

** Excerpt **

The Dragon Claw Inn

Prologue

It's not as if I can easily erase her from my thoughts. For how can I? Laura haunts my thoughts with such exasperating persistence, it's as if she's feasting upon my living spirit, until soon my beating heart will become as still as the blanket of barren snow that now covers her lonely grave.

A few months have passed since Laura's murder. Yet still, her presence with me is just as intense, if not more, as when I last held her warm body in my arms. I know what I must do, what she's encouraging me to do. Her tortured spirit will never rest, nor mine, until I return to the place I've tried desperately to forget. I must go back to The Dragon Claw Inn. God help me....

Chapter One

Dave turned on the windshield wipers on his truck as the snow started to fall. It was coming down so heavily that he could barely see the road before him in the bright reflection of the headlights.

He'd been driving three hours and was becoming tired. He soon felt his eyelids grow heavy, and his mind begin to convince himself to doze off for a few moments.

"Dave..." her soft voice whispered. "Dave."

Hearing the haunting sound of Laura's voice all around him, Dave opened his eyes. He swerved his truck back onto the road just in time before hitting one of the trees along the road.

As his truck straightened out from a skid, his heart pounded quickly. He wondered if she would speak to him again. He deliberately listened for Laura's voice, but all he heard was the repetitious sound of the windshield wipers scraping back and forth against the glass.

These *visits* from her had been occurring intermittently since her death. Laura spoke to him through his dreams, or in times of desperation, but never when he was alert or when he pleaded for her to speak to him. And for that reason, Dave knew Laura was trying to let him know she was not at peace.

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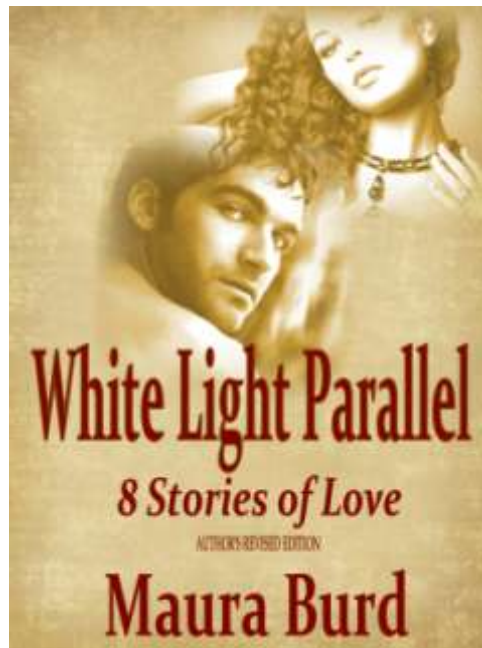
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