

THE DEATH KART

A TRUE STORY

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To my brother, AJ. Thanks for the unforgettable memories. We miss
you every day.

ZIP TIES

They say that necessity is the mother of invention. If that is the case, boredom is that mom's drunken uncle...Summers were normally filled with days at the park, riding bikes, or spending time fishing. However, this particular year, the universe required us to stoke up the BBQ. Add some lighter fluid. Really create something with a little more hype. Dare I say, dangerous? Unknowingly, events would line up where my siblings and I may have added a dash of pepper or a fistful of habanero more than we bargained for. There was a chance that this summer's activity would end with disastrous results, and I'm not talking about a ruined recipe...

“I’m bored,” said my brother, AJ.

“I mean, we could go fishing off the dock,” I suggested.

“The tide is too low.”

“We could ride up the hill to the store,” I offered.

“We did that yesterday. Plus, I don’t feel like traversing those huge hills again.”

“Okay...” I said, exasperated, “You got any ideas?”

AJ scanned the driveway. With his wandering eyes, inventive mind, and twitchy fingers, he meandered to the open garage. It never failed; AJ was always looking to get his hands on something. To inspect it or tear it apart. A true engineer at heart. He couldn’t resist dissecting things’ inner workings, then trying to build something else with those loose parts. Maybe he was just a demolition connoisseur. Whatever it was, his brain never stopped tinkering.

“Oh, check this out,” AJ said, pointing to the blue hand truck stationed on the wall of the garage.

“Yeah. So?” I said, clearly not seeing any potential for a fun time. I am NOT an engineer at heart.

“Don’t you realize what we have here?” AJ asked with an uptick of zeal in his tone.

I stared blankly at him, “Is this a trick question? Because I *know* what that is.”

“Come on! Where is your imagination?”

“Clearly still asleep,” I said.

“What we have here is the body of our future GO-KART.”

I stared long and hard at the blue hand truck. Completely perplexed. Had he lost it? The summer sun must have fried his poor brain. Leaving nothing but a dried-up prune locked away in his skull, “What the hell are you talking about, dude?”

“Hear me out,” said AJ, before darting off deeper into the dusty garage. Similar to a dog chasing a small flock of birds spontaneously landing on the lawn. Then being too excited to choose which target to tackle first.

“I’d love to, but I need more words.”

AJ did not return with a retort, instead he returned with a well-loved folded RAZOR scooter, sporting a grin wide enough to store a watermelon, “And this,” he so proudly held up, “Is the front of our kart.”

I squinted, confused as Elmer Fudd befuddled by that tricky rabbit, “And how are we connecting these two things together?”

Without skipping a beat, drum, heart, or other, AJ dropped the scooter and skipped over to the toolbox. His hands went to work rapidly pulling open metal drawers until he came across a bundle of zip ties.

“These!” he said, again proudly presenting the ties to me. This time holding them up high, something out of the Wheel of Fortune. A male version of Vanna White, but far less feminine.

“Zip ties?” I asked unconvinced.

“Well, yeah! Just look at how thick they are,” AJ opened the sealed bag, pulling out one to inspect, similar to how a paleontologist may study a fossilized turd. “You see these? These aren’t just any old zip ties, my man. No, sir. These are *industrial* grade zip ties! They are super strong!”

Now, at the time, when someone said something with enough confidence and vigor, I tended to believe them. I’ve since unearthed this belief system. However, at the time, being young and completely ignorant of most things, one of those being the breaking strength of zip ties, I dutifully trusted him like I would a full-blooded adult. This would be a mistake. Just because something works, does NOT mean we SHOULD do it.

“Oh, awesome!” I proclaimed, now getting rather excited about the prospect of owning a GOKART-like object.

“Yeah. Check this out. I’ll show you how we can connect it.”

With an eager fervor of a beaver building a dam, he gathered the necessary materials. AJ went to work fitting together the makeshift janky mobile. He began by laying the handcart down so that the handle would fit loosely in between the joints of the scooter that connected the main body and the tall handle of the object. Then he would marry the two like a Catholic priest, but instead of vows he used the ‘claimed’ industrial zip ties. About six of them to be exact. The more the sturdier? We had no idea. We figured if less was more, than more was definitely MORE! Again, we were young and dumb. Don’t judge us too harshly.

“Voila! Feast your eyes on our brand-new GO-KART!” shouted AJ, in a French accent, clearly enthralled with himself and his creation. A stereotypical Dr. Frankenstein before the monster started terrorizing the village people, and inevitably ending the good old doctor, himself.

