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*10 DARING EXPEDITIONS*

(*Ti ville ekspediajonar*)

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**Foreword:**

ARE THEY TOTALLY BONKERS? OR JUST CURIOUS?

What is it that makes people seek out the unknown? What makes them go to places people have never been before? What makes them climb higher, dive deeper, and blaze a trailinto a world that is often cold, wet and dangerous, without ever knowing whether they will make it back?

Take Neil Armstrong, for example, the first man on the moon. Or Ellen MacArthur, who sailed across stormy, rocky seas the whole world over - all by herself. Or the filmmaker James Cameron, who led a diving mission that went far down into the ocean deep.

People travel in order to explore worlds no-one has ever been before, or to find answers to questions they’ve always wondered about. Many people set out on expeditions to break records, or cross boundaries in order to challenge themselves.

Usually we only hear about expeditions that are successful - ones where the explorers reach their goal, or set the record that they hoped for. Yet there are countless adventurers who never make it. Many of them never reach their goal, and some never come back.

This book will teach you about the people that let nothing ever stand in their way - especially not those who didn’t believe in them. Some call it madness, others call it bravery. The one thing that all these explorers have in common is that they each had a dream - and they chose to pursue it.

Perhaps this book will inspire you. You don’t have to be the first man on Mars, or fling yourself off a towering cliff, but maybe it will help you follow your interests. What have you always wondered about? What have you always dreamt about doing?

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Gennady Samokhin was born in Simferopol on the Crimean Peninsula, 1971

* He is a speleologist, also known as a spelunker or a cave explorer**.**
* He broke records in 2012 when he clambered and dived 2196m down into the deepest cave in the world.

THE DEEPEST CAVE IN THE WORLD

It is easy to measure the height of a mountain, but finding out the exact depth of a cave *inside* a mountain is even worse. There might be a whole new cavern hiding behind each and every lump of rock. A passage so narrow that a human can barely squeeze down it, might be metres and metres of long corridors. And right when you think you’ve reached the bottom, the water might yet find a way further via slim riverways.

The deepest and biggest caves in the world are called supercaves. They are the darkest places on earth. In their labyrinth of cramped tunnels and passageways, it’s easy to get lost. A trail into one of these mountain caves might suddenly drop down several metres, and in order to proceed you would have to lower yourself downwards with a rope. Squeezing yourself through a hole so tight that you might get stuck halfway through is not an activity for the faint-hearted. At the very bottom, there might be water, but above, there are tonnes of stone, and it would take several days for you to find your way out.

The Krubera cave in Abkhazia, near the Black Sea, is one of these supercaves. It is among some of the deepest caves in the world, as well as the only one which we know goes deeper than two kilometres. Its entrance is the size of a surfboard, but once you have wriggled through the narrow entrance, you will be engulfed in a stifling darkness. Climbers say that entering Krubera is like scaling Mount Everest - but upside-down.

A MONTH UNDER THE EARTH

Gennady Samokhin has explored Krubera cave multiple times as part of a climb crew. Last time, two of his fellow cave divers delved down into the water they found at the end of a cave passage. They squeezed through what they called “The Way to the Dream”, and could see that the cave continued on, down a steep shaft. This meant they ought to be able to go even deeper. But four weeks underground had almost depleted their whole rations of food and drink. The expedition had to be cancelled, and they set off on the several day trek back home.

It is the 21st of July 2012 and Gennedy has returned, this time with 58 climbers from 9 different countries. All of them are dressed in helmets and boiler suits, and are equipped with flashlightsand several metre lengths of rope. They have brought 500 kilos of food, 3000 batteries for their flashlights, 31 diving canisters and 150 liters of fuel for their primus stoves. They have sleeping bags and water and everything they need to spend three weeks underground. Since last time, they have set up some cables that enable them communicate with people outside on the mountain. They leave a trail of rope behind them to make it easy to find the way out again.

The lead climber wields a drill that he uses to clear rocks and make an easier way through. They hold their breaths to make themselves as thin as possible. At times they must get down on their hands and knees to wriggle through a hole in the rockface. A long way into the mountain, they find a large cavern where they set up a makeshift campsite with tents and stoves. On their journey down into Krubera, they will set up a further six camps.

As they descend even further into the cave, Gennady changes into a diving suit and straps three flashlights to his helmet. He is wearing gloves, as well as a depth gauge on his left wrist that tells him how far underwater he is and how much oxygen he has used. For safety’s sake, he fastens yet another small torch to the other arm.

He leaves his fellow climbers in the first camp and squeezes himself between a narrow crack in the cave wall. He’s on his own now. It is so cramped that his nose rubs against the stone, and he has to turn his head to one side to get through.

SQUEEZED TIGHT IN A CREVICE

He slips into the water. Ten metres below the surface, he can see no more than 15-20 centimetres in front of him. The deeper he goes, the less he can see. In places it becomes so tight that he can’t move forward with his oxygen canisters on his back - he has to pull them along by hand, or push them in front of him. At 37 metres below the surface, he has to rest and catch his breath. He has already used up a third of the air in his canisters. At 43 metres he has to give up. He is desperate to dive further, but has so little air that he can’t take the risk. This is the moment when he realises that he doesn’t have enough room to turn around.

He twists himself into different positions, trying to continue breathing calmly so he doesn’t run out of air. Eventually, he manages to cross his legs, put his flippers under his armpits and turn around. He lets out a sigh of relief, but it doesn’t last long. His head has become stuck in a small gap. He can see spare gas canisters he has left on the other side of the narrow opening, but he can’t quite reach them. He twists and turns, making himself as narrow as possible, and at long last manages to squeeze his way through.

