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The episode screamed of “stranger danger” and brought to mind the Great Clown Panic of 2016, when tales of clowns lurking near the woods and under streetlights ignited a national hysteria , although many of the reports were found to be false. The reported sightings played on a cultural fear of clowns and eventually led to at least a dozen arrests in multiple states.

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The brief panic in Tennessee also happened to coincide with the release of the trailer for “It Chapter Two,” a follow-up to the clown horror movie, set to hit theaters this year.

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But after a swift investigation, the Clarksville authorities determined that the latest fright was a false alarm: He was not a bad clown. He was simply misunderstood.

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