The Day Death Made Himself Known

By

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It was a hot summer day simultaneously both burned and forgotten in my mind. The blistering heat made all sweat and desire relief. I was only 8 years old, yet to even see a decade of life. The world was simple. Math was simply addition, subtraction, multiplication and division and I had a happy family consisting of my mother and father alongside two older sisters. The world made sense, I thought I understood it all. In my mind death was foreign, the afterlife an absolute truth, and tragedy a distant relative.

The day was going to be like every other day. I was going to my cousin's dock on the river to swim and enjoy the cold water. My mother and sisters came with, alongside more of my cousins. This was like usual, it had happened countless times. We all gather to have fun and swim in the river.

Nevertheless I was excited, everytime I went to the dock it was never ending fun. The relentless heat would fade in the cold river water and the void of silence was filled with boisterous laughter and joy. I would go tubing on the river, something that seemingly haunted my mother. Terrified she was, I was but a small child what would happen if something went wrong. My older cousin would have to come with me and make sure I wouldn't fall and I was choked nearly to death by a life jacket so tight it posed more of a threat than tubing ever could.

Everytime I went tubing it bothered me how my mother was so overprotective. Why is she so afraid? There's nothing to fear and nothing to worry about. What could she possibly even be so afraid about?. Regardless of my mother's overprotectiveness, I was filled with excitement and anticipation for the possibility of tubing.

Eventually we arrived at my cousin's residence. Funnily enough either only my aunt who resided there or nobody who resided there was attending yet. I wonder how many of us there were? Who was really there and who was not? This memory is so shrouded in mist that chokes my recollection of the events. All I know is that when we

arrived there were a lot of us and that we carried fast food, a common delicacy in Minnesota.

At long last we reached it, the carrier that would take us down to the dock. If I had words to describe it I would say it's a crappy roller coaster. After all it's not a roller coaster, it was nothing but a machine that would slowly carry us down to the dock where endless bliss awaited us. I wonder how many of us stood on the carrier? All I can recall is that there were too many.

My aunts and mother chatted about gossip or whatever was on the news. Their fascinating discussion was broken up by the carrier's discomfort from all the people boarding it. It cried, "CRRR KKK" my mothers face immediately filled with anxiety. Her face became pale and she stopped talking. She looked around uncomfortably looking at the sketchy machine. I looked straight at her face dead in the eyes and thought nothing of it. Her face was nothing but a face to me and to try and derive meaning or emotion from faces was too much for my undeveloped mind. My eyes full of innocence only saw bliss. Relentless peace obtained only in childhood consumed me. I had nothing to fear for my mind could not conceive of any harm falling upon me.

After what felt like decades of boredom we finally reached the dock. Restless to dive into the water I cast away my shoes and shirt leaving nothing but my swim trunks covering me. I was ready but my mother thought otherwise. She prevented me from reaching the cool bliss of the river water and put sunscreen on me first. I thought I didn't need sunscreen, for even though I had previously sustained sunburn it was nothing but a little pain. I had yet to see what the full wrath of the sun does to your skin when unprotected.

Finally my armor of sunscreen was cast upon myself and I was free to dive into the water. I swam around in the endless bliss, splashing the water, diving under, and playing with my cousins. I would jump in, just to climb back out all in order to jump right back in. I went down the bright yellow slide that would seemingly shoot you through the air into the water. It was endless joy and the true fun had yet to begin for the tubes had yet to arrive.

After about an hour or so I was hungry. I would also probably need more sunscreen soon so I climbed out of the water. I got some juice to quench my thirst and some doritos to relieve my hunger. Everytime I would go swimming these moments

would always occur. Eventually I would tire out and need to recover. When eating like this there remains only one thing to do: observe. I watched my aunts and mother all gathered and talking. I saw my sister walking with my younger cousin along the small beach. My other sister and older cousins were also talking with each other but I was near them as they were always swimming. Time began to pass and as I continued to cover myself in Dorito dust from all the chips I was eating, people would begin to move.

Almost as if it was perfectly timed, as soon as I was about to finish my chips the tubes began to arrive. Two of my older cousins who were the residents of the house and owners of the dock, began to arrive. One was in his early twenties and the other was merely one year older than me. I got along well with her unlike how I did with the rest of the cousins who were also girls and the one in his twenties I saw as someone really cool. Although he wasn't here, my favorite cousin was also her other older brother and I got along with both of them really well.

My two cousins began to descend down with the carrier. However, more importantly they carried the tubes. Now the fun was about to truly begin, as now I would be able to tube. As they continued their descent at long last we were able to see them.

We all began to wave at each other and cheer in excitement. I locked eyes with multiple tubes as I continued to watch their descent. I was flooded with excitement. We all watched as they continued to come down and eventually my eyes were only locked on the tubes…that were in the air?

