

FINDING THEO

A Memoir

Chapter One: Finding Theo

Beads of cool sweat stream down the flushed cheeks of **four twenty**-something mountain bikers **while** pausing to catch their breath at a scenic overlook. The high afternoon sun filters through the aspens. Crisp fall air stings their lungs as they gasp for sparse oxygen. Their grueling climb to the top will be rewarded with the exhilaration of the downhill ride they have been anticipating all day.

One rider speeds ahead of the pack and stops to video the others as they whiz **by**, laughing, then repacks his camera and jumps on his bike to catch up. The earthy smells of the forest floor fill his nostrils as he gains **speed**, descending into a deep ravine. He spots a pair of humps in the **single**, rutted path and, in a split-**second**, decides to jump them. The trail takes an awkward turn just past his landing. He launches through the air, **striking-then strikes** the base of a lone aspen tree **head first**, **headfirst**.

He awakens, splayed on the ground **face-down**, **facedown**, when a single mountain biker

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Commented [LTE1]: For inserted comma, see CMS 15th ed. 6.31, p. 248: *Restrictive and nonrestrictive phrases*. Examples given: "She set off for the **city, wearing** a red coat"; "The coyotes **ran on, howling**." (The comma also helps your audience avoid reading the line as: ". . . as they whiz, by laughing. . . .")

Commented [LTE2]: See comment above.

Commented [LTE3]: For inserted comma, see CMS 15th ed. 6.39: Comma or no comma between adjectives: "When a noun is preceded by two or more adjectives that could, without affecting the meaning, be joined by *and*, the adjectives are normally separated by commas." Examples: "Shelley had proved a faithful, sincere friend"; "It is going to be a long, hot, exhausting summer."

Commented [LTE4]: For inserted comma, see CMS 15th ed. 6.30: "Parenthetical Elements. Example given: "The Hooligan Report was, to say the least, a bombshell."

Commented [LTE5]: One word. See Webs. 11th: "headfirst."

Commented [LTE6]: One word. See Webs 11th: "facedown."

For inserted comma before "when," see CMS 15th ed. 6.36, p. 249: Dependent clauses: *Comma following main clause*. Example given: "He didn't run, because he was afraid to move."

stops and asks, “Hey, man. Are you okay?”

The injured rider’s face is tight with pain. He mutters that he is having difficulty getting up and just needs a little help. Soon two women arrive and stoop to help him up, but they instantly realize his hands are limp and he has almost no strength in his arms. Two more women appear, and they remove the young man’s backpack and ease him onto his back. One of the women unlatches his chin strap, gingerly removes the helmet, and tosses it aside without a glance. They know they need to call for help, but they are twenty miles from the nearest town, ten thousand feet up in the mountains, and at least two miles from the bottom of the trail. There is no cell service.

The first rider to find the young man knows what to do next: go for help up the mountain. He jumps across the small brook running alongside the trail and disappears up the steep mountain terrain, scrambling on all fours. He picks his way up the slope, running on pure adrenaline, frantically dialing 911 pressing 911 on his cell phone as he goes.

“Nine-one-one. What is your emergency?” he hears as his cell phone finally connects. Breathlessly he blurts out what he has seen and gives precise directions s about where the injured rider is on the trail. He reports that the fallen rider cannot feel his extremities. The operator instructs him to do everything possible to keep the young man warm and emphasizes that it is impossible to guarantee exactly how soon a rescue team can arrive.

Meanwhile, the four women have turned their attention to the injured rider. Two spring into action by instinct. Their first priority is to keep him warm and awake to prevent him from going into shock, or, worse, from falling into a coma if he has a concussion. One of the women rips through her backpack to retrieve the survival blanket she always carries just in case of an emergency but has never had to use until now. ~~They~~ The two women cocoon him, carefully

Commented [LTE7]: Commas are used to separate independent clauses joined by the coordinating conjunctions *and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so*. See CMS 15th ed. 6.32, p. 248.

Commented [LTE8]: **Query:** At the beginning of the chapter, you mention “four twenty-something mountain bikers.” But I, as one of your readers, count six: 1) the injured rider, 2) the rider who asks if the injured rider is “okay,” 3) two women who first arrive, 4) two more women who “appear.” (Your readers might wonder whether or not the four women are part of the original group of mountain bikers. Or are the four women just hikers or bikers who happen to be at the scene of the accident? In the copyedited black letter version of your manuscript, you might want to clarify this possibly confusing passage.

