Reflection on “The Promise of a Pencil” by Adam Braun

By Sean Stark
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The most reoccurring adjective for Adam Braun struck me as bravery. To give up everything in the pursuit of giving others an education is a terrifying thing to do. Not only is it jumping feet first into the unknown but it’s also risking an entire lifestyle. It’s a difficult feat to even start down that path, but to continue and do what Adam Braun has done is an incredible feat. If I could be anything, I would hope to be as brave as he has proven to be in his life. I hope that one day I have the strength to follow my heart as he has done.

“Get out of your comfort zone” – Chapter 2.

The quote is something previously alien to me, but nonetheless something I desperately wished to experience in my life. I attended high school amongst affluent peers, summered by the lakes of Upstate New York, and skied down the mountains when the lakes froze over. However, this past summer I realized my experiences growing up were ones that all my friends shared, almost verbatim. When I asked myself seriously, “What makes me different from my peers?” I was disappointed by the answer. Rather than accept the answer to that question in an unsatisfactory manor, I decided a change must be made.

I decided to take a job offer from a neighbor, an offer I originally had sneered at. I was to work in a kitchen washing dishes in a country club seven hours away. It was the first time I was
away from family and friends and truly felt as if I was on my own. It was also the first time I learned the value of a dollar.

By the end of the summer I’d come to truly appreciate the education I’m receiving, one that qualifies me for a job above minimum wage. The first summer I left my comfort zone proved to be the most educational of my life.

“Speak the language of the person you want to become.” – Chapter 11.

Although Bonnies don’t speak a different language, the university will be an entirely different culture than the one I’ve come to know. I hope to be able to speak as an educated college graduate by the time I am done here. I’m nervous that I’ll get to school and be outmatched by the intelligence of my classmates, but I know that I’m ready to begin my higher education, and as a result I’ll be one step closer to speaking like the man I want to become.

“If your dreams don’t scare you then they’re not big enough” - Chapter 29.

I feel as if Adam Braun and I must have had a similar upbringing. I attended a college prep school filled with the sons of doctors, lawyers, and businessmen. All the students, influenced by their parents, had lofty, ambitious, and very green goals. I myself was no exception. It seems safe to assume that Adam Braun was probably no exception either, however he broke from the mold when called by a higher power. Like him, I hope when I’m called to do something with my life I have the courage to forsake money and follow my heart.

The future depends on education. It is the single most important thing for furthering the human species. To create an educated mass is to end significant world problems and Adam Braun is a man who recognized that. He gave up a career on Wall Street simply to help children who had no possible way of repaying him. This is not only an incredible feat, but also a testament to his incredible character, character that was evident throughout the entire book. To
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say I admire Adam Braun is an understatement. I’m both scared and jealous of what he has done. I’m scared because I want to live comfortably and live a successful life, but I’m jealous because I think it’s rare to truly find happiness in your work as Adam Braun clearly has. I only hope that one day I can use my education in as meaningful a way as he has.