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The Snow Walker

By Charles Martin Smith

Someone's coming!
Visibility is zero.
How can he see anything?

And he asked:

He looks up and he says:
"I don't know, I think it's Beaver Board. "
Set 'em up, Jimmy.
Except for this son of a bitch...
... he's working on my plane tomorrow.
No, just one more, one more come on.
Hey you guys! Here they are.
Here, I'll get it for you.
No...
Get out of there, boy...
Estelle!
Boys, boys! Come on!
Charlie, we all pitched in and
we bought you a girl for your birthday.
Oh, yeah?
OK everybody, look here.
One, two, three.
Charlie... two, three.
I set it up for you all myself...
Beautiful!
Concentrate.
Hey brother!
Five dollars?
Piss off, you drunken rummy!
Get outta here!
Come here, come here.
Come here.
Look at me.
Come on, look at me!
Hell, hold this.
I'll give you a nice shiney new quarter
if you look at me, huh?!
Look me in the eye.
Look me in the eye.
Look at me!
The oddest bunch of people
I've seen in my life.
Won't even look me in the eye.
Beautiful.

Don't give him a good lead, Charlie.
Concentrate.
Ok, ok, ok, ok.
Hey, brother.
Get off of me.
Hey!
I'm sorry, brother.
I ain't your brother.
Hey, you're outta here.
Get outta here.
Come on, take a shot.
Yeah.
Rum is here.
Wait... stop.
Why?
Wait, I have...
...your birthday present.
I have your birthday present.
My birthday is not 'til tomorrow.
Come on, open it.
I'm opening my present.
Charlie?
Charlie, are you in there?
What? Yeah...
It's Carl...
What... what's going on?
Hey, what do you want?
Yeah, it's seven...
Yeah? So?

It's 7:

to be there at 6:30, and it's 7:00 already.
Ok, Ok, um... hold on, I'll be right back.
Give me five minutes.
Alright.
Well, we tried calling, but...
Oh. Sorry.
Aren't you gonna eat?
What about your present?
What?
Your present?
Yeah, right.
I'll tell you what...
as soon as I get back,

I'll open it, ok? Promise.
All right? I'm gonna call you.
I'll be back before you know it.
So you just help yourself
to anything you need in the 'fridge.
And ah...
...see ya.
Here you go, fellas.
Queen Maud Gulf
We'll set up the first camp
right by the ocean.
Go that far?
Cover the territories.
Every bloody inch.
Morning fellas.
Wow! It's a beaut!
What is it?
She's a Norseman.
Right.
You got pontoons on?
Floats.
Right.
Would you excuse us a second?
Charlie.
Yeah.
Knock it off.
What?
You know what.
Now, knock it off.
These guys are a couple of custards.
I'm just tryin' to have fun.
Now look, this is a really big contract.
You piss these guys off...
they're gonna take their
business someplace else.
Oh bullshit!
They ain't goin' anywhere.
Oh yeah? Well, you just
make sure that they don't.
Speaking of which...
how 'bout a little detour
after my run?
Where?
Bathurst.

Why?

Business.

What kind of business?

Oh, a little business business.

Come on, two or three days.

I'm in, I'm out.

Make it worth your while.

Two.

Three.

Two!

And you let me know where you are.

Alright.

And try to keep those
guys happy, will ya?

Hey. Get your suit all dirty?

It's kind of grimy up here.

Oh yeah. Thanks.

So uh...

...you've been flying long?

Guess a better part
of twelve years.

He's my best pilot
during the war.

Africa?

No. Europe.

Flew bombers, Mosquitos, mostly.

Bombed the hell out of Manheim.

Hell, I would've sunk the Bismark
if they'd given me half a chance.

I was infantry myself.

Well, sir...

you have my sympathy.

So, you have a co-pilot
you work with?

Sure do.

Like the book says...

God!

Heavy little buggers, huh?

Didn't expect to see anybody here.

You fellas like chocolate?

You eat this stuff?

Thanks again.

Come.

Come.

