

THE PLAYGROUND:

When a band of dysfunctional children is suddenly thrust into a diabolical realm of violence, they must grow up instantly to have a chance at survival. Will they find a way to put their differences aside, or be swallowed up by the insidious architecture all around them?

SETTINGS

There are three main settings in this book. The Playground itself, the control/viewing room, and Geraldine's bedroom/Hall of Mirrors.

The Playground is obviously where the children spend most of their time.

The control room is where the parents are forced to watch their children make their way through the Playground.

Geraldine's bedroom/Hall of Mirrors is where Rock is sexually and physically abused.

The Hall of Mirrors is exactly what it sounds like, a maze of mirrors with dildos suctioned to them at various intervals.

CHARACTERS

GERALDINE BORDEN is the mastermind of the playground. She's an old rich lady, 70s or 80s. She has a lot of trauma regarding her mother MILDRED, as well as her infertility, so has concocted a plan with former Nazi Scientist Dr. Fuchs, to pay \$3000 to families who opt to let their children test out "playground equipment" as part of a charity organisation. It's all a ruse and what she really wants is to watch kids be tortured, while making their parents watch also.

ROCK STANLEY is Geraldine's muscle/butler/rape and abuse victim. Adopted as a child, Geraldine groomed Rock to assist with her plans by means of rape, physical abuse and verbal assaults. Rock is tasked to approach the families in playgrounds to entice them with Geraldine's offer. Rock is a legend, imo and is the true hero of the story.

DR. ADOLPHO FUCHS is Geraldine's personal Nazi offsider. He's a Nazi Scientist that has been recruited by Geraldine for his diabolical tendencies towards new forms of violence. He's your typical slimy perverted Nazi scumbag and is described as a mirror for Geraldine's depravity.

MILDRED BORDEN is Geraldine's mother. She's long dead and only mentioned a few times in Geraldine's chapters, but informs a lot of Geraldine's motives.

THE GRIMLEY FAMILY

TOM GRIMLEY is the dad. Probably the most normal character, just a regular dude with some kids and a wife.

MOLLY GRIMLEY is the mother. Also relatively normal, but slightly more hysterical reactions than Tom.

SADIE GRIMLEY 7

Described as a “sadistic psychopath”, she seems relatively normal too, except for being a jerk to her brother Isaac. Is a negative influence on her sister Sam, despite being younger.

SAMANTHA GRIMLEY 8

I barely remember her tbh, I don't think she lasted very long lol

ISAAC GRIMLEY 11

Decent and noble young lad with big ears and glasses. Becomes friends with CJ throughout the playground.

THE MATTHEWS FAMILY

GREG MATTHEWS is the dad. He's definitely in the top 3 for Biggest Piece of Shit in the book. Ultra competitive, abusive to his sons in a way that he doesn't think is a big deal. Pushing them to sports etc, wants his daughter to do Cheerleading because she's a girl, even though she wants to swim.

LACEY MATTHEWS is the mother. Naive, also under the thumb of her husband but doesn't seem to mind.

BOBBY MATTHEWS 14?

Big jerk. Oldest of the playground kids and likes everyone to know it.

TANYA MATTHEWS 10?

Athletic and smart, wise beyond her years. Gets along best with CJ.

CJ MATTHEWS 12

This kid is a total superhero. Natural sports ability, a kind heart and somewhat of a hero to Isaac.

KIP MATTHEWS 9?

Bullied the most by his father for not being as good as CJ. Competitive, but doesn't want to be.

THE CLARKE FAMILY

CAROLINE CLARKE is the mother. She's an abusive POS as well, burning her son with cigarettes and attaching him to a leash in public, dragging him around. No father is mentioned.

DONNIE CLARKE 6

Youngest of the playground kids, typical abused child. Non-verbal and unassuming, with a seemingly big tolerance for pain and crazy situations.

A NOTE ON SEX

All the sex in this story happens between adults. None of the children are sexually assaulted. In fact, the only people who do have sex are Geraldine and Rock (I think). There may be some flashback type scenes of when Geraldine was a child, however it's not presented as child rape, due to the characterisation of Geraldine. The Geraldine/Rock scenes are stomach churning. "Fermented beaver" is a direct description of Geraldine's parts, and it only gets worse from there. It's worse for Rock than it is Geraldine, as she is the rapist in these scenes. I get "woman in the bathtub in the Shining" vibes from the sex scenes, and it's written quite viscerally. I cringed more at this stuff than the explicit violence.

There is extreme sexual violence at the end, but I'll get into that when I talk about the deaths.

