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Category: Science Fiction & Fantasy

Projector

"No," Marcel replied, for what must've been the hundredth time already.

"Come on, Marc," Devin pleaded, "It'll be fun! Besides, you owe me from when you lied to me. You told me you'd do anything to make up for it."

Marcel sighed. Devin was right. "Fine," he said, "but only for a few hours."

"A few hours is all I ask," said Devin, grinning as he walked away. "See you tomorrow!"

It amazed Marcel how he and Devin ever came to be friends. Marcel was shy and introverted, the second child in a family of three brothers. Devin was outgoing and gregarious and was an only child. The two had met each other in the same first-grade class, and ever since then, had declared themselves best friends. Marcel spent most of his free time pursuing his interests in filmmaking; the infinite possibilities and potential for creativity had always inspired him to direct a film one day. Tomorrow, he had planned to see a remake of one of his favorite films, but those plans had been intruded on by Devin's sudden decision to go trick-or-treating. An early Thanksgiving at least gave him the leisure to not worry about school.

Marcel sighed again, walking up to the front doorstep of his home. He fumbled for the keys to his house, eventually finding them, and walked in on the chaos. He rarely experienced peace in his home, not since his youngest brother, Hazel, was born.

"Marcel, could you take out the trash, please?" his mother said, in the midst of what sounded like a war. "Check the mailbox too!" Hazel yelled an order for his mother to come. "And tell your brother to come down for dinner!"

"Okay." Marcel walked over to the trash bin, grabbed the trash bag, and hurled it over his shoulder. "What's for dinner?"

"Just leftovers from yesterday!" his mother yelled, trying to calm Hazel down. "Talk later!"

Marcel walked outside, hauling the trash bag with him. He put out the trash, then went and checked the mailbox. Advertisement. Scam. Wrong address. He discarded the impostors stuck in the mix and walked back towards the house.

"Come down and eat!" he called, and after hearing a distant reply, scuttled towards the dining table. He finished setting up the table, and seeing that he was no longer needed, walked towards his room.

"Where are you going?" his mom whispered, attentive to the sleeping baby. "Are you not going to eat?"

"Not hungry," he replied. "I'll be in my room."

Marcel crashed onto his bed, reveling in the few moments of tranquility in his home. He was starving in reality, but yesterday's meal had been a nightmare, and he would rather starve than go through the torture of eating that again. He let out a groan of exhaustion.

Marcel woke up to a ray of sunlight beaming through the curtains. He yawned, then froze. A rustling sound was coming from under his bed. He reached for his alarm clock, ready to defend himself; his brother was probably trying to scare him again. He readied his weapon in one hand, slowly creeping out of his bed. As he pulled up his bedsheets, Marcel was face-to-face with a demon.

It jumped out from under the bed and exclaimed, "Marcel... I've been waiting here for so long!"

Startled, Marcel yelled and jumped back, hurling his alarm clock at the horror.

"Ow!" The demon peeled off its face, and under it was Devin. "What was that for?"

"Y... You scared me!" Marcel stuttered, still in shock. It wasn't every day a demon greeted his morning underneath his bed.

"Scared? You don't believe in the supernatural, do you?" Devin teased.

"Whatever!" You got what you deserved. Let me get ready." Marcel quickly cleaned himself up and walked out.

"Also, I don't have a costume, so I'll be going like this."

"Don't worry; I brought an extra!" Devin pulled out another demon costume from under the bed, slightly smaller to

fit Marcel.

Marcel sighed to himself. He didn't have a costume because he didn't want to wear a silly suit, but now he had no choice. "Great!" he said, putting on his best fake smile. "I'll meet you outside."

The pair decided to stay at Devin's house until sunset since his neighborhood had more places to plunder. As the sun started to fall, Marcel and Devin began their hunt for candy. As the weight in their bags became more and more apparent, Marcel and Devin eventually reached the end of the neighborhood.

Marcel shook. There, near the end of the road, stood home to the neighborhood's most infamous home. A young couple had once lived there with their kid until the family died in an accident. Or, rather disappeared. Nobody wanted to move in, claiming that they didn't want "cursed land."

"Let's turn around," Marcel shuddered. "My bag is getting too heavy anyways."

"Wait!" Devin called. Marcel was already jogging away from the house. "Let's finish the rest of the houses."

Finishing the rest of the houses meant passing by the haunted house, something Marcel didn't want to do. The sun faded away, darkness taking over the streets. People had started retiring to their homes, emptying the streets.

"Fine," he said. "But quickly. It's getting late now."

They finished the remaining homes, and when they ringed the doorbell of the last house, an old lady bustled to the front door and greeted them.

"Trick or treat!" the pair said. Marcel was ready to get this over with and go home.

"Hmph," she said, clicking her tongue. "A group of boys just came by and stole all my candy. If you want it, they hid it in that home over there." She pointed towards the house across the street.

