

DARK CARNIVAL

A STORY OF HORROR AND RETRIBUTION

FICTION BY
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What Happens at the Carnival Stays at the Carnival...

Prologue

The clown was sweating buckets. Man, it was bitchin' hot today. He wiped his brow with his shirt sleeve, not caring that he was smearing his awful makeup. The show was over for the night anyway, but he still had one last thing to do before he could call it quits. The pig needed to eat, and it was absolutely his favorite part of the day. He crept into the tent at the back of the fairgrounds...the one that was closed off to the public.

The clown laughed without humor – he was certain this was one attraction that local city folks wouldn't want to see. It was his own personal show, after all. He shifted the heavy slop bucket to one hand as he approached the fenced off muddy area where his little piggy waited.

"Dinner time, piggy pig. Come an' get it! I know you gotta be hungry, little piggy! You haven't eaten in three days, now. Let's not have any trouble outta you tonight..." the clown threatened as he tossed the slop over the side of the fence.

He chuckled and watched with delight as his pet stared at him and made a move for the disgusting food he'd just tossed down on the ground.

"I'm not hungry," the girl said as she watched the clown watching her. She knew her words would make him angry, and she was right. She saw the rage building up inside of him. He was quite frightening to her, especially the way he looked now with his horrid makeup smeared across his face. He was much worse than any creepy clown out of a horror movie, in her opinion.

"I said eat, and I meant it. C'mon now...here piggy, piggy. Come and get your slop. I know you're a hungry piggy, aren't you? Tell me you're hungry, you worthless bitch! Tell me

what I want to hear!” The clown was nearly shouting now, fury plain in his eyes.

The morbidly obese girl tried futilely to shuffle to her feet. She was completely naked, filthy from head to toe, and on the edge of a mental breakdown. She’d lost count of how long she’d been held captive by the deranged clown, but she thought it had been at least four or five months, maybe more. It had been weeks since she’d had a bath or slept in a bed. He’d moved her to this awful makeshift sty once he was certain she couldn’t escape. He’d made sure that she couldn’t even walk, so trying to run away was out of the question. Screaming didn’t help...no one ever came for her but him.

She knew why he was doing this to her, and she hated him even more for it, but she was completely at his mercy. She knew what she had to do.

“I won’t keep waiting, and you know what happens if you piss me off!” the clown said through his teeth.

The girl was about to break down and cry again, but she didn’t want to give him the satisfaction. She was a broken woman...that much was clear. She’d give him what he wanted so he’d maybe leave her alone tonight. She didn’t believe she could handle him on top of her right now.

“Yes, I’m hungry,” she whispered.

“And?” he prompted.

“I’m a fat, worthless bitch.”

“Good piggy...you get to live another day.”

“I wish you’d just kill me and get it over with already!” she snapped back at him, losing the little bit of self-control she had left. Tears welled up in her eyes but she fought them back.

“I know you do, piggy, but that’s why you’re still alive. I’m going to break you...in every way imaginable. The day you truly no longer care whether you live or die will be the day I no longer have a use for you.”

The clown watched as his little pet leaned down and stuck her face in the grotesque food he’d brought for her. She ate it quickly, making little oinking noises just the way he liked as she fed.

He was proud of his accomplishments with his little piggy. He'd been able to force her to eat in the beginning when she still had some resistance in her, and she had to have gained more than 100 pounds in the last few months. He wanted to make sure that no one would ever want her again...ever. He wasn't being cruel, really. He was merely returning the favor.

He patted the girl on the head before he left the tent for the night. Tomorrow was going to be another long, hot day. God, he hated his life. But, as bad as his was, he knew *hers* was worse, and that thought made him smile.

CHAPTER 1

Benton “Ben” Stokes (aka “Junior”)

“I’m sorry, Benton, but I’m afraid we don’t have any other choice at this time. The Davenports have agreed to drop all charges against you – and the school – provided you meet their requirements. I’m sure you can understand the predicament we’re in here.”

I looked around the room at the faces staring at me. They were professional enough, but I could see their barely contained disgust just below the surface. What a crock of shit.

“Richard, this is bullshit! You know damn well that all of this is completely preposterous!” I shouted, thumping my fist on the large conference table.

“I want to believe you, Ben, but this is Davina Davenport we’re talking about. Her father is one of the largest benefactors of this university. What would you have me do? Ignore him? The Franklin police are one hundred percent on his side. I suggest you do as he asks, or you’ll likely be facing prison time. It’s your word against hers, and her family has enough influence to buy and sell the judge *and* the jury,” Richard said.

I sighed and slouched in my chair. I had no idea this week was going to turn out quite so bad. I was so fucking angry I could hardly keep it contained. I couldn’t even look at any of them right now. The whole damn administrative staff seemed to be here to watch me squirm. People I thought were my co-workers and friends. Apparently not.

“Mr. Stokes, the police have solid eye-witness accounts that put you at Davina’s apartment, plus more students saying they’ve seen you two alone together. It’s enough to make the whole situation look a little...fishy,” Bob Henson said snidely. I always hated that prick.

“Mr. Henson, with all due respect, they’ve got nothing!

Even my lawyer says so, and I don't think he'd sugarcoat anything for me at this point," I exclaimed, coming to my defense yet again.

"Look, I think I need to lay it out for you, Ben," Richard said a bit condescendingly. "Innocent or not, you're going to have this mark on your record now. You'll never have another teaching job again...at least not at any respectable institution. These are serious charges, and we can't simply ignore them. It's not just about you or Davina. We have a whole campus full of students that we need to think about. Do you think the parents will be happy once all of this hits the news? They won't stand for it, and you know it. There's nothing we can do, and that's our final decision on the matter." Richard was staring at me, waiting for a response. I wanted to punch him right in the jaw.

"Fine. You want my resignation? You've got it. You can say it however you'd like in hopes of making yourself feel better about this, but you know damn well this is fucked up and that I've done nothing wrong. But you don't care, do you? All you're worried about is your own paychecks," I vented as I stood up abruptly, knocking my chair over in the process.

I didn't bother waiting for another lecture before I stormed out of the room. The anger was coursing through my veins and it was a very good thing that *Davina* wasn't standing in front of me right now. The lying little cunt. She was going to get hers someday.

I practically ran to my car and sped out of the parking lot. I didn't know what to do now. My whole career was toast...just like that. I had no idea what the next step was. Never in a million years did I think I'd be facing this kind of shit...this wasn't supposed to happen in real life – only movies.

I don't even remember how I ended up at the bar, but that's where I found myself. I fueled my hatred for the Davenport family as I chugged beer after beer. I was aware at some point that the bartender was ushering me into a cab, and that it was very late. I must have eventually made it home somehow, because the next morning I woke up on the floor next to my couch.

The shrill ring of the phone finally managed to pull me from the deep sleep I was in. It was my lawyer, and he needed to see me. I wasn't prepared to deal with this shit. I was at the breaking point and I felt I could literally snap at any moment. After promising to meet the next morning, I hung up the phone and rolled to my side, letting my eyes close in hopes of passing out again. Yet, all I could see was her face every single time I closed my eyes. Davina...the bitch who ruined my life.

The next morning was...rough. I must have stared at myself in the bathroom mirror for at least half an hour before I could find the motivation to get ready and leave the house. I hardly recognized my own reflection. Davina had really done a number on me.

