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                              The Dark Carnival

                             by Kyrie Dunphy

          It all began at midnight when an expensive sports car dashed through
the empty, dark streets and into the outskirts of the town. Six college
students crowded the inside.

          "Rob, I don't think this is a good idea..." Stephen said.

          "Please! You're always worrying about our well-being," Robert, the
driver, said with a laugh. "Jeez, you're such a goody two-shoes!"

          Stephen gave him an offended glare as Markus broke up the fight by
clearing his throat.

          "Um, I don't mean to interrupt, but where exactly are we going?" he
asked.

          "We're going to this carnival. It was my idea since my older sister
works there." Chris said.

          Jeremy looked out the window and groaned, asking, "Are you sure we're
not lost? We're in the middle of nowhere."

          "Boys, don't you think this is kind of suspicious?" Elizabeth,
Jeremy's girlfriend, asked.

          "You're absolutely right, Liz. This seems...off." Stephen said with a
nod.

          He wanted to go home and just study for whatever exams were coming up,
but knowing Robert, this was obviously futile. Robert parked the car and
stepped out of it with a grin.

          "And here we are, guys!" he said.

          The others stepped out of the car and followed him to the front
entrance. The carnival didn't look out of the ordinary, but it didn't matter
to them.

          *At least it's not a frat party...*Jeremy thought.

          They bought their tickets and walked through into the carnival.
Needing a break from his friends, Stephen decided to wander off before he
bumped into a nearby game stand.

          "Hey, man, watch where you're going." the attendant said with a groan
before recognizing him. "Stephen?"

          Stephen jumped before getting a good look at the attendant, asking,
"No way, is that you, James? I haven't seen you since high school!"

          "Sure is..." James said, nodding.

Then, he gestured him to come a bit closer.

"What is it, James?"

"You and your friends need to get out of here. This carnival has a connection to the disappearances of those students that went to your college thirty years ago..."

"What do you mean by--" Stephen began to say before Robert called him over.

He quickly waved goodbye to his old friend and went to catch up with the others.

"Jeez, you're such a scatterbrain. We're heading into the House of Mirrors." Robert said.

Stephen glared at him before Markus said, "Let's just move on in..."

Everyone else nodded and walked to the House of Mirrors. Once they arrived, the group wandered through the dark maze of mirrors that twisted and turned in different directions.

Jeremy and Elizabeth stayed together until she noticed a shadow that definitely didn't belong to any of their friends.

"Jeremy, did you see that?" she asked.

"Yeah, that's really freaky, Liz." Jeremy said.

"Go to the carnival, you said. It'll be fun, you said..." Stephen said with a groan.

"Hey, don't look at me! I just thought it could be cool!" Robert said.

A shuffling noise then came into earshot as the group jumped in fear.

"Uh, what was that?" Markus asked.

"This is weird...my sister usually runs this place, but I haven't seen her around." Chris said. "Maybe she's taking time off."

Stephen gazed at his friends and remembered James' warning, saying, "Uh, did you guys hear about those people who disappeared thirty years ago?"

"Yeah, what about it?" Jeremy asked.

"It happened at this very carnival. We HAVE to get out of here!" Stephen said.

"Alright, alright, if you want to get out so bad, let's find the exit to this place..." Robert said with a groan.

The six college students wandered around the building, constantly getting lost in the labyrinth of mirrors to find the way out.

"This place should've been called the House of Misdirection." Markus said, trying to lighten up the mood.

They continued moving through the maze some more while being distracted by their own reflections or the sounds of footsteps.

Jeremy groaned and said, "This is taking forever! I just want out of this stupid--"

Suddenly, he was grabbed by an unseen force and dragged away.

"Jeremy, no!" Elizabeth said before turning to her friends. "I'm going after him."

She ran off, leaving the remaining four behind.

"Do you think we should follow?" Markus asked his friends.

Stephen shook his head and said, "It's not a good idea, whatever's in here with us is probably after every single one of us."

"So, like in those horror movies?" Chris asked.

"EXACTLY like the horror movies." Robert said with a nod.

The four then tried to find a way out, but got stuck in dead ends just like before. Suddenly, before either of them could react, Markus was dragged away by the same force that took Jeremy.

"Help!" he said before disappearing from view.

"They took my best friend..." Robert said. "Oh, this ghost or whatever is going down!"

He went to storm off, only to be pulled back by Stephen.

"No, you'll probably get taken too, I haven't heard from Liz in a while." his rival said.

"He's right, Rob. We can't lose you too." Chris said, crossing his arms.

Robert groaned and said, "Alright then, let's just find our friends and get out of here..."

The trio continued to wander, being bothered by the growing footsteps and the fact that they couldn't hear anything familiar from their disappeared friends. Had they truly gone missing like those students from thirty years ago?

Now, it was as if they were walking in circles with all the misdirection and fake-outs near the entrance. Soon enough, they found themselves at the center of this maze.

"We looked everywhere, but there's no sign of them. This better not be some prank." Stephen said.

"Don't you think this is kind of weird, guys? I mean, it was like they were with us and then, POOF! they're gone." Robert said.

The footsteps were heard again as Chris began to say, "Guys, I think whatever's in here is getting--"

Then, quick as a flash, both Stephen and Robert were dragged away. Chris stood there alone as his eyes darted around frantically, looking for anything or anyone suspicious.

"Whoever you are, stop with this! Show yourself!" he said.

"Oh, alright...whatever you want." a voice said as the figure stepped out of the shadows.

Chris's eyes widened, he recognized that voice and those dark green eyes anywhere.

"Will?" he asked.

"Actually, it's William. I work here, our sister gave me the job." his brother said.

"But why are you doing all this? Making my friends go missing like those guys from thirty years ago?"

"Why not? I was constantly overshadowed by you, even though it was me who actually put effort into everything, but no, dad decided you were the favorite after he kicked Helen out."

Chris couldn't believe what he was hearing, his own brother had gone mad and was admitting that he was incredibly jealous of him.

"Please, Will. You don't have to do this! You can stop all of this." he said.

William laughed at this and said, "Pathetic. I only need to enact my revenge by taking out your weakness, so I can get to you."

He pulled out a knife with fresh blood on it and twirled it in his hand as Chris gasped.

"No, please!"

"Goodbye, brother..."

With that, he plunged the knife through him several times. Once he was finished, William cleaned it and laughed to himself, proud that he got his revenge.