THE BUCKEYE
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The Buckeye is a magazine of writing and art from seventh and eighth grade classes at Montgomery Bell Academy. The title was inspired by the buckeye tree that stood in the grove on the north end of campus. It was once a familiar gathering place for both faculty and students.
“It Was Just He*”  
By Julian Goldner

*This short story also placed second in the Rascoe Bond Davis Contest

It was just he, the old gentleman with the suit, tie, and brown hat, sitting on the park bench. Alone in his thoughts, alone in his imagination. It was autumn, and through the falling leaves, splendid beams of radiant sunlight shined, making the park beautiful although it was so isolated, so old. Through the sky-reaching branches of the brown and gnarled trees sat the man, contemplating the view that was his paradise, a landscape of memories from his past. He went there every day, and the children playing in the park noticed him and moved away, basking in their youth at a distance. Their shrieks and giggles were noises that the man was accustomed to, provoking a feeling of nostalgia that sent shivers of sadness, but at the same time, joy, down his spine. Through his sizable and delicate glasses he could observe the happiness that the park invoked in the children. It was their paradise too, but in a different way. They had so much to learn, so much to experience, and although their guides in life stood only a few feet away keeping a watchful eye on them, it was the play they felt free.

The man saw all this, and all this he absorbed. “Life is a curious thing,” he thought. “We humans never really understand the virtue of enjoying the moment. There is always something we look forward to in life or something we regret. However, in reality, the incredibility of life accompanies us wherever we go. It is written in our destiny for us to decide what choices to make and what paths to explore. Life is time’s best friend, it never stops to wait, and if one doesn’t take advantage of what is happening now, then it is too late to worry about what will happen soon.”

The old man turned to his right and opened his mouth as if to say something, only to close it, realizing that there was no one there for him to talk to. Instead, he felt his heart sink slightly and his gaze slowly lose the excitement he once possessed as he saw only the metal and wooden frame of the empty side of the bench. The heavenly feminine figure of blond hair and blue eyes did not accompany him anymore. She was no longer in this world, and even though her silhouette followed him wherever he went, the truth was that even in this place where they had shared so much time together, he could never bring her back.

The old man remembered the day of the picnic years back, when he was a young man with hair of gold and piercing eyes. He remembered how her smile lifted his soul, how her hair, gently waving in the wind, made him feel as if the resplendent woman in front of him was an illusion, too good to be true. He felt his hand being held and pulled towards her, and him trying to get up from the luscious green grass to go towards the sprightly woman that was signaling for him to follow. He remembered her melodic laugh as he stumbled and slipped as he rose, and he remembered the sound of his shoes on the soft ground as he followed the woman up a winding path leading to the top of a beautiful hill.

Once at the top of the hill, he remembered the golden light of the sun that bathed the plants in a heavenly aura and the rose that he picked from the ground and placed behind her ear. He remembered the turquoise lake that dominated the scenery, and the tiny sailboats skirting across its waters. He remembered the wind gently blowing her hair, and the magnificent tree that sprawled for hundreds of feet up in the air, extending its branches into the heavens. He re-lived the moment in which they lay down on the grass and gazed into the skies, staring at the celestial shapes that the clouds formed.

He reminisced about how it felt to get down on one knee as they were about to leave, the feel of the small purple box in his pocket that contained the crystal of their continued on page 4
“It Was Just He”  
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love. He thought about how her face lit up as he placed the ring on her finger, creating the eternal bond
that symbolized their affection while a single tear of joy rolled down her cheek. He reminisced about
how they walked down the hill with their fingers intertwined, smiling and laughing as the stars became
exposed and the moon came out from its hiding place. The memory of their first kiss as fiancés under
the moonlight, the sensation of her lips against his and her perfume filling his nostrils kept being a
cherished memory to him. He remembered the pact he made with himself as he lay in bed once she had
gone to sleep next to him, to never forget that day, to never forget her.