Throughout all the vague details that I cannot recall during the time of my childhood filled with endless fog, there exists only one sight that is forever burned into my sight from this day. All of the sudden the slow crappy carrier descended at a speed I saw only out of actual roller coasters. I heard my cousins scream and saw them crash at the stopping point flinging them straight into the air alongside all the tubes. My eyes could only catch the tubes in the air but one of my cousins fell upon the beach my sister walked upon minutes prior and the other crashed her head onto a tree before landing on the dock.

Endless screams began to echo out into the air that was filled with nothing but innocence and joy minutes prior. “SOMEONE CALL AN AMBULANCE!” someone cried out.

Another person screamed out, “GET A HELICOPTER!” whether it was at 911 on the phone or the person calling 911 I cannot remember. Those two vague phrases alongside the sounds of panic and terror are all that I could hear.

My body began to shake a feeling that I had never felt before began to consume me. It was a mixture of adrenaline and fear that I had never felt before. I had to do something. The sweet summer air suddenly felt impossible to breathe and was now filled with blood.

One of my younger cousins and his sister was near me alongside my second oldest sister. He hadn’t seen or realized what had happened so we all began to try and distract him just as much as we tried to do so to ourselves.

I jumped into the water trying to grab his attention, I was but a child trying to distract an even younger child. I hopelessly splashed and swam trying to hide ourselves from the reality of the situation. I remember climbing out and trying to look at my cousin who was on the brink of death only to see panic and horror from all the adults surrounding her.

All I can remember after that is the cop boat that had arrived after my cousins had been taken to the hospital. My younger cousin loved cops and I remember my sister and I making a joint effort using it to distract him and lie to him about the situation. After everything was taken care of we had to use the neighbor's carrier to get back up. Upon having to get on the carrier I felt something I had never experienced before. Even though the neighbor's carrier was newer and better it was terrifying riding it up. What I felt was something I had never experienced. It wasn't simply what I felt whenever I saw something scary, it was the fear of death.

Eventually I was in my father's car who had arrived after hearing about the situation. I remember my father's worried and confused face as a result of seeing our terrified state. As we drove a vulture drove past us as they smelt the blood of the story that they felt the need to share to the world. My mother screamed obscenities at the vehicle as we passed them. Even though I saw tragedies all over the news my entire life, never before had I thought about how much it must anger those who have their tragedies displayed for the world to see. Eventually almost everyone who was present at the incident stopped for snacks and gatorade or whatever was at the gas station and

gathered to discuss the situation. The day ends there with me drinking a yellow gatorade while the sight replayed endlessly in my mind.

Eventually I would get news that both of my cousins survived. The older one had it significantly better off compared to the one who was but a year older than me. My oldest sister and mother would get to see both my cousins before my second oldest sister and me. I wanted to see my cousin and eventually I would.

Never before had a hospital looked more terrifying, but I continued onwards. Although the hospital and its atmosphere I couldn't comprehend terrified me, I was nonetheless excited. I was going to see my cousins for the first time in weeks. It was going to be fun, I would play some board games with her and the world would finally go back to normal.

I stood in front of the door leading to her room. Time feels so slow replaying this memory, the door seemingly takes forever to open. At long last it opens and I enter the room. Things would go back to normal after this meeting, at least that's what I thought. As I entered the room the sight of my cousin terrified me to my core. As my family began to talk normally I stood towards the door absolutely petrified. She weakly said my

name but I could only put up my hand as if to say hi. Her face was swollen and purple and stitches covered her entire face. It must have been the worst sight for her to see, as she was forced to see through the look in my eyes how terrified her own cousin was of her. One who weeks prior would sleep over at her house and hang out with her at family gatherings.

That entire day I could barely interact with her. My world had forever changed, everything felt weird and the world I once thought I knew crumbled. What if I was the one who was sitting in that hospital bed? A tragedy like this never could have occurred in the world I once lived in, but now my eyes of innocence were burned with that sight and I began to see the world for what it was.

Although the sight of my cousin's face scared me to my core, there was something beyond that sight that scared me. What I saw through those cruel stitches were not just the result of a surgery to keep her alive but remnants of Death's work.

How could something like this happen? She would never have done anything to deserve being subjected to this. The once innocent world I saw crumbled. It wasn't just the result of the accident that dealt her this fate, it was the uncaring world we lived in.

The stitches were the result of Death himself carving scars into her face with his scythe and left her to survive only on a whim. Although death didn't take my cousins' he killed the world I thought I knew and showed me through her black stitches that stretched across her face proof of his existence. It was the day my eyes saw the truth of the world before me and the day Death made himself known.