

You know how it is. You pick up a book, flip to the dedication, and find that, once again, the author has dedicated a book to someone else and not to you

Not this time.

This one's for you.

MICHEL F. BOLLE

ALPEROSE

LOVE WHERE YOU LEAST EXPECT IT

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About the author

Michel is undoubtedly a very special person. When you meet the imposing two-meter man for the first time, as I did in 2007 during a leadership symposium in Zurich, one could almost get involved with fear. But it does not take long until you feel and see that you are dealing here with a warm-hearted and very down-to-earth Swiss Guy.

Michel has this rare ability to tackle everything he tackles with incredible passion and immediately inspire people around him for his projects.

Over the many years of our friendship, I was fortunate enough to get to know his various facets and talents. As a volleyball coach, businessman, Leadership expert, friend and in privileged moments also as card magician.

No matter what role he is in, two constants are always the same. Michel is a unique storyteller, and he has an unmistakable sarcastic humor. Not infrequently, our dinners did not end until the early hours of the morning, after entertaining the whole restaurant with his fascinating stories or card and mental tricks.

He always stands firmly on the ground with both feet and has always remained true to himself, despite his success and the media hype. A charisma that makes a special difference to Michel.

Steve Parker – Business Partner & Friend

*“You are the last thought in my mind before I drift
off to sleep and the first thought when I wake up
each morning”*

Prologue

Robert had many things running through his mind. If he clinched this deal with Mr. Ocean, he would finally have his revenge on his father-in-law and his own family who had alienated him.

Of recent, business deals were snatched under his nose by the Weinstains. His suspicion rose after the third occurrence, but he decided to keep mute. He would beat them at their own game.

This current deal would be a close deal. No one would know about it. That was why he decided against flying to driving all the way up, to a beautiful and completely lost place in the Swiss Alps, to arrange a very special vacation for Mr. Ocean. He was currently returning to Zurich. Tonight, he would sign the deal, and his revenge would be satisfied.

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Alice had never had a vacation in her thirty-five years. She had spent almost all her life moments in Kandersteg. She had always dreamt of a vacation, but she could not afford it. Therefore, when Kylie, her best friend, decided that they visit an amazing place in the Alps for girl's trip, Alice could not refuse.

The best part of the trip was that Alice would not get to pay a dime. She only needed to submit her time, humor, and car, then all would be set.

At the Alps, they had gone on a fall and trail running, they went caving, they did a downhill mountain bike ride, and they went kayaking. They had the fun of their lives over the course of three days at the Alps.

A day before they were to return, Kylie had an emergency. She booked a plane ticket and left that night. Alice would have to drive all the way back to Kandersteg the following day. It was going to be boring, but she was glad she had an album of Shakin' Stevens to keep her company.

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Robert and Alice did not know that they were about to be held ransom by destiny. Would it be a kidnap or a beautiful memory to remember? It was all in their hands to decide.

Chapter One

Robert was driving his black Bentley down from the Swiss Alps. Even though the ambient air was cold and there was a thunderstorm coming, he decided against sliding down the windows. Instead, he had switched on the artificial air conditioning of the car. It was blowing cold, and he loved it that way.

It was few minutes past four in the evening, and he was looking to get to Zurich on time. He had a client, Mr. Ocean, coming from Seattle in America and he would like to receive him personally at the airport. He could not imagine missing it for the world. This was a deal worth thirty-five million dollars. It would be the highest he has been ever been involved in.

Robert wished he could accelerate more than he was currently doing, but he could not do that without hitting the Citroën 2CV ahead of him. Its driver looked like a woman.

Women and their unseriousness.

He could not overtake the car because the road was a single lane, so he turned on the headlight of his car and started flashing it. He had hoped the driver would catch the reflection of the blinking headlight in her rear-view mirror, but to his dismay, the driver did not behave as if she noticed anything. This made Robert change strategy.

He pressed his thumb on his car horn and pressed it several times that soon; the sound of the horn was like the beats to a pop song. Still, the car ahead did not increase its speed.

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Alice was driving her almost antique Citroën 2CV car down from the Swiss Alps, and she was at an average speed of 60km/hr. She had wound down her car window so that the cold mountain zephyr would blow inside. She had the music turned on at a high volume, and the mixture of Shakin' Stevens's sonorous voice and beats were filtering out of the car's four speakers.

Her phone vibrated in her pocket. She took it out. It was a message from Julian, her brother.

"When will you be home?"

Alice could not risk replying the message while driving, so she tucked the phone back into her pocket.

She started a karaoke with the music, and she would periodically take her hands off the wheel and fling them to the gyration of the musical beats. She was really enjoying herself. Then she saw something that was blinking in her rear mirror. It was flashing headlight. This made her turn towards the rear windshield and checked whom it was. A young man dressed corporate with a stoic look. She

guessed that he was one of those top shot bankers who lived in Zurich. He kept blinking his car's headlight.

