

Alex Korn

Exercise 10

Up and Down

It was that time in the morning to climb to hike to the second highest peak in Colorado. Prepared with my favorite pair of black gym shorts, blue Under Armor shirt, and my black worn hiking shoes, I was ready to go. All of the guides said you need at least a few days to acclimate to the thin air, but I had a different idea. I had been in Colorado for only one day. The air was thin but I was confident, I was fit or so I thought, I was prepared, and I was ready. The weather was constantly changing from rainy, to sunny, and back to rainy. I could see Pike's Peak in the distance, it was looking down at me, challenging me. I got in the glowing red, rental Ford Fusion. Hiking pack filled with hiking snacks, such as peanut butter, Nature Valley honey bars, and a few bottles of water. My dad was in the car with me, driving me to the start of the two-mile steep, early, rocky, and dangerous Manitou Incline. To my surprise there were a few people there, looking like ants hiking up the near ninety-degree incline.

"Best of luck, and have fun," As I got out of the car my dad said with a slight smile and a laugh.

"Thanks," I said sarcastically. "I'll see you in a few hours", I knew the journey was going

To take longer than a few hours.

I began my trek down the long winding dirt path until I came to my first challenge, the Manitou Incline. Once I reached the bottom I thought to myself, why am I doing this? Oh yeah, I wanted to experience one of the toughest hikes in Colorado. Yet I continued and took my first step onto

the incline. The trail was surrounded by mysterious pieces of metal from the train tracks that the incline was built on. Tall, ancient trees were standing over the path guarding it from the sound of the outside world. Almost half way up the two-mile incline, I thought, "Hey this isn't too bad". I soon realized that I wasn't actually half way up the incline. I was half way to the false peak which was the actual half way point to the top. The sun was high in the sky shining down on me. I saw people passing me on my way to the top. Some of them were running up the incline and running back down for fun. Working my way up the steep, treacherous incline step by step. Sweating heavily and winded I finally made it to the top. Looking down the hill in the distance I could see the town of Manitou Springs over the canopy of the trees. Cars and buildings looked like Legos. I took one last look down the steep incline, took a selfie, and continued on my path to the summit of Pikes Peak.

I found my way to the Barr Trail, the trail that would take me to the summit of Pikes Peak. The birds were chirping, the trees were blowing in the breeze. It sounded like an environment straight out of a meditation soundtrack. Early in the trail, the trail was flat, unlike the previous incline. I was relaxed, and no longer hot. Strolling my way down the path enjoying nature and all the creatures unique to Colorado such as mountain goats and elk. I decided since I'm about a third of the way down with my journey, or so I thought I was. It was time to sit down and enjoy a Nature Valley bar dipped in peanut butter. I pulled the nature valley bar out of my hiking bag. The wrapper made a crinkling sound as I pulled it out of my bag along with my peanut butter. I sat down enjoyed my bar with the peanut butter and continued on my journey.

The next destination was the camp site found exactly at the half way mark of the Barr Trail. I reached it with ease since the trail was relatively flat the entire way. I did not even feel the searing pain of the altitude on my lungs that I felt during the incline. I arrived at the camp saw a

few tents set out at camp sites. A few outhouse-looking buildings, and one old building you would expect to find during the 1800s at a logging camp. A small creek running down the middle of the camp. A few people were there filling up their water, as I was out of water I decided to go over there and fill mine as well. I realized all of my water bottles were empty, I asked an old athletic looking man, wearing classic Park Ranger clothes.

“Hey there, I forgot my water filter can I use yours, because I am out of water,” I asked.

“Sure, let me fill your water for you,” he said politely.

We got through the general small talk that all strangers go through, such as what is your name, where are you from, etc.

“Are you planning on hiking to the summit in one day?” he asked.

“yeah, I’m not in Colorado for too long so that is my plan,” I said.

“Well, be prepared, you’ve done the easy part of the hike towards the summit it is rocky and dangerous, its also a much steeper incline near the top,” he said.

“Thanks for the advice” I said.

He finished filling up my water bottles, we said our goodbyes and I said thank you. I continued my way on the Barr Trail. The forest was starting to get thick now after the camp. The sky was starting to get cloudy. The breeze was picking up, it was a nice feeling since it had been so hot for the entire hike. The old man was right. The hike did start getting much harder once I got past the camp. The path became much steeper and was lined with hazardous things, such as large rocks and huge tree roots to trip on. I continued my ascent dodging tree roots, rocks and other obstacles only to heard an ear-piercing scream. I froze, wondering what the scream could be, I

wandered farther up the mountain towards where the scream was coming from. On the path about 50 feet in front of me was a bear standing over a mangled person. I slowly crept backwards out of sight of the bear. I started rushing back towards an area where I got cell phone reception. I fumbled my phone around nervously while trying to call 911.

“911, What is your emergency?” the operator said.

“I’m on the Barr trail about 1 mile from the camp site and a man was just attacked by a bear,” I said quickly.

“Hang on a moment sir the operator, we are sending a helicopter as soon as possible,” the operator said.

I rushed back up to where I found the bear. The man was still alive and the bear was gone. Multiple claw marks running down the back of his shirt. A bite mark on his arm. Multiple lacerations on his leg.

“Help is on the way” I said.

All he could do was moan in response. In desperation I couldn’t do anything but wait for the help to come. In the distance I saw some more hikers heading this way and called for help. The two hikers rushed over to see what was happening. Luckily one of them was trained in first aid and tied a tourniquet around his left leg. We sat there waiting for the helicopter to arrive. Eventually in the distance we could hear the whirl of the helicopter blades. I rushed to the highest point I could to wave the helicopter down. A rope flew out of the helicopter and three men came sliding down, like in coast guard movies when they rescue a ship. I directed them to the man who was attacked by the bear. They quickly got him on a stretcher wrapped him up so he couldn’t move

and began heading back towards the helicopter. In the distance the whirring sound of the helicopter blades disappeared and hopefully the man was saved.

I continued my hike to the summit of Pike's Peak. Eventually the trees faded out and the environment was many large grey boulders. Fat marmots were scattered everywhere around the path. Watching me as I made my glorious hike towards the summit. With a deadly cliff to my left and a giant boulder wall to my right. My heart was racing. The sky started getting even darker and I could hear thunder in the distance. It started to downpour, all the marmots rushed for cover while I was stuck in the open. I had to hurry because it was clear lightning was going to start sometime soon. I ran up the steep mountain, my heart burning from the pain of the altitude. Lungs ready to give out I could see the top. I ran up the rocky cliff into the cover of the buildings at the summit of Pikes Peak. It was done I summited the second tallest mountain in Colorado. Crawling to a chair found in the café I celebrated my victory by ordering chocolate frozen yogurt from a man behind a counter filled with ice cream. Out of breath I sat down and realized I have finally completed my trek. I walk away a savior, humbled, and impressed by everyone who conquers this trail.