

THE CARNIVAL

"Haunted Home"

by
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CHARACTERS (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Soldier 1 - a soldier in the civil war

Soldier 2 - another soldier in the civil war

THOMAS WILLIAMS - (27) - a cowardly actor playing a ghost at a carnival later revealed as an actual ghost from the Civil War

JACOB - (28) - Thomas' friend and fellow soldier in the civil war

THE WATCH - (ageless) - the narrator of the show, Rod Serling-esque in their knowledge. All knowing, confident

SERGEANT - (39) - Thomas and Jacob's sergeant in the Civil War

AVA - (19) - a woman on a bad date

ALLEN - (20) - Ava's bad date

SUPERVISOR - (ageless) - the kind but stern figure tasked with overseeing Thomas' ghostly position

KAI - (12) - a runaway girl with some serious sass

SECURITY GUARD - (30) - security guard chasing Kai

JEREMY - (18) - Kai's older brother

CARNEY - (30) - a female worker at the carnival

SCENE 1

(A Civil War battlefield)

SOUND: Cannons boom in the distance

Distant soldiers CRY OUT in pain.

SOLDIER 1
On the hill!

SOLDIER 2
Get down!

THOMAS WILLIAMS (27) BREATHES shallowly.

JACOB
Williams? Williams--

Thomas' response is a dry, CROAKING sound.

THE WATCH
War. The most terrible test of a
man's character.

JACOB
Williams, look at me. We're almost
there. You hear? One last charge
and we'll be back on our own
ground.

SERGEANT
Whatever happens men, be sure to
stay together!

A closer cannon BOOMS. Thomas' BREATHING grows faster.

THE WATCH
A test that not all men pass.

Thomas lets out a desperate CRY.

SOUND: Pounding footsteps

SERGEANT
Williams, get back here!

Thomas PANTS hard. His FOOTSTEPS speed up.

JACOB
Williams!!

SOUND: A gun shot cracks

SCENE: OPENING (PRE-RECORDED)

MUSIC: Opening theme music with a ghostly twist

THE WATCH

A traveling menagerie of entertainers visits town after town, bringing in their wake thrills, pleasures, drama, heartbreak, and hope. One will experience visions of things astounding and perhaps things strange. One never knows what they may encounter within this peculiar festival; one only knows they will be forever altered in the process. This is... *The Carnival*.

SCENE 2

(Inside of haunted house)

AVA and ALLEN, a couple in their twenties, walk through the house. The floor CREAKS under their feet.

SOUND: An animatronic monster springs to life

AVA

Ugh! I *hate* haunted houses. Stupid animatronic zombies. Why did I let you drag me in here?

ALLEN

For the romantic *tension*.

SOUND: An eerie moan echoes

AVA

What was that?

ALLEN

Probably just another animatronic.

SOUND: Eerie laughter

AVA

What was *that*?

ALLEN

(dramatically)
Easy, babe. I'll protect you.

SOUND: Rustling sound

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALLEN (CONT'D)
That's it. Just squeeze my hand.

Beat.

AVA
I'm not holding your hand...

SOUND: Rushing, spooky wind crescendoing. Then:

THOMAS
(darkly)
Boo.

ALLEN
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!

Allen BANGS into the door as he runs away.

Ava LAUGHS, relieved.

AVA
(sighing)
Thanks for that. I owe you one.
And nice... ghost make-up.

THOMAS
All part of the job.

SOUND: Footsteps leading away

SOUND: Door closing

Leaving in a different direction, Thomas HUMS "All Quiet Along the Potomac Tonight" to himself.

SCENE 3

(The sound transitions to Thomas humming to himself in a back room. The eery echo is replaced by a low, mechanical whirring.)

SOUND: Buttons clicking. Creepy sound effects playing

THE WATCH
A man from a long line of cowards -
trapped spending his days
terrifying random strangers. A
ghost at a carnival. A man
desperate for a change - but
without hope of reaching one.

SOUND: Footsteps approaching. A pointed cough

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOUND: Spinny-chair squeaking

THOMAS
(startled)
Madame Supervisor, ma'am!

SUPERVISOR
Thomas.

THOMAS
Sorry- I... I didn't see you
standing there... In the
shadows... Ghost-like.

SUPERVISOR
You would know.

SOUND: A stack of papers drops onto a table

THOMAS
What are those?

