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Five Nights

at Freddy's

FAZBEAR FRIGHTS #1

INTO THE PIT

SCOTT CAWTHON

ELLEY COOPER

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FAZBEAR FRIGHTS #1

INTO THE PIT

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**INTO
THE
PIT**

The dead possum's still there." Oswald was looking out the passenger window at the gray, furry corpse on the side of the road. Somehow it looked even deader than it had yesterday. Last night's rain hadn't helped.

"Nothing looks deader than a dead possum," Oswald's dad said.

"Except this town," Oswald mumbled, looking at the boarded-up storefronts and the display windows, which were displaying nothing but dust.

"What's that?" Dad said. He was already wearing the stupid red vest they put him in when he worked the deli counter at the Snack Space. Oswald wished he'd wait to put it on until after he dropped him at school.

"This town," Oswald said, louder this time. "This town looks deader than a dead possum."

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His dad laughed. “Well, I don’t guess I can argue with that.”

Three years ago, when Oswald was seven, there had actually been stuff to do here—a movie theater, a game and card store, and an ice-cream shop with amazing waffle cones. But then the mill had closed. The mill had basically been the reason the town existed. Oswald’s dad had lost his job, and so had hundreds of other kids’ moms and dads. Lots of families had moved away, including Oswald’s best friend, Ben, and his family.

Oswald’s family had stayed because his mom’s job at the hospital was steady and they didn’t want to move far away from Grandma. So Dad ended up with a part-time job at the Snack Space, which paid five dollars an hour less than he’d made at the mill, and Oswald watched the town die.

One business after another shut down, like the organs in a dying body, because nobody had the money for movies or games or amazing waffle cones anymore.

“Are you excited it’s the last day of school?” Dad asked. It was one of those questions adults always asked, like “How was your day?” and “Did you brush your teeth?”

Oswald shrugged. “I guess. But there’s nothing to do with Ben gone. School’s boring, but home’s boring, too.”

“When I was ten, I wasn’t home in the summer until I got called in for supper,” Dad said. “I rode my bike and played baseball and got into all kinds of trouble.”

“Are you saying I should get in trouble?” Oswald said.

“No, I’m saying you should have *fun*.” Dad pulled into the drop-off line in front of Westbrook Elementary.

Have fun. He made it sound so easy.

Oswald walked through the school’s double doors and ran smack into Dylan Cooper, the last person he wanted to see. Oswald was apparently the first person Dylan wanted to see, though, because his mouth spread in a wide grin. Dylan was the tallest kid in fifth grade and clearly enjoyed looming over his victims.

“Well, if it isn’t Oswald the Ocelot!” he said, his grin spreading impossibly wider.

“That one never gets old, does it?” Oswald walked past Dylan and was relieved when his tormentor chose not to follow him.

When Oswald and his fifth-grade classmates were preschoolers, there was a cartoon on one of the little-kid channels about a big pink ocelot named Oswald. As a result, Dylan and his friends had started calling him “Oswald the Ocelot” on the first day of kindergarten and had never stopped. Dylan was the kind of kid who’d pick on anything that made you different. If it hadn’t been Oswald’s name, it would have been his freckles or his cowlick.

The name-calling had gotten much worse this year in U.S. history when they’d learned that the man who shot John F. Kennedy was named Lee Harvey Oswald. Oswald would rather be an ocelot than an assassin.

Since it was the last day of school, there was no attempt at doing any kind of real work. Mrs. Meecham had announced the day before that students were allowed to bring their electronics as long as they took responsibility for anything getting lost or broken. This announcement meant that no effort would be made toward any educational activities of any kind.

Oswald didn’t have any modern electronics. True, there was one laptop at home, but the whole family shared it and he wasn’t allowed to bring it to school. He had a phone, but it was the saddest, most out-of-date model imaginable, and he didn’t want to take it out of his pocket because he knew any kid who saw it would make fun of how pathetic

it was. So while other kids played games on their tablets or handheld consoles, Oswald sat.

After just sitting became intolerable, he took out a notebook and pencil and started to draw. He wasn't the best artist in the world, but he could draw well enough that his images were identifiable, and there was a certain cartoony quality about his drawings that he liked. The best thing about drawing, though, was that he could get lost in it. It was like he fell into the paper and became part of the scene he was creating. It was a welcome escape.

