

Clowning Around

By

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A gleaming, spacious bank vault sits in silence, disturbed only by the presence of a sleeping CLOWN lying in its bare centre.

The clown, dressed in full clown garb; red nose, oversized shoes, wide trousers, fuzzy hair, facial make up, awakens.

He takes in his bearings: three walls are a solid mass of numbered safety deposit boxes, the other a floor to ceiling vault door.

He shakily stands, reaching a wall for support. He coughs up a cloud of confetti. Wipes his face clean.

The clown fingers his way along the walls to the door. Pushes his face against it, listening. His nose flattens a little, emitting a HONK. He doesn't flinch.

He punches the door. Pushes it. Kicks it. Runs at it. It doesn't yield.

Frustrated, he drops to the floor. Rifles through his deep, cumbersome pockets. He pulls out: a handful of loose balloons, a sticky mess of a small tart, a set of car keys with a mouse-head keyring, a banana, gimmicky pocket-watch and a handkerchief.

Pulling the kerchief out to wipe his forehead, he finds it strung up to another kerchief, and another. He sighs and stops halfway through the process.

In his breast pocket, next to his lapel-flower-watergun, he finds a note. Opens it. A picture falls to the ground - ignored.

The note is written in crayon, on childrens' party invite paper. He reads aloud, through V.O. as a series of events play out.

CLOWN

Inside box number 32 you'll find  
twenty thousand pounds in bundled  
notes, and an assortment of  
jewelry.

CUT TO:

2 INT. CHILDREN'S PARTY - DAY 2

A different clown performs at a children's party. He is confronted by a caricature ROBBER - black and white striped shirt, eye mask, dollar sign bag.

The children clap and laugh as the robber drags the clown away.

CLOWN (V.O.)  
Empty the box, leave nothing  
behind, and bring it to the  
clownhouse by noon tomorrow.

3 EXT. DAYCARE CENTRE - DAY 3

Another clown stands outside a childcare centre, smoking a cigarette. A white van screeches to a halt in front of him, driven by the robber. It drives on. The clown is gone.

CLOWN (V.O.)  
If you arrive late, empty handed,  
or the loot is lacking...

4 INT. MALL - DAY 4

A third clown is selling balloons in a crowded mall. Passing shoppers block him from view for a moment. The clown is absent, his balloons float to the ceiling.

5 INT. BANK VAULT - NIGHT 5

CLOWN  
Anything at all goes wrong... your  
colleagues visit the great  
custard-pie in the sky... Wishing  
you the best, 'R'

Shaking, the clown reaches down for the discarded photo. It depicts a car adapted to look like a mouse on wheels. At least twenty clowns are packed into the small space, their make-up smiles now frowns of worry.

Standing to the left of the car is the robber, grinning maniacally.

CLOWN  
Oh, no... no... Cocoa! Bozo! Pogo!

The clown checks his gimmicky pocket-watch. 23:29.

(CONTINUED)

He begins to hurriedly navigate his way around the box-wall, looking for #32.

CLOWN  
Little Zig! And Zag! Their first  
day...

His shaking, gloved hand finds box #32. He grapples with it, hauling, shoving, prying to no avail.

He hastily pulls the remainder of the kerchief string from his pocket. Ties it to the handle, trying it as a rope. Nothing.

CLOWN  
Think! Think! C'mon!  
(slapping forehead)  
Top of the class in Buffoonery! Use  
that brain!

Looking up, he spies for the first time, a camera in one corner next to the door.

CLOWN  
Oh no! Oh dear, oh dear!

He smears the tart over the lens.

CLOWN  
(muttering)  
Stupid, stupid, stupid...

He sits against the wall, staring at his little pile of belongings, contemplative for a moment. Then...

CLOWN  
Stupid! Stupid! Stupid!

He springs to his feet, rushes to his pile and grabs two balloons.

CLOWN  
B- for Balloonery, ha! We'll see  
about that...

He hurriedly stretches, ties, blows the balloons. Contorting them into all manner of strange shapes.

CLOWN  
Aha!

He produces a balloon crowbar.

Back to box #32, running his gloved hand over the exterior to find a groove. He carefully places the bar alongside the groove. Pries.

CLOWN  
C'mon! C'mon... Easy...

The box gives, the balloon bursts, he falls flat on his face. Nose SQUEAKS.

He turns over, chuckling his clown chuckle. Above him dangles the open box.

6 INT. BANK VAULT - MORNING

6

The still air is disturbed by sounds of BANGING off screen.