1-18-2018: After reading the whole manuscript, I now see what you meant. Perhaps the best way to clarify this possibly confusing passage is to add the word “male” in the very first line of the chapter—so that the sentence reads, in part, “. . . the flushed cheeks of the four male twenty-something mountain bikers. . .”

tucking ~~it~~ the blanket under his sides to keep him warm. The ~~two~~ take up posts, sitting cross-legged on opposite sides, and massaging his hands and feet to keep the circulation moving.

The other two women decide to start down the trail to find more help. As they descend the winding path through a clearing, they pass the injured rider's three friends, who are backtracking. The guys soon find their friend sprawled under a tree between the two women who are working to keep him comfortable as he drifts in and out of consciousness.

A rescue operation, triggered by the 9-1-1 call, is beginning to take shape. A Care Flite rescue team is on standby but still sixty miles away. A specialized wilderness search and rescue team, still bleary from a flood rescue operation the day before, is assembling at their headquarters. Within an hour, they have converted the dirt parking lot just above a river at the entrance to the trail into an emergency rescue base, teeming with people, vehicles, and equipment, and a helicopter is in the air. Now, time is what matters most.

At the accident site, the lengthening afternoon shadows begin to cast a fall chill over the group, and clouds gather over the ridge, threatening an afternoon thunderstorm. Ignoring their own discomfort in the chilly evening breeze, they all pile their jackets across the young man's shivering body, as it fights to protect itself against the shock and the pain.

The two women pepper him with questions and occupy him with conversation not only to keep him from falling asleep but also just to keep his mind off his predicament. The young biker cannot feel his chest, and, having no sensation of his own breathing, senses he is drowning. As time drags, he desperately needs to shift his weight. His rear is numb, and he aches with pain in his back and neck. He cannot move his arms or legs, and the women resist his pleas to help him reposition himself, afraid to injure him more.

Commented [LTE9]: For inserted hyphens, see CMS 15th ed., 7.90, p. 304, phrases, adjectival. Example given: "an over-the-counter drug."

Commented [LTE10]: For inserted hyphen, see CMS 15th ed. 7.90, p. 303, "noun + noun, single function." Example given: "tenure-track position."

The biker forces himself to remain calm. In the quiet, he stares at the sky and thinks, “This is where I will die.” The undulating trees open to a patch of blue sky, where puffy white clouds meander through the frame. It draws him in like a glowing campfire or a mysterious window to an unfamiliar world. It is his idea of what heaven must look like.

The women can see when his thoughts drift, and when his eyes fill with fear. “Pain in my back . . . -can’t feel my hands and feet . . . -won’t walk again.” One gently cradles his head with her warm hands, saying with all the certainty she can muster, “Don’t worry. Just be still. They will come and take care of you.” The light touch of her fingers stroking his hair reminds him of his mother’s touch, and it calms him. “Why are you here ~~---~~ now ~~---~~ doing this?” he wants to know.

At the makeshift emergency ~~-~~ rescue base, an anxious mission commander listens for news from the first team of rescuers now scrambling up the trail. A second team, responsible for the logistical and technical aspects of the hike, caches rope and other climbing equipment at strategic points along the trail in case a helicopter exit becomes impossible.

Past the most difficult part of the trail, lugging heavy equipment through steep ~~switch~~ backs-switchbacks and around massive boulders, the first rescue group picks up its pace. ~~They~~ The group members cross an open ridgeline, drop into a crease, and begin a steady climb into a long gulch, as the foothills steepen on either side. The trail is well defined, a single, smooth dirt rut cut a half a foot into the forest topsoil and just wide enough to walk, with shin-high grass growing on either side. Three miles in, they round a bend and finally catch sight of three mountain biking friends huddled above two women who are sitting on either side of the injured biker.

The welcome sight of the rescue team coming up the trail unleashes an almost euphoric sense of relief among the young man's caretakers. Waiting gives way to action. The biker's friends step back and watch the pros take over, working with practiced precision to triage their patient and stabilize him.

They hear the helicopter hovering in the distance, but the lead paramedic on the ground already knows that reaching the helicopter poses a problem. He has been communicating with his colleague on board, and the pilot has burned off enough fuel to accommodate the weight of his additional passenger, but the team on the ground cannot find a landing spot. They agree the pilot should search for a clearing while the rescue team starts down the trail.