Why? What d'ya got there?
Please... please...
come.
You got some pelts?
A little white fox?
What? Wanna do a little trade'n?
Yeah, sure.
What the hell.
Ah Jesus.
Is she your girlfriend?
Your sister?
Well, ah... she's sick,
I can't do anything for her...
because she's got TB
or something.
You know what tuberculosis is?
You...
No. Not even going straight back.
I can't take her.
Take her back to her village.
You got a medicine man,
or somethin' don't ya?
I mean, the hospitals in
Yellowknife are full.
She stays.
I'm sorry.
What d'ya got there?
Holy Smokes!
Lotta money right there.
Yellowknife
Alright. Shit.
I'm deadhead'n anyway.
But you hurry, alright?
Gotta storm brew'n.
Give me your government
number there...
Eskimo tag in case
I gotta get a hold of ya.
E5254
Alright.
This her stuff?
Ok.
Come on.
Ok, here?

Here you go.
Yellowknife.
Yes, yes, Yellowknife.
I said I'd take her to Yellowknife.
Come visit her in the spring,
bring her a potted plant.
How you doing over there?
You alright?
Good days and bad days
I guess, huh?
Coffee?
No. I believe not.
Chocolate?
Come on. It's Nestles.
You know...
N-E-S-T-L-E-S
Nestles makes the very best.
Alright. Never mind.
No what?
To hell with it.
What d'ya say we screw Bathurst...
head straight for home?
Get around this miserable weather.
Funny thing is I was just going there
to sell off those grape di soda...
maybe scrounge up some ivory.
...glad I got that covered.
Life is funny that way.
Shit!
May Day, May Day, May Day!
This is Juliet-India-November...
I'm outta fuel.
We're going down.
Come on!
Hang on!
Come on!
Come on!
Son of a bitch!
Come on!
Pull up!
Come on! Come on!
Pull up!
Don't stop, you bitch!
Shit!

Shit!
Son of a bitch!
Shit!
Son of a bitch!
Well, you might as well get out.
She's broken!
She's smashed to hell,
you understand?
Don't fly no more.
Fish'n.
What the hell kind of fish
can you catch in here?
It's Juliet-India-November...
Anyone read?
Anyone read?
Warren, do you copy?
Bathhurst, Baker Lake.
Anyone?
Oh, hey hey, easy
easy with that.
No, no.
Get outta here with that.
Oh....no what?
Just go....go
You eat it if you're gonna
eat it like that. Go.
Disgusting.
You speak any English?
You speak any English?
Yes, no...
Little bit?
No?
I don't know if you
understand our situation here,
but we're in a hell of a bind.
Nobody knows where
the hell we are.
The reason being is I didn't
stick to my flight plan.
The radio's busted.
I can't call out.
Try and fix it in the
morning, but...
I think my tools are in the

bottom of that lake somewhere.

So I'm just saying, uh...

...there's a good chance

nobody's gonna show up.

Ok?

Good talk'n to ya.

Hey, Shep...

Still no sign of 'em.

I'm start'n to think...

No sign of who?

Charlie?

Yeah, he just got a little delayed

by the weather, that's all.

Now why would you say something

like that in front of her for, huh?

I didn't know she was standing there.

Jesus, Carl.

You know Charlie's got women

stashed all over the bloody map.

I know, but shouldn't we have

heard something by now?

Hey, don't worry about it.

He's fine.

I'll start worrying

about Charlie Holladay

five minutes after

hell freezes over.

I'll tell ya what though...

he'd better be having

one hell of a good time.

Shit! No!

No!

No!

No!

Hey!

A town couple hundred

miles east of here.

I'm gonna head for it.

Alright?

I left you some grub.

Be back in about a week.

What?

No. It's too far.

You stay.

Ok? You stay here.
I'll send a plane
to get you.
Ok? I'll be back in a little bit.
Shit!
Shit!
Charlie Holladay...
with the Norseman.
Juliet-India-November
I think I got it here.
Norseman!
Mark 5!
They say it isn't gonna break
for at least another 24.
Second it does...
Pierce, I want you and
Carl to go to the Gulf.
You take the Stinson,
cover west towards Bathurst.
Yes, sir.
Bathurst?
Can you try them? Over.
Sorry.
Frank. It's the station.
The want to make it an
official missing person.
Yeah, Ok.
Charlie!
Charlie!
What?
Hold back on the formation.
No!
Charlie!
No!
Shit!
What the hell?
What the hell you doing here?
Hey.
Did you follow me?
You follow me?
Walk?
Did you walk here?
Sleep.
You speak English?