Marcel turned and stood still. The boys had hidden the candy in the abandoned house.

Before he could speak up, Devin said, "Thank you! Have a good night." As the lady shut the door to her home, he said, "Let's go get that candy."

"No way!" Marcel exclaimed, at a loss for words. "You said to finish the rest. And besides, that house is haunted."

Devin laughed. "Haunted? Do you believe that children's stories? Come on; we're getting the rest of our candy."

Marcel reluctantly followed Devin. This was a bad idea; he could feel it. But Devin was right. It was just a children's story. What could go wrong?

The pair reached the front steps of the house and walked in. The air was musty, and the floors creaked and groaned at every step. All of the doors were closed, except for one. Marcel and Devin carefully crept to the door and walked into a storage room. In front of the window, there was the missing candy, the wrappers glistening in the moonlight.

Marcel let out a sigh of relief. Nothing had happened. They were okay.

"Marcel!" Devin whispered, "You've got to see this!"

Marcel froze. Why did Devin always have to pry everywhere? He reluctantly turned around, ready to leave the house. "What?" he whispered back, annoyed.

"It's an old projector. Didn't you go on a search to try and find one of these?" Devin replied.

To Marcel's surprise, Devin was right. A real old-fashion projector. No refurbishings, no changes, this was the real deal. He let out a breath of admiration. He wished he could take it with him, but he knew that he shouldn't. "Cool," he said, walking back towards the door, acting indifferent. "Let's go now."

"Okay!" Devin said. "Let's go home."

By the time Marcel reached his house, he was exhausted. Devin's mother had offered a ride home, but Marcel had declined. Marcel walked up to his home's front doorstep and fumbled for the keys to his house, eventually finding them and walking in. By the silence that answered his arrival, Marcel knew that his family was sound asleep, confirmed by the distant sounds of snoring. He went up to his room, ate a few candy bars, washed up, and laid on his bed, immediately falling asleep.

Marcel woke up to the sound of his alarm clock with a mild headache and no memory of how his clothes had changed. Today was Sunday. He let out a sigh of relief and crashed back onto his bed—just a few more minutes of sleep.

Marcel woke up about an hour later and went through his usual morning routine. He had a messy omelet prepared by his very busy mother, who promptly said goodbye and left for work for breakfast. Marcel reached in his bag of candy, deciding to indulge in a few treats, but he found himself grasping onto a cold, hard metal surface. Marcel stepped back, confused. When he looked into his bag, he saw staring back at him, the projector from last night. He had not taken the projector with him; he had left it where it had been.

Marcel rushed towards his phone, quickly dialing Devin's number.

"Hello...?," a sleepy Devin replied.

"D...Did you put that projector in my bag?" Marcel asked, shakily.

"What project -- oh. Maybe." Devin said, this time with a bit of mischief in his voice.

"WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT?!!!!" Marcel fumed, not out of rage but out of fear.

"Eh. You'll thank me later." Devin yawned. "I'm going to sleep. Bye!"

"I'm not do--" Marcel heard the beep as Devin hung up the call. He turned back towards the projector and took it out from the bag. Although the projector could be haunted, Marcel had to admit that getting his hands on something like this was unique. The cheapest ones costing \$700, these precious antiques were rare to find, and rarely in such pristine quality. The projector was covered in a silver sheen, unparalleled to any other antique.

Marcel sighed. He decided that keeping the projector might not be the worst idea ever. Besides, what could go wrong?

After clamoring over the projector for a while, Marcel found a blank film roll inside a compartment. As soon as he sat down, he began to draw, immersed in the world of fantasy. He looked out his window and imagined Devin's car. It was a limited edition car, something that the Devin boasted had been more challenging to acquire than the President's phone number. Marcel had always secretly wanted to have that car, even if it was just for a day. Nothing in his life was ever out of the ordinary, and being able to ride such a luxurious and expensive car would feel amazing. As he imagined this, his hand started moving, drawing the sleek curves, elegant rims, and smart cover of the vehicle. Whenever Marcel drew, it was almost like he was unconscious. After he finished his drawing, he decided to test out the projector. He inserted the film into the projector, plugged the cord into the wall, and turned on the projector.

The image that looked back at him was shocking. His drawing of the perfect and elegant car looked back at him, crumpled, crushed, and destroyed. The front window was broken, the front of the vehicle wholly crushed. There was a distinct spherical dent in the side mirror. Marcel frowned. This was not what he had drawn! At least, he didn't think so. He stopped the projector and looked at the image in his hand. He scratched his head.

Marcel woke up to a bright light shining into my face. He rubbed his eyes and glanced over to his alarm clock. 3 P.M.? That couldn't be right. It was pitch black outside. When he glanced over to the source of the light, he saw the projector shining right into his face. He winced at the bright light, then walked around to turn it off. Directly before he was about to take out the power cord, he stopped and stared. There, shining on his wall, was the same picture of the crashed car. He frowned, turning towards the drawing on his table. He turned off the projector and looked inside the film compartment. Nothing. He turned the projector back on, and strangely enough, the car showed up. Marcel frowned. There was no image in the projector, so how was anything being projected? He smacked the projector on the side, and the projection flickered and died away. "Maybe the projector is more worn down than it looks," Marcel thought and shrugged it over. He turned the projector off, pulled out the power cord, fixed his alarm clock, and went to sleep.