The pilot crisscrosses the gulch, looking for a landing, and the ~~on-board~~ onboard paramedic scans the forest for a sign of the rescue team and catches a glimpse just as the team passes through a small clearing about a half mile down from the accident site. The pilot spots the open top of a rock abutment on a ridge parallel to the clearing, a tight space about the size of a two-car garage against a hundred-foot bluff on one side, with a sea of fallen pine trees scattered around the other side like the start of a big game of pick-up sticks. Not quite level, the rock surface slants toward the cliff edge, but it will have to do.

The rescuers ~~team-veers~~ from the trail and begins picking their way, hoisting their patient gingerly along in the litter, more than a half of a mile up the steep embankment toward the bluff. Navigating over and between the fallen trees, stumps, and boulders and through the soft, loose footing, one rescuer steers the litter, two more steady the sides, and two more walk ahead, calling out rocks and holes to avoid, keeping their patient as stable as possible. Others clear the path, haul gear, or position themselves nearby to take over for a tired colleague.

Commented [LTE11]: For inserted hyphen, see URL https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pick-up_sticks.

Commented [LTE12]: Subject-verb agreement. "... rescuers ... **veer** ... **begin** ... their ... their. ..."

The pilot maneuvers the helicopter down on the rock, hoping it is level enough and big enough to accommodate the landing skids and accessible enough for the rescue team to get to him. He drops in for the landing. The ~~on-board~~ onboard paramedic slides the cargo door open to survey the surroundings in the last few feet before the helicopter touches down. He glances back at the tail rotor and shouts a warning to the pilot just seconds before the rotor can strike a protruding stump. The pilot corrects just in time to avoid a crash and repositions the helicopter to a solid landing. They wait, with the rotors still turning to provide a beacon of sound for the team on the ground. The paramedic jumps out to hike down around the bluff and help bring the injured biker to the helicopter.

Rotor blades spin to a deafening roar. As ~~they~~ the helicopter ~~lifts~~ off, the lead paramedic looks down at the young man lying on the deck beneath him, the patient's head braced just between his feet. To the flight crew, the young patient seems calm, but the paramedic can imagine what lies ahead. ~~They~~ The flight crew and the paramedic all know this young biker is in trouble. His name is Theo. He is my son.

Chapter 2: The Call in the Night

The helicopter disappears into the night, as an intense lightning show rips across the western sky. The flight is solemn, except for the steady, ominous drone of the helicopter blades cutting the air. Somewhere below, three impatient friends are hurtling down the highway to find Theo at the hospital. The beautiful mountain scenery retreats beyond the reach of their headlights. Scott Everhart is driving Theo's car, while Eric Sjoreen stares blankly out the passenger window. A cracked cycling helmet rolls around in the back seat, giving in to every curve. In the other car, only the sound of the engine straining against an uncertain, winding road, and the bikes rattling against each other in the back of the jeep divert Dan Miller's ~~far away~~ faraway gaze.

Fewer than twenty-four hours have passed since the group of friends stopped their cars at the top of McClure Pass on the way to Crested Butte to admire the spectacular sunset and to consider how fortunate they were to be living in such a beautiful place. Long gone, now, is the flush of anticipation on their faces. Plans have changed, and Dan must find the words to tell Theo's parents about what has happened. Dan is Theo's friend and also his supervisor. Dan invited Theo on the trip and feels responsible.

He stares down at his cell phone and slowly ~~dials punches in~~ a number. I am sitting on the couch and watching TV when the house phone rings. Only solicitors, the alarm company, and my wife's relatives ever call that number, so I let it go to voice mail. When no one answers, Dan tries a second number, my wife's cell phone.

When Jorja answers, Dan introduces himself as one of the friends with whom Theo had gone riding in Crested Butte. In a quiet tone, he finally breaks the news.

Commented [LTE13]: Two words. See Webs. 11th: "voice mail."

Jorja grabs a note pad, brightly decorated with a green-and-blue floral design. She scribbles as Dan speaks:

Hurt neck -

flew him to Hosp

St. Mary's

Grand Junction

Concussion?

Couldn't/didn't move feet @ 1st -

now better.

The next thing I hear is a terse, "Tim, come here now! Ted is hurt!"

I scramble off the couch and stand in front of her, listening to one side of the conversation as Dan tells her as much as he knows. Jorja wants to know more. He does not have more but will call again when he does. In the instant it takes to hear the simple "click" of a disconnected call, time hangs for us.

Jorja and I stare at each other. We have no clue what to do next. Do we wait? Do we call someone? Do we book plane tickets? My chest now feels as if I am pinned under a huge rock. My heart is pounding so hard it makes my shirt flutter with every beat. I feel as if I am jet lagged, out of breath from a hard sprint, and sick to my stomach from eating too much pizza.