SUPERVISOR
The relocation forms - to request
a change in position. I noticed
you hadn't filled them out yet...

THOMAS
(dejected)
Like you'd ever approve it anyway.

SUPERVISOR
(sincere)
Thomas-

THOMAS
Don't 'Thomas' me. I've filled
those papers out every term, *every*
term. And what happens? *Rejected*.
Do you have any idea how long I've
been stuck here? How long I've
been waiting to move up?

SUPERVISOR
It's not a matter of time, Thomas.

THOMAS
You keep saying that.

SUPERVISOR
And you keep not hearing me.

SOUND: Beeping control board. Distant voices of carnival
goers over surveillance system

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THOMAS

Please... Just tell me straight.
What more do they want from me?
How many more people do I have to
scare before they let me leave
this stupid place?

SUPERVISOR

(quietly)
There can be no relief in
leaving... until you know in your
heart where you are going.

SOUND: Footsteps leading away.

THOMAS

(sarcastic)
Helpful as always.

SCENE 4

(Sound transition to a crowded part of the carnival.)

Footsteps THUD quickly on the ground. KAI (12) PANTS as she runs, her full backpack JANGLING.

THE WATCH

Let me turn your attention to yet
another part of the carnival.

SECURITY GUARD

Kid! Wait - kid!

THE WATCH

A child sprints through the crowds
and around corners, searching for
someplace to hide.

The sounds of the carnival fade. Kai slows to a stop.
She's still PANTING.

SOUND: Distant, spooky howl

Kai STRAINS down to grabs something and throws it,
GRUNTING.

SOUND: Shattering glass

SCENE 5

(Sound transition back to Thomas' mechanical back room)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS

What the-

SOUND: Fiddling with surveillance equipment

SCENE 6

(Sound transition to main part of haunted house.)

SOUND: Surveillance camera swivels

SOUND: Scraping glass

Kai GRUNTS.

THOMAS

(over speakers)

Who dares break into my house?

Kai continues GRUNTING.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I said - **who DARES break into my house?!**

SOUND: Feet hitting ground.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

(breaking character)

You know, I *can* see you on the surveillance cameras.

SOUND: Backpack unzipping. Kai rifling through contents

SOUND: Security camera swivels again

THOMAS (CONT'D)

For the record, we HAVE a front door-

SOUND: Something heavy being thrown

SOUND: Security camera breaking and sparking

SCENE 7

(Sound transition to Thomas' mechanical back room)

SOUND: Electronic devices shutting down

THOMAS

Oh you've gotta be-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOUND: Pushing lifeless buttons

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Ugh! Stupid ankle-biters!

SOUND: Rolling chair pushing out

SOUND: Hurried footsteps

SOUND: Door opening and closing

(Sound transition from back room to main part of haunted house. Eerie wind whistles through eaves.)

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Hello?

Beat.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
I know you're in here! Come out -
or I'll feed you to animatronics.

SOUND: More hesitant footsteps.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Kid?

SOUND: An animatronic monster springs up from out of no where, growling and rattling mechanically.

Thomas SHRIEKS. He lets out a shaky BREATH.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
No wonder people hate coming here.

SOUND: Faster footsteps

SOUND: Shattered glass crunching underfoot

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Where did you go?

SOUND: Heavy door creaking open

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Are you in there? You aren't
supposed to be back there. That
area is blocked off to the public.

SOUND: Thomas entering and closing door behind him

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Kid?

SOUND: Something being pulled out of backpack

KAI

Take one more step and you'll
regret it.

THOMAS

Kid-!

KAI

I mean it, freak. ONE more step.

Thomas hesitates.

THOMAS

That's... an inhaler.

KAI

(darkly)
Yep. And I know how to use it.

THOMAS

You... sure?

Thomas takes a STEP.

SOUND: Inhaler puff

SOUND: Frantic climbing up old wooden crates

THOMAS

Hey! What are you-!?

SOUND: Scampering from crates onto rotting ceiling beams

KAI

I warned you.

THOMAS

Get down from there! You know how
dangerous those ceiling beams are?

KAI

Maybe for someone *your* size.

THOMAS

You come down here *right* now.

KAI

What's the matter? Afraid to come
up after me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SOUND: Creaking beam

THOMAS

No. I just... don't want to.

KAI

Some ghost *you* make.

THOMAS

If you don't come down here in the next ten seconds I'm going to go get security! ... Do you have any idea how much that camera cost?

