

Deadwater Crossing as known by Non Towns Folk

Deadwater Crossing wasn't always a rumor. In its early years, the town was a must stop for westward settlers making the long push into California. The hills around it offered a natural resting point with rolling grasslands, shaded creeks, and enough flat earth to park a wagon train without worrying much. The crossing itself, a shallow bend in the river that cut through the valley, gave the town its name.

At its height, Deadwater bustled with life. Wagons stopped for days at a time to rest their oxen, buy fresh stock, and trade news of the trail. Merchants made tidy profits selling supplies to those bound for the goldfields, and the town square hosted weekly markets that brought together ranchers, drifters, and hopeful settlers. Travelers would later recall the glow of lanterns on porches and the easy sound of music spilling from the saloon as if the town was always waiting with open arms for any newcomer.

But prosperity on the frontier is fragile.

The first signs were small. Travelers began whispering about wagons that never reached their destinations. Lone riders failed to return. A stagecoach vanished between Deadwater and the nearest fort, leaving behind nothing but half-eaten horses. At first, folks blamed outlaws, bands of desperate men had always haunted the hills. But the marshals sent to chase them down stopped riding back.

Rumors spread like brushfire. Ranchers swore their cattle grew restless near the valley, eyes rolling white in their sockets before bolting into the dark hills. Some animals were found later, gutted or gnawed. Others were never found at all. A few men drove their herds wide of Deadwater after that, losing days on the trail just to avoid its shadow.

Then came the stories that no lawman would touch. Families told of strange figures trailing their wagons at dusk, keeping pace just beyond rifle range. Campfires were found smoldering with no sign of the travelers who built them. Ranch hands spoke of screams carried on the night wind, too high and sharp to belong to cattle or coyote. The few who survived claimed the hills themselves seemed to open and swallow men whole.

The law gave up. Outlaws who ran into Deadwater country were left to their fate; none were worth the cost of pursuing. Travelers stopped stopping there. Trade dried up. And those who lived in Deadwater Crossing found themselves cut off, their town slowly turning inward.

After a few years, Deadwater Crossing had become a ghost story. A place mothers warned their children about and old men mentioned over whiskey with a knowing shake of the head. No one agreed on what happened to the folk who called it home. Some said they packed up and fled in the night. Others swore they'd been taken by monsters, by devils, or by the land itself.

Now, Deadwater Crossing exists more as a shadow than a settlement. For those outside, it's a name spoken with unease. It's a set of markers that warn travelers to go no further or risk never coming back. For those who wander past the warnings, be it on accident or purpose only one question remains: what is happening in the town of Deadwater Crossing?