

THE TWISTING TURNING DEATH MACHINE

By Alan Haehnel

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ISBN 1-932404-02-3

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CAST: SUE and MARLA

(MARLA and SUE stand next to two chairs.)

SUE: I can't do it.

MARLA: Come on, Sue! We've waited an hour in line to get on this thing. You can't chicken out now!

SUE: **(looking at her watch)** Actually, we've waited one hour and thirteen minutes. Almost fourteen.

MARLA: Exactly! So get on the ride.

SUE: I can't. I just can't.

MARLA: Sue, you're making everybody behind us mad. **(to an imaginary person waiting in line)** She's just a little nervous. She'll get on.

SUE: I am not just a little nervous. I am a little nervous when I have to present my portfolio project in math; I am a little nervous when I have to get up and greet my neighbors in church. This feeling I have is nothing like that. I am not a little nervous. I am terrified, Marla! I cannot do this!

MARLA: **(as if talking to the attendant)** I know, I know. Yes, I'm going to get on, and she is, too.

SUE: No, I am not.

MARLA: **(still to the attendant)** Why don't you let a couple of others go ahead of us, then we'll go on the next one? Thanks. **(pulling SUE aside)** Sue, pull yourself together.

SUE: Why should I pull myself together? So I can get on this thing and be torn apart?

MARLA: You're not going to be torn apart. It's a ride.

SUE: It's a ride called "The Twisting-Turning Death Machine." That sounds like tearing apart to me.

MARLA: Thousands of people ride this thing every day. They get on, they have fun, they get off again—whole and safe.

SUE: Thousands of people smoke cigarettes every day. Thousands of people drive recklessly fast every day.

Thousands of people jaywalk every day. That does not make them smart!

MARLA: Don't you remember what you said earlier?

SUE: My terror has erased all memory of former events.

MARLA: You said, "I'm feeling brave. I'm feeling ready to break the old mold of Sue Morrison. Let's do something crazy!" Do you remember that? And I said, "Yeah, it's about time! Let's go!" So that's why we came. That's why we waited in line for an hour and fifteen minutes. And that is why we are going to get in those seats—we're going to break the old Sue Morrison mold.

SUE: I've decided I am comfortable with the old Sue Morrison mold. It fits me just fine.

MARLA: It's boring.

SUE: It's safe.

MARLA: It's bland.

SUE: It's safe.

MARLA: It won't impress Josh Michaels.

SUE: It's...what? Who?

MARLA: Josh Michaels.

SUE: What about Josh Michaels?

MARLA: Oh, nothing.

SUE: Talk to me. You cannot just toss out a name like that and then not talk to me.

MARLA: Oh, well, I know you're sort of interested in him.

SUE: Sort of? Sort of? I am sort of interested in the fruit flies we study in biology. My interest in Josh Michaels is nothing like that. It is much, much bigger than fruit flies.

MARLA: Well, I happen to know he loves this ride.

SUE: He does?

MARLA: And I happen to know...no, I shouldn't mention that.

SUE: Don't do this to me.

MARLA: Do what?

SUE: We are on a very high tower at this moment. If you were thrown from it, I do not believe you would survive the experience.

MARLA: All right, all right. I happened to overhear Josh saying something about you.

SUE: He didn't.

MARLA: He did.

SUE: You're joking!

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MARLA: I'm serious.

SUE: What did he say?

MARLA: He said...**(getting a devious look)** Actually, I can't remember.

SUE: You what?

MARLA: I'm having this strange memory lapse. It happens to me sometimes.

SUE: I am telling you, Marla, when it comes to Josh Michaels, I am not averse to homicide.

MARLA: Yeah, it's this very strange illness I have. I get these blank spots in my memory and do you know the only thing that seems to help? Do you?

SUE: A ten-story fall from an amusement ride?

MARLA: Close, but no. The only thing that jogs my memory is a ride with a friend on The Twisting Turning Death Machine.

SUE: Is that right?

MARLA: Yes! I mean, I'd really like to help you, Sue; I'd really like to be able to tell you what Josh said about you, but....Oh, my gosh, would you look at this! As luck would have it, here is an empty seat on The Twisting Turning Death Machine, right here in front of us. Now, if I could only find a friend to....Sue! You're my friend! We could cure my illness and I could tell you what you want to know! Isn't that great?

SUE: This is blackmail.

MARLA: What did he say? It's right on the tip of my brain. If only I could remember.

SUE: **(getting into the chair as if it were an amusement ride)**

Fine, fine, you win! Get on the ride. Hurry up, before I change my mind.

MARLA: **(getting in her chair)** All right!

SUE: I swear, Marla, if you're lying to me...

MARLA: This is great! You're going to love this. Pull down your harness.

SUE: Are you hearing me? If you're lying to me, Marla, I will...

MARLA: **(pantomiming pulling down SUE's harness, then her own)** Here, you've got to put this on.

SUE: I'm telling you, Marla, I will...ow! What are you doing to me? That's too tight!

MARLA: It has to be tight.

SUE: Why does it have to be this tight? It's not like we're going upside-down or something. **(sudden realization)** Marla, this thing doesn't go upside-down, does it?

MARLA: You'll love it.

SUE: Marla!

MARLA: Just think of Josh.

SUE: A non-existent brain cannot think of anything. I will die of fright and nothing will matter. Get me out of this thing! **(waving to an attendant)** Hey, hey you! Let me out of this!

MARLA: **(to attendant)** She's fine, she's fine! She's just waving that she's all set. Thank-you!

SUE: Marla, you don't understand. Marla... **(The two jerk in their chairs, as if they have begun to move.)** Oh, no. Oh, no. Why are we moving?

MARLA: Yahoo!

SUE: Why are we moving?!

MARLA: The ride is starting. You're going to love this, Sue. This is going to break the mold for sure. After this, you'll be the new Sue Morrison, ready for anything.

SUE: No, I'll be ready for nothing because I will be a quivering glob of jelly splattered on the pavement. We are going backwards, Marla!

MARLA: Isn't this great?

SUE: Why are we going backwards? Why are we going backwards and way up in the air?

MARLA: This part is a little slow, but it's just the pull-back.

SUE: The pull-back? The pull-back? What is a pull-back?

MARLA: You know, like on a slingshot—you pull it back to get momentum.

SUE: I am not a stone in a slingshot. I am a human being and I should not be being pulled back like this. Marla, I have to get out!

MARLA: It's too late now, Sue. Just have fun!

SUE: I am *not* having fun!

MARLA: We're almost there!

SUE: I can't have fun being pulled back like a slingshot...

MARLA: Get ready!

SUE: On a ride called the Twisting Turning Death... **(Her word turns into a scream as the ride releases them into a virtual free-fall.)** Maaaaaaaaaah!

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