DEATHS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

I'll try not to name the characters so it's not completely spoiled, and give vague descriptions of the deaths. I'll also include some non-fatal injuries, and any animal abuse.

- 1) An adult is killed by “a steel collar thrusting cleanly through the right side of [their] neck.” I saw this coming a mile away, and it’s described as “a comedy of errors”.
- 2) An adult is garotted, lifted into the air and smashed skull first into the marble floor. Still alive, they are beaten in the face to a pulp. Not too traumatic, just blind rage and bloody punches.
- 3) A child is attacked by a pair of ferocious dogs, seriously bitten in the back of the arm. One dog dies (broken neck) and the other is temporarily blinded, and then ordered to be killed. We don’t see this happen.
- 4) All the children are forced to slide down a slide with razorblades embedded in the plastic, along with barbed wire. None come away without injury.
- 5) A child is gravely injured in an explosion, losing a limb and being burned. In the rescue attempt, they are crushed by the falling ceiling.
- 6) A child falls into a pile of salt, exacerbating the pain from their injuries.
- 7) Minor run in with some fire ants.
- 8) Live cows are dropped into a specialised meat grinder, then remains are sprayed at the children.
- 9) A child also ends up in the meat grinder.
- 10) Some snakes are injured, because apparently a pit filled with broken glass isn’t enough - must add snakes.
- 11) A child is stabbed in the back several times, and their still somewhat alive body is used as a makeshift skateboard by another child in order to get down a slide with timed circular saws. This is probably the most brutal death in my opinion, not just based on objective violence, but the psychology behind that decision being made. A real turning point for most characters.
- 12) Two children fall to their deaths in a vat of acid.
- 13) Two children are on a seesaw, attached at the seats by hooks through the shoulders and into the armpits.
- 14) The seesaw children are badly burned at the feet and shins whenever the seesaw comes down.
- 15) A child is sent careening into steel fan blades, and his head is sliced and obliterated. This was the saddest one for me, specifically because of who it was.
- 16) A child is injured by the seesaw hooks when the entire structure is brought down, and they land on the flames causing more burns.
- 17) During a scuffle, one adult is shot in the bicep and the other receives a compound fracture to the arm, and dies by having their face smashed into a control panel causing an electrical fire which melts and explodes their head.
- 18) Three adults scuffle, one adult is shot a few times and this fight results in one particularly brutal death. They basically choke on their own fluids, as a result of another adult forcibly inserting their fist into their mouth and throat, and breaking their nose with the other hand.

- 19) Two adults scuffle in a Hall of Mirrors, resulting in bone fractures and several glass-related injuries.
- 20) An adult's face is smashed into a mirror that has a dildo attached to it, the dildo is forced into their mouth and it knocks some teeth out.
- 21) An adult lifts another adult above a spiked shard of mirror, and drops them genitals first onto the shard. This may be the most extreme sexual violence that occurs in the book, as the other rapes that are described are more psychologically depraved, than violent. This adult dies.
- 22) An adult succumbs to the injuries sustained throughout the story, in one of the most beautiful deaths ever penned in Extreme Horror Literature.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This book is the best written Extreme Horror novel I've read. Beauregard's capacity for language is phenomenal, and the balance between absurd violence and realistic motives makes this a delight to read. Phrases like "fermented beaver" and "human vomit" (used to describe a corpse) are very visceral, and the overall vibe I get from the language is that people really are just fragile meat bags filled with liquid and sharp pointy bones. Like in most Extreme Horror, the characters can withstand injuries that may kill a regular non-fictional person. It's sometimes hard to tell when a character actually dies because the violence is so severe that one would assume instant death. Not the case.

You can tell Beauregard had the idea of an evil old lady first, then added brutality to the story, so it really feels like a true narrative, rather than pages of bloody violence for the sake of it.

I find the horror in this book doesn't really come so much from the brutality, but from the "holy shit" unexpected moments of pure human evil. This novel has a hopeful ending, and it's just so much fun to read. The children all have distinctive personalities, I thought I would have trouble keeping track but the characterisation of them really shines through. I believe we are supposed to empathise the most with Rock, despite most readers probably having the most in common with Tom and Molly, as Rock's character arc is the basis for the entire plot.

I really enjoyed working on this summary, as I got to dive back into the book that I couldn't put down the first time.

Hope this was what you were after, I'm happy to go into further detail regarding any of this but like I said, I don't want to spoil specifics, and this book is just so much fun that I want you to read it anyway, even if it doesn't sound like it's up your alley 😊