I had been to funfairs before. Apart from the occasional report of someone getting hurt on a ride, nothing bad had ever happened to me there. Until a year ago. Sometimes I sit and wonder that if hadn’t gone to the fair that summer evening, would anything had changed for me at all? Probably not, is usually my answer. But I did go. I think that that’s the biggest regret of my life so far. If only I’d listened to my Mum, stayed at home. If only./.

JULY 28th, 2002

“I’m going out!” I shouted up the stairs to my Mum. I proceeded to head for the door, but then my Mum called out to me,

“Can you wait an hour or two? I have to go and pick up your Dad from work; his car has broken down, and I need someone to watch baby Lilly!” I sighed. I had promised my friend Doug that I would meet him at the funfair at four o’clock. This was typical of my Mum, ruining my plans.

“Can’t you just take Lilly with you?” I asked, “I’m not a babysitter you know,”

“No, it’s an hour there, I’m not taking a screaming baby with me! I already have a huge migraine! Where are you even going, Rachel?” My Mum looked down at me from the upstairs landing.

“The funfair, or I was *going* to, before you made me waste five minutes, and appointed me as a babysitter!” I retorted, angrily.

“Who with?” She asked again.

“Doug,” I told her, “Now I’m going, whether you like it or not!” And with that, I stormed out of the house, slamming the door behind me.

As I sprinted down the street, I heard my Mum calling after me, but I pretended I couldn’t hear her. I had places to be, I thought to myself. She’s always trying to get me to be more sociable, I thought again, and when I am she just shouts at me. Turning a corner and nearly crashing into an old man, I saw Doug by the entrance to the fair, pacing up and down the pavement, clearly agitated. I checked my watch. It was half past four. No wonder he was cross.

“Doug! Hey, Doug!” I called to him. He barely looked up.

“Oh. Hey Rachel. Thought you weren’t coming,” He said, still staring at the floor.

“Sorry I was late... my Mum delayed me, asking all sorts of stupid questions,” I told him, rolling my eyes. I expected him to laugh, but he didn’t.

“Look, I umm... think my Mum told me to be back like... now, so I’m gonna have to go,” He said to me.

“Oh but that’s not fair! I’ve just got here!” I shouted.

“Sorry, but maybe be on time more often?” He spoke coldly. And then he was gone, running of up the street. I considered following him, but then thought better of it.

Instead, I turned round and entered the fair. The mass of people and bright colours was overwhelming, and I could smell hotdogs and fried onions. Trying desperately to see a way through the seemingly endless crowd, I started running through the horde.

Eventually I ended up on the outskirts of the fair, where there were less people. Only a few attractions were nearby, but the one that caught my eye the most was the Ghost train. I loved being spooked; if ever a new horror film was in town, I would nearly always be the first to see it. My Mum didn’t know of course, she wouldn’t approve.

The ghost train’s exterior was painted purple, with green carriages. Pictures of ghosts and skeletons were drawn on the outer building. The queue wasn’t big, only a few people seemed to have noticed it, and I stepped into line. There where about seven people, and the train held six at most. It would be my turn after the first lot of six, I was at the back. As they boarded their allocated carriages, more people joined the queue. And that was when something strange happened.

A figure with black curly hair was running round the back of the tent. He was almost out of sight when he turned round and looked straight at me. His face was painted white, with a red nose and red paint around his mouth. The man wore large, black overalls with red buttons and a grey top with red spots on it. He looked me in the eye. I don’t think I will ever forget those eyes. Cold, dark eyes that seemed to stare right through me, almost into my soul. And suddenly he was gone, vanished, as if he had never been there. I turned around to the man behind me.

“Excuse me sir? Did you, did you, see that man? Behind the tent? In overalls and had black hair?” I asked him. I knew what he was going to say before he said it.

“Sorry, no. Maybe it was one of the workers, dressing up?” he replied. My heart sank. I knew that I saw a clown. But then, maybe the man was right. Maybe he was just dressing up or something. That is what I told myself until it was time to board to ride.

As I entered my carriage, a voice came down from a loudspeaker.