“More like Franken-KART. Also, watch out how you use the term ‘brand new,’ dude.”

“Okay, okay. But, man, look at it. The thing rolls and stays together! I bet you money that it would do great down our driveway.”

This is of course the time that the kid in me, by kid, I mean five-year-old self, woke up from my fifteen-year-old brain and peed all over himself in excitement with the thought of riding this monstrosity. Again, young and dumb. Judging won’t get you bonus points. Do it quietly to yourself.

“Hell yes! Let’s try it out!” I said, drooling with excitement. Something like you’d see when asking your dog if it wants to ‘go for a ride’.

“Alright!”

“But maybe one at a time.” I suggested, “And you should go first.”

Without uttering a single syllable of argument AJ took off running up the hill pushing the kart, which surprisingly appeared pretty sturdy for being held together with plastic ties. My penguin strategy had

worked phenomenally! I would let one idiot try the dangerous thing first before another idiot gave it a shot. But in this case, the leopard seals and killer whales were replaced by uncontrollable speed, no breaks, and the brick walls of our home. What could go wrong?

NO BRAKES

With the gusto and mental fortitude of the first cosmonauts, AJ reached the top of our driveway. Delivering the untested kart to a level spot before straddling the metal body. With a quick flick of his thumb, he lowered the extended scooter handle and took a seat. His face contorted; discomfort radiating from his expression.

“You don’t look too comfortable up there,” I shouted.

“You’d be right about that,” he replied, bouncing, scooting, and adjusting his rear to the most agreeable position possible. With one bar supporting each thigh and only one two-inch bar supporting his buttocks, I imagine it was similar to wearing a rigid G-String. With one long offensive piece of hardened material between the butt cheeks. He reminded me of a toddler shifting a dookie around in his diaper. All wiggles and obviously displeased, “We’ll figure out something once I get back down there.

I nodded in response and waited for the kart’s maiden voyage. Chris, my younger brother exited the house as AJ checked the invisible gauges and kicked the tiny inadequate tires during the rest of his

unnecessary yet rigorous inspection. Obviously doing his engineering thing to calculate his chances of becoming a human stain on the driveway.

“What are you guys *doing*? Wait, what is *that* thing?” Chris asked. His tone conveyed more jealousy about not being included right away, rather than that of shock of a sane person.

“*That* is our new Go-Kart,” I answered, beaming with what I believe was pride. Possibly just nervous gas. I mean, I’d never seen anyone get seriously injured before. Maybe this kart would change that.

“Aww! I want to try!” Chris whined.

“Yeah, well first we need to make sure it isn’t a No-Go Kart,” I said.

“First test run, huh? Glad I didn’t miss it.”

“Yeah. You can help me bandage AJ up when he loses all his skin trying to stop that thing.”

Chris chuckled, “Also, that seat doesn’t look too comfortable.”

“That’s because there isn’t one.”

“Hey, maybe we should open up the car port for him in case he can’t stop in time,” Chris suggested. The carport was a narrow-covered extension of the driveway that sat between the house and garage. Behind it was nice soft grass. A much better landing area than deep window wells and abrasive brick walls.

“Yeah...” I said, elongating the word, “Good idea. Hey AJ! Don’t go yet!”

But it was too late. With one firm push and a leap of faith every test pilot in history made, he was off. Apparently, AJ had settled into his pad-less seat well enough to make the ride bearable. Perhaps he lost enough feeling in his hindquarters. A numb bum. Fun! Slowly, AJ rolled down the crest of the driveway. With his feet pulled up, he began picking up speed. Chris and I looked at each other. Fear paralyzed us for a split second.

Then, I reacted, “Chris, guide him to the car port!” I ran to the covered area as fast as I could, clearing obstacles in a way similar to how Godzilla leveled cities, making way for a clear path to a soft grass landing.

Chris imitated his best flight deck choreographer, but instead of shiny lights and hand signals, he pointed wildly and shouted, “Car port! Car port!”

The cart carried AJ down the steep sloped driveway. Each foot he traveled, the cart increased its speed, aimed straight for the bricked window well. With every revolution of the tires, a slight wobble became more and more pronounced, bouncing like a deranged carnival ride. If I weren’t scared for his wellbeing, I would have thought the damn cart was doing a little jig to an internal song. His hand gripped the thin jostling handles, rocking the steering apparatus left and right. With each minuscule rock, AJ inched further away from the wells and closer to safety.

