

THE ELEVATOR TO ELSEWHERE

By Down Home at Dee's



The Elevator That Wasn't There

I've lived in this building for seven years. Seven years of beige hallways, humming fluorescent lights, and the same two elevators—left for odd floors, right for even. I knew every scuff mark on the walls, every squeaky hinge, every faint smell of detergent that lingered after the cleaning crew left. This place was predictable, almost comforting in its monotony.

So when I saw the third elevator, I froze. It was tucked into the far corner of the lobby, where there had always been a blank wall. I was sure of it. A brushed steel door gleamed under the dim light, perfectly polished, as if it had been waiting for me. No sign above it, no floor indicator, no call button. Just... there.

I blinked hard, rubbed my eyes. Still there.

"Excuse me," I said to the security guard at the desk. He looked up from his phone, bored. "Was this here yesterday?"

He frowned. "What?"

"The elevator," I said, pointing. "That one."

His eyes followed my finger, then he shrugged. "Been here as long as I have."

That was impossible. I walked toward it slowly, my footsteps echoing on the marble floor. The closer I got, the stranger it seemed—too perfect, too clean, as if untouched by time or fingerprints. My reflection shimmered on the steel like a ghost.

The doors slid open without a sound. Inside, the elevator was impossibly clean—walls of mirrored glass, a floor of black marble that reflected my shoes like a dark pool. No buttons. No panel. Just an empty box, waiting.

I should have walked away. I should have told myself this was some kind of renovation surprise, a maintenance thing. But curiosity tugged at me like a thread I couldn't ignore.

I stepped in. The doors closed behind me, silent as a held breath.

The Ride

The elevator began to move. I couldn't tell if it was going up or down—there was no sensation of ascent or descent, just a smooth, gliding motion that felt like floating in space. My stomach didn't lurch. My ears didn't pop. It was as if gravity had taken a break.

I looked for a hidden camera, a speaker, anything to explain this. Nothing. Just my reflection staring back at me, pale and wide-eyed.

“Okay,” I whispered, voice trembling. “This is... weird.”

The hum was soft, almost soothing, like distant wind through trees. Time stretched, elastic and uncertain. Seconds felt like minutes. Or hours.

Then, without warning, the motion stopped. The doors slid open.

The Familiar That Wasn't

I stepped out cautiously, heart thudding. At first glance, I was back in my building. Same beige walls. Same humming lights. Same faint smell of detergent.

But something was wrong.

The air felt heavier, like a storm was brewing outside. The lights seemed dimmer, casting longer shadows. And the silence—thicker, almost tangible, as if the building was holding its breath.

I walked to my apartment door, relief bubbling up. Home. I'd laugh about this later.

I slid my key into the lock.

It didn't fit.

I tried again, harder. No use. The key was mine, the door was mine—or it should have been. My name was still on the little brass plate: A. Carter. But the lock rejected me like a stranger.

"Tigger?" I called softly, pressing my ear to the door. No answering bark. No scrabble of paws. Just silence.

Cold dread seeped into my bones.

The Stranger's World

I hurried to the property manager's office. The fluorescent lights buzzed overhead like angry bees. The office door was open, but the desk was manned by someone I'd never seen before—a tall man with silver hair and a crisp navy suit.

"Can I help you?" His voice was polite, distant.

"Yes," I said, forcing calm. "I'm locked out of my apartment. Unit 4B – Antoinette Carter"

He tapped on a sleek tablet, brows knitting. "There's no record of you."

"What? I've lived here for seven years."

"I'm sorry," he said, tone flat. "Unit 4B is occupied by a Ms. Langford."

"That's impossible. The name tag says A. Carter." My voice cracked. "My dog—Tigger—he's inside."

The man's expression didn't change. "We don't allow pets in this building."

I stared at him, words shriveling in my throat. No pets? Tigger had been here since day one. Everyone knew him. Everyone loved him.

I couldn't grasp what was happening. I stumbled back into the hallway, pulse pounding. The elevator—the strange elevator—was gone.

The Search

Hours passed in a blur. I wandered the building, searching for something familiar. Faces looked almost right but not quite—neighbors with different hairstyles, different voices, different lives. The mailroom was in the wrong corner. The vending machine sold brands I'd never heard of. Even the smell was wrong—too sterile, too sharp.

I stepped outside. The street was the same, but the cars were sleeker, quieter. The skyline shimmered with towers I didn't recognize. A billboard flashed an ad for a phone I'd never seen before, its logo alien to me.

I was in my city. But not my city.

The Descent

Days—or what felt like days—passed in a blur of confusion and dread. I stopped counting after the third sunrise, because even the sun seemed wrong here—too pale, too cold, casting shadows that stretched unnaturally long across the streets.

I slept in a cheap motel on the edge of the city, clutching Tigger's leash I found in my pocket like a lifeline. The nylon felt rough against my palm, grounding me in a reality that no longer made sense. Every time I closed my eyes, I saw his face—bright eyes, wagging tail—and woke with a hollow ache in my chest.

I scoured the internet for clues, but even that betrayed me. Familiar websites had different names, different colors, different news. Headlines spoke of events I'd never heard of—wars that never happened, celebrities who didn't exist. History itself seemed rewritten, as if someone had taken the world I knew and rearranged it like a puzzle with missing pieces.

I tried calling friends. Numbers didn't connect. Tried searching for my own name. Nothing. It was as if I had been erased.

The city pulsed with a strange vitality that made my skin prickle, as if every street and shadow was quietly conspiring against me. Cars glided silently down streets, their engines humming like distant bees. Billboards flashed ads for products I couldn't recognize—phones with holographic screens, drinks in colors that defied nature.

Then, one night, as I trudged back to the building for the hundredth time, I saw it.

The elevator.

It stood in the same corner, gleaming like a promise. Its doors were closed, but the steel shimmered under the dim lobby lights, impossibly clean, untouched by time. My breath caught. My legs moved before my mind could protest.

I wasn't sure if I was walking toward salvation or oblivion. But I knew one thing: I couldn't stay here. Not in this world that wore my life like an ill-fitting mask.

The Return

It stood in the same corner, gleaming like a promise. My breath caught. My legs moved before my mind could protest.

The doors slid open.

I stepped inside.

The doors closed, and the elevator began to move—smooth, silent, endless. My heart hammered against my ribs. I whispered Tigger's name like a prayer.

The motion stopped. The doors opened.

Home

I stepped out.

The air smelled like home—warm, faintly of coffee and dog shampoo. The lights hummed their familiar tune. My door waited, brass plate shining: A. Carter.

I slid my key into the lock.

It turned.

Before I could breathe, a bark split the air—a joyous, frantic bark that shattered the silence. Tigger barreled into me, tail wagging like a metronome gone mad, paws scrabbling against my legs. I dropped to my knees, laughing and sobbing all at once, burying my face in his fur.

Home.

I held him tight, heart aching with gratitude, with terror, with wonder. The elevator was gone. Or maybe it had never been there.

But I knew one thing: I would never take this ordinary life for granted again.