

THE GREATEST SHOW (LEFT) ON EARTH

by

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EXT. CIRCUS TENT - NIGHT

An enormous CANVAS TENT stands at the center of a circle of smaller tents and wagons. The CIRCUS is in town.

A CROOKED MAN hobbles alone, wearing a CRACKED WHITE MASK. He pauses in front of a SIGN, wipes away the dust.

The sign reads: THE GREATEST SHOW (LEFT) ON EARTH

The sign is relatively new, standing in sharp contrast with the distant POST-APOCALYPTIC RUINS.

The Crooked Man hobbles toward the main tent.

INT. CIRCUS TENT - NIGHT

HARRY (late 30's) balances on a tiny platform, bound with ropes, chains, and handcuffs.

The platform is the center of a DEATH TRAP: nails in baseball bats, shards of broken glass, rusty knives, all held at bay by a series of ropes and pulleys.

A CANDLE burns beneath the one rope that holds the instruments of death at bay.

NATHAN (9) is Harry's only audience. The boy stands by a sign that reads: HARRY WEISZ, MASTER OF ELUSION.

Harry struggles against his restraints. Time is running out.

SNAP! The flame severs the last strand of rope. The death contraption COLLAPSES on Harry.

But he's not there.

Harry stands on the ground, unbound. He bows.

NATHAN
Close one, Dad.

HARRY
Not at all.

CROOKED MAN (O.S.)
You call that entertainment?

The Crooked Man emerges from the shadows, hobbles toward Harry. Nathan resets the trap as the older men speak.

(CONTINUED)

CROOKED MAN
The audience demands more.

HARRY
Risking my life isn't enough?

The Crooked Man glances toward Nathan.

HARRY
No. Absolutely not.

CROOKED MAN
(menacing)
I'm not asking. Add him to the
show, or you're out.

The Crooked Man turns his back on Harry, hobbles away.

INT. HARRY'S TENT - NIGHT

Nathan sleeps beside Harry. Harry lies awake, his face full
of worry.

A RUSTLING SOUND outside.

Harry sits up, peeks into the darkness. A HOODED FIGURE
stands a few yards away, staring right at him.

Harry slips outside without waking Nathan.

EXT. HARRY'S TENT - NIGHT

Standing next to the stranger, Harry looks like a peasant in
the presence of royalty.

HARRY
What do you want, Clem?

The figure draws back its hood, revealing a FEMININE face
that was beautiful once. Now it's all SORES and BOILS.

CLEM
You know why I'm here.

HARRY
The answer is still no.

CLEM
You know we can give him a better
life. A safer life.

(CONTINUED)

HARRY
By renting him out?

CLEM
A small price to pay for his
safety. Our customers aren't cruel,
Harry. Just lonely.

HARRY
It's abhorrent.

Clem looks pointedly around.

CLEM
I can think of worse conditions.
(beat) Our offer stands.

She pulls up her hood and disappears into the night.

INT. HARRY'S TENT - NIGHT

Harry stands over Nathan, watches his son sleep.

He moves to a LOCKED WOODEN CHEST at the rear of the tent.
He unlocks it, revealing a BATTERED METAL SUITCASE.

Harry looks from the suitcase to his son.

INT. CROOKED MAN'S WAGON - NIGHT

A RAPPING at door.

The Crooked Man struggles to his feet, hobbles to the door.
Harry stands just outside.

HARRY
Tomorrow night, Nathan performs
with me. You'll get your show.

EXT. CIRCUS TENT - NIGHT

The Crooked Man BARKS at the crowd, drawing them toward the
tent. He collects items from them as admission: a can of
food, a book of matches, a winter coat.

Harry's sign sits on the ground by the entrance to the tent.
The words "AND SON" have been added after his name.

INT. CIRCUS TENT - NIGHT

The crowd MURMURS in the darkness. They settle as a CIRCLE OF LIGHT appears in the center ring, illuminating the Crooked Man.

CROOKED MAN

Ladies and Gentleman. What you are about to see will shock you.

The circle of light expands, revealing Harry's DEATH TRAP.

CROOKED MAN

The greatest escape artist alive will risk his very life, tonight, for your entertainment.

Harry steps into the light. A smattering of applause.

CROOKED MAN

But, wait! There's more. Tonight you will be privy to something truly amazing. Tonight, you will bear witness as he initiates his son, a mere child, into his dark art.

Nathan steps into the light, stands beside his father.

That draws the applause he was looking for. The Crooked Man dons a crooked smile.

CROOKED MAN

Without further adieu, ladies and gentlemen, I give you... THE MASTER OF ELUSION!

The Crooked Man steps out of the light, leaving Harry and Nathan alone before the hungry crowd.

Harry lets them settle into silence. He finds Clem in the audience, locks eyes with her, then nods to his son.

Nathan steps into the darkness. He returns with the METAL SUITCASE, which he places on a small wooden table.

HARRY

The contraption you see behind me was constructed with one purpose and one purpose only. Night after night, I have prostrated myself before Death, daring him to claim me. He has failed.

(CONTINUED)

Harry pauses for effect. He opens the suitcase.

HARRY

Tonight, I shall tempt Death with
the one thing he cannot refuse: the
life of my son.

The Crooked Man nods, approving. Clem looks on with disgust.

Harry looks down at Nathan with an expression of
overwhelming love. He gestures for his son to come closer.

HARRY

Behold, the greatest escape ever.

The audience's anticipation is palpable. Their depraved
expressions reveal their true desire: disaster.

Harry reaches into the suitcase. A soft CLICK.

Nothing happens.

Harry steps forward with Nathan. They bow. Harry pulls his
son into a tight embrace.

An ANGRY MURMUR rolls through the audience.

The Crooked Man frowns. He hobbles to the table, looks
inside the open suitcase.

The interior contains a broken switch, wires, and a silver
cylinder marked with a radiation symbol. A SUITCASE NUKE.

A digital display counts down: 9, 8, 7...

The Crooked Man looks up, stunned. Harry's eyes are closed
as he cradles his son in his arms.

NATHAN

What now, Dad?

HARRY

Now, we escape.

The digital display continues to countdown. 3, 2, 1...

Wind. Fire. Cloud.

FADE TO WHITE