“Can’t stop! Can’t stop! No brakes! No brakes!” AJ shouted.

“Use your feet!” I yelled.

With that suggestion AJ lowered his feet. Crunching the gravel, grinding loose pebbles under his sneakers. Next, he leaned forward, attempting to put more friction on the smaller diameter scooter tire. Hoping with the help of physics and maybe a bit of pleading with the almighty that he would stop prior to experiencing firsthand what being launched from a catapult felt like. Then, barely clearing the house, he threaded the needle into the carport. His speed being taken up by the extra twenty feet and the eventual three-inch drop of concrete walkway leading to the merciful dirt and grass lawn. At last, coming to a total and complete stop.

“Wow!” AJ exclaimed, “That was a blast!”

“That was awesome!” Chris added.

“This thing can move!” AJ said, still on an adrenaline high.

“Next time, drop your feet sooner so you don’t smash into the house like a bug on a windshield,” I said, relieved that no one had to be transported to the hospital.

AJ dismounted the kart, “But we have got to do something about the seating accoutrements.”

“I have an idea,” said Chris walking into the garage’s side door. Emerging moments later with something both unsavory and brilliant.

“A dog bed?” I said, disgusted.

“Oh, yes! Nice find!” complimented AJ, “This will work great.”

Chris smiled, pleased that his suggestion was well received.

Ah yes, I thought, the pièce de résistance, for comfort, a dog bed. It was the smelly cherry on top of the crap sundae that was our new go-kart.

Chris plopped the odorous object on top of the blue frame, then took a seat. AJ followed suit, sitting behind him, “Man, this thing is a game changer! And even better, we don’t have to secure it to the kart. Our weight will keep it on while we ride it.”

“Awesome! What do we want to do next?” asked Chris, beaming with a dare devilish smile.

“Now that we know it works. That just leaves stress testing!” exclaimed AJ.

“Stress testing?” I asked, beginning to grow worried again.

“Yeah! We gotta see what this baby can do!” answered AJ.

“Let’s do it!” exclaimed Chris.

“We’re all going to die,” I muttered to myself. The next thing I knew, both brothers were running back up the driveway pushing the cart to reset for another run down the treacherous hill.

SAFETY

Chris zoomed by me like a rocket-propelled grenade, fast, noisy, and if he ever contacted something hard, he would make a big mess. We had at last realized that there was an entire straight quarter mile road right above our driveway. That stretch of asphalt led to the other homes at the end of the neighborhood. So much safer than aiming ourselves at a brick house. Hands down the second-best idea we had all day.

While I waited for my turn to ride the kart down the even steeper hill connected to this road, AJ was doing his engineering thing again. Doing math, calculating how fast we were going. By his rough calculations we travelled at a whopping 35 miles per hour. I'm pretty sure he forgot to carry the one somewhere. I estimated we were traveling slower, but I guess math doesn't lie...It does if you do it wrong! Chris and I were certain that his numbers or formula were off. Who cared?! We were having a killer time. And I was pleased as Chucky from the Rugrats that no one had been accidentally killed (If you don't get this

reference, kindly put the story down and Google it. Otherwise, we can't be friends).

Moving on, Chris ended his rickety ride at the end of the street before the blind turn to the aforementioned houses. It didn't matter how many times we test rode this thing, we always stood up, placed our hands on our hips, and stated, "Dang. Smooth ride. This thing can coast with the best of them."

Where afterwards, someone else would respond with, "Surprisingly sturdy. A bit bouncy though."

AJ of course, would follow up with a statement that was most comforting like, "It wouldn't pass any OSHA inspection, but it will do for us." or "Man, this thing needs some shocks. The suspension on this thing is awful."

At the time Chris and I had zero idea what OSHA was, so to prevent social strife we nodded along in agreement.

"Yeah, not to mention," Chris added, "Turns are not a thing. Remember when I biffed it on my second run?"

How could we forget the sight of my younger hefty brother making the slightest correction with the scooter steering wheel? On the road, he attempted to swerve to avoid a fairly sizable stone. The rocky obstacle had been kicked up by a passing vehicle. To circumvent said rock, he ever so slightly rotated the scooter tire a tenth of a degree, consequently jackknifing the entire rig, sending him flying like a baseball hocked by major league pitcher Randy Johnson into the spiky bushes, littered with stinging nettles.

"Yeah, we remember. Hard to forget," I said, "You looked like a train getting derailed by a wrecking ball."

