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Subject: Re: Cold Front

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 21:41:35 GMT

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Sunday, November 18, 2068, 8:25 p.m., outside of Reykjavik, Iceland (Monday, November 19, 9:25 a.m., Tracy Island)

Jacques sipped his après-ski whiskey as he sat by the fireplace, warming himself on both the outside and the inside. He'd just come in from his final downhill run of the day. He wasn't usually one for vigorous outdoor activity, preferring golf and other, less strenuous sports, but for some reason, skiing was an exception. He had never figured out why he liked it. Was it the bracing air? The exhilaration of racing down the hillside at breakneck speed? Was it all of these and more? He wasn't sure, but he did enjoy it -- all the more since neither of his younger siblings shared his appreciation.

It was the beginning of the ski season in Iceland. There had been quite a bit of snow already, turning what were usually fast, hard-packed runs into softer, grainy powder. Since it was also the beginning of the workweek, Bláfjöll Ski Resort was quiet, with only a handful of patrons. In Jacques's eyes, this translated into better service for those who currently resided there; the staff had fewer guests to tend to, and he liked prompt, courteous indulgence. It also meant fewer people to contend with on the slopes and lifts. Looking out the windows to the treeless slopes, he counted only one or two people taking advantage of the night-skiing

Two men walked by, talking in low tones. Jacques was slightly acquainted with one; he had come to Stellar Innovations once or twice, looking for specific technologies -- which the cartel was happy to provide. The other, he knew by name and reputation -- both of which were fearsome. They were meeting with three or four others, men and women who dealt in the shadows and had a very specific political agenda. Jacques had heard rumors about their current endeavors, no more than whispers, really, yet reliable nonetheless. He expected to be approached by one or more of them in the near future, for business reasons... but not now. He was on holiday, and the only business he looked to was his own good pleasure.

"Sir? Would you like a refill?"

Jacques looked up at the waiter who hovered nearby. He waved his hand. "Yes. Another whiskey." After that, I'll take the car into Reykjavik for dinner and whatever else the city has to offer.

"Very good, sir. Right away...." The waiter's voice trailed off as he glanced out the wide windows. Jacques followed his gaze. His eyes grew wide and his mouth went dry.

Tumbling down the slope was a wave of snow. The crest covered everything in its path; it swallowed whole the few skiers who tried to run before it. It loomed larger and larger until Jacques breathed, "Oh my God. It's going to bury us..."

The waiter's scream brought him out of his amazed stupor and with a burst of adrenaline, he jumped up, running for the other side of the building. He flattened himself against an inner wall, cringing in anticipation of the glass breaking and wood splintering in the room he had just left.

But the windows were made of sterner stuff; they did not break. Instead, they were forced wholesale from their frames by the weight and pressure of the snow. The whole building shuddered and shifted. Wood cracked and popped. Patrons and staff screamed and wailed. Then, there was a long moment of dark and silence.

The silence was broken by the murmurs and cries of those in the lodge. The manager hurried from his office, flashlight in hand, to view the damage, giving sharp orders to the staff and brief moments of comfort to the patrons along the way. The building groaned under the weight that pressed against it. Several staff members were sent to different parts of the building, to reconnoiter and to bring their guests to a central location. The desk clerk was given the task of counting heads and confirming who was within the building.

Once he had confirmed his presence, Jacques went to the front doors to see if he could leave. His eyebrows climbed to his hairline as he saw the wall of white that confronted him.

"Yes, sir," the manager said, coming to stand beside Jacques. "I fear we are truly buried."

"Well?" Jacques demanded. "What are you going to do about this?"

The manager pulled himself to his full height. "When I have confirmation of how many people are still inside, I will attempt to call emergency services. It may be a futile gesture; my satellite phone may have difficulty piercing the snow. But I will try."

"Bloody right you will," Jacques said, his eyes narrowing. "And you had best get through or you'll hear from my solicitors."

The manager raised one eyebrow, but said nothing. He was rescued by the desk clerk and two of the reconnaissance team, all talking at once. Silencing them, he drew them into his office, and shut the door firmly.

"Now, what do you have to say for yourselves?" he asked, settling in behind his desk. He indicated that the clerk should speak first.

She took a deep breath to steady herself. "We are missing five guests and two staff. At least three of the guests were seen on the slopes before this happened. I am not certain where the staff are." She put a piece of paper on his desk. "The names are highlighted."

"Very good." The manager turned to the others. "Report."

One, a young man in his twenties, spoke up. "I went to the upper storage level. The roof is caved in but the floor below it seems to be holding for the moment. The roof access points are totally blocked."

With a nod, the manager turned to his other staff member, an older man. "All of the windows show a wall of snow. I opened one to see if I could clear an opening to the outside." He shook his head. "There is just too much of it. We will not be able to dig ourselves free."

The manager had already picked up his satellite phone. "I am calling the local rescue teams. They should be able to get us out." He nodded toward the door. "Go. Do what you can to calm our guests. Have the rest of the staff gather blankets and torches, and keep everyone in a central location. Do not tell the guests the extent to which we are buried. I will be with you shortly."

After sending his people out of the office, the manager said a short prayer and called for help.

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"What do you mean you cannot come right away?" The manager was nearly hysterical now. His call had gone through, and he had been told to wait on the line for a response. He waited for a good twenty minutes until someone came back on the line. "Why must we wait for the World Government to send agents? Why?"

There was another long period of listening. "And what about the rest of us? There are twenty-five people here in the lodge right now, plus another five that are dying -- if not already dead -- on the slopes! Are we to be sacrificed just so these terrorists can be caught?"

He shook his head violently. "I do not agree!" He paused, then added, "Yes, yes, I know that we cannot let terrorists operate with impunity. No, no, I am not siding with them. I am siding with the people who are the innocents in this! Who are only here for skiing. Who had nothing to do with that sabotage! Please, you must help us. For them..."

He pulled the phone from his ear and swore. Taking a deep breath, he squared his shoulders. "So. The World Government has ordered our rescue be delayed until they can get their agents on the site." He continued to mutter as he moved to the radio set he and his staff used to communicate throughout the resort. "They probably don't even know for sure that those terrorists are guests here!" He switched it on, thankful that the unit was battery-powered. "Well, there is one organization I can turn to that will come... I hope." Putting the earpiece in place, he touched it. "Calling International Rescue. Calling International Rescue... please hear me!"

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