

THE SUMMIT

by Ken Bradbury



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(The scene is near the summit of a very tall mountain. Two climbers, after days on the mountain, stop at a small precipice.)

PIKE: *(in the lead, climbing to a ledge)* I found a ledge! Come on buddy! Just another few inches.

EVEREST: *(below Pike, struggling and breathing heavily)* Gimme a minute.

PIKE: Take your time. Take your time. You're almost there.

EVEREST: *(pulls himself up to a small resting position, a bit lower than Pike)* Oh, man. Man oh man oh man.

PIKE: Look at that view.

EVEREST: Let me catch my ... *(sees)* Oh, wow. That is ... that is unbelievable. You tired?

PIKE: We can reach the top before night.

EVEREST: You sure?

PIKE: I can see it from here.

EVEREST: Let me loosen this rope.

PIKE: Don't! Come on now. We can't get sloppy.

EVEREST: It's cuttin' me in half.

PIKE: Don't loosen the rope. I can't hold you if somethin' happens.

EVEREST: You know ... *(takes a deep breath)* ... it's really not that important.

PIKE: What? It's not that important that you might fall? Have you looked down lately?

EVEREST: I've looked down a lot. That's why it doesn't make much difference.

PIKE: What're you talkin' about? Last night at the camp ... the same thing. Like you didn't ... I mean, why'd you want to climb this thing?

EVEREST: *(dramatically)* Because it was there!

PIKE: I'm serious.

EVEREST: Me too. I told myself I'd make this climb if it's the last thing I do. Maybe it will be.

PIKE: You know, there are more pleasant ways to spend a week than scaling a mountain with a suicidal climber.

EVEREST: Yeh ... well, that's the way life goes.

PIKE: Hey. You're not serious are you? I mean, I was just kidding.

EVEREST: It's my last mountain.

PIKE: What're you talking about? Hey maybe it's this altitude ... you're not thinking right. We can rest here awhile if you ...

EVEREST: I'm quite serious.

PIKE: (*a long beat*) Look ... I don't know what your problem is but ... well ... put it off, will you? We're tied together. I don't need any talk like that. Come on; let's take another shot at it. (*begins to move*)

EVEREST: Go ahead. This is as far as I'm going.

PIKE: Go ahead? We're tied together. How can I go ahead?

EVEREST: Easy ... (*begins to loosen his rope*)

PIKE: Stop that! What're you doing?

EVEREST: (*still loosening the rope*) I was gonna wait 'til we got to the top but if you're gonna force the issue.

PIKE: What issue? I'm not forcing anything! What're you doing?

EVEREST: I'm loosening my rope.

PIKE: I know that! I mean ... Why?

EVEREST: It's over, Pike. This is last move. My last step's gonna be a doozie.

PIKE: You want some oxygen? I've got some right ...

EVEREST: There's nothing wrong with my mind, my friend. I owe this to you.

PIKE: Killing yourself? You owe me killing yourself? Let go of that rope!

EVEREST: In a minute I will. Believe me.

PIKE: (*grabbing for him*) Let go of that!

EVEREST: (*pulling back violently*) Get back, Pike. You can't stop me.

PIKE: You climbed all the way up here just to ... to jump and kill yourself?

EVEREST: Yeh. On flat ground it sort of looses the effect.

PIKE: I can't believe this is happening.

EVEREST: Hey, in five minutes you'll be a millionaire.

PIKE: What're you talking about?

EVEREST: Look, we've been friends since childhood. Then business partners. And because of me, we made headlines with the biggest bankruptcy of the year. I was lousy at soccer, I was lousy on the piano and I was lousy in business. For the first time in my life I'm gonna do something right. A month ago I took out a million-dollar insurance policy payable to you, buddy. Now get out of my face and let me do it.

PIKE: (*grabbing him*) No!

EVEREST: (*calmly, in spite of being held tightly by Pike*) I'm sure they won't let you collect if they find you down there with me. It's sort of pointless, don't you think?

PIKE: I'm not letting you jump!

EVEREST: Frankly, you have no choice. I've got the ... leverage here, my friend.

PIKE: Look, you're out of your mind. You're depressed. That's why we took this trip, to bring you out of it. We'll go back down, okay? Nice and easy. We won't have to finish this climb. A couple of days at the base camp and you'll be your old self.

EVEREST: My old self got us into this. Now let go, I've got the spot all picked out. I hope I die on the way down. This could hurt.

PIKE: Forget about the stupid business! Anybody could make that mistake! The markets were crazy! Nobody's blaming you! Did you hear me? I don't blame you for anything.

EVEREST: Then don't blame me for jumping. Would you please let go of me? You see, there's one certainty here: I'm going to jump. Your going with me is still only an option. Let go, buddy. It's out of your hands.

PIKE: No it's not! (*Pike makes a grab for Everest but goes to far and slips ...Pike grabs for him and holds him over the snowy ledge*)



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