KAI

Do *you* have any idea how much more I could break if you left me to get security? Alone... unsupervised... with no cameras to catch me?

THOMAS

You wouldn't-

KAI

Try me.

Beat.

SOUND: Crate slowly scraping up against the wall

Thomas sits on it with a SIGH and a creak. He begins to HUM.

KAI

What are you... doing?

THOMAS

Waiting you out. If no one else comes, security does a sweep through at 2 am, just to make sure no crazies are hiding out in here.

KAI

You really gonna wait all night?

THOMAS

You gonna give me a choice?

Beat.

Thomas resumes his humming.

SOUND: Inhaler puff

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You good up there?

KAI

Oh yeah. Totally. My asthma *loves* being chased through a carnival and into a ceiling.

THOMAS

Who were you running from before?

KAI

Security.

THOMAS

You break some of the other attractions too?

KAI

No. They just freaked out because I was here alone.

THOMAS

Shocker. How old are you, anyway? Nine? Ten?

KAI

(offended)

Twelve and a half.

THOMAS

You know, in *my* day, twelve was an age of responsibility and maturity.

KAI

Whatever you say, millennial.

SOUND: Phone beeping

KAI

Dang it. No service in here.

THOMAS

You really think I'd be sitting here all night if there was?

KAI

I don't know. Maybe you're just really dumb.

Sound: Phone turning off

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

THOMAS

Who were you trying to call? Your parents?

KAI

Aliens.

THOMAS

Oh-

Beat.

THOMAS

Do they at least know you're here? Your parents, I mean, not the aliens.

KAI

Nope. They were distracted when I left.

THOMAS

Distracted with what?

KAI

Visiting someone at the hospital.

THOMAS

You left your parents at the *hospital?! With the sawbones?!*

KAI

(indignant)
No - I left them in the waiting room.

SOUND: Feet creaking on ceiling beam

THOMAS

Now what are you doing?

KAI

Looking for some other way out of this place...

SOUND: Heavier creaking

THOMAS

Careful! If you fall down and die I don't know CPR.

Kai SNORTS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

KAI

That's the first scary thing
you've said.

SOUND: Skittering of tiny feet

KAI (CONT'D)

(uncertain)
What was that?

THOMAS

Probably just a rat.

KAI

You have... *rats* in here?

THOMAS

(dramatically)
SOOOOO many rats.

KAI

... Cool!

Kai makes her way across beam.

KAI (CONT'D)

It sounded like it came from over
here...

Beat.

KAI (CONT'D)

Whoa-

THOMAS

What "whoa"?

KAI

There's something wedged up here
behind the beams in the wall. It
almost looks like...

Thomas STANDS quickly.

THOMAS

Wait - Don't touch that -

KAI

It's an old rifle!

THOMAS

I told you not to touch that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

KAI

Why is it in here... is it real?

THOMAS

It's mine and yes. But careful!
It's a family heirloom.

KAI

(flatly)
You hid an heirloom rifle in the
wall at your carnival gig?

THOMAS

Seemed as good a place as any.

SOUND: Fiddling with the rifle

KAI

Does it still work? Is it loaded?

THOMAS

No, of course it's not *loaded*.
What kind of psycho do you think I
am?

KAI

You're *literally* wearing ghost
makeup.

THOMAS

(annoyed)
Not by choice.

SOUND: More fiddling with rifle

KAI

This thing is ancient. Where did
you get it?

THOMAS

My grandfather. That rifle has
been in the Williams family since
before the Civil War.

KAI

This was in the Civil War?

THOMAS

Yes.

KAI

Did it shoot anyone?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

THOMAS

It shot... *at* some people.

KAI

And missed?

THOMAS

You try hitting an enemy target.

SOUND: Inhaler bouncing off Thomas' head and clattering to the ground

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Ow!

(annoyed)

With a *bullet*.

KAI

(superiorly)

Clearly, the inhaler is far better ammunition.

Beat.

SOUND: Thomas sitting back down

KAI (CONT'D)

Your last name is Williams?

THOMAS

Yes... Thomas Williams.

Longer beat.

KAI

I'm Kai.

Beat.

KAI (CONT'D)

Are you going to get in trouble for the window and camera?

Thomas SIGHS.