He didn't know why, but lately he had been drawing mechanical animals—bears, bunnies, and birds. He imagined them being human-size and moving with the jerkiness of robots in an old science-fiction movie. They were furry on the outside, but the fur covered a hard metal skeleton filled with gears and circuits. Sometimes he drew the animals' exposed metal skeletons or sketched them with the fur peeled back to show some of the mechanical workings underneath. It was a creepy effect, like seeing a person's skull peeking out from beneath the skin.

Oswald was so immersed in his drawing that he was startled when Mrs. Meecham turned off the lights to show a movie. Movies always seemed like a teacher's final act of desperation on the day before break—a way to keep the kids quiet and relatively still for an hour and a half before setting them loose for the summer. The movie Mrs. Meecham

chose was, in Oswald's opinion, too babyish for a roomful of fifth graders. It was about a farm with talking animals, and he had watched it before, but he watched it again because, really, what else did he have to do?

At recess, kids stood around tossing a ball back and forth and talking about what they were going to do over the summer:

"I'm going to football camp."

"I'm going to basketball camp."

"I'm going to hang out at my neighborhood pool."

"I'm going to stay with my grandparents in Florida."

Oswald sat on a bench and listened. For him there would be no camps and no pool memberships and no trips because there was no money. And so he'd draw pictures, play his old video games that he'd already beaten a thousand times, and maybe go to the library.

If Ben were still here, it would be different. Even if they were just doing the same old stuff, they'd be doing it together. And Ben could always make Oswald laugh, riffing on video game characters or doing a perfect impersonation of one of their teachers. He and Ben had fun no matter what they did. But now a summer without Ben yawned before him, wide and empty.

Most days Oswald's mom worked from 12 p.m. until 12 a.m., so his dad had to make dinner. Usually they got by

on frozen meals like lasagna or chicken potpie, or on cold cuts and potato salad from the Snack Space deli that were still good enough to eat but not good enough to sell. When Dad did cook, it was usually things that just required boiling water.

While Dad got their dinner ready, Oswald's job was to feed Jinx, their very spoiled black cat. Oswald often thought that he used about the same amount of cooking skill in opening Jinx's can of stinky cat food as his dad used in his dinner preparations.

Tonight Oswald and Dad were sitting down to plates of blue-box mac and cheese and some canned corn his dad had zapped in the microwave. It was a very yellow meal.

"You know, I was thinking," Dad said, squirting ketchup onto his macaroni and cheese. (*Why did he do that?* Oswald wondered.) "I know you're old enough to stay home by yourself some, but I don't like the idea of you staying by yourself the whole day while your mom and I are at work. I was thinking you could ride into town with me in the mornings and I could drop you off at the library. You could read, surf the net—"

Oswald couldn't let this one slide. How out of date could his dad be? "Nobody says 'surf the net' anymore, Dad."

"They do now . . . because I just said it." Dad forked up some macaroni. "*Anyway*, I thought you could hang out in the library in the mornings. When you get hungry, you

could head over to Jeff's Pizza for a slice and a soda, and I could pick you up there once my shift's over at three."

Oswald considered for a moment. Jeff's Pizza was kind of weird. It wasn't dirty exactly, but it was run down. The vinyl on the booth seats had been repaired with duct tape, and the plastic letters had fallen off the menu board above the counter so the listed toppings included *pepperon* and *amurger*. It was clear that Jeff's Pizza used to be something bigger and better than it now was. There were tons of unused floor space and lots of unused electrical outlets along the base of the walls. Also, on the far wall was a small stage, even though there were no performances there, not even so much as a karaoke night. It was a strange place—sad and not what it had once been, like the rest of the town.

That being said, the pizza was decent, and more important, it was the only pizza in town if you didn't count the kind from the frozen food department at the Snack Space. The few good restaurants in town, including Gino's Pizza and Marco's Pizza (which, unlike Jeff's, had real pizza maker names), had closed their doors not long after the mill had.

"So you'll give me the money for pizza?" Oswald asked. Since Dad's job loss, Oswald's allowance had dwindled to practically nothing.

Dad smiled—a kind of sad smile, it seemed to Oswald. "Son, we're bad off, but we're not so bad off I can't spot you three-fifty for a slice and a soda."