

The Ice Cream Man

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Police Chief Harrison sipped his morning coffee as he read the newspaper. He was sitting behind his office desk in the police station. It was early in July, and the heat of the day hadn't yet set in.

Harrison looked up after hearing a knock on the door. He set down his coffee and newspaper.

"Come in."

The door swung open, and in stepped a deputy. His face was grim.

"Sir," he sputtered, "we just got another report about a missing child."

Harrison rubbed his chin and muttered, "That's the fourth one this week. This definitely isn't a coincidence."

"I don't think it's gonna stop soon," the deputy said frantically. "Look, sir, I have a son. I'm worried something's gonna happen to him."

"Don't worry, Kyle. I'll start posting neighborhood crime watches."

Kyle was clearly concerned. "Do you think we should contact the FBI, or something? This is bigger than we can handle."

"Nonsense!" Harrison replied. "Grantville Police Department is more than capable of tracking down this kidnapper."

"People will be angry if we were able to get help from the FBI but decided not to."

"The people will have more faith in us once we single-handedly take down this criminal," Harrison declared, smiling at the thought. "Now go start the investigation."

On the other side of town, an ice cream truck rolled merrily down the street. Its driver, George, smiled and waved at passersby. George turned down a pleasant residential street and activated his truck's jingle.

Once children heard the familiar tune, they rushed onto the street. George pulled his truck up beside the curb, climbed out of the driver's seat, and opened up the vending window.

He looked down at the group of four thin boys and girls.

"What'll it be today, kids?" he asked warmly.

"Cookies and cream!"

"Chocolate!"

"Vanilla!"

George chuckled and reached into his tubs of ice cream. He scooped the cold treat into cones and handed them all to the children.

"Two dollars, please," George said.

"Wow, George," one of the boys said as he held out the money. "Your ice cream costs so little."

"And it has an interesting taste," the other boy added.

The ice cream man smiled and answered, "George only serves the best."

"Bye, George!" the kids shouted as they hurried away down the street.

George grinned as he shut the vending window. He turned to his tubs of ice cream and peered inside. He was running low.

"Oh, drat," he murmured to himself. "I'll have to restock."

George slipped behind the wheel and put the truck in drive. He peeled away from the curb and took off down the street.

"Any leads, Kyle?" Harrison inquired, looking over the deputy's shoulder.

"None, sir. The missing children don't live near each other. No pattern."

"Whoever this guy is, he's good," Harrison commented. "I think we're dealing with a professional here."

"I'm worried, Chief," Kyle muttered.

“We all are, Kyle.”

“Have you told the mayor about this yet?”

“I’m going to as soon as I’m free,” Harrison replied.

“Please do, sir. I’m worried about my son.”

“Don’t worry, Kyle. We’ll find this guy.”

3 Days Later

George’s ice cream business was going remarkably well. Unfortunately, that meant the other ice cream trucks in the city were going out of business. The others simply couldn’t compete with George’s low prices. One of these rival ice cream truck drivers, however, was determined to do something about it.

This man’s name was James Melvic. He knew he couldn’t drop his ice cream prices as low as George’s, or else he wouldn’t make a profit. Melvic just couldn’t understand how George was able to sell his ice cream so cheap. He decided to do some investigating.

In the early evening, Melvic parked his vehicle a few hundred feet from George’s truck and fished around in the glove box. He grabbed a pair of binoculars and watched George’s ice cream truck through them.

Everything looked normal. George was handing out popsicles to a few small children. One of the children held his hand out to give George money.

Melvic zoomed in on the money. It was comprised only of coins.

Shocked, Melvic lowered the binoculars. How could George be turning a profit? He had to be spending a considerable amount of money on the ingredients of the ice cream. It seemed his ingredients would cost more than he was being paid in return for the finished ice cream. It just didn’t make any sense.

George soon drove away. Melvic decided to follow him.

Melvic tailed George at a reasonable distance for several miles. He had no idea where George was planning to go.

A few minutes later, they entered an industrial district. Melvic was confused; there surely wouldn’t be any children here. Still, he continued following George.

George took a right down a deserted alleyway. Melvic stayed back and peered around the corner. George stopped his truck by a dumpster.

About a minute later, he emerged with a bin of some sort. Melvic couldn't quite make out what was inside. George walked up to the dumpster, opened it, and tossed the contents of the bin inside. He then returned to his ice cream truck and continued down the alley.

Mystified, Melvic hopped out of his truck. He walked down the alley, towards the dumpster. What could George possibly have been doing here?

Soon, Melvic was at the dumpster. He slowly opened the lid.

A putrid odor suddenly met his nose. Melvic gagged, but was able to look inside through tearing eyes. He was shocked to see at least a dozen small, child-sized clothes at the bottom of the dumpster. Even more horrifying, they were all covered in blood.

A second later, a metallic object pierced the back of Melvic's skull.

2 Weeks Later

"Alright, everyone, listen up!" Harrison shouted. He stood at the end of a long table filled with police officers. "This situation has become more critical than we ever could have imagined."

"At least eight children have been reported missing," Kyle commented.

"That's right. The mayor says he's even contemplating shutting down all the schools in the city and forcing all children to stay indoors," Harrison added. "I want twice as many patrols in the streets starting now. As of today, finding this kidnapper is our top priority. Dismissed."

As the police officers filed out of the room, Kyle approached Harrison.

"Chief, my wife's working late today. My son's alone in the house. Can I call him to make sure he's safe?" Kyle asked.

"Sure."

Kyle's plump eight-year-old son, Jeff, was sitting in front of a TV. He stared mindlessly at the dancing screen.