The clown springs awake. Burst balloons, a banana peel, his giant shoes and two separate puddles of confetti litter the room.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Step aside! Step aside, now! We  
know you're in there! No use trying  
to hide, now. Nope! We've got you,  
you miserable little blighter!

Clown begins to pocket his belongings. Checks his pocket-watch: 9 am. Squeezes his shoes back on. Stuffs the kerchief string back in his pocket.

CLOWN  
Uh... Who is it!?

He picks up his loot bag.

VOICE (O.S.)  
What!? Who is it!? Why... It's the  
constabulary, my dear fellow. You  
are under arrest!

SECOND VOICE (O.S.)  
(identical voice)  
You have broken the law!

FIRST VOICE (O.S.)  
(in reply)  
Yes, yes. Thank you, officer.

CLOWN  
You're making a mistake. I'm not a  
culprit!

(CONTINUED)

Noises of discontent, tittering and guffawing from the door.

FIRST VOICE (O.S.)  
Not the culprit? Why, the nerve!  
You are in a locked bank vault,  
chap. Culprit you are!

CLOWN  
No, no, no. I was put here. Put  
here against my will!

FIRST VOICE (O.S.)  
Against your will.  
(aside)  
Against his will. Listen to that  
boys. The robber has feelings!  
Crack this old girl open!

CLOWN  
I am not a robber. I am a clown!

Scraping and banging cease. Whispering and hissing replacing  
them.

FIRST VOICE (O.S.)  
A clown?

CLOWN  
Yes. I'm not a robber!

FIRST VOICE (O.S.)  
A clown? With the hair and the  
nose?  
(laughing)  
Whoever heard of a clown robbing a  
bank!?

CLOWN  
Exactly. I'm being set up! Framed!

FIRST VOICE (O.S.)  
Framed. Framed! The audaciousness!  
We are officers of the law, not  
some children at a party!

THIRD VOICE (O.S.)  
(Also identical)  
That's right. Police officers.

FOURTH VOICE (O.S.)  
(Again, identical)  
Save your tricks, funny man!

CLOWN  
What tricks!?

FIRST VOICE (O.S.)  
Enough! We're coming in!  
(to somebody else)  
C'mon, lads, heave-ho. That's the  
way. It's almost tea-break time.

SECOND VOICE (O.S.)  
Why don't you do it then?

THIRD VOICE (O.S.)  
Dissension in the ranks!

FIRST VOICE (O.S.)  
Get him, boys!

A SCUFFLE is heard on the other side of the door, as someone is dragged away.

The clown hastily grabs two balloons and begins to expand them.

FIRST VOICE (O.S.)  
Right, as I say: step back! We're  
coming in. We want no trouble,  
yes!?

The clown ties the inflated balloons together, making an inflated gun.

CLOWN  
Yes, yes! Quite alright, no  
trouble! It's all a  
misunderstanding.

FIRST VOICE (O.S.)  
(grumbling)  
Quite.

The clown places the used banana peel in front of the closed door, stands behind the hinge and waits.

The banging ceases. The door whispers open.

Nobody enters. Shuffling steps are heard.

FIRST VOICE (O.S.)  
(whispering)  
On you go, then. There's a brave  
lad. No, no. No use fighting, come  
along now.

Suddenly a figure is launched into the room. A MIME ARTIST.

The mimic slowly advances further - looking every bit the puerile stereotype.

He mimes the action of throwing a rock into a pool, puts his hand to his ear as if to hear an echo. The clown remains hidden behind the door.

Delicately, the mime artist moves forward, step by step. Then slips on the banana peel! He mimes pain and shock.

The clown springs, seizing his moment, and grabs the artist. Drags him behind the door and puts the gun to his head.

FIRST VOICE (O.S.)

Did you see that!? Did you all see that? He grabbed Pierre. Back up, lads. Back up!

(scuffling)

You alright, Pierre? What's the situation?

The clown prods him with the gun, prompting an answer. The mime artist merely acts terrified, brushing a hand over his brow.

CLOWN

I've got him! I warn you, I'll hurt him!

FIRST VOICE (O.S.)

Bloody thespians. Let him go, now. He's no threat to you, son.

CLOWN

Back away, I'm not kidding... I'm armed!

FIRST VOICE (O.S.)

(flustering)

You... "back away".... You're demanding!? I've got a right to bloody well come down there and bosh you on the head myself!

FOURTH VOICE (O.S.)

