



8/5/94

The Demon

It's been a long wait.

The line was long, but now you're next.

A nondescript, generic college student working for the summer, indicates that you should step to the spot on the ground with a big "3" in a white circle. Not too bad. First or last would have been better, but after a 55 minute wait, anything will be worth it.

With a roar and a squeal of brakes, the eight car train stops in front of the waiting people. The passengers that step out of the cars look a little dazed. A few might even be described as terrified, but all of them seem happy (happy because of the ride or because the ride stopped, we don't know).

The attendant gestures for you to step into the seat.

When everyone is aboard, padded bars lower over your head and shoulders to your chest. They lock in place. Tentatively you test their strength. Will they hold you? Let's hope so.

With a jerk and a clank, the train lurches forward. You look back to the landing and suddenly time slows, like a bad thriller movie. A weird silence descends over you that only allows the clanking of the wheels to reach your ears. It's kind of like a Felini movie but in vivid color.

Out of the loading house and along the track you and the other riders bounce along until, with a lurch, the winch grabs the front end of the train. Your gaze wanders up, and up, and up. My, that's some hill!

Slowly, agonizingly slowly the train is pulled up this steep, loooong hill. The people sitting in front of you block your view of the top. Not for the first time, you reconsider the wisdom of this trip, but now is not the time for second thoughts. Now there is only room for fear.

Wow, this climb is still going up. How far are they going to drag us? The suspense is killing you. Somewhere in the back of your mind some long lost physics memory

reminds you that all of this potential energy the train is storing will be released as kinetic energy. Kinetic means motion. Probably fast motion. "I will not show fear, I will not show fear, I will not show fear," passes through your thoughts like a mantra.

Finally the train reaches the top (damn, it's really high up here) and starts around a wide sweeping curve to the left. You can see that it makes a big U-turn to the beginning of the down part. By just straining your neck in that direction you can tell that the down hill slope isn't very steep. Hey, maybe this won't be so bad after all!

As the cars complete the turn, your view is once again blocked by the passengers in front of you. The first few cars dip down on their decent, then yours, then the ones behind you. The slope is rather gentle, but the final car still hasn't released. Why not? Aren't we supposed to be hurtling down at some high rate of speed? Aren't we supposed. . .

Whoosh! The cars in front of you dip again! Before you can think, your car also starts to release that potential energy. The designers put the big hill *after* a small grade.

Now, wind is rushing past your ears. Down, down, down you swoop to the first LOOP! Who said there were loops?

The first cars, then your car, then the others zoom up the first part of the loop. Up, then down. You throw your head back and realize you are looking into the faces of the people in the back of the train, just now going up the first part. The loop is tight enough that it almost folds the train in half.

Whew, that was wild! Wait! There's another LOOP!

Tighter and quicker, you go through this one before you even have a chance to think about it.

Under some trees, through a narrow corridor of pruned trees and bushes, the car flies at freeway speeds. Sunlight, dark, light, dark splashes across your face.

You break out of the trees only long enough to realize there's an oval tunnel

The Demon is a rollercoaster in the Great America Amusement Park near San Jose, California. It is one of the most carefully designed coasters I've ever been on. For example, the first, gentle slope is to allow all of the cars to come off of the turn and start downhill before the actual drop. The loops are ellipsoid rather than round. This design allows the cars to go through them very quickly and puts a lot of the energy lost in the upward part back into the train. The bank under the waterfall is almost a 90 degree bank and the series of corkscrews is so quick that thought just isn't an option.

In a few weeks, the world's tallest, fastest, and longest rollercoaster will open at Stateline, Nevada. You can be sure that I'll be one of the first in line.

I've heard it said that adrenaline is the best drug of all.

As always, Apa-tizer is brought to you by the sick and twisted mind of

Ken Forman
7215 Nordic Lights Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89119-0335

ahead. Foosh, into the tunnel. Up ahead you realize the other end is much smaller than the beginning. Will we fit?

Flash. Back out into the sun. Okay, that's enough! I've had my ride, but no, there's more.

A water fall? Over the track? Is that water red?!? Blood or dye? No time to think now.

Under the water fall, fast, banked U-turn to the left around a red lagoon.

Out of the bank an into a corkscrew. Once, twice, three times you go around. Your stomach isn't just in your throat, it's back on the track somewhere after the second loop.

This corkscrew is intense. After the final turn, whoop the track, the train, the cars and you all corkscrew the *other* direction a couple of times.

Before you even have time to catch your breath, the car enters the loading station and wrenches to a halt. With a roar and a squeal of brakes, the eight car train stops in front of the waiting people. The passengers, and you step out of the cars looking a little dazed. Your knees are shaky and a little unsteady but you're still alive and in one piece.

Deep breath, another. You look back at the unsuspecting people waiting in line.

"Hmmm, how long is that line, anyway?"