

“Finally it is all over,” Rob thought to himself. Rob had just walked off the stage with a diploma in hand. His high school career was now over and so began a new chapter in his life.

Rob had done all right in school. Never having applied himself, Rob had below-average grades. He was somewhat popular at school because he was on the football team and threw parties from time to time. Rob was a shy but extremely nice kid, who always tried to put the needs of others before him. Not having the best home life, Rob really treasured the friends he had because to him they were his brothers.

This summer was different, though, for Rob. He didn't plan on attending college like many of his other friends at his high school. Instead he had decided to join the workforce and hoped to someday start his own business. Rob knew he would be missing his friends a lot and really wanted to spend quality time with them before they all left for college.

The summer started like any other with everyone working and only seeing each other at night. The summer was flying by. Rob was working so much that he had only seen his friends a few times.

Then one night at a party it hit him. Rob realized that a great way to end the summer was a road trip. “But where to?” he thought to himself. “Ha, to Canada!” he exclaimed. This immediately went over well with all of his buddies. Not only would they all break away from their boring town, but also go to a

place none of them had ever been to before.

Over the next two days Rob and his friends Roy, Hank, and Franklin all planned out the trip. They were going to leave in a few days and would be gone for a week. They hoped to travel throughout Canada for five days and use the other two days for traveling to Canada and back.

On their departure from the great state of New Hampshire the boys were all excited. This was their first time being independent and traveling without parents. After saying their goodbyes, and fighting for the front seat, the boys got in the car and were on their way. Rob was at the wheel, Hank, riding shotgun, was giving him directions, while Roy and Franklin were in the back. Everyone was having a great time and it seemed like nothing could ever go wrong.

A few hours and a hundred miles later the guys were lost. Hank, who had tried really hard to get the directions right, somehow managed to navigate them way off course. Roy began to get agitated and whined for the front seat claiming that he was a good map-reader. Franklin just began to complain because he was bored and claimed that this trip was a waste of time. Rob who only wanted to hang out with his friends was beginning to contemplate whether or not this road trip was a good idea. He began to feel bad by making his friends upset, when all he wanted to do was have a good time..

Suddenly Roy, who was so frustrated and fed up with Hank's apparently bad map reading, began to wrestle him for the map. Rob tired enough as he was from driving, began to lose concentration on the road. Then Roy accidentally

knocked into Rob as he was struggling to grab the map away from Hank. Rob lost total control of the car and it went off the road and down a hill. Now all the guys were screaming as Rob frantically tried to regain control of the vehicle. They all realized it was too late as the car flew off a cliff and into a river.

Unfortunately Roy and Franklin were not wearing seatbelts. Both hit their heads and immediately went unconscious. Rob and Hank were still conscious after the car slammed into the river, but were dazed and confused as to what was happening. The river's water instantly began to fill up the car. Rob came to and frantically tried to escape from the car. He couldn't open the car's door due to the water pressure, and was quickly losing air. He looked at Hank and saw that he was still alive but his legs were stuck. Then looking at Roy and Franklin, Rob felt his stomach turn as he realized that they would soon die. Knowing that Hank had the best chance of living and was easiest to get out, Rob made the choice to try and save him. With the water quickly rising, Rob unbuckled both himself and Hank. He hurriedly pulled the still groggy Hank from his seat. With his fist Rob began to punch the window. The car was sinking faster now and the water was almost up to Rob's chin. Rob took a deep breath, covered Hank's nose and mouth with his right hand, and punched the window for the final time with his left hand. The window broke open and Rob trying to keep Hank from drowning climbed through the window and pulled Hank out as well. Quickly looking back at Roy and Franklin for the last time, Rob with his lungs burning and screaming for air swam to the surface grasping Hank and

hoping that he could save his friend.

They finally reached the river's surface and luckily Hank was still alive. Rob was having trouble keeping himself and Hank afloat since Hank was unable to swim alone. Then as if a miracle from God, a log floated next to them. Rob, exhausted and out of breath, held on to the log and Hank with everything he had left. The three of them slowly floated down the river. As Rob looked back to where the car went in the water his heart sank. It all became clear to him. Not only did he now actually grasp the fact that Roy and Franklin were dead, but the car had sunk and was out of site, and no one would know they were missing until next week when none would arrive home. Rob, the big tough football player, began to cry and blamed the whole mess on himself.

A few hours later the log hit land. The night had come and Rob, who had fallen asleep, suddenly awakened and, for a second, thought that it was all a dream. Then he felt the water all around him and sadly realized that it wasn't. In the darkness Rob grabbed Hank and carried him ashore. There he sat with Hank, who was asleep, until the sun rose, feeling sick with the guilt of his friends' deaths.