Now he saw a young couple walk past him by the park bench, smiling and walking with their
fingers intertwined. But the old man didn’t see a couple of strangers; he saw himself and her when they
were young, in love, and vulnerable. He saw them going off to live through several mistakes, journey
through several hardships, but in the end, always come back to the affection of each other. As they
walked past, he saw the sparkling ring on the girl’s finger, and he smiled a sad smile. The man lifted his
head to observe the hidden beauty of the park. He saw an old, tall, and leafless tree with its branches
extending to the heavens. He saw a littered path leading to the cusp of a hill, and he observed a setting
sun with its golden rays bathing the trees and plants.

He looked at what once had been, and he looked at what was now. He stood up and delved into
his forever cherished memories of happiness, of euphoria, losing himself in the incredibility of his
past. He closed his eyes and lifted his arms to the sun, releasing the pain of his past and present that
were hidden by his wrinkles. Smiling and opening his eyes, he absorbed the small beauties that were
in front of him, absorbed life. He walked away from his bench, his heaven, and walked out of the park,
towards the sleek, black car waiting for him. He was not to go into the back seat, but that is what he did.
The old man leaned over and ran his fingers across the smooth and brown thing in front of him, stroking
it. Finally, his feelings overcame him, and he placed his lips to the box, closing his eyes and saying, “I
continue to keep my promise.” Then, as abruptly as he had entered the back seat, he exited it, walking
across the front to the passenger’s seat, and opening the door. Once he had sat in the comfortable, leather
chair, the driver drove off, leaving behind the park where he would not return. Now they were headed a
direction where stones rose out from the ground, a place that the old man would go to sometime soon in
his life, but not while sitting in the front seat.

Arthur Laffer
I took the knife into my grasp
The handle safe within my clasp
I slid it in his meaty side
And watched the blood stretch far and wide

I stood up to admire my work
Went back into the dark to lurk
And watch the woman cry and weep
As he lay in a deathly sleep

I must sound heartless, mad, and cruel
To leave him in this scarlet pool
But there’s a reason for my act
A plan I planned with care and tact

This man had done bad things to me
And it was my desire to see
His lifeless corpse upon the ground
Without a breath, without a sound

So, yes, I smiled! And yes, I grinned!
For this cheap man had met his end!
My enemy was finished now
I’d finally fulfilled my vow

So now I stride away unseen
Amidst a vague and murky dream
Exhausted, now I go to rest
And leave behind my evil quest

Sims Lance
Here we are; at the end,
We’ve been down the road and around the bend,
The regular season is over and done,
and everyone knows its time for real fun,
Like fall’s leaves in the winter time, teams will fall
until there is one that stands above them all
It’s the time of year when no one’s nice,
as teams clash on freezing ice

Bodies clash against the boards,
while the whole crowd erupts and roars,
Some players egos’ as big as the Great Barrier Reef
when lost, players are drowning in a sea of grief
skaters are constantly shooting,
while goalies are constantly saving,
and in the final game, when time is up,
the captain will be the first to hoist the Stanley Cup.
Nature at its finest,
Birds conversing with each other,
Squirrels scampering through the trees,
Water dripping from the leaves,
Interrupted by a relaxing breeze.

Giants covered in bark awake and show their colors,
But remain weighted down by heavy rain.
A calm uprising of colorful flowers,
Through the once barren war zone,
Now these towers are known as flowers.

The outdoors are no longer avoided,
The frost prince has been oust from power,
Now the sun king rules again.
Like frost,
Winter coats and hot chocolate have been forgotten.

This sacred time must be appreciated,
Before summer takes the Earth,
When the heat is too much too bear.
The world will be sad,
When spring is no longer there.
Hey, my name is Jason Jameson, or as a few might know me as, “The Ringmaster.” I have recently just pulled off the most evil hearted, conscience destroying, and economically brilliant schemes in the history of evil hearted, conscience destroying, and economically brilliant schemes. One would think after doing such I would feel guilty, yet I don’t feel a tinge of regret. But on some boring, uneventful days, I ponder the past “experience,” as some would call it, which made me rich, well richer. All the trouble, heartbreak, and scheming began in the summer of 2002.

