

On April 25, 2003, Aron Ralston _____ (drive) to Moab, Utah, where he mountain-biked the famous Slickrock Trail. He then _____ (make) his way to Horseshoe Canyon. When he _____ (arrive), night _____ (fall), so he _____ (make) camp. He _____ (plan) an ascent of Mount McKinley in Alaska, and this trip was part of his training. In the morning, he filled his backpack with water, candy bars and his climbing gear, and set out for Bluejohn Canyon.

He _____ (climb) into the canyon on April 26. He _____ (go) about five miles when he came to a section where a series of large boulders _____ (hang), wedged between the walls of the canyon. He worked his way past these until he came to a boulder hanging over a drop of about three metres. Putting one hand around the boulder, which weighed about 800 pounds, Ralston _____ (stretch) to reach a secure foothold below. As he did so, the boulder _____ (rotate), slid down and _____ (trap) his right hand between it and the canyon wall, crushing it completely.

His heart _____ (beat) fast and for the first few moments he _____ (throw) his body repeatedly against the boulder to move it, but it refused to move. He forced himself to stop, breathe and then considered his situation logically.

He _____ (tell) anyone where he was. It would be days before anyone realised that he _____ (miss). Ralston _____ (stand) on a small stone, facing the boulder that _____ (crush) his hand. The pain was intense, but he _____ (determine) to stay in control. He only had two courses of action left to him: he could chip at the rock to free his hand; or he could cut off his hand.

His only tool was a cheap multi-tool. Over the next days, he _____ (work) to chip away at the rock with it, but the progress he made was minimal. He _____ (wear) shorts, hiking boots and a fleece pullover. He _____ (start) with three litres of water. Now he was down to one.

Ralston _____ (wait) there for five days. But by the time the search teams _____ (start) out, he _____ (decide) what he had to do. He packed his gear and arranged everything neatly in preparation for cutting off his hand. The arm was numb, so he _____ (not/feel) anything, but it was still not an easy thing to do. The operation took over an hour. Dripping blood, he made his way back out of the canyon and began the long hike out of the National Park. After six miles, he _____ (meet) by some tourists.