in a place like this. Tastes like petrol going down, burns me throat raw, but it's wet and I'm dry. Tenner's still burning a hole from that posh twat's cash—good enough.

Locals clock me—skinny git in muddy trainers, Burnley accent sticking out. The air shifts when I walk in, conversation dipping for a second before resuming, lower now, more guarded. This ain't a tourist trap with hiking maps and craft ales—this is where the Peak hides its proper face. "Fuck 'em," I think, sipping slow. Been grafting since I were sixteen, twenty now—earned this. Fire's going in the corner, flames licking up against sooty bricks, casting long shadows across the worn stone floor. Heat barely reaches where I'm stood.

Table in the corner catches me eye—two lads, one loud, one dead quiet. Loud one's a flash twat—chain glinting under the lights, hair gelled up, laughing too big for the room. Reckon that's what money looks like up here—not London money, but local king cash. Next to him's a bloke who looks carved from stone—short hair, face scarred, pint sat there untouched. Scar runs jagged across his cheek, old and white against tanned skin. His eyes—fuck me—dead as winter. He's spotting me already, eyes cutting through the haze—proper creepy. Dunno why, but they're pulling me in—whiskey's got me bold, or I'm just a daft twat.

I'm halfway through me Bell's when the flash one swaggers up to the bar—chain clinking, boots scuffing the floor. Designer jeans, but not the ones you'd see in Manchester—these are trying too hard. Leans in next to me, all matey-like. "So, you must be working up at the Mayberrys' place, eh?" he says, voice loud, northern but posher than

mine. Breath smells of expensive whiskey and cheap mints. I squint at him—"How'd you know that?" Me spine tingles—small towns, everyone knowing your business before you do.

He laughs, looks around the pub—"Small town, mate—we all know everyone. New face laying bricks? Sticks out." Fair point—Glossop's a speck, and I'm the odd sod. Clock his hands—soft, no calluses, nails clean. Bloke ain't worked manual in his life, that's for sure. He nods at me glass—"What you drinking?" "Bell's," I say, sipping the dregs. He smirks, turns to the barman—"Two Glenfiddichs, proper stuff." Slides me one—amber, smells like money—gestures with his head toward the table. "Come on, join us." I grab the glass—fuck it, free drink—and follow him back.

"I'm Daz," he says, plonking down. "This is Riggs. And you are?" "Callum," I mutter, sipping the Glenfiddich—smooth, burns less. Wood creaks under me as I sit, chair wobbling on uneven legs. Place probably hasn't seen new furniture since the 70s. "Where you from, Callum?" Daz asks, leaning back. "Burnley," I say—"down the road, but far enough." Enough to feel like another world—Burnley's all red brick and industry dying slow, not this wild emptiness.

Daz nods, grinning—"Rough spot, eh? Riggs here's an army boy—proper hard bastard." He claps Riggs on the shoulder—Riggs don't flinch, just sits there, face blank. But something flickers in those dead eyes, just for a second. "Did two tours, didn't ya?" Daz goes on—"Some sandy shithole, cutting throats and all that." Riggs nods once, slow—"Aye." Voice is low, clipped, like he don't waste air. Me spine tingles—he's a psycho, I reckon, but Daz is too pissed to care.

"What kinda mad shit?" I ask, cos the Glenfiddich's got me nosy now. The whiskey's settled warm in me belly, making me feel invincible. Stupid. Daz leans in, eyes glinting—"Tours, mate—sandy places, slitting throats and blowing stuff up. Proper psycho, our Riggs—once

took out a camp single-handed, didn't ya?" Riggs don't blink—"Summat like that." Voice is low, no brag, just fact—makes me skin crawl. His hands are still on the table, steady, nails trimmed neat, a scar across one knuckle white against tanned skin. Killer's hands, no doubt.

"Fuck me," I mutter, sipping again—"and now you're here, babysitting this twat?" Daz howls—"Oi, watch it! I'm the king round here, lad!" Riggs' mouth twitches—closest he's come to a smile, but it's gone quick. "Keeps me busy," he says, staring me down—reckon he'd snap me neck if I pushed it. Behind us, the old codger shuffles to the bar, muttering about the weather turning. Rain's starting, pattering against the small windows, distorting the darkness outside.

We chat more—Daz banging on about the Peaks like he's some lord of the manor. "Got it made up here," he says, grinning—"locals don't grass, see? Been here forever—know every gully, every path." I nod along—Glenfiddich's warming me gut, making me feel sharp. Through the window, the moor's gone pitch black now, rain coming down harder, drumming on the slate roof. Daz's eyes have that glassy look of someone who's been drinking steady all day. "Aye, and them rich twats pay big, eh?" I say, egging him on.

He nods, all smug—"Too right—hiking up Kinder, thinking they're hard, then they come to me. Keep 'em buzzing, keep the cash rolling." Dodgy as fuck—reckon he's dealing, and not just fags. Riggs shifts again—"You talk too much, Daz," he mutters, low and hard—first time he's sounded pissed. The warning's clear, but Daz is too gone to hear it. Daz waves him off—"Chill, Riggs—he's sound, look at him! Fresh meat, up from Burnley—give him a break!" Someone drops a glass behind us, smashing on the stone floor. Nobody moves to clean it up.

"What you shifting, then?" I ask, cocky now—whiskey's got me mouth running. Should know better—Burnley rules, don't ask

what ain't your business—but I'm floating, invincible. Daz leans in close, voice dropping—"Gear, mate. Coke—best in the north. Keeps them posh cunts coming back—hundred quid a pop, easy." Fuck me—that's mad money. The kind that makes me fifty quid brick-laying look like nothing. "Proper job, that," I say, playing it cool—head's spinning already, picturing stacks of cash. The kind of money that could get me and Liv sorted proper, maybe a flat in Manchester, away from all the Burnley shit.

Daz digs in his pocket, pulls a fag packet—flicks it open, taps a line out with his key right there on the table. White dust on scratched wood—quick, no fuss. Riggs' eyes scan the room, making sure nobody's watching. The barman's busy pulling pints, old timers focused on their drinks. "Go on, Callum," he grins—"welcome to the Peaks." I hesitate—ain't done gear in a bit, not since that night with the lads—but the Glenfiddich's buzzing, and I'm in. Snort it fast—fuck me, it's sharp, hits like a slap. Nose burns, throat goes numb, then me head's singing, eyes wide—Daz laughs—"Good, eh? Best up here." Riggs nods, slow—watching me.

Me phone's out before I think—texting the lads back home: "Met some nutter with coke, proper gear." Daft, yeah, but the buzz is pushing me, making me stupid. The coke's exploding through me veins, heart racing, skin tingling. Pub's thinning now—old codgers shuffling off, barman wiping glasses. Rain's hitting harder, wind picking up—can hear it howling through gaps in the ancient window frames. Daz slaps the table—"Fuck it, come back to mine—more gear there. Proper night, eh?" Should say no—Riggs is still staring, and he's off, standing sharp. "Got business," he mutters, boots thudding out the door. Leaves me with a shiver—psycho bastard's not gone far, I know it.

"Aye, alright then," I say, cos me head's singing and I'm in too deep. Maybe this is me chance—get in with the local money, make connections, stop busting me back for fifty quid a day.