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Topic: Fear or Connections

A Transformative Experience



The scene in front of me was at once majestic and terrifying! The night before, a heavy snowfall had blanketed this lonely and isolated spot in the Swiss Alps. The towering Eiger, Monch and Jungfrau stood like fearsome sentinels over a world shrouded in mist and entombed in ice and snow. Drifts reached the eaves of the isolated Kleine Scheidegg hotel, where I was staying. The wraith-like figures on the ski lift appeared like a procession of recently departed souls disappearing into a grey, otherworldly dimension. The snow and limited visibility made it impossible to judge ski conditions and terrain.

Contributing to a feeling of dread and foreboding was the hotel itself. Built years ago, it was an old structure with an ambience reminiscent of a bygone age. It had the haunting quality of the Outlook Hotel in *The Shining*. One of its more macabre offerings was the ability to view, through a telescope in its parlors, the corpse of a climber still hanging from the deadly Eiger.

On the first morning of this 5 day ski vacation I was convinced that my limited skiing experience in Vermont in no way prepared me for the challenge ahead. I was in way over my head—and terrified!

However, I hated to just give up. So I went to a ski patrolman for guidance. He brusquely asked if I could snowplow. I said; “Yes”. He replied: “Go” , and pointed to a T-bar, the only lift that served the area. So, with great trepidation, I got in line. The person with whom I shared the lift was a huge man, who was probably twice my weight and at least a foot taller. On a T-bar this is not an ideal arrangement. As the lighter person , I would have to exert considerable force to counterbalance my heavier companion.

By the time I got on the lift, I was in a state of panic—and trembling uncontrollably! Perceiving my state of mind (or more accurately feeling it from the shaking lift) my partner cavalierly advised me, that should I fall off, to just hang onto the lift’s horizontal bar. He would then counterbalance the T-bar, and drag me to the top. But seconds later, instead of *my* falling off, *he did*—and he hung on! In a heartbeat, I was the one offsetting over 200 pounds of drag. Instinctively, I braced my body like a steel rod against the ski track, while exerting a herculean strength to maintain the stance. My mind emptied but for one thought—brace! Fear disappeared!

We reached the top. It was time to exit the lift. Without any warning, my companion let go ! Caught off guard, I found myself still gripping the lift as it suddenly started spinning like a top. I was trapped in a vortex that kept me pinned to it. Meanwhile, the T-bar was now moving, with what seemed like blinding speed, toward a huge barricade against which it would slam (and me with it) before returning to the base. I had just nanoseconds to act before the impact! As I spun around, I caught fleeting glimpses of the lift line below me, the barricade straight ahead, and the mountainous snow pile to my right. My only escape route was the ski track on my left. But could I, at just the right moment and place, overcome this impossible force that kept me in its embrace? Then, out of nowhere, that mysterious strength within me once again asserted itself. And suddenly, I was free—and safe!

I had survived! And with that realization came an epiphany! I had just experienced a life changing discovery! Some mysterious power within me had suddenly and automatically transformed paralyzing fear into awesome strength!