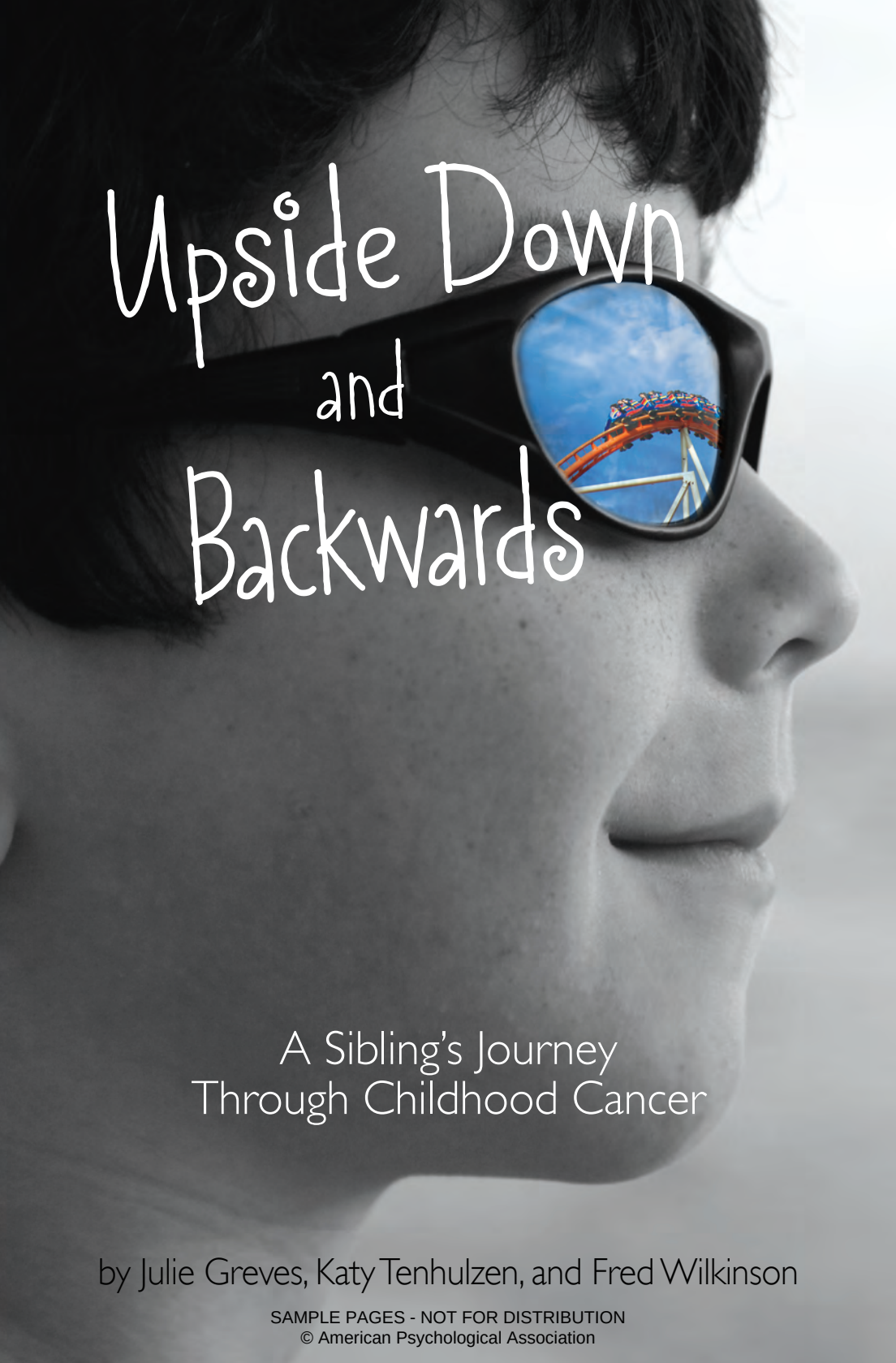


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Prologue



Ever since my first ride, I have been obsessed with roller coasters. There is something about the "hiss" of the ride starting that fills me with anticipation. I love looking out at the park during that initial slow ascent—leaning back, staring at the sky while the cars climb slowly up the track, clicking as the guide wheels make their way up that first steep hill. Everything seems to get smaller and smaller as the car climbs higher. I look down at the people on the ground, happily going about their day, paying no attention to me sitting several hundred feet up in the air, heart pounding, about to careen over a steep drop. The car pauses at the peak of the hill just long enough for my adrenaline to build.

Then comes the plunge.

The wind whips my face so it feels like my cheeks are being stretched back into my ears, and I don't know whether to laugh or scream. Throughout the whole ride I hold on for dear life, stomach in my throat, screaming my head off, until the cars gradually come to a stop with another familiar "hiss."

