The Elevator Voice

Her thumbs moved quickly across the screen as she typed her message, her eyes fixed on her phone as she stepped inside. She barely noticed the soft beep of the elevator doors closing behind her. The building was quiet at this hour, and the light inside the lift felt too bright against the dark hallway outside. She looked up only once to press her floor button, four, and then returned to her screen.

The lights flickered briefly. That was when she noticed the man in the corner through the mirror. He looked like any other IT employee heading home after work. Formal shirt, laptop bag resting on his lap, eyes lowered as if lost in thought. A small chill ran through her. Had she really been so distracted that she hadn't noticed him when she entered?

The elevator moved past level two and then level three before flickering again and coming to a sudden stop.

"Shit," she muttered.

She waited a few seconds, hoping it would start again on its own. When nothing happened, she reached out and pressed the emergency button.

"Hello, is anyone there?" she said, leaning toward the speaker holes above the floor buttons, unsure where the microphone was.

For a moment, there was only faint breathing on the other side. Then a voice answered.

"Hello."

"The lift has stopped," she said quickly. "We are stuck between the third and fourth floor."

Silence followed.

Then the voice asked, "We?"

She froze. It was not confusion. It was a question.

"Ma'am," the voice continued, calm but firm, "I can see you on the camera. There is only you inside."

"What?" she whispered, turning around.

The elevator was empty.

No one stood behind her.

Her heart skipped a beat.

Slowly, she turned back to the mirror.

The man was still there.

Only in the reflection.

She screamed.

In the reflection, the man slowly lifted his head and smiled. It wasn't a friendly smile. It was wrong. Creepy. As he smiled, he opened his laptop bag and began searching for something inside.

"What the fuck!" she screamed as she banged on the elevator door. "Open the door! Help!"

"You are between level three and four," the voice said through the speaker. "You can't get out even if the doors open."

"I can see a man… in the mirror," she cried.

"Relax, ma'am," the voice replied. "He is only in the mirror, right? He can't hurt you."

In the reflection, the man finally found what he was looking for.

A knife.

He slowly pulled it out.

She went silent, breathing hard.

Then the knife slipped from his hand.

It fell out of the mirror. Hit the handrail with a loud clang and dropped onto the floor of the elevator.

The man looked at her through the glass and smiled wider.

"Oops… sorry," he mouthed.

She was too shocked to react. This couldn't be real.

"Take the knife," the voice said. "Take the knife. Fast."

“What?” she cried.

“Grab it,” the voice urged. “Before he does.”

The man in the mirror sat down and reached for it.

His hand began to slowly come out of the mirror as if the mirror was just a layer of water for him.

Slowly. Unnaturally.

“Fuck!” she shouted, “Get me out of here! Help!” banging the doors again.

“Grab it. Now,” the voice said, this time with authority.

She rushed forward. But she was too late.

The man’s hand closed around the knife.

She stumbled back into the corner. “What do I do?” she cried.

“Don’t let him come out. Break the mirror, peel it off the wall” the voice said urgently.

“What?” Her mind could not keep up.

“Break it,” the voice shouted. “Use your phone. Break the mirror and peel it off.”

She lifted her phone and smashed it against the mirror, but nothing happened. She hit it again, harder this time. A crack spread across the surface. On the third strike, the glass began to split and peel away from the wall.

The man growled inside the mirror, his face twisting in anger. He pushed harder, trying to force his way out. His head began to slip through the cracked glass. The cracks tore through his face as he tried to come out of the mirror.

“Break every part of it,” the voice cried. “Pull it off the wall!”

She kicked what she thought was the last loose corner with her boot.

The mirror tore free.

As the mirror peeled off the wall, the man’s head and hands, already halfway out, were cut off and dropped onto the floor with a wet sound surrounded by pieces of glass.

She turned her face away from the severed hand and head on the floor. Her stomach twisted, and she felt like throwing up.

“That was close, ma’am,” the voice said through the speaker.

“Get me out… please, get me out of here,” she cried.

The elevator flickered once more, then began to move downward with a low hum.

“Listen to me very carefully,” the voice said, now serious. “The lift is going to stop at a lower floor. Whatever happens, do not step out.”

His tone was calm, but she could hear fear beneath it.

“Please,” he added softly, “trust me.”

She nodded in disbelief and moved toward the doors, ready to run the moment they opened.

“Ma’am, no!” the voice shouted, this time in anger. “I said stop!”

But she lunged toward the door as it began to open.

The moment she stepped a foot outside the elevator, she saw a shadow waiting in the darkness. It moved closer, almost as if it were calling her.

She froze.

The shadow suddenly reached out and grabbed her wrist, pulling her forward.

She screamed. “No! Let go!”

She kicked and twisted, struggling to pull herself back inside.

The elevator doors began to close, slowly.

The figure tightened its grip and pulled harder, dragging her toward the darkness.

With all her strength, she pushed her hands and feet against the sides of the elevator for leverage and dragged herself back in. The doors closed on the shadow’s hand, and it finally let her go.

“I told you, ma’am… that was close,” the voice said, exhaling slowly, almost satisfied.

“What the hell is happening? Someone help me!” she cried.

“Take a deep breath,” the voice said, softer now. “I’ll get you out of here. You just have to listen.”

“Do you see the light above? You have to remove the panel and reach the clips inside,” the voice instructed.

“What?” she cried. “This makes no sense. Why can’t you just send someone to get me out?”

“That could take time, ma’am,” the voice said, then paused. “And I don’t think you have much left.” His voice had turned cold.

She glanced at the severed hand and head on the floor. Her face twisted with anger and fear.

“Fuck.”

