

THE CLOWN IN THE WOODS

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I'm not sure why I started watching the Holtman Family. I guess I was just bored. I was collecting unemployment and was tired of sitting in my apartment all day. I needed low-cost entertainment and this was it. Truth is, being a peeping Tom is really pretty boring, cause most people are pretty boring. Not much exciting happening. I kind of have a thing for the mom and daughter. She's had her boobs done and goes to the gym like every day. The daughter is in high school. I figure she'll pretty much follow in mom's footsteps.

I just sit on my stool in the woods on their property and watch them until it gets dark, then I really get close. Sometimes I'll sit only ten feet from the window and watch them. I'm not sure of the boy's name. I know the wife is named Janice and the husband is named Mark. They seem like a very well-to-do, All-American couple. The daughter is Jennifer. Then there's me, my name is Woodrow. Everyone calls me Woody. I never did ask my parents why they named me Woodrow. I figured if they did, their reasoning would only anger me more. I've always been a Woody. I always will be a Woody.

I was kind of getting bored with the family. Mark was never around and Janice and the daughter wouldn't ever have anything to do with me, so I kind of felt like I was wasting my time with the whole stalking thing. I didn't have a game plan with them. I guess it was just like watching really, really bad reality TV.....and I do mean really bad. That's when I noticed the little man in the woods next to the wood pile. I wasn't sure at first. It was dark and raining. He didn't see me, but I saw him. Yes, sir, I saw him as plain as day. I wasn't really sure what the proper etiquette and decorum is in situations like this. I mean, how does one stalker tell another stalker that this family is already taken? I figured the only way to get my point across was to confront him right then and there and make my intentions perfectly clear.

The Holtman Family was off-limits to everyone, but me. No ifs ands or buts about it.

I decided to confront him behind the small metal barn in their backyard. I had my knife with me, I just had to hope the man could be reasoned with. I turn the corner and what I saw shocked me. This freak was dressed up like a clown. More like a court jester from the middle ages. The kind that provided comic relief for the king and queen. I just kind of froze. He was barely five feet tall. I had over a foot on him and nearly a hundred pounds. I looked like a giant compared to him. His face and teeth were hideous.

He looked like a troll in a clown suit.

We just looked at one another for a moment. I could see he was carrying some kind of weird dagger in a sheath on his side. I figured I would get right to the point.

"What are you doing?" I asked

The clown said nothing and just continued to stare at me.

"I said.....what are you doing? This family belongs to me. I'm watching them. Go find another family to stalk."

The man moved closer to me. I had my hand on my knife. I was ready to go.

"Woody, Woody. You disappoint me. I was expecting so much better from you." said the clown. His voice sounded like that of a hundred-year-old man. It was very unnerving.

"How do you know my name?"

"I've been watching you too now for quite some time. I think you're ready to take the next step." the clown creaked.

"What next step?"

"Come on Woody. You and I both know what I'm talking about."

"No, I don't. I just watch. That's all I do. There's no harm in that." I say

"You aren't watching them. You're stalking them. Big difference."

"They're just my entertainment for the evening. I don't have a lot of money. Now, if you don't mind. I'd like you to leave, so I can enjoy the rest of my evening."

"You know Woody. The worst lies in the world are the ones we tell ourselves. They're the ones that really hurt." said the clown.

"What did you mean when you said you were watching me?"

"I'm always watching you, Woody. Watching and waiting. Watching and waiting for you to take the next step. That's why I'm here. To hold your hand during this very difficult time. I want you to become the person you were meant to be." said the clown.

I was scared now, I'm not going to lie. This little freak had thrown me off my game. I also knew he wasn't going to go anywhere. Problem was, I just couldn't leave the family alone with this whacko out here. I had to warn them before I left.

"I want you out of here. I've been watching this family for three months. I've grown rather fond of them." I said.

"Oh.....my dear child. I've been watching them since the day they were born," he said grinning from ear to ear.

I watched him disappear into the darkness and never looked back.

The Holtman Family needed me now more than ever. I wasn't about to let my adopted family down.

It was people like this guy that gave the rest of us stalkers a bad name.

Two nights later I was back out there. It was more for the concern of the family than my own enjoyment, I waited and waited for hours, walking and stumbling all over the property, hoping to find the clown again, but no such luck. Hopefully, he had gotten the picture. I was still very worried as to how he knew my name. He had probably been watching me for a while around the house and simply followed me home. I was getting sloppy. If he knew who I was and where I lived, that put me at a huge disadvantage.

