



The carny vocabulary is traditionally part of carnival cant, a secret language, and is an ever-changing form of communication, in large part designed to be impossible to understand by an outsider Thus, as words are assimilated into the culture at large, they lose their function and are replaced by more obscure or insular terms. Most carnies no longer use cant, but many owners/operators and "old-timers" still use some of the classic terms. Here are some terms you would find back then and that you can use at your Murder Under The Big Top party!

**86** Banned from the carnival midway

ADVANCE MAN The person who arranges the rights to play a certain town or fairgrounds

ALIBI A carnival game that has very little chance to win

**BABY Q** A type or model of a merry-go-round ride

**BACK END** Rides and games

**BACKLOT** The area behind the midway where the carnies keep vehicles and living quarters

**BILLBOARD** Trade magazine for carnival owners -- Now called "Amusement Business" or "AB"

An item of stock given away in order to attract more customers

A carney's sales pitch to get customers, or marks, into his joint

**CARNEY** A person who works in a carnival

**COOK SHACK** Food joint where carnies eat

CORN GAME A bingo game -- In the old days, corn was used to cover each number

The amount, usually a percentage, paid by a concession to the boss

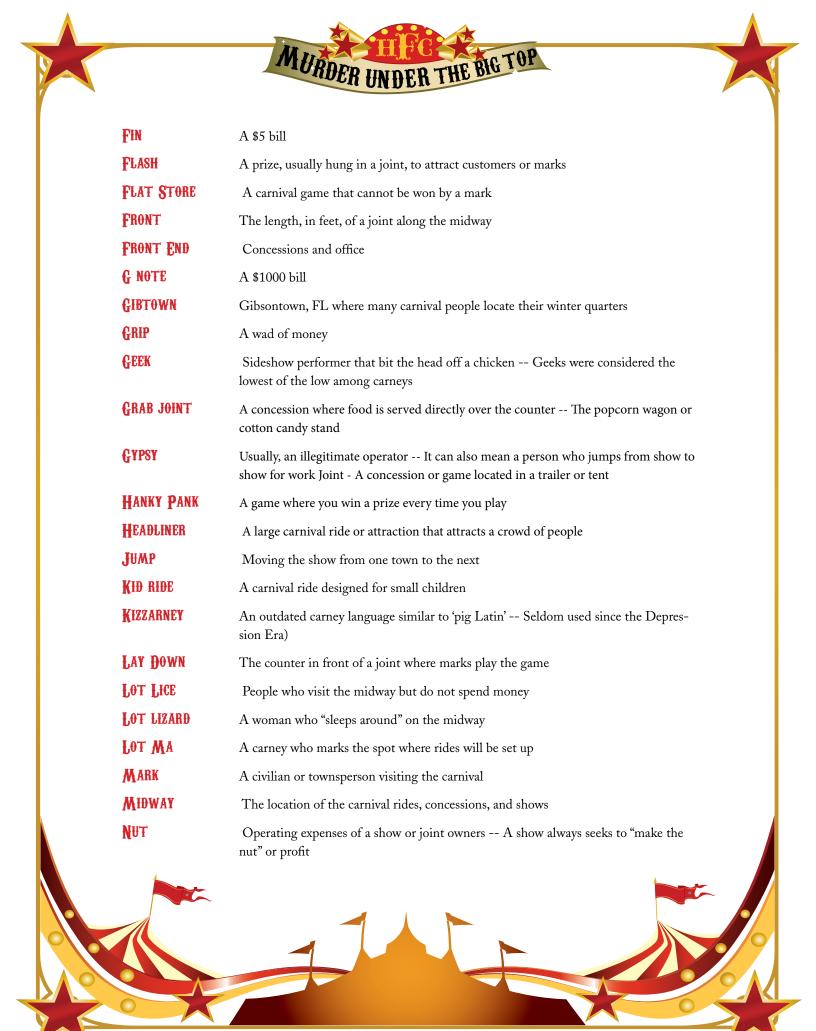
**DONIKER** Toilet

**DONIKER JOINT** A bad location for a joint away from the flow of the crowd

**DOUBLE** A \$20 bill

**Money provided to a carney by the office before it is earned** 

**ELY #7** A type or model of a ferris wheel





**OFF ICE** A trailer from which the carnival owner runs his business

**PLASTER** Cheap prizes

PLUSH A stuffed animal given as a prize in a game -- A soft, furry teddybear

**PITCH GAME** A joint that sells merchandise instead of offering items as prizes to win

**POSSUM BELLY** Compartments under a semi truck trailer used to haul cargo

**PUNK** An immature young person

RAG Cheap stock, usually a stuffed animal made from plain material -- Also called 'slum'

or 'plaster'

RIDE JOCKEY A carnival ride operator

**ROUTE** The itinerary of towns to be played for the season

RUBE A pejorative term for a carnival customer – The cry, "Hey, Rube," is a signal to help a

fellow carney in a fight

**SAWBUCK** A \$10 bill

**SCHLOW (SLOUGH)** To take down or tear down the show – Pronounced like "Ow! I hurt my finger!"

A person who pretends to play a game as an enticement to others

**SIDEWALL** A wall of canvas that hangs just below the top of a joint

SINGLE 0 A dollar bill – Also refers to a show that has a single attraction

SLUM Cheap, inexpensive prizes used in a game

**SPOT** The location of a carnival – That was the best 'spot' we played all year

**SWING** To steal money from the owner/boss

**THE MAN** Any person of authority

**TOP MAN** A carney who, when setting up a ride, positions himself high in the air

TUB The passenger compartment on a thrill ride

TURN THE TIP To attract a good crowd

WINTER QUARTERS The town where the show locates in the off season

YARD A \$100 bill