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English 101-055

1 Sep. 2013

### Wonderland

Picture it. Listen. Can you hear it? Listen harder. The laughs; the screams. Now look, but don't open your eyes. What do you see? What do you feel? Children are running around. While putting sunscreen on, you watch as the usually busy people stop to relax. You're walking barefoot across the warm, wet pavement. The sun is beating on your body. Then, you see it; the biggest one you've ever seen. There is a line that snakes around the tall steps and you start walking toward it. As you walk by a food stand, the appetizing aroma of pizza and sausage fills your nose with a slight mixture of chlorine. To your left, the crystal clear waters with splashes, yelps, and parents chasing their children. Straight ahead, a wonderland of fast waters, tubes, long lines, and freedom.

You get to the line of the beauty that you saw from afar. Waiting in line is not the most fun, but when waiting in line for one this big, it's worth it. The first few stairs are like looking up at Mount Everest: warm, daring, and you question yourself if you want to go through with it. You look up, holding your tube, and see the next fifteen flights or so that you need to climb. Rounding the corner to the second flight of stairs, you watch as the people from the top splash into the highly chlorinated waters with smiles from ear to ear. While climbing the stairs, there are always those children and sometimes-even adults that don't have control of their tube. Usually the tube ends up in your face or hitting your tube, followed by a "sorry."

Once you get half way to the top, you get more and more excited, but also more and more aggravated at the fact that the line is taking so long and the sixth “sorry” is responded to with a dirty look. Looking down again, you watch the people from the top splash into the water and see how much fun they have, which makes you more excited. Still looking down, you see where the slow line of people is started and realize that you were in that spot just a short time ago.

Although you’ve moved up in the line, you can’t help but feel anxious. Another shove from the tube in front of you, but you decide to ignore it this time. You’re getting closer to the top.

One small step at a time, you imagine yourself as one of those people splashing into the water. Some bumps and shoves from people make you want to push them back at this point, but you refrain and decide to focus on how close you’re getting. You look down; you’re almost at the very top. The people splashing at the bottom look like ants. You can’t see where the line even starts. Before you know it, you’ve ran out of steps. The “sorry” people are sent down; screams and laughs echo up from the dark, yellow tube. “Ready?” says the man in charge at the top. Nodding your head yes, you and your friend climb into the tube that you’ve carried for hours (it seemed). You grab the handles on the tube and hold on tight. “See ya later!” yells the guy as he pushes your tube down into the dark hole.

Darkness overcomes you. You try to figure out which way you’re headed. Is it left? Is it right? Are you upside down? Your friend is screaming with joy and hearing her, you do the same. The splashes hit your face and fall into the tube getting you all wet. A small patch of light appears, then disappears as fast as it came. Then another one followed by sprits of water falling from the top. You’re going under another one and feel the water drip down your face. You wipe the water out of your eyes and eventually, they start to adjust to the darkness. Then suddenly, there is light beyond. Looking ahead, it seems like you’re going toward the gates of heaven. The

bright sun is blinding. You slide under a bucket of water that dumps on you and your friend, then go splashing into the pool just as you saw many people do before you. The tube dropping into the water makes your stomach feel like it does a back flip, but only for a second. The sudden splash causes water to form a wave around your tube and makes you feel like you've just been under a water fall. You sit in the tube for a second, smiling and laughing with your friend. After wiping the water out of your eyes again you lay back as if being at the bottom is a sigh of relief. You feel the sun hit your face and realize how much fun you just had.

You see the “sorry” people getting back into the line and think to yourself, ‘I wonder who their new target will be for this line.’ Purposefully falling into the pool, you grab the tube and pull it out of the water. You place the tube back onto the rack where you got it and head for your towel. You watch the young children, all excited, run past you to get into the line you just left. Walking back to your towel, you feel the sun drying your body. You find your locker, grab your towel and iPod, and decide that you want to lie out. You find a chair to lie in to let the sun finish what it started. You lie on your stomach and put your head phones in your ears. You put on a song about summer: being in the water, looking sexy and getting a tan. Lying there, you think to yourself that this wonderland of waters, splashes and those “sorry” people- who seem to ruin every chance of freedom- is a place for people to relax; to forget about what they do or where they came from and not worry about if they look “hot” or fit in with everyone else. A place where people can let it all hang out and not care what anyone thinks of them; a place where people can be free.

Looking around, you see that people these days are so caught up in the new trend or new technology that they forget about the beauty of the world that they live in. Rather than worrying about all the wrong things, people need to realize that they were put on this world for a reason

and later in life it won't matter if you were captain of the football team or the homecoming queen. No one will care about how popular or attractive you were in high school or how great you looked at the reunion. Life is about so much more than those things. As the summer song ends, you, again, look around at the people trying to relax with you and think that tomorrow all of these people will be back doing their normal routines, and that seems to be the only thing on their minds as they check their iPhone's constantly to see if they missed anything. For right now, however, they can be free of their worries. Leave all of their worries in the parking lot.

As you gather your things, you look up at the sunset and close your eyes one last time. Listen. Look. Can you see it now? Can you feel it? The park is getting quieter as those children that you saw running around earlier are being carried out by their parents, exhausted from all of the fun they had throughout the long day. You watch the "sorry" people climb into their car and pull away, knowing that you will probably never see them again. You see the gates of the wonderland being closed as you walk into the worrisome parking lot and think to yourself, 'until next time.'