I was a strapping young lad; I had a chiseled face, deep, warm brown eyes, messy light brown hair, and a dazzling pearl white smile. I was a solid 6 foot 1 inch with a skinny, yet muscular figure. My hands, though smooth and warm, were strong and trustworthy. Yes, all-in-all, I was the perfect specimen of the human race. Handsomeness aside, here’s how all the trouble started. I was perusing the streets, looking for the next get-rich-quick scheme that would send me straight to the top. That’s what I do for a living. I use my big, quick-witted brain to think of an ingenious plan; I execute it, and then walk away with the cash. After several hours of walking, I had no scheme, no one to pawn, and a cramp, which felt like my foot was being set on fire. Finally, after hours of walking, I found myself staring towards the entrance of the traveling circus. I figured that this place was as good as any to look for talent, plus I was tired and hungry. So I purchased a ticket, bought some popcorn, and watched an hour and a half of my life slip away on a thread of incompetent circus fails.

First of all, the trapeze artists had a habit of just missing the rope and landing flat on their faces with a sickening crack. Next, the moron driving the clown car crashed it into the pole holding up the Ringmaster, and he fell ten feet to the floor. Luckily, he landed on an unconscious trapeze artist and sustained minor injuries. The trapeze artist though, well he’ll probably need a chiropractor. Thirdly, their “magic balancing elephants” were two minimum wage interns dressed in discount Dumbo costumes. Somehow, one thing led to another, and they managed to light an acrobat’s butt on fire. Next, when the clowns got out of the totaled car, they looked like a baboon with Parkinson’s disease had done their makeup. After that, the lion tamer had to call animal control and 911, and the guy riding a motorcycle in a cage ran out of gas in about nine seconds, right when he was on the top of the cage. So after he was hauled away on stretcher, the ringmaster came out. One would think after several broken bones, unconscious trapeze artists, clowns who haven’t even gotten a driver’s license, and interns with incendiary talents, the circus would at least have a mediocre grand finale. Maybe they could blow something up or destroy something that wasn’t their car, ringmaster, or reputation. Instead, the final act was the ringmaster trying to sell the circus to some schmuck in the audience who wanted a let down. As the ringmaster was lowering the price, I formulated another one of my get-rich-quick schemes. My plan involved betrayal, lying, a chance of romance and maiming, and most importantly, money. So I sat there until finally the ringmaster made a last ditch effort at $500,000. I stood straight up and bellowed, “I’LL TAKE IT!” The ringmaster frantically searched the audience for the fellow with his retirement fund. I ran down the steps, taking two at a time, with the money from my last brilliant plan that involved fake love and a divorce. I finally reached the bottom step while every eye in the circus continued on page 10
tent stared into my soul. “Gentleman,” said the ringmaster, “you have a deal.” So I whipped out my pen, and he retrieved the deed, and right then and there, I became the ringmaster of the worst circus in the world.

Training the worst circus known to man is a feat unlike any other. I spent my money from five ingenious plans just to make the circus acceptable. First, I had to hire new trainers for the trapeze artist because they aren’t competent enough to hold on to a rope, and I needed a new animal trainer since the old one is in the ICU section of the hospital. I also had to put the clowns and the motorcycle dude through drivers training. Then, I had to get some new makeup artists because I found out the old ones were the ringmaster’s grandchildren, who had a habit of eating the lipstick. Don’t even get me started with insurance funds. Then, to prevent further expenses, I bought fire extinguishers for the interns, dart guns for the animal tamers, real elephants, (I know a guy in Africa), and a new clown car. The lions were especially hard to get. A PETA guy went on and on about some crap like “they are endangered” and “they would hate being trapped and put on display for money” and “animals have feelings too.” Don’t ask about how I got the lions; it wasn’t exactly legal. So with all of the costs of food, trainers, lessons, hospital bills, animals and automobiles, my total is $1,543,196.80. Luckily, I am a millionaire, a significantly poorer millionaire, but a millionaire all the same.