We rationalize the news might be better than it sounds. Maybe just a concussion and a couple of broken bones. Still, Jorja calls Theo's younger sister, Mae, who is home from college but out with friends. She turns to a friend and says, "It's my brother. I wonder what he's done

this time.” The tone in her mother’s voice is serious, so she decides to come home. We wait for hours. No news. For hours.

Jorja and I sit on the floor in my study and cry as night caves in on us.

Time is scarce, however, in Grand Junction, at St. Mary’s Hospital. It is a short trip from the helipad down the elevator ~~staek~~, chute and directly into the emergency room on the main floor. Technicians, nurses, and doctors swarm. A scan is ordered, and Theo is whisked off to radiology. The on-call surgeon waits impatiently for the images to be processed. As the pictures tile across the computer screen, he winces. Theo’s neck looks like a derailed train. Joints are jammed together, and the vertebrae are twisted, pinching, but not breaking u the spinal artery. A shard of bone appears embedded in Theo’s spinal cord wall.

The surgeon scans the emergency room schedule. An operating room is open and ready. Coincidentally, his best spinal u-surgery team is also on call tonight. His orders set off a flurry of activity. Oblivious to the way conversations pause and hospital staffers steal glances as he and the attending physician pass by in the hallway, he discusses the complexity of the repair procedure with her and what they are about to tell their patient.

Pushing through the doors into the quiet u but brightly lit u pre-op room, they find Theo behind a half-closed curtain. A white blanket, fresh from the oven, is neatly draped across his hospital gown. An IV drip port is installed in his left hand, and a bundle of wires monitoring his vitals converge on a set of machines keeping sentinel near the headboard. His cycling clothes have been cut off his body and are in a plastic bag stuffed under the bed. The two doctors pull the curtain closed behind them. No family is there to hold Theo’s hand or keep him company. His friends are still a half hour away.

Commented [LTE14]: Word usage. See Webs. 11th: “chute” (as noun) vs. “stack” (as noun). (The word “chute” means a passageway through which something passes; the word “stack” usually means a pile of something.)

Commented [LTE15]: For change, see Webs. 11th: “process” (as transitive verb). (In this sense, the verb “process” can be only transitive. Something “processes” the images, or the images “are processed” by something.)

The surgeon glances at the monitors to check vitals and flips through the chart. Theo's low pulse rate sets off the monitor alarm, and the nurse reaches up to silence it. "I'm in pretty good shape right now" Theo says. "I'm road biking a lot, and I'm lifting weights, getting myself ready for the snowboarding season," he explains. "So something in the 40's/forties is normal for me." After a brief introductory conversation, the surgeon knows he is dealing with a no-nonsense personality. He gets right to the point. "You have broken your neck. Realistically, you are not going to walk again, but we are going to do our best to make it so that you can get use out of your arms."

Theo takes the news with a steely glare of defiance as the doctor delivers his prognosis. Theo nods his head in understanding, though, and sets his jaw tight to fight back tears. The doctor explains the procedure, asks if there are questions, and slips out to finalize his preparations for the surgery. The attending physician stays behind to keep Theo company. They decide it is time to call home with an update.

Our house phone rings again, at 2:00 a.m. This time, I answer immediately, and Jorja picks up the extension. "Mr. Krause, this is Gina Martin. I'm the attending physician in the ER tonight, and I'm here with your son." Her tone is measured and clinical, but friendly. As she talks, her confident, calming manner says, "Don't worry. We know what to do. He is in good hands." She tells us what the triage revealed. He has broken two vertebrae in his neck and has no movement in his extremities. He will be going into surgery soon. On the back side of the piece of note paper Jorja used when Dan called, she writes,

fracture in neck.

C4/C5

Commented [LTE16]: According to CMS 15th ed., cardinal numbers from one to one hundred are spelled out, whereas numbers over one hundred are given as numerals. See CMS 15th ed. 9.3, p. 380. Examples given: "Thirty-two children from eleven families were packed into three vans"; "The three new parking lots will provide space for 540 more cars."

Laminectomy.

may not walk.

vitals

stable

Dr. Clifford

Surgeon

Dr.

Gina

Martin

Vertically, down the side of the note paper in big letters, she scribbles, “In pain?”

Dr. Martin says she will stay with Theo until surgery. She passes him the phone.

