

The Merry-Go-Round

In a small town in the heart of Missouri sits an old Merry-Go-Round. It was constructed in the town square back in the fifties as a way to give roaming children a place to go. It's scarlet red with beautiful gold inlays around the top. The horses are candy colored with unique expressions. One horse appears mid sneeze. Another horse is smirking. One is even giving another horse lovey eyes. The town wanted to hold a grand opening for the new Merry-Go-Round and invited the local shops to set up booths, there was a small parade, and the local bluegrass band performed. The entire town turned out for the Merry-Go-Round's first go around. The kids loved the machine, and the machine, in it's own inanimate way, loved the town's kids. During the summer, the Merry-Go-Round was *the* spot to meet friends before a grand adventure in the woods and mothers would bring their toddlers to play on it while they did their weekly shopping. Teenagers rode it at night on a first date. The beautiful architecture, the lights, the music, and the giggles made for a fun and romantic evening.

The Merry-Go-Round continued to be the centerpiece of the town for quite some time, but eventually its numbers began to dwindle. Less and less kids would meet at its base, less and less teens would kiss under its lights and less and less parents would bring their children to play while they shopped. What was a hot zone of playful shouts and hustle n' bustle became something more to look at than experience. Parents who had grown up with the Merry-Go-Round would bring their children every so often for them to experience the same joy their parents themselves once felt but it did not draw the crowds it used to. The Merry-Go-Round, in its own inanimate way, started to feel lonely.

Around the winter of 1996 the town decided they needed a mall. The historic downtown with its mom-n-pop shops were still around but they could only sell so much. The town's board received countless plans for a new mall, but one set stuck out in particular. A local architect who had grown up in the town submitted what appeared to be the same mall designs everyone else submitted but his included one major difference: the Merry-Go-Round. The town's board thought this was brilliant. By moving the Merry-Go-Round indoors, people could use it year-round. Parents could bring their kids to play while they shopped, teens could have a romantic moment while on a date. The Merry-Go-Round had also started to wear. It's dark red was now more pink than red and the gold had started to peel to reveal the metal underneath. The horses, once full of life, had since lost their unique expressions and just resembled painted plastic horses. The board decided that when the Merry-Go-Round was moved it would also be refurbished.

The Merry-Go-Round enjoyed its new location and young look. It began to attract the same size crowds as its heyday. The carnival music coming from it could be heard all over the mall creating a fun and inviting atmosphere. The town also saw growth with the addition of the mall. It brought in money for the town to continue to grow with the times. Soon a new movie theatre would be added, modern restaurants would pop up, and it seemed each neighborhood got its own mini golf course.

However, the new amenities combined with the explosion of the internet made the mall less and less busy every year. Kids could now find entertainment without leaving their house, teenagers started going to the movies or playing mini golf instead of the mall for dates. Parents could now shop online and only have to leave the house to check a handful of stores. The once joyful atmosphere the Merry-Go-Round's carnival music gave the mall now gave it an eerie abandoned feeling. Almost no one rode the Merry-Go-Round anymore. The mall no longer had an attendant on duty to run it. The few stores that were left in the mall rarely had more than 2 customers at a time and the once full hallways

now seemed like vast underground tunnels. The Merry-Go-Round was lonely. It had loved the town and had provided many great memories for a lot of people. Engagements, first kisses, reunions for soldiers who came home from war and surprised their loved ones. The Merry-Go-Round was there for it all. It was also there as a witness to heartache for people. Breakups, funeral processions, and tornadoes. Even through these sad experiences, the people had the Merry-Go-Round there for support, beauty, and happiness. Now, it portrayed the opposite. This vast structure in the center of the mall represented how lonely its life had become. It seemed it's music had turned to a minor key in its last few years.

The now completely abandoned mall was an eye sore to the town. With all the shops gone, it no longer served any purpose. The town, still wanting to boast that they could support a mall, decided it needed updating, so on July 12th, 2016, they announced that they will be tearing down the mall to create a new one. The shops would be outside, not in vast, cold, empty hallways, but brick streets with trees, live music, and flowers everywhere. One thing was missing from this plan, however. The Merry-Go-Round would not be included. It would be torn down with everything else. People protested this for a time, but eventually the protests died out. The only people hurt by the Merry-Go-Round's removal were those who were children in its heyday. The younger generations didn't care about some old spinning machine. The week leading up to its demolition the Merry-Go-Round would see familiar faces who had come to say goodbye. It had watched them grow up. It had been a friend to them in it's inanimate way, and they loved it.

The Merry-Go-Round was torn down one month and 4 days after the town had announced its plans. The scraps that could be sold were, but most ended up in a trash yard. The expressive horses now stared off in the distance, empty behind their eyes. What was once full of life had now met its natural end.