At this point in my story, my luck takes a turn. Whether that turn is a good or bad one is debatable. I was walking through the tent examining the circus (which was doing great...sorta). Little did I know love was in the air. To be specific, love was swinging on a rope at my head at ninety miles and hour. KERSLAM! Love came crashing into my head with the sensation of being run over by a train. As I was regaining my sense and prepping for a beat down that would make Mohammed Ali cringe, I saw her face, platinum hair, sparkling blue eyes, delicate features, ruby lips with a hint of blood, and an amazing figure. We really hit off.

“Watch where you’re going you moron!” she screamed.

“Me” I yelled, “you crashed into me!”

“Well you should have been paying attention to where you were going” she retorted,

“Listen Miss Prissy, I’ve spent a fortune just so you can swing on pretty ribbons and do fancy tricks. So I suggest you shut your gorgeous lips and show some respect!” The beautiful criminal stared daggers at me, then her eyes went wide. For a very awkward moment she just sat there staring, until I bellowed “WHAT”

“Your...uh... nose... It’s a little... err... crooked.”

“What!” I screamed. “Oh my god, oh my god, oh my @#%&!## god!” I might have overreacted a tad. “Call and ambulance, I’m gonna die. My beautiful face! Oh my god!”

“Hold on,” said the dazzling crook that broke it. “I’m going to set it.”

“What?” I said, “On three, one *Crunch* “HOLY- *For the sake of young listeners I’m going to skip this part. So five minutes later after saying every expletive I knew in every language I knew. “You’re so fired” I growled.

“Circus Freak”

By John Jameson

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“Oh I don’t know, the fact that you broke my nose comes to mind,” I replied.
“Oh come on, I fixed it,” she said.
“But it still hurts!” I screamed.
“Is there anything I can do to keep this job? I’ve wanted to be in a circus since I was six,” she pleaded.
“Meet me for coffee and maybe a lawsuit?” I replied smoothly.
“Really?” she said, “I break your nose, you threaten to fire and sue me, and you want to hook up?”
“Is that a yes?” I said in my most date-me voice.
“You don’t even know my name,” she said.
“I’ll know it when you’re on trial,” I replied.
“It’s Lucy, thanks for asking,” said Lucy.
“I’m Jason” I said. “So,” is it a date?” I asked.
“Sure” she said, “pick me up tomorrow at eleven.”

Coffee with Lucy was very pleasant. I picked her up at her apartment. She greeted me with an air of hatred, regret, and forced politeness. We drove in my gold-plated Porsche to a Starbucks.

We sat down for coffee, and Lucy ordered some green tea and a muffin, and I ordered a cappuccino with a croissant and resisted the urge to poison Lucy. “You have to act sincere,” I told myself.

“So,” she started “I think the circus is doing well. You’re a decent ringmaster,” “What? Oh yeah, right. The circus, great,” I replied half-heartedly.

“The trapeze team and I can actually hold on to the rope, the motorcycle guy got his license, and the elephants haven’t crippled anyone yet.”

“Okay” I said.

As we talked more and more, well she talked, I lied about caring for orphans, and I got the sense that Lucy was actually getting to like me. The hatred she had melted away the more and more I charmed her with my fake sincerity.

“I’m actually kinda glad you’re my ringmaster. I know you’ll do great things for the circus, said Lucy blushing.

“Did I hear circus?” said a voice behind me. I spun around in my chair and almost coughed up my croissant when I saw the owner of the voice. Gill Bates, one of the richest men alive, was sitting right in front of me.

“Mr. Bates I’m a huge fan of your work, I love Nicrosoft.” I exclaimed, “Personally I’m a Mapple person,” said Lucy.

“Anyway,” said Gill through gritted teeth. “My daughter is turning six, and she absolutely loves a good circus. I’ve looked everywhere and haven’t found a single seller. continued on page 12
Would you sell me your circus? I’ll pay top dollar.”

“Define top dollar.” I said

“Jason! You’re not actually considering this are you?” pleaded Lucy.

“Two million,” said Gill.

“You’re right,” I said, “not even.”

“Fine. Five million, but not a cent more,” said Gill.