On you go then, guv.

SECOND VOICE (O.S.)

Off you go, Sarge!

FIRST VOICE (O.S.)  
Whoa, steady on lads. Hold up. Oi!

A portly, red cheeked, fat POLICEMAN jostles into the doorway. Again, the clown springs, letting go of the mime artist and replacing him with the policeman.

POLICEMAN/HOSTAGE  
Whoa! He's got me lads! No sudden movements, now. That's the ticket. Let's be delicate here!

The mimic quickly turns on his heel, mimes a camera and takes a photo of the clown before fleeing through the door.

The clown begins to waddle his way to the doorway, policeman in front, balloon gun to his head.

As he reaches the stairwell outside the vault door, the voices are revealed to belong to a flurry of identical policemen, all clones of the hostage.

SECOND POLICEMAN  
He is ruddy well armed!

THIRD POLICEMAN  
Watch him, watch him!

FOURTH POLICEMAN  
Back up, back up, c'mon lads. Make some room!

SAD POLICEMAN  
Tea-break'll be late now.

POLICEMAN/HOSTAGE  
Let him through, boys, let him through. No harsh movements, that's right.

The clown painstakingly pushes his way into the upper bank lobby. The crowd of wobbly police officers all jostle around one another. Holding lopsided hats to their heads, waving truncheons.

CLOWN  
Alright, nobody follow us. Get away. Go have your tea-break.

POLICEMAN/HOSTAGE  
Hold up, lads. Don't listen to him. No tea-break. Stay away from my ruddy pound cake! He's a mad man.

Clown presses the balloon gun to the policeman's temple, the plastic SQUEAKING against his skin. He shuts up.

He backs out onto the street, littered with small, two seater police cars. He backs up to the closest one.

Forces the policeman in the passenger side.

POLICEMAN/HOSTAGE  
(bumping his hat off the roof)  
Watch it, watch it!

Clown flaps round to the driver's seat, squeezing the massive shoes into the foot-well.

CLOWN  
I mean it, stay away or he gets it!

The car squeals off into the distance, leaving the hapless crew of officers to argue about who drives which car.

7 INT/EXT. CAR - DAY

7

Clown is arched over wheel, steering with one hand, aiming the gun with his other.

The policeman is apoplectic.

POLICEMAN/HOSTAGE  
Oho. You'll see bars for this, you will. Mark my words!

CLOWN  
I wish you'd listen to me.

POLICEMAN/HOSTAGE  
Most definitely. Mhmm. Bars!  
Everything might be fun and games for you lot. But this is a serious offence.

CLOWN  
Could all have been avoided.

POLICEMAN/HOSTAGE  
I'm an important man, you know. A very bloody important man! D'you hear?

Car screeches to a halt.

(CONTINUED)

CLOWN  
We're here. Handcuffs.

POLICEMAN/HOSTAGE  
I ruddy well think not!

CLOWN  
(waving gun)  
You ever seen one of these go off?

POLICEMAN/HOSTAGE  
Alright, alright, bloody hell.  
Aren't you meant to be a cheery  
bunch?

Clown slaps him with his gloved hand.

The policeman grudgingly hands over his handcuffs. The clown fastens him to the door, grabs his bag and leaves.

CLOWN  
No funny stuff.

POLICEMAN/HOSTAGE  
Oh no, no, no. I shouldn't think  
so. You do your job, I'll do mine.

8 EXT. STREET - DAY

8

Clown flaps his way up to a psychedelic, cartoonish house. Proceeds to bang incessantly until its answered by the robber.

ROBBER  
Well, colour me monochrome. You  
actually did it.  
(Robber looks him over)  
Didn't even take the shoes off.

CLOWN  
Here.

Clown shoves the bag in through the door.

ROBBER  
Ah, the loot.

The robber rummages through the bag.

ROBBER  
Heavy! Excellent!

(CONTINUED)

CLOWN  
Where are my friends?

ROBBER  
They're quite safe, don't worry. Do you know that you all look the same?

CLOWN  
Where are they!?

ROBBER  
Keep your voice down, they're in here.

The robber's rummaging hand halts. He looks beyond the clown.

ROBBER  
Is that a police car? You brought the police?

CLOWN  
No. Just that one. Had to be done.  
He's not a threat.

Robber slams the door closed.

The clown lingers for several seconds before knocking again.

ROBBER  
(peeking through gap)  
What? Get away!

CLOWN  
My friends?

ROBBER  
Oh, yes, yes. Of course! Just, clear off!

