

CLOWNS

I spontaneously bought tickets to the circus recently because I hadn't been to one since I was a kid. Afterward, I went to get the person I had been happily dating for years to ask him, as a surprise, to join me. But when I so unexpectedly arrived, I found him with my replacement. They were sitting in his bed eating my favorite peanut butter ice cream. I turned and immediately walked out in shock, and went to the circus alone to console myself with greasy, over-salted popcorn.

Many different circus events could be seen from where I sat on my hard bleacher, but most were too far away to be clear to me. I became interested in watching other spectators, mainly because there were a lot of cute kids enjoying themselves. Parents were pleased to see their kids happy. I imagined people may have wondered why I chose to go to the circus alone. Generally, I'm too self-conscious to go to a public event by myself, and have never even gone to a movie alone because I would feel friendless. But here I was truly friendless and not feeling anything yet.

Sometimes it's lonelier to be with someone than to be by yourself. There are people who do not make pleasant companions, either because they've never practiced having conversations and don't understand the composition of everyday discussions, or because they're self-absorbed and ignore you, or because they're unable or afraid to be honest about their feelings for fear of rejection. They keep their bodies moving and talk about their bodies moving, so their minds don't have time to think. They have a mixture of vanity and insecurity, and are always in the mode of trying to impress everybody for constant reinforcement. This type of person wants you to think he has no flaws and, if he were to continue to relate to people in this manner, he will eventually convince himself that it's true and will become unable to accept the fact that reality is otherwise. When a person lies about his personality it, like lying about anything else, gradually and unconsciously becomes easier to lie in general. Likewise, the more someone repeats a false statement, the more convinced he is that the statement is true. Therefore, he's

comfortable telling the lie and the harder it is for the listener to detect the lie. Although, the more honest the listeners, the less likely they are to consider that they're being lied to in the first place, especially if it's about the simplest things. I was pondering these ideas as I sat at the circus watching the clowns come out, and I started to wonder where to draw the line between believing what you hear, possibly showing naiveté which makes one gullible, and being cautious of everything you're told, and therefore too skeptical, paranoid or accusatory.

The clowns began interacting with the children, much to the kids' enjoyment. Personally, I never liked the clowns. I see clowns the same way I see most dolls and other masks. While they're made to amuse people, they can also be the most frightening things in our lives. It seems they may know things about us, or do things that affect us when we are not looking or aware, and we are never the wiser, because when we look at them they can stare off in silent disguise. Sometimes if you look away from a clown or a doll you can almost fool it. It thinks you are preoccupied with your own thoughts and it starts to play its haunting games. Then you snap your head back when least expected, and you can almost catch it before it gets back behind its innocent gaze. I realize many a child has been comforted in the company of such a confidante, appreciating the quality of the listener and the sincerity with which it treasures secrets, but I'm sure it's rare to find such a companion that doesn't deceive when it's left alone.

I finally realized why many of the littlest kids seemed to think the clowns were the best part of the circus. The clowns are the only event that brings the action right up to the bleachers, and captures everyone's attention. The happy clowns were well received because these kids didn't come to a circus to watch someone cry or be sad. One happy clown walked past, then shortly after turned and walked back. He was now a sad clown. He stopped and looked up into the crowd. Half of his face was made up to be a happy clown and the other side sad, which I found interesting and appropriate. Nothing in life can be coined as simply good or bad. Think of riding the biggest roller

coaster at an amusement park. We anticipate the fun and are quite calm or maybe apprehensive going uphill, then excited and energetic coming down. Afterwards we are exhilarated, but not necessarily satisfied. Once we get a small taste of the excitement coming down the largest drop, the other turns and falls aren't enough. When the ride is quickly over we get back in line again. If every thrill were as big as the first, and lasted longer, we would be fulfilled and not ride again for some time. That is not the case, which engineers of amusement park rides obviously fully understand. Although we look at the short thrill as fun, the ride is inwardly frustrating and leaves you wanting more, but most people do not realize that, or bother considering it. Many people look at the surface, and as long as things don't disrupt their every day lives, it's easier to live with the circumstances, and convince themselves they're satisfied, than to consider a change.

Maybe the particular actor playing the clown with two personalities wasn't sure whether he was happy or sad. It struck me then that maybe he wasn't an actor, and that's when I decided I did like this one clown in particular. He was wondering if someone would figure out that he was real and accept both sides of him and I did. On one side he was smiling and content. But at the same time, he wasn't able to hide that he had a lonely and sad side. Many clowns may feel sad, but they put on the faces of happy clowns to win the hearts of spectators. If they get to a point where they decide to admit they're not happy, no one would believe them because the smile is perpetually plastered on their faces. Eventually, they lose the ability to show the emotion at all, and it shrinks up inside them. They have made fake friends in the process who will not accept the real person inside so they live a lie, not willing to risk giving up the fake friends.

When all the other clowns go to the dressing room to remove their make-up and go back to their roller coaster lives, they will not see this clown at the mirror. They will only see their own false faces. This clown has no make-up to remove. Although he is not as popular as the other clowns, he will betray no one, because he doesn't cover up

his true self with a convincing lie. He will not be caught hiding in a dark corner
lamenting and then jump out with a big smile on his face trying to assure you otherwise.
He wanders around the circus as his real self, unafraid to take a chance and show it,
waiting to be recognized, accepted, and someday loved by one, true friend.