

## **The Circus Freak**

*Narrative Dark Ride*

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*(guests enter from the queue into the Big Top.)*

*(In the middle of the arena there is a raised platform, upon which The Ringmaster stands)*

*(The Ringmaster is a giant marionette with a mischievous moustache and top hat)*

*(Everything should be bright and whimsical, but there is a layer of industrial decay overlapping it all)*

RINGMASTER:

Welcome, welcome, one and all to my Big Top!

Here you will be tickled by Carnival Delights which have been thoroughly vetted by a team of Private Investors, to ensure that your experience here is the most statistically fun that it can be!

I am your Ringmaster - your host, your compere, your Tsar!

I like to think of myself as a purveyor of happiness, for you see - within these walls you can forget the troubles of your outside world, and distract yourself with the idle illusions of *entertainment!*

In fact, this is no ordinary circus, you see, for here we do much more than brighten up your days - here we create our own kind of *life!*

Send in the Clowns.

*(Circus mimes break out amongst the crowd with friendly, cutesy interactions.)*

You must have noticed by now that we house no *ordinary* performers here. We have laid claim to the singular best talents in the world of performance! And when those morons didn't return our calls, our corporate overlords got skittish and therefore created specially designed humanoids to populate our marvelous circus!

In short, here in my Big Top, we create our own Clowns. For you see, nobody wishes to be the brunt of anyone else's joke, unless of course, you mold them in the image of a punch-line.

Now you may point and laugh at their misfortune all the livelong day - well, for another eight minutes or so, we do like to run a tight ship here.

Do be a collection of darlings and present your tickets so that we may start the show!

...what's that? None of you have any tickets? Who the heck let you in then!  
Well that's just fine. You may stay, but you'll have to work for me to pay off your debt.  
How much? Oh, a paltry sum. Let's say 500,000 Zollars even.  
It won't take long to pay back - perhaps a decade or two. And there's no time like the present to get started.

CLOWNS. Show them backstage.

*(maniacal laugh... maniacal moustache twirling... )*

*(Lights change, the circus now has an ominous feeling)*

*(Guests seats are brought down to the lower level. They board "Circus Wagons". They are all given clown noses by their mimes, who take their places as the "drivers" of the wagons.)*

*(The circus wagons all have labels on them: i.e. Acrobats, Lion Tamers, Fire Breathers, Clowns, etc.)*

RINGMASTER:

What are you doing? Get into makeup and wardrobe right now - we have another show in approximately 7 minutes and you're all up first as a brand new act!

*(The circus wagons take the audience into the **backstage area**)*

*(the **backstage area** where the audience sees the maltreatment of the circus staff - all performed by animatronics, or puppeteers)*

*(the Circus Wagon goes through the **backstage** through the factory, seeing performers being given cruel commands by The Ringmaster, whose voice is heard from the Circus Wagon speakers)*

RINGMASTER:

Stretch him out further! I need the world's tallest clown for this evening's show, not the world's second tallest! And for God's sake put on a *happy face* about it all! *[to audience]* Don't mind them, they're old news, but you all will be my *new stars*!

*(two puppets are stretching out a third on a steampunk medieval rack)*

*(a more jim carrey energy for this character is at play)*

*(the mimes "leading" the carts attempt to follow everything the Ringmaster says as well)*

*(there are mechanical structures which are reminiscent of steampunk medieval torture devices)*

RINGMASTER:

Over there we have our own power generator! It's state of the art and a *must* for the circus, due to the nature of apocalyptic rolling blackouts. So long as little Grindle over there keeps up on that single-lever crank, we'll have power all the livelong da - *hey*, I better not see that lever drop

below 60 rpm! Put your back into it! Ugh, some clowns don't know the value of hard work, I'll just have to put him on another 24 hour shift so that he can *learn*.

RINGMASTER:

You see? Making someone into a Clown is *easy*. You just need to know how to *motivate* someone.

RINGMASTER:

Are you still not changed? What have you been doing all this time? Just listening to me talk? Can't you multitask? I thought that was on your resume under special skills - right next to *hurrying it up!*

*(The entrance to the **Hall of Greats** has posters of the Circus' golden hay day. There's a Clown behind a Flash Lamp Camera amongst the statues of Great Performers.)*

RINGMASTER:

Can you smell it in the air? Ahh, the savory aroma of nostalgia. Nothing quite like it; just as none have ever compared to the legends you see before you. There were the Helix Twins, high flying trapeze artist sisters - they were marvelous, until they lost their grip. Then there was Hercules 2, the *second* strongest man in the world, crushed by his ambition to become the first. And of course, Leonhart the lion tamer. He died of Pneumonia.

There was *one* who could have outshined them all... but that *Freak* is long gone... and as for you? Well I hope for your sake that you have what it takes to measure up.

RINGMASTER:

But first! We need to get your picture for processing. Make like a good little Clown... and *smile*.

*(A Flash! The audience sees smoke go up from the camera, and they're sent along).*

*(The **Funhouse** is a long hallway, taking the audience from room to room. The rooms all emulate different Carnival attractions like warped mirrors, and more.)*

RINGMASTER:

A dash of powder... some special makeup for the illusion of "individuality" - maybe a wig? No? Hang on, where are my scissors...

RINGMASTER:

Our methods may be a bit unusual, but don't you fret - you'll be clowning around in no time!

RINGMASTER:

We're getting there but we're missing something... something with "broader audience appeal" like... a giant head maybe?

*(the Circus Wagon rolls onto a freight elevator taking the audience up to the second floor of the **Funhouse**.)*

*(There are flashing and rotating lights, while the audience climbs higher)*

*(there is a Hidden Message which reads "Find the Freak")*

*(the second level opens up to a candy stripe hypnotizing tunnel)*

*(The audience emerges from the tunnel into a room with a large "Mirror")*

RINGMASTER:

All right then. Let's get a good look at you and see if you're ready for the Big Top, Big Leagues, Kids!