He sounds groggy, and calm. “Hi, Mom. Hi, Dad,” he says, as if he were about to tell us he had just been to the grocery store or bought a new pair of pants. The visit is short. None of us

knows what to say. “I’m okay. I’m about to go into surgery,” Theo quietly says.

I choke out, “I will find us a flight₂ and we will be there tomorrow as soon as possible.”

“~~OK~~Okay, I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“We love you so much,” Jorja tells him.

“I love you₂ too. Bye.”

Once again, the antiseptic click of the disconnecting line abruptly thrust a thousand miles of endless Texas plains, New Mexico’s vast mesa_s, and Colorado’s towering Gore range between us and Theo’s unknowable future. We wait. Again.

Commented [LTE17]: Change made because in this context, “none” is considered plural and therefore needs a plural verb: “None . . . know. . . .”

Commented [LTE18]: Change made to “okay” because the same spelling is used earlier in the manuscript. See page 6.

A few minutes later, across all that distance, an anesthesiologist appears at Theo's bedside. He releases a syringe into the IV drip. Theo drifts off to sleep. The surgeon, Dr. Kirk Clifford, finishes scrubbing while the gurney is being rolled into the operating room nearby, and Theo is positioned face down on the table. Dr. Clifford pauses for a brief moment, bows his head, and closes his eyes.

At home, I flop into my desk chair, setting about to solve problems, not because I know exactly what to do, but because I do not know what else to do. "Who is this Dr. Clifford, and does he know anything?" I ask myself. Google's search engine reports that Dr. Clifford was trained at Yale Medical School in orthopedics and neurology. "Where is Grand Junction, Colorado, and how do I get there fast?" A direct flight on American Airlines gets us there by lunchtime.

We pack bags, not knowing how long we will be gone. I find out we can stay at the Rose Hill Hospitality House just across the road from the hospital however long we need to stay. I pen a brief email to work colleagues ~~saying:~~ "Our son Ted had a serious mountain bike accident. . . . -The outlook is not good. We are glad to have him alive and breathing on his own. Beyond that I don't know."

Then we wait some more, in the dark.

At 4:00 a.m., the phone breaks the tense air again with its happy ring tone of light jazz. This would surely be the good news we were waiting to hear. Dr. Clifford tells us the procedure had gone well, Theo is in recovery, and he will be moved into the ICU. That is good news. Then it gets much worse. The injury is particularly bad. A portion of one vertebra has broken off and become embedded into the spinal column wall. His spine had compressed and twisted, pinching one of the spinal arteries. Another millimeter or two, and the artery would have been cut off or

burst open₂ and Theo would have bled out on the mountain. There is some bleeding internal to the spinal wall, which is alarming. He is fortunate even to be alive. The surgeon has removed the bone shard from Theo's spinal column and has completely removed the back side of the vertebra to relieve pressure on the swollen spinal cord. He has also installed two titanium rods and six screws across vertebrae C4, C5₂ and C6 to stabilize the spine. "Based on my experience, it is not likely Theo will ever walk again, but he is a strong individual who will figure out a way to maximize his recovery and ultimately flourish in life₂ no matter what." *Dr. Clifford says.* "It is a bump in the road, but not the end of the road." There is a matter-of-fact confidence to his tone.

We are unable to ask any intelligent questions, or even *to* organize our thoughts. We thank him for his care to our son, and hang up. In an instant, the air becomes stale, the lighting goes flat, food is irrelevant, and clocks are useless. Unable to absorb the news that something that happens only to other people has now happened to us, we desperately want to be there. We want to be there *now*.

Jorja lies on the floor in the bathroom connected to my study, clinging to the toilet₂ not knowing if she will throw up or pass out. I am certain this is the most vacant the soul of a parent can feel, short of losing a child to death. My mind floods with an onslaught of confusing facts, unthinkable scenarios, impossible decisions, and unanswerable questions.

I design wheelchair ramps into the house and look around for where the elevator could go to the second floor. I imagine myself in his body, looking up at the bright lights as the anesthetic ~~elosed~~*closes* in, wondering how I would wake up₇ or even whether I ~~wanted~~ to wake up. I search "spinal injury" on the ~~I~~*Internet* as I take breaks to decide what to pack for an unplannable trip. Heavy medical jargon, talk of limited long-term survival rates, and low₂-probability recovery ~~fills~~*fills* me with suffocating fear. I think, "God, I hope Jorja doesn't look this stuff up."

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Commented [LTE19]: For change to uppercase, see CMS 16th ed., 7.76, p. 372. Terms like "web" and "Internet." Examples given: "the Internet"; "the net"; "an intranet."