She stood up, barely steady on her feet, and reached toward the ceiling.

“I can’t reach it,” she said, stretching.

“Step on the handrails,” the voice replied.

She climbed onto them. The elevator was narrow enough for her to press her body against the opposite wall and balance on the rail. Her fingers finally touched the light panel.

It was a long, cloudy cover fitted tightly into a thin metal frame. Dust and fine cracks covered its surface.

She tried to pull it down from the edges.

Nothing moved.

“It won’t come off!” she shouted.

“Then break it, ma’am,” the voice said firmly. “You don’t have much time.”

Below her, the severed hand twitched.

“No!” she screamed, her voice breaking.

She punched the light panel. It shattered with a sharp crack.

Shards rained down, slicing into her palm. She cried out but forced herself to keep going, carefully brushing away the broken plastic.

Behind the light was a shallow metal cavity. Loose wires hung down. Above it sat another thin sheet of aluminum, held in place by two spring-loaded clips on either side.

“Now what?” she gasped.

“Look for the clips,” the voice said. “They’re on both sides of the panel. Small metal hooks. Use your nails. Pull them inward.”

She squinted through the darkness and reached inside. Her fingers brushed against cold metal. The clips were sharp and tightly wound, digging into her skin as she tried to bend them back. Her nails scraped against the edges, and pain shot through her fingers. Blood began to seep out, but she kept pulling.

Below her, she heard movement. A slow, wet sound that made her stomach twist. She did not look down. She pulled harder, gritting her teeth, until she finally heard a click.

Her nail snapped off.

She screamed in pain. “Argh! I broke my nail!”

“So what?” the voice replied. There was something sinister in it now. “You have nine more. I would love to see each one snap off.”

“What? Who are you?” she asked, her voice shaking.

“Someone who loves the last flicker of a flame before it goes out,” the voice replied calmly.

“What?” she murmured.

“You sealed your fate the moment you stepped into this elevator,” he said softly. “I’m just giving you a fighting chance. Making it interesting.”

There was a brief pause.

“Quick. Break the top panel. That’s your only way out. You’re running out of time.”

The woman struggled harder to unclip it, using another finger. The left clip finally came loose, partially freeing the panel. She pulled again, and it gave way, falling inside the elevator with a loud clang.

Fresh air rushed in from above. She looked down at where the clip had fallen.

The hand was crawling now, dragging itself slowly toward the wall, the knife still clutched in its fingers. She stared at it in disbelief, her mind refusing to accept what she was seeing.

“Ten… nine… eight…” the voice began counting down.

She stopped trying to unclip the other side and instead used all her strength to punch the panel open.

“Seven… six… five…”

She punched harder. The panel shifted further but refused to come off completely.

“Four… three… two…”

With one final shove, the panel broke free.

She held her breath, unsure if she had made it or if it was already too late. The countdown stopped.

A second passed.

Nothing.

Above her was the dark shaft of the elevator. Loose wires hung from the ceiling, and cold air drifted through the narrow space.

With shaking hands, she reached for her phone and switched on the flashlight.

As she lifted it, the beam reflected off something on the wall. A small piece of mirror was still hanging there.

The glare blinded her for a moment.

When her vision cleared, she looked again.

And froze.

Inside the reflection, the man was still there. Headless. With only one arm.

Her mind went blank.

“One…” the voice said softly, deep satisfaction in its tone.

She raised her phone and smashed it against the mirror, but it was too late. A hand burst out of the shattered glass and wrapped tightly around her neck. She gasped for air, lost her balance, and crashed hard onto the elevator floor.

The arm squeezed harder, cutting off her breath. She kicked and scratched at it, trying desperately to pull it away.

“I told you,” the voice said sharply. “I told you to break every part of the mirror on the wall!”

She thrashed on the floor, clawing at the arm and trying to force her fingers into its grip.

“Use the mirror shards,” the voice urged. “That’s the only way.”

Her vision began to blur. With shaking hands, she grabbed a sharp piece of broken mirror, a jagged triangle shaped like a dagger, and slashed at the fingers, trying to cut them loose. Each strike sliced into her own skin, but she did not stop. She slashed again and again, even as blood ran down her throat.

Still, the hand refused to loosen its grip.

“Stab it,” the voice said. There was a strange eagerness in his tone. “Stab it. That will cut off its fingers.”

She hesitated for a second. Then, using all the strength she had left, she drove the shard forward toward her neck.

The broken glass sank deep.

Warm blood spilled down her dress. She could feel it.

“Well done,” the voice said, almost tasting the words. “You fought beautifully.”

The elevator suddenly shuddered and began to move.

“Ding.”

It stopped. Fourth floor.

The doors creaked open, slow and uneven, like they might get stuck again at any moment.

Outside, a small crowd had gathered after hearing the screams. Some residents, a security guard, and the society secretary stood frozen as they saw the scene inside.

“Oh God…” someone whispered.

The secretary turned to the guard and shouted, “I thought this elevator was shut down for maintenance! Why did you restart it?”

“I didn’t, sir!” the guard replied, his voice shaking. “After the monsoon leakage the electrical system was broken. None of the buttons or the camera. Not even the emergency line. I came running when I heard her scream. I tried to pull her out when the lift stopped, but she wouldn’t come.”

He swallowed hard.

“She was acting strange… like she was afraid of me. You can check the third floor’s CCTV, sir. I tried my best.”

Inside the elevator, the woman lay slumped against the wall. Broken pieces of mirror were scattered across the floor. The ceiling panel was open.

In her hand, she still gripped a large shard of glass. It was buried deep in her own neck.

There was no sign of anyone else inside.