

I am writing first of all to say how much I appreciate the goals of your organization. I think that it fills a hole, as there are not, as you say, sufficient funds or resources to properly pursue cases in rural locations.

There are people all around this town who would tell you that I have benefited from just such a situation. I don't think they are correct, though. We're all the same in this town when you get right down to it, me and the ones who hate me and all the other people who have simply cared about that girl and what happened to her. We are all the same because we live with the not-knowing.

We live with that every day and we think about it every day or at least some of us do. And while some people think that if things were known then I would be in prison or maybe in the electric chair, I would just like to know what happened, the same as them. That's all that I want to know. My question is the same as theirs—did I do it?

I expect that you will take the opinion of most people who read anything about this case, which is that I'm a liar or a crazy person because I would know if I did it. I had given up on ever explaining that but then I came

across some things in a book and I thought maybe this would explain my situation better than my own words ever could. So I hope you read it and consider it and then maybe consider talking to me. Here is what was in the book, which is called *Blind Descent*, by a man named James Tabor.

Supercaves create innate dangers as well, warping the mind with claustrophobia, anxiety, insomnia, hallucinations, personality disorders. There is also a particularly insidious derangement unique to caves called *The Rapture*, which is like a panic attack on meth. It can strike anywhere in a cave, at any time, but usually assaults a caver deep underground.

And, of course, there is one more that, like getting lost, tends to be overlooked because it's omnipresent: absolute, eternal darkness. Darkness so dark, without a single photon of light, that it is the luminal equivalent of absolute zero.

I can't tell you anything I experienced better than those words do it. That bit about the Rapture. You'd have to have a jury of twelve people who'd lived through it to

believe me. There might not be twelve people alive who have been through such a thing as what I endured down there. But here's the deal—it's never going to get to a jury until we know what happened. And whether it helps me or hurts me, I can't take that anymore. The not knowing. I just can't take it, and I'd rather go to prison and know that I belonged there than live another day in my own skin wondering what happened. So that's what I'm asking you for. I don't have money. You say you don't need money. That you only need cases that deserve attention. Well, this one always did. Still does.

I'm hoping you can tell me if I did it.

Best regards,

Ridley Barnes