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ROOM 101

by Rosalind May

The hotel was minimalist. Vast expanses of polished marble from floor to ceiling reflected back my image from every angle with each step I took.

I wondered if the architect, his name engraved in the stone beside the entrance, lived his own life with little to no fuss. A binary fetish.

Smiling as the perfectly groomed receptionist handed me my room card, I looked at the number. 101. I might have guessed.

I followed the sound of the intermittent tinging and gentle swoosh of the elevator doors. How long would it take to travel one hundred floors I thought as I stepped into the glassed box.

A perfectly polite monochrome voice warned me of the imminent closing of the doors. I stood back as they glided together and gently pushed the button that would take me up to the hundredth floor.

Checking the panel of chrome, I noticed the numbers jumped from twelve to fourteen. How strange that superstition still existed in this twenty-first-century world. I liked the number thirteen, it had always been lucky for me.

My bodiless companion acknowledged my trip was over. It had taken forty-six seconds. I stepped out on to a plush crimson carpet. The architect clearly liked comfortable luxury above ground level.

An ice machine clunked as it birthed newly formed ice cubes from its belly. Beside it a coffee pot hissed in its cradle. I poured myself a cup and, wanting to avail myself of all the amenities placed a handful of ice chips into the top before pulling up the handle of my suitcase to drag it across the thick piled fifty meters to my room.

The faint murmurings of a television show drifted on the soft breeze along the long corridor. Trays of room service meals lay like discarded pieces of a jigsaw puzzle at various doors. The occupants now slumbering in the rooms behind now fed and watered. It reminded me of the animals after feeding time at the zoo. Compliant and docile with their bellies full. Exhibits from across the globe, waiting for the daylight to re-emerge from their dens to the delight of the crowds. We were the human equivalent. This was our zoo. We the exhibits. Every step, every movement, every moment captured on a screen somewhere for someone's amusement.

I placed the coffee cup in the crook of my elbow as I set the key-card in the lock. It clicked, and a little light flicked green signalling entry. I pushed the door open and stepped across the threshold. Room 101 my new home for the next thirty-one days. The white female Caucasian exhibit had arrived.

I heard the soft whirring of the cameras as they focused on my face. I smiled. This would be the easiest money I would ever earn. Part of a more significant social experiment. I could almost hear the psychologists chattering behind the two-way mirrors. I looked forward to surprising them.