"Good thing I didn't hit my head. I wasn't wearing a helmet," said Chris lightly knocking on his noggin with his fist.

What I should have said is, hello, anyone home? You could have died! But those kinds of thoughts never crossed our minds. At our age, we believed ourselves to be invincible, “Yeah, maybe we should get some pads or something, huh?” I asked.

“Nah, they may hinder your movement or worse the helmet could drop over your eyes and blind you while you drive,” AJ replied.

Good point. We wouldn’t want there to be any cushion between our fragile bodies and something as hard or ruthless as a moving car and the pavement. If we had the helmet covering our eyes we couldn’t witness for ourselves dying a miserable, awful, painful, excruciating, horrifying, dreadful, ghastly, horrendous, vile, and devastatingly tragic death. Can anyone say closed casket funeral? But no! We were young men! We never blinked in the face of danger! These are just more hindsight thoughts.

Regardless of anything sane or logical, the three of us continued to spend the better part of the next couple of hours walking up the one lane road. Then riding down the street on the kart with a clanky jangling clang each time. Maybe that’s what Satan’s jingle bells sounded like...perhaps it was a hellish warning bell.

I just finished my turn on the ‘safe’ go kart. Kid tested. Kid approved. When Chris was back up for another fear free ride. Understand that the spectators would stand clear away from the roller coaster-Esque creation as it barreled its way down the hill coming to a complete stop much further down the street. Also understand that through this entire stretch of time, several motor vehicles had indeed traversed the road to and from the homes there.

Do you ever think that the two fifteen-year-olds and one twelve-year-old thought of maybe possibly installing a guard on the blind corner where the cart would reach bumper level? I’ll give you a hint, the answer has one syllable, two letters, and rhymes with ‘whoa’.

If you can guess this riddle, then you can probably also guess what happened next.

Chris began his ride as usual, lining up the kart so there was absolutely zero turning involved. Next, he lifted his feet just so to allow the angle of the hill and gravity to do what it does best. Finally, he gripped on the handlebars and held on tight as he enjoyed the wind blowing through his hair. What happened would be a miracle in the making.

AJ and I watched him whizz by us gliding effortlessly on the wavy asphalt. Then a glint caught our eye in the distance. The glint grew larger as it came rolling towards us and of course, Chris, who now was frantically doing his best Fred Flintstones impression to stop the rolling death kart. The black SUV began to pick up speed ever so slightly as it came around the blind turn towards my younger brother. All AJ and I could do was yell and run towards him and the car. We waved our arms in a desperate panic. All I could think was, thank God he wasn't wearing any safety gear, or he'd suffer worse if he got run over. Nothing like the idea of a painful death to get your heart racing and feet moving.

By the grace of some divine deity, Chris managed to hop, scoot, and then crash into the soft ditch to his left rather than learn what a squirrel felt like when it tried to go back for a dropped nut on the highway. The driver slowed considerably and waved a friendly hand as she passed by. I honestly don't know if she saw Chris.

"We have got to post a guard down here!" I said.

"Good idea," said AJ, breathing hard, "Safety? Am I right?"

"I'm okay. No need to ask how I'm doing," said Chris, crawling out of the shallow ditch, kart in hand.

Finally, I said, "I think that's enough for today."

AJ and Chris both agreed. We helped brush off more nettles and grass from Chris' back and sauntered to the house, but not without hearing Chris say, "I bet we can go higher up the hill with this thing."

AJ nodded, "Don't do anything too crazy without me. I'm leaving tonight, and don't want to miss the action."

THE WHITE SIGN

The following days were fun and uneventful. Surprising, I know. With AJ back at his mother's house, Chris and I included our younger sister, Emily. The spritely seven-year-old lovingly wanted to spend time with her older brothers. Her curiosity piqued following us mentioning the creation of a super fun go-kart. Well, to be honest it was more of a constant yapping than a mention. Got to keep the record straight. I'm shooting for accuracy here.

With the addition of our precious younger sister. Not to mention fragile (More jest than reality, but kind of true). We institute a few rules. Every time someone rode the kart, there was always a guard at the end of the road. Another was to take the helmets out and make Emily wear one. For the boys, safety gear was optional. Invincibility was believed and practiced blindly. Not dissimilar to a religious zealot. Lots of faith. Little logic. Finally, Emily never rode the kart by herself. If it was going to crash, she would have someone squishy to land on...Or crush her into a cute little pancake. We of

course didn't think of that possibility. I should have made a sign that read "Caution, optimists at work."

