

THE FRENZY

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Bad Bunny Pictures/Roxy Pictures Inc.

EXT. OKLAHOMA CARNIVAL MIDWAY - DUSK

TITLE - "1995"

Mustard-stained HOT DOG WRAPPERS blow through the dust as KIDS race past signs announcing "DEEP FRIED CORN FRITTERS" or "GUESS YOUR WEIGHT - A WINNER EVERY TIME". In the distance, a FERRIS WHEEL knifes through the setting sun.

YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Sawdust in the veins. That's what they call it when you're born into this. Me, my momma, her daddy; all, as our people say, *with it*. We were *with it* alright. Carnys til the maggots bite.

CAMERA tracks down a long line of GAME BOOTHS, stopping at one marked "RAZZLE DAZZLE". A TOWNIE, 20's, admires the new TV that sits along the booth's back wall. It's surrounded by BOOM BOXES, 35MM CAMERAS and GOLD WATCHES.

YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
That's the *flash*. Guaranteed to stop each and every Bubba dead in his tracks. But guaran-damn-teed to never find its way into Bubba's double-wide.

A CARNY, mid 30's, approaches.

CARNY
Nice, ain't it?

TOWNIE
Sure as shit.

CARNY
Simple game. Wanna give 'er a whirl?

TOWNIE
Nah, don't think so.

The townie turns to leave. As he does, the carny gently cups his arm. The ACTION FREEZES on a close up of the "arm cup".

YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
What ya gonna see now is *the rope*. Invented during the waking time of Jesus H. Christ himself. Still works today like it did then.

UNFREEZE

CARNY
Tell ya what buddy...

The carny leans in close. Whispers...

CARNY (CONT'D)
Can't stand my boss. Tighter than
a bull's ass at fly time, know what
I mean? I'd love to screw 'em and
hand that TV to a nice fella like
you.

TOWNIE
Whadda I gotta do?

CARNY
Like I said, simple. All you gotta
do is roll the marbles into these
lil' holes. Get twenty points,
TV's yours. I'll give ya two rolls
free, buck a roll after that.
Leave any time, your business.

The townie considers this.

TOWNIE
Two rolls free?

CARNY
As a braless teat.

The carny hands the townie a DICE CUP filled with MARBLES and
leans him over a WOODEN BOARD. The board is full of NUMBERED
INDENTS, each one big enough to trap a marble...

TOWNIE
Well, I guess its alright...

MOMENTS LATER

The townie celebrates!

TOWNIE MAN
HOT DAMN!

CARNY
I'll be fucked boy, you're hotter
than a popcorn's fart. 13 points
on 2 rolls. Buck a roll, here on
out.

The townie pulls a WAD of BILLS from his pocket. FREEZE
FRAME on the townie's VORACIOUS SMILE.

YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

You see those eyes? The flushed skin? Sweat just below the nostrils? It's the look a vic has...sorry, that's short for victim. It's the look they got when they're ready to give us their last dollar. We call it, the frenzy. It's what he came here for. Fueled by his greed. His own selfish wants. No matter who gets hurt.

UNFREEZE. The townie pours the marbles again.

EXT. OKLAHOMA CARNIVAL MIDWAY - NIGHT

BABIES sleep in strollers as FIREWORKS explode in the ink-black sky. The townie now wanders aimlessly through the crowd; his hands tucked tight in his empty pockets, his eyes vacant. A beaten man...

YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Looks a little different now, don't he? Funny thing is, sap blames himself. His luck went bad. He doesn't even think to blame his new best friend over behind that counter, one that gifted his entire government check in just under 45 minutes...

INT. BUS - DAWN

A RICKETY BUS bounces down a country road. Inside, carnys sleep, quietly blow HARMONICAS or play CARDS. The CAMERA travels down the middle aisle of the bus, taking in every FACE, every character...

YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Back in the day, it was just carnys ripping off townies. It was, well, not to use a four dollar word on ya, ...sym-bi-otic. We'd count on them for money. They'd count on us for the frenzy. Both parties got what they wanted. Then, that changed...

The CAMERA stops in the last row, revealing an INFANT GIRL wrapped tight in blankets.

EXT. MISSOURI CARNIVAL MIDWAY - DUSK

TITLE - "Missouri State Fair -- 1998"

PEOPLE push into a large, open ARENA. A SIGN reads "The Missouri State Fair welcomes GEORGE STRAIT - TONIGHT ONLY".

YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Owner's got wise. They found they could make more off one concert or demolition derby than off a week of crooked games. So, big business came to the midway. And the midway went the way of Times Square. Fucking Disney-fied...