“Deal!” I shouted

“Jason!” screamed Lucy. “I thought you were going to help the circus, not sell it! I thought you were better than this! And to think I actually liked you.” cried Lucy.

“Yeah you really screwed up there,” I said smugly. “You see, this was my plan from the start. I bought the circus so I could fix it up and sell it to make a fortune. I never loved you. I thought if you had love in your life, you would perform better, thus raising the asking price for the circus. But now I’m rich, and I don’t care anymore. Pleasure doing business with you, Mr. Bates, so long poor schmucks.” And with that, I drove off, content and rich.

So after all of that, I felt great. Yet throughout the entire ordeal, I heard this little voice telling me to keep the circus, stay with Lucy, and reject the money. It made me think, “What would Jesus have done?” I actually did feel something between Lucy and me. I couldn’t believe I left her for money. So, knowing I could never forgive myself, I donated all my money to charity...*snicker* Ha ha ha ha ha hoo boy. I can’t say that with a straight face. I did none of that good person crap and felt absolutely no feelings towards Lucy or the circus. Why would I? I’m filthy rich and don’t feel even the slightest bit guilty. It’s good to be cold-hearted.
Third Place Prose
“My Hero”

By John Raulston Graham

“My mother has died,” said my father. I did not really know much about my grandparents at the time. I did not really want to make the four hour drive to Duluth in Georgia, and I also knew that I would be unbelievably bored through the funeral and the following days. However, I had no idea what I would find on the trip.

I just rode in the car, staring out the window, when finally we pulled into the funeral home in Duluth. Through the funeral, which seemed to last twelve hours, I sat there looking up at the ceiling. The next day, my father and his brother, Jim, went to my grandmother’s house to go through my grandparents’ belongings. At this point, I had pretty much given up on this trip. Then, I defaulted to snooping around the old house. After looking in some drawers in the kitchen, I walked up the old wooden stairs to my grandmother’s room. I looked through a drawer, and all I found was some old glasses and ink pens.

I was about halfway through the drawer when something caught my attention. It was a letter from the Department of War. It was addressed to Mrs. William Adams. William Adams was my grandfather’s name. Everyone in our family knew he was in the army, and that he was killed. However, no one knew how he was killed. I opened the letter wondering what could be in it. To my disappointment, all it said was that my grandfather had been killed while on a secret mission.

I ran downstairs to where my father was going through the cabinets and showed the letter to him. However, my said, “Son, mother tried years ago. They didn’t tell her. They won’t tell us.”

I was not satisfied by this answer, so, I ran out to the garage and looked around for some means of transportation. I saw my father’s old bike leaning in the corner. I wheeled it out of the corner of the garage and took out for the Duluth Public Library. I went straight to the information section and found a book titled, *U.S. Government Directory*. I found the phone number for the Department of Defense. I rode back to my grandmother’s house. After much persuasion, I convinced my father to call and ask about my grandfather. All that the Department of Defense said was that the would try, but they could not promise anything. There was not much hope.

I left Duluth sad, very sad. Every day after school, I diligently checked the mailbox for a letter from the Department of Defense. About two weeks later, what I had been waiting on for what seemed like forever, was finally here. I tore into the letter and read the record:

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“My Hero”

By John Raulston Graham

* Selected for 101st Airborne Division - August 14, 1942
* Trained in Great Britian - August 21, 1942 - May 30 1944
* Parachuted before D-Day - June 5, 1944
* Advanced ahead of the 101st Airborne Division into enemy territory to try to take out German machine guns on the hill - Morning of June 5, 1944 was killed after expedition broke down

As I sat the letter down, I felt something else inside the envelope. I pulled another slip of paper out of the envelope. The first thing I saw was the Presidential Seal atop it. It said because of William Adams’ heroics that we were invited to the White House for President Reagan to present us with the Silver Star. The letter said that they did not know whom to give the medal to until we emerged.

