

cARnie

Written by

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FADE IN

EXT. GREENSBORO PARK - DAY

A beautiful fall day in North Carolina as EDDIE LESTER (19, fit, handsome) walks briskly along a deserted walking trail talking into his phone as he shoots a SELFIE VIDEO.

EDDIE
Another kicking day here in
Greensboro Park, bringing it live
on my video blog.

He flexes his well-sculpted bicep and ZOOMS in on it then his infectious smile.

EDDIE (cont'd)
Shout out to my boys DeeJay and
Froggie Fresh! Be sure to check out
my Insta and Snaps, peeps. You can
also follow me on...

He stops suddenly, eyes squinting with interest.

EDDIE (cont'd)
What the-

He points the camera toward a LONE FIGURE in the distance.

EDDIE (O.S.)
What is that?

He ZOOMS in on the FIGURE far away and then we take the POV of the CAMERA VIEW.

EDDIE (O.S.) (cont'd)
(whispering)
This is crazy. You see what I'm
seeing?

And then the FIGURE comes into focus as we witness the clear outline of a CLOWN holding a SILVER MYLAR BALLOON in one hand and something SHINY in the other.

Eddie continues to walk toward the figure, slowing his pace to 'sneak up' on this guy.

EDDIE (O.S.) (cont'd)
(whispers)
Holy shit, it's one of those creepy
clowns just wandering around. Gunna
check this out, peeps.

He flips the camera POV so we get a SELFIE and we just see Eddie's eyes and mouth reacting to this CRAZY sight. The camera POV changes back again...

...and the clown is MUCH closer now, having made up at least half the distance in such a short time. And that SHINY object in his other hand is also in plain view.

EDDIE (O.S.) (cont'd)
Oh shit! He's got a knife!

Eddie runs away from this killer clown. FAST!

The CAMERA POV shows the clown gaining on him, the balloon whipping behind him, his colorful costume billowing in the wind, KNIFE slashing left and right, WHITE FACE snarling.

EDDIE
Oh my God! Oh my God! Someone help
me! PLEASE!

The camera POV shuffles around quickly showing the running path, the falling leaves, the SOUND of his footsteps and heavy breathing. Then the POV flies around to...

...an ATTACKING CLOWN, knife slashing into CAMERA VIEW, as Eddie SCREAMS and the camera falls to the ground, looking straight up into the sky, as the clown looks down at it.

There's a quiet pause.

Then the camera moves again.

EDDIE (O.S.)
That'll do it. Great job, Matt!

EXT. GREENSBORO PARK - CONTINUOUS

MATT BUCK (19), aka Killer Clown, smiles and helps Eddie off the ground.

MATT
That wasn't too much?

EDDIE
No way, man. Creepy as fuck. Here,
take a look.

Matt leans over Eddie's shoulder as Eddie cues up the video on the phone. They gawk at it together.

MATT
Dude, I look sick!

EDDIE
This is totally going viral.

Matt looks at Eddie and gives him a high five. Matt looks back at the video screen.

MATT
Hold up. What was that?

EDDIE
What was what?

Matt points to the screen.

MATT
There. What is that?

ON VIDEO

Off to the side of the walking path where Matt is dressed as Killer Clown, is another figure. ANOTHER CLOWN. Only this one is completely creeped out.

CLOWNIE is tall and cartoonishly lanky. Long arms and legs hidden by a grimy red and black satin costume, dirty orange strands of hair shooting in all directions off his head.

Clownie appears between several trees following Matt and Eddie along the path, carrying a long, rusted knife.

END VIDEO

Matt and Eddie look over their shoulders in the direction of the trees. Nothing there.

EDDIE
What the hell was that?

MATT
I don't-

SNAP. A twig breaks behind them and they both turn around. Nothing.

Eddie lifts up his phone and as he turns, CLOWNIE APPEARS IN FRAME right next to them.

Clownie's knife slashes across the FRAME ON VIDEO and in the real world, Eddie's neck is sliced wide open. He drops to his knees, still holding the phone, video rolling.

Blood SPRAYS across Matt's face, as he watches Eddie's neck split open on its own, a deer in the headlights unable to comprehend what is happening.

MATT (cont'd)

Eddie?

Matt turns around three-hundred sixty degrees, alone in the woods. Except for his friend bleeding out beside him, phone in hand.

ON VIDEO

Clownie appears directly behind Matt, as Matt turns around again looking right at him...but seeing nothing. Clownie takes his knife and SLASHES once.