A few weeks ago, I could have been considered handsome to some people. Right at six feet tall, I had a strong, slightly muscular build. I'd inherited a faintly olive complexion from my mother, so I always looked like I'd been tanning. I'd also inherited her vivid green eyes and her dark, glossy black hair, which I wore a little bit longer than most men would have. I almost had enough there for a small ponytail.

I'd always gotten plenty of attention from women...most notably from my female college students, though I'd never once responded to such attention, despite what others now thought of me...thanks to Davina.

Now, as I looked in the mirror, my appearance was haggard. Deep circles under my eyes made it seem as if I hadn't slept in days, which wasn't too far from the truth...last night notwithstanding. My hair was unruly and my eyes, normally bright and clear, seemed clouded and distant today. I sighed and turned away, not wanting to waste any more time thinking about what she'd done to me.

"Ben, it's good to see you again," Lewis Whitman said with a polite smile as I entered his office.

"Lewis," I nodded, shaking his hand before I took a seat.

"I've called you in here to give you some good news. It seems Ashford Davenport has made good on his promise

and all formal charges have been dropped.”

I tried to find some sort of excitement at this, but I just felt more hostile. How kind of that pretentious asshole to drop the charges against me...considering those charges were completely false and he damn well knew it.

“Look, I told you they wouldn’t have a case. There wasn’t enough evidence against you. They tried to scare you into capitulating to their demands and, unfortunately, it worked. I think there’s every possibility that you could get your record expunged if you wanted to explore that option. I’m afraid, though, that it might get a bit pricey. The decision is completely up to you.”

I frowned as Lewis continued to talk. I wasn’t really listening anymore, because I knew I had no chance of clearing my name. I had already spent most of my savings on his fees and for bail. There was no way I was going to be able to afford even more fees to retain him. Besides, who knew when, or if, I was ever going to find another job, so what little money I had left was going to have to last.

“I’ll let you know what I decide,” I finally said, realizing that he was waiting for a response.

“I understand, Ben. Just let me know what you want to do and I’ll make it happen. Call me if you need anything. I’ll make sure I follow up with the authorities to make sure everything is settled.”

As expected, the whole fiasco turned into a media nightmare. The next few weeks were pure hell and because of this, I practically became a hermit. I was too afraid to leave my house in fear of being accosted by reporters hoping to get a few words out of me. I quickly noticed that all of my colleagues and so-called friends from the university no longer had anything to do with me, despite my desperate attempts to stay connected with them. I was apparently permanently shunned because of *her*...Davina Davenport.

Days bled into weeks, which turned into months. I made the best of my situation, but it was pretty damn bleak. I had to sell my house, and I was damn lucky to have actually made a few dollars by doing so. I moved to a different city – Westbrook which was an hour away from Franklin – into a

tiny studio apartment, and spent money only when necessary. I had about a year's worth of salary saved up and needed to make it last as long as possible.

Everything seemed to be going okay for a while. The media had finally gotten bored with me after I left, and I was able to get a job as a night worker at one of the local warehouses close to my new apartment. It was not the kind of work I was used to, after being a professor for years, but I was happy to have money coming in. No one there seemed to care what happened between me and Davina, and I was grateful for that.

Just when I was able to get through a day or two without thinking about her, it happened. She started appearing in all of the local newspapers, her face plastered on the front page for all to see. Davina Davenport...engaged to one of the wealthiest bachelors in Franklin...but besides her engagement, the newspapers were reporting that she was expected to graduate at the top of her class. The media was turning it into a sort of happy ending story. Davina Davenport...overcoming the odds and succeeding at school, despite what happened to her by her heinous professor. Or what she *claimed* happened to her. What a coincidence that Davina suddenly had such stellar grades...the bitch!

It was too much for me to handle, seeing her every time I turned around. Then the reporters found me again and started hounding me, wanting to know what I thought of Davina's success. That's when the drinking began. It didn't take long for that to spiral out of control, and I lost my job. After that, I got into the heavier shit...anything to keep me unaware of all the bullshit that was happening around me. It seemed to work for a while, but after a couple of DUI stops and one bad car accident, I thought I'd hit rock bottom. I was wrong.

Rock bottom came soon enough, though. I was facing serious jail time for yet another DUI, and the only thing I could do to get out of it was to head to rehab. Unfortunately, I was tapped out and had no way to pay for the program. I had pretty much accepted that I was going to be spending the next six months behind bars. Then, the unthinkable

happened.

“Right in here, Mr. Stokes,” I heard. I thought I was hallucinating when I saw him walk into the room. A police officer had brought him back to the holding cell where I’d slept last night. His cold eyes glared at me from the other side of the bars, and I was speechless. He hadn’t changed one bit since I’d seen him last.

Arthur Stokes, or Artie as he went by...my father. His dirty blond hair was cropped short, his face was clean shaven, and his dark brown eyes were boring into mine. At just over six feet tall, he wasn’t much bigger than I was, but he still had a way of making me feel like a child. He was wearing his favorite outfit – dark blue jeans and a long-sleeved flannel shirt.

“Well, looks like you’re in a bit of a pickle, eh?” His voice was so familiar, even after all these years.

“It would seem so,” I replied, not entirely sure he was really here.

“I got a call...letting me know you were in trouble. What the hell’s going on with you, Junior?” he barked.

I cringed at the name, not having been called that since I last saw him all those years ago when I left for college.

“Dad, what are you doing here?” I asked.

“I’m here to get you out of this big fucking mess you’re in. Any other questions?” he snapped, still glaring at me.

That’s how it all began...my immersion back into the world I’d left behind so many years ago...the world I swore I’d never go back to, no matter what.

My father paid for my sixty day stay in rehab, and when I got out he was waiting for me. The condition for him spending his hard-earned money on me was that I’d come back to the family business and stay for good this time.

After all, as he pointed out, it was obvious that running away from him did me no good at all, and I was starting to believe him.

After one painfully long and awkward car ride, I was back home...well, what was considered home, anyway. I’d had sixty days to prepare for this moment, but I still wasn’t sure that I could do this.

We parked in the back of the large gravel lot, and I stared for a while at the family business...the carnival. The tents and RVs were all set up in the back, which mostly housed the workers, but a few were for the "attractions." Farther towards the front of the lot were the rides and the various booths. I didn't need to go exploring to reacquaint myself with any of it...nothing looked like it had changed over the years. I even recognized my dad's RV parked in the back...same as always.

I said goodbye to this lifestyle long ago, and I did not want to have any part of it. It was depressing to be here. Unfortunately, life's a bitch and my future kind of got decided for me.

"C'mon...I'll show you around...introduce you to the new faces. We've got a lot of work to do before opening up tonight," my dad grumbled at me as he climbed out of the car and stomped off. He was clearly not happy about having me here. Well, the feeling was mutual.

I braced myself, expecting all of my old friends and acquaintances to give me a hard time for all that had happened to me in the last year, but surprisingly, I was welcomed back with open arms.

"Hey there, Junior! Great to see you again, buddy!" Marco was the first to spot me, and he shook my hand enthusiastically. Marco had been with my dad since the very beginning, and I was actually glad to see him. He looked the same as always...dark, unruly shoulder-length hair, scruffy beard, deeply tanned skin, piercing blue eyes and a crooked smile. He was wearing his signature blue overalls, which were dirty from setting up the rides, no doubt.

For the next two hours, I wandered around the carnival grounds, reconnecting with old friends, and meeting the newcomers. For some strange reason, I began to feel a little bit better.