I finally felt the connection to my grandparents. I had to learn all of the things I did over those three weeks to gain that connection. I now have a great admiration for my grandfather. He is my hero.
“Home”  
By Alex Kalams

I leave and enter this brick building every day
It is like a planet that my life must revolve around
It serves as a bay
For me to dock and rest in
I am lucky to have a place to stay
protected by it under its gray roof

But I never truly appreciate this place
And the good it does for me
For I should have great grace
For being allowed live in this building
While others have no place
to truly call home

Grant Ellison

Mickey Kelly

John Dinkins
“Night”

By John Thornton

The night is etched in stairs and filled with black,
And wonder lies within its endless sky.
Before Apollo’s fiery sun comes back,
I’ll lie down here and wish the world goodbye.
I praise the night, with darkness vast and deep,
Where moonlight beams and owls soar above.
The face of God, white tears it starts to weep--
Unlike the day, the night I truly love.
But unknown things are hidden in the trees,
And bad things happen when you go astray.
Outstay your welcome, and you might just freeze,
And there forever will your body lay.
Although the night may scare the scared and weak,
Its waiting, violet depths are what I seek.
“The Kaleidoscope”
By Quinn Trabue

It sits, quietly
Not drawing attention to itself
With wheels like a summer field of wildflowers
And a golden shaft

A hole for the eye
To see beautiful things
A woman’s face, a cat, a ball of yarn
A swan, a four leaf clover, and a barn

Dancing with color,
Bringing enjoyment to the eye
I see my world, spinning
And I stop when a headache is beginning

Picking it up, it slips through your hands
Watching it fall to the hard cold ground
As time goes on its memories fade
The Kaleidoscope

Zachary Jackson

Carson Reisinger

Owen Albright
“The Mitt that Changed My Game”

By Harrison Hitt

The ball skids my way again
On the dirt scorched by the midday sun
And it bounces once, and then twice
Shot off the bat like a bullet from a gun
The ball slipped into the pocket of my glove
And soon I realized I had to get rid of
The ball made with leather worn out by the weather
To halt the runner in his tracks and bring my team together
The brown leather that snatched the ball
It was my glove for six great years of baseball
Through five state championships
And many nights of pitch-and-catch
Now my beauty lies still and time worn
Waiting to hear the words Play Ball!
And so as it lies in a pile of memories
It dreams of the day the ball skids my way again.
“Grammar”

By John Thornton

Grammar, grammar
What a clamor
Find with strange and certain glamour
Grammar, grammar
I enamor
Helps me not to trip and stammer
When I talk to others, yes
I don’t have to worry or stress
Grammar is my favorite subject
Though it makes a sorry reject
Out of me, a student here
I won’t shed a single tear
Grammar’s truly what I love
A blessing sent from up above
Grammar’s something I won’t lose
Even when others abuse
Its beaten, blackened, mangled name
Oh, the horror! Oh, the shame!
Grammar, I’ll protect you now
Don’t worry, I’ll show them how
To use you properly and right
I’m Sorry for your awful plight
We’ll see a better day, you’ll see
Just you and me, just you and me
Money,
So Rich in green,
The root of all evil?
Or so it seems,
Some live their lives to acquire,
Some use it to impair,
Others, to inspire.

Money,
Some may call it dough or even cash,
It causes many great to crash
It may last immortal
Or in a flash
It causes great cohorts to clash.
Money,
For some they have it with better luck,
Others kill loved ones to make a buck,
Man,
Why have a rooster that doesn’t cluck?
Why ride a wagon, when you’ve a truck?
Money,
Why are you so significant?
Are you this god in which they trust?
Do they sell their soul to make a fuss?
Man,
Why walk the path
When there’s a bus?
Why eat pizza
But not the crust?
Why water grass but not the turf?
Why come in second when you could be first?
Money,
Though you don’t live, you’re very alive.
You hear the shouts and all the cries.
You hear the truths and all the lies.
Why walk the ground when you can fly?
Money,
Your treasured beast.
You wanted monster.
You symbol of death.
You symbol of joy.
You symbol of love.
You symbol of accomplishment.
What truly have we accomplished
Why shall man cheer when you’re a present?
Why shall man fear your daily presence?
Money.
You man-made curse.
The longer we have you.
The more it gets worse.
Money,
You deceiver.
Man,
You believer.
When spring begins and winter ends the stick is put to use. Like a highly anticipated event, the season arrives on time, A glorious game comes with this season. Finally the months of waiting are over. I get to break out my lacrosse stick. The white, weightless weapon of the game called lacrosse, The pocket pounded in with robotic fists, Great hold, not too much whip, The pinched pear shaped head is the house for the ball, The slender shaft extends beneath it, Ready for game time.

