

The Death Slide

It started much like any other day, however I was so excited. I could hardly breathe through the hour-long drive there. I was squished between my two ten-year-old best friends (whose names have been changed here to protect the innocent) in the back seat of a white Saturn, but I didn't care. I was practicing over and over in my head what I was going to say to all the smart adults who would tell me I was too young to ride the water slides. I was simply going to reply, "Actually I'm ten, going on eleven."

On the right of me sat the girl I met in preschool, the swimmer who was named after a state, like me: Lucy. She was the observant artist. She sat there holding a deck of cards, trying to find all the queens. I could tell she was nervous. Her hands were sweating. The cards were damp and at one point they slipped from her fingers. She giggled unhappily. I looked down and realized mine were sweating, too.

On my left was the girl who spoke for the three of us. She was the big cheese. Anna was without a doubt the most daring of the three of us. She was the one who started the famous food fight of '95 in the cafeteria. She told the entire school that her sister ran away to join the circus in '96, and in '97 she broke a boy's arm, wrestling. It was obvious that she was going to ride the infamous "death slide." In fact as soon as we jumped out of the car she screamed, "I'm going to ride the biggest ride at Shimmer field, 'The Death Slide.'"

I was still debating whether or not to go on the newest and scariest ride of Shimmer field. Anna was humming and acting like it was no big deal. Lucy was practically shaking and saying, "Everything will be fine. I'll ride the kiddie slide." She was joking, but I knew that thought was probably going through her head for real.

And there was me. I'm the one who would rather write an essay than talk. I'm like the invisible one.

I was so nervous and excited at the same time that I practically leaped out of the car with my backpack and my towel flying behind me. I could hear the screaming and crying of children.

After we went through the long line to pay and put on a whole tube of sunscreen, we were ready to have some real fun. We wandered around trying to find the perfect ride.

Lucy and I had decided on the water gym when Anna suddenly stopped short. She pointed way up in the air. Our eyes slowly followed her finger. Through our ten-year-old eyes we saw what looked like the scariest ride in the entire world. It was a fifty-foot tall sky blue slide that went straight down into a giant pool of deep dark water.

Anna looked around and smiled. Her short brown hair jumped and fell each time she took a long stride. Her brown eyes twinkled as she walked to the slide. She seemed so proud about being brave and daring to walk up to "The Death Slide." Lucy and I felt embarrassed that a girl six months younger than we were was going to ride it while we were going to play on the water gym. But Lucy and I had a plan to cover up our embarrassment. We were going to act like we were going to ride The Death

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Slide, and then, at the last minute, say we forgot something and wait at the bottom for Anna.

As we stood in line, slowly approaching the fifty-foot ladder I tried to gather my strength and suddenly knew I wanted to go down that slide. I stared at Lucy and suddenly whispered, "I'm going to do it." She was in awe.

I looked at the ladder and I looked at my friends. Lucy was smiling but Anna was looking very serious. She had wrinkles in her forehead and her eyebrows were down over her eyes. She was looking up to the top of the ladder, which was hardly visible at that moment. All of a sudden she started crying. It was like a low siren. Then it got louder. "What's wrong?" I yelled over the voices of the screaming children. Anna didn't answer. Her face was like a wrinkled prune. She had tears coming down her red cheeks. She didn't answer me, she just ran to the water gym without a word, to her four-year-old sister. I looked at Lucy uneasily. I knew it was too late to go over and comfort her. There were already thirty people behind us. If we got out of line, I knew we'd never get back in. If you give up your place in line at Shimmer field, you might as well go home.

Lucy and I sucked in our fear and decided to ride the scariest ride in Shimmer field.

The climb up the ladder was long and miserable. Everyone pushed and shoved, not caring about the people above or below. I was surrounded by those adults who were thinking I was too short for the ride. We were stuck near the bottom for five minutes and didn't make any progress. So many people were cutting in front of us that we were actually moving back down the ladder. Lucy and I, the innocent daisy pickers, decided to let out our fierce side. We stuck out our elbows and pushed our way to the top. It only took about ten minutes.

When we reached the top we looked down. I suddenly got dizzy but thought about how much fun I'd have during those few seconds that I was riding the ride of my life. The lifeguard yelled, "Keep your hands and your feet together." I sat down on the edge at the very top of the slide; he gave me a hard, fast push and I was off.

It was like sliding down a vertical stick. I had to squeeze my arms to my chest and keep my clenched feet together. I was screaming so hard, I had a sore throat the next day. But I wasn't screaming from pain or fright but from excitement.

When we got to the bottom Lucy and I were laughing and throwing up our arms in victory. Anna wasn't too happy with us at first but she got over it, though she never did go down The Death Slide that day.

I know it was just a ride in a park, but I always think about day when I'm feeling too scared to try something new. I remember what it felt like to fly down that big blue slide. I realize that I might be quiet, even invisible, but hidden inside me is a brave heart.