That night, I watched as everyone took their places and put on a show for the local townspeople. I, at my father's request, resumed my old position as head bookkeeper. It wasn't really a challenging job, but it was better than operating the rides or running one of the game booths. Plus I

was allowed to stay inside the RV most of the time, away from the public eye.

Before I knew it, I was back in the swing of things and life skipped along in record time. It had been nearly three months since I'd rejoined my carnival family, and thoughts of Davina had dropped off significantly. My dad even seemed to be a little bit more enthusiastic to have me around once again. I lost count of how many towns we'd moved around to in the short time I'd been back, but none of them were remarkable...they all seemed the same to me. As we set up for our first night in this new town – Danville – I expected more of the same. As it would turn out, this sleepy little town would be life-altering for me...I just didn't know it yet.

“Look, Junior, I don't have a choice, okay? You know how bad Frank was...we got complaints on him in nearly every town! I didn't have a choice!” Artie grumbled at me.

I wasn't going to be persuaded. There was no way in hell I was going to do this...no way.

“Absolutely not,” I insisted once again.

Artie was so mad that I instinctively took a step back, out of habit. He had been a definite “hands-on” kind of parent, and I'd had many a blackened eye to prove it when I was growing up. I wasn't sure if he knew I was too old to smack around anymore, or that I might actually hit back.

“Look, here...this carnival is yours, just as much as it is mine, and that means you do whatever you gotta do to keep it going, you got it?” Artie shouted, pointing a finger at me accusingly.

“I don't know the first damn thing about it!” I shouted back.

“You don't have to! Do you think Frank was some kind of expert? He was a fucking dishwasher before he came here! You just put the costume on, walk around with a fake damn smile, and be nice to the brats!”

A carnie clown...could there have been a worse job that Artie could have saddle me with? Frank had been known for his “secret” drinking during working hours, and quite often we'd had complaints about him being so stinking drunk that he was scaring the kids. My dad finally let him go today, but

he didn't have a replacement and everyone else already had a job to do. Now, it was going to be up to me, it seemed...if Artie had his way.

"Please don't make me do this..." I practically begged.

"Look, there's no one else! We're already shorthanded because of the damn flu we picked up two cities back...so I suggest you suck it up and deal with it. I will find a replacement as soon as I can but we can't go without the damn clown. Go get the stuff from Frank's trailer and get ready. Marion will help you with the makeup," Artie said before storming out of the RV.

Fucking great...just what I needed to deal with! This was going to be horrific, I could tell. I sighed loudly and stomped off towards Frank's RV. One night...I could get through one night. I'd help Artie find a replacement ASAP, and then I could put this shit behind me.

* * * * *

Kelsey O'Neil

"Are you serious? Please tell me you're joking, June," I griped, staring at my best friend.

"I'm completely serious, Kelsey! Why don't you want to go? It will be fun, I promise!"

"The carnival? There's no way in hell I'm going there! They creep me out!"

"Please, please, please? I don't want to go alone, but Jared is going to be there and he wanted me to go out tonight. I think it's more of a group thing, but I'm not going to complain," June admitted as she swiftly changed her clothes, taking off her work uniform.

"Fine, but you owe me...big time," I reluctantly caved in, knowing I would hate every minute of tonight.

"You're the best, Kelsey!"

“I know...pick me up in an hour...I’ve got to change and let my mom know I’m going out,” I grumbled as I left June’s bedroom. I thought we were going to be going to the movies tonight, not hanging out at the weird, creepy carnival.

As I drove the short distance back home, I tried not to sulk. I wanted to spend as much time as I could with June this summer before I left for college. Who knew if we would even still be friends in another year? I couldn’t wait to get out of this crappy little town, though, even if that meant I’d lose my only true friend...I couldn’t get out of here fast enough. I’d had it with this place...and the people that lived here.

I had a little better attitude when June picked me up, though I was totally faking my enthusiasm...but luckily she didn’t seem to notice. All of her thoughts were on Jared.

June was practically bouncing with joy when we got to the fairgrounds. I rolled my eyes but tried to keep myself in check for her. She grabbed my hand and pulled me along behind her, heading for the special “spot” where Jared was supposed to be waiting for her.

I was surprised when we discovered that he was actually there, waiting for her. He was with a small group of his friends from school, and they all looked appreciatively at June. I noticed that she was wearing a very tight, very short denim skirt along with her favorite whore top, as she liked to call it. It was bright red and extremely tight, with tiny spaghetti straps and a girly ruffle that ran straight down the middle, which emphasized her boobs. It looked like she was wearing her water bra tonight.

Unfortunately, none of the guys bothered looking in my direction, but that was something I was used to. I’d worn my usual – loose jeans and a non-flattering t-shirt, along with my dark sneakers. Anything to hide my bulges and curves...

I looked at June with ill-concealed envy. I never understood why she had befriended me our first year of high school. She was pretty enough to have fit in easily with the popular crowd, but she wasn’t that kind of girl. I felt guilty about my atrocious thoughts earlier...I didn’t want to lose my best friend. She’d be loyal for the last four years.

June was petite in every way – barely five and half feet

tall, and maybe weighed a hundred and ten pounds on a bad day. She had a beautiful face that was very feminine, with her tiny pixie nose and her lovely hazel eyes. She always wore her long, soft chestnut hair down...the boys seemed to like it that way. She never had to worry about getting a date, though she'd had her eye on Jared for some time now.

I watched, amused, as Jared appraised her now, and it was clear that he had been keeping an eye on her, too. He was still too chicken to ask her out on a date though. Who the hell asks a girl out to a damn carnival...for a group date? What an idiot.

I knew my irritation stemmed from the fact that June had yet another guy interested in her, while I'd practically gone through high school without even talking to a boy. No one noticed me, that was for sure...unless they were tormenting me. While June constantly told me that I had a very pretty face, I was reluctant to believe her. I was a couple of inches shorter than June, which didn't help my cause, but on top of that, I was overweight. No one was fooled when I tried to hide my big belly or my fat ass...they knew what was under my baggy clothes. My wavy blond hair went well with my dark blue eyes, but neither of those were enough to get a boyfriend. My fat ass was all they could ever see when they looked at me. That was a shame, too, because I also had a killer pair of tits...double Ds, but still I couldn't get noticed. It was all very aggravating.

I twirled the end of my ponytail in a nervous gesture as I watched June interact flawlessly with Jared and his friends. I wanted to go back home...this was excruciating. Finally, June realized that I was still standing there and attempted to steer the conversation towards me. It didn't work. I half-smiled at her, and pretended like all was well.

Finally, the guys wanted to hit the rides, so June and I followed dutifully behind them.

"Oh, shit...he's so damn hot, Kelsey!" she exclaimed when he was out of earshot.

"Yes, he is," I agreed. I was beginning to get nervous as we approached the first ride. I didn't like them and I didn't want to ride anything. First of all, because I was a huge

weenie and was terrified of them. Second, because I didn't like squeezing my fat ass into those tiny little seats.

I made up some lame excuse and June pouted at first, wanting me to go on the ride with her, but she finally gave up and went with Jared. I stood around, feeling like an idiot while I waited for them to get off. This went on for at least an hour, and I was getting bored.

While we were headed to the Ferris wheel, we passed a small tent. I noticed the sign hanging on the front – Marion the Magnificent – and I looked in with curiosity. There was an older woman with long, curly black hair perched on a stool behind a large round table, smiling at me. Fortune teller, or so the sign said...I suddenly wanted to give it a try.