CAMERA lifts out of the packed arena, zips past the closed RIDES, over the empty game booths, and drops down to the...

EXT. CARNIVAL TRAILERS - CONTINUOUS

Far away from the crowd, the TRAILERS sit end to end behind rickety temporary fencing. All around, CICADAS zip across the purple sky.

In the shadows, FOUR MEN and ONE WOMAN stare at the trailer marked "OPERATIONS". They are:

ATTICUS HAIN, 32. A STETSON easily rests on the top of his head. Calm and serene, but definitely the man in charge.

LEANNE JESSUP, 25. On most days a party lookin' for a place to happen. Today, serious as a heart attack. Beautiful but cheap.

BEN (HAWK) HAWKINS, 35. Gangly and nervous, his brow in a perpetual sweat.

TRAVIS BOYLE, 28. A sinewy testament to the benefits of clean living and prison yard weight training. And...

BOBBIE BARNETT, 23. Country boy through and through, never without a tin of COPENHAGEN or a flask of WILD TURKEY.

Hawk pulls a SYRINGE from a LEATHER POUCH, lifts his shirt slightly, and sticks the needle into his stomach. Seeing this, Bobbie pulls the flask from his pocket.

ATTICUS

(to Bobbie)

Put it away.

BOBBIE
Come on Atticus, Hawk gets his.

HAWKINS
I'm diabetic, Bobbie.

ATTICUS
Hawk needs his, you don't. Away.

BOBBIE
Yes sir.

Bobbie tucks the flask back in his pocket. From inside the operations trailer, A WINDOW opens. A CIGARETTE is tossed.

ATTICUS
There it is. Six minutes, in and out.

Travis pulls BOLT CUTTERS from a GYM BAG and snaps the fence's padlock. Atticus leads a slow, purposeful walk towards the trailer.

YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Now, crime didn't disappear from the midway. It changed. Instead of carnys trimming townies, carnys themselves was getting trimmed. And these crooks weren't happy with a c-note here and there. They wanted more. That's what they got...

They pull TRANSLUCENT PLASTIC MASKS from the bag and place them over their faces. Atticus turns the trailer's doorknob. ENTERS...

INT. OPERATIONS TRAILER - MINUTES LATER

The five masked robbers move with precision while CARNIVAL WORKERS lie bound and gagged on the floor. A SECURITY GUARD, A PREGNANT WOMAN, the CARNIVAL MANAGER, and TWO TEENAGERS. The teenage BOY makes a reassuring move towards the crying teen GIRL. Hawkins scampers to her, grabs her hair, and puts a GUN to her head.

HAWKINS
Goddamnit boy, what I say? You want holes in her you never dreamed of!?

The boy slides away. Atticus moves up behind Hawkins.

ATTICUS
 (quietly)
 Blasphemy, Ezra. Watch the
 blasphemy.

HAWKINS
 Shoot. I'm sorry, Joshua.

ATTICUS
 Be more careful. Ezekiel?

No answer. Atticus snaps his fingers. Bobby looks up from the hostages, sees Atticus motion "come here", and crosses to him.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
 Security tapes, Ezekiel.

BOBBIE
 (laughs, remembers)
 Oh yeah, ...Zeke. You got it,
 Josh.

Bobby runs into the...

BACK ROOM

...lifts his mask, yanks a VHS TAPE from a RECORDER, then takes another SIX TAPES that are sitting on a shelf. He plops them into the bag, pulls the mask back down and crosses back into the...

MAIN ROOM

Atticus lifts the pregnant woman into a seated position.

ATTICUS
 That better?

The woman nods.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
 Good. (across the room) Esther,
 Jeremiah, how we doing?

Leanne and Travis frantically yank money from a SAFE and stuff it into BAGS.

TRAVIS
 Four and a half minutes.

ATTICUS
 Count?

LEANNE
Looks like about 225.

ATTICUS
Good. Ninety seconds. Wrap it up.

LEANNE
Not a problem.

ATTICUS' POV

In the furor, a ONE HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL falls from a bag and lands on the floor, one small rectangle of GREEN on a burgundy carpet. Atticus, however, is not the only one who sees it. A SECURITY GUARD rolls over the bill, palms it with a bound hand, and tucks it into his back pocket.

BACK

Atticus stares down at the security guard, not saying a word.

INT. OPERATIONS TRAILER

TITLE - "90 Seconds Later..."

The robbers lift bags and head for the door. Atticus stops.

ATTICUS
We get it all?

Leanne and Travis look to each other.

LEANNE
Safe's clean, Joshua.

ATTICUS
I know. But did we get it all?

TRAVIS
We got it. We should move.

ATTICUS
I don't know, I got a feeling.

Atticus drops to one knee in front of the employees.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
Anyone down here?

Atticus scans the faces. The teenagers. The manager. The security guard. The pregnant woman...

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
 Anyone? (beat) Alright then...

Atticus turns and kicks the security guard flush in the ribs.

SECURITY GUARD
 (through the gag)
 AAARRRGGGHHHHHH....

ATTICUS
 Help this boy up, will you fellas?

HAWKINS
 Joshua...

ATTICUS
 Sooner you help, Ezra, sooner we
 leave. Free his hands.

HAWKINS
 Alright.

Hawkins and Travis pull the terrified security guard to his feet and take the tape from his hands. Atticus takes the PLASTIC COVER off an ancient PAPER CUTTER.

ATTICUS
 Hand please.

TRAVIS
 Boss?

ATTICUS
 Hand! Please...

Travis places the guard's hand on the paper cutter.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
 Ezekiel, check his pockets.

BOBBIE
 Yes sir.

ATTICUS
 (to the guard)
 Now you know, in certain parts of
 the Middle East, Allah still
 demands a hand as punishment for
 theft.

Bobby pulls the \$100 bill from the guard's pocket.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
 Well, well. He got a wallet?

Bobbie yanks the guard's wallet out.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Count it. (to the guard)
Fortunately for you, our Lord has
some radically different ideas from
old Allah. (to Bobbie) How we
doing?

BOBBIE

Almost.

ATTICUS

Like this one. Exodus 22. Chapter
3. All about restitution. *"If a
theft be certainly found in hand,
he shall restore double"*.

BOBBIE

One sixty three.

Bobbie hands Atticus the money. He tucks it in his pocket.

ATTICUS

Close enough. That's restitution
for your crime, boy. Feel better?
Aren't you glad you live in Branson
and not Bahrain?

The guard nods. Atticus stares at him for a beat. Then...

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Now, just to be fair, I certainly
see old Allah's point...

Atticus slams the blade of the paper cutter closed, CHOPPING
OFF the guard's PINKY FINGER!

SECURITY GUARD

(through the gag)
AAAAAHHHHHHHHH!!!

The guard drops to the ground, writhing in pain! Atticus
reaches down, scoops up the finger, and tucks it in the man's
shirt pocket.

ATTICUS

Doc'll sew that back on for ya, but
I don't want you forgetting the
lesson.

Atticus grabs the man by the collar and pulls him close.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
 (menacingly deliberate)
 DON'T EVER TRY TO STEAL FROM ME!

Atticus drops the man and turns to the other employees.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
 I wanna thank the rest of you for
 your grace and cooperation. Good
 night and God bless...

Atticus leads the gang to the door. However...

CUT TO:

The security guard, bleeding profusely, reaches down into his
 pant cuff with his good hand...and yanks a PISTOL from an
 ANKLE HOLSTER!

SECURITY GUARD
 (muffled through the gag)
 FUCKER!!!

He fires wildly! A bullet slams into Bobbie's shoulder!
 Atticus' mask FLIES OFF! Hawkins, Leanne and Travis turn and
 fire. ROUND after ROUND slam into the guard's body! He
 falls backwards. Dead.

Leanne drops to the floor next to Bobby and rolls him over.
 The bullet has gone clean through...

LEANNE
 Oh Christ. Bobby...

TRAVIS
 Atticus, we gotta...

Travis turns. Atticus kneels. Facing the corner. Not
 moving.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
 Atticus?

Atticus turns. BLOOD streams from above his left eye!
 Travis rushes to him.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
 ATTICUS!

Atticus grabs Travis' throat!

ATTICUS
 (angrily)
 My...name...is...JOSHUA!

Atticus stands. Blood pours down onto his shirt.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
Ezekiel! Can you stand!?

BOBBIE
I guess, yeah. SHIT! MOTHER
FUCKER!

ATTICUS
Watch your tongue, son.

Atticus lifts Bobbie to his feet.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
Let's go. Now!

The five robbers stumble through the door and disappear into the night... Inside, the CAMERA drifts over the wreckage. The open safe... The hog-tied, crying hostages... The bullet shells...

YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
That's the frenzy too. Being so close to something good. Something for nothing. Then the carpet's pulled out from under ya. And people get hurt. People get dead.

The camera drifts across the dead security guard, over the blood soaked carpet, and up the legs of the pregnant woman...

YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
I live on the frenzy now. I swallow it like it was water. Cornbread. It sustains me. And I've learned how to control it. To use it as fuel.

The camera stops just below the pregnant woman's face. BLOOD POURS from her chin to her chest. She collapses to the floor. DEAD.

YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
And now, like a gas can in an August shed, that fuel's ready to explode...