When Hank awoke in the morning it was more bad news for Rob. After Rob told Hank the whole story of what happened they both soon learned that Hank's right leg was broken. Rob figured the leg broke during the crash and probably was hurt even more after he pulled Hank out of the car. This just brought Rob's spirit down even more.

After a while Rob pulled himself together. He knew that in order to save himself and Hank, and to tell Roy's and Franklin's parents what had happened to their sons, he must get home. The first task was finding food. Rob, who had never hunted or gathered food, had trouble with this task. Not having any tools or skills, Rob looked for anything edible. He looked and looked and was becoming very frustrated when he came across wild berries. Rob, for the first time since the crash, had a smile on his face as he ate the berries. After getting his fill he gathered all of the ones he could find and carried them back in his shirt to the immobile Hank. Hank was as excited as Rob with the lucky find.

When they finished eating, Rob and Hank began to think of a way to get themselves to safety. The dilemma was whether Rob should leave Hank to find help quicker. This risked each being alone with the hope that both could survive on their own. The other choice was that both could go together to find help, but which meant they would go at a slow pace. The decision was that they would travel together. Basically, Rob didn't want to lose another friend, and since he got Hank into this mess, felt it was his duty to help Hank get to safety.

After another search for food and sticks to make into crutches for Hank, the boys slept another night along the riverbank. They woke up the next day and set off with a shirt full of berries. They had decided to walk along the river so they would always have water and hoped to sooner or later run into civilization. Rob and Hank moved slowly with Hank having to break often. Rob, realizing that Hank was growing weaker and beginning to look sick, knew

he needed to get to a hospital quickly. After their first day of walking the boys had not gone far and although neither said it, they feared the close possibility of death.

On their second day of hiking Rob knew there was something wrong with Hank. Although he insisted he was fine, Hank was moving extremely slowly. Rob decided to take it upon himself to carry Hank. Hank at first said he was fine, but knew inside that he needed help. Eventually he agreed and Rob, trying to do everything to help his hurt friend, carried Hank for hours on his back.

When they finally stopped for the night, both knew Hank was in trouble. Rob could see he didn't have much time left. Determined to not let his friend die, Rob snuck off after Hank went to sleep. Rob, by the moonlight, ran as fast as he could down the river hoping to find somebody. Then while stopping to catch his breath Rob heard the faint sound of a car. He realized that there must be a road nearby. He ran toward the occasional sound of car, and knowing that many cars weren't out at night, he strained his ears to figure which direction to go. Then suddenly, he stumbled onto a road.

Joy filled Rob's heart, and for the first time he began to believe that he would be able to save Hank. Rob, tired from the day's hike and finding the road, waited for a car to pass by. He began to drift off to sleep when he heard the sound of an engine. Immediately he stood up, not wanting to miss what could be his only chance that night. When the car came around the turn Rob jumped and screamed for the car to stop. The driver who was extremely surprised to see

a young man on the side of the road stopped his car to see what the problem was.

Rob ran up to him and quickly began to tell the man the whole story of what happened to him and his friends. Tears were pouring out of his eyes as he told the sad story of the deaths of Roy and Franklin, and the broken leg of sick Hank. The man, named David, told Rob everything would be all right. He parked his car and followed Rob into the woods to find Hank. A while later they found Hank who was near death. They carried him out of the woods and to David's car. The three quickly drove to the hospital where both Hank and Rob were admitted for treatment to the injuries they had received during the crash.

The next day all the families of the boys arrived at the hospital where they heard the story of what happened. Rob was unable to control himself when telling the story for all the sorrow, guilt, and pain that he felt for the death of his friends. No matter what anyone said to him Rob kept blaming the deaths of his friends on himself.

Hank, after arriving at the hospital, felt a little better. He was well enough to thank Rob for his quick actions and never giving up on him. Hank also talked to his family and told them how much he loved them. Hank died two days later from an infection. An autopsy showed that some of the wild berries Hank had recently eaten were poisonous. Rob was beyond devastated. He had lost all of his close friends in less than a week. Although the families of those who died told him it was not his fault, Rob never forgave himself or was ever the same

wonderful nice guy he used to be.

Everyone must understand this. I am Hank. My death was caused by that crash. This is my story of an unbelievable friend who never gave up. If there is anyone to aspire to be, it is Rob. Not only was he a nice person, he never stopped fighting for his friends because all he wanted to do was make them happy.