He closes the door again.

SIRENS are heard in the distance as the clown grows impatient.

The door re-opens just as a troop of cars pull round the corner.

POLICEMAN/HOSTAGE (O.S.)  
He's up there, up at the house  
lads! Quick, quick. Get him!  
There's still time for brunch!

(CONTINUED)

The robber holds the door open for the line of clowns to leave. The squad look the worse for wear: Hair frizzled, make up running around the eyes, smiles painted into complete downward grimaces.

CUT TO:

9

POLICEMEN MONTAGE:

9

A policeman places a cup of tea on his car roof, whilst absently waving his truncheon.

Another, through a mouthful of pork pie, calls incoherently at the clown.

A third is trying to fasten his hat.

POLICEMAN/HOSTAGE  
Forget the tea-break! Forget it!  
Get the ruddy clown!

BACK TO SCENE:

The freed clowns, confronted with the police force, make a mad dash for freedom.

Clowns flee left, right and centre. Calling out to one another. Slapping down the streets.

The policemen drop their snacks and tea, giving chase.

The Sad Policeman has his pie knocked out his hand in the rush.

Havoc ensues as battle takes over. Policemen beating clowns with truncheons. Clowns giving as good as they get with water pistols, lapel-squirt-guns, bunches of flowers and pies.

Our main clown flees down the street, hands in pocket, amid the chaos.

POLICEMAN/HOSTAGE  
No, no! Get 'im, lads. The one with  
the kerchiefs in his pocket!

CLOWN  
(hastily hiding kerchiefs)  
No! Get the robber, the robber!

Clowns get in the way of pursuing police.

(CONTINUED)

A weeping clown drags down Sad Policeman. They share a moment.

CUT TO:

10 EXT. ROOFTOP - DAY

10

The mime artist lies prone on a rooftop. The sounds of the nearby riot can be heard.

He studies a mimed photograph before mimicking the weight and shape of a rifle. Tracking unseen prey, smoking a mimed cigarette.

INTERCUT BETWEEN CLOWN AND MIME ARTIST

Clown still pelts the pavement, his hand jiggling in his pocket. Eventually, he pulls out the car keys.

Mime artist suddenly stops his rifle-tracking. His prey located.

Clown rushes up to the same mouse-car seen in the photograph. Beeps the locks.

Mime artist takes one last draw of his mimed cigarette, flicking it away. Eyes still on his prey.

Clown jumps into the front seat of the mouse-car, starts the engine and breathes a quick sigh of relief.

Mime artist tightens his grip on his 'rifle'.

Clown sits forward, ready to make off in the car.

Mime artist mimes the recoil of the rifle.

Seeing only the side of the car now; the driver's side window EXPLODES with the sounds of glass SMASHING, party poppers and whistles HOWLING, as a cloud of colourful confetti furls out.

The car horn emits one, long continuous call.

11 EXT. ROOFTOP - DAY

11

Mime artist pulls an 'O' with his mouth, covering it with his hand. The sounds of the chaotic clown/policeman battle continuing, oblivious.

He mimes disassembling the rifle. Packing it away into a mimed case.

(CONTINUED)

He stands, mimes the weight of the case.

He mimics the action of walking down a flight of stairs, behind the roof's ledge-wall.

12 EXT. STREET - DAY

12

A door opens on an inconspicuous warehouse. The mime artist exits, swinging the invisible case.

He turns the corner, walking right into the robber - shaking on the spot.

ROBBER  
(vehement)  
"Like clockwork" you said.

Mimic shrugs, mimes a snagged rope, then pulls it free. The robber softens and chuckles. The mime artist mimics a laugh.

The pair walk away together. Robber swinging the bag of loot. Mimic swinging his gun-case.

FADE TO:

13 EXT. HOLE - DAY.

13

Looking directly up at the clouded sky from the POV of a coffin.

The coffin is lowered, slowly. Around the periphery of the graveside, an assortment of clown faces appear. Painted sad faces.

Among the crowd is a lady-clown and her son. Both are weeping.

One of the clowns, different from the rest - with a painted smile - offers her his string of handkerchiefs. She obliges, wiping her eyes and nose.

He mimes weeping and bawling, rubbing his hands in his eyes.

In no order, the rest of the clowns begin to toss down handfuls of clown apparatus: horns, noses, wigs, balloons, ribbons and confetti, in lieu of dirt. All raining down on the coffin as everything dims.

FADE TO BLACK.

The End