

Love your Locket!

By Roan Cox

I know I can do it. I've been training since forever; running, jumping, lifting, pushing. It's been a long wait but I know it'll be worth it. I finger my locket fondly. When it pops open, I stare at the worn photo lovingly. I still remember the day when it was taken. Dad never liked having his photo taken so I guess that makes this one all the more valuable! 'Anyway', I whisper to myself, 'time to hit the hay'. It was only nine o'clock but I knew I had an early flight to Nepal the next morning. Mount Everest might wait but my pilot won't.

It was a two-hour coach trip to Everest Base Camp but the stunning views of the Himalayas coated in a vast blanket of snow, glimmering in the morning sun, made the trip feel like ten minutes of jaw-dropping sights of pure wonder. When I arrived at the Base Camp, it was 0800 hours so I quickly headed to the first point to check in. Once I had checked in, I checked, double-checked, and triple-checked my mound of gear before heading towards the start of the trail. I collected my Sherpa guide before beginning the hardest, longest trek I have ever, and will ever do.

I hike to the first of the three checkpoints. It goes without saying, it was the most physically difficult day of my life. So as I reach the checkpoint, I set up camp and retire to my sleeping bag. About halfway through the next day, Steve the Sherpa and I decide to take a break so he went around the corner to take a whizz. A half hour later, he still hasn't returned, so I head off in his general direction.

As I'm turning the corner, I see a rucksack. Steve's rucksack. When I move it to investigate I notice a few things. His rucksack is ripped open, there was a trail of blood leading towards a particularly suspicious cave and most importantly, Steve has much nicer climbing axes than I do. So I radioed the next checkpoint, eager to show off my knowledge of the phonetic alphabet. I call into the radio 'Sierra, Tango, Echo, Victor, Echo' only to be interrupted by a young man mumbling 'uh...hey man, y'know... I'm like kinda new here so I don't know this kinetic alphabet stuff'. Disappointed, I try again. Once the message gets across, I go to investigate the cave but not before '*borrowing*' Steve's climbing axes.

I'm at the mouth of the cave, observing its gloomy interior and the first thing I notice is that it gets very narrow very quickly. Still no sign of Steve, so I drop my bag, take out Steve's axes and wrap my locket around my hand to avoid it getting caught around my neck. As I'm shimmying through the narrow passage, simultaneously picking up a few cuts and bruises along the way, I hear a low growl, and then another followed by many more. Scared lifeless, I sprint out of the mouth of the cave, basking in the sunlight.

I risk a backward glance and sure enough, a pack of wolves was close on my heels. As the lead runner is beginning to close in on me, I turn and throw Steve's axes at it as hard as I could. I manage to hit it straight between the eyes, but I wasn't looking where I was going. I tripped over a rock that sent me fumbling off a cliff. My reflexes help my hands snap out to catch a ledge but I missed. For a split second I thought I was a goner. I suddenly felt a sharp tug on my arm and as I look up, I see my locket. When it wrapped around my arm it caught the ledge. Never have I ever loved an inanimate object so much in my life! I pull myself up

and radioed the Everest Emergency Services. I guess the lesson here is just because you stole your Sherpa's axes, it doesn't mean a piece of jewellery can't save your life... I never was good at fables.