

A White Blur

I looked out the snow frosted window. The giant mountain filled my vision. The white snow occasionally separated from the wind whipped trees.

"It's going to be a cold one today," I said to my brother Luke.

"It sure is, Jake," he replied.

I looked around the small cabin of the helicopter. A man and a woman accompanied us on this trip, along with our tour guide. The tour guide looked like a small Hungarian man who was no more than six feet tall and had a long red beard. His name was Skip.

"When we reach the top of the mountain," Skip said, "we're going to get out of the helicopter one at a time, starting with you Jake."

I stared back at the man, only able to utter the word, "Ok."

We were nearing the top of the mountain. Excitement was coursing through my veins, and a smile was forming under my gator.

"We're here," Skip said. I took a deep breath in; I was ready. When the helicopter landed on top of the mountain, Skip made his way over to door where I was.

"When I open this door, you're going to jump into the snow. Do you understand?" Skip asked me. I nodded my head. "On the count of three," Skip said, "1.....2.....3!" The door of the helicopter flew open. The icy wind swept into the cabin of the helicopter, sending a chill down my spine. The white powder rested beneath the landing skids. "Jump!" yelled Skip. With a little push from behind, I was hurdled into the air, landing on the soft blanket of white snow. One by one, the others jumped out of the helicopter. Lastly, Skip threw out our skis and jumped into the snow. Skip locked the door of the helicopter and with a quick thumbs up to the pilot, the helicopter was off.

"That wasn't so bad, now was it Jake?" Skip said.

"Nope, I guess not," I responded.

"Let's get our skis on and start this journey, folks," Skip said to the group.

I immediately began to look for my red and black Volkels I had gotten the past year. I spotted them in the snow, only about a yard away. I began the hard journey to get them, my foot sinking into the snow with every step. When I had finally reached them, the challenge

really began. I unhooked them from each other and placed them side by side. I lifted my foot, sticking the toe of the boot into the binding. I pressed down on the heel, *click*, that ski was done. I tried to get my foot into the other one, but it was nearly impossible from the position I was in. I turned to Luke, who somehow was standing with his skis on. "Can you help me up?"

"Yah sure, grab onto my hand," Luke said. I grabbed his hand, trying my best to grip it with mittens on. When I had a decent grip on Luke's hand, he yanked me to a standing position with force. "There you go," he said.

"Thanks," I replied. I grabbed my other ski, careful not to fall into the snow again. I pushed my toe into the binding, then my heel, *click*, both my skis were on. I looked out into the sky; white topped mountains formed the landscape. The blue sky was only broken up by the sun shining down, slowly melting away the snow.

"It's beautiful, ain't it?" Skip said when he saw me admiring the view. "Only so many people have the chance to see it."

I didn't reply to him, instead, I stood there, soaking in every minute of this moment I could.

"Alright, let's keep moving, or else we'll be up here all night," Skip said. "Follow me this way." Everyone began to move, but I stood there as long as I could and was left as the last in the group. When we got to the place where we would begin to ski down, Skip gave us a briefing. "Watch out for the snow shifting under your feet as avalanches happen relatively often in this area. You'll be able to hear an avalanche. They're pretty loud. If one does occur, don't forget to deploy your avalanche air bag and don't panic. With that done, let's go."

I looked down the snowy peak as the wind tried to push me back. I began to form a pathway in my head. Skip was the first one to leave where we were standing. He skied down the mountain with grace. The man and woman went next, leaving me and Luke standing at the top.

"It's now or never," Luke said. "Race you to the bottom!"

Luke left a hair before I did, getting the upper hand. I raced down the mountain, a huge cloud of snow forming behind me, my skis sinking into the fresh powder. After a little while, I began to catch up to Luke. My heart was pounding.

Suddenly, the snow beneath me began to rumble. In an instant, everything went white. My body was doing flips, and my whole vision was white. The noise filled my ears. I began to panic, wanting to scream for help. Then I remembered I had my avalanche airbag on. I fumbled around, unable to see the pull tab. When I had finally grabbed hold of it, I yanked it.

A large balloon was instantly inflated above my head. I was still spinning uncontrollably down the mountain; I closed my eyes. I could feel my body coming to a stop. I opened my eyes, hopeful there wasn't a large white cloud anymore. Instead, I opened my eyes to see snow packed all around me. I began to panic. "Luke!" I yelled. "Anyone? Help!" I could hear in the distance the faint voice of someone yelling. The sound was muffled under the thick blanket of snow. My skis were no longer on my feet. They must've come off in the avalanche. I yelled again, "Luke! Help! Can anyone hear me?!" There was no reply, only the faintest sound coming from an unknown direction.

I began to breathe heavily, the air around me cold and stale. I decided I should at least try to dig myself out of this mess. I spit in the snow to see which way was up and down. My spit landed next to my feet, leaving the only way up to be above my head. I lifted my hand above my head and tried to dig myself out. The snow was compacted well already, making it almost impossible to get a grip on the snow.

It seemed like I had been sitting in the snow for hours. My fingers and toes were becoming numb. I looked from side to side, as if something had changed.

"Jake," yelled a voice that seemed rather familiar. "Jake are you around here anywhere?"

"Help!" I yelled at the top of my lungs. "I'm over here!" All of the sudden, I could hear footstep coming closer.

"Jake!" the voice yelled again.

"I'm over here!" I yelled. I heard footsteps now over my head.

"Hey guys, Jake's over here!" The voice yelled. I then heard a stampede of footsteps coming closer.

“Move out of the way, Luke,” Skip said. I could hear the sound of a shovel scraping across the icy snow. A hole small hole appeared and let in a small bit of sunlight above my head. I peered up, seeing the sun peeking out from behind the clouds.