Commented [LTE20]: Verb changed to plural form because it has a plural subject: "jargon," "talk," and "recovery."

Chapter 3: Theo's Journey to the Mountain

Theo's tendency to find danger began early in life. Our family stopped in downtown Houston on the way to the beach for vacation in Galveston, Texas. We were walking across a downtown street via a glass-enclosed bridge between skyscrapers. A small ledge and a chrome railing ran along each side of the second-story bridge. Theo, or "Teddy," as we called him then, was about two. Mae was an infant.

Running a few yards ahead of us, Theo climbed up on the ledge, squeezed himself between the railing and the glass, and pressed his nose and forehead against the window to watch cars whiz by below. When we caught up to him, he stepped down, and ran ahead to do it all again. The bridge continued into an atrium high above a bank lobby, but the glass wall stopped at the building entry. There was nothing but air between the railing and the marble floor of the lobby two stories below.

As we were about to enter the lobby, Theo ran few yards ahead again. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw him step up to press his nose against glass he did not realize was no longer there. "Teddy, stop!" I shouted. He froze. He looked back and saw horror on my face. He dropped instantly to his knees and shuffled back to safety, saved in a moment from the unthinkable. That was the first time I nearly lost Theo.

Teddy, of course, is short for "Theodore." Before Theo was born, Jorja and I had been going through books of names for months, but nothing really stuck with us. We decided early on a middle name of Thomas, the maiden name of Jorja's mother, Betty. As Jorja's due date neared, we felt the pressure of finding the perfect first name. Sitting in the hot tub one day, listing names, one of us, I'm not sure who, said, "What about Theodore?" It somehow sounded right. There was nothing The name was not sentimental, and we had no favorite relative named

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Commented [LTE21]: Added for the sake of clarity.

Theodore. It was strong and sounded nice together with the middle name Thomas, the maiden name of Jorja's mother. After we looked up the meaning, it was settled.

Theodore comes from the Greek *Theos dōros*, meaning "God given." As a bonus, it was a nod of to one of my favorite historical figures, Theodore Roosevelt, who only through his gritty hard work and determination grew from being a sickly, undersized child to one of the most forceful figures in American history. So when our Theodore was born on August 9, 1988, we were ready to write his name on the birth certificate.

"Theodore" seemed large for a twenty-one-and-a-half-inch person weighing in at eight pounds, four ounces. So we called him "Teddy" at first, explaining to him from the start that his "big name" was "Theodore." Teddy fit him well as a cute, towhead ed blond with bright blue eyes. He had one brown swatch across the bottom of the iris in his right eye, which he came to refer to as his "poop stain." He was a trouble-free baby, generally compliant when it was time to go to bed or take a bath. He was intent on doing the right thing, something he grew less dogmatic about in his teen years.

Born in August, he was one of the youngest in his class, but he never seemed intimidated. On the first day of kindergarten, Jorja was dropping him off at the school. He paused and turned to her before walking into the school, sensing she was having difficulty letting him go. Theo cocked his head to one side, pointed his index finger at her with his thumb up in the shape of a pistol, pulled the trigger with a click of his tongue, and smiled and winked at her. He said, "It'll be okay, Mom." He turned and disappeared into the building.

We decided to go snow skiing in Winter Park, Colorado, as a family when Theo was six and Mae was four. I was the only member of the family who had experienced skiing. I learned to ski as a small child, while balancing on the fronts of my dad's skis. I had rarely been skiing since

~~then~~. Jorja had never tried. I knew if you have a good day on the first day, ~~everyone wants you~~
~~will want~~ to come back. If you have a bad day, you will never be back.

Commented [LTE22]: Change made for the sake of keeping parallel structure: "you will want to come back"; "you will never be back."

Apart from being fully annoyed with their parents for ~~over-dressing~~ ~~overdressing~~ them for the spring conditions, Theo and Mae had a blast. When we collected for dinner that first evening, everyone was full of stories, and a tradition was born. Snow skiing became our favorite family vacation. Ultimately, it evolved into much more than that for Theo.

Commented [LTE23]: One word—no hyphen. See CMS 15th ed. 7.90, *over*. Like "overcoming," "overdoing," "overcompensating."