“*Passengers. Thank you for boarding the Ghost Train. Please keep your hands inside the ride at all times, don’t undo your seat belt and have fun!*”

I clipped my seat belt together and then the ride began. Ghosts popped out from corners, skeletons dropped from the ceiling and spiders crawled along the walls. They were all fake of course. I was beginning to forget all about my strange experience from earlier, but then something even stranger happened. I saw a figure gradually getting nearer to the train, or rather, the train getting closer to it. When we went past it, I finally saw what it was. It was a clown. It was *the* clown. He looked straight at me, right into my eyes, and again I experienced that chill as I saw the coldness in his pupils. He stood there not doing anything, just watching as we grew further away from it. My heart was thudding, and I really thought that it might burst. A dot of light was coming closer; the end of the tunnel, but it was very far away. I just wanted the ride to be over, to get out and to never come back here again. That’s when it happened. The clown was next to me, in the pairing seat, smiling at me, not blinking, just smiling. Nobody seemed to have acknowledged his presence.

“What do you want?” I whispered. He didn’t reply, just sat there, smiling. The train drew closer than ever to the exit, it was nearly over.

“Please just leave me alone,” I said again. He still said nothing. The train left the tunnel and drew to a stop. Climbing out as quickly as I could, I turned back. The clown was still smiling at me. Then he waved. And then he was gone.

I knew that there was no point in telling anyone because they wouldn’t believe me. The only other thing to do was to forget about it. And so I walked home, shaken, but alive.

SEPTEMBER 19th2006

I ran as fast as I could, my satchel banging against my hip as I ran down the street. My heart was pounding like a lion in a cage but the only thought I had at that moment was that I was late, and that I was going to miss the bus. Sprinting, I saw the bus leave.

“No! Come back, wait, please, wait!” I yelled, but nobody heard me, and the bus showed no sign of stopping. My heart sank. That would be a letter home for sure. I began to trudge back up the hill, to ask my Mum to take me. I was staring at the floor, so no one recognised me and asked why I wasn’t at school, but then I heard something that made me stop. It was a popping sound, that kind you make when you pop a balloon. I looked up. A deflated balloon was falling from the sky. I heard steps behind me, so I turned around. And that’s when I saw him. The clown, looking right at me, still saying nothing, began to walk towards me. My head was telling me to run, but I felt paralysed. He was so close that I could hear his breathing. I felt his hand on my face as he punched it, knocking me to the hard ground. Then I saw him pull out a knife. He brought it closer and closer to my throat, until I could fell the blade pierce the tip of my skin, not enough to kill me but enough to make a line of blood trickle down my neck. I put up my hand to stop him, push him away, but he slashed my arm and I cried out in agonizing pain. He turned away to pull out a much larger, sharper knife, and before I knew what I was doing, I was staggering away, up my hill and into my house.

My Mum met me at the door, about to question why I wasn’t in school, but then she saw me and started screaming. Then she was calling the police and carrying me to the sofa. And I think that’s when I blacked out.

DECEMBER 12th2006

I was sitting on the sofa, watching the news with my Mum.

“Hey Mum, what time is it?” I asked her.

“Let me see. Oh! It’s quarter to ten! You better be getting ready for bed sweetheart,” She replied.

“Fine,” I said, and heaved myself off the sofa. As I was walking to the door, I heard something that made me stand still.

*“Coming in at quarter to ten news, we have a jailbreak! Serial killer, Domonic Brice, or more commonly known as Harpo, a clown, has escaped from local jail! We advise everyone to keep a close eye out for this man! If you see him, do not approach. Harpo has been responsible for many deaths around the country so stay away. That’s all for now! See you again in half an hour!”*

I turned around to face the TV. And there it was, a picture of the clown who had stalked and tried to kill me. Harpo.

“You okay sweetie?” Mum asked me.

“Yeah, fine,” I muttered and carried on upstairs to my room.

As I drew my curtains I stopped to stare at the moon. It illuminated the trees and houses below like a beacon, illuminating a room. My thoughts were distracted suddenly by the feeling I was being watched. I shrugged it off though and carried on watching the moon. Then I saw a figure standing at the bottom of the hill, watching me through the darkness. I screamed, and closed the curtains shut immediately, just as my Mum burst in.

“Are you okay?” she asked.

I didn’t speak. My head was clouded with worry. Heart thudding, I clambered into bed as if nothing had happened.

“Nothing Mum. I just saw a spider, that’s all,” I whispered.

There was no point telling her the truth. She wouldn’t believe me if I told what I just saw. She wouldn’t believe me if I told her that I had just seen Harpo.