

# How We Met

The waning rays of a westering summer sun slanted through the small fairgrounds, sending long shadows dancing through the golden hour. I stood contentedly waiting my turn at the Ferris wheel, enjoying the warm, fry-oil perfumed evening air. Everything was just fine.

I caught the Ferris wheel operator looking at me several times. A sort of secretive, embarrassed look that he was hoping I wouldn't notice, but of course I did. Not that I minded. I love a good flirt as much as the next fairgoer.

I jumped as I heard a crash behind me. I turned and saw that a Lemon Shake-Up cart had been toppled—two mischievous youths were darting off, falling into one another laughing. I assumed it was their doing. I looked around and noticed there was little to no reaction from anyone in response to the scene, and I disregarded it as well.

My eyes moved away from the cart, watched a fraction of a revolution of the Ferris wheel, then snapped back to the operator, whose eyes fled again when mine alighted on him. There were still roughly a dozen people ahead of me in line for the ride. No rush.

After stopping the Ferris wheel, the operator suddenly hopped down from the control platform, approached me, and invited me to get on the Ferris wheel next. "It's OK. I can wait. They've been waiting ahead of me," I said to him, gesturing to the people standing before me in the queue.

"No, please, go ahead. Please," he insisted. I bit off further refusals when I saw a sign of alarm flashing in his eyes. I let myself be led past the grumbling line, from which several voices lobbed rather pointed questions at the operator. He ignored them and almost rushed me to the waiting Ferris wheel carriage, gingerly helping me in and giving me a wistful, almost pained look as he closed the gate of my carriage and returned to the controls.

As he walked away, I noticed lemonade was gushing in surprisingly copious currents from the overturned, and now abandoned, Lemon Shake-Up cart. Those near it had lemonade bubbling over their ankles as it swept over ground, spreading in every direction.

I felt the Ferris wheel lurch into motion and slowly I began to rise over the fairgrounds. I could see people with small children scooping them up out of the spreading lemonade pond and begin

carrying them back to their cars. The sweet, citric flow was disrupting queues of fairgoers all over the grounds, including the Ferris wheel, as people either rolled up their pants or left.

The Ferris wheel was brought to a halt with me at the highest point. From there I could see people beginning to flee in larger numbers. The lemonade was getting higher now, dangerously high, as it continued to gush with shocking violence from the now submerged Lemon Shake-Up cart—its location only discernible now by the churning of the lemonade from its source amongst the flood. People were wading away—sticky, cold lemonade up to their navels—as empty cups and unwrapped straws floated this way and that.

I could hear the riders in the lower Ferris wheel cages screaming and clawing at their carriage doors as the lemonade rose over them, trapping them like raccoons caught in a farmer's field and doomed to drown in a crate for their trespasses. The Ferris wheel operator stood on the platform on his tip-toes staring up at me intently as the lemonade crested the breast pocket of his yellowed t-shirt. I looked back into his eyes, confused and a bit afraid, as he silently mouthed the words 'I love you' at me. The lemonade then rose over his mouth and nose, leaving only a few viscous bubbles as it crested his hairline and hid him from sight.

Moments later I found myself the only apparent survivor in the fairgrounds, suspended above the now placid lake of lemonade. I sat there for some time watching the sun set—casting its final rays across the sickly-sweet sea that surrounded my lonely tower—wondering what was to become of me.

I heard a gentle splash-splash-splash. I looked in the direction of the sound and saw the freak show's dog-faced boy churning slowly yet steadily toward me in a swan shaped paddle boat, gazing at me in deep admiration, clutching a soggy heart-shaped box of chocolates in one hand and a cluster of wilted flowers in the other. My hero.



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