

Trapped in Death Valley

By Kabir Syed (Grade 5)

Have you ever been stuck in a place so hot that it felt like you were about to melt into a puddle? Well, that was what happened to me. I was stuck in the hottest place on Earth: Death Valley. It was a scorching hot day, and my family was trapped in the parking lot of the largest gas station I've ever been to. It was called Terribles. The name was terrible but the inside didn't seem to agree. In New Jersey, the big stores like Home Depot and Walmart were of this size. But on our drive to Las Vegas, these larger-than-life parking lots seemed very rare. Not only were there few gas stations, but even fewer were of this size. But we have to agree, nobody wants to get stuck in a parking lot on an impossibly hot day, but here we were, tired, hot, and bored to death.

How does someone find themselves in this situation? Well, let's turn back the clock, around 4 hours ago. We had finished our vacation in Los Angeles and were getting ready to travel to Las Vegas. After a lot of rushing we finally finished packing. Then me and my dad went down to check out of the hotel and get the car. Our car was a Chrysler Pacifica. After getting our rented car and putting our luggage in the car, we waited for the rest of my family.

"What hotel are we going to?" I asked my dad. My dad sighed, clearly stressed and running on nothing but a few hours of sleep. "It's called Residence Inn," he replied. Just as he finished the rest of his sentence the rest of my family appeared and got in the car. After a brief pause, I asked "Are we going to stop anywhere?" "I think we will stop at the grocery store to get some snacks" my mom replied. On our way to the grocery store, my sister inquired how far we were from Las Vegas. "Las Vegas is around 3 hours away," I told her. Finally, we left our hotel. While driving my mom pointed out the mountains nearby us. She told us they were called the San Antonio mountain range. Around 45 minutes later, we entered a desert-looking area.

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When I looked at the thermometer, it showed a sweltering 109 degrees Fahrenheit. Then when I peeked at the thermometer again after maybe 5 minutes it showed 112 degrees. When I looked at the water in the trunk I thought I might have seen it boiling. For what I thought was 3 decades my mom told us that we stop at a spot where a sign was marked runaway truck ramp to take a picture. We stopped near the ramp and got out. Then we found a nice spot on the ramp to take good pictures. I sighed, already exhausted from the day's events. "Can we please, please not take a picture?", I complained to my mom and dad. "Come on, it's too hot for me." "Come where?" my dad joked. "Anyway you have no choice" he stated. I really didn't want to but I had to "Fine." I sighed. After the picture, which seemed like forever we got to continue our journey.

A while later I realized the car was going slower than the other cars that zoomed ahead of us. It seemed as if we were turtles chasing a bunch of cheetahs. "Why are you going so slow?", I asked my dad. "Perhaps the engine needs a break," he replied with uncertainty lingering in his voice. Suddenly, the pressure on the left back wheel went down drastically. The car stopped and we heard a large pop as the rest of the wheel gave away. We pulled up into the shoulder, still tired, but even more annoyed. After give or take 15 minutes I heard my dad saying that the road patrol (Road police) were coming. "Would the police pick us up?" my sister asked hoping that they would. "No. The cop will guide us on what to do next". At last, the cop arrived and pulled up behind us. Then he came to talk to my dad. My dad explained what had just happened to us. "The best choice right now would be to drive off the highway and slowly head over to that gas station there." "The highway is a dangerous place, especially with a baby." the police continued. "So we just drive there?" my dad questioned. "Yes you should move like one mile per hour till you get there, it will make a lot of sounds but don't worry I'll follow

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right behind you". After reaching the gas station we stopped there and continued our calling non-stop to towing companies and Uber. Since we were in the middle of nowhere we had no such luck. After we had arrived we went to use the bathroom in the convenience store. The inside of the bathroom was clean and big, And the actual store was as big as a Walmart or Home Depot. I had thought that it was just a small store at first glance. But looking at it more you would realize that it was much bigger. There was a coffee station, a hotdog station, a slushie station, an ice cream freezer, a snacks aisle, a candy aisle, and a water refrigerator and dispenser. Then we went back to the car.

We were waiting for a long time. After around 5 hours, I saw my dad asking another person if they could drop us at Las Vegas. But, after some talking, we learned that they were going to a place called Prim, where no one could pick us up. So, unfortunately, we just had to wait some more. Finally, after what felt like the longest time in my life, my dad got a call that someone was going to tow our car to Las Vegas. But we still had to wait. At that time we had gone to the convenience store and had gotten some snacks to snack on, like chips and trail mix. By the time we checked out and came back to our car, the truck came. "Finally, the towing truck!" I exclaimed, excited to finally receive help.

As the towing truck lifted our car into its bed, the truck driver told us to sit in the truck. I was really excited to ride in it, as it's not every day you get to do this! The truck driver was very nice and got us snacks. From there he took us to Las Vegas and we dropped the broken car. After we reached our hotel, we all let out a massive breath we didn't even realize we were holding. Rested and relieved, we were finally out of Death Valley and somewhere safe.