When Theo was nine or ten years old, he made the switch to snowboarding. About the same time, he ~~also~~ informed us ~~that~~ calling him "Teddy" would no longer be acceptable. Our next-door neighbor, Ted, had a pool, played the guitar, and seemed to have done just about everything in life. Theo thought that was all interesting. "Ted" suited him better, he decided, as childhood turned towards adolescence. It was only a matter of time before "Barney" and the "Teenage Ninja Turtles" gave way to "Pinky and the Brain" and "Johnny Bravo" in his ~~cartoon~~
~~viewing-cartoon-viewing~~ habits. This pleased me.

Theo was then, and ~~still is~~ ~~still~~ what I would call a determined learner, never satisfied, always looking for some way to do something better. He worked hard, but this attitude led to accidents. As proof, I have a substantial file folder in my desk of insurance statements for stitches, sprains, and broken bones. One year we got a call from the sponsor of a youth ski trip ~~that~~ Theo had broken his arm. Another year, he called us to tell us an ambulance was taking him to Denver. He had a huge bump on his lower back, ~~spine~~ ~~caused~~ by a fall.

Commented [LTE24]: **Query:** It doesn't seem to make sense that Theo had "a large bump on his lower back spine," because the "spine" itself is not visible from where the "bump" can be seen with the naked eye. A CT scan would be required to show if the "bump" affected the spine in any way. So I simply deleted "spine." The new sentence would read: "He had a large bump on his lower back, caused by a fall."

Some accidents were more avoidable than others if a little forethought had not abandoned him, like all teenage boys, from time to time. I remember walking into his second-story room one night. His window was open. He had wedged his trombone case across the window frame, and he was repelling on the outside wall above the garage and the concrete driveway with a rope

But if you want to mention a more exact injury than just a "bump," you might write: <He had a huge bump on his lower back, caused by a fall—a bump very close to the spinal cord.>

Feel free to 1) leave as originally written, 2) to accept my deletion, 3) **to rephrase as I suggested**, or 4) to rephrase in your own way in the copyedited black-letter version of your manuscript.

he had tied around the middle of the case. This was intended, he explained, to get his blood flowing so he could concentrate on getting his homework done.

Theo ~~also~~ was never one to take the easy or the well-travelled path. He has always lived ~~in the realm of counter-culture~~ the counterculture, cutting his own arc in life, choosing the difficult over the safe, and relishing the challenge to prove something new to himself. Exhibit A is that, as a teenager, he decided to play ice hockey in Dallas, Texas.

He started late, after we had returned from my three-year expat assignment in France. ~~Everyone~~ Every other teenaged hockey player had a head start on him by about two years. He took beginner clinics, learning how to stop, how to skate backwards, how to handle and shoot the puck; ~~and~~ then he joined a team. ~~His~~ His hockey playing was hard to watch at first. He was awkward, reeling and falling, as he worked to control his body and the puck against the onslaught of the opposing team.

One night, during a game, he was skating along on open ice, watching for a pass from a teammate. From his ~~blindside~~ blind side, an opponent leaned in and rammed his shoulder pad into Theo's rib cage at full speed. Like a rag doll, Theo recoiled from the violent blow. You could hear the loud, "thud!" as the back of his head smashed against the ice. He slowly got up, straightened his helmet, and skated away with a dull, ~~nonplussed~~ undaunted look on his face. He took some terrible blows, but he always got up and skated back into the game. He progressed simply through brute-~~force~~ determination. At the end of the season, his coach presented an award to him as the "most improved" player on the team.

Ice hockey, however, was just a hobby. His college choice was guided by proximity to mountains with snow. We visited several schools, and he decided on Denver University. I tried to convince him that TCU in Fort Worth was an equally good choice. ~~And~~ it was equally good,

Commented [LTE25]: Changed for the sake of greater precision in word choice.

Commented [LTE26]: Two words when used as noun. See Webs. 11th: "blind side" (as noun) vs. "blindside" (as verb).

Commented [LTE27]: Word usage. See Webs. 11th: "undaunted" vs. "nonplussed." ("Nonplussed" means "perplexed" or "puzzled." I doubt that Theo was "nonplussed"/"puzzled." He comes away from the accident as someone who is "undaunted" or "unfazed" by it. In other words, Theo shows courage and fearlessness about the accident.)

by almost any criteria except ~~the mountain~~-proximity to snow-covered mountains. It was much cheaper, too. The ~~differential~~ difference in tuition was enough that I even offered to pay for ~~him~~ to fly his flight to Colorado once a month to snowboard. My logic did not work.

