

Invasive Crawdads at the Fun Fair

From the Misadventures of Crusty & Rusty

A Crawdad Tale by Suzy Nees

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Our scene opens on a beautiful spring morning in the hills of Appalachia. All seems calm and peaceful in the little valley we see; the morning sun sparkles on a crystalline brook as it weaves its way downhill past a schoolhouse, where the students are getting ready for a very big day.

Today is the day of the Fun Fair, and everybody is doing their part to make the school a fun and festive place for the visitors.

Little do these hard-working kids know that two well-traveled Crawdads named Crusty and Rusty are fixing to take over the Fun Fair with their obnoxious manners, their ravenous appetites, and their terrible jokes.

Worst of all, most of these jokers' theatrics are merely a ploy to sneak into the nearby waterways. The Invasive Crawdads' real plan is to get out into streams and rivers to terrorize the natives, lay waste to underground gardens, and generally upset the ecological balance.

Crusty is a member of the species *Procambarus clarkii*, commonly known as the Red Swamp Crayfish. The toughness, economic importance, and cultural relevance of this species can't really be overstated...in Crusty's mind, anyway, they can't.

Really, Crusty is a bit puffed up about his survival skills, his harrowing escape from the Pet Trade, and his Cajun connections.

But sometimes the charismatic Crusty just doesn't see how bad he makes his friend Rusty feel when he goes on and on about his own species' many virtues.

Rusty, a member of the species *Orconectes rusticus*, commonly known as the Rusty Crayfish, is smaller and far less glamorous than Crusty. His "traveling opportunities" have mostly been awarded to him via the bait trade.

Rusty is greedy and wasteful, slicing important underwater gardens to ribbons and preying on fish eggs and whatever else he can find. Rusty's meanness often makes him more difficult to catch than native crawdads, giving him just one more way to upset the ecological balance in his own favor.

On the positive side, Rusty greatly enjoys playing guitar and will enthusiastically seek any audience he can find for the handful of songs he can play. As to whether or not Rusty is actually any good, this author must plead the Fifth.

Great care has been taken to create a culturally rich and crowd-friendly afternoon concert at this Fun Fair. Some very good artists have been invited, and this fundraising concert for the school could be a real game-changer for everyone if things go according to plan.

But if the Invasive Crawdads take things over, a whole lot of work could be for naught.

Oh no! Here is Crusty, sweet-talking the lady in charge of the Cookie Booth. He is lying now, saying that Invasive Crawdads have opened for Levon Helm, and could she please let the Invasive Crawdads play some music for the people while they babysit the Cookie Booth?

We will do a brief Levon Helm tribute while we monetize your

cookies, Crusty says as he waves his antennae in a flirtatious way.

Oh, yes, that all sounds wonderful, says the mesmerized lady.

Crusty never fails with the ladies. His handsome lobstery appearance, his Cajun accent, and his vast knowledge of Swamp Music all make the ladies swoon. His moxy doesn't hurt, either.

But we must leave our story now, and pray that things start looking better for the families of Appalachian Brook Crayfish that live near the school in our story.

This entire community could get violently displaced if Crusty and Rusty manage to get loose in the stream, so we must earnestly hope that the Invasive Crawdads don't manage to get away with too much mayhem today!

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End of Chapter One.