

Charlie Glick
The Carnival

Down on the boulevard by our house—I mean the house we rent, not *our* house—they were setting up for a carnival. A carousel, tilt-a-whirl, ferris wheel, house of mirrors, all the classics, taking up several blocks of the street. Each day you'd hear a crew of men banging around down there, unloading the rides from semis and doing whatever needed doing to prep the old machines for the event. I liked it because the road was closed all week, and you know how I feel about cars. But it was odd—I hadn't heard or seen any advertisements about the carnival, and I couldn't find a thing about it online.

Friday came and it was hot. I took a walk at dusk because I love how those days sink into you when they cool off. I did my usual route over the hill and came back down by the carnival, wove my way through the rides. Nothing was open yet, all those big machines like sleeping animals in the warm night, queue gates and control panels shut and padlocked and everything a bit used up, battered metal and tired paint, radiant with an old dog kind of wisdom. How many crumbling cities had they visited along the interstates before they landed here? Could that be the same Gravitron I rode with Dad and Franny at the 1999 Yolo County Fair? Walking at their feet I felt time bend and I wasn't sure if I was walking thirty years ago or thirty years from now once the craze ends and we're left with relics. Beneath the high summit of the Super Slide I saw a loop of children racing up the narrow stairway just to slide back down, elbows and knees and bright mouths begging for one more go, the whole weekend ahead of them. I moved on, passed a small work crew moving heavy stuff around by the ferris wheel and came out through the barriers on the far end.

Next morning I left at dawn for a quick desert camping trip. I didn't want to miss the carnival, but I was confident it'd be full-swing when I got back early Sunday afternoon. Carnivals usually last a few days or a week, I figured; besides, I was sick of people and needed to leave to love them again. Well, I got back to LA on schedule the next day and it didn't hit me until I drove over the spot where the Super Slide had stood: the rides were gone, the carnival had never happened, I was driving down a boulevard of ghosts.