

Dreamcraft Hill

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*Atop the hill in the town of Dreamcraft,
The Carnival opens again.*

A wisp of chilly air blows over the muddy fairgrounds below an ash colored sky. Overhead, dark clouds create a thick mask which hides the misty treetops of the outlying forest. The asphalt leading up the steep hill is wet with yesterday's rainfall and today's morning dew. Around the area, there is a dense silence. All except for the occasional calling of a crow in the distance, no sound leaks out from the headland above.

*A musical silence rises from the gates,
As they quaver in the wind.*

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*People gather around the Carousel,
Mystified by its cast,*

Past the swaying wrought iron gates, the red and white Merry-Go-Round lies ahead. A little boy stands peering over the queuing line fenced off by rusting steel beams. His little hands grip the bars tightly, watching the motionless ride with interest. The ornate horses which galloped slowly around their course no longer take pride in their colorful saddles, for now, paint slowly chips and peels away from their wooden structures. Their feathered plumes, now brown from lack of care seem to weep as they bend towards the ground. Although the carousel sits in a defiled state, the little boy still stares, taking in every detail. But as the wind picks up again and

the horses slowly sway on their poles, the boy blinks, releases his hands on the rusted corral, and turns away.

*What once held a parade of dancing beasts,
Their talent shattered and passed.*

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*Walking under the beams of the coasters,
Had always been a thrill,*

Across the way from the Merry-Go-Round, the sounds of roller-coasters still echo though the dying wind. Chains lifting the wooden cars up their slopes and squealing wheels upon oiled tracks as they fell had created a cacophony of terror and amusement. Today, the cars remain in their stations, retired from their usual drive, their structures too dangerous now to pass on. The very beams holding them in the air have slowly withered away under their own weight. The little boy, wandering now when his eyes catch sight of the magnificent creations standing tall above his head. Gazing upwards, his eyes follow the tracks, trying to figure out all the twists and turns which cars used to fly through. Shifting from the tracks to the framework, coiling wooden girders have slowly loosened, some tearing away from each other and hanging by an invisible seam.

*But by wandering now under its structure,
Wood may splinter and spill.*

~*~

*The teacup ride was where guest would unwind
As they twirl and whirl and spin.*

Over the asphalt now, litter and scraps of old pieces of paper dot the ground. Empty popcorn cartons and cotton candy cones lay flat, caked with mud. Napkins and forks missing

tines scatter the ground, occasionally moving when pushed by a gentle rush of wind. Trash gathered around the teacup ride, abandoned plates finding refuge between the glossy handles and turntables. The gates which protected people from the twisting vehicles swing open and close with a clatter of iron upon iron. The boy still not through with searching the park peers over the control panel of the amusement ride. Every button, every switch on the slate seemed to stare back into the boy's dull eyes. Lifting a hand and dropping it over the bright green sphere, the ride flickers on for a brief moment before it stops again and lets out its last coughing breath. The teacups still again, its power drained and now gone forever.

*The lights that once flickered in the dark,
Have now been forever dimmed.*

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*Towards the swings which used to fly,
Their chains always hanging,*

Beside the choking teacup ride, the swings on their binds used to dance in the gust now ripping through the hillside. Their links created a tune of metal grinding together in a chorus with the sound of clashing bells. Now, however, the violent winds whip against the swings without a sound. Still silence except for the crunching of blown leaves across pavement fills the area. The sound of hanging chains is no more as their shiny metal sheen now dull with the color of umber. Rust lines each segment preventing movement and constricting into permanent shackles. Stepping over the torn down iron gates, the boy, bored after the teacup ride, sits down on one of the still baskets. Pushing himself forward and back, he manipulates the chains into bending to his desire. Swinging, he looks around the park wondering what to do. There were more places to explore but not enough time in the day. Night was approaching and he hated to be out past dark. Letting the swing come to a stop, he hopped off the ripping woven seat and climbed back over the broken gates.

Now rusted tight with lack of flight,

Finally stilled of swaying.

~*~

*The people who wandered here once would cheer,
And run towards the colored rides*

Walking back through the amusement park proved a challenging task. The little boy's legs were torn up and tired from his exploration. The cuts etched into his cold skin almost burned now from the constant breeze ripping through the air. Looking up at the sky, the dark clouds seemed to grow darker with every passing second. Rain was going to fall soon. The boy's white eyes flickered back and forth, trying to register how far he had wandered into the carnival. Passing by the dying rides again, his feet crunching newly falling leaves, he walked on with no avail, aimlessly through what seemed a maze. Opening his mouth and tasting the air, he could only detect the scent of rain and his own rotten flesh. Yearning for his true desire, there was not a living soul left in the place of abandoned thrills. Closing his jaw, he limped forward faster now, feeling like an animal left in a cage to starve. There was no food here and his previous detection had been from the past, now a faint memory.

*Now their faces fresh from decay
Made the others run and hide.*

~*~

*So now if you travel to Dreamcraft Hill
You may have to stop and stare,
The townsfolk here have become the walking dead,
Tourist and travelers beware.*