What does he want?

She let her mind off it, and she continued to do karaoke to the Shakin' Stevens's *You Drive Me Crazy*. The blinking headlight had stopped. Then felt she heard something like a honk, so she reduced the volume of the in-car music player. The honks were sounding like the beats of a pop song.

Does he want me to go faster? If he likes, let him press the horn until eternity, I am not driving more quickly. If he is not satisfied, let him fly.

The death of her cousin, almost a year ago, on the same road, was what borne her stubbornness. He had gone racing with friends when he lost control of his steering wheel along a dangerous bend. The car somersaulted several times. When the rescue team got there, they could not remove the body as the car had wrecked grotesquely. They cremated the incomplete dismembered body parts the rescue team found.

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Robert did not know what else he could do. He really wanted to get to Zurich on time, but this car and its slow driver would never make it possible. A thought popped

into his mind that he should speed up his car and ram the rear bumper of this old Citroën 2CV with it. Maybe it would make her stop the car and come out to make a confrontation. Then he could write her a check for the damages and tell her he has an emergency and he needs to speed up. It sounded nice in his mind, but Robert's smart counter-mind stimulated the idea and found that it could be equally dangerous as it was nice. He could ram his car into her. She could get a panic attack and lose control of her vehicle. An accident was likely to happen, and accidents on these parts would likely result in death. He would be charged to court for murder. If he were lucky, he would get life imprisonment, but his reputation would be ruined forever. Then he would sit up in his prison bed and wondered why he was not patient with the Citroën 2CV driver.

He decided against ramming her car. Instead, he would keep blinking the headlights and pressing the horn. He hoped it provokes a response.

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Alice hit her hands hard on the steering wheel.

Why do some men behave like animal?

She increased the volume of the music. The loudness made the honk sound like a whisper, but it ruined the beauty of the music to her ears. It was more like torture, so she reduced it.

She was trying hard to bottle her anger, but she was nowhere near succeeding. The man was now flashing his headlight and honking at the sometime. It was then she decided she has had enough. She gently applied the brakes, and the car came to a halt in the middle of the road. She flung the door open.

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Robert was happy when he noticed she was pressing brake. Now he would be able to tell her to speed up. His plan did work, after all, so he matched the brake pads too.

He opened the door as soon as the woman in Citroën 2CV car did and he went out, his shoes kissing the cold asphalt.

As he approached her, he could see the eyebrows on her heart-shaped face were furrowed and her hands balled. She was angry even though some of her auburn hair fell across her face. Her look did not disturb him, and he maintained a calm attitude. He had always faced angry customers all his life, and as he climbed up the career ladder, he had learned how to pacify even the lion-hearted ones.

“What exactly is your problem?” The woman spat at him as soon as he got close enough.

“Pardon my crazy attitude. I am in a hurry, and your pace is not good for me.” He said in the softest of voice.

This was opposite of his nature, but he had learned that to pacify people, you must be able to admit errors that are not yours and treat your adversary like a boss. “I didn’t get your name ma’am.”

“I didn’t throw it either.” The woman said. The fury in her face was still there. “If you can’t drive at my speed, then fly. People as rich as you are don’t even drive nowadays.”

“Well, I am not rich as I look—“

She cut him mid-sentence, “But you drive a Bentley. Keep your pretense to yourself. I am not one of those country ladies your sweep away with your charm.”

“Trust me Ma’am; it is not what you think. I--”

The woman suddenly placed her hands on her lips and she hushed Robert shut. Robert was thinking she was rude until he noticed she was craning her neck to listen to something. Robert tried to listen too, but he could not hear anything peculiar from the normal ambient sound that had been on since he started driving.

“Run!” She shouted all of a sudden, pulling his arm and bolting off.

Robert was confused, but a jolt of adrenaline ensured he joined the rapid sprint. They raced back the road.

Chapter Two

Now he could hear the sound as he was running. It was an avalanche!

“That lane,” the woman screamed, pointing to a lane that led into the forest. Without giving it any thought, he followed her into the lane.

After running for some minutes, Alice stopped when she felt they were at a safe distance from danger. She had heard the sound of a stone avalanche. Growing up in the mountainous village of Kandersteg, the sound of an avalanche (be it snow or stone) was not alien to her.

She was catching her breath when the young man arrived.

“You are one terrific runner,” He said, catching his breath. “As fast as a bullet.” He gestured with his folded fingers.

“Everyone is fast during danger. You weren’t bad yourself.”

“And still you arrived here several seconds before me.”

“Well, let’s say I do this pretty often.

Robert found a log at the edge of the lane, and he placed a leg on it. Alice chose to sit on the shrubs instead.