Matt grabs his neck, stumbles two steps, then falls to his knees in front of Clownie.

Clownie walks toward the camera POV, then leans in close. His ROTTED teeth and BLOODSHOT yellow eyes contrast against his SCARRED AND POKED WHITEFACE.

END VIDEO

Eddie, his eyes closing, swipes his finger across the UPLOAD button on his phone. The wait bar fills slowly then finishes.

The phone reads UPLOAD COMPLETE.

SMASH TO:

TITLE CREDITS

EXT. CAROLINA STATE CAMPUS - DAY - ESTABLISHING

Another day on a typical college campus. WORKERS assemble scaffolding for the AUTUMN FALLFEST CARNIVAL, while students mull about ignoring the chaos.

And with the exception of a group of people playing frisbee on the quad, EVERYONE IS STARING AT THEIR PHONES.

- GIRL walking across campus engrossed in her texting skillfully navigating through a crowd without looking up.

- A cute COUPLE sitting on the grass taking a SNAPCHAT using the cute DEER FILTER to capture how perfectly adorable they think they are.

- BOY plugged into his phone watching a YOUTUBE video with such rapt attention that he MISSTEPS and trips on a sidewalk, nearly falling down. He looks around to make sure no one saw.

- TWO GIRLS posing with duck lips taking a selfie, looking at it, giggling, then repeating with another pose and pic.

Everywhere you look, kids are immersed in their phones, blocking out what is happening around them. All except one.

ERIKA WALLACE (19, tall, long blonde hair, cute glasses) walks briskly across the quad watching the frisbee game and taking in the beautiful day.

One of the players JUMPS and misses the disc as it FLIES over his head toward Erika.

She watches the disc flying away from her then steels her eyes and BURSTS into a sprint toward it. She covers the distance quickly as the disc approaches the ground.

She SLIDES across the grass like she's going into home plate and catches it before it hits the ground then stands up quickly holding it over her head.

All of the players APPLAUD and whistle.

DISC PLAYER
Sweet catch! Wanna play?

Erika bows and tosses the disc back to the player, smiling.

ERIKA
Maybe later. Have fun!

She waves to the players and crosses the quad into SORORITY ROW, smiling and waving to anyone who looks up from their phone to make eye contact. Which doesn't happen often.

She turns and bounces up the neatly manicured walkway to the-

EXT. PSI CHI OMEGA SORORITY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

- beautiful multi-story brick residence house that Erika calls home away from home. Several GIRLS sit outside on the front porch ticking away on their PHONES.

INT. PSI CHI OMEGA SORORITY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Erika enters and bounds up the stairs passing several girls coming down chatting and texting at the same time.

At the top of the stairs, she walks down the bustling hallway and enters-

INT. ERIKA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

- her dorm room only to find her two sorority sisters BRIANA SELLARS and ASHLEY TURNER sprawled out on their beds, laptops opened and phones engaged. Erika takes it in.

BRIANA

Did you see what Kim got Kanye for their anniversary? It was sick.

ASHLEY

I know right? And that outfit she had on at the MET Gala? FML.

Briana slides to her side, holds the camera out at arms length, pouts slightly then takes a selfie. She looks at it, smirks, then goes back to texting.

BRIANA

Hey Erika. Journalism test go okay?

ERIKA

Yeah, I think I did-

BRIANA

Did you catch the fight on Real Housewives last night?

ERIKA

-Uh, no I-

ASHLEY

Oh My God! I know right? Those women can't hold their liquor.

BRIANA

We only got fifty likes on our video blog last night. Losers.

Erika shakes her head and laughs.

ERIKA

You know, you keep watching that garbage and it's gunna kill you.

The girls roll their eyes.

BRIANA
Okayyy mom. Whatever.

ASHLEY
You keep reporting the news, and
we'll keep making it.

Erika chuckles.

ERIKA
What are you two doing later?

Briana and Ashley roll over and look at each other thinking.

ASHLEY
Bachelor is on at eight-

BRIANA
Dancing is on after, then-

ASHLEY/BRIANA
Vlogging!

ERIKA
You are two of a perfect pair.

ASHLEY
Hey, you're the editing queen. Can
you help us later?

BRIANA
We have to build our brand. I mean,
fifty likes? Will you...please?

They get up on their knees, playfully pleading.

Erika rolls her eyes and nods.