"Hey...you gone on ahead, June," I offered as I slowed down.

"What? You won't even ride the Ferris wheel, Kelsey? It's not so bad!" she complained.

"You know how I hate heights," I reminded her. "I'm going to go in here for a minute," I said, pointing towards the tent.

"A fortune teller? Are you serious? You know those people are just screwing with you, right?"

"Yes, I know June," I replied with impatience. "It's just for fun. Besides...I'm bored just standing around waiting for you. I'll meet up with you in a few minutes, I promise. The line looks pretty long, anyway."

"Okay. We'll wait for you at the Ferris wheel. Have fun, I guess." June looked at me oddly for a moment before she turned and sprinted towards Jared and his group of friends.

I sighed with relief, and then turned and ducked into the cramped little tent. The fortune teller smiled warmly at me, sensing an easy sell, most likely.

"Welcome, child," she murmured as she motioned towards the seat opposite her.

I quickly sat down, not looking directly at her, feeling quite stupid suddenly. What was I doing in here?

"It's okay to have doubts...you wouldn't be the first," the fortune teller said softly. I noted that she had a faint accent, but I couldn't place it. I looked up and smirked, figuring this was one of her opening lines.

“You don’t have to sell me on anything...I know this is just for fun,” I insisted. “How much is it?” I looked more closely at her now, and her dark eyes seemed friendly. Her long dark hair was neatly arranged down her back, and her outfit seemed...odd. Her fitted dress was deep burgundy with traces of gold throughout, but flared at the waist. She looked kind of like a pirate...or a gypsy...which is precisely what I expected. Though, her clothes didn’t seem to be cheesy...they actually looked rather expensive. So did the rings that adorned her fingers.

“I think...for you...I shall allow you to choose what you wish to pay me for my services,” she responded, eyeing me strangely, probably because I was looking her over.

My mouth fell open. Surely this wasn’t normal business practice. How would she ever make any money?

“You seem...special. Not like the others,” she informed me. “I will provide my services and if you are satisfied, you can pay me. If not, then you may leave.”

“Okay,” I replied hesitantly. Surely she wasn’t serious. There was probably a body guard outside that would shake me down if I tried to leave without paying.

She reached up onto the table and snatched away a small silk cloth that was covering up a very large ominous looking crystal ball. She reached across the table and took both of my hands in each of hers. Her penetrating stare sort of unnerved me.

“I am a seer, my child, and with the help of this crystal ball, I will be able to see into your future. I cannot tell you precisely when these events will occur. It could be tomorrow or ten years from now. I often see an event that is very pivotal in your life. Sometimes they are extremely clear, sometimes they are more shrouded, depending on the person. I need you to try and clear your mind for me. Focus on nothing but the crystal ball.”

She gripped my hands tightly and closed her eyes. I did as she asked, and tried to empty my mind. I stared at the crystal ball for what seemed like an eternity. Finally, she released her grip on my hands and moved them to the ball.

“Close your eyes, child,” she instructed swiftly. I did as

she commanded. I heard her making a strange noise...almost as if she was humming to herself...but not loud enough for me to make out the tune.

I sat patiently, wondering if this was all part of the show...anticipation from having to wait so long.

"I can see...something terrible in your future," she said in a strange voice.

My eyes popped open and I stared at her. She looked...different. Kind of creepy, if I was being honest with myself. Her face seemed...darker. Her eyes were glued to the crystal ball as she slowly swirled her hands around the outside of it.

"Something terrible indeed," she continued. "Your life will be forever changed by this. You will be met with an evil – the likes of which you've never seen. This evil you will witness will be shocking, and you will be tempted to share this...secret. But heed this warning, child...you will be given a choice to keep this secret hidden, and that is precisely what you must do!" She was practically screaming at me now, and frightening the living shit out of me. What the fuck?

"You will be sorry if you don't keep it hidden! You MUST keep it to yourself...it is the only way to stay safe. This evil is not what it appears to be..." she trailed off, her voice almost a whisper now. She sagged back in her chair, her eyes closed and her breathing ragged.

I sat, stunned, waiting for her to say something else, but she just remained still. I didn't know what to do. I felt like running out of the tent, screaming at the top of my lungs. I had damn goosebumps on my arms. This was one freaky woman. I know it was all a show, but I didn't expect her to be so...intense.

Finally, her breathing slowed and she opened her eyes. After a moment, she focused her gaze on me, and she shook her head slightly, like she was trying to shake off an unpleasant thought.

"I think you should go now," she said softly. I scrutinized her face, and she actually looked a little spooked.

"Um, okay. How much do I owe you?" I asked, standing up and reaching into my pockets.

“No charge,” she said quickly. Her tone was impatient, and I looked at her once again. Her eyes were darting around the small tent as she tried to usher me towards the door.

“Are you sure?” I asked, confused.

“Yes, yes, I’m sure. No charge,” she said as she practically shoved me outside, following me out. She swiftly yanked the canvas that was tied up at the front of the tent, letting the material fall down to the ground. Apparently she wasn’t going to be doing any more readings tonight. She hesitated as she parted the fabric, preparing to go back inside. She looked at me for one brief moment, and then peered around her as if she wanted to be sure no one was listening.

“I know you have...reservations...about what just happened, but please take my words seriously. Do as I’ve told you...you will know when the time comes. This secret is such that you must take it to the grave. You cannot tell anyone about it, or it will bring evil straight to your doorstep. Do you understand?” Her voice was pleading, and her words seemed sincere.

“Yes, I understand,” I replied, still utterly confused.

“Good,” she said, looking a little relieved. Without another word, she turned and went back in her tent, closing the front flaps securely behind her.

I turned in a daze and headed towards the Ferris wheel, hoping to find June. That had to be the weirdest encounter I’d ever had with another person. I didn’t understand any of it...why did she seem so shaken? If it was all just an act, then why didn’t she want any money? I couldn’t make any sense out of it.

I stumbled over to the Ferris wheel, but June was nowhere in sight. I grumbled to myself...she was probably off making out with Jared right now. Great...how in the hell was I going to get home now?

I took out my cell and texted her, demanding to know where she was. I waited a few minutes but got no reply. Frustrated, I began aimlessly walking around, hoping to spot June or at least one of the guys from Jared’s group. I was

really paying attention to where I was walking, and before I knew it, I found myself in an area that clearly wasn't meant for customers. This must have been where the carnival people stayed.

There were a couple of tents, but mostly there were tons of RVs and trucks attached to small campers. I didn't know how I'd managed to wander back here, but as I was about to turn around and leave, I heard a noise that caught my attention. I whirled around and heard the strange banging sound again. It was coming from one of the RVs on the edge of the grounds.

I knew I should have kept walking but I didn't...I'd always been a little too nosey. I crept up to the RV and peeked cautiously into the small window on the front side. I almost gasped out loud, but I managed to catch myself before I made a noise.

Two people...carnies, apparently...were inside the RV, on the small bed in the corner, and they were going at it. I'd never seen anything quite like it before. I looked around self-consciously, and then snuck around to the back side of the RV. There was another small window on the opposite side that I was able to peek through, but I was more hidden in case anyone decided to walk by.

I wasn't sure what I was thinking...I knew it was stupid to spy on them, but I couldn't help myself. I'd never fucked anyone before, nor had I seen it happen in person...only by way of the few pornos I'd managed to get my hands on.