Waiting in line to get on, I always watch the people who have just finished the ride. The cars pull up, full of passengers with red faces and hair going every which way. Some smile and laugh, while others stand up with shaky legs and this shocked, nauseated look on their face, as if they are thinking, "I can't believe I survived that." I always feel bad for the ones who look so miserable when they get off. I love the adrenaline, but if you don't, it sure would suck to be stuck on the ride, panicking that it's taking you on unpredictable twists and turns at lightning speed when all you want is to have two feet steadily back on the ground. I guess some people

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just don't really know what they are getting themselves into. The ride looks less scary when you're watching from the ground, but for some, once they are the ones getting flipped upside down and backwards, it's not as much fun as they thought it would be.

Little did I know that in the spring of my eighth grade year my sister Paige would be diagnosed with cancer and my life would become one of the craziest roller coasters I would ever ride. As much as I love roller coasters, this was one I definitely did not climb on by choice. There were many, many times when I just wanted my two feet safely back on solid, predictable ground. But I was buckled into my seat, and there was no getting off once the "cancer coaster" started—I just had to hold on as my life flipped upside down and backwards.

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Chapter 1

The Screamroller



The car moved in slow motion up the track—*click, click, click, click*. I felt a flutter of anticipation and excitement in my stomach as we got closer to the top. For a moment everything stopped as we reached the highest point. Then a collective scream rang out as we plunged down, down, down. Right when we reached the bottom, the track curved back up and took the car around and upside down. My stomach flopped up into my throat and then dropped along with the car, heavy in my gut. After two more loops, I couldn't figure out which way was up. Finally the car slowed as it reached the end of the ride.

"Woo-hoo!" my best friend Tyson hollered as he stepped off. "We conquered the Screamroller!" He started punching the air like Rocky Balboa. I followed him more slowly, laughing, my legs feeling slightly wobbly. I did my best to seem chill as Kelsey and Rebecca stepped off the car behind us. Becca, always concerned with looking her best, was smoothing out her hair. Kelsey, on the other hand, didn't appear to notice or care that her long blond hair was tangled and a few strands were almost standing on end. I always appreciated how low-maintenance Kelsey was. It was the last day of spring break and we were at the local amusement park to distract us from the reality facing us the next day. We all headed over to the designated meeting place where Luis and Jamal were already digging into sugar-coated elephant ears. I breathed in the smells of cinnamon and butter and was glad I'd waited until after the ride to get one for myself, unsure if it would still be in my stomach if I hadn't.

Ty and I always talked about taking a long road trip someday to visit all the best roller coasters across the country. I laughed to myself as I

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stood in the concession line, thinking back to the first time he made me go on one. We were eight. I didn't want to admit it to Ty, who never seemed fazed by anything, but I was scared out of my mind as I watched the cars looping and zooming around, listening to the screams of people hanging upside down in the loops. I could barely breathe through the first half of the ride, but on the way down, screaming like a wild man, I realized that the rush of speed was addictive, and I felt proud of myself for conquering it.

I felt an elbow jab me in the side, interrupting my thoughts. Kelsey had a big smile on her face as she teased, "Earth to Bryce!" I suddenly noticed I was next in line.

"Three elephant ears, please." I handed my money over to the vendor and gave one of the hot pastries to Kelsey, who smiled even bigger as she took a huge bite out of hers before we even started walking away. Yet another reason to appreciate that girl: she ate anything and everything. Becca, on the other hand, scrunched up her nose at us and said, "I can't imagine how many calories are in one of those things."

As I handed Tyson his, he rolled his eyes and declared, "Oh Becca, you let little things like calories ruin all the joys of life! All this sugary goodness hot out of the fryer, mmm-mmm!"

Jamal, being the Eeyore of the group, broke the relaxed mood by mentioning the "S" word. "School tomorrow and a test the first day back. Did anyone study this week?"

Luis threw his wrapper at him. "Dude, seriously, that topic is off limits until about 8 o'clock tonight. We still have hours of vacation left before we need to stress about that!"

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Juvenile Fiction/Cancer
Ages 8–13

Upside Down and Backwards

A Sibling's Journey Through Childhood Cancer

Ever since his first ride, Bryce has been obsessed with roller coasters. The hiss of the ride starting, the anticipation, the slow climb up that first steep hill, the pause just before the car careens over the steep drop.

But when Bryce's sister Paige is diagnosed with cancer, his life becomes one of the craziest roller coasters he would ever ride. His parents are suddenly distracted and stressed. It seems like Paige always gets her way. He has trouble keeping up with school. He misses out on time with his friends. And he worries about Paige. Will his family ever get back to normal?

With the help of his family, friends, and support group, Bryce starts to feel steadier and not so out of control. Together with his family, he gets through the ups, downs, twists, and flips of cancer. Includes a Note to Readers.



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