

A Specialty Service

My Life Behind the Gun

The Devil's Icebox

I find myself in the snow again. Well, at least it's not snowing. We were working a job a now retired operator setup just before she stepped away. My right-hand TC decided she didn't want to risk the baby she was having on working in the field. She said it was selfish to put her wants before the baby's needs. She and my best friend from high school were expecting their first child soon. So, I find myself in uncharted waters. Yes, I have done many jobs without her, but this will be the first with her completely gone.

I own and operate a specialty security service. I started this company to do some good while making some green. TC's father worked for the World Health Organization or WHO. He retired a few years ago, but he kept some of his contacts. While there he and his wife started a secret organization helping women to escape violence. They started in the middle east but now operate all over the world including America. Occasionally, we provide security for those who are escaping from more violent troubles. Some are running from abusive husbands' others from such wonderful people as sex traffickers.

My team was split up with Ted, Tina and her brothers with me in Alaska setting up our hideaway while Gregg, Bobby, Jimmy, Phil, and Janet are in Afghanistan helping our guests make a move. They will enter Canada then cross the border into Alaska. This site works well with most people thinking, "*who would go from the desert to the tundra.*" People in hiding move here for a year or two. While here we can help them assimilate into the culture. By the time they are ready to leave they have everything, they need to start a new life.

We had a window of about three days then a storm will close off access to this site. I don't want to be here then. It could be a month or more before anyone can get to this hideaway. We built up enough supplies for twenty people to stay comfortable for two years. There will be at most thirteen-people including the people TC's parents hired. This site also includes a remote weather station which provides satellite Wi-Fi. The station acts as a cover for why we are there and provides a connection to the outside world. Now, all we need is for my team to show up with the guests.

Five miles from the departure point they found themselves being chased. Gregg and Bobby were on point in a Land Rover with a 50-caliber machine gun mounted on top. Jimmy and Phil were in the rear with a Humvee and another 50-caliber. Gregg and Bobby pulled to the side and let the convoy pass. They ducked behind a hill and waited for the ones following them to pass by. Three old Land Rovers passed. Two of them had 50-caliber machine guns, and one was loaded down with RPG rounds. This was bad. It would take some time to load the plane, and a running gun battle with children would be a bad deal. They needed to stop them or at least slow them down. Bobby radioed ahead to warn the airstrip. With Gregg behind the wheel and Bobby at the gun they struck.

They caught the pursuers by surprise. Bobby hit the third car with the 50-caliber. The excessive number of RPG rounds in the back exploded turning it into a fireball. Gregg dodged the flames sending the Land Rover to the left. The second pursuer found his target and opened fire on the two. Over the radio, Jimmy heard his brother and Gregg being cut down. Jimmy Sped up and came to a stop. They were approaching the end of the mountains. The terrain then opened to a flat plateau with no cover. From here the pursuing Land Rovers could catch up. He had Phil get out. Janet in the truck with the refugees started to protest. Jimmy said, *“they will need all the help you two can give them. I need to finish my brother’s work.”* The truck slowed down enough so Phil could get on. Janet looked back knowing she would never see Jimmy again.

Jimmy blocked the narrowing road with the Humvee. He then grabbed his Barret rifle and a bag of magazines from the back. His last act was to set the explosives in the Humvee. He just had time to take a position when the two remaining pursuers arrived. They slowed to a roll as they approached the Humvee. Jimmy waited for them to get close then he set off the explosives in the Humvee. The explosion turned the Humvee into a large grenade. The shrapnel ripped and shredded both vehicles. A few men were able to escape the blast, and they tried to duck behind a ridge as Jimmy opened fire on them. His first three shots hit their marks. Off in

the distance, he could hear more trucks. These guys had help coming. Jimmy fired until he ran out of ammo.

We received news that they took off and were on their way. They also told us about the brothers and Gregg. Bobby was one of my first employees and a good friend. His brother Jimmy was a screw-up. His last act was to give his life so they could escape. I hired Gregg because I saw something in him. I knew he could be doing better. He proved to the rest of the team he was one of them, but we don't have time to morn.

I sent Tina to the meeting point with the snow van. It is an extended van with treads instead of tires. Soon even this vehicle won't be able to go out. A strong storm was moving in with our guests making it just in time. We, however, are going to be trapped with them for what could be a month or more. I guess I should stop calling them the brothers. Dave and Dan helped me batten down the station for the storm. TCs parent's employees won't be here in time. Their plane was diverted to Anchorage. So, their first month of education would be online. All we can do now is prepare and wait.

About five hours later they made it to the camp. Well, most of them made it. At one of the stops along the way, Phil got off the plane. He said he had enough of the life and wanted out. We helped the guests out of the van along with the meager possessions they brought with them. Their clothing was bought along the way. Most of them had never seen snow before. Now they were surrounded by it. A security blanket with a temp of fifteen degrees below zero. Tina said there was one other plane on the tarmac. There was no pilot or crew, and the plane was just left out for the elements. The troubling part was that the plane had a flight plan that originated in Saudi Arabia.

With the snow moving in we would be safe soon. Whoever that was, it would appear they didn't plan for the weather or remote locations. Off in the distance, I could hear a helicopter. In

this weather and at this temperature that is not a good idea. I pulled in my people and did a weapons check. Given the nature of our duties, we planned accordingly. Each of my team had a Colt M4 and a Barretta Storm. I had my Browning Automatic Rifle or B.A.R. and my Barretta Storm. One of the ladies watched us prepare. She walked up and said in what was very good English, “*are we in trouble?*” I answered, “*I don’t know yet, but it’s better to be prepared than not.*” We had snow gear just not deep snow gear. We were supposed to be out of here by now and the new crew coming in would have all the gear they would need. With no options, we would have to improvise. Tina said she saw a couple of rattan chairs in the back. With a little imagination and a lot of duct tape, she could fashion some snowshoes. The rest was just layers of clothing and goggles. Jimmy had packed about fifteen pairs of goggles in a box marked grenades. I looked at the box and thought about him and all he did. The sky turned from blue to ashen then black within a few minutes. The storm was here.