Little bit.
Eat.
Thank you.
Oh, that's good.
That's good.
Where did you get this?
What is this?
Sicsic.
What's sicsic?
You catch this?
Where the hell you find this?
I don't even know your name.
What's your name?
No, no...
Not your tag.
Your name.
What do I call you?
Kanalaag.
Kanalaag.
Charlie.
Charlie?
Nice and easy.
Here we go, Cherry.
Look alive.
Fishing camp.
Huskies.
What are you doing?
Lunch.
Why? Don't you ever eat, Cherry?
Don't call me that.
How long you been up here?
Couple months.
It's different, isn't it?
How big you think it is,
the territory?
Half a million?
Million miles?
You know, you could put all of
Europe in here three times...
and still have room for Greenland.
What are you talking about?
Charlie was where he
was suppose to be.
Why is Shep sending

people to Bathhurst?
Maybe the plane's
under the water...
crashed on the sand
or something.
How'd the barrels
get on the beach?
Right.
Somethin' else happened.
You know?
Maybe it was murder.
Maybe the Huskies killed him.
Then they ate him.
Then they ate his plane.
What's the matter with you?
Nothing.
Let's go find the poor
son of a bitch.
Here. A little souvenir.
What are these little things?
Old boots.
Old boots.
Want some water?
Here. Do you want some?
Water.
Hot.
Water?
Drink.
Drinking is "imec"?
Water is "imac"?
Drink... "Imec".
What's that?
Water... "Imac".
I'm not gonna remember all this.
Hey!
What are you doing?
What?
Fix it.
No... not right now.
Wait!
I need those.
Come back!
Kanalaag!
Come back!

What about up here?
North of Slave Lake.
... have already covered that...
I don't give a damn.
I'm telling you where
I want you to go.
Fine.
Pierce?
Do the Back River...
in case he cuts straight down.
Why would he?
Shep?
Hello, Mrs. Holladay.
This is Walter Sheperd.
I work with your son.
I don't know exactly
how to say this.
I always hoped I'd never
have to make this call.
Want some fish?
Your, um...
You got something...
What are you making?
For you.
No you don't have to do that.
At least...
these boots are still fine.
Put a few stitches in them,
they'll take me a few more miles.
You should rest.
You know?
Alright. That's it.
Gotta go back.
Maybe we should push a little bit.
No.
Look at the gauge.
We got the fuel.
Just 5 more minutes.
Look at the gauge.
What do you think this is, a game?
What are you, some kind of boy scout?
What are you talking about, Pierce?
Think I don't know
what's going on here?

You think I don't really
see what's going on?
Why don't you just come out
and say it? Say what?
You don't wanna find him!
You... you dumb ass kid!
Charlie Holladay's dead.
He was an arrogant, selfish
son of a bitch who got sloppy...
and now he's dead.
Take a look out there.
Go on. Just look down below.
You see that?
That's death, boy.
This land will kill you as
sure as a bullet in the head.
We just run this little drill
to make us all feel better.
Because next time, who knows,
could be my ass...
or Shephard's, your yours.
He would have done the
same for us. What?
He would have done the same for us.
Your goddamn right, he would.
But that don't change the facts.
Hey!
Hey!
Hey!
You see, the way I figure it,
I probably walked for 5 days.
Maybe... I don't know...
...15, 20 miles a day.
So that would put us,
probably...
...80, 90 miles from the plane.
So if Shep is flying a triangular
grid from Queen Maud Gulf...
...Bathurst, Yellowknife...
and that was them
and they're flying east...
they'd see the plane.
They'd see the S.O.S.
and they'd know

