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Dr. David Horton likes to say "It doesn't always keep getting harder." Which is true. BUT, what he doesn't say is: "Don't get me wrong, it's definitely going to be super hard at times, but then it might get *slightly* less hard," which might be a slightly more accurate description where the Promise Land 50k is concerned.

For my third ultra I decided to try something(s) different. I had completed two, rather successful, Holiday Lake 50ks, and in the post-race daze from finishing my second one, I rashly decided to sign up for another Horton event. This one was going to be a significant challenge for me for a few reasons. As a huge winter baby who had grown accustomed to running in the 30s to 50s, the predicted late April temps were going to be a shock to my system. I was not particularly looking forward to the 7400 feet of elevation gain either, especially since that is over 3 times what I was used to for the distance. Lastly, my continued, let's say, 'sporadic' training schedule due to my not-completely-healed patella issues would all make this a difficult race. Nevertheless, I felt confident that I could at least finish.

The event started off well enough. I showed up Friday evening to the start location, accompanied by my dad who had graciously agreed to pace me to finish within the 10-hour cutoff time. Even after running the Boston Marathon earlier that week, I knew my dad would probably consider my pace "an easy hike," spoilers: I wasn't wrong. After "camping" overnight in the field, we joined the queue of headlamps for the first 4 mile stretch up the mountain. I had run a practice Jarmans the week before, I was ready for this. That is until... Remember how I said I was trying some new things?

One rule of running is to never try anything new on race day. I was aware of this rule, I have heard it since I was a kid. I have even given that advice out to others many times myself! But somehow I guess I thought I was above it. This wasn't my first rodeo, *I was an ultrarunner now*. And *ultrarunners* drink fancy hydration, right? So, for the first time ever, without any practice, I decided to swap out my usual water for a vest full of Tailwind hydration. Pretty quickly up the mountain I realized this was a huge mistake. I was drinking profusely but could tell I wasn't getting any more hydrated. Around mile 2 I started feeling a little light-headed. Around mile 4 my body had enough. I was shaking and dizzy and it was WAY too early to be feeling so rough! How on earth was I going to make it another 30 miles! I started to panic. All of my visions of finishing in under 10 hours were disappearing. The shorts were slipping out of my grasp. Was I even going to finish at all? Was I even going to make it to the half marathon?

I informed my dad of the "situation" and on his advice tried to get some nutrition from a Gu. Instantly my body rejected the fuel. After... ridding myself of all the Tailwind I had consumed (which apparently was just sitting in my stomach waiting to come back up) things started to improve. We ran a nice downhill section and after 6 more miles with no liquid hydration, I was finally able to refill my vest with normal, plain, refreshing water. My nausea didn't fully go away until around mile 13, but things were getting better.

After (sadly) making it to the 3rd aid station a mere 3 mins before the cutoff, my spirits were slightly raised as we tackled the 16 mile Dark Side of the course. I had run this section in training and knew roughly what to expect. We dodged some poison ivy, cooled off in the creek, and managed to trim off some time. We arrived at the next aid station over an hour before the cutoff with plenty of time for me to stumble my way blindly up the dreaded waterfall. I had told my dad it was going to be slow going at that point, but I think he was still impressed with just HOW SLOW I managed to "hike." My struggle-bus attitude didn't stop him from continuing to force-feed me pretzels every two seconds, despite my many grumbles.

Once we made it back to Sunset Fields the end was in sight! I could barely believe we had made it that far. And based on the surprised looks other runners (who had been witness to the mile 4 pukefest) were giving me, they could barely believe it either! From there it was smooth sailing downhill to the finish line, where we ended with a time of 9:32:20. It wasn't pretty, and it certainly wasn't easy, but the course was beautiful and the support and encouragement I received from my dad, other runners, and the event crew made all the difference. Just don't let me sign up for anything else any time soon!