ERIKA
I have to do NewsDesk first. But
after that, sure. I'll help build
your brand.

Briana and Ashley clap quickly then roll back over on their
beds and re-engage with their phones.

ASHLEY
After, I'm gunna get so hammered!

Erika drops her books on her desk, picks up her CAMERA BAG,
and heads out.

INT. CAMPUS NEWS STUDIO - LATER

Two student NewsDesk ANCHORS report the latest campus news as ERIKA sits at the control board adjusting levels. MOLLY, PAUL, and CAL, work camera, sound, and boards, respectively.

ANCHOR #1

And finally tonight, those 'creepy clown sightings' continue around the country. And it's no joking matter.

Pictures of various clowns in different locations around the country scroll on the screen behind them.

ANCHOR #1 (cont'd)

Police are investigating several cases locally, putting a strain on other necessary services.

ANCHOR #2

They are asking for help to not promote these activities further on social media, in an effort to thwart the popularity of these types of pranks.

Anchor #1 looks at Anchor #2 to close out the program.

ANCHOR #1

In other words, stop the clowning around?

ANCHOR #2

Or go join the circus.

Both anchors chuckle uncomfortably. Just like the pros.

ANCHOR #1

That's it from us at NewsDesk, thanks for joining us.

ANCHOR #2

See you next week.

Lighting dims slowly as music cues and credits roll on the screen behind them.

Erika leans forward and speaks into a mic.

ERIKA

And we're out. Good job everyone.

The set bursts with activity as the anchor's unpin their mics and head off set to change. Molly and Paul get their areas prepped while Cal slides a box out from underneath the desk.

CAL

Erika, you gotta check these out.

He hands her a VIRTUAL REALITY HEADSET while he slips his set on, including a pair of shiny VR GLOVES. He looks like an odd combination of Michael Jackson and Daft Punk.

ERIKA

What are you doing?

Cal moves his hands out in front of him like he's manipulating something.

CAL

It's the future of sound board engineering in virtual reality. We can operate the board from anywhere on set. Watch!

He slowly moves his hand forward and Erika watches as the lever on the sound board MOVES FORWARD.

ERIKA

Whoa. That's incredible!

Cal removes his headset and smiles wide.

CAL

Just beta stage right now, but put yours on and I'll show you a game I created. It's totally killer!

Erika slides the headset over her head and eyes, and slides on a pair of gloves, while Cal does the same.

ERIKA

I feel stupid.

CAL

Don't be ridiculous.

The two of them face each other with their arms moving about in random slow movements, their heads looking all about. They both look stupid and ridiculous.

INT. ERIKA'S VR HEADSET - CONTINUOUS

But INSIDE the headset, it's an amazing three-dimensional, full-immersion graphic experience, as we see the POV of Erika's virtual character, her arms reaching out and touching the graphic landscape.

ERIKA

I can feel the bush! How is that possible?

CAL

Motion and kinetic sensors in the gloves. Cool, right?

ERIKA

It's amazing.

CAL

Wait 'til you see this. Push the 'W' button in the top right corner of your vision bar. See it?

Erika glances up and sees a large round button with a "W" on it, and virtually 'pushes' it. Suddenly, laid out in front of her is every possible WEAPON you can think of. GUNS, GRENADE LAUNCHER, FLAMETHROWER. You name it.

ERIKA

Oh my gosh. Now what?

CAL

Reach out and grab one.

She picks a MACHINE GUN. The others disappear from view and she is now standing in front of a virtual target range.

ERIKA

Okay, now what do I do?

CAL

Pull the trigger.

She motions her 'trigger finger' and the gun FIRES off ROUND AFTER ROUND, blowing up targets down field. She STRAFES the ground all around her with all the excitement.

CAL (cont'd)

Let go! Let go!

Erika relaxes her finger and it stops.

INT. CAMPUS NEWS STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Erika removes the VR headset as she catches her breath.

ERIKA
That's unbelievable! And you
created all that?

Cal removes his headset and smiles.

CAL
Not just me. Molly and Paul helped.
But yeah, we did.

ERIKA
I want to invest!

Molly and Paul walk over having prepped for the next show.

MOLLY
Those clowns give me the creeps.
Free hugs? Hell to the no!

PAUL
All I know is if a clown attacks
me, I'm going for the juggler.

Paul freezes, waiting for the guffaws from the crowd. He's still waiting. He grabs his neck.

PAUL (cont'd)
Juggler. Jugular. Get it?