we're alive. But, no...
we're here in the middle
of bloody nowhere.
Because I left the plane.
Shit!
You never, never, never
leave the plane!
But I know it was them.
We gotta go back.
You're gonna cut my
circulation off there.
Alright.
I'm not a bloody invalid.
I'm good.
I got it, I got it, I got it.
I'm good.
Alright, let's go back to camp.
No, I'm not going in the water.
It's Ok.
No, I'll get soaked.
It's Ok.
How 'bout that?
Water tight.
I got boots.
You've... wife?
Me? No.
Not married.
Use to have a girl.
That was a while ago.
How old?
32, no wife?
How old are you?
20?
How 'bout you?
You got a wife?
Hey. That's enough.
Time out.
You know, you've been singing the
same song for three days now.
I mean, have mercy woman.
A man can only take
so much of this.
You know any other songs?
You know anything with

a tune or a beat?
You sing.
No, ah...
that's not what I meant.
You sing now.
Alright.
Fine.
I'll sing.
"When the moon hits your eye... "
"... like a big pizza pie... "
"... that's amore."
"When the world seems to shine... "
"... like you've had too much wine... "
"... that's amore."
So?
Sit down.
Search and rescue called.
They've been at it for
almost three weeks now.
You know what they
say about them.
They have a perfect record...
but never found anybody.
The country is just...
so big, you know?
And if, God forbid,
the plane burned...
they could fly right
over the top of it...
never see anything at all.
I'm sorry kid.
You Ok?
Here, sit down.
Let's rest a while.
What the hell is that?
It's not the plane.
You see that?
Dear God.
Ooh, jeeze,
look at this.
Bimotor...
You know,
I think this is a B-18.
Sure took a tumble.

Look at all this stuff.
Come look at this.
Come here.
We can use some of this.
Look up in here.
All kinds of stuff.
Yeah.
Use that.
Look at the jack I found here.
We can kill a few squirrels
with that, huh?
Come on. There's all kinds
of stuff. Give me a hand.
It's Ok.
It's Ok.
Poor son of a bitch.
Look at that!
Not too bad.
Use it for somethin'.
Come on!
Come on, give me a hand.
Yeah!
Jack pot!
Look at this!
Thank you!
That's gonna save us,
right there.
We were meant to
find this stuff, Kanalaaq.
Would you at least
look at me?
I'm talking to you.
Would you look at me?
What are you doing?
He doesn't need
these things, you know.
Fine.
The world has many spirits.
All things ...
Breath?
Everything breathes?
Some spirits good...
some bad.
They trick you.

When you die...
"Tarquiup" will come.
Who's that?
Who is Tarquiup?
Is he a spirit?
He...
He sees you?
He watches you?
He says...
Come. It's Ok.
It's your time now.
It's Ok.
Where does he take you,
when he comes?
Good hunting.
Many fields...
fish...
walrus?
Sounds like a good place.
When you die...
you need...
You need your tools.
I see.
So, where does Tarquiup live?
The moon?
Hey.
I was just trying to figure
out whose dog that is.
You off work?
No, just a break.
Told Jimmy I needed some air.
I wanted to tell you something.
I know you feel bad, Shep.
But this wasn't your fault.
You aren't responsible for him.
Nobody was.
When it comes right down to it,
all of us are just alone in this world...
and that's just the way it is.
I brought you something.
I thought you might
like to have it.
Ok.
What are you doing?

Gettin' my stuff.
I heard they called off the search.
Yeah.
That's a tough break.
Listen, if you're looking for another flyer,
I got a buddy you might wanna meet.
He and I are partners on
a couple of side deals we got going.
I do a little speculating now
and again myself, you know?
Matter of fact, you know
we should talk.
Because, uh...
maybe we could...
work out a little arrangement?
Get out.
What?
You heard me.
Go on.
Get the hell outta here.
Before I throw you
through the goddamn wall.
Look.
Thank God!
Look at that.
How could you miss her?
Come on. I know you
guys left something here.
Alright. Come on fellas,
I know you left it. So where is it?
Come on, Shep, Pierce.
I don't believe it.
Damn it!
Nothin!
Not a note. Not a sign. Nothin!
How could they miss this?
How could they not see us?
You know, the snow is comin'.
What is it gonna get?
20, 40 below?
How we gonna eat then, huh?
How we gonna stay alive?
I don't even know
why you came for me.