I watched with fascination as the couple went at it like wild animals. The woman was petite with short blond hair and a set of tits that would black an eye if it hit you just right. The man was tall, tan, and muscular. His dirty blond hair was ruffled and he was glistening with sweat. The woman was on top of him, riding him like her life depended on it. From what I could see, he was very well endowed.

The grunts and moans of passion that were escaping from them were seriously turning me on...even though I knew it was wrong. I started panting quietly as I watched her bounce up and down, pounding his fat dick with her pussy. From the slickness I could see on his dick, she seemed to have been

dripping wet.

Fuck, this was hot! She reached down and grasped his hands with both of hers, releasing her tits that she had apparently been keeping restrained. They now bounced freely and flopped ferociously each time she moved. The man must have enjoyed this, because he leaned his head forward and snagged one of her tits with his mouth, sucking on the nipple and making her moan.

He released her tit and said something to her, but it was too low for me to make out. It became clear, though, that he'd asked her to move, because she stopped riding him and climbed off of the bed.

He stood up and walked towards me, frightening me momentarily. I thought for a minute that perhaps they'd caught me spying. I ducked down, holding my breath and waited for what seemed like a very long time. I eventually got the courage up to poke my head back up and peep in again. I breathed a sigh of relief. He'd retrieved something from the other side of the small room, but now his attention was back on the woman. I couldn't tell what he was holding in his hand.

She was now standing on the side of the bed, leaning over so her torso was flat against the mattress with her ass in the air. The man, standing behind and to one side of the woman, swung his arm back and forth once...it was so swift I almost missed it, but I realized now that he had what looked to be a small leather whip in his hand. He had swatted her across her ass with this whip, and she yelped once.

I could tell by his raging erection that he was getting off on this, and she seemed to be enjoying it as well. He let the whip snap across her ass cheek once more, and this time I could hear the sharp noise that the whip made when it came into contact with her soft flesh. She moaned louder this time. He kept spanking her with the flexible little object until her ass was pink.

I watched as he dropped the whip on the floor and fell to his knees behind her. He dipped his head down and pressed his face into her pussy. My mouth popped open as I watched

him lick and probe her crotch with his eager tongue. He slipped three fingers inside of her and began to thrust them in and out as he continued to assault her with his tongue.

I could see her legs quivering beneath her, but he didn't let up. She turned her head to one side, closed her eyes, and reached down with one hand, twisting and pinching her nipple.

I couldn't stand it any longer, and I didn't, at that moment, care if anyone caught me. I snaked my hand down the front of my jeans and found my sweet spot. I was already wet from watching these two, so I knew it wouldn't take long for me to get off. I rubbed my clit slowly with two fingers, wanting to prolong this as much as possible.

I bit my lower lip to keep from moaning, not wanting to draw attention to myself. I kept up a steady rhythm as I watched, feeling totally devious. The woman was close, by the look on her face. The man must have sensed it because he seemed to go crazy with his tongue. I watched her building...and finally reaching her climax. She screamed out loud as she came – wetly – and sagged onto the bed. I watched the liquid dripping out of her like a faucet...and I wondered what it might taste like.

The man seemed pleased with himself as he smacked her ass with his hand. She smiled slowly and rolled over onto her back, gazing at him in a way that made me feel like blushing. She struggled to sit upright on the bed, reached out to him, snagged his hips with both her hands, and then wrenched him closer to her.

Her head bobbed down as she took him suddenly into her mouth. I saw him tense up as he grabbed her hair roughly. She wrapped both hands around the immense shaft of his penis, stroking up and down in rhythm with her mouth. I continued to rub my clit, occasionally slipping a finger inside and probing the soft flesh, wishing desperately that I had a dick to shove in there instead of my own fingers.

I tried to memorize every move she was making – I had every intention of having a boyfriend SOME day, and I wanted to seem experienced. It sure seemed like she'd done this a few times. I wasn't sure how in the world she was able

to fit his entire dick in her small mouth, but she did. I followed her previous move and tugged on my own nipple through my shirt with my free hand. It felt good...

I watched, fascinated, as the man threw his head back, grunting loudly. His hands grasped the woman's hair even tighter, pulling her mouth down harder on his cock. She increased her speed, and it wasn't long before he was pushing her away.

He grabbed his dick and began pumping it with his hand. I rubbed my clit vigorously, knowing it was about to be over. A few seconds later, he exploded, his spooge spurting all over the woman's face. She was smiling as he coated her with his goo, and as I watched, I imagined that it could be me with the sticky face. That was enough to push me over the edge. I felt my muscles bunching as I tried to find my release. It was harder standing up...I was usually in the tub or in the bed when I rubbed one out. I was almost there when my phone suddenly started to ring, scaring the holy daylights out of me. I cursed quietly, trying to dig it out of my pocket, and noted a bit too late that the couple inside the RV had apparently heard the noise as well.

"Hey! Who's out there?" the man shouted, floundering for his pants. I stumbled away from the window and took off in a sprint, trying to find my way back to the customer side of the carnival. The whole time I was digging for my damn phone since the bitch was still ringing jarringly. I finally managed to get my hands on it and switched it off.

I kept running, not knowing if the man was in pursuit. I weaved through several RVs, trucks, and tents before finally emerging at the back of one of the rides that was shut down and closed off. I stopped running, not wanting to attract attention to myself, but I walked as fast as I could manage. I finally got back to the Ferris wheel, hoping that somehow June would be waiting for me. Of course, she wasn't...

I was breathing pretty hard now – exercise had never really been my thing – and I had to clutch my side that was protesting from my sudden exertion.

I was looking down, once again not paying attention to where I was walking, when a familiar voice caught my

attention.

“Oh, look, Heather! It’s Kelsey...our very best friend!”

I knew who it was before I saw her, and I was silently cursing in my head. Why was *she* here? I reluctantly looked up, meeting Holly Palmer’s gaze as she smirked at me. This whore had been the cause of so much of my misery. I glared back at her.

Holly was about my height, maybe a bit taller on a good day, but she was slender. She didn’t have too much in the boob department, but she made up for it with her slutiness. She’d slept with half the high school...guys AND girls. She was overly tanned with platinum blond hair that fell straight down her back and brown eyes.

She always wore the tightest, most revealing clothes she could get away with, and tonight was no exception. She had crammed herself into a snug black miniskirt and a skimpy white silk camisole that was covered in black polka dots. Her high-heeled shoes seemed a bit much for the carnival.

“What the fuck do you want, Holly?” I snapped, not in the mood for her shit tonight. I’d hoped I’d never see this bitch again after we graduated from high school.

“I’m just so excited to see you, Kelsey,” she said sweetly. I braced myself, waiting for her to unleash her cruelty on me. She’d been tormenting me for the past four years...why would she stop just because high school was over?

I tried desperately to bring my breathing under control, but I was still out of breath. I realized – too late – that my hand was still clutching my side.

“What’s the matter, Kelsey? Trying to get to your favorite snack booth before it closes for the night, you fat ass? I thought I felt an earthquake a minute ago...glad to know it was just you trying to run,” she quipped, glaring at me with a disgusting smirk on her face. “Man, this place is full of losers tonight. First the clown, and now Kelsey!” she grumbled to Heather.

