

Thridrangaviti Lighthouse

17 januari 2025, leon elshout

"This is it?" Jenna shouted over the deafening roar of the helicopter's retreating blades. Her voice was lost to the wind and the sea's relentless applause against the rocks.

The pilot gave a thumbs up before the aircraft disappeared into the grey horizon. The three of them were left standing on the precarious metal platform, luggage scattered around their feet, staring at the tiny Thridrangaviti Lighthouse that was to be their home for the next month. It was a grim structure, stark and solitary, with a narrow bridge connecting it to the relative safety of the platform.

They looked at each other, a mix of excitement and trepidation etched on their faces. The wind bit at their skin, carrying with it the salty scent of the ocean. The waves crashed against the base of the mountain, sending up plumes of spray that painted the rocks a ghostly white. The bridge swayed slightly, groaning under the weight of their footsteps as they approached. It was a tightrope walk over a sea that seemed to stretch on forever, the water a deep, unfriendly shade of blue-green.

Once across, they pushed open the heavy timer door to the lighthouse. Inside, the stench of stale air and dampness hit them like a wall. The place was a mess, a testament to the years of neglect and the harsh elements that had found their way in despite the building's stoic facade. The floor was covered in a layer of dust so thick it looked like it had been snowing indoors, and the only light came from the flickering beam of their flashlights.

They dropped their bags and set to work, coughing and sneezing as they uncovered a table and a few chairs. The walls were lined with shelves, but the books and charts had been reduced to a pulp by the damp. The windowless space was claustrophobic, the air stale with a hint of something metallic. They found their camping gear and set up the stove, eager for a cup of coffee to warm their hands and soothe their nerves.

"How the hell did they manage to build this place?" Marcus wondered aloud, wiping the dust off a framed photograph of the lighthouse's construction. The workers in the photo looked so tiny against the backdrop of the towering mountain and the angry sea.

"And why?" Elena added, her voice echoing in the small room as she peered out the open door at the bridge swaying in the wind. "It's like they wanted to be as far from civilization as possible."

They set about their task, assembling the camping stove and finding a spot to brew their coffee. The silence was deafening once their work was done, the only sound being the occasional gust of wind whipping around the lighthouse. Marcus went to the pile of garbage, which had been pushed into a corner, and began to sort through it. The sight of a half-eaten sandwich from a previous team made his stomach turn.

"We've got a lot of cleaning to do," he said, holding up the sandwich with two fingers. "This place is a dump."

They laughed nervously, the absurdity of the situation not lost on any of them. Here they were, in the middle of nowhere, tasked with the Sisyphean job of cleaning a lighthouse that seemed to have been abandoned by time itself. But the warmth of the coffee, once brewed, brought a bit of comfort to their cold, trembling hands. They sat in silence, sipping the hot liquid and watching the light play off the dust particles in the air.

Marcus broke the silence, "So, who's up for the first round of garbage duty?"

Jenna took a deep breath, "Let's get this over with," she said, standing up and grabbing a trash bag. They split up, each tackling a different corner of the room. The bridge squealed with every gust of wind, a constant reminder of their isolation. They worked in harmony, their movements precise and efficient as they cleared the space of debris. The air grew clearer as the dust settled, revealing the true extent of their challenge.

Marcus paused in his work, staring at the thick layer of grime covering the lighthouse's interior. "It's like an archaeological dig," he said, half to himself. "We're uncovering history here."

"Yeah," Jenna quipped, "but instead of artifacts, we're finding moldy bread."

They laughed again, the sound briefly filling the empty space before being swallowed by the ever-present rumble of the waves. As they cleaned, they found themselves imagining the lives of the men who had built this place. The sheer determination it must have taken to construct a beacon in such a hostile environment was awe-inspiring. They worked in silence, the only sounds being the scrape of the broom and the rustle of plastic bags.

The hours passed quickly, and soon the room was empty of garbage, the floor a sea of plastic and decay. They stepped outside, gasping in the cold, fresh air. The wind had picked up, turning the ocean into a tumultuous canvas of whitecaps. They stared at the horizon, the helicopter's promise of more water and supplies a distant memory in the face of the vast, uncaring wilderness.

Marcus spoke first, his voice tight with the realization of their situation. "We're going to need to ration what we have until they come back."