But you know what
the real joke is?
We never had a chance.
We were dead the minute
we hit the ground.
(Speaking Eskimo)
Leave me alone.
(Speaking Eskimo)
I said leave me alone.
Charlie, no!
No!
Charlie?
Charlie?
What?
You Ok?
Here.
What is that?
Looks like fat.
You eat this?
Pretty good.
(Speaking Eskimo)
I was just thinking about this...
steak house in Montreal.
Called "Moishe's".
I use to always go there
with the fellas from my outfit.
I'm tellin' ya, the
steaks in this joint
were at least five inches thick.
They had it all, boy.
They had...
top sirloin, New York, rib eye...
and you walk in there,
and you could smell it...
waft into the joint,
sizzling on the grill.
They come to the table
with these giant spuds...
just swimming in butter
and sour cream...
and chives, and fried onions
and mushrooms...
and the wine, just...
flowing like bloody spring water.

Course, the fellas would
get a little tight...
gettin' lit up on the sauce,
and start jaw waggin' about...
all the crazy, dumb ass shit
we did during the war.
Those were good times.
Funny thing, you know, what
war does to some people.
You know, you think
you know a fella...
seems perfectly normal,
then one day...
the hammer drops,
and he snaps, you know?
He falls all to pieces.
Just because a...
what we saw over there, you know,
what we saw during the war.
Never in your wildest dreams
thought you'd see stuff like that.
You never thought you could
do the things you did.
Things you just grow
to hate yourself for.
But somehow you know
you'll make your peace with it.
At least you try.
Soon, we walk.
(Speaking Eskimo)
Here.
Put this around you.
Oh, damn.
That's enough for today.
Ok?
Oh shit, you're burning up.
It's Ok.
It's Ok.
You just pushed yourself
too hard today.
It's Ok.
It's Ok.
It's Ok.
How you doing?

You alright?
I'm Ok.
Good.
There was small girl.
Family. Family hunting?
She was hunting with her family?
Father...
Father was hurt?
Couldn't hunt.
The storm...
snow...
Many days never eat.
Tarquiup Inua took father...
mother...
She went away to die
because there was no food?
More food for her.
Sure.
Sister was dying.
So the girl...
You fed her with your blood.
Then what happened?
People came.
But Tarquiup never came.
Tricked him.
You are not going to freeze.
Yeah, I figure just keep headin' north...
We're bound to run into
a hunting party, or a village.
Sooner or later.
I can radio from Medivac
and get straight into a hospital.
They'll take care of
you in a hospital.
They got good medicine
since the war.
I'll tell you another thing.
We're not going to Yellowknife, either.
Take you to the big city,
like Edminton.
Ever been to the city?
You wouldn't believe your eyes.
There's cars and people,
everywhere all over the streets.

Millions of "cabunas"
everywhere.

"Moishe's"?

"Moishe's"

No, that's in Montreal.

But, they have the
same thing in Edminton.

Plus, I'll tell you what...

soon as you get out of the hospital,
I'll take you for a big steak dinner.

Alright?

Mushrooms...

potatoes and onions...

I didn't know Charlie Holladay
for very long...

but I do know he
was a good pilot...

and a good friend.

We are gathered here today
because he was taken from us.

Much too soon.

Words are cold comfort when
a young life is cut so short.

But I thought I might read
from a poem I found,

written by a young Canadian flight lieutenant
named John McGee during the war
and found in his locker
after he was shot down.

"Oh, I have slipped the
surly bonds of Earth,

and danced the skies
on laughter-silvered wings.

Sunward I've climbed,
and joined the tumbling mirth
of sun-split clouds --

and done a hundred things
you have not dreamed of --

wheeled and soared and swung
high in the sunlit silence.

Hov'ring there,

I've chased the shouting wind along,
and flung my eager craft
through footless halls of air.

Up, up the long,
delirious burning blue,
I've topped the windswept
heights with easy grace
Where never lark,
or even eagle flew.
And, while with silent, lifting mind
I've trod the high untresspassed
sanctity of space,
Put out my hand,
and touched the face of God."
Not very good boots.
Thank you.
My people.
Brother.
Kanalaag.
Kanalaag!
Kanalaag!