He breathes in air from the new canisters and sets out on the long way back to base camp. As he grows closer, he once again hears noise from the other spelunkers. He has never been so happy to lay eyes on his friends again. He lies down to sleep straight away. The next day, he wakes up and does nothing but drink tea, sleep, eat, then drink more tea and go back to sleep.

On the 26th of August, over a month since the expedition first began, they return at long last to fresh air. Gennady’s depth gauge reads 2196 metres. No-one has ever been so deep underground before. But Gennady knows deep down that, with the right equipment, it should be possible to go even deeper.

**Ellen MacArthur** was born on the 8th of July 1976, in Whatsandwell, England

* At the age of 18, she sailed around the whole United Kingdom on her own.
* On the 7th of February 2005, she broke a new world record by sailing around the world on her own without stopping in 71 days, 14 hours, 18 minutes and 33 seconds.

**AROUND THE WORLD**

**ALONE ON A SAILBOAT**

The Antarctic Ocean. The name alone is enough to run a cold shiver down your spine. Its waves tower as high as six-storey buildings, and its seaspray whips around you like a snowstorm. It is Christmas Day, and Ellen MacArthur is completely alone on the open sea. The icy wasteland of Antarctica is the closest thing to what one might call land. The nearest human beings to her are the astronauts aboard the international space station, soaring in outer space above. No helicopters can reach her, no plane can land close by, and if she needs help, it will take four days for a ship to reach her. And it looks like trouble is on its way. She is heading right into a storm.

**BROWN BEANS FOR A BOAT**

Ellen was just four years old when her aunt took her sailing for the very first time. She will never forget the thrill she felt as they departed from dry land, and the rush of freedom as they hoisted the mainsail. Right there and then, she decided that one day she would sail around the entire world.

Many people have dreams that they lose sight of as time goes by. Yet Ellen held on tight to her dream, and kept a special blue piggy bank in her room. When Ellen hit ten, she started receiving “tuck” money to buy her lunch with. Then, for every single one of her lunches over eight whole years, she ate mashed potatoes and brown beans. This was the cheapest thing to eat in the school canteen, which meant she could save a couple of pennies each day. Then each time she collected a whole pound, she would place it into the piggy bank and put a small cross down on a homemade sheet with hundreds of little boxes. Once she had crossed off every square, she finally had enough money to buy her first ever sailboat. Unfortunately, she still didn’t have enough money to buy a mooring for the boat or launch it. So for a number of years, Ellen just sat in her boat in the garden and fantasised about sailing the seas for real.

In the year 2000, she circumnavigated the world in the Vendée Globe, the world’s toughest solo regatta. She was the youngest in the race, at 24 years old, and came in second. Six months later, she realised she wanted to try again, but this time she would sail entirely on her own, and not as part of a competition. Her goal was to become the fastest person to ever attempt a solo sail around the world without stopping.

For this, Ellen would need a new boat, a boat that was bigger, faster, and wider. But while it was being built, a Frenchman managed to break the old record by 21 days. Now the record was going to be even harder to beat.

**ALARM BELLS**

“We were clinging on for dear life,” Ellen explains in her book about the trip.

Despite being the only person on board, she always says *we*, as she is referring to both herself and her boat - Moby. Ellen has promised to take care of her boat, so it will take care of her.

Right now, they need to pick up speed if they want to escape the storm. Ellen describes the experience as being like driving a car at 100 miles an hour in the pitch-black with no lights, no windscreen and no wipers. Waves pick up the boat, then hurl it downwards again with a big smack. Ellen knows that if she doesn’t sail fast enough, she and her boat are going to be trapped by the storm and end up either keeling over or being smashed into smithereens. Many people have drowned on this journey before her.

She knows that she desperately needs sleep, but can’t afford to. If she lays down on her bunk for just twenty minutes, she will have no time to eat. She is sodden, starving and exhausted. But what should she choose - sleep or food?

Once in a while she is forced to rest in her bunk with all of her clothes on. If she is lucky she might get 30 restless minutes of sleep, before being abruptly awoken by a loud bang as the boat crashes down into a trough in the waves, or by her alarm that is reminding her to wake up and adjust her sail. Her largest sail will give her the speed she needs to escape the storm, but the fierce gale might tear it in two. Now and then she has no choice but to change to a smaller sail, even though she and her boat will lose speed.

The whole time, the timer is ticking. The timer that decides whether she is ahead or behind the record of the Frenchman who sailed the voyage before her.

She battles through the storm. Right when she is at the her most exhausted, more tired than she ever thought she could be, it suddenly clears. The rain lets up, and the moon shines brightly in a clear sky. Moments like this make it worth all the trials and tribulations.

**HELPING SICK CHILDREN**

Ellen in an interview once described the Antarctic Ocean as being one of the most fantastic places on earth.

It was wild and terrifying, and she admits to being frightened. But she considers herself lucky too, that she was able to experience its unbridled forces of nature and weather. When she crossed the finish line on the 7th of February, 2005, she became the fastest person ever to sail around the world single-handed.

Ellen could well have carried on setting new records, taking part in regattas and pitting herself against wind and sea. But despite her love of sailing, she decided to call it a day. Not because she was scared, or because it all became too challenging, but because she found something that she felt was even more important to her.

Some measure the worth of expeditions by the records they set. Others believe the most important thing to be challenging yourself. And other people set out to find new knowledge and solutions to world problems. The goal of Ellen’s expedition was to spread the word about how we need to take care of our planet and its seas. But she hasn’t stopped boating altogether. She has since founded an organisation that teaches young victims of cancer and other serious illnesses how to sail. Not so that they might set new world records, but so that they can regain their courage, their self-confidence and their lust for life. Not even a world record on the open ocean can beat that.

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