

Goosebumps SLAPPY WORLD

**PLEASE DO NOT FEED
THE WEIRDO**

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I took a big bite of the fluffy blue candy. I could feel the powdery sugar stick to my face.

Karla pointed to the cone in my hand. “Jordan, you have a spider in your cotton candy,” she said.

I let out a loud “ULLLLLLLP!” and the cone went flying into the air. I watched it land with a soft *plop* onto the pavement.

Karla tossed back her head and laughed. “You’re too easy!”

Mom shook her head. “Karla, why are you always scaring your brother?”

She grinned. “Because it’s fun?”

Grumbling to myself, I bent down and picked the cotton candy off the ground. Some of the blue stuff stuck to my sneakers. I took another bite anyway.

Some kids like to be scared and some don’t. And I totally don’t. I saw the Tunnel of Fear up ahead, and I knew Karla would force me to go in there with her.

My name is Jordan Keppler, and I'm twelve, a year older than Karla. I don't like to brag, but . . . I get better grades than Karla, and I'm better at sports than Karla, and I have more friends than Karla does.

So just because she likes scary things doesn't make her any kind of big deal.

I looked all around. Carnival World was crowded because it was a beautiful spring night. I saw dozens of kids on the boardwalk, going from the game booths to the rides. And I knew a lot of them were walking right *past* the Tunnel of Fear because they were like me.

What's the fun of screaming your head off, anyway?

I tossed my cotton candy cone in a trash can. "Where's that ride with the swings that go really high?" I asked.

"You mean that baby ride in the kiddie park?" Karla said.

Dad leaned over and took a big bite of Karla's cotton candy. "If you two want to go into the Tunnel of Fear, Mom and I will wait here," he said.

"No thanks," I said. "I'll wait out here, too."

Karla pressed her hands against her waist and tossed back her curly red hair. "Well, I'm not going in alone, Jerkface."

"Don't call your brother names," Mom said.

"I didn't," Karla replied. "That *is* his name." She thinks she's so smart and funny.

“Don’t make your sister go in there alone,” Dad said. He put his hands on my shoulders. “Jordan, you’re not scared, are you?”

He *knew* I was scared. Why bother to ask?

“Of *course* I’m not scared,” I said. “It’s just that . . . I ate all that cotton candy. I have to sit down and digest it.”

I know. I know. That was lame. You don’t have to tell me.

Karla grabbed my hand and tugged me hard toward the entrance. “Come on, Jordan. We don’t come to the carnival very often. We have to do *everything*.”

I turned back to Mom and Dad. They were both making shooing motions with their hands. They were no help at all.

Don’t get me wrong. I love Carnival World. I love the dart games and the corn dogs on a stick and the Ferris wheel and the Dunk-the-Clown water tank.

There are only two things I don’t love. The rollercoaster rides that make you go upside down. And the Tunnel of Fear. And somehow—thanks to my sister—I knew I had both of those in my *near* future.

Karla and I walked up the wooden ramp to the tunnel entrance. “See you later!” I heard Mom shout. “If you survive!”

Ha. She and Karla have the same sick sense of humor.

Purple and red lights flashed all around us, and I heard deep, evil laughter—horror-movie laughter—echoing inside the tunnel. And screams. Lots of shrill screams. I couldn't tell if they were recorded or if they were from real people inside the ride.

Karla gave the young guy at the entrance two tickets, and he motioned us to the open cars. They were moving slowly along a track toward the dark cave opening where the ride began.

She pushed me into a car and slid in beside me. "This is so cool," she gushed. "We should have brought a barf bag for you."

Ha again.

"It's all fake," I said. "It's all babyish scares. Too phony to be scary. Seriously."

Wish I had been right about that.

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As we rolled into total blackness, the door on our moving car slammed shut. A safety bar dropped down over our legs.

The car spun quickly, then slid along an invisible track beneath us. I gripped the safety bar with both hands. My eyes squinted into the darkness. I couldn't see a thing—

—Until a grinning skull shot down from above. It stopped an inch from my face, and its jagged, broken teeth snapped up and down as shrill laughter floated out.

I gasped. I didn't scream. I gripped the safety bar a little tighter.

Something damp and sticky brushed my face. I raised both hands to swipe at it, to try to push it off me.

Beside me, Karla laughed. "Yucky cobwebs," she said. She poked me. "And you know if there are cobwebs, there has to be . . ."

She didn't need to say it. At least a dozen rubbery, fat black spiders bounced over the car. I tried to brush them off my face, but there were too many of them.

The car spun again, and I stared into a wall of darkness. Were there other people in the tunnel? I couldn't see them and I couldn't hear them.

Karla screamed as a huge, caped vampire jumped into our car. "*I want to drink your blooooooood!*" it exclaimed. The vampire lowered its fangs to Karla's neck—but then disappeared.

Karla shuddered. She grabbed my sleeve. "That was creepy."

"It's all computer graphics," I said. I was trying to be the brave one. But to be honest, my stomach was doing cartwheels and my throat was suddenly as dry as the cotton candy.

Then evil cackling surrounded our car, and we jolted to a stop. I rocked against the safety bar, then bounced back.

The cackling stopped.

Silence.

I heard a high-pitched scream. A girl's scream that echoed off the tunnel walls.

We sat in solid darkness. My heart started to pound.

"Think there's something wrong?" I whispered. My hands were suddenly cold and sweaty on the safety bar.

“We definitely stalled,” Karla said. “Unless maybe this is all part of the ride. You know. An extra-thrill part.” Typical Karla. Now she didn’t sound scared at all.

My heart was pounding. “It’ll probably start back up, right?”

“For sure,” she said.

So we waited. Waited and listened. Listened to the heavy silence.

No voices or music or sounds from the carnival on the other side of the walls. The only thing I could hear was the throb of blood pulsing in my ears.

We waited some more.

“Cold in here,” Karla murmured. “Like a tomb.” She hugged herself.

“You don’t think that girl’s scream was a real scream—do you?” I whispered. My skin prickled.

“Why doesn’t the ride start up again?” Karla whispered back, ignoring my question.

“Why are we whispering?” I asked.

Even our whispers echoed in the black tunnel.

I spread my hand over my chest. I could feel my fluttering heartbeat. I had tried to be brave. But . . . I knew I was about to lose it.

I could feel a scream forming in my throat. Feel all my muscles tighten. Feel the panic creeping up from my stomach.

How long had we been waiting in the cold, silent darkness? Ten minutes? Fifteen? More?

I gripped the safety bar so hard my hands ached. “Hey!” I shouted. “Is anyone *else* in here? Can anyone hear me? Hey!”

No answer. No one.

“I think we’re the only car in here,” Karla said. “Creepy, huh?”

“Can anyone hear me?” I shouted again, my voice high and shrill. “Who is in here with us? Anyone here?”

Silence.

“Hey! We need help—”

I couldn’t finish my cry. Fingers wrapped around my neck from behind. Cold, bone-hard fingers . . . tightening . . . tightening. I tried to scream. But the fingers were so tight, I couldn’t make a sound!