The game begins like an awaiting stampede. I cut to the goal at the right time. My stick hangs in the air demanding the pass. The ball falls perfectly in the pocket. The high pocket creates a quick release, quick enough to beat the goalie. Goal! The stick has delivered this time, as it always will.

Josiah Francis

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“Valentine”
By Marcus Le

She distracts him from his homework. All she does is want to play. The brown gooey stuff is picked up with a Kroger bag. She sheds, like no tomorrow. The fur wonders and finds its way, to make people sneeze. The night of that day, she barks like the highest note of a saxophone. So people can sleep peacefully, his dad comes, cuddles, and puts her outside her cage exactly what she wanted, but the wrong thing when you want to train her. She causes her owner’s mom to have anxiety. So she puts her with her brother.
Prologue

The crystals were lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
and miles to go before I sleep.

Klink! Klink! Klink! went the stone. The cave is over seven thousand feet deep. I was at the deepest cave on earth called Krubera Cave in Abkhazia, Georgia. My name is Ben Freeland, and I am going to become the first man to reach the bottom of this cave solo within three days.

All Stone and Sinew

Heights never really scared me. Neither did staring down into a deep hole. Despite my audacity, I had no idea what fear would erupt inside of me during my next adventure. People said I shouldn’t go without a partner, but I paid no heed to their mischievous words. They were just trying to block my goals.

“All passengers, please buckle your seatbelts. We have been cleared for landing. Welcome to Abkhazia.”

I buckled myself in and packed up my carry-on. I was finally here.

The giant sign read, “Welcome to Georgia” on it. I walked to the baggage claim, picked up my gear, and headed out of the airport.

“Are you Ben Freeland?” Someone asked in Georgian.

“Yes actually I am.” I said fluently back to the old man.

“You shouldn’t go in alone. You need a climb-mate. I am a great fan, but please, don’t go in alone.”

“Thank you for your concern, but I think I will be OK.”


/\MEMORY LOG/\

I was finally in Krubera Cave. The first part of the journey was scaling the straight drop into the cave. The cave was beautiful. Limestone figures walked along the cave walls. It was more wondrous than any cave I had ever seen. But, I was getting distracted. I had a goal to meet, and I intended to meet it. I could admire the cave when I came back up. Now, it was all stone and sinew.

Three hours later, I was deeper in the earth relative to how the Eiffel Tower is high. I was nearing the next vertical drop. It was so cold in here, about three degrees celsius. Slowly but surely, I scaled this nearly vertical drop. There was something in the air that created a green aura emanating from the cave walls. It was beautiful. Then, I saw the epidote crystals. The crystals were lovely, dark, and deep, but I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep. I had to get a sample. But, it was on the other side of the cave wall, and the path was perilous. I inched toward the crystals. My hands started to get sweaty. Then, I reached out to grab a sample. I chipped it off and placed it in my pack. The danger was over.

“Ahhhh!” I screamed after my lifeline was severed against the jagged rocks. I was falling, falling, falling. Then, unconsciousness beckoned and I fell into its open arms.

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“The Cave Diver”

By Aaron White

My head felt sticky. Where was my helmet? I looked around, and I saw it on the ground, shattered into pieces. I don’t know how I was alive, but I was. I tried to move my legs, but they wouldn’t respond. The only thing I could feel was the shattered rib sticking out of my chest. I coughed up blood. Now I know my fate.

“You were right, old hoss, you were right.” I know I should have listened to everyone who doubted my goal. I could feel my lungs filling with blood. Then, I drifted back into unconsciousness.

//MEMORY LOG ENDED//

Sam DeCoster
Carlos Soria-Garcia

Charlie Buffkin