

Old Bones

To the relief of the farmers, the storekeepers, and the rest of the town, the end of summer fair had finally arrived. The last of the cotton candy and goldfish were being sold that night, and everyone was eager to win these summer souvenirs to keep the illusions of bliss alive in the autumn. The teacups were spinning joyously and the participants were pleased as Peggy Ann, who was known for having a very delicate stomach, had hopped off after the first spin. The horse carousel, which was a beloved treasure at the fair, was making rounds after rounds. Shelby Ian liked to call the pink one with the yellow ribbons Galinda, while James Acre named the larger crimson one Mighty Wind. Its decaying light bulbs flickered spastically, illuminating the multitudes of vendor and game tables around it. Whenever the fair came at the end of August, just as the summer squash and sweet corn was at its prime, it would always be delightfully packed. Mothers would bring their screaming children, fathers would bring their aging grandparents, boyfriends would bring their shy girlfriends, and the night was alive with the buzz of the townsfolk. Those unlucky enough to not be able to attend would listen to this spirited buzz from their windows as they washed the last of the dishes or finished the last of the paperwork. The sound moseyed its way through the air, and down the main street, and the side roads, and the lanes leading to the valley just as the sun touched the horizon. It smelt of popcorn, grease, sugar, and kisses. It all vaguely annoyed Berta George.

Having put the last rose dish in the drying rack, she lightly tossed the towel to the side and went to open the back door. It revealed her cluttered vegetable garden, a large wavy pasture, and the speckled night sky. Down in the left hand corner, the fuzzy warm bubble that was the Summer Fair hummed in the distance, and Berta squinted. Carnivals didn't interest her, the food made her sick, and the flashing lights were bothersome to her older eyes. She squatted down carefully on the back porch and squinted even harder, making the already distant image a yellow smudge in her vision. It didn't

really matter that she couldn't go to the carnival, whether she wanted to or not, because it was all very easy to picture.

Everything from the champagne coloured dresses on all the women, to the smug expression on their husbands faces. The way that Mrs. Anderson - the one wearing the different yet appreciated sky blue sundress - would buy sherbet ice cream for her three boys, who would get tired of it within the minute. They'd toss it right on the grassy floor, where it would melt into a colourful pond. The lights from the towering Ferris wheel, which would turn around and around the whole night, would reflect in the rainbow puddle beautifully. Young Jimmy, one of the town's local punks, would be trying to persuade Sandra House to take a spin on it with him, but she'd just lift her tiny nose in the other direction and head towards the picnic tables. On the ride itself, Ron Dexter would have his two daughters on either side of him, each held tight in his strong arms, as they would squeal with joy when the wheel moved higher up from the ground. At the tip top, Felix Flemming would have just made the most terrifying move he had ever made, kissing Celia King on the cheek. Frankly, she had been waiting the whole damn night for him to man up, so she'd enthusiastically kiss him back, knocking the breath out of him. The wheel would spin and spin, bringing each new face closer to the heavens above and then back down to the heavens below.

At the ground, Berta George would be walking and holding the hand of her beloved Charlie. He'd be telling her a joke silly enough to make her snort, which would then bring him to a fit of giggles. They'd stop in front of the Ferris wheel, arms close together, and look into each other's faces with genuine grins. They were filled with cotton candy and root beer, and Berta's curfew wouldn't be for about another hour. In Charlie's hair, there would be a little piece of confetti. While on Berta's shoes, there would be a stain from the ice cream puddle. They were both quite handsome, and the air around them warmed with their youth and sense of freedom.

Berta got up from her squatting position on her back porch. She focused in on the outline of the fair in the distance, which was now significantly darker and quieter, as if it was finally going to sleep.

Berta had been there a long time, and her knit cardigan was not doing her old bones justice in keeping her warm. She walked back into her cottage kitchen and closed the light, putting all memories and yearnings for bliss away for the night.