I don’t know what possessed me to do what I did, but I suddenly found myself stooping down and grabbing a handful of dirt and gravel before flinging it right into Holly’s unsuspecting face. The shocked and bewildered look that

she gave me was priceless. Then the debris hit her, and I saw fury bubbling up to the surface.

Though she was half my size, I still didn't want to fight with her. Heather was with her, and they were known for fighting dirty – I didn't have a chance of winning against them both. I turned and ran back in the direction of where I'd just been trying to escape, not caring if I got caught by the carnival people now...it would be better than facing Holly and Heather.

"You bitch! I'm going to kill you when I catch you!" I heard Holly shout after me.

I dodged in and out of the RVs once more, finding a hiding place and trying to breathe quietly. I heard Holly's footsteps not too far away. Fuck, why did I let June talk me into this? Here I was, running from carnies and from my high school enemies, while she was probably sucking on Jared's cock right about now. Life sucked ass...

* * * * *

Ben "Junior" Stokes

This night could not possibly get ANY worse. I'd already had my foot stomped on twice, had three kids completely freak out on me, and had one almost vomit right on my shoes. No wonder Frank drank so damn much. I couldn't say I blamed him...and I'd only been at it a few hours.

I wasn't sure how much more I could take. Then *she* came along. She managed to make my awful night even worse...and that was a pretty hard thing to do. She looked to be about 18 or 19...maybe still in high school, maybe in college. I couldn't really tell, and I really didn't want to know. After Davina, I steered clear of all females in that age bracket.

She was a filthy little cunt...I could tell right away that she was one of *those* girls. Little filthy rich-bitch type that always got what she wanted, no matter who she had to trample on

to get it. And, of course, she headed right for me – her and her homely friend. Apparently my costume amused her. She probably picked on everyone.

“Hey, there, mister clown! Don’t you look hot in your costume! That outfit get you laid a lot?” she said, snickering. She was small, with blond hair and a tight polka dot shirt. She looked ridiculous walking around at a carnival in that kind of clothing.

I didn’t respond to her taunts, and that seemed to piss her off. I knew better than to have any kind of reaction whatsoever. I had too much of a temper, especially towards bitches like her. I turned my back on her and started looking for a nice family to go and pester, but there weren’t many little kids left at this hour...most of them had gone home for the night.

“Hey! I’m talking to you, asshole! I’m not a very satisfied customer,” she said, relentless. “Aren’t clowns supposed to be funny? You just look kind of pathetic to me...if I’m laughing it’s only because you look so ridiculous!”

When I still didn’t answer, she got very angry and started following me, determined to get a reaction.

“So did you have to go to clown school? Nah, you don’t look like you’re smart enough to even get through clown school. I bet you didn’t even make it to high school, did you? Can’t you speak, or is that even too hard for you, you fucking moron?”

I gritted my teeth together. Don’t do anything rash, Ben. It wasn’t worth it. You have a record, and you can’t afford to do anything stupid. I tried my best to leave it alone. I walked briskly away, heading for the RV. I was done for the night, and I didn’t care what dad had to say about it.

“Run away, you little bitch! God, you are pathetic! Go tell your little blow-up doll girlfriend about your day, you loser!” she shouted after me as I practically ran away. I could hear her and her ugly friend laughing loudly behind me, making more jokes at my expense. Fuck her.

I ran into Marion on the way to my RV. She looked frantic, and frankly a little strange. She wasn’t wearing her usual clothes. Instead of her signature dresses, she was wearing

jeans, and her long curly hair was pulled back into a ponytail. That was not like her at all.

“Hey, Marion. What’s going on?” I asked casually, happy to be away from the taunting little whore.

“Um, I’m afraid I have a situation...that I need to deal with,” she replied haltingly. I noticed that she wouldn’t look me in the eye.

“Having trouble with a customer?” I asked, concerned.

“No, nothing like that,” she assured me. She looked around, as if searching for someone. She almost looked me in the eye, but it seemed like something startled her. “I have to go, Ben. There’s a sort of emergency that’s come up,” she explained hastily. She turned and walked away.

What was up with her? I’ve never seen Marion like this. She was always so calm and collected. I followed behind her, wanting to know what was wrong.

“Is there something I can do to help?” I asked, wishing she would tell me what was going on.

“No. Well, yes, I suppose. I was on my way to find your father, but if you could just please tell him that I will call him tomorrow and let him know when I will return...” She was edging towards the very back of the lot, where most of our personal vehicles were parked...those of us that had them, that is. I noticed when I stopped beside her car that the back seat was full of luggage.

“You’re leaving?” I asked, surprised. When she said she had a situation, I thought she meant here.

“Yes. It’s a long story, and I’m afraid I don’t have time,” she murmured as she climbed into the car. She gave me one final glance as she started the car and backed out.

That was...strange. Now I had to go find my dad and let him know we were going to be missing a fortune teller. That was sure to piss him off. Marion wasn’t replaceable like Frank. Anyone could be a clown, but Marion...she was unique. I always had the impression that she wasn’t faking her abilities. That’s probably why she was always so popular with the customers.

With a sigh I turned and headed off to find Artie. I knew, somehow, that he was going to blame me for this and chew

my ass out for it. This night seemed like it was never going to end.

* * * * *

Kelsey O'Neil

Fuck, I wish I could stop breathing so hard. I knew it wasn't helping me hide from Holly. I heard the crunch of the gravel under her shoes as she searched for me. After a few minutes, when I was sure that she was unable to see me, I came out of my hiding spot. I planned on making a mad dash towards the front entrance of the carnival and calling my mom to come pick me up. I could hide out in the damn portable toilets if I had to.

I looked carefully around me, but didn't see her or Heather. I cautiously crept back towards the main area, only to find myself suddenly on the ground, gasping for air again. Holly had snuck up behind me or had been waiting for me in her own hiding place. The bitch had hit me in the back with something, and now I could barely breathe. Fuck, that hurt!

"Did you seriously think I wasn't going to find you?" Holly said with a laugh.

I looked up to see her and Heather peering down at me. She had a thick wooden plank in her hand...I had no idea where she found that, but she apparently wasn't afraid to use it.

"Looks like we have a fat piñata, Heather," Holly mocked. She raised the board over her head, preparing to swing it down to hit me. I bunched up in a ball and covered my head with my arm, bracing myself for the impact...only it never came.

"Hey! What the fuck do you think you're doing?" I heard Holly yell.

I looked up and saw a clown – a very scary looking clown, at that – grab the board out of Holly's hand.

"You again?" Holly scoffed. "What are you going to do? Hit me with it?" she asked condescendingly as the clown

glanced back and forth between Holly and the board.

“No...but if you don’t get out of here right now, I’m going to call the cops,” the clown said with a cold voice.

“Oh, I’m so scared! The loser carnie is gonna call the cops on me! Oh no! Heather, are you worried about this loser calling the cops?”

“Nope,” Heather said with a tight grin.

“Heather’s older brother is a cop...so I just wonder who would be the one in trouble if you called them. Do you think it would be us or some strange creepy clown from out of town?”

I watched as the clown’s face went from angry to livid. I was waiting for him to start beating Holly with that board. God knows I’ve wanted to do that for a while. Hell, I might even help hold her down if he did jump on her.

Unfortunately, he dropped the board, glanced briefly at me, and then turned around to walk away. Holly didn’t stop, though, as I knew she wouldn’t.

“What’s the matter? Afraid you couldn’t take me?” she said, running to get in front of him. She put her hands on his chest to stop him, and he recoiled from her touch.

