

Into The PERFECT STORM

HOW WE VERY NEARLY, ALMOST, PRACTICALLY MADE ADVENTURING HISTORY

STORY BY MICHAEL LANZA

ILLUSTRATION BY TAVIS COBURN

"Do you think we'll get out alive?" Mark blurts. I shudder to contemplate the answer. We're deep in the forgotten forest of north-central Massachusetts—a dark, primordial wilderness somehow overlooked by the forward press of civilization. We've been following the Tully Trail all morning. Now, inexplicably, we're off trail and in trouble.

Looking around nervously, I try to forget that we're miles from the nearest road—or at least a couple hundred yards, anyway. The power lines overhead do not delude me: No one would find our carcasses in this godforsaken place before the bugs had picked our bones clean.

Clenching my fists to suppress the tremors of terror, I scour the terrain ahead. "Oh, there's a cairn," I announce with practiced calm. The team takes a collective deep breath, and we press on.

Just hours into our expedition, Mark Russell, Kari Bodnarchuk, and I are already inured to these flirtations with our own mortality. But we have no intention of turning back, for we live in a time without heroes. A time when few opportunities remain to explore virgin country. This is our chance to crayon our names into the annals of exploration history beside those of Magellan, Lewis and Clark, and my childhood buddy Armand (who, at age 11, boldly set off alone into the woods behind our subdivision, armed with only a plastic sword and two Pop-Tarts, shrugging off warnings from the rest of us kids that he'd be eaten by trolls). We would be the first expeditioners to thru-hike the 18-mile Tully Trail, one of the newest footpaths in the nation. Mark, communications manager for one of the groups behind the trail's creation, assured us this historic feat had not yet been accomplished—or at least not in one day, as we audaciously planned to do.

