

## Apex of Love (768 words)

by Brian Trepanier

“Please explain one last time how this will be a painless way to die.” Pat asked of the attendant who was strapping him into the two-person rollercoaster car. The second seat was supposed to have had his wife of 60 years, Milly, sitting in it beside him. They had planned this joint departure from life before Milly was diagnosed with cancer, but the horrible disease came out of nowhere and took her fast.

Too fast.

Damn cancer.

The attendant pulled the last strap tight, put a pair goggles on Pat’s head and stood up straight.

“Well, Mister Brown, you’ll be taken to the top of the coaster, way up past those clouds. At the top, the car will come to a stop next to a button. Collect your thoughts, take your time, and when you’re ready, just push the button. The rollercoaster has seven successively smaller loops. As you enter them, the blood is forced to your legs, robbing your brain of oxygen.”

“I was told it would be painless. My wife deserved to die painlessly. She was a good woman.”

“It is totally painless, Mister Brown. The lack of oxygen will make you feel euphoric at first, and by the third and fourth loop, you will be unconscious. The last loops finalize starving your brain of oxygen and

your brain will shut down. You will not wake up, and your body will be attended to at the other end. The whole process is absolutely painless or I personally guarantee your money back.”

Pat chuckled. “Very funny, good on you. I would think it’s not easy to get someone to laugh at a time like this. Thank you, I am ready.” Pat said.

The attendant stood back, pushed a switch, and the rollercoaster car began climbing, taking Pat several stories into the sky.

As he passed through the clouds, Pat thought of how Milly would have loved it. This would have been their last ride together, and Milly loved going for a ride. It didn’t matter if it was in a car, on a boat, even on a bus, she just loved going somewhere. With 60 years of marriage, life had been more than good to them. They knew they would be going soon and had wanted to go together. A rollercoaster ride in the clouds would have been such a perfect way to go.

And then the damn cancer screwed that all up.

The car reached the top and came to a stop. Pat looked about and saw blue sky all around, with a bed of puffy cloud tops below, and the peaks of a couple of the loops that will be taking his life sticking out of the clouds.

"Sure would have been a romantic way to go." Pat said, looking out into a sky of a blue that always made him think of Milly’s eyes.

"All we have to do is push the button." Pat said to Milly, looking at the big red button on the post beside him. “I know you’re waiting for me on the other side. It was promised this would be euphoric, do you

remember when they used that word? I don't know about euphoric, seems like a pretty fancy word for suicide, and I know it will be hard to compare it to the euphoria I will have when I see you again."

In the distance, a few birds flocked in play, and Pat watched them dip into the clouds.

"I love you Milly." Pat said. He reached over and pushed the big red button.

The rollercoaster car pushed forward a bit, teetering on the edge. With the briefest of pauses, a pause that allowed Pat to be aware he was holding his breath, the car began its rapid drop straight towards the ground.

The goggles he wore did nothing to stop the tears from being forced out by the air pressure and the memories as he plummeted towards earth. As he passed through the clouds and the ground came into view, Pat reached under the goggles and wiped the tears to take one last look at life.

It was during this last look the realization the track was not actually connected to the loops hit him, followed very soon after by the hard, unforgiving earth.

The attendant drove a backhoe up to the hole Pat and the rollercoaster car had left behind and dumped a load of dirt over it, happy he would be going home early and hoping that Mister Brown, in his final moments of life, would have seen the humor in it and had a laugh.