“Oh, what’s this? You don’t like me touching you? Is it because it’s been a while since a REAL woman touched you...or is it because you’re a fag? Huh? Is that it? You like the cock, don’t you? I guess this won’t bother you will it?”

I watched with a mixture of shock and horror as Holly pulled her tight shirt up, revealing her bare breasts. The clown looked like he was going to vomit, or scream...or maybe both. Somehow, I managed to make my brain work for once. I scrambled around in my pocket and yanked out my cell phone. I flicked the video recorder on and pointed it at Holly, not wanting to miss the opportunity to get her doing something so outrageous.

“Come on, clown...touch my tits! You know you want to! Shit, you probably haven’t even seen a real pair of tits in years...if EVER!”

I tried to stay as quiet and as still as possible. I didn’t want Holly to notice what I was doing, or she’d probably smash my phone to bits.

“God, you are so fucking PATHETIC! There are tits right in your face and you can’t even touch them! There’s no way you are straight...unless you are just incredibly stupid, which is a good possibility.”

Holly tried to step forward to force the clown to touch her boobs, but he moved back hastily. I could tell he was extremely uncomfortable. She moved at him again, but he dodged out of her way. She got aggravated, I guess, because he wouldn’t even look at them. There wasn’t much there to look at.

I kept recording as she moved her hands to her breasts, pulling on her almost non-existent nipples, probably in an effort to get the clown’s attention.

“I bet you like that, don’t you? You like watching me touch myself? I bet you wish YOU could touch me, don’t you?” Holly kept teasing him, but he wasn’t breaking. I had to give it to him...he was holding his own with her.

Finally, when she realized she wasn’t going to get a reaction out of him, she got disgusted and pulled her shirt down. I quickly shut my phone off and slid it back in my pocket.

“I guess even some people are beyond help,” Holly snapped as she turned her back on the clown. She glanced at Heather and nodded her head once before glaring down at me. I figured she was going to pick on me some more, but she seemed aggravated.

“C’mon Heather, let’s go. I’m bored with these two losers...let them have each other!” Holly grumbled before stomping off. Heather followed without another word.

Fuck, I wish I’d known four years ago that all I had to do to get Holly to leave me alone was ignore her. I don’t know how the clown managed to resist her for so long. He was more controlled than I was...I had too much of a temper to take it for long.

The clown finally turned around and looked at me. I couldn’t tell what kind of mood he was in due to all the makeup he was wearing. He looked like he might be a little hostile. Hopefully he wouldn’t direct his anger towards me.

“Are you okay?” he finally asked.

“Yes, thank you. I appreciate your help,” I whispered. He was still creeping me out.

“No problem,” he replied before walking away.

I stood up and brushed my pants off before I pulled my phone out. First, I checked to make sure the video of Holly was there, which it was. I quickly emailed it to myself...wanted to make sure I had a backup in case something went wrong with my phone. That video was going up on the internet tomorrow morning...fucking bitch...she deserved to be humiliated.

Once I was certain the video was saved, I punched in June’s number...angrily. She answered on the second ring.

“Finally! I’ve been trying to call you! Where are you?”

“Where the hell are YOU?” I growled. The warm and fuzzy thoughts I’d had about June earlier – mostly due to my impending move – were now gone. I was seriously pissed at her. She was the one who forced me to come here, and now look at what I’ve had to deal with.

“I’m over by the funhouse. I’ll stay right here till you find me. Promise,” she said, and I could hear the guilt in her voice. That bitch dumped me...for Jared.

“Fine,” I snapped, hanging up on her.

I cautiously made my way to June, making sure that Holly and Heather were nowhere to be seen. I finally spotted June...she was alone and looking rather awkward. She smiled tentatively at me...she must know that she was in trouble.

“Look, I know what you’re going to say, but I can’t help myself! It was JARED!” she exclaimed before I even got close to her. I rolled my eyes. I could tell she was eager to fill me in on the details.

“What happened?” I said with a sigh, realizing there was no point in trying to stifle her excitement.

“You will not believe it, Kelsey! Holy shit...Jared...wow, where do I start?” she said, grabbing my arm and towing me along beside her as we made our way to the front of the carnival.

Ben “Junior” Stokes

“Why didn’t you try to stop her, son?” Artie chastised me for the hundredth time.

“How exactly am I supposed to stop her from leaving? Huh? She’s not my pet...I can’t just put a leash on her neck! Marion seemed really upset...what was I supposed to do?”

“Well, this is just fucking great! No Frank, no Marion...who’s next, huh? What the hell am I going to do without her? She made us a ton of money! I can’t just replace her with someone off the street, dammit!”

“I don’t know! Go call her! Get your answers from her, because I don’t have any! Now please leave me alone...I want to forget that this day ever happened,” I complained.

Artie took the hint and stomped out of my tiny RV, slamming the door behind him. I ripped off the stupid clown costume and walked naked into my bathroom. I scrubbed my face at the sink, trying to get all of the ridiculous makeup off. Of course it left faint stains on my face so I still looked absurd once I was done. I was never doing that again...Artie would just have to find someone else to be the fucking clown...or he could do it. I wouldn’t make that mistake again...especially not after tonight.

That one simple thought was enough to set me off. All I could think about now was that fucking little bitch. God, I felt like I could crush her skull right now. The anger pulsed through me, making me tremor with rage. Sweat popped up all over my body, and it was suddenly very hot in the cramped little RV. I threw on a pair of jeans and stormed outside, needing some fresh air.

I paced around outside in the night air, trying to get through the consuming rage without hunting down a bottle of alcohol. There was no way I was going back to THAT again. One stint in rehab was enough for me...

I happened upon Marco’s truck and trailer, knowing what was secured in the back. I popped open the back doors of the enclosed trailer, not really sure what I was after. I quickly scanned all of the various tools and equipment that were stashed away, and found a very large, very sharp looking ax

that was securely fastened to the wall. I pulled it down, turning it over and over in my hands for a moment. Then, I paced towards the edge of the woods that the fairgrounds butted up against, my eye on one of the large pine trees.

I don't really know what, but taking the ax to that tree was very liberating. Instead of smashing that little rich bitch's face in, I was able to take my frustrations out in a...better way. Unfortunately, thinking about the snide little bitch from tonight set my brain in motion and memories of Davina popped up unbidden. The recollection of her face in my mind fueled the fire once again, and I very nearly chopped the whole damn tree down.

I don't know how long I'd been out here, beating and chopping away my hostility, but eventually I became aware that my muscles and my body were beginning to protest. I also realized I must have looked pretty stupid, considering I was drenched in sweat, had clown makeup stains still visible on my face, and was barefoot, only wearing a pair of jeans. Not to mention I probably looked a little psychotic standing out here in the middle of the night with an ax.

I chuckled to myself, actually feeling a bit more relaxed now, and headed back to my RV. I was in need of a shower and some sleep. I figured it might be a good idea to hang on to the ax, though, so I took it back with me instead of returning it to Marco's trailer.

Once inside my RV, I stripped down and crawled under the scalding water of my shower. I tried, but could not keep Davina out of my head. I wondered what the little cunt was up to these days, or if she'd ruined anyone else's life lately. I didn't want to think about her anymore. Before I'd landed myself in rehab, I'd had an unnatural obsession with her. I kept tabs on her online, through the newspapers, even followed her around town occasionally when I was sober enough to drive. I knew it wasn't healthy, but the bitch had ruined my life. I felt that I was justified in being fixated on her every move.