Erika, Cal, and Molly look at each other blankly. Then back at Paul.

MOLLY
Did I tell you I was in love with
an idiot?
(points at VR headset)
I got next.

Erika gets up and hands the VR Headset to Molly.

ERIKA
Heading to Jacob's. See you later.

Molly's already got the headset on and waves goodbye.

CAL/PAUL
Later!

EXT. CAMPUS DORM - LATER

Erika knocks on a door and walks into a disaster zone of dirty clothes and empty pizza boxes. Her friend JACOB STEPHENS (19, athletic) plays XBOX with his roommate KYLE FITZPATRICK (19, jock) as they argue.

ERIKA

The way you two live is disgusting.

JACOB

Our ecosystem is perfect.

She carefully moves a pile of crap off the bed and onto the floor to find a halfway clean place to sit.

ERIKA

It's gross. What are you guys arguing about anyway?

Kyle talks without taking his eyes off the game.

KYLE

Matt didn't come back last night and Eddie's not picking up.

ERIKA

So they went on a bender.

JACOB

Exactly.

KYLE

I don't think so. Check this out.

Kyle stops the game mid-shot and grabs his phone.

JACOB

Hey! I was about to take you out!

KYLE

Chill, dude.

Kyle swipes the phone over to Instagram and starts the video of Matt and Eddie in the park.

KYLE (cont'd)

He told me the two of them were going to do some viral video prank.

On the video, Matt the Killer Clown comes into view. Erika laughs out loud.

ERIKA

Oh my god...that is so pathetic. It looks so fake-

Then the video continues as we see the camera view of Matt's blood covered face and turning around in front of Clownie, before falling out of picture frame having his throat slit.

ERIKA (cont'd)

Oh, gross! Wow, they really planned it out with that other guy.

KYLE

That's just it. He told me exactly what they were going to do, and that wasn't part of it.

JACOB

Kyle wants to go out there and find them. Make sure they are okay.

ERIKA

Why don't you call the police?

KYLE

And bust them for making a viral clown goof? No way.

Erika scrolls the video back and forth.

ERIKA

That is so weird.

JACOB

Stupid is more like it.

ERIKA

No, that's not what I mean. Let me show you.

Erika taps a few things on the phone, then tosses it back to Kyle while fishing out her laptop and opening up her video editing software.

Kyle and Jacob look over her shoulder as they all look at the video on the monitor.

ERIKA (cont'd)

Look, when the video starts up and Matt comes into camera view.

The monitor shows Matt in the distance, alone.

JACOB
Like I said, he looks like a tool.

Erika fast forwards the video.

ERIKA
Look here, when he's closer. Do you see that?

She points at Clownie on the screen.

JACOB
The second idiot.

ERIKA
No, he just came out of nowhere.

JACOB
So he was hiding behind a tree.

Erika forwards to the end as Matt turns around in a circle. Scared out of his mind.

ERIKA
I don't know. Matt looks really scared here. And you don't see that second clown in this shot...

Erika rewinds the video showing Matt run closer. No Clownie.

ERIKA (cont'd)
Or this shot...

Erika fast forwards to just before Eddie getting clobbered.

ERIKA (cont'd)
But then that other guy covers that whole distance without being in the shot? How is that even possible?

KYLE
Like I said, something's off and I'm going to go check it out.

JACOB
If you're going, I'll come with.

ERIKA
Are you sure that's a good idea?

JACOB
It'll be fine.

Jacob nudges toward her.

JACOB (cont'd)
Why don't you come along.

ERIKA
I don't know...

JACOB
I'll keep you safe. Might make a
good story for NewsDesk.

He knows what buttons to push.

ERIKA
Okay, let me get my stuff.

KYLE
We'll meet up in an hour.

INT. PSI CHI OMEGA SORORITY HOUSE - LATER

Erika finishes packing her camera bag when Briana and Ashley
BOUND into the room, bursting with excitement.

BRIANA
You ready to vlog us into stardom?

ASHLEY
This is going to be so excellent!

ERIKA
I can't tonight, sorry.

The air is let out of the room.

ASHLEY/BRIANA
WTF? / WHY NOT?

ERIKA
Jacob and Kyle are heading over to
Greensboro Park to try to find
their friends who were pulling some
stupid clown prank, but then-

Briana and Ashley perk up.

BRIANA
Those creepy clown sightings?

ASHLEY
The ones totally going viral?

Erika nods. Briana grabs Ashley.