Elena nodded, her eyes on the small puddle of coffee they had spilled while setting up camp. "Every drop counts."

They decided to use the little water they had sparingly, prioritizing drinking and cooking. The cleaning would have to wait for the water bin delivery. That night, they spread out their sleeping bags in the now less cluttered room, avoiding the dustiest spots as best they could. They huddled together for warmth, the only sound their breathing and the distant lullaby of the sea's rage.

The first night was a test of their endurance. The howling wind and the relentless pounding of the waves kept them awake, each gust feeling like a personal challenge to their resolve. The darkness outside was absolute, only pierced by the rhythmic sweep of the lighthouse beam that painted their faces in brief moments of stark relief before plunging them back into shadow.

They had managed to scrub down the essentials with the little water they had left, but the pervasive grime had seeped into their clothes and skin, leaving them feeling sticky and unclean. They tried to ignore it as they lay in their sleeping bags, listening to the symphony of the storm that raged around them. The floor was still cold and unwelcoming, despite the insulation they had laid out.

The next day dawned, bringing with it a sliver of hope in the form of a slightly calmer sea. The helicopter was due to arrive with the new water bin, which was essential for both cleaning and their survival. They had set an alarm, not that they needed one; the anticipation kept them wide awake. The sky was a brooding grey, the light a feeble imitation of the sun's usual brilliance.

They waited, their stomachs growling, for any sign of the helicopter. The wind had died down to a whisper, leaving only the solemn cries of seabirds to keep them company. Finally, the distant thumping of rotors pierced the silence. The aircraft emerged from the fog, a gleaming beacon of civilization against the stark backdrop. Their hearts raced as the helicopter hovered, the pilot carefully maneuvering the water bin into place. It was a delicate operation, one that could spell disaster if mishandled.

Marcus secured the net to the hook dangling from the helicopter's belly. "Be careful," he yelled to the pilot. "Some of this stuff is pretty old." The pilot gave a curt nod, his eyes focused on the task at hand. With a jerk, the net lifted off the ground, swinging precariously as it ascended into the mist. They watched as it disappeared into the grey

sky, feeling a strange mix of relief and anxiety. The garbage contained a piece of the lighthouse's history, a tangible connection to the lives that had been lived and lost in this forsaken place.

The team had unearthed relics from a bygone era during their cleaning: rusted cans with labels peeled away by time, frayed ropes, and even a leather-bound journal, its pages yellowed and brittle. They had debated whether to leave the journal behind, a silent witness to the lives of those who had come before, but in the end, they decided to include it in the garbage net. It was a piece of the lighthouse's soul they hadn't the heart to discard.

With the net secured and the helicopter's engines growing distant, they turned their attention back to the lighthouse. The wind had picked up again, whipping the waves into a frenzy. They could see the spray rising up like misty specters, trying to claim the platform. Inside, the space was cleaner but still starkly empty, the walls seemingly closing in with the weight of the isolation.

The next two days fell into a rhythm of endless cleaning. The helicopter returned at dawn, the pilot's face a mask of stoicism as he dropped off the new water bin and collected the garbage. The ritual was oddly comforting, a tether to the outside world. They greeted each other with curt nods and shouts over the engine's roar, the only words exchanged being instructions about the cargo. The team took turns watching the horizon, waiting for the aircraft's daily visit, their eyes strained against the salty gusts.

Finally, after three long days, the small building began to shed its former identity as a garbage dump. The walls and ceiling had been scrubbed clean, and the floor was now a canvas of gleaming white. The room felt alive again, as if the layers of dirt had been weighing it down. The transformation was astonishing, and as they stood back to admire their work, a sense of pride swelled within them. They had conquered the grime, restored order to this tiny bastion of humanity in the face of the wild.

The next step was to give the room some warmth, to make it feel like a home. They chose a paint color that would bring a sense of comfort and familiarity: Caffee Latte 3017, a cozy coffee milk shade that would blend with the light that filtered through the fog. The decision to paint the floor was a practical one; the constant battle against the seeping dampness required a sealant that the paint would provide.

