

Devil's Circus - Corona
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First chapter; please email me; remccallum2001@yahoo.com

To receive the complete story (short or novel)

I struggle for breath. I think of the people wearing face mask and complaining about how inconvenient they are and how they don't care if they get exposed to the COVID-19. Wait until they are on a ventilator 24/7, and have tubes running down their throats. I focus on the glowing hospital bedside clock. It's straight-up midnight. Fighting to stay conscious, my eyes open wide, but it gets dark, dark, and darker.

I hear a code alarm. The sound fades and then my vision returns.

I look down upon the scene from high above. I know my body remains there, alive, but near death. My thoughts spin, befuddled, disconnected. I wear a white robe and sandals. Colors on the collar and front of the gown—and similar patterns decorating the bottom seam—display the same bravura as my famous neckties. I sense weight, yet I feel as if I'm floating. My senses register smelling, hearing, and feeling, the same as ever.

Cold permeates my soul, not a chill, but rather a desire for warmth. I equate it with being comfortable in my house on a cold winter night, yet I still want to light a fire, wrap up in a blanket, and sip whiskey. A bright orb hovers above; the light attracts me like a bug; why? A shroud, an enveloping fog, approaches and begins to obscure the luring light. Lacking traction, movement towards the glow, or fleeing the shadow overtaking and ensnaring me does not seem possible. Mime acts pushing hands against an invisible barrier, feeling structure where none existed, comes to mind.

Other souls float alongside. A mother clings to her children; the innocent glide towards the light, the adult, cannot join them. She cries and flails. More souls pass by; the forgiven linger for a moment until the brightness absorbs them. Others, not penitent, scramble towards the light but remain in place. Night-beings appear. Demons fly to and fro, snatching souls. Fiendish eyes gleam as the beasts' shred victims with vampire teeth and raptor talons. I hear cries for help, and shrieks of terror as the soul-eaters encircle me. "Someone, somebody," my plea echoes, "help me, please!"

The phantoms leap. I raise my arms to protect my face; the creatures fly through them. Toothed jaws open wide; the hot, putrid breath of hell blows against me. Devoured souls in the throats of the beasts, heads bumping against each other, squirm like fish in a net. A scream, the scream of a man falling off a cliff backwards, emits from deep within my soul.

The soul-snatchers flee in sudden fright, like a pod of seals attacked by a great white shark. A chaotic retreat. What horrific fiend strikes terror in these ogres? The luminance available fades into the encompassing darkness. A sudden and terrible demise awaits me.