Just as I was about to leave, I decided to eat my dinner. I just made a few sandwiches and some coffee I kept in my knapsack. I'm sitting on a log out behind their house when I look up and see a figure on the roof of the house. I get closer and can see the clown on top of the roof of the house. He's looking down at me and waving. He takes out his little dagger and makes some stabbing motions with it. I had enough. I didn't even care if I got caught.

Enough was enough.

I don't know how he got off the roof and got away. I was now almost on their front lawn. It was dangerous being out in the open like this. I ran around the house, through the woods, and even down a dirt road trying to find the little shit and he just up and vanished. I was tired, cold, and out of breath. My little hobby had turned into a nightmare. I had no choice. I had to warn the family that this little monster had them in his cross hairs. There was no other way around it.

I couldn't call them. That wasn't an option. I couldn't send them an email. I decided to type up a very professional-looking letter and just stick it in their mailbox.

The letter had to be well written and convey a very strong sense of urgency on their part. Time was of the essence.

Dear Holtman Family,

It has recently come to my attention that a very nefarious-looking individual has been lurking around your home with the intent of doing you great harm. He is dressed like a medieval court jester. I would strongly advise you to keep your doors and windows locked at all times. I do not know this individual's intentions, but we must err on the side of caution.

Please do not underestimate the gravity of this situation. Your safety may very well depend on it.

Sincerely,

A concerned citizen

I made sure to include Janice and Mark's names on it. Then, I decided to do something a little more drastic. The family was pretty lazy. A day or two might go by before they can be bothered to walk out to the mailbox and open it.

I put the letter in their front door and rang the doorbell, running like hell. It was dark and heavily wooded. I know Janice was home. I stuck the letter in the screen door and pressed the doorbell button.

I dashed off the steps and into the woods. Through the bushes, I could see Janice open the front door and grab the letter. She looked around and then quickly went back inside with the letter. I went into the woods where I had left my knapsack and thermos and the clown was there waiting for me. This time I took out my knife and he took out his. We looked at one another. It was on. We slowly circled around one another like in the movies. Just as we were about to go at it, we see the blue and red flashing lights of a police car pull into the driveway.

"They might have dogs with them. I'll deal with you later." I say as I grab my stuff and start running through the woods back to my car.

I didn't want to get caught by the cops and have to explain what I was doing out there. I doubt they would believe me anyway.

It took me nearly half an hour to get back to my car, only to see all of my tires slashed. Someone had painted a frowny face on my back window. I knew exactly who had done it. The list of suspects wasn't very long at this point.

I was now very worried about the Holtman Family. I should have been more concerned with my own safety, but they had no idea what they were up against.

It was as if they were fighting the boogeyman.

This clown was beginning to piss me off. He was ruining my little hobby. My very innocent little hobby didn't cost me anything. The nerve of that little shit! He should be a jockey or something, not watching my family. I still had no idea how he knew my name. That was the worst part of this little situation. How the hell did he know who I was?

It didn't matter now anyway. I had to stop him. He obviously had very bad intentions and he could be setting me up to take the fall. Hopefully, Janice and Mark will act accordingly. I can't be there 24 hours a day. Maybe that clown is watching the kids at school. It was almost too terrible to think about.

The more I thought about it, the angrier I became.

I made an educated decision at that point to continue watching the family, but to do it from a distance. The house was at the end of an old logging road off the highway. It was surrounded by thick forests. Lots of places to hide. My letter had been eye-opening, but it had also been vague. Cops don't like vague. They like someone to connect all the dots for them and do all the detective work, so they can just arrest the bad guy. It wasn't going to be nearly that simple in this case. I still had no idea who or really what I was dealing with.

I was also reasonably certain that the next time we met, one of us was not going to leave there alive.

Things were coming to a boil at the Holtman House.

I had to take the long way around to the house. By long way, I mean like two hours out of my way. I had to park my car at the park and hike through the woods to their house. It sucks trying to navigate your way in the near dark, through a national forest. I had to go very slowly. I was trying to cover my tracks. This was much more difficult than I had imagined.

Over the river and through the woods, to the Holtman Family's House, we go!

I had no idea what to expect. For all I knew, the cops could be hiding in the woods, ready to pounce once they saw me.

I waited until dark to make my move. Sure enough, through the woods, I could see a police car at the very edge of their driveway. The house actually had two driveways. One went right to the house, the other was just a dirt road that went by the house and into the forest. The police car was parked at the edge of the forest. I was dressed like a jogger in case I was stopped. I even had a small light on. It sounds stupid, but I figured if I were caught, I had to have some kind of alibi, even a weak one. I was unarmed. If I encountered that clown, I was in big trouble. I sat there for over an hour. I was shivering it was so cold. The car wasn't even running and it was getting cold out. It just didn't make any sense. I could see someone inside. It looked like he was sleeping. He certainly wasn't going to do the family any good in that condition, so I ran right by him and pretended to fall right in front of the car. Still no response. Enough was enough. I decided it was time to blow my cover.

