

The Rabbit Hole - Excerpt

“Oh, shut up,” Bailey said. “Listen to this. It’s on family vacation review dot com.”

“ . . . ”

“Stop sulking and listen.”

Bailey read the review:

“We just got back from Santa’s Kingdom, and I had to post my review right away. I took the wife and kids, and we camped in Prancer’s Playground. We were supposed to stay for five nights but left after two. It was the worst vacation of my life. The advertisements made it look like a paradise, with a tire swing in a willow tree by the banks of a river. The kids were SO excited to meet Santa and go on the rides. When we got there, though, we found no river, just a big, shadeless, cleared area full of other campers. No tire swing either. On top of that, I found it unnerving to discover that Prancer’s Playground backed right onto the staff living quarters.

I am not an elitist by any means, but I feel that when you are on vacation, they should keep service industry workers away from visitors, especially in a vacation area where I pay top dollar to visit. And speaking of the staff, I am not sure what penitentiary they hired these people from, but they were maniacs. Especially at night. My girls and I expected to roast marshmallows by the campfire, but we were scared to leave our trailer after dark. The park closed at eight o’clock and the staff would party. And I mean PARTY! They spilled over from the staff quarters into our section. I couldn’t even begin to explain to the girls what was happening out there. People all over the park were using marijuana cigarettes. The smell followed us wherever we went. On the

very first night, I tried to lodge a complaint, but there was no one in the gift shop, no one in the security station, no one in the first aid booth, and no one in the main park office (or 'Santa's Lodge,' as they call it). Or so they pretended. Because I saw a light on in Santa's Lodge! I even heard someone in there. It sounded like they were typing. Then, I heard some laughter. It sounded like someone was reciting an incantation and giggling. Yeah, big joke! Big joke on me, huh? I KNOW someone was in there. I banged and banged on the lodge door, but no one answered. And they better check the wiring in that lodge too! Because that light in there dimmed constantly. There's probably faulty wiring all over that place. I shudder to think I even let the kids on those rides. Then, after being unable to locate a single solitary soul responsible for, or in charge of, anything, I gave up. Not wanting to leave my wife and kids alone too much longer, I figured I better hurry back to our trailer. On my way, I stumbled upon the elf who ran the bumper cars and Mrs. Claus. Well, I am not going to elaborate on what I witnessed because this is a site for families, but I'll just say I saw two full moons that night and neither of them was in the sky. If you get my drift. Then I heard someone shouting. I couldn't make it out at first, but it soon became clear. He was shouting again and again, 'A man's gonna die tonight, and I'm gonna kill him.' Over and over and over. I ran back and locked the trailer door and didn't open it until the morning. First thing, while my wife got breakfast together, I went back to the lodge and found a man named Mr. Marbles. Apparently, he is the manager of the place (or 'Chief Elf,' as they call him), although you would hardly know it. I told him about the murderous threats I heard. Mr. Marbles told me, 'Don't worry, that's just Billy Joel. He's harmless.' Apparently, one of the grounds crew calls himself Billy Joel and screams like that all night long, 'A man's gonna die tonight, and I'm gonna kill him.' And that was only our first night. I didn't expect it to get any worse! My wife suggested we just pack up and go home, but I told her I paid for a fun

vacation, and I was hellbent and determined to get my money's worth. I don't spend all day selling insurance only to get cheated out of my hard-earned money. Surely, the park itself was going to be worth it. Boy, was I wrong! We didn't even make it to the long weekend. And if you think that's bad. There's all this: I am pretty sure I got pink eye from the pool; one of the bumper boats caught on fire; the splash pad was yellow with urine; and to top it off, on the day we cut our losses and left, we noticed an inordinate amount of dog feces. It was like landmines all over the park! I hesitate to say this, but I feel I must warn people: my groin is itchy. My friend is a doctor. He says it sounds like crabs! HOW does that even happen? Santa's Kingdom. Ha. More like Satan's Kingdom. I'll leave you with six words to describe it and pardon my language, but THIS PLACE IS A SHIT-HOLE!"

Boba was standing on the picnic table, all four feet, eating the french fries.

"What?" Jimmy asked. "Why are you staring at me like that?"

"Is this where you're taking me?" Bailey asked. "Santa's Kingdom?"