

End of the pier

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This was supposed to be summer. I'd left my hotel room just after breakfast and by the time I arrive at the entrance to the pier I was already soaked through to the skin. Determined not to be beaten by mother nature I decided to venture onto the pier where I knew I could get some shelter and even a cup of tea.

I was already thinking that if this is a holiday I should have just stayed at home?

I walked past the amusements, the noise of the old rock and roll music they always seem to play was deafening but I forced a smile and enjoyed watching the children playing on the machines.

I'd decided to take this holiday to get away from noise, from the family, and especially from the kids, but here I was putting up with a load of noise and watching kids play, so I made for the end of the pier in the hope of finding some peace and quiet there.

It was a long walk and there was no cover. The sea was rough and the sky was darkening with each passing minute and I could also hear the sound of distant thunder.

By the time I reached the end the storm was full on, thunder, lightening, the lot and I began to think I was the only person daft enough to be there.

I leaned on the railings and looked down to the waves below as they hit the pier and looked as if they were stretching upwards trying to catch me and pull me down. Then I was suddenly aware of something moving on the framework below. As I looked closer I became aware that somebody else was there, looking back at me, lower down on the framework.

I called out "Are you ok?", but they either couldn't hear me above the noise of the storm or they merely ignored me. I kept calling down to them and realised that there was not one, but two people there. The darkness and bad weather made it impossible to see exactly who they were, but they just kept looking back at me and even though I continued calling them they said nothing in return and just kept looking up at me.

Their eyes were wide open as they stared back at me as if gripped by fear and then they both stretched out their arms appearing to ask for help, and I was immediately drawn towards them and knew I had to do something very quickly.

The storm was worsening still and the sea was more angry than I have ever seen it before.

I was becoming more and more worried that very soon one massive wave might come and simply wash them both away then they would be lost and nobody would be able to help them so it was now or never, I had to do something.

"Hold on tight", I called out "I'm coming down for you".

Climbing over the railing was hard enough, but trying to manoeuvre my way down the framework was treacherous, my feet kept slipping off the beams and at times I was left hanging with just my hands holding onto the metalwork. More than once I thought about giving up and trying to get back onto the right side of the railing but I kept seeing those faces looking at me and I forced myself to carry on.

I paused, just for a moment, as I tried to get my breath back, and I was starting to think that the two faces I'd been looking at looked strangely familiar, but as hard as I tried I was unable to delve deep enough to be able to put names to the faces and on I went.

As I started down again, the waves were already hitting the two people below me and some were reaching me and washing over me.

But as I continued down a sudden and huge wave hit the pier and tore me off the framing and threw me down into the mass of waves and foam. I fought to try to get back to the pier but the waves were too strong and they forced me further and further away. I was, by this time, totally exhausted and I could feel myself gradually losing consciousness.

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I could feel the hot sun shining on my face as it tried to force its way between curtains, but I laid there just for a while and felt in a state of limbo, somewhere between a dream and reality. I remember those two faces under the pier and then it came to me, I did recognise them, they were the faces of my children.

I was suddenly fully awake but as I tried to get up out of bed something was holding me back and I had difficulty in moving. I then became aware of wires attached to my arms and to my chest and as I tried to fathom out what they were, I could also hear the sound of bells and buzzers going off and then a soft voice was talking to me

"Stay where you are John", it said. "You are in hospital, you've been very ill, you need to rest. Please just lie there for a moment".

And then as I opened my eyes I could see that the voice belonged to a young woman in a blue uniform. "Where am I, what happened to me. Where are my children?" I asked.

"You are in hospital, you fell into the sea and almost drowned" she said. "But you're ok now, you have been here for a couple of days now, just relax and I'll call the doctor".

Then I remembered my children and as panic began to set in I tried to get up once again. "My children, they were on the pier, where are they, what's happened to them?".

"Your children and your wife are all here", she said. "They are outside. You can see them as soon as the doctor's been".

"No", I protested, "I need to see them now, they were on the pier, I'm telling you I want to see them now - immediately, I need to see for myself that they are ok!".

"OK, OK", she said "I'll let them in quickly ,but only for a minute. Then the doctor will see you, just lay still".

With that the door opened and in came my family, my wife and both of my children and, as if on cue, we all broke into spontaneous crying and laughter.

"Come here", I shouted and I held them closer than I ever had before, "I was worried about you, where have you been, what have you been up to?".

"We haven't been anywhere dad" said my son, "We've been at home since you left and then when the hospital rang to say you were here we came with Mum straight away. Why did you leave us all at home and go off on your own?".

"Oh, I don't know, that's not important now" I said "But what I do know is this, I'm never going to leave you all ever again. Next time we are all going to go on holiday together, alright?".