"You're up!" I said after completing another successful ride down the hill.

Emily jumped off the kart and celebrated, "That was so fun!"

"I'm up!" said Chris, rerouting the kart, turning it around and aiming it at the big hill again, "Can I get the tow rope, bro?"

"Sure," I handed him the rope attached to the back of a bicycle. Chris went about tying his best knot to the frame of the four-wheeled carriage. The long stretch of the road made the reset and wait time unbearable. Introducing the rope and bicycle reduced those precious minutes between rides. AJ would have been proud.

After Chris tied a suitable amount of rope securely to the kart, he and Emily climbed on board for a smooth, effortless tow back to the bottom of the hill. Pulled by yours truly. Where after, the riders would disembark and push the cart the rest of the way. At which point, the spectator would ride the bicycle back down the road to resume the role of guard. This cycle would continue until the inevitable happened...Boredom. That damn drunken uncle again.

With each climb back up the hill, the starting line naturally moved upward. Not dissimilar to a migrating itch but with more potential consequences. An inch here, a foot there. Until collectively we reached the peak of our mountainous hill. The agreed upon limit, the spot, still considered sane...or at least survivable. The white sign. The white sign was just that, a wooden sign, painted white with several house numbers forecasting homes beyond it. At this point on our hill, it was both the highest and albeit, kind of the last straightest portion before any harsh turns became a nasty element. Turns as you may recall

are bad. Whether it was complacency or comfort we continued to push the envelope leading to this next event.

“What do you guys say for this to be the last run of the day?” I asked.

Emily and Chris nodded in agreement.

Once at the bottom of the hill, I stowed the bike in the grass and suggested, “Since it’s the last run, we should all go down together.”

“Oh, that would be cool,” said Emily.

“Yeah, I don’t see why not. But I want to drive,” said Chris.

“Totally. It’s your turn anyway,” I replied.

Chris pushed up the cart with Emily and I right behind him. The heat of the day was upon us. Even though it was near dinner time, the sun still beat down atop our heads.

“It’s a good thing we are done after this. I’m hot,” said Chris.

“Yeah, we didn’t even stop for lunch today either,” I said.

“Oh wow! Really? I guess we were having too much fun,” said Emily.

“Yeah, we basically created our own trackless rollercoaster,” I said.

“I love roller coasters!” said Emily.

“Here we are,” said Chris, picking up the kart to turn it around towards our destination. Then proceeded to sit on top, shifting his butt as close as possible to the scooter steering wheel.

“Hey, how far up have you gone?” I asked.

“Here,” Chris stated flatly.

“What if we went higher?” I asked.

“Higher?” Chris asked.

“Yeah. I mean it’s our last run. Let’s make it epic,” I said, clearly forgetting caution, “I’ve gone up to the white sign by myself. It wasn’t bad.”

“Really, that high up?” Chris asked, mulling it over.

I nodded. Then looked to Emily, “Ems, how do you feel about going up that high?”

“Sure. I guess. If you’ve done it,” Emily responded, “But where will you sit?”

“Oh, I’ll sit in the back. You’ll be in the middle.”

“Like an Emily sandwich. You should be safe there if we hit something. Screw it. Let’s do it,” Chris finally agreed.

“All right!” I said, happy that my idea passed the sniff test. Looking back, the idea really should have been shot down like an enemy aircraft.

With a quick adjustment, about thirty feet higher or so, we planted the kart in its new starting point. The white sign. Chris mounted the janky kart, followed by Emily, and lastly, me.

“Shoot, where do you hold on to?” I asked, “I can’t grip the frame with the dog bed spilling over the sides?”

“You’ll have to hold on to Emmy. Or you can somehow flare your elbows out and grab the spade of the handcart behind you,” said Chris.

“Hmmm. That’s going to be super uncomfortable. I’ll figure it out. Just don’t crash, okay?” I said, joking. The universe, however, took me a touch more seriously...Darn sarcasm. Lost in translation. I should never tempt fate. Regardless, we prepared ourselves. After a quick in-flight safety lecture to Emily, explaining the location of exits. Not to mention how vital it was for her to know how to use us as landing pads, a parachute, or as sleds down the cliffs, we were off!

All at once, we lifted our feet ever so slightly allowing the kart and gravity to do what it did best, godown. The first second was great; smiles, laughter, and jokes. Then, the next second passed, allowing the feeling of free-fall to hit us. However, with a more aggressive pull than prior runs. With the added weight of 175lbs, the rolling kart of death

began rolling with a speed that only NASA and NASCAR had ever seen before. *Boy this is going fast. A little too fast*, I thought.