On a typical weekend at DU, he and his friends would head for the slopes, ski from opening time to ~~close~~ closing time at Breckenridge or Copper Mountain and then catch a couple of hours of snowboarding at night ~~boarding~~ at Keystone before stopping ~~in~~ for pizza at Beau Joe's in Idaho Springs on the way back to campus. His friends would all mention his intellectual capacity alongside his sense of humor as admired traits, but he would admit that academics was not his prime objective. He still managed to cash in on the incentive to keep the Subaru we bought him to drive by getting better than a 3.5 grade average. Along the way, he spent a year at University Dauphine in Paris, taking most of his classes in French.

By the time he was through college, snowboarding had become far more than a hobby. He saw it as essentially his expression in art. The way a painter sees a blank canvas and a composer sees an empty piece of staff paper, he saw an undisturbed slope on a fresh ~~champagne~~ powder champagne-powder morning. Theo watched hours and hours of snowboarding videos on his laptop, picking up ideas. He was the only one of us willing to fall to learn, ~~and~~ so he was quickly better than all of us. He always was trying something new, challenging himself with a cleaner turn, a new trick, or a bigger jump. Whether it was hockey, skateboarding, snowboarding, or anything else, he was not afraid of a few bumps and bruises if they meant getting better.

Once he left for Colorado, he would never return to Texas for more than a visit. Armed with degrees in International Business and French and a minor in Economics, he moved to Vail on the advice of some friends, where he was determined to find a job teaching snowboarding. He

felt he would never get the chance again. He wanted to see what he could do there for a couple of years before shifting to a more serious career. Jorja and I admittedly struggled a bit with that decision, but in the end, we decided to support him.

Anyone who goes to Vail to teach snowboarding gets a second job to cope with the high cost of living. Theo started parking cars at the Marriott and followed his supervisor, Dan Miller, to the Ritz Carlton. Don saw Theo as a perfectionist and thought he would raise the performance of everyone on the team. Dan laughed when Theo showed up at the Ritz the first day and said, "I want my name tag to say 'Theo.'" But Theo was serious, and it wasn't a request. So, from that day, he was "Theo." We first noticed "Theo" on his name tag when we were visiting the spring before his mountain biking accident. At the time, we passed it off as something probably intended to provide a level of separation between his work life and his personal life. Frankly, we put it out of mind as not applicable to us. On our next visit in August, we stopped by the hotel to ask for him. Nobody knew who Ted was. Somewhere ~~in~~ during that time span, he changed his Facebook profile name to "Theo T. Krause" and his Instagram handle switched ~~in~~ to "thearitstformerlyknownasted."

The week before Theo's accident, we spoke to him by phone. He mentioned he was going on a mountain biking trip to Crested Butte with friends from work. Both Jorja and I remember saying what we always said: "Be careful." Theo had a bit of a history. When we said, "~~B~~Be careful," he always said, "~~e~~Okay," and we all always meant it. No one believes anything bad is actually going to happen.

Theo was not too keen on the use of phones to call home. So much of the news about his life in Vail we gleaned from reading posts on his Facebook page. Most of his posts were about his general passions in life: snowboarding, biking, music, and food. A September 16, 2013, [his](#)

post read, “Oooooe! Headed to CB for a few days of mtb shredding. There will be a lot of ‘shut up legs’ and ‘damn it, Scott dropped me again’, as well as many a good time.”

Mountain biking was never Theo’s favorite sport, and it was not his best. He could not pass up the chance to spend time with good friends in the outdoors. True to form, he was pushing out the boundaries of his limitations, working to improve his technique in the seconds before he was catapulted into the aspen tree next to a trail called Doctor Park.

Now, only hours later, as Theo looked up at Dr. Clifford telling him he would never walk again, the first thought that crossed his mind, which he did not intimate to the doctor until months later, was, “Fuck this shit. You don’t know me. You don’t know what I am capable of. I have heard stories about other people in this same situation. I choose a different outcome for myself.” Months later, Theo would learn that when Dr. Clifford saw him the first time, the physician instantly identified with his patient. His first thought was, “That could just as easily be me.”

Theo was waking in the fog of residual anesthetic the next morning when Dr. Clifford stopped in the ICU to check on his progress. Just before he left, Theo said to him, “Thank you very much for operating on me last night. I’m sure you are exhausted.” Out in the hallway, Dr. Clifford struggled to hold his emotions, saying to his physician’s assistant, “Here he is lying there, unable to move his legs and arms, unsure of his outcome, and he is concerned about me and if I am tired. In my entire career, no one has ever said anything like that to me.”

By the time, Dr. Clifford was out of the room, Jorja and I were on our way to the airport.