Of course, that just made things worse, I now realized. I saw her moving on with her life and practically being rewarded for what she'd done, while I was hitting the bottom

of the barrel. And while I still felt like strangling her if I had the opportunity, I was much better than I HAD been.

My mind wandered as I stood numbly under the cascading water...back to the first time Davina had approached me in class. I'd never really paid much attention to her before that day. She wasn't a memorable student, and the size of the class had been rather large...

"Alright, guys...because you've got the project due in two weeks, I'm going to be nice and go easy on all of you. No homework this week or next week," I said, smiling as I watched the faces in front of me go from stressed to ecstatic. I waited for the commotion to die down before I continued.

"Okay, okay...yes, that gives all of you a bit of freedom, but that also means I'll be expecting stellar work from ALL of you in regards to your projects and the corresponding papers. This is worth twenty-five percent of your overall grade, so please take this seriously, everyone," I instructed.

The bell rang then, and everyone started packing their books and scrambling to their feet. I wandered back to my desk, happy that this was the final class of the day. I had two student meetings in my office and then I was done for the rest of the weekend.

"Professor Stokes?" I looked up from my desk, and found Davina Davenport standing in front of me.

"Yes, Ms. Davenport, what can I do for you?" I asked, mildly curious. I don't think she'd ever spoken directly to me before. She always sat in the back of the room and acted like she was bored to death. Davina was a mediocre student...just barely getting by. In my class at least...I wasn't sure what her other grades were like. If she didn't do well on her project she might actually be in danger of a D or an F.

"I need to speak with you about the project," she answered hesitantly.

It was as I thought. I sighed internally...why, oh why did some students *always* wait until the very last minute to suddenly become concerned with their grades? She'd known all semester that she was doing poorly, and I could just about bet she needed at least a C in this class, as most

students were required for their degrees.

“Of course,” I said. “I’m on my way to my office. I have a meeting with a student in fifteen minutes, if you’d like to join me,” I offered. Despite everything, I always felt like I should help a student who asks for it, even though I knew it was a last-ditch effort to salvage their grades.

Davina followed silently behind me as I made my way to my office. Once I unlocked the door and got settled behind my desk, I motioned for her to sit down.

“What about the project?” I asked, getting right down to it. I knew who Davina Davenport was...or rather, who her father was. I was furtively hoping that she wasn’t going to try to bribe her way into a good grade.

“Well, I know it’s worth a lot of our final grade, and I’m pretty sure that the project is going to be the deciding factor...whether I pass or fail your class. I have to get a C, but I’m hoping to do better than that. I need a B to keep dean’s list.”

Dean’s list? So it was just my class that she slacked in, apparently...or her father’s influence was very persuasive. Regardless, I didn’t give grades based on wealth or persuasion...only hard work and effort.

“I was hoping for some help, and maybe to see if I could get some extra credit to help boost my grade...I’ll do whatever you want, Professor Stokes. I just need this grade. This is my last semester and if I bomb this class, it’s going to ruin my overall average.” Davina was practically pouting at this point.

Yet, I couldn’t find much sympathy for her. Maybe she should have thought of that earlier in the semester. If I remembered correctly, her test scores were lacking...so maybe she should have tried studying.

“I can provide some assistance on your project, Davina, but I explained on the first day that there is no extra credit in my class.”

I could tell this bit of news made her angry. Well, she should have paid attention. She was warned, just like the rest of them. There was always one...in every damn class...one that thought they were different – or better – than

the rest and deserved special treatment. I figured Davina was probably used to getting special treatment.

I saw some strange emotion flit across her face before she composed herself.

“Thanks, Professor Stokes. I’ll take all the help I can get with my project. I’ll let you know what I’ve decided to work on by Monday. If you can offer some assistance, I’d really appreciate it,” she said sweetly.

For some reason, I didn’t trust her. I couldn’t put my finger on it, but the warning bells were sounding in my head. Unfortunately – as I would see in the not so distant future – I would regret not listening to my instincts.

“That’s fine, Davina. I’ll see you on Monday. Let me know what you want to work on, and I can help with the research and point you in the right direction. Plus, we still have the final, so if you do well on that, I don’t doubt you could pull off a B,” I said reassuringly.

Just then, there was a knock on my door. My first appointment was here.

“Come in, Alex,” I said, motioning for him to enter. He stood just outside the door, hesitating as he watched Davina stand up. She had that effect on a lot of students, it seemed. I could see Alex’s eyes widen as he stared. I almost chuckled...it wasn’t that long ago that I was in college myself.

Davina took me by surprise by reaching over and placing her hand on my arm. I froze, not used to having any kind of physical contact with my students. She let her hand linger there for a moment as she spoke.

“Thank you, Ben. I appreciate...all of your help,” she said in an almost seductive manner. She smiled warmly at me before withdrawing her hand and turning to leave. Alex shuffled out of her way instantly.

I frowned. What was that all about? That girl was definitely strange...

I tried to shake off the weird feeling I’d gotten from her and concentrate on Alex’s problem. By the end of the day, I’d forgotten all about Davina Davenport. Little did I know that our impromptu meeting would be the beginning of it all...

I shook my head, coming back to the present, and realizing that the shower water had turned ice cold. I must have been daydreaming longer than I'd thought. I shut the water off and quickly climbed out, drying myself vigorously.

I robotically dressed in a t-shirt and flannel pants, not realizing how tired I was. I flopped down into my miniscule bed and almost instantly passed out. I secretly wished that tomorrow would be better than today, because I didn't honestly think I could handle any of that again.

I wasn't quite sure if I'd actually fallen asleep or if I was on the verge of unconsciousness, but the thudding fist against my door jolted me awake with a shock.

"What the fuck?" I nearly shouted, jumping out of bed. I grumbled all the way to the door, figuring it was Artie, coming back to bitch at me some more because he couldn't reach Marion.

"What?" I yelled, flinging the door open. I froze. Two police officers were standing back a few feet from the door, with Artie behind them.

"Mr. Stokes?" the officer in front – the taller, leaner one – asked in a brusque tone.

"Yes," I responded instantly.

"I need you to step outside, sir. We need to speak with you about a complaint we received," he informed me as he assessed me critically.

"A complaint?" I asked stupidly as I stepped out of the RV. What the hell?

Both officers shuffled back a couple of feet, like I was a wild animal that might strike at any moment. My eyes flashed to Artie's face, and I couldn't tell if he was angry with me or angry with the officers.

"Yes, sir. We had a complaint that you were interacting inappropriately with one of the customers tonight."

I knew as soon as he said the words who was behind all of this. I remembered the little bitch saying something about her friend's brother being a cop. I hadn't said or done one thing wrong tonight, and yet she'd still done this. In fact, I'd gone out of my way to ensure that I didn't let my temper get

the best of me. Now, I had to deal with this bogus bullshit, and I knew it would be just like she'd said...whose version of the story would the local cops believe? Mine, or hers? It was like Davina all over again.

The blood boiled in my veins and my vision literally started to turn red. I was going to find that bitch...and I was going to kill her for this, if it was the last thing I ever did.

TO BE CONTINUED

**THIS NOVEL IS PRESENTED IN SERIAL FORM. NEW AND
SUBSEQUENT CHAPTERS WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE AT
REGULAR INTERVALS.**