

## Irrational Logic

“Welcome! Welcome! Welcome to the carnival. Welcome! Welcome! Welcome to the carnival,” an enormous animatronic human hand statue repeated monotonously. A tattered purple sash with golden lettering clung to its palm.

“M-A-Y-O-R,” my younger sister Alice spelled carefully, “What does that say?” A chilly wind whipped her words away, scattering them about the abandoned amusement park in a ferocious echo. A purple top hat with a gold band was perched atop the hand’s pinky, but time had concealed any elegance the hat once held. I imagined it must have been a glorious sight years ago. Today however, the hand’s fingers drooped as if it were slouching, and the waving gold band emitted a vibe similar to that of a forfeited battle. Perhaps it was only in combination with the sight of the rusting amusement park that lay before us that created this stale impression. I forced myself to abandon these thoughts, recognizing that my conclusions as to why the park seemed so eerie were undoubtedly basic and likely irrelevant. Yes, it was clear the park’s eeriness, like most things in life, was much deeper than what I could observe from this distance. I tried to keep this thought molded in my mind as an obvious example of misjudgement. I already knew the park had secrets, yet for some reason I still found myself believing that I could pinpoint it’s demeanor with just a quick glance. Suddenly, my tangent was broken by a bolt of lightning. It illuminated the forest just a few hundred yards behind us and caused Alice to jump nearly two feet into the air before landing in my arms. Thunder and a drenching rain quickly followed. Alice and I took cover beneath the strange hand-statue. Its voice droned on despite the rain, repeating it’s message dutifully.

“W-was that the signal?” Alice asked, her voice trembling.

“I can’t say for certain, but I believe it was,” I murmured, pulling her in close. If only the small bottled message Alice had received just a week earlier had been more specific. I pulled the small, tattered scroll out of my pocket and read, “*There is a place where no one goes; a hole in the ground where no one knows. If you’re longing for escape, or just a place to hang your cape then call us home. Signed, the Runaway Rabbits*”. A follow up note had informed us to “*Meet when the hands point to the sky.*” I reminded myself it was all a bunch of nonsense; the Runaway Rabbits were not real. If they were then why had they never come looking for me?

“Welcome! Welcome! Welcome to the car-carnival. Welcome! Welcome!”

“Did you hear that?” Alice shouted over the storm, “the hand’s message! It’s changed!”

“It’s just the rain, Alice. All this water has probably drowned its batteries. There’s no time for nonsense, we need to find shelter! Clearly the Runaway Rabbits are just a fairytale.”

“Welcome! Welcome! Welcome to the car-carnival! Welcome!”

“There it is again!” Alice screamed, “the Carl carnival!”

“Alice don’t be sill-”

“WELCOME! WELCOME! WELCOME TO THE CARLIN-C-CARNIVAL!” the hand rose out of its slouch, sending Alice and I toppling to the ground. As it rose up, its fingers seemed to shoo the horrendous storm clouds away. The sky cleared immediately, and an upbeat organ tune filled the air.

“Welcome to the Carlin’s Carnival!” the hand announced.

“Who is Carlin?” Alice asked, turning to face me.

“I haven’t a clue, but shall we go find him?” I said, gesturing towards a rusted entrance sign.

“Only if we can ride the ferris wheel first!” Alice squeaked.

“Race you there!” I replied, but upon taking my first step, I felt my feet being lifted off of the ground. Before I could blink, we were launched into the air. Miraculously landing in the top seats of the ferris wheel, Alice and I turned in unison to see what had sent us flying so quickly. The hand was frozen in mid-throw. The wheel jolted forward and Alice clapped her hands with excitement.

“Look!” shouted Alice, a wide grin consuming her small face, “it’s a rabbit!” I squinted in the direction of her pointed finger.

“I don’t see anything,” I said truthfully.

“You don’t see that?” whispered Alice cautiously.

“Alice, cut it out, you’re really starting to scare me,” I nudged her.

“OUCH!” She cried, over exaggerating just like I knew she would.

“You really have no problem believing a gigantic robotic hand just shot us fifty feet in the air, but you think I’m lying about seeing a rabbit? I see one, just over there!” Alice argued.

“Oh stop, the technology required for that hand has been around for hundreds of years. As for the mysterious rabbit, I know you think it’s one of them, but I’m warning you, it isn’t. Don’t go getting your hopes up like you always do,” I scolded her, but I silently hoped she was right.

“Now look what you’ve done. You’ve gone and scared him away! Now we’ll never find them,” she whined.

“Oh nonsense,” an unfamiliar voice coaxed slyly. Alice turned to find the face of the voice, I followed her eyes but saw nothing. She, on the other hand, saw something, for her hand clung to her open mouth as she sat staring at the stranger in shock.

“A-are you a Runaway Rabbit?”

“Not only am I a Runaway Rabbit,” said the voice, “but I am the conductor of the Runaways.”

“Alice, who on Earth are you talking to?” my face must have been as pale as a cotton swab. This state of confusion quickly turned to rage as my eyes darted vigorously from side to side, searching for some kind of explanation.

“She’s talking to me my dear friend, and it is indeed a disappointment that you yourself cannot see me, for I am quite the sight for sore eyes. My, my your eyes do look sore. Maybe come and have a rest in the rabbit hole while I show young Alice here around? You won’t mind will you? There’s really no use watching if you can’t see. That’s a good lesson for life! No use watching if you can’t see. I should really write that down. Except it’s missing the ever so important detail which is that it isn’t per se that you can’t see, it’s simply that you won’t see. At any rate, we’re quite the performers, the only issue is that our tricks all

focus on visuals. Really is a shame. I've considered adopting some new routines to accommodate for folks like you, but we don't get many visitors of your kind back here. Maybe there's still hope. Maybe if just one of you can see... Ah but it's no use, you're all the same once your brains are fully formed," the rabbit rushed, blabbering on at a million miles a minute.

"If you don't mind my saying, Mr. Runaway sir, I don't think my sister is quite like you say she is. Perhaps you can teach her to see?"

"Please call me Ralph. Alice," Ralph softened his voice to a whisper, and as if he believed I could no longer hear him stated, "You must understand that people go mad trying to make sense of our troupe. As the carnival's Carlin it is my duty to ensure that no one is hurt here. This place is not for the overly analytical or rational."