They set to work, brushing the first strokes onto the walls with a fervor that belied their fatigue. The scent of paint filled the air, a sweet, almost nostalgic aroma that seemed to cleanse the space of its past neglect. Each stroke was a declaration of their intent to conquer the elements and make this forsaken lighthouse their own. They

painted into the night, their flashlights casting eerie shadows across the walls as they moved in a silent dance of progress.

The next morning, they stepped outside, blinking in the stark arctic light. They had transformed the room into a warm, inviting space, the Caffee Latte 3017 hue a stark contrast to the cold, whitewashed walls of before. The decision to paint the floor had been a good one; the room looked complete, the paint a protective seal against the ever-present dampness that threatened to reclaim its territory. But the price of this improvement was two nights of camping outdoors.

They decided to get it right this time. A good start was half the battle. Therefore, they would repaint the entire inside can t of the building, including the floor, with Café Latte 3017. This meant they had to bivouac in the tent for two more nights. And it had suddenly turned cold at night. But two nights they would sacrifice to soon find themselves in a brand new hipster shelter.

After four days the floor and the walls were dry and the interior started to look hipster. Now they broke down the tents and finally settled in the building itself which looked very different from when they arrived.

The decision to paint the rooftop came easily. It was the last untouched part of the lighthouse that needed attention. They had already cleaned it and now they would also paint it Café Latte. The only problem was the draught through the vents. Who had ever thought of that. As if it didn't already blow enough on the roof terrace. For this, the helicopter would deliver cement and bricks. But that was for later concern.

The entire building and the door and roof terrace was now painted Café Latte. The helicopter would take the empty paint pots tomorrow and bring in Persian carpets and other stuff.

The next day, the helicopter arrived as scheduled, the pilot's face a mask of curiosity as he lowered the basket containing their new supplies. To their astonishment, the basket held not only the requested Persian carpets and cement but also three Barcelona chairs, a parrot, a cat, and two squirrels. The sight of the animals was so absurd that they couldn't help but laugh, the tension of the past few days momentarily forgotten.

Marcus caught the rope attached to the basket and pulled it in, setting the contents down with care. The cat looked up at them with unblinking eyes, its fur as white as the snow that capped the distant mountains. The parrot squawked, flapping its wings, a flash of color against the dull grey of the metal floor. The squirrels chattered in their cage, tiny paws clutching the bars.

"Well, this wasn't what we ordered," Jenna said, trying to keep the laughter from her voice. "But I guess we can make it work."

They unpacked the basket, setting aside the animal food and the Persian carpets. The small electric heater was a welcome sight, a beacon of warmth in the otherwise cold room. They plugged it in, watching as it began to glow, casting a warm circle of light onto the freshly painted floor. They decided to let the animals inside immediately, figuring the warmth would be good for them.

The parrot was first to venture out, hopping onto Marcus's shoulder and pecking curiously at his ear. "Hey, now, no biting the hand that feeds you," he said, laughing as he stroked its feathers. The cat, more cautious, peered out of the basket, its tail flicking nervously before it too stepped into the warmth. The squirrels chattered in excitement, their tiny bodies a blur of movement as they explored their new home.

The radio played Mozart, filling the space with a soothing melody that seemed to resonate with the very soul of the lighthouse. They set up the news radio in a corner, the static-filled voice offering a comforting reminder of the world beyond their solitary perch. The wifi connection was a miracle, a lifeline that brought them music, movies, and the ability to communicate with the outside world, even though their physical connection was as tenuous as the bridge that connected them to the platform.

The animals grew accustomed to their new surroundings, the parrot's squawks punctuating the classical tunes with a discordant yet oddly fitting flair. The squirrels took to their cage, chasing each other in endless circles of playful banter, their tiny paws skittering across the plastic floor. The cat remained aloof, watching from the safety of its basket, its eyes gleaming in the soft glow of the laptop screens.

The next step was to create a small oasis outside, a task that seemed almost ludicrous in the face of the relentless sea and the unforgiving winds. Marcus and Elena donned their waterproof gear, stepping out onto the bridge with a sense of trepidation. The path to the back of the lighthouse was narrow, a tightrope over the abyss that was the Arctic Ocean. The box trees they had brought with them from the mainland looked pitifully small in the vastness of the landscape, but they were hopeful that with care and the right conditions, they would thrive.

They began to dig, the sound of