“Let’s just take a few minutes and head back. I really need to be in Zurich.” Robert said, taking his legs off the log and facing the small mountain road.

Alice did not respond. She did not even act as if she heard what he said.

Robert repeated himself. Still, Alice did not respond.

“I don’t know why you young ladies are very rude.” He moved closer to her. “I am telling you something, and you are not answering me.”

Alice slapped her palms together. “You think I am one of those numerous ladies without dignity in the streets of Zurich? I should have left you to keep driving, and the avalanche should have rid the world of you. I am sure no one would miss such an ungrateful man like you.”

“Oh, you wanted ‘Thank you, ma'am, for saving my life,’ He curtsied while he talked. “Well, if not for your slow driving, I would have driven far, and the avalanche wouldn’t have caught up with me. Now we should get going because it will soon be dark and we would be trapped here.”

“Well, I am not holding you ransom. Go and drive the Bentley now turned rubble. That is if you even see it.” She brought out her phone and started fiddling it with her thumb.

Robert was not going to have this nonsense. If the crazy woman wished, she could sit and spend the eternity there. He was not going to spend any more minute there. He better walked back to his car and drive to Zurich. Mr. Ocean would not be annoyed if he was late particularly when the news comes in that there was an avalanche. He stormed off through the path he had run a few minutes ago. Fury fed his legs, and he walked briskly. He could not imagine the audacity the crazy woman had to demand a ‘thank you’ because she pulled his hand and told him to run.

He was soon on the road, and he began to walk towards the spot where he had parked the Bentley.

“It is just after that bend,” he muttered to himself, and then he began to jog.

By the time he came out of the bend, the sight before him was his wildest nightmare.

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Alice had not seen such an ungrateful man before. She was sure it was not because he came from Zurich. She had met many mountain hikers who come to Kandersteg from Zurich for holidays, and they were usually nice and kind. She knew he would return. Stone avalanche in these areas usually covered the roads and sometimes, it would take a week before the clear off the boulders and open the road for use.

Even though she would prefer to be on her own, she knew she was not equipped for the scenario she was in. She needed shelter, food, and clothing, and she was sure the rude man in some way could be helpful.

She knew he would be back, so she kept fiddling with her phone, checking the vacation pictures she took last with Kylie at the Alps.

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Robert could not believe it. Several boulders covered the road. Both cars were covered he could not see them. He could only imagine how wrecked his car must be under the boulder.

He really needed to get to Zurich before the plane landed.

A thought came into his mind. Why does he not try to climb the boulder to the other side? Maybe he would be able to hike a ride. Then he would come back for what is left of his Bentley. It seemed like an excellent idea, so he moved closer to the boulder and tried climbing. His fancy shoe was more deterring him than helping him, so he took them off, tied their laces together, and he hung them over his neck.

Climbing was now easier as he climbed a small boulder. The next boulder was so huge that there was nowhere to place his arm or feet to climb it. He tried to move to the

left and then the right. The situation was the same thing. Dejected, he climbed back down.

Think Robert, Think.

How would he get across? All efforts to singlehandedly climb had been futile. He needed external help. There was no one around, except that mannerlessly girl who only cared about ‘thank you.’ He wished they had met in Zurich and she would know who he was.

There was no one around, and darkness was slowly taking over the skies. Soon, it would be dark. He would be without food and shelter. He did not think his suit could protect him against the cold of the Alps. If only he had his phone with him. He would have called his Mr. Barkley, and an emergency helicopter would be on its way to his location after they had triangulated where the call signal was coming from.

Maybe the crazy girl has a phone.

It came back to him. She has a phone. She was fiddling with it just before he left. He must get to her and somehow convince her to let him use her phone.

He set his shoes on the ground, untied the laces that were together, wore his shoes, and he was soon on the way to meet her.

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It would soon be dark. The battery on Alice's phone had turned to red, giving her a visual notification that it would soon be empty.

Where is this ungrateful man? He should be back already.

She had such a huge faith that he would be back. She had not seen the avalanche, but she was sure the intensity of the sound she heard was very loud. The road would be inaccessible, and their cars must have been wrecked. She was sure of it.

This was not the first time she would escape an avalanche. She had taken avalanche survival courses in the past, and she had learned the key to surviving an avalanche was a reaction. She had to run from the epicenter towards the side because avalanches are most dangerous in the middle where the bulk of the snow or stone are. That was why she grabbed the ungrateful man's hand and ran to the side.

Her phone screen flashed on 'battery low' followed by a warning tone. She turned it off to conserve the remaining battery. Restless for the moment, she decided to start to sing Shakin' Stevens's "Green Door".

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Robert had doubts if he was on the right path. There were two paths off the road, and he was not sure if it was