

Shelly Bailey

Essay One

ENGL-1100

January 25, 2014

Fear in Starport Seven Five

“Why did I agree to this?” I thought to myself as we approached the entrance to what was surely my imminent doom. I briefly paused to evaluate my surroundings, but there was no legitimate escape. The sun was beating down on me as its reflection on the pavement scorched my already tormented feet. We had walked for what seemed like hours in the blazing 90-degree Florida heat, and this was supposed to be our final stop for the day. Sweat had dripped down my forehead and had dampened my hair. I already felt miserable and had dreaded the so-called “adventure” that awaited me. I felt a tug at my hand.

“Come on, let’s go!” exclaimed Sophie, my overly enthusiastic 5-year-old daughter. I glanced at the standby time posted near the door...fifteen minutes to go. “The line is short right now!”

“Are you sure you’re ready?” I asked her? Maybe she had second thoughts.

“Yes!” she replied, as she ran ahead of me.

I threw a desperate glance at my husband, Justin, who had nudged me from behind. I let out an exasperated sigh and forged on through the gate, with the bravest face I could muster. I didn’t want them to see that I was petrified as an acrophobic climbing a mountain (because that was basically the truth). A cheerful cast member in a blue and white uniform waved as we walked by.

“Enjoy your ride!” she exclaimed with a smile as wide as the Cheshire Cat’s.

I nodded in her direction as I nervously turned toward a long dark tunnel that resembled a black hole that opened into a parallel universe. We turned a corner and instantly, creepy extra-terrestrial music and rows of bright neon pink, purple and blue lights assaulted my senses. The rush of cold from the air conditioner provided relief from the oppressive heat as I ascended the walkway to the launch platform. I attempted to keep up with Sophie as she excitedly bounded up the stairs before me. My heart had been thumping like a corps of drums leading a battalion into combat. As we navigated the queue, we were greeted with an array of visual stimulation.

Welcome to Starport Seven-Five. Your Gateway to the Galaxies, a glowing neon sign announced. On one side of the narrow hallway, windows were positioned throughout the area to give the illusion of traveling through massive star fields in the center of outer space. On the opposite side were enormous star maps labeled with names like “Star System Superports,” “Ice Dwarf Sector,” and “Nebula Warp Gates.” As we approached the launch platform, I could feel the butterflies in my stomach kick into overdrive.

Where is that chicken exit? I thought to myself. I resented the people queued in line around me. They all appeared to be having the time of their lives, excited about their destination, while I was overcome with trepidation.

“Why isn’t this line moving faster?” I complained to Justin, who at that moment was included in the group of people I resented. The white detail of his Mickey Mouse t-shirt glowed eerily under the black light.

“Relax, this will be fun!” he replied. I narrowed my eyes and scowled in his direction. I couldn’t wait for this to be over. If I lived through this, my next stop would be straight to the Aloha Isle to recover with a frozen pineapple Dole Whip. We had been in Disney World for the last three days, and so far I had managed to avoid the monstrosity that is Space Mountain, until

now. Rollercoasters have never been easy for me to handle, and this particular rollercoaster not only was situated inside a claustrophobic building; it was also enveloped in pitch-dark blackness, and this knowledge had my anxiety working overtime. But, I couldn't back out. You don't come to Disney World and NOT ride Space Mountain. I knew the regret of avoidance would far outweigh the fear I felt. We finally reached the end of the line where the cast member at the top was organizing people into rows for embarkment. Half of the riders were directed to Loading Bay Alpha and the other half to Loading Bay Omega. I realized that we were headed to the front of the loading bay. Oh God, the first car? Seriously, could this get any worse? Each vessel had three seats to it. I decided I would be better off in the back seat, with Sophie in the middle and Justin in the front. I made sure Sophie was secure in her seat before I reluctantly settled into the rear of the vessel. I pulled the lap bar down across my knees. We gently lurched up to the beginning of the track.

"You are cleared for launch," a voice from a loudspeaker announced. The ride operator gave us the thumbs-up sign. I said a brief prayer to myself as the vessel began to move and slowly made its way around the corner and into a tunnel. We jolted into high gear, and we were off. A swirl of blue and white lights rapidly flashed at us. Was that an air raid siren I heard? We whipped around one more turn and ascended up the first hill. The creepy music commenced as we were hauled up the incline, through an area that was designed to look like the inside of a space station. Astronauts were suspended from the ceiling. Higher and higher we went until we had reached the peak of the mountain, shrouded in total blackness. Suddenly, thousands of shimmering stars of light appeared before us and I felt like we were floating through space. I was in awe of the amazing special effects and almost forgot about the terror I had felt moments before. Just as I began to enjoy the beauty of the twinkling stars, we were abruptly yanked

around another corner and thrust down a steep hill. I had no idea where we were, and could not see where we were headed, but we were headed there FAST. With one hand still gripped to the lap bar, I reached forward into the seat in front of me and tried to feel around for Sophie. I could not see or hear her and I prayed that she was okay. For all I knew she wasn't even in the seat...oh, there were her shoulders. She was fine. I figured we had to be at least halfway through the ride by now and that it would be over soon. We had come down the track into a seemingly endless corkscrew; like we had been tossed into the center of a tornado, around and around we went. The lack of gravitational forces tickled my stomach and I broke out into simultaneous screams and giggles. I couldn't help but let go as the irrational fear seemed to fade and I realized the ride was as awesome as everyone had said it would be. One last whip of the vessel and we landed in a tunnel of red flashing lights. We had slowed down.

"It's over!" I bellowed out to anyone that would listen. We returned to the launch platform. Everyone jumped out of their seats and back onto the platform as I cautiously pried my white knuckles from the lap bar. Justin reached for my hand and pulled me up out of the car. I survived! As an instant reminder of our adventure, our ride photos were on display on the video wall near the exit. I laughed as I saw the expression on my face in the picture – crazy wide eyes and my mouth hung open as I appeared to be howling like a banshee. Justin and Sophie were smiling in their picture; it looked like they had certainly enjoyed themselves.

"Let's ride it again!" Sophie exclaimed, as I felt the blood drain from my face and turned as white as a sheet. Damn that Walt Disney. My Dole Whip reward was going to have to wait a little longer.