

Conquer Your Fears – By Kristine Taylor – January 30, 2019

Robert Anderson was leading the staff meeting in the conference room at On-the-Go Travel Magazine. After a brief business meeting, he announced a travel article contest.

“The writer of the best article will receive a first class round-trip ticket to anywhere in the world, the cover story in the next issue, as well as an ongoing position as a travel writer. By the way, the deadline is a month from now on January 31st.” The meeting ended with a lot of excited voices talking about the contest.

After lunch Madison and her friend, Ashley, were walking back from their favorite Italian restaurant. “I realized where I want to go for the contest...Paris, France. The museums, the Louvre, and the Eiffel Tower. Where do you want to go if you win?”

“I’d like to go to Australia. See the Sydney Opera House. Walk the beach.”

Madison pushed her long, curly blonde hair away from her blue eyes when she noticed a poster of a woman downhill skiing. It was one of Cameron Young’s photos.

“Oh my gosh! I just had an aha! moment. I know what I’m going to write about for the contest,” Madison said. “I’ll include the nature and winter sports photographer, Cameron Young. And I’ll participate in the sports such as skiing, rock climbing, zip-lining, etc.” She wore a navy suit with a white silk blouse and black high-heeled boots.

Three days later Madison left the Utah International Airport and took a taxi to the Golden Eagle Resort. Suddenly, there was a loud thunk. The driver got out and looked at the problem.

“It’s a broken axle. Another taxi should be here in a few hours. The resort is about a mile down the road if you don’t want to wait that long.”

Madison used her black leather glove to push up her beret where it had slipped over her eye. She hobbled along dragging her suitcase behind her. She wore a black pantsuit under a long teal coat, a black beret, and black leather gloves. A Range Rover slowed down and a handsome man asked her if she needed a lift.

“No, thank you. I’m doing fine as I am.” *I just don’t accept a ride from a stranger no matter how handsome he is*, she thought.

“Okay, then, good luck with the bears.”

Bears? she thought. *He can’t be serious.* She made her feet walk just a little bit faster the rest of the way. Finally she arrived and she was glad she had worn her long teal coat because she was just starting to shiver.

She checked in at the resort. She walked what seemed like three blocks to her cabin. Later that afternoon Madison went to the Hunter Art Gallery as recommended by the resort clerk. She began to look at the photographs. There were photos of downhill skiers, zip liners, rock climbers, and snow boarders. He managed to capture the intensity on their faces. The director of the gallery pointed out Cameron to her as she browsed. She quickly realized that the handsome man on the road was Cameron. He was tall with a husky build, short brown hair and blue eyes. She introduced herself as Madison Lewis, and he immediately remembered her.

“I really am a big fan of your work. I’m on a travel writing assignment, and I can’t afford to mess it up. I’m supposed to write an article about me doing winter sports, but I’m basically afraid of everything and probably the worst person for the job. The slant

will be how I conquer my fears. This is my one shot to advance my career. Please help me, Cameron.”

“Sorry, Madison, but we are really busy here.”

“The clerk told me about the Winter Walk and Meet and Greet. Maybe I could help with both of those. You can help me with winter sports...it’s a win-win.”

He paused for a long moment. He started thinking that yes this could be a win-win situation. Besides he just now started to notice her attractive blonde curls and thought that working with her might be fun.

“Meet me tomorrow at the activities center at nine a.m.”

The next morning the wind was howling and snow was blowing sideways. Cameron decided it would be best to do some indoor rock climbing.

“Put your weight on your feet and keep your arms straight. Focus on your foothold.”

“So, I am in this contest at work. If you win you have to chose where you want to go – anywhere in the world. Where would you go?”

“Definitely South Africa. The safari offers so much opportunity for photographs.”

“Hmmm. Interesting,” Madison said.

They moved slowly up the rock wall. She noticed his burly physique. She couldn’t afford to get attached at this point in her life. She would be returning to New York at the end of the week. Soon they reached the top and then shimmied down the rock wall. At the bottom Madison’s heart was pounding rapidly when Cameron said, “You’re really good at this – are you sure you’ve never done this before?” His words gave her new confidence. She had tried her best. He reached out to take her ropes from her and their

hands touched as she glanced into his warm blue eyes. She felt electricity flow through her from his touch.

"If you don't mind I would like to take some pictures of you rock climbing," Cameron said as he handed the ropes back to her.

The next day the weather cooperated, but Madison started to freak out at the start of zip-lining.

"Maybe we could just go back down the mountain. I'm feeling a little jittery here."

"Madison, if you really want to write about conquering your fears, you're gonna have to take the leap or else your readers will see right through you," Cameron said. "You're not in any danger. Hundreds of people are doing this. I'm going. I'll meet you at the bottom." Cameron set off on the zip line. Madison swallowed her fear and followed right behind him. At the bottom Madison started to gush about her ride.

"Oh, that was so fun! Oh, Cameron, thank you for saying just the right words to encourage me."

"Let's do it one more time to build your confidence, and I'll take pictures of you," Cameron said. Off she went. The thought of pictures made it so much easier this time.

The next day, Cameron said, "We will now go skiing." She rented some skis and walked out to the Bunny Run.

"Keep your weight centered over your skis. Hands forward."

Madison started down the slope. She slipped and fell but got up, and they made it down the hill. Then, they decided to go to the Winter Walk. They walked through the downtown area of Salt Lake City, Utah. They entered several art galleries, clothing boutiques, and ice cream shops. There was a bonfire burning in a park where people were

roasting hot dogs and marshmallows. Robert called. She put him on speakerphone. She said that Cameron took her skiing. So you're still going to incorporate Cameron into the article, aren't you? "The more the Cameron Young, the better." The line dropped.

"Oh, no. You weren't supposed to hear that. I know it sounds bad, but it's not what you think."

"We've been together for the past several days. I helped you and you took advantage of me. You're not the kind of person I thought you were. That's a shame. Bye, Madison."

Madison was devastated. Before leaving for the airport, Madison wrote a letter to Cameron. She included a copy of her article. He opened it and began to read the last part of it first. *Cameron, I'm so sorry. I respect you too much to publish this without your permission...Sincerely, Madison.* She also included how nice it was to get to know him and how she wished things had turned out differently. She apologized for writing the travel article without his permission.

She flew back to New York and walked into her boss's office. He said, "Yours was one of the best articles I've read in a long time. It was poignant, self-deprecating, inspiring and funny. Great job."

"I'm at a loss for words," Madison said.

"Good, because I have more. Madison, you won. Your story will be on the cover of next month's magazine. I couldn't be prouder."

"I must tell you, Robert, I don't have Cameron's permission to tell this story and I assured him that I wouldn't publish anything without his okay."

"That won't be necessary. I received word from Cameron about an hour ago. He read

your article. He wrote in a note to me that he gives Madison permission to publish the article and photographs.”

Madison flew back to the Golden Eagle Resort. She found Cameron at the art gallery. “Cameron, in one week you have literally changed my life. You’ve pushed me outside of my comfort zone and taught me to believe in myself more than I ever thought possible. I came here to fulfill a dream. Now I can’t imagine any adventure without you.” She gave him her plane ticket to France. Cameron asked if she would like to exchange the ticket for two to South Africa. He said that he could take pictures and she could write about it. They could capture Africa’s beauty and visit the elephants. Together. She looked into his deep blue eyes. They were soft and gentle. Time seemed to stand still. She heard herself saying, “Yes, a trip to South Africa with you sounds perfect.”

A new chapter in her life was opening. She now had her permanent position as a travel writer. Cameron had opened the door to traveling with him. All her dreams were coming true.

