

Essay 2: Into Thin Air

In Into Thin Air, Krakauer uses his voice to narrate the story in such a way that the readers can experience the action firsthand. His words cause the readers to feel emotion, and allow them to understand the true story of the Everest Disaster. The scene where Beck Weathers comes back into the camp alive and the scene where Krakauer opens up his emotions as descending the mountain are arguably some of the most powerful parts of the story. By closely examining these two passages we can see that Krakauer has told this story in way so that the readers will be interested to read his story by the specific voice and words he uses to describe all scenes.

The moment that Beck Weathers trudges back into Camp is one of the most remarkable scenes in the story. The readers feel extreme elation, shock, and also some optimism. It seems like there is still hope left for everyone. Krakauer tries not to express his emotions in this passage, but he cannot help from feeling happy. After all the misery, the readers get to read about an inspirational miraculous event – Beck coming back alive.

The starting point of this great scene is when it is announced that someone is coming into the camp. ““Check this out. Somebody’s coming into camp.”” (Krakauer 328). Because Krakauer chooses to express this fact in dialogues, the audience will feel as if they are there hearing those words personally. “The person’s bare right hand, naked to the frigid wind and grotesquely frostbitten, was outstretched in a kind of odd, frozen salute.” (Krakauer 328). This sentence really will blow away the audience because of all of the vivid detail Krakauer put into it. The hand is not only described as freezing, but he also alludes to the happiness by saying “in a...frozen salute” (Krakauer 328). This description of a salute that Krakauer decides to include

causes the readers to already start feeling joyful emotions because subliminally, a salute represents survival and bravery. “Whoever it was reminded Athens of a mummy in a low budget horror film” (Krakauer 328). Once again, Krakauer uses his choice of words to create a simile so the readers can understand how deranged Beck must have looked. Krakauer uses the word “mummy” and this really does paint a picture in the minds of the readers of Beck limping and struggling. “As the mummy lurched into camp, Burleson realized it was none other than Beck Weathers, somehow risen from the dead.” (Krakauer 328). The final realization that this unknown being is actually Beck coming back into the camp is the highpoint of the passage. Krakauer decides to use “risen from the dead” in this sentence because this will really convey the message to the audience that everyone considered Beck dead. The shock of happiness that the audience feels is heightened because of the way Krakauer describes Beck’s rising.

Another intense passage that Krakauer narrates effectively with his voice is the scene when he descends to the bottom of the Khumbu Icefall for the last time as he is making his journey all the way to the bottom to go home. This is a prominent scene in the story because Krakauer really becomes personal with his audience and expresses himself so honestly that the readers are dumbfounded. While reading Into Thin Air, many people often think that Krakauer is uncaring and cold hearted for not showing too much emotion while writing much of the story. For example, when Beck Weathers falls through the ice Krakauer does not seem to even care for one second about Weather’s pain. “As he squatted, he lost his footing on the ice and went hurling down the Lhotse Face...falling only seventy feet he plunged headfirst in a crevasse...” (Krakauer 201). However, everything changes at the point where Krakauer nears the end of his descent of Mount Everest, and the readers realize that Krakauer is a human being and feels pain

just like everyone else. All of this is possible only because Krakauer's voice expresses emotion and he uses certain descriptions and words to describe his feelings.

"Guy handed me a beer, Caroline gave me a hug, and the next thing I knew I was sitting on the ice with my face in my hands and tears streaking my cheeks, weeping like I hadn't wept since I was a small boy." (Krakauer 348). This statement is striking to the readers because Krakauer not only uses descriptive language, but he also directly opens up his heart to the audience. Krakauer creates an image in the minds of the readers of himself as an innocent, unprotected, and helpless child. The audience cannot help but feel extreme levels of sympathy for him. He seems so human because he talks about drinking a beer and getting a hug – things that are considered normal in daily life. "Safe now, the crushing strain of the preceding days lifted from my shoulders..." (Krakauer 348). Krakauer uses his voice to explain to the audience how he felt at this period of time. By describing the past days as a "crushing strain" it becomes apparent that Krakauer has been suffering immensely. "...I cried for my lost companions, I cried because I was grateful to be alive, I cried because I felt terrible for having survived while others had died." (Krakauer 348). This sentence has a great rhythm to it because Krakauer's uses repetition of the words "I cried" and this repetition really brings out his honesty with the readers. For those readers who thought that Krakauer was arrogant, this statement in the passage changes their views instantly. He actually expresses that he is guilty that he is alive. He cares so much about all of the people who died and by using these words he carves a way into the audience's heart and forces all readers to perceive him in this humble light.

Krakauer uses his voice to allow his readers understand the story and feel the same emotions that he felt while he was on the trip. Krakauer's voice in the way he tells the story also creates lasting impressions on the readers. The first passage about Beck Weathers can serve as an

extended metaphor for everyone's life. Beck never gave up hope while he was dying and freezing on the mountain. If he was able to gain enough energy and confidence to stand up and stay alive, then everyone also should have the power to fix the problems in our lives.

Additionally, Krakauer establishes that internal pain is something that can never be overlooked.

He gives the message to the audience that they should never consider other people as arrogant or emotionless because on the inside the person may be very humble – like Krakauer makes himself out to be. Krakauer is extremely effective as a writer because throughout his novel he is able to connect with and draw emotions from the readers.