

you are grieving. In these situations we are left to mull over judgement issues: peer pressure, drugs and inexperience.

Long before I discovered the gorge, long before experience taught me fear, I had read Earle Birney's poem, David.<sup>1</sup> His story of two young men cutting survey lines in the Rockies has always stayed with me. On the weekends David taught Bob how to climb. Their goal that summer was to reach

... remote,  
And unmapped, a sunlit spire  
on Sawback, an overhang  
Crooked like a talon. ...

By September they were well practised and hardened, and over a weekend they reached the summit. Bob recalls:

... Unroping we formed  
A cairn on the rotting tip.  
Then I turned to look north  
At the glistening wedge of giant  
Assiniboine, heedless  
Of handhold. And one foot gave. ...

David reaches out, grinning, to steady him. And then,

... Without  
A gasp he was gone. ...

Somehow Bob makes it down to the ledge where David has landed, still alive. He cannot move. He does not feel pain. He understands what this means. He whispers,

Bob, I want to go over!

Birney's poem was written in 1940, before aerial rescues and the advances of rehabilitation medicine. Bob, anguished, struggles with his friend's request.

This story haunted me the day I saw the young divers on my first visit to the gorge. I pondered the meaning of freedom, my own fear of risk-taking, and Bob's dilemma. That day, the gorge was suffused with the golden light of late afternoon. I looked toward the notch. There, with his back to the water, the second diver stood on tiptoes, his hands stretched out in front of him, balancing. The sun glinted above the tallest hemlock, a bird sang, and then with a thrust of his arms the diver launched himself into the incredible thinness of air.

#### Ian A. Cameron

Department of Family Medicine  
Dalhousie University, Halifax

#### Reference

1. Birney E. David. *Ghost in the wheels: selected poems*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart; 1997. p. 21-7.

## ICU life lessons

Don't drink.  
Don't drink and drive.  
Don't drink and drive a motorbike.  
Don't drive a motorbike.  
If you drive a motorbike,  
please sign your organ donor card.  
And wear a helmet.

Don't smoke.  
Don't do street drugs.  
Don't do street fights.  
Don't play with bombs.  
Don't forget that helmet.

If you have asthma, don't have a cat.

Drive carefully.  
Avoid trees.  
Avoid animals.  
Avoid oncoming traffic.  
Cycle cautiously.  
Avoid cliffs and sharp rocks.  
Wear your helmet.

Pay attention.  
Never assume anyone else is.

Pay particular attention to your family.  
Tell them you love them.  
Tell them often.  
Tell them  
to wear their helmets.

**Lana Lovo**  
Family physician  
Calgary, Alta.

## All forgiveness

Confession of our faults is the next thing to innocence.  
— Publius Syrus, maxim 1060

The art of confession has an illustrious history: think of St. Augustine and Rousseau. A fault admitted is more readily forgiven than a fault denied. And sometimes there's a good story in it.

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