THOMAS

Maybe. Probably. But it was bound to happen. Just another excuse to keep me in this stupid place.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

KAI

I... I didn't think anyone actually worked here when I broke in... for the record. I thought it just had animatronics and stuff.

THOMAS

Meet the *stuff*.

SOUND: More fiddling with rifle

THOMAS (CONT'D)

If you come down... I can show you how to load it.

Kai LAUGHS suddenly.

KAI

Like I'm falling for that.

SOUND: Shifting sitting positions on ceiling beam

Kai STRAINS.

KAI (CONT'D)

Here. Take it. I'll watch you from up here.

SOUND: Rifle changing hands

THOMAS

What's with the cast?

KAI

Sprained wrist.

THOMAS

That's a big cast for a sprain.

Kai snorts.

KAI

Okay, Dr. Thomas.

SOUND: Rifle turning in hands

THOMAS

Can you see okay from up there?

KAI

I can see you holding the *unloaded* gun like it ate your grandma.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

THOMAS

I'll take that as a yes.

SOUND: Placing the butt of the rifle on the ground

THOMAS (CONT'D)

So, to start off, you'd put the gun like so, between your feet. Then, after you'd bitten the end off, you'd take the cartridge-

KAI

They bit the ends off cartridges?

THOMAS

Unless they had a third hand. Once it was off, you'd pour the gunpowder down the barrel and position the bullet on top.

SOUND: Tapping on the end of barrel

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Then, you'd draw the ramrod out... and ram the bullet down.

SOUND: Pushing the ramrod into the barrel

KAI

Huh...

THOMAS

Finally, once you'd returned the ramrod, you simply primed the rifle and -

SOUND: The rifle cocks, clicking loudly

Thomas SUCKS in his breath. All noise dies instantly.

KAI

Thomas? Are you... alright?

Slowly, Thomas lets out a long, shaky BREATH.

THOMAS

Yeah... yeah. It's just... been a while.

Thomas undoes the mechanism with a much softer CLICK.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

KAI (CONT'D)

You... look like a natural. Your great, great, great, great grandpa must be proud.

THOMAS

(drained)

The Williams in the Civil War didn't live long enough to have kids.

SOUND: Propping the rifle up against the wall

KAI

Which side was he on?

THOMAS

Does it matter?

KAI

Well, depending on the side, at least he could have died a hero.

THOMAS

He didn't die a hero. All right? He died a coward; running away from his troops barely a week before the war ended. Something I'm sure you know all about.

KAI

What's that supposed to mean?

THOMAS

You're running too, right? Right when your parents need you most?

KAI

(darkly)

Shut up.

THOMAS

Oh... so my family's fair game but I can't know about yours?

KAI

It's none of your business.

THOMAS

Why did you run off in the first place? You annoy them to death?

KAI

Shut up! Just *shut up!*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (12)

SOUND: Fist banging against beam. Beam creaking
Beat.

THOMAS
It's time to go home, Kai.

KAI
(sniffing)
What do you know about it?

THOMAS
Whatever happened, surely you can
fix it. Trust me, whatever is
waiting for you at home is better
than being stuck in this place.

KAI
No... it's not.

SOUND: A car backfires from somewhere outside

Kai GASPS, startled. Her BREATHING comes hard and fast.
Slowly... it slows back to normal.

Beat.

THOMAS
Kai... what happened to your arm?

KAI
It doesn't matter.

THOMAS
Is that why you won't go back
home? Because you're afraid?

KAI
(forcefully)
I'm not afraid of *anything*.

THOMAS
Then why are you here? Why aren't
you willing to go home?

KAI
(voice catching)
Cause it's my fault! Okay?! My
brother is lying half-dead in the
hospital and it's my fault!

A long moment.

SOUND: Kai CRIES quietly

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (13)

THOMAS

What... happened?

Beat.

KAI

(through tears)

He was driving me home from soccer practice... and he was being such a jerk - teasing me and taunting me - so I started jabbing at him. And he told me to stop being a punk, so I kept doing it. And just as he swerved this truck came out of nowhere and -

Beat.

THOMAS

It's not your fault.

Kai's lets out a CHOKING LAUGH.

KAI

Of *course* it's my fault. It's *completely* my fault. If I hadn't been such a brat none of this...

Beat.

THOMAS

Do your parents know?

KAI

What was I supposed to say? "Hey mom and dad, I know you're sitting by your son's unconscious body but just thought you'd want to know that I caused it." When the doctor said he was waking up today... I couldn't face them... I couldn't face any of them.