*(The mirror displays the audiences "processing photos" from downstairs, but with all the members of each Circus Wagon having been "clownified" or putting their faces in "Face-in-hole" tableaux)*

RINGMASTER:

Hmph. Not nearly as funny as I thought. For your own good, I hope you aren't cut from the same cloth as that *Freak*... no matter. There's still time to prove your monetary value provided that you do not deviate from the norm. Head back down and rehearse for your act. I'm sure you need the practice.

*(The audience's wagon pulls through a new door into a gritty, checkered-tiled hallway. On the walls, shadow puppets of important doctors have heated conversations.)*

*(Above an open door is a Marquee that reads: Operating Theatre. Now Showing: Free Will Surgery)*

*(The audience's Circus Wagons sneak into the room, and they circle around an operating table with a clown on it, the walls have more shadow puppet doctors milling around)*

*(The Ringmaster's voice blares over all the speakers)*

RINGMASTER:

I thought I told you all - Five minutes to places! I -

No - no - no - no - no - no - NO!

You are NOT supposed to be in here. This is not meant for your eyes!

Oh, and you had such promise too... just like that *other Freak*.

This is all *your* fault! If you had just done as you were told, none of this would be happening!

You've brought this on yourself, I have no other choice. Down you go, with the rest of the *outdated acts*...

*(the freight elevator takes each wagon down to the **Jail**)*

*(In the freight elevator there's a pratfall with the wagon, and the illusion of dropping down deep)*

RINGMASTER:

And here you'll stay with the rest of the *failures*.

Now if you'll excuse me, I have a show to put on.

*(Here the mimes indicate for the audience to exit the wagon, which is taken away on a track after the freight doors close)*

*(The lighting in the **Jail** is minimal, and the area is full of jail cells with other Clowns. The back wall has an illusion of a never-ending hallway of cells)*

*(The mimes guide the whole audience into one large jail cell. At the back of the cell, on a bench, playing a harmonica - is the Freak. The Freak is a medium-sized puppet, who looks half-complete and half-confused, with a big red nose and a heart of gold.)*

*(The Freak, once the audience is focused on him, tears away a "poster" to reveal a gaping hole in the wall. The Freak and the Mimes guide the audience through the hole and into the **Storage Room**.)*

*(The **Storage Room** is full of shelves with old circus props, some rusty, all covered in dust. In the middle of the room is an old Circus Cannon. The Freak attempts to move it but cannot. The Mimes help him. The Freak grabs other props off of the old shelves, including a giant "Admit One" ticket, and hands them to the Mimes.)*

*(The Freak guides the audience through the **Storage Room** to a near, ceiling-high wall of old props. The Freak goes to push again, lifting some props, and seeming hopeless. He kicks the base of the wall of props at the base, and the wall splits apart - revealing it was made of cardboard. The Freak shrugs.)*

*(At the end of the **Storage Room** the audience is outside the tent of the **Big Top**. The Freak climbs a ladder meant only for him, and indicates to the audience from his vantage point that they should head through the candy-stripe curtains. The Freak climbs higher and disappears)*

*(The Audience, with the mimes rolling the Big Canon emerge into the **Big Top** where the Ringmaster is snoring in the middle of the ring. The Mimes line up the canon. Then they pick one*

*audience member. The other mimes roll up the Admit One ticket and turn it into the Cannon's fuse. The Mime has the one audience member rub their hands together to create "friction" or light the fuse. The other mime has the other audience members "whistle" to get the Ringmaster's attention).*

*(The cannon hisses while the Ringmaster is speaking).*

RINGMASTER:

You lot! What are you doing out of the basement? I already stamped your paperwork and everything. Have you been disobeying my rules? Don't you know that gums up the works! I am your Ringmaster, I am the one in charge, and you are not permitted to -  
What is making that sound?

Oh.

*(The cannon goes off like a confetti cannon, blasting the Ringmaster with tons of Admission Tickets. He is buffeted, but unharmed).*

RINGMASTER:

So. You thought you'd play a trick on me, eh? The duke of deceit. The emperor of illusions. The master of misdirection!

*(The Freak appears on a walkway behind the Ringmaster, midway up the **Big Top** with a spotlight. He walks along the grate walkway toward a flipswitch on the wall above).*

RINGMASTER:

I suppose there will always be a need for good, old-fashioned, discipline -

*(The Ringmaster goes to swipe at the audience with his arm, but the Freak switches the wall toggle and the arm flops down - limp, and useless).*

RINGMASTER:

What? What's going on? Fine. I can always use my other -

*(The Freak flips the other wall switch, and the other arm goes slack.)*

RINGMASTER:

How? This can't be! Unless... ? Are you working with that *Freak*?

*(In response, another toggle flips and the Ringmaster's head droops down)*

RINGMASTER:

No - no - no! This can't be how it ends! I've given everything to this Circus, just to have it all undone by a bunch of *Freaks*? Wait - let's cut a deal! I'll make you all stars in the circus - producers, executive producers even! We can even split the merchandising profits, 70-30... 60-40... 50-50?

*(The final switch flips and the whole Ringmaster sparks and deflates, with smoking billowing out from underneath him - his speech slurs and comes to a stop).*

*(The Freak bows from his place up top on the walkway, and raises his hands to conduct the band in a triumphant melody. The Freak claps his hands twice and a large EXIT sign, illuminates with big red bulbs, guiding the audience out of the ride. The Freak waves and conducts, the Mimes wave and smile. The audience exits. End.)*