I stood by a window and watched it snow sideways. I grew up in northeast Ohio. So, snow is nothing new to me. I remember one day when it snowed three feet in five hours, but it just snowed that in one hour. This wasn’t just snow, it was end of times snow. Looking at this I can see why people say the suicide rate in Scandinavia is so high. Nothing but icy cold death as far as the eyes can see. Sara joined me at the window. She said, “*I couldn’t have ever imagined such a place like this.*” Sara was the guest who asked us if we were in trouble. Her husband would beat her if she left the house. She is around 5’ 11” with an olive complexion, long jet-black hair and a figure that makes Marilyn Monroe look like Olive Oyl. She wore her hair over one side of her face to cover a scar given to her by her husband. One day he was going at her with a bamboo rod when she picked up a kitchen knife and held it in front of her. He tripped and impaled himself on the knife. Although it was ruled an accident, his family wanted her head. No, literally her head.

What I couldn’t tell her was I wasn’t staring at the snow I was watching an auxiliary building. The lights were on, and someone was home, but it wasn’t one of us. We had company. The thermal camera wouldn’t work here. Although with it back at our headquarters it definitely won’t work. The box marked “camera” was filled with ketchup packets. I wanted to ask who put

Jimmy in charge of packing the gear. Oh, that's right it was me. That boy just loved ketchup. In our inventory, we found something like three thousand packets of ketchup. They took the place of the camera, extra ammo for the Barrett, Ted's backup laptop and Tina's romance novels. As I stared out the window, Tina was reading an old dog-eared copy of War and Peace.

A break in the storm brought about a dark yet clear sky as well as a clear satellite connection. With that, I received an Email from Phil. He told me he had sold our location to the Taliban who then told the family of the guests where they can find us. He was to be paid around five hundred thousand dollars for the information. What really happened was they set an ambush for him instead. He said he was sorry and wished he could take it all back. I wish he dared to come to Alaska. Maybe then I could have forgiven him. Ok, maybe I would have buried him in the snow, but we may never know what I would have done.

Whoever that was must know that they will need the building we are in or we would already be dead. All the supplies are in here, and those auxiliary buildings weren't built for long-term habitation. They had another two to three hours before the storm struck again. This time it would be around for days. I gathered everyone in the common room. I told them what was what and explained how we need to defend the main building. Dleen took the three children that came with them into a panic room in the center of the main building. Dleen was one of the guests escaping a forced marriage to a man that thought she was a punching bag. She also took a Colt 1911 with a couple of spare magazines. No one in their right or wrong mind would shoot the windows out, so we took up positions at the doors. I quickly realized this was a bad idea we need to take the fight to them.

The snow was thick and deep, but Tina's makeshift snowshoes actually worked. Tina, her brother Dan and I made our way to the auxiliary building they were occupying. There was four of them all in lite snow gear. All of them with AK 47s. Clearly, they didn't understand what fall in northern Alaska would be. After a quick exchange of gunfire, we went inside. Then Tina did a count. She realized there were ten cots on the floor. Six men were missing. We made our way

back to the main building. As we approached, we could hear the unmistakable sounds of AK and M4 fire. We made it inside to find two of them dead along with a woman named Kayoosh and Tina's brother Dave. They were taken by surprise. Ted was hurt but not badly. It took all of us to keep Tina from rushing out at the others from the auxiliary building. I made a mistake by splitting up, and it cost us, two good people.

One of the children watching out the window said the others were on the move. I ordered all the guests into the panic room, but Sara would have none of that. She wanted a gun and a chance to defend herself. Is love at first fight a real thing? Soon all the women wanted guns. Two of the men went to a loading dock on the other side of the building. The other two charged inside the front. They found nine-armed people waiting for them. A very quick exchange of gunfire ended up with both dead. I don't know or will ever know if the other two heard all that gunfire and were spooked or whatever they were thinking. The two at the loading dock made a break for it into the wilds of Alaska. Their mauled frozen bodies were eventually found sometime in the spring two years later.

Just before the storm hit again, we received a message. Jimmy somehow made it out of Afghanistan. He found his way back to our headquarters only to find a message Phil taped to the door. He then found Phil the next day on a beach in Mexico. He enclosed a video of him making Phil dig his own grave then him filling it. As much as I want to say I don't approve of this, I did find myself watching this video two or three hundred times over the course of the next two months.

Two months later we were just days away from getting out of here. The site was compromised by Phil, and the guests were going to be moved. That is all except for Sara. I woke up every morning with Sara next to me. I wouldn't mind doing this for the rest of my life. Up here in the devil's icebox, a Jew and a Muslim found happiness with each other. Dan and Ted found something too. Who knew? Well, I guess they knew.

We would go back home and go from there. I didn't have enough employees left to keep the company running. Maybe one day I would open shop again. I gave Tina, Dan, and Ted enough money so they wouldn't have to work again. Bobby gave Jimmy seven million dollars in his will. He planned to open a catering business offering a restaurant experience in a person's home. It sounds a little too pricey but who knows it may work. Sara and I will go back and manage all the properties I built while working as a mercenary. Maybe we will franchise the Russian bar concept? It will be nice to have a job that only requires wearing one gun.