Marcel got up and rechecked his projector after being forcibly woken up by his little brother's tantrums. The incident that had happened last night was foggy and seemed only like a distant dream. He rechecked his alarm clock, which correctly read 9 A.M. He went straight back to the projector and sat down in his chair. He thought of something to draw, and while brainstorming, glimpsed at a picture of him and Devin in a tree. Seeing no other inspiration, he began to outline the tree, Marcel, and Devin's small figures in the tree. As he drew, time continued to flow away. After finishing a rough sketch, Marcel glanced up. The clock read 2:57. Marcel decided to break, stretch, and make his way towards the front door to visit Devin. As Marcel began to walk out, he heard a siren. He glanced towards the direction of the sound and stood in horror at what he saw before him. There, out across the driveway, Marcel saw his Devin's car, crumpled, crushed, and destroyed. It was identical to the depiction of the projector. It had the same distinct dent in the mirror, just like the projection. Marcel could see Devin being transported into an ambulance. He rushed towards Devin, only to see him unconscious. Marcel quickly ran back to his house and dashed up to his room.

After frantically searching for his film, he found the sketch of Devin's car. A car, good as new, looked back at Marcel, without a dent or scratch. He then remembered the alarm clock that had been projected. It had read 3:00. And Marcel had come upon Devin's accident right at 3:00. Marcel was stunned. He put up the film, then got in his car. There was only one person Marcel could rely on right now to help him.

Devin seemed unhurt; his right arm was just banged up a bit. Marcel waited for him to wake up, and after everyone checked on Devin, Marcel entered the room.

"Hey," Devin said. "You don't look very worried, considering I could be dead."

"I heard the doctor, silly," Marcel replied weakly. "You'll be fine."

"Your face says otherwise..." Devin said suspiciously. "Look, if you think I can't drive, don't worry --"

"I knew about your accident." Marcel blurted, cutting off Devin. "I knew about it before it happened."

"Wh-- What is that supposed to mean?" Devin asked, looking dazed.

"Yesterday, I drew your car into a film, and the projector showed your car in a crash," Marcel said. "I knew it wasn't a good idea to get that projector!"

"Look, if this is payback for sneaking that projector into your bag, I'm sorry, okay," Devin replied calmly. "But I'm not falling for something like that."

"I'm serious!" Marcel said, his voice slowly rising. "I saw your car crash on the projector!"

"Look, I may have little injuries, but this isn't funny!" Devin snapped back, a wave of heat rising in his face.

"Fine," Marcel replied coldly. "Don't believe me. It's your fault, anyway."

After an unsuccessful conversation with Devin, Marcel returned home. He didn't understand what had happened with Devin's car and the projector, but he didn't wish to find out. He got the projector and tossed it out with the trash. Marcel went back up to his room and went to sleep. There had been enough action today.

Marcel woke up only to find the projector on his desk, untouched. Next to it was a note. On it was the words "Not that easily." Marcel felt anger rising in him. He knew who had done this.

Marcel entered Devin's hospital room furiously. He slammed the note on Devin's bed and demanded, "You think this is funny?"

"What are you talking about?" Devin asked, a hint of annoyance in his voice. "You think this was me?"

"Well, who else could it be? Who else knows about the projector?" Marcel challenged.

"Is this about that stupid projector again? Look, first of all, I've been hospitalized all night, and if you hate the projector, then get rid of it instead of acting like a baby about it." Devin replied, his voice crescendoing. "I'm sorry for everything, okay? Just stop making a fuss."

Devin's tone started to build up rage in Marcel. He was the one who had put the projector into Marcel's life! And he called Marcel a baby for it?

"I wish you'd never entered my life," Marcel said icily. He left and slammed the door behind him.

That night, Marcel made sure he did everything he could to destroy the projector. He hammered it, burned it, and then tossed it back in the trash. He was going to make sure that this projector would get out of his life.

The next morning, however, the projector was still there, laying on Marcel's desk, as if taunting him. Marcel fell down in a heap. He had lost. A few days later, Marcel went missing, along with his family. Nobody knew where they went. Nobody knew what happened.

"Wait up!" Zac said. "Let's skip this house."

"What's wrong?" Francis said. "Scared of a town legend!"

"People actually disappeared in this house." Zac said. "My mom said it's not safe!"

"Oh, whatever." Francis walked in the desolate home; the door had given in years ago.

"What's that?" Zac whispered timidly.

In the middle of the room, staring back at the boys, was a shiny projector, asking to be taken, preying for another victim.