

Trip to the Mall

My heart raced around my stomach tying and twisting knots into itself, giving me a nauseous feeling. I looked ahead and clenched my fist, bringing back awful memories like it was PTSD that I never wished to bring back again. It was like slow-motion as I turned around, reaching to stop what my older sister was about to say as sweat poured off of me in tons and gallons.

"Can we go to that mall? I've never been there before!" my sister asked my oldest sister. I was too late to stop her. Now, we have to go back to the nightmare mall and if I say no, I'll be the mean selfish sister who has nothing better to do than bully her siblings. I had no hope of stopping them now.

As we entered, a strong overpowering scent of urine and drugs punched us right in the face.

"Gyat, what the heck? Why's it smell like this? Smells like gyat-cheeks!" my brain-rotted younger sister wheezed. As I cringed, I noticed it was even more empty than the last time I went. All of the food courts were closed, half the lights were off, and in the background a slow, creepy, old Christmas song from the 1900s was menacingly echoing throughout the mall like in those horror movies. Lights flashed around us and the only sound in these barren hallways were the squeaking of those cars you put a coin in and it bobs back and forth to entertain snotty little kids. Even though it was almost Christmas, usually the busiest time of the year in malls with little kids sitting on Santa's lap not knowing "Santa" was just a paid employee to act for more profit, there were still no kids anywhere in the mall to use these car toys.

"Bro what. Guys, look over here. This shop seems kinda... sketchy." my sister whispered. Inside the dark messy shop you could see shelves and racks filled with clothes from the early 2000s and face products with no clue how long they've been there for. Bars held us back, and even if we could get in, you couldn't walk through all the mess. The eerie red light from the exit in the back flickered and was the only source of light in that shop. I looked around more closely and realized something. The watch and jewelry shop was also barred shut, chains thrown on the ground and display glass smashed open. Glass shards and trash littered the ground. The playplace next to it had a cartoonish lion statue, all ripped up and scratched, sitting and looking out the display window. The play structure was all broken into pieces or collapsed on its side all over the ground. The only sign that it used to be a place where kids happily giggled and played around was the scattered half-deflated colorful balloons with all the cartoon characters you could ever think of grinning on it. But half of them were already completely deflated.

"Guys, what the heck. I searched up why this mall is so empty. Apparently a lot of murders happened and it's also haunted here...?" she laughed nervously. This isn't good. Especially when behind us I hear footsteps and there's a homeless man behind us staring while pacing back and forth, blocking us from the exit. The strong stench of marijuana drifted towards us from him and his backpack, carried by the draft of wind from the holes smashed into the glass exit doors behind him.

I remembered when I was small, and I would ask my mom questions like "Why are there homeless people?" She would say that anyone could become homeless. A rich, wealthy man one day could immediately lose their money and end up homeless the next day. I now

specifically remember the warnings that my mom gave. There are reasons why people end up homeless, and usually it's not a very happy one. They spend all their money on gambling or drugs, and slowly go insane and that's why there are people at gas stations talking to themselves. If I ever see one, avoid them at all costs and run.

I grabbed my older sister's arm and fast-walked past him, hoping and praying that he wouldn't start chasing after us with a weapon because we just walked a little too close to his backpack. Finally, the door to the outside. We ran towards it, the only ray of light in these terrifying hallways. Please, please, please let us get out of here safely. I pushed open the doors that used to automatically move by itself and the fresh wind from outside felt cool on my sweaty palms. It was a much needed break from the still stuffy air inside. I could still feel the stare of the homeless on our backs but with the door in between us, it was a safety barrier.

"Whew, we're out! We're safe!" my oldest sister sighed. "I'm never going back there again. Never ever, or else the next time I go in I might not be able to come back out again." And honestly, real.

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