Suddenly, his phone began ringing. He reached into his pocket and pulled it out.

"Hello?"

"Jeff, it's Dad. Are you alright?" Kyle asked.

"Yeah," Jeff replied, picking his nose.

"Listen, Jeff. I need you to stay inside the house."

"Whatever."

"Do you understand me? It's not safe outside. Don't leave the house."

Just then, Jeff heard something in the distance. He strained to listen to it. The sound grew louder. It sounded like a melody.

It was the ice cream truck's jingle.

"Alright, Dad. Right after I get some ice cream."

"What? *No!*" Kyle screamed, right before Jeff hung up the phone.

Jeff squealed with glee and raced out the door, neglecting his father's command. He spotted the truck heading in his direction. He ran over to the street and waited as the truck pulled up beside him.

"Hi there, son!" George greeted him as he opened the vending window. "Pick any flavor you'd like."

Jeff eventually made up his mind and announced, "Um... I want mint chocolate chip!"

"Good choice," George said, disappearing out of view to retrieve the ice cream. "What size cone do you want?"

"Large."

"I see you have an appetite," George commented, grabbing a cone from the rack beside him. "Speaking of which, let's play a game. If I can't guess your weight within five pounds, you get your ice cream for free."

“Sure!”

“Alright,” George murmured, looking the chubby boy up and down. “I’d say you’re 140 pounds.”

“150,” Jeff corrected him.

“Then this cone is free of charge!” George replied, holding out the ice cream cone.

As Jeff extended his meaty hands to grab the cone, George quickly thrust it towards the boy’s gut. There was a shiv hidden inside the ice cream, and the cone was the handle. The shank punctured the boy’s stomach.

George quickly yanked Jeff through the window, struggling against the boy’s great weight. Once the fat boy was completely inside the truck, George closed the window and drove away.

The ice cream man drove around the city for a while, looking for a spot to hide his truck. He eventually found a deserted alley, which he backed his vehicle into. George switched off all the lights and headed into the rear of the truck.

Jeff was lying on the floor, bleeding out through his wound. He looked up at George with glazed eyes.

“Still a little bit alive, eh?” the ice cream man said, surprised. “Good. That means I get to watch you die painfully.”

Jeff’s blood-spurting mouth contorted into a fearful frown. He tried to say something in protest, but it was too late. George picked him up and began to carry him over to a strange contraption mounted on the floor of the truck.

Suddenly, the back doors of the van were pried open. Half a dozen police officers stormed into the truck, guns drawn. Kyle was one of them.

He fired his pistol. The bullet struck George in the shoulder, causing him to drop Jeff. As George screamed in agony, the fat boy crawled out of harm’s way.

Kyle picked up his son and saw the blood seeping through his shirt. He quickly carried him out of the truck.

“I need a medic!” he screamed.

Paramedics were already on the scene. Two of them rushed over to the boy and began administering first aid.

“Don’t worry,” one of them reassured Kyle, “he’ll make it.”

“Thank God.”

Inside the truck, George was writhing on the floor. Chief Harrison and another police officer grabbed the ice cream man and pulled him to his feet. Harrison snapped a pair of handcuffs around George’s wrists.

“You sick piece of trash,” Harrison spat as he led the man out of the truck. “You’re gonna spend the rest of your life in jail.”

George grinned and answered, “I wouldn’t be so sure of that, if I were you.”

“Get him outta here,” Harrison fumed, shoving George into the back of a squad car.

He slapped the hood twice, and the car took off. George grinned at Harrison through the rear window until the vehicle disappeared out of view.

“Jail’s too good for a freak like him,” Harrison muttered to Kyle as he returned to the scene. “Thanks for the heads-up about the ice cream truck, Kyle.”

“My boy was in danger. I’m just glad we got here when we did,” Kyle answered, rubbing his son’s head.

Harrison nodded. Then, he walked back towards the ice cream truck.

Harrison entered the truck and shined his flashlight around. Blood was everywhere. It was dripping from the ceiling. It was encrusted between the wall panels. Harrison did his best not to vomit.

Then he saw something that stopped him cold. He had found a meat grinder. The flashlight beam quivered on the horrible machine, shaky from Harrison’s shivering hands. It looked like the grinder had been freshly used.

Slowly, Harrison walked forward. He gazed at the rear of the grinder. It appeared to be some sort of spout. Perturbed, he directed the beam underneath the spout. There was a large tray filled with blood and guts.

“Oh, God,” Harrison whispered.

“Find something, Chief?” called an officer outside.

“I found too much.”

Harrison spotted several tubs of ice cream nearby. Strangely, the worst odor was coming from them.

The chief slowly approached the tubs. He read the labels on their lids.

Cookies 'N' Spleen, Vein-illa, Good Humerus Bars.

The list went on and on. Slowly, Harrison reached his hand out. He grabbed the lid of one of the tubs. He pried it off. The chief peered inside.

He was horrified to see human remains mixed with ice cream. Harrison couldn't contain himself anymore. He vomited on the floor of the truck.

Harrison dashed out of the truck and fell onto the ground. He gasped for fresh air.

"What is it, Chief?" Kyle asked, helping him up.

"The sick bastard was grinding up kids and turning them into ice cream," Harrison panted.

Everyone on the scene suddenly became quiet. The only sound was Harrison's second wave of vomit.

The chief's radio suddenly crackled to life. Harrison wiped the puke from his mouth and listened.

"Attention all units," a female officer said, "the suspect has escaped."

"What?" Harrison coughed. "How?"

"The car he was being transported in was found overturned in a ditch."

"What about the driver?"

"He was found dead with an ice cream cone sticking out of his neck."

