

Lit Up Sky

"Scared yet, Addy?" the most annoying voice in existence taunts.

"No, Jackson," I reply through gritted teeth. I'm seriously starting to regret the little promise I made myself earlier tonight. I raise my eyes to the monstrous structure in front of me and stare.

It's a Ferris wheel.

Or, at least, it looks like a Ferris wheel. Strings of white lights have been wound up around every bit of metal, making the ride glow against the dark sky. I guess it's supposed to look pretty, but to me, it just looks horrifying, especially since all the lights blur together when the ride moves. My eyes slide upwards, to the top of the Ferris wheel, then back down to the base. Yeah, falling from that height could easily kill me.

But I can't back out now, since we're almost at the front of the line. I promised myself I would go on every ride here, no matter how much they scared me. So far I've done well in keeping that promise. This is the only ride I haven't gone on, the only one left. It's also the tallest ride at the carnival.

"I don't want to do this," I mutter quietly.

Not quietly enough, apparently. "Why are you, then?" Jackson asks as the line inched forward.

I glance at him, but stay silent.

"Other than wanting to spend time with me, of course."

I scoff. The arrogant jerk.

“No, honestly,” he says, his voice dropping from its teasing tone. “I wanna know.”

I sigh and turn to look at him. “Alright, where is it?”

His brow furrows. “What?”

“The phone, camera, whatever recording device you have on you right now.”

He lays both hands over the left side of his chest and his mouth turns down in an exaggerated pout.

“You wound me, Addy, really.” He then spreads his arms out, nearly hitting the person behind us in the face. “I don’t have anything on me, promise. You can check it you want.”

“I’m not feeling you up, thanks,” I reply, rolling my eyes. I don’t really believe Jackson’s cruel enough to have something recording this conversation. But I’m not going to tell him why I’m going on this death wish of a ride when I’d rather be doing anything else. He’d never let me live it down.

“Aw, come on, Addy,” he says, dropping his arms. “Everyone knows but me.”

True, Danny and Kayla already know about my fear. I’m sure how they know, since I didn’t tell them, but they do. It’s only Jackson left. I know they want me to tell him, I had seen the grins on their faces as they backed out of going on this ride with me and Jackson. For people who are supposed to be my friends, they really like watching me suffer. But they’re not going to get their wish. As mean as it is, I’m happy with keeping Jackson in the dark.

I shrug and turn back to look at the Ferris wheel. Then immediately turn away, choosing to look at the game booth next to the ride instead. The one my traitorous friends are currently playing at.

“Please? I promise I won’t judge.” Is that actually sincerity in his voice?

I turn back to stare at him. "Maybe I should've brought a recording device. Are you actually being nice to me?"

"I'm always nice!" he exclaims.

I blink. "Right. Of course you are."

"Please Addy. You know I won't stop bothering you until you tell me," says Jackson, repeatedly flicking me on the arm.

That's true. There's nothing Jackson Thompson does better than bothering people. Me, in particular. I open my mouth to speak, but the wail of a little kid distracts me. A boy, who looks about seven, is getting dragged away by a woman. I can hear her repeatedly trying to get him to quiet down. In between the shushes, I hear a couple whispered words, since the line's gone pretty silent. Something about him not being tall enough to go on the ride.

I turn to stare up at the ride. It's a Ferris wheel! How dangerous can it be? I mean, yeah, you can fall out and crack your head open, but I'm probably the only one who really worries about that.

"We're going next," Jackson says. I glance at him to see a disturbingly wide smile on his face. The ride slows to a stop and a worker unclips the rope in front of us, letting us, and the two pairs behind us, onto the loading platform. We get the middle cart, which, like the rest of the carts, looks all too fragile. They're made completely of thin metal bars, with two benches on either side. Four plastic poles shoot up from the middle, then connect, forming two lap bars. What Ferris wheel needs a lap bar?

Was it too late to back out of this? I look around, searching for an escape route. Before I can find one, Jackson pushes me onto the right side of the metal death contraption, then gets on the other side.

As the worker pushes down our lap bars, he gives us a short safety talk. Then he shuts the door. I am officially trapped.

Jackson notices my panicked expression immediately. "I think this will be so much fun," he tries to squeal. A voice crack prevents him from succeeding.

"You know, I really hope you fall off this thing," I say as the ride started moving.

He widens his eyes in an exaggerated look of innocence. "But then you'd probably go down with me."

I hate it when he's right.

I glare at him and I'm about to respond when, to my immense horror, the cart starts swinging back and forth. A wave of dizziness crashes through me. *Breathe, Addy, Breathe*, I tell myself, dragging in deep breaths. *Just don't look down.* "Jackson?"

He glances at me. "Yeah?"

"I think I'm gonna be sick."

"Oh cr- uh, look at the, uh, sky! It's all lit up with carnival lights," he says.

"Jackson?"

"Yeah?"

"That's really not helping."

His eyes widen and he looks around, almost frantically. "Uh, look! There's Danny and Kayla! Whoa, they're really small..." I am officially trapped with the dumbest person ever. I am officially about to die, with the dumbest person ever.

“Jackson?”

“Yeah?”

“Stop talking.”

When we get to the top, the rocking increases. It gets to the point where we're almost about to spin over the bar holding the cart. *I'm going to die! I'm going to die! I'm going to die.* I close my eyes and press my head against my knees. *You're just sixty feet above the ground in a metal cart, you'll be okay,* I tell myself, unconvincingly.

“Addy?” Jackson asks.

I open my eyes to see he actually looks genuinely concerned. “I'm just scared of heights, okay?”

He blinks. “Why are you on this, then?”

“I'm going into high school, and I'm scared of heights.”

He blinks again. “That's it? This is what you didn't want to tell me?”

“I throw up on small rides like these!”

This seems to bring back the Jackson I knew. “Whatever you do, don't throw up on me, okay?” he says, leaning back a little. “Why's it so bad?” he asks. “Lots of people are scared of heights.”

“Not the height of a Ferris wheel!” I sigh when he didn't reply. “I'm trying to get over it.”

For a moment he's silent. “I don't think this counts as a Ferris wheel,” he says finally.

I glare at him. “You suck,” I tell him, before pressing my head against my knees again. I'm not feeling all that dizzy anymore, though, the cart has stopped swinging.

“Hey Addy?” Jackson whispers two seconds later.

I don’t look up. “What?”

“We’re on the ground.”

I lift my head. We are back at the bottom. The ride has stopped. A worker is coming to open the cart. I’m free! And I didn’t die! I jump out as soon as the worker steps aside, causing Jackson to laugh.

Danny and Kayla are already waiting for us at the exit. “So how was it?” Danny asks.

“I’m never going on that again,” I tell them.

He raises an eyebrow.

“The cart started rocking!” I exclaim.

“Oh,” says Kayla with a grin. “I think it's supposed to do that.”

My mouth drops open and I turn to stare at the Ferris wheel, that I guess isn't really a Ferris wheel. It’s a little hard to see past the lights, but true to Kayla's words, the carts at the top are swinging around wildly. How did I not notice that before?

“At least you didn’t throw up.” I turn back around to see Jackson standing in front of me, his hands in his pockets. He grins, looking like he was seconds away from laughing. At me.

“It’s not funny!” I yell.

But I smile back anyway.