

It's just a Carnival

The Break-in

In a city that nobody cared about, in a section that nobody visited, stood a carnival that had long since fallen into disuse. The once pleasant façade had rusted and faded from the brutal assault of the elements. Graffiti obscured the walls, and trash covered the grounds. Shattered lamps and broken bulbs decorated the pathways and offered little light for those brave enough to venture beyond the gates.

Once upon a time, the Carnival had been a pillar of the community, bringing joy and happiness to all that crossed her threshold. But as the years went on, people began to disappear. Though slight, the number of those who entered the park was never the same as those who left at night. Slowly the number increased. The thing within the carnival that snatched the adults grew eager and lazy, drawing the town - and the polices' - attention.

No proof was ever found, and the police could do nothing without it.

So, the citizens took justice into their own hands.

The townspeople moved through the Carnival like a cyclone, destroying everything they touched. The gates of the Carnival were forced to close, and the disappearances ceased. The town's citizens urged for the Carnival to be torn down, but nobody ever moved forward with the demolition. So, the Carnival sat like a bad dream, always on the edge of people's memory. It became known as a place where teens would come to blow off steam - or blow one another. But rumors spread about what continued to live within the Carnival and how it only came out only between midnight and sunrise. Nobody seemed to believe the stories, but none were brave enough to tempt fate or the THING that still crept through the carnival. Hungry and eager for its next round of people.

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"Are you going to open the door? Or am I just gonna sit in the back of the rest of the evening?" A dark-skinned male yelled from inside a blue sedan while his three friends walked towards a black jeep as it approached the deserted parking lot. The tallest of the group pointed his keys towards the blue car and double-clicked the key fob.

Beep Beep

The doors unlocked. The male inside the car reached for the handle but was not quick enough to beat his friend.

Beep Beep

The doors locked once again.

"Fuckin' really! Just unlock the damn door! I hate that you have fucking child locks on the back doors, Devin!" The man inside the car yelled as his friends snickered. "Stop being a dick and open the damn door?" He cursed - not amused by his friend's antics.

"Don't be such a fag, Brett; I was just messing around," Devin laughed as he held the keys up once again and clicked it twice.

Beep Beep

The car doors unlocked once more, and Brett waited. He held his hand, waiting to see if the game would continue, but Devin did not lock the door again. But, much to Brett's surprise, Devin tucked the keys into his pocket, and Devin kicked open the door.

"About time . . . asshole," Brett said as he exited the car and rushed towards his friends as the jeep rolled to a stop.

Four more men jumped and slid from the black jeep, and all gathered together. The eight friends welcomed one another with aggressive high-fives, playful punches, and the occasional slap on the ass.

"Okay, guys, here's the plan. My brother told me there was a break in the fence around the back near a large cement building, and we should all be able to fit through it." The friends nodded. "Well, maybe not tubs over there, but if we grease him up, I bet we can force him through."

Brett reached for the largest friend's gut and gave it a rough shake. The round belly jiggled underneath his shirt, bouncing partially free from the underneath.

"Fuck off, Devin! And get off me, Brett," the overweight man said as he playfully shoved Brett off but not before Brett swiped at one of his heavy moobs.

"You know I'm just kidding, Bryan," Devin laughed. "He also said, no guards are patrolling nowadays, so we should all be fine to roam around as much as we want." The group of friends gave a resounding yes of excitement at the thought of being able to have the run of the place. "I also wanna say that you guys are the best friends a man could ask for. I know this isn't the typical bachelor party, but I hope we can make some memories that will get me through the next 30 years of marriage."

"Awwwwwww," a sizeable muscled guy said mockingly. "That's so sweet." The man dabbed the corner of his eyes, faking a tear. "I think I'm gonna hurl."

"Fuck off, Kyle, let me be sappy for one moment, and then we can go break some shit. But for real guys, I gotta ask you one thing?" Devin asked, dropping his voice. "Who are we?" Devin shouted!

"DELTA KI!" The group of men bellowed together.

"WHO ARE WE?" Devin yelled once again.

"DELTA KI!" They all shouted together once again.

“Now, let’s go fuck some shit up!” Devin shouted one last time to the applause of his many friends.

The eight men gathered their belongings and began to trek across the large empty parking lot. Each man cast their eyes towards the open fairgrounds that stretched towards the night sky, the large attractions, the desolate buildings, the big cage that surrounded the park. Every inch of it was as off-putting as the next, but they were not fearful of the amusement park or the rumors surrounding it.

Devin led the group of men around the edge of the fence, walking off the paved pathway and into the overgrown grass. They walked until they came to the spot that Devin’s brother had described. And just as he had said, there was a break in the chain-link wall. Devin pulled back on the fence, expanding on the hole the fence and the building.

“Ladies first,” Devin announced. All his friends chuckled at the joke as two of them pushed a guy in a black polo forward. “Travis, if you would,” Devin offered the open gate with a slight bow.

“Ha. Ha. Ha. SOOOO funny.” The man laughed. “Don’t be jealous cause I get more ass than all of you,” the guy said as he crossed through the hole in the fence, sliding easily through with his slim frame.