From the back I could hear Chris grumbling as his control of the improvised vehicle slipped further and further away. He struggled with the kart, arm-wrestling back and forth, fighting to maintain command of our rickety rocket ship. At this point, the craft was flying like a piss-missile down the hill at a rate small aircraft generally hit just before takeoff. The rolling sack of bricks was doing an excellent job at staying true, going straight, and NOT diverting from its destination. Too bad that its current target was not the nice clean straightaway. No, with the starting point changed it also altered where the kart would land. The terminus of this terminal bus from hell would be about forty feet away followed by a similar drop to the houses below.

Chris' realization of our potentially life-threatening destination initiated a loud verbalization of many colorful expletives not suitable for children or virgin ears. Don't worry, Emily didn't hear anything...She was too worried about the same thing we were. Death...Then with the heart of an ace fighter pilot, he reacted. Utilizing the rocking motion to slightly turn the kart away from imminent danger. For a millisecond, it appeared to be working. Then the kart reacted in kind, the wrong way. The kart misbehaved like a stubborn canine avoiding the veterinarian's finger. Locking up with the grit of a prized boxer, the scooter's steering mechanism seized.

With slight panic in his heart Chris began turning the scooter handlebars to counteract mechanical failure. In that instant, the three of us felt an uneasy skid and lift of our seats. Drifting like a car in a Fast and Furious movie (Family! Sorry, I couldn't help myself). Where we instinctively reacted in kind, by lowering our feet down to slow our descent. Each pair of sneakers grinded against the passing concrete beneath, kicking up bits rubber, pebbles, and other debris.

Unfortunately, the speed and weight of the kart worked synergistically against us. With the very slight half-of-a-degree turn, resulting in the entire butt of the rig to fish tail. Ultimately, over-correcting the kart and aiming at the cliff's edge. The three of us were hopelessly wishing for an ejector seat at this point. Hoping for a miracle. Craving for anything to improve this situation, like airbags, handles, or clean underwear. But no luck was in sight.

With another second passing, the cliff's edge and what was below rushed closer and closer. The tree trunks below came barreling into view. We could now see that the Puget Sound would be the backdrop of our doom. The scenery zoomed past us, blinding our senses to the intimate details below. A sudden rumble and grind made the kart bounce like a bucking bronco, but with no rodeo clown in sight, we would be battling this beast with nothing more than our wits and sheer will to live.

Without warning, our small scooter tire hit the street's tapered edge. We were now millimeters away from meeting our cosmic creator. Flipping or rolling down the cliff side. There was no longer road underneath us at this point, only steep sloped earth leading to the hard and painful landing pads below. Another second would pass, a dip in speed then, slightly slower still, as if something beyond our perception pumped the breaks of the out-of-control rig. Finally, suddenly, stillness. We stopped. We weren't flying with the birds or falling to our untimely deaths to the rooftops below. No, instead, the safety edge did its job. It stopped our Frankenstein mobile at the last moment. Attacking the edge at a dangerous angle.

"Holy crap!" I said, "Is everyone okay?"

Emily nodded, "That was close."

"You have no idea," said Chris, looking back at us. His face, white as a ghost.

At this point our right legs were dangling off the cliff face. Chris slid off to the asphalt and the miracle was revealed to us. The unintended makeshift brake, our savior which stopped us so abruptly, was the scooter wheel. Now sitting off the face of the road, still spinning wildly. It had acted as an emergency brake against the tapered road edge. That combined with our feet dragging, slowed us enough for us to come to a dead halt. Collectively, we breathed a sigh of relief.

After carefully helping Emily and myself off, we pulled the go-kart away from the edge. Proceeding next to walk the rolling contraption down the hill to our driveway and back to the garage, eventually breaking out in hysterical laughter. Nerves and the hangover of adrenaline fueled our belly laughs. We were just so thankful to all that was holy we didn't just end up as morbid statistics in a local news piece about the pitfalls of summer antics.

“So...” I started.

“So...” Chris said.

“So?” Emily asked.

“We don’t tell mom!” said collectively.

Agreeing, the three of us pushed the now infamous near-death kart to the garage and walked into the house. Again, thanking our lucky stars that the improvised go-kart, our summer fun creation, made of a hand truck, a rusty scooter, zip ties, and a dog bed was NOT the material of our permanent undoing.