Beat.

THOMAS

You can't stay away forever.

KAI

That's the whole point, right? Run away and join the circus?

(sniffs)

I think I'd rather live the rest of my days stuck in here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (14)

THOMAS
(quietly)
No... you wouldn't.

SOUND: Thomas shifting

THOMAS (CONT'D)
It's not too late.

KAI
What do you mean? Of *course* it's
too late? My brother almost *died*.

THOMAS
I know, Kai, but -

KAI
(angrily)
No, you don't! No one knows! No
one will ever know! Not you, not
my parents, not anyone! It wasn't
even just a mistake. It wasn't
even a bad decision that I can
apologize for. I ruined his life
by being *me*. I can't ever go home.
Not ever. Not ever!

Jacobs's voice rings out, nearly cutting her off.

JACOB
Williams!!

SOUND: A loud GUNSHOT sounds. It echoes for a long moment

THOMAS
(quietly)
I know.

SOUND: Crates creaking and shifting

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Here... Scoot over.

Thomas GRUNTS with effort.

SOUND: The beam creaks weakly

Beat.

THOMAS
You can't... hide from it.

KAI
Who says I'm hiding?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (15)

THOMAS

There's no easy answer, Kai.
Everything that's happened... what
you did and didn't do... it's not
going to go away. No matter what
you do or how far you run... some
choices can't be unmade.

KAI

I thought you climbed up here to
encourage me.

THOMAS

I thought you wanted me to be
honest.

Beat.

KAI

It's been two weeks... and I still
can't look at them. I know and
they don't. And if I go back now
it will only be worse...

THOMAS

Maybe. Probably. My guess is it
will be one of the hardest things
you ever do.

KAI

Then why would do it if I don't
have to?

THOMAS

Because it's not about having
to... it's about getting to.
Getting to go home to a place...
where you don't have to face it
alone.

(beat)

Where no one has to face it alone.

SOUND: Beam shifting

KAI

(thinly)
Will you... go with me?

Beat.

THOMAS

I'll go as far as I can.

SCENE 8

(Sound transition to the entrance of the haunted house.)

THE WATCH

No one expected the runaway girl to return of her own accord. No one knew what to say as they stood with her on the outskirts of the crowd, waiting until her parents came to take her home. From the entrance of the Haunted House, a lone figure watched it all - At least... almost alone.

The Supervisor CLEARS her throat.

Thomas COUGHS. He SNIFFS

THOMAS

(clearing his voice)
Madame Supervisor, ma'am... you're back...

SUPERVISOR

You left your post.

THOMAS

I know... sorry. I know I'm not supposed to but... but I *had* to.

Beat.

SUPERVISOR

I heard about the girl. What she did... and what you said.

THOMAS

(distantly)
She couldn't leave. Not until she could face what she'd done... All of what she'd done...

SUPERVISOR

Sounds familiar.

SOUND: Handing over paperwork

THOMAS

What's... this?

SUPERVISOR

Your relocation approval.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS

But - but I never filled it out.

SUPERVISOR

(chuckling)

You know Thomas, there are a lot of things you've gotten wrong over the years, but there's one thing that you finally got right.

THOMAS

And... what's that?

Beat.

SUPERVISOR

It's time to go home.

SCENE 9

(Sound transition to main area of carnival.)

SOUND: Wheelchair rolling

THE WATCH

One year later, a young girl pushes her older brother through the returned carnival, using her people-skills to carve a path.

KAI

Move it, people! Wheelchair coming through!

JEREMY

(laughing)

Easy there, dork. You're gonna wreck the rest of me.

KAI

Oh, shut up.

SOUND: The wheelchair slows to a stop

JEREMY

You... want me to go in with you?

Beat.

KAI

I think... I'd rather do this alone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

(Sound transition to inside the haunted house.)

KAI (CONT'D)

(calling)

Hello? Thomas?

(beat)

Thomas!

SOUND: Footsteps approach

CARNEY

Hi there. I'm sorry, we're actually closed today to repair some of the animatronics. Is there... something *I* can help you with?

KAI

Oh, that's okay. I'm actually looking for Thomas Williams; the actor who played the ghost last year... I was hoping he might still be working here?

Long beat.

CARNEY

We've never *had* an actor working the haunted house...

MUSIC: up and out

CLOSING CREDITS