“He’s not lying,” Devin agreed. “Y’all didn’t have to share a room with him freshman year. He literally had a rotating door of men coming in the room. There were SEVERAL nights when I slept at a table at the library.” Travis chuckled from the other side of the fence as if he remembered those long college nights.

One at a time, each of the friends passed through the gap while Devin brought up the rear. The fence clang shut behind Devin as he slid down the tight alleyway between the two buildings. The eight crept along the large cement building until they reached the walkway that encircled the park. The pathway sprouted off into several different directions, offering multiple possibilities for them to explore. They separated slightly and wandered off into different directions, looking for a sign or a map of where to go first. Several walked away from the building they walked from, while two stayed nearby and attempted to read the sign that sat unlit.

“Sean, does that say what I think it says?” Kyle asked, squinting his eyes as he tried to read the broken signage on the front of the building.

“Jesus Christ! It looks like it says freak show. Aren’t those illegal?” He asked.

“Your guess is as good as mine,” Kyle said as he shrugged his well-muscled shoulders. He looked at the wall and saw faded posters of overly muscular men, bearded ladies, and someone called Batboy. There was no picture for the last one, but Kyle shivered at the thought.

“Hey, guys over here!” Shouted one of the guys with a large beard. Kyle and Sean both turned away from the large building and walked towards their shouting friend.

“Whacha find Paul?” Kyle called out as the friends gathered back together and stared at the wood board covered in ivy. Paul tugged at the plants, uncovering a faded picture of the park beneath the plants.

“Looks like it is a map of the park. Well, what use to be a map of the park,” Paul said as he began to shine the light off his phone, illuminating the map for all to see. “Looks like this is where we are,” Paul said as he pointed to a faded red X on the map. “This must be the Freak Show, that way is the game area, over there are more rides, and this way must be where how to get to the dining area,” Paul instructed as he pointed in multiple different areas. “Devin, where do you want to explore first? I personally think we should -”

“Whose looking to play with me tonight?” Shouted a high-pitched voice from the darkness. The question cut through the relatively quiet night like a knife.

“Shit, dude, I thought you said that this place wasn’t patrolled anymore?” Kyle hissed as the eight squatted down behind the sign and a collection of trash cans that sat beside the map. “Fuck Paul! Turn off your god damn light!”

“Sorry,” Paul whispered as he turned the bright light off.

“I know you’re there,” the voice shouted again. A burst of crazed laughter and the soft jingle of bells followed its voice. The sound echoed off the buildings and circled the friends, growing closer with every syllable. Kyle tapped several of them and pointed off into the distance. A shadowed form stumbled closer to them. The dark silhouette appeared to be shaped like a man but walked as if its body contained dozens of more joints, bending and dipping awkwardly with every step. As if each step was a pain that it must endure.

“Shit, guys, I can’t get arrested for trespassing when I am supposed to be getting married tomorrow!” Devin angrily whispered to the group.

“I can see you behind the trash cans,” the figure spoke. Its whispered admission felt as if it was spoken into the men’s ears. Each of the frat boys could feel the stranger’s breath on their necks as it spoke again. “I am so excited for a new friend to play with!” Even as they watched it approach, they could each feel the figure beside them, laughing louder with every step, jiggling louder with every movement. The figure paused underneath a broken lamppost and raised its arm. A lamp came to life, casting a harsh white light across the surrounding area and revealing the thing that stood beneath it.

“It’s a fucking clown?!?” The Bryan exclaimed quietly. The smeared white face paint and bright red lips sent chills down their spines as the clown smiled at them. He stared as if he saw each pair of eyes and did not want to break contact with any of them. His eyes moved across each one of them, somehow knowing exactly where they stood. The oversized black and white polka-dotted costume was covered in stains and patches. His body was overwhelmed by the heavy fabric of the outfit, but the clown did not seem to care. He bounced twice, and the bells that decorated the trim jingled in response. He raised his hands and clapped twice, turning the light off, and approached once more.

“We need to leave,” Kyle said as he looked towards the fence. “We can make a run for the fence?”

“We don’t have time for everyone to get through it. The alley is too narrow, and I don’t think that clown is looking to play games.” Devin looked back to the clown as he danced and pranced within the darkness towards them. “We need to split up. Try and stay together and get back to the car by three. Got it?” Devin said, taking control of the situation. “Brett and Michael, you too head towards the other rides. Bryan and I will head towards the game area with Travis and Paul. You two head towards the children's side of the area, and we will go to the opposite. Kyle and Sean try and hide in the freak show building behind us. Understand?” The group nodded. “Stay safe, brothers.”

“Don’t you guys want to play?” The clown whined. The friends looked back to him and saw him just yards away from them, dancing and humming madly to himself.

“GO!” Devin shouted as he pushed the trash cans in the direction of the creepy clown, hoping to distract him with the loud noise. The friends ran away within their respective groups while the clown watched the friends run away into the dark carnival.

“I haven’t had eight playthings in a long time,” the clown whispered as a cruel smile grew on his white face. The dry white paint cracked along his face, showing scars and wounds hidden beneath the thick face paint. He clapped his hands excitedly as he considered what to do next. “I’ll have to make to find each of them before the night is over!” The clown laughed as he danced around the trashcans before picking each one up and placing them back into their appropriate spot. “Now, where do I start first?”