

Rage Conklin  
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## The Superman

There are a lot of irrational phobias that many people have. For the longest time I had an unimaginable fear of rollercoasters. I have no idea where I got it from since everyone in my family loves them. The idea of being strapped into a metal cage and being thrashed around at 75 miles per hour was not something I wanted to think about, let alone do. In short, I was a bad partner to bring along to an amusement park. I had never been on most of the rides, and if I did I must have chosen to forget them. In the summer of 2019, I took my girlfriend to Darien Lake and found myself facing the very thing that I feared the most. We spent the majority of the morning getting sunburnt in the lazy river and getting scammed by carnival games. It was starting to get to around noon and the games were getting old. I paid for one more bucket of rings at the ring toss and felt a knot begin to form in the bottom of my stomach as Savannah eyed some of the larger rides. We both began tossing rings and with no surprise, we were not winning anything. The bucket was getting lighter and lighter, and I felt the knot moving around in my gut. Time slowed down while I chucked one of the last rings. It landed on the one bottle marked with a yellow dot in the center of the stand. I had won the largest prize and Savannah picked out a plushie goat about the same height as her. Looking back, I think I used all of my luck for the week on that single toss. She looked at the goat, then at me, and exclaimed that she wanted to ride some rides. The first one she laid her eyes on was “The Superman - Ride of Steel.”

As we approached what I truly believed was going to be a ride to my death, the welt in my stomach started to move, leaving a burning sensation as it made its way to my throat. I was getting very nervous about the ride but also trying to keep my cool in front of my girlfriend. We

got into the line, which was probably 150 people long, and we waited. Every three minutes, a group would walk out of the red cars and another group would pile right back in. Every three minutes we would move a considerable amount closer to the ride. The butterflies might as well have been clawing out of me from the inside. I was getting dizzy and nauseous, but most of all worried. Was this it? Was I going to die today? Why is this the first ride she chose? We finally got to the front of the line, and we were going to be on the next go around. I looked at my phone. One minute passed. Two minutes passed. Two minutes and 30 seconds passed. The cars full of screaming people with messy hair came screeching to a halt right in front of me. The thing I was so worried about was there to get me. It felt like I was climbing into my own casket to be buried. I could have chickened out but it was already too late. I got in a seat near the middle, buckled my seatbelt as tight as I could without ripping it, pulled the metal bar down over Savannah and me, then waited. I waited some more. The anticipation was killing me. The worker looked me directly in the eyes and winked, "Have a good ride."

The ride shot out of the tunnel and straight up a ramp. The ramp was so high that when we got to the top, we could see the entire park, and possibly some clouds at eye level. I saw the front go down over the hump, but it felt like I was not moving at all. Then before I knew it, we were shooting down the ramp at a blazing speed, and all that fear turned into pure adrenaline. We were going around corners and being lifted off our seats, going through spirals, back up and down smaller ramps, and eventually shot right back into where it started. I shoved the metal bar up, unbuckled, and stood up. I felt terrible, but I was proud of myself. I absolutely hated the anticipation and fear I felt before the ride started, but once I got over that first big bump, I enjoyed myself. I genuinely had a good time, which is not what I expected to happen.

After I went through some heart palpitations, we walked over to the go karts. I bought tickets for two races around the track. While we waited in line I started to calm down a little. I thought about how much I worried about going on the ride and was surprised by the fact that I actually went through with it. I do not know if I was trying to prove something to myself or not trying to disappoint my girlfriend. Whatever it was, maybe a combination of both, the fear I had felt for so long went away by just a hair. I had survived the tallest, fastest, most infamous ride in the entire park. By the time I was done thinking, the four tickets I bought were used up and we were walking to another ride. On the way, we bumped into one of Savannah's cousins and her boyfriend who were also there for the day. They started to talk about all the rides they had been on and which ones that they wanted to go on with us now that they knew we were here. They explained that they were off to the ferris wheel, and after getting funnel cake.

Now, the thing I did not understand is while waiting in line for the ferris wheel, my brain started to fill up with the same worries I had before riding the "deadly" roller coaster. The ferris wheel did not have any drops, loops, or even speed really. It was not until we got stopped at the very top that I realized I am severely afraid of heights. It had never occurred to me before that moment, but it sure did explain a lot of my feelings towards rides over the years. So of course, as we sat there at the top of the world, the ride got stuck. Tina, Savannah's cousin, decided that rocking the cabin we were locked into would be funny. She wanted to scare her boyfriend who just so happened to also be scared of heights. As my clammy hands gripped the metal casing of the death trap I was stuck rocking back and forth in, I asked myself those same questions I thought before getting on the Superman. Obviously I survived, but fear makes a person think and do really dumb things a lot of the time. The ride, after what had felt like three hours, gracefully dropped us back down to Earth. I had never been so excited to be back on the ground in my

entire life. Even the rollercoaster did not give me that feeling. I was not interested in eating funnel cake anymore, but I watched.

The final memory from that summer day that I can remember perfectly is the last ride the group went on. It was dark and neon lights lit up every ride across the park. I was dragged over to another ride that would give me high blood pressure as an adult. Plastered over the wooden lattices and beams were the words “The Predator.” There was no one in line so we went right up and got in to ride it. Well, that is how it would have gone if Tina’s boyfriend and I had gone on it. We convinced the girls that they wanted to ride it alone while we played the three pointer challenge. Whether they knew why or not, they thought it was an amazing idea. It made me feel a hell of a lot better that there was another person with me who felt the exact same about the rides. So, we played basketball until they were back on the ground with the sane people. While playing basketball I decided that someday I would go back and do those rides with less worrying.

Did I want to go on the Man of Steel ride again that day? Hell no, I got myself too worked up over it. For the rest of the day, and even the day after I had a roller coaster hangover. The next morning, mixed in with some atrocious sunburn, I had a migraine and stomach ache. I am glad I went through it, though. I had a genuine fear of going on those rides, but I did it anyway and that is why I am proud of myself. I am more likely to go back on those rides now only because I know what to expect, but I know I would still get worked up like I did the previous time. I understand why people like the adrenaline rush, but that kind of living is just not for me. What I enjoyed the most was the firework and musical pyrotechnics show at the end of the night. As the explosions filled the sky and the heat of fire seared over my face, whatever part

of the brain is responsible for keeping memories opened a big folder. Although I experienced some less than pleasant moments, I would not go back to change a thing.