



Dedicated to helping LGBT people build and strengthen their families.

Slippin' Into The Screamin'

Greater love hath no father than this, that a father taketh his daughter to a Jonas Brothers concert with a sellout crowd of over 16,000 people – mostly tween and teen girls. For those of you who are not fortunate enough to be drowning in adolescent pop-culture, the Jonas Brothers are shooting stars of American boy bands. My daughter's bedroom is a shrine to their graven images. There are a few posters of less worthy icons like Chris Brown and Corbin Bleu that adorn her bedroom walls, but for now the trinity of Nick, Joe and Kevin Jonas, in that order of idolatry, get top billing.

So when I read that they were coming to our State Fair I thought, Remember all of the times that I've taken Mona to concerts and how she gets over stimulated and over-tired, and then shows her gratitude the next day by throwing endless temper tantrums. I recalled my empty threats: "For as long as I live, I will never take you to another concert." Then I went online and purchased three tickets, one for Mona, another for a guest of her choice and one (unfortunately) for me.

I had purchased the tickets more than two months in advance, but the better tickets were already sold out, so our seats were fairly high up in the grandstand. Fortunately, I brought binoculars and a cold compress for nosebleeds. As I watched the hundreds of little girls surrounding me talk and smile and giggle and laugh, I couldn't help but think that I should call my stockbroker to see if my portfolio includes investments in orthodontics. I also worried about an electrical storm; surely this audience could attract lightning from anywhere in the Northern Hemisphere.

The ubiquitous braces were upstaged by the even more ubiquitous cell phones. Everywhere, people were talking on their cells as if complaining that through some computer glitch they were all given the wrong tickets and now had to sit next to someone that they couldn't stand talking to. Given that I didn't have braces nor was I wearing a Jonas Brothers t-shirt (like the vast majority of the audience) I could at least conform by taking out my cell phone. I called Jack and asked him if it was too late to reconsider parenthood.

Suddenly, screams like I've never heard or imagined echoed throughout the grandstand, but they quickly subsided when the adoring fans realized that unless the Jonas Brothers were trying to save on housekeeping it was a stagehand that pushed a

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broom across the stage. Screaming was replaced by chanting: "Jo-nas...Jo-nas." I scanned the stage in search of Greek columns and Democrats. Oops! Wrong chant: O-ba-ma...O-ba-ma. But then I could never get my chants straight.

Knowing what was soon to come, I rummaged through my backpack for earplugs. I rolled up a little wax plug and shoved it into one ear. As I pressed the second plug into my other ear, an oval platform in center stage emerged like the rising orchestra pit in Radio City Music Hall. The Jonas Brothers! Despite the earplugs, I thought that my head would explode. What on earth was happening? I mean I can appreciate a crush, infatuation, maybe even an obsession that leads to stalking. But jumping and screaming in public? I just don't get it.

Even my daughter who used to pretend that her doll carriage was an armored tank and her baby dolls were missiles now jumped and screamed with the best of them. What happened to my sweet little hawk? Clearly this Jonas Brothers concert brought out something in Mona that Barney and Elmo concerts never did. Kevin's jumping and spinning, Joe's seductive eye contact with his immediate audience and Nick's puppy dog, love-starved side glances – from where we were all this was viewed on larger than life monitors – spoke to Mona and her peers like a purple dinosaur shaking his tushie couldn't. And the lyrics I Love You...You Love Me....We're a happy family could hardly compete with:

I'm slippin' into the lava

And I'm tryin' to keep from going under

Baby, you turn the temperature hotter

Cuz I'm burning up

Burnin' up for you baby

So there I sat among thousands of screaming tweens and teens adjusting my earplugs and thinking that next summer Mona will be going on thirteen; I'll drop Mona and friend(s) at the entrance to the grandstand, and then pick them up after the performance. I glanced around at the 16,000 plus folks in the audience and thought How many stranger dangers are lurking in the shadows? What weapons are hidden in their backpacks?

Who am I kidding? Long after Mona yells, "You stay home!" I'll be sneaking into concerts and dances and parties. There is one consolation, however. At some point, I'll no longer need earplugs.