

ALWAYS FINISH THE STORY

by

Shaun Dyer

Shaun Dyer
Your Address
Your phone number
picto@pictopirate.com

Agent's address and phone
number

The scene opens in a mental asylum, there are three steel chairs arranged in a semi-circle, and behind them, you can see the cells where the inmates sleep.

TANNOY OPERATOR: Welcome to another wonderful day in the Shady Pines home for the criminally insane. Tonight we have a fun-packed evening of sitting down and not being mental followed by a relaxing night of lying down and being quiet so the guards can watch the football in peace, but first, we have group therapy! Fun, fun, fun! Let's all get better ladies.

Two inmates in dressing gowns shuffle in. One looks remarkably normal the other dishevelled and depressed like she hasn't slept in a year; they are followed in by a prim looking nurse, and they all take their seats.

NURSE PRIMROSE: Hello ladies and welcome to group therapy, my name is Nurse Primrose. I hope you're all having a super day.

TRACY: Smashing, I just love it here it's a real hoot.

NURSE PRIMROSE: Well, that's just fabulous, Tracy, really wonderful. How about you Josie, how are you doing today? Josie? Josie?

JOSIE: What? Where? What?

NURSE PRIMROSE: We were just wondering how you were doing weren't we Tracy.

TRACY: Sure, why not?

JOSIE: Erm... fine I'm fine, totally I mean...

An evil clown laugh rings out, but only J hears it, she looks around terrified.

JOSIE: No, you're not real, not real, not real

TRACY: Oh, we've got live one here.

NURSE PRIMROSE: It's okay Josie we're in a safe space here no one can hurt you.

JOSIE: Safe?

NURSE PRIMROSE: That's right Josie, we're here to help you. Why don't you tell us a little bit about why you're here?

JOSIE: No! He will hear me, please, I can't. I can't...

The evil clown laugh rings out again and J looks around, terrified.

NURSE PRIMROSE: Okay, well it looks like Josie isn't quite ready to share just yet, let's come back to her. How about we start with you Tracy, why don't you tell us why you're here?

TRACY: Love to Prim, love to honestly, but the truth is I'm not sure why I'm stuck here with these nutters. Nowt wrong with old Tracy fit as a fiddle mind, body and soul, never been better.

NURSE PRIMROSE: Now we don't refer to our super special guests as nutters here do we Tracy?

Nurse Primrose pulls a small box out from her pocket and holds it casually in her hand.

TRACY: No Nurse Primrose, sorry Nurse Primrose.

NURSE PRIMROSE: Excellent Tracy do continue.

TRACY: Alls I'm saying is I'm not sure what I'm doing here. I mean all the sitting around is alright and those pills, wow. De-e-licious! But seriously, I'm fine. If I didn't know better, I'd say you were only keeping me here so you can meet your quotas or something.

NURSE PRIMROSE: Oh, we don't keep people here who are well Tracy.

TRACY: But I feel fine, honestly.

Nurse Primrose takes a small toy hammer out of her pocket, the second Tracy sees it she leaps to her feet her dressing gown falls open to show Roman looking robes underneath.

TRACY: I am the mighty Thor strongest of all the Gods of Asgard, slayer of the evil snake Jorgmungandr and master of all I survey. Tremble before my mighty...

Nurse Primrose slips the hammer back in her pocket.

TRACY: ...hammer?

NURSE PRIMROSE: Yes, you were right. You're so sane I feel bad even having you here. Anyway, Josie, I think it's your turn to share now.

JOSIE: I can't he'll hear me...

TRACY: It's okay Josie love, we'll look after you. It's like all safe here and stuff ain't that right Nurse Primrose.

Nurse Primrose beams a smile at Tracy

NURSE PRIMROSE: That's right Tracy. Now come on Josie we can't help you if you don't talk to us. You'll feel better I guarantee it, and once we're done here, we can have some cocoa and a nice quiet sit by the window.

JOSIE: B, Be, Bedtime stories...

TRACY: Bedtime stories? You're in the madhouse because of bedtime stories? Crikey I've heard some bedtime stories in my time, but none made me decide to start talking to myself and dressing like a mad cat lady.

JOSIE: You haven't heard these bedtime stories.

NURSE PRIMROSE: Why don't you tell us what is so special about these bedtime stories Josie.

JOSIE: It's him...

TRACY: Who?

JOSIE: Mr Giggles.

The evil clown laugh rings out, and the lights dim only Josie notices.

NURSE PRIMROSE: Tell us about Mr Giggles Josie.

JOSIE: Well, there was a story that my Dad once told me when I was small. How did it go? Oh yes, A long time ago-

TRACY: In a galaxy far, far away?

Nurse Primrose pulls the little box from her pocket and presses the button. The lights flash, and Tracy writhes around like she's a had a cattle prod rammed up her jacksie cursing like a drunken sailor.

NURSE PRIMROSE: You'd think the god of lightning would be able to take a few volts up the wazoo. Oh well, continue Josie.

JOSIE: A long time ago, there was a beautiful little girl called Josie, and she lived with her Mummy and Daddy in a lovely little town called Leicester. Everything was magical until one day the circus came to town.