I knocked on the window and the person inside didn't even move. I looked down and could see some blood stains on the door knob. I opened the door slowly and the cop fell out of the car and onto the ground. His throat had been slashed and there was blood everywhere, including on me. I made a mad dash for the house. I tripped over something in the backyard and landed on my back. Looking down at me was the clown. I had the wind knocked out of me and was in a bad spot.

"Hiya sport! Glad you could make it. Wouldn't want to start this party without you." he said and pulled me to my feet. I was amazed at how strong he was. I was not expecting that from a five-foot tall person.

"This is my family, not yours. Go find another." I said struggling for air.

"Come on Woody! We both know why you're here. We both know why you've been watching this family. Let's not lie to one another."

"Leave them alone! I'm not going to let you hurt them."

"Woody, Woody. Always the last one to get picked for anything. Let's you and I have some real fun. We'll make a mess and let someone else clean it up."

"What are you talking about?"

"Woody....*I think you know exactly what I'm talking about. We're not playing for peanuts here my boy.*" he said with a big grin on his face.

He walked up the stairs to the back door and opened it. I watched him go inside. These idiots didn't even lock their doors? After I wrote that letter? I knew it was now or never. I should have called 911. I should have done a lot of things that I didn't and vice versa. I just couldn't let him hurt this family. Mark was nowhere to be found. The house was big. He could be anywhere. I ran from room to room, looking for the clown. I turned the corner and ran into junior. He had a plate of cake in one hand and a glass of milk in another. He had chocolate smeared all over his mouth. The look on his face was priceless.

The poor kid didn't know whether to shit or go sailing.

"Where is he?" I ask.

"Where's who?"

"The clown. I know he's in here somewhere."

"I think you better leave."

"Is anyone else here?"

The kid didn't say anything and just began to back up quickly.

"Come on kid. Is there anyone else here?"

"My sister is upstairs," he said with his back against the wall.

I ran up the stairs as fast as I could and just started opening doors. Jennifer's was the last in the hallway.

I opened the door and saw her sleeping on the bed, fully clothed. The clown was standing over her with his dagger in his hand. He looks over at me and hands me the dagger.

"First one's always the hardest," he said grinning.

Jennifer woke and opened her eyes.

"What's going on?" she asked rubbing her eyes.

I grabbed the clown and lifted him off his feet. We went right through her bedroom window, onto the roof, and collapsed onto the lawn. That hurt like hell. The ground was frozen solid.

I tried to run, but they caught me at the edge of the woods. 911 was already on their way, even before junior had called them when they lost radio contact with their deputy who had been watching the house. I was handcuffed and stuffed into the back of a police car. I was being treated like a common criminal. A murderer no less. Mark and Janice arrived a short time later. They had the big family hug on the front lawn and cried into one another's arms. The clown had vanished. All that remained of him was his soiled, dirty clown suit and dagger. This was the end of the road for me. It was pretty much game over. I knew I was going to be charged with the cop's death. The clown had set me up good. At least the family was alright, that's about the only

good thing that came out of all this. It didn't matter that Jennifer was sure there was someone else in the room with me before we went out the window. The cops weren't even listening.

Now, I'm at the police station, being grilled by detectives. I know they aren't buying my story. I probably wouldn't either. I realize my options at this point are life in prison or lethal injection. Either way, my life is pretty much over.....*and it hadn't even started yet.* They keep asking me to repeat my story over and over again, hoping to catch me in a lie. They say they have my fingerprints on the car door. They take a DNA sample as well. It's like the cops were judge, jury, and executioner. Anyone who has spent any time with me at all, knows I am not capable of hurting another human being, no matter what that clown might think.

Nobody cares about the truth anymore. The truth just seems to get in the way of things. It's so much easier to just lie and pretend.

I can hear the detectives talking outside. I know they're talking about me. Yes, it's true, I spent time in a mental hospital. Lots of people go through rough patches, but I'm fine now. Yes, I was caught last year at another house doing the same thing, but so what? I never hurt anybody. I wouldn't hurt a fly. I'm not a murderer.

The damn clown is responsible for all of this. He's not a figment of my imagination. He was very real. I saved the Holtman Family from certain death and I'll never get any credit for it.....that's what really stings.

The cops actually think I was going to hurt that family....can you believe that?