

The Battle of LA (Little Angels)

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Today I was invited to a play date by a friend...

I love play dates during the summer holidays, the kids are off so its 'guilt free' time to have cake, chat and drink coffee *wine* to maintain your sanity during the 6 week break.

The summer weather has arrived (basically, we woke to find grey skies, rain on a biblical scale and the annoyingly jolly weatherman confirming that we are to expect an entire months rainfall in one day...hurrah!)



With that, my friend text me to suggest an indoor soft play as a suitable venue.

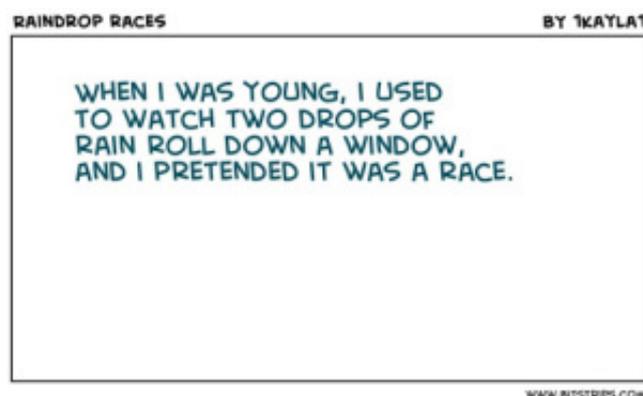
I was tentative (code for: we are doing what on a wet day during the summer holidays?!) but when I looked at the big, doe eyes of my children, with their faces pressed up against the rain splattered windows wondering where the chuff the sun has gone (Erm, hello!!! Mr Sunshine?! Didn't you get the

memo?! It's SUMMER holidays...they're so young an innocent. They'll soon come to realise that this is how it is in the UK and become bitter and resentful of it like their mother. "I'm moving somewhere warmer, Greece maybe...oh no wait, maybe not there...")

I sent a message back to my friend agreeing to go to the germ and child infested soft play and packed the kids into the car...along with our waders and a dingy.

It was a rather wet drive, with the windscreen wipers set to warp factor 5, and the kids loved splashing through the puddles and soaking pedestrians as we sped past them for fun! Mwahahaha!!!! (Only joking!)

When we arrived at the soft play, before we had even set foot in the place, I could tell it was heaving. The car park was full to the brim and the only spaces left were at the very bottom of the car park where nobody else wanted to park, as it was a good 30 second walk from there to the door of the place. Grown ups hate walking in the rain, especially women with children in tow. It's such a hassle when the children find it all exciting and want to splash in the puddles and have fun...



I unloaded myself, the pushchair (the dingy) and the kids from the car and we made our way up to the entrance of the soft play. The place is called 'Little Angels' (I know, the irony!) and it is in a converted barn/farm warehouse (evidently suitable for housing animals or children, is there a difference?!) on a golf course complex.

You can see the look of joy on the golfers faces as the mums hurry their children into their pristine, green fairway-ed sanctuary. They love children at golf clubs...

On my way to the entrance, my friend calls my phone.

"We are already in here but there is a 40 minute wait until the next play session...what would you like to do?"

40 Minute wait?! In the rain! With children! RUN! I want to run away and hide in the pub!

"I don't mind hun, what would you guys like to do?" (I hate making decisions...)

We decide to wait it out in the golf club coffee shop/clubhouse so the kids aren't disappointed and we can have a much needed caffeine fix.

Upon entering the clubhouse, we are greeted by the sound of 40 odd squealing children, 20 nattering mothers and 2 huffing, puffing golfers who are mumbling something about the fact their clubhouse is full of "little brats" and that it was "completely ridiculous" and stormed out. It's safe to say, they were really 'teed off' – that was a terrible joke. I'm sorry we've bought extra revenue to your golf club. How dare we...

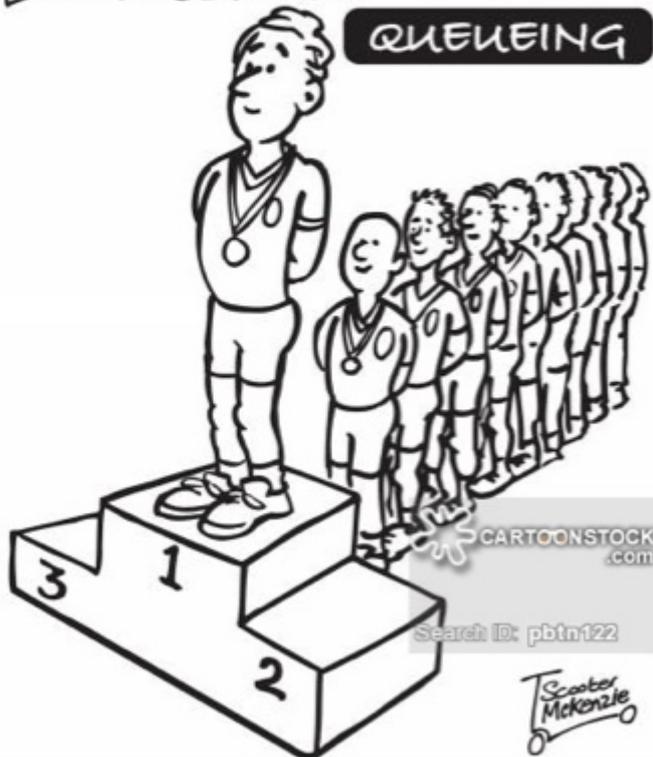
We told the kids that when the big hand got to the 6 on the clock, it was time for us to go and queue up.

One of my boys said, "Why cant we just move the hands on the clock forward so its already on the 6?" I explained that you can't do that and that he just had to be patient...but a little bit of me wanted to give it a go. It would basically almost be time travel and maybe I could just move time forward so much that our play session had already passed and we could go home. After a coffee, some shortbread and some sweeties, the mums were full up and the kids were bored of watching us stuff our faces. The clock finally had its big hand on the 6 and it was time to go back out in the rain and queue up.

Joy.

By the time we got out the cafe to queue, the line was already quite long and my son had a look of despair on his face. But in true British fashion, he took it on the chin, along with his friends, and they did what us Brits do best...they queued. I'm so proud of the way our kids behaved in the queue, despite the rain, the screaming children and grumpy mothers, they behaved impeccably and didn't moan at all.

'Sports' that the British excel at...



As we neared the door, I was aware of 2 women and 4 kids behind me who were edging nearer and nearer into my side view.

Oh no you don't you cheeky buggers, you are not pushing in. But push in they did. They were sly about it mind you, they feigned rain phobia and made a break for the shelter of the doorway. One of them already had terrible hair, I don't see what more damage the rain was going to do to it. Them pulling this manouver caused a double queue issue. One of the worst offenses you can make. Confusion reigns and nobody knows what's going on and the floodgates open. Any old person just rocks up and shoves their way in with complete disregard for the British queuing code.

Arseholes!!

Don't they understand how to queue?!

It's very simple, one person stands behind the other in order of arrival and they wait for their chuffing turn!

Ahem. Calm down love, calm down.

My friend noticed what was going on and, being more forceful than myself, she calmly tells the women that i am with them and that they've pushed in front of me.

"Yes! We know..." they mutter ,and carry on talking about their dear Tyson's ear infection.

As we near the desk, I'm even more aware that the women aren't letting me back in to my space. They've done it, they've actually queue jumped. It took all my power not to 'accidentally' ram them with my pushchair and I decided rising about their behaviour was the way forward, so I just muttered the word tossers under my breath and pretended to itch my nose with my middle finger. A highly mature response I'm sure you'll agree.

My friend gave them the death stare as they passed through the gates for good measure, a stare medusa would have been proud of and she assures me they looked scared. That or the woman had just passed wind and followed through.

death stare

noun

informal

a hostile or contemptuous look directed at a particular person.

"Jane gave her a death stare that was even detectable through her sunglasses"

Once we were inside the barn full of soft things, the kids were off. And so were everyone else's. It was a wall of noise and smell. Cheesy feet, baby poo, fried chips, sweat and stale impulse body spray linger in the air (the makers of magic tree may have a new product in there somewhere...)

Everywhere you look you can see kids using punch bags as Battle Rams, waiting to pick off any unsuspecting passer, 6 year olds practicing their WWF moves, children using their mother massive hooped earrings as gym equipment and plastic balls being launched like heat seeking missiles at people's heads.

I decide to take my 1 year old into the under 4s area as it should be quieter and safer in there. We weave our way through the tables full of stressed out mums and make it to the safety of the infant area...or not.

As I look around I notice that the under 4s area is also full of 6 year olds who have decided they are now The Undertaker

from WWF, and think it's hilarious to try and clothes line the toddlers for fun.

Arms and legs are flailing around everywhere and the mums of the mini wrestlers are completely oblivious to what their 'little angels' are up to because they're too busy gossiping about their children's glowing school reports (whilst said child is beating the crap out of a toddler) – what a well rounded individual little Tyson is.

Needless to say, by the time our session at the soft play was over, I was in need of a Gin.

I'd hardly seen my friend, I'd watched a child slide down a padded slide with snot dribbling out their nose, only for the next child to come down after them face first and get covered in it, numerous kids putting the same foam ball in their mouth and then rolling it along the snot trail for good measure and to top it off, one of my boys decided to go in the toilets in only his socks and use them to soak up the puddle of pee another child had left on the floor in there – but only tell me that after I've squeezed said socks in my hands. Thanks for that son...

Lessons learnt today...

Never go to a soft play during the summer holidays on a rainy day. Ever.

Teach your children queuing etiquette from a young age as well as the death stare, which is essential in today's broken society.

Always take Gin with you to a soft play. Not only does it calm your nerves but it will disinfect pee off your hands and leave them with a lovely, lingering juniper scent.

Thanks for a lovely play date friends...

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**IT'S
BEEN
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BUT
I HAVE TO
SCREAM
NOW**

