

5 For Heaven, 6 For Hell

A Horror Story

Only five of us went on that staycation. Mark couldn't come because of church. Lisa and Martha were on a shopping spree. Humph. Typical girls. I wasn't gonna go, but Tristan told me I should. "Sitting at that desk all day is gonna kill you, for real." He had said. "Being an animator, making all those *amazing* characters in movies is cool and all, but you really needa take care of your body more." And so, I went, dragging Tristan with me.

It wasn't so bad after all. Anabeth, Trisha, Tristan, Carl, and I had what is as close as you can get to a 'blast' staying at a local hotel for 3 days.

The first day went by fast. We went in the pool a few times, and although I may look "athletic," I truly am not. Swimming was a struggle. We went on a hike in a nearby trail as well, and again, that was a struggle. We played cards, a few childish games like "Spin the Bottle," and we ate. A lot.

On the first night, as we were getting ready to sleep, Tristan, being who he is, suggested we tell ghost stories. He mentioned something about someone lurking in the corridors of this hotel at night- someone other than the workers. We laughed, shrugging it off, and went to bed.

The girls went off to their room. They each had a queen-sized bed to themselves. Us guys had two queens that we had to share between the four of us, which sucked, but it was that or sharing a room with the girls. They were NEVER going to allow *that* to happen. At least I didn't have to sleep with Carl or Tristan who both ADORE taking up the *entire* bed.

But something that happened on the second day- the day before we left- stood out to me. I felt this weird sensation on that day. Like something in my mind... shifted.

It took a few seconds for me to get myself together. Where was I again?

"Hey! James!" Carl's voice snapped me out of my thoughts. He told me I had looked like I'd seen a ghost.

I felt like I had.

Maybe I had.

I don't remember going to the sauna. Frankly, I don't remember much of that morning at all. The last thing I can vividly recall was that peculiar sensation that ran down my spine. Suddenly, it was almost past noon. Three hours later than I'd remembered. I wasn't drunk or anything. I went sober 2 years ago.

As we stepped out of the sauna that night, I felt it again. But this time it was stronger. This time, it felt like my whole *body* shifted. As if something went right through me and my organs slipped out of place for a split second.

Tristan, Carl, and ██████ stared at me. They looked confused. And worried.

The next time I came to my senses, we were at a restaurant. Again, I could not recall getting there. This time, I had lost track of 4 hours. This was getting out of control.

Wait, aren't there supposed to be 5 of us at the table? There's another...

I counted once, twice, a third time-

Anabeth, Trisha, Tristan, Carl, ██████, and me... Nope, seems right.

When I asked the others, they had simply told me I was tired and we should call it a day.

But it didn't stop there. When we reached our hotel room, the door wouldn't open. We tried all our keys, and fumbled for hours, but the lock just wouldn't budge!

Were there any employees working at this hour? Carl went to the front desk a while ago but he hadn't returned. Trisha tried to call him but was instantly thwarted when we realized she had no service. None of us had any.

And then I remember hearing an ear-splitting scream coming from Anabeth. Blood was gushing out of her finger. She had cut herself on the loose hinge. But it was impossible to lose *that* much blood from a cut- right?

Just then, Carl came back. He looked like he'd been running. Breathing heavily, Carl sees Anabeth and says, "What happened now? I left you for *10* minutes, *10 MINUTES*, and someone's bleeding?"

Anabeth, Trisha, Tristan, Carl, ██████, and I look at each other in unison.

Just when nothing could get worse, something passed through me again. This time, almost making me lose my balance. “Wait,” I stutter, “Who are you to get mad? We’ve been waiting for ages! It’s been an *hour* since you left!”

“No, it’s been 5 minutes! It couldn’t have been 10, there’s no way he’s been gone that long. And an *hour*? Have you gone insane?” Tristan says.

Trisha looks almost angry. “It’s been *seconds*! Stop playing with me guys, this is not funny! Did you even go to the lobby, Carl? This really isn’t funny!”

Before Carl could respond, my head began to spin uncontrollably. Then, I start to fall.

Just before my head hits the ground, I remember seeing a white figure hovering over me eerily. Then, everything went black.

I don’t remember what happened next. When I woke up, I was in the hotel bed. I got up to see Trisha wrapping a bandage on Anabeth’s wound. Everyone packed their things, and we left.

I have no idea what happened that night, but I’m just glad all six of us made it out alive.