

## **Room 255 at the White House Hotel**

**by**

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It is a myth that black folks don't believe in ghosts or have supernatural interactions. Black people have experienced ghostly encounters since pre-Civil War times. It was the reason I wasn't spooked by the paranormal happenings at the White House Hotel, in Biloxi, Mississippi.

For our one-year anniversary, Yvette wanted to spend the weekend at the White House Hotel. She had become obsessed with the historic lodge after reading an article in *Southern Living* magazine. Located near the town's famed lighthouse, the hotel sits across from the beach. Its antique décor and finishes exude great historical significance. Yet, the place radiates peculiar and mystic vibes.

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Room 255 had the perfect view. Although the sky was dark, the bright casino lights captivated the Mississippi night. The scene was beautiful.

As I continued to stare out the window, I heard a noise and turned around. It was Yvette snoring in the bed. I couldn't believe she had already fallen asleep. I wasn't mad or anything though. I removed my shirt, slipped into some shorts, turned off the lights, and joined her.

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Distorted lyrics from Johnny Cymbal's "Mr. Bass Man" blasted from the clock radio, causing me to awake. "What in the hell is going on? It is six in the morning. We didn't set that alarm last night."

It was dark, but I managed to reach over and fidget with the clock radio until I finally hit the snooze. The music stopped. Although the noise had startled me, Yvette never moved an inch.

I closed my eyes to try to go back to sleep, but I couldn't. My body tossed and turned until I accepted the fact that I wouldn't be able to go back to sleep. With that notion in mind, I headed to the bathroom to attempt an early start on getting ready for the day.

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As I stared at my reflection in the mirror, my eyes focused in on the few strands of gray in my hair. My body had given no obvious signs that I had aged, but my appearance told me otherwise. Still, there was no embarrassment by the matured progression of my hair. In fact, I thought it made my appearance look regal and more professional.

I smiled, turned around, and glanced out the bathroom window. A huge bolt of lightning ignited the dawn sky as if it was the Fourth of July. Like a child, I counted down to when I expected to hear thunder. The count was accurate. The thunder didn't roar too loud though.

When I turned and faced the mirror again, a loud, boisterous thunder shook the hotel. The lights went out, and the bathroom went completely dark. I tried not to worry about it too much. Yet, I was concerned about Yvette and wondered how she had been able to sleep through the storm.

"Yvette?" I called out. "Yvette, are you up? The power has gone out. Are you still asleep?"

She didn't answer though. Her lack of verbal response seemed rather odd. I figured she had to have heard me call out for her. Something must have been wrong, so I had to hurry and get to her.

Although the bathroom was completely dark, I attempted to make my way to the door. "Yvette, are you okay, sweetheart?"

When she didn't respond, I started to panic. Warm sweat oozed from my pores and trickled down my brown, clammy face. I felt dizzy and like I would pass out at any moment. The ordeal completely overwhelmed me, but I had to get to Yvette.

There was a sudden realization when I took another step. Despite all the steps I had already taken, I still hadn't made it to the door yet. It was just a few feet away.

"What in the hell is going on in here?" I stopped walking. "Yvette, I'm coming, baby. Hold on!"

Before I could move, a nauseating odor immersed the bathroom air. The aroma watered my eyes so I closed them. It was one of the worst smells I had ever encountered. The unpleasant scent immediately dropped me to my knees.

When my eyes opened, I was no longer in the bathroom. At that moment, I was in the middle of what appeared to have been a guest room in a hotel. The placard on the door indicated that it was the White House Hotel. The room number was 255.

While I stood there, a woman walked in front of me and over to the bed. The badge on her housekeeper uniform indicated that her name was Lenora. Her face frowned while she changed the sheets.

“Hello,” I said to Lenora. “What are you doing in here?”

She did not respond, which was odd. I stood right next to her, but it was as if she didn’t even see me. I wondered if it was a dream, but it didn’t seem like it. The hardened appearance of Lenora’s caramel-colored face was as real as I had ever seen.

When I attempted to touch her arm, the hotel door burst open. Two young, blonde-headed men walked in. Their clothes were reminiscent of 60’s dress attire.

A few seconds later, a redheaded man entered. The badge on his blue shirt suggested that his name was Terry Dale Rothchild. A small boy accompanied him. White duct tape covered his mouth and an old, tattered rope bounded his tiny, brown hands.

Terry Dale looked at Lenora. “Does this boy belong to you?”

Tears raced down her cheeks. “Yes, sir. That’s my boy. His name is Simmie. Please don’t hurt him, mister. Please.”

Terry Dale rolled his eyes and motioned at the other men. “Get that gal out of here. We’ll deal with her later.”

After the two men ushered Lenora from the room, Terry Dale pushed Simmie face-first onto the bed. “I’m about to teach you a lesson, boy. By the time I’m finished, you won’t ever eavesdrop on another conversation as long as you live. I ought to just chop both of your ears off.”

As much as I wanted to help Simmie, I couldn’t. My body could not move. While I tried to make sense of the situation, Terry Dale removed his thick, brown leather belt. He reached over and turned on the clock radio. The song was Johnny Cymbal’s “Mr. Bass Man.” Terry Dale turned the volume up as loud as it could go.

He looked down at Simmie. “Guess what? I’m about to put you back in your place, boy.”

Without any hesitation, the belt hit Simmie’s back, causing him to jerk forward. Somehow, I felt his pain in my body though. It was as if the belt had hit me instead of him.

Before I could respond, the belt struck Simmie's body again. I felt his agony. I wanted to cry out but it would have been pointless.

I closed my eyes and embraced the little boy's pain. Each strike of the belt was more intense than the first. There was another strike. And another one. And another one. And another one. And another one. The beating continued for what seemed like an hour until Simmie's black body went limp. Terry Dale picked up the lifeless being and carried him into the bathroom. From where I stood, I saw him dispose of the body down the laundry chute.

While I remained frozen in the middle of the room, Terry Dale walked by me. Before he reached the door, a business card fell from his back pocket. Unaware, he opened the door and exited the room. His departure somehow freed my body from the temporary paralysis.

I reached down and picked up the business card. It contained Terry Dale's employment information. He was a law clerk for a Harrison County judge.

After I carefully examined the business card, I balled it up. I took a deep breath and exhaled it. My body shook uncontrollably so I closed my eyes.

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When my eyes opened, Yvette stood over me. "Lincoln, calm down. Stop shaking. Try to relax, babe. You were having a nightmare."

I sat up. "Where am I?"

Yvette secured her pink robe together. "Babe, we are in the room. We are at the White House Hotel. You are still in the bed."

Before I could respond, Johnny Cymbal's "Mr. Bass Man" began to play from the clock radio. For some reason, the music motivated me to open my clenched, left fist. To my surprise, there was an old, balled-up business card in my hand. It belonged to a law clerk by the name of Terry Dale Rothchild.

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While Yvette and I loaded our bags into the car that day, I looked up at the window to room 255. For a few seconds, I saw the apparitions of Simmie and Lenora smiling and waving at me. It was proof that divine intervention had led us to the White House Hotel.

After some time, I shared my experience with one of my colleagues at *The New Orleans Post* newspaper. He was interested in my story, so he investigated the claims. His efforts eventually lead to the discovery of Simmie and Lenora's remains buried deep within a basement wall of the hotel. Subsequently, an old Mississippi judge named Terry Dale Rothchild was indicted for their murders.

Over the years, Yvette and I went on to stay in room 255 at the White House Hotel several more times. We never encountered any supernatural beings either. In fact, our other experiences were quite enjoyable. We will definitely be going back.