Ben,

Ahhh hhmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm, sorry…I had to start this as you would start every phrase...

Where are you? When I needed to write something important, clever, beautiful, polite, insightful, proper (as you would say)……Your phone would ring, your inbox would have a new email and the message would be short and to the point: "Yoooo I need you to write something for me…something good!." A few days letter, I would receive what would have taken months for me to create! Today, I have to write what cannot be written and you are not around….and the hardest thing is that it does not matter how long I wait, you will never be around to help me on this one. How can I express into words how much I miss you?

How can I put into words how much fun we had together flying, biking, climbing, travelling, snowboarding and chatting until 3AM because neither you nor I would let the other one go to sleep? And when I came up with the idea of going biking at 7AM instead of you saying: "Are you out of your mind!? It's late now mate, and I need to sleep in", you would always say: "I am in! What time should I wake you up? I will have the bikes ready!"

I remember when I met you at the flight tutor lab sometime around 2004. You were the annoying Australian kid that would not let me go by without quizzing you with the "question of the day". Every day, I had to come up with a question to test you. Your idea was to learn something new every day and what I never told you is that I always looked forward to seeing you every morning with your smiley face saying: "Hey mate, what's the question of the day!?". I didn't know back then that the annoying student was going to become my student in the CFI (Certified Flight Instructor) class for the summer of 2005. Back then, I learned how dedicated to aviation and to learning you were. That class was not mandatory for you, yet you did not miss a single class. To top it off, you had the highest grade in class even though passing or failing would have not made a difference to your transcript. During class, I realized what a cool guy this annoying Australian kid was and before I could realize, this cool guy became my roommate, best friend and little brother. I was a mentor to you in aviation and you were a mentor to me in life. There is nobody that knows how to enjoy life to the fullest as you did. You have changed my perspective of how to live and I am forever grateful for that.

Before you left to Australia, you were quite homesick and we used to joke about how "Daytona could be mistaken as a nice place on a sunny day." After you left, I realized that the correct sentence was "Daytona could be mistaken as a nice place if you were around."

This past week, I lost my little brother and I am left with a strong pain. It hurts a lot to see you taken away from us. It is very hard for me to comprehend. In the mix of this tragedy, we have come together. I have gained a new mom whom I can't wait to give a big tight hug, a new sister who loves to chat just like you, a new father whose words are clever like yours and a brother who's smooth voice calms me down just like yours.

My father once told me something I never fully understood but now I do. He said: "Your *blood brother* was born with you. You have no choice other than accept that he is your brother and you have to learn to like his qualities and problems. Your "*friend brother*" is the one you fall in love with and you choose him to be your brother."

I choose you to be my brother and if I could wait for you to write this to me I would wait until my last heart beat…..

VERY MUCH

Mikha