TRACY: What's so bad about a circus? I bloody love a circus me. Ferris wheels, candy floss and those strong man things with the big...

Tracy stands up again her dressing gown coming open again, showing her Roman looking robes.

TRACY: ...hammer. But not any hammer Mjölhnir destroyer of mountains, scourge of giants and petty mental health nurses who refuse to give Thor seconds on cheesecake night.

Nurse Primrose pulls out the remote and zaps Tracy again, cue more cursing and flopping around.

NURSE PRIMROSE: I'm sorry about that Josie do continue.

JOSIE: Right, erm... Oh yeah, this was no ordinary circus. I mean it had all the usual stuff, bearded lady, Elephants, lions, tigers you know the whole nine yards, but only this one had Mr Giggles.

The lights on the stage dim except the spotlight focusing on the three chairs.

JOSIE: Mr Giggles wasn't like the other clowns, he didn't tumble or throw buckets of confetti he told riddles. Get them right, and you won a prize, anything you wanted from his pile of goodies; but get them wrong and...

Josie runs her thumb across her neck, making the throat-slitting noise.

JOSIE: You were never seen from again.

An evil clown laugh rings out, but this time both Josie and Tracy hear it.

JOSIE: Anyway, so Josie goes to the circus with her daddy, they have candy floss and ride the rides, and it's all great until Josie and her daddy get separated. She wanders around for hours but can't find him. Josie has looked everywhere, everywhere except where she stands now at the tent of Mr Giggles.

TRACY: Dun, dun duuuuuuuu.

Nurse Primrose raises an eyebrow and taps the box in her lap.

TRACY: Sorry couldn't help myself.

JOSIE: Josie knocks on the post by the door to his tent; knock, knock, knock. The flap goes a back and out comes Mr Giggles small pointy teeth, glowing red eyes and a laugh that freezes the heart.

The evil clown laugh rings out, and this time even Nurse Primrose even seems to notice it.

JOSIE: He invites Josie in and tells her if she answers his riddle, he will take her to her father.

TRACY: Don't do it Josie, you can't trust a clown!

Nurse Primrose and Josie look at Tracy, who looks embarrassed.

TRACY: Sorry...

JOSIE: So then he gives her the riddle. I have keys but no locks, I have space but no room, you can enter, but you can't go outside.

TRACY: It's a cat? No! A monster truck? No! A badger. Yeah, a badger, it's a badger, right?

JOSIE: Josie doesn't know the answer, but she really misses her father, so she guesses. A rocket.

NURSE PRIMROSE: Then what happened?

JOSIE: I don't know? My Dad got called away for work, and there was some kind of accident he never came home.

TRACY: Aww man you can't tell half a story, was I right was it a badger?

NURSE PRIMROSE: Shush Tracy! Josie I see now what the problem is, this isn't about Mr Giggles at all, this is about your father. He left halfway through the story, and you think if you let go of the story, you'll let go of him. But that's not true Josie; it's not your fault. You can let him and Mr Giggles go, just let them go.

TRACY: Let it go, let it go! Can't hold it back anymore-

As Tracy sings the song from Frozen Nurse Primrose presses the button and Tracy starts to flop around again. She holds it for an uncomfortably long time as Tracy rolls and screams.

NURSE PRIMROSE: As I was saying, you just let it go and know that your Dad is with you now and wherever you go.

JOSIE: I'll try.

TRACY: Do or do not there is no try.

Nurse Primrose looks down at her remote and then shrugs.

NURSE PRIMROSE: Ah, what the hell she's right, just do it.

Josie closes her eyes, takes a deep breath in and out, and when she opens her eyes, she is sitting up straighter with a smile on her face.

JOSIE: He's gone! He's really gone!

Nurse Primrose and Josie hug it out a buzzer sounds signalling the end of the session.

NURSE PRIMROSE: I'm sorry that's all we have time for today, but I think we made some great progress.

Nurse Primrose leaves, and Josie brushes down her hair with her hands looking relaxed and happy for the first time.

TRACY: So that was it he's really gone, simple as that?

JOSIE: Simple as that and it is a weight off my mind I mean I've barely slept a wink since I was ten.

She nods to Tracy and heads to bed with a skip in her step.

TRACY: Pah, Mr Giggles what kind of name is that for a scary clown, I mean it's no Pennywise is it. Besides what's scary about a stupid clown anyway?

Tracy goes into her room and lies down as the lights dim, and the evil clown laugh comes back. Tracy sits up in bed, clutching the covers to her chest.

TANNOY OPERATOR: It's been another lovely day at Shady Pines home for the criminally insane, I hope you guys have had as much fun as we have. It's time to turn in now and remember the football is about to start, so if you don't want a good shoeing and a night in the naughty pit, I'd keep it down if I were you. Sweet dreams everyone, well not you Tracy.

TRACY: Huh? What?

A clown appears on stage behind Tracy.

TANNOY OPERATOR: I said no sweet dreams for you Tracy, never again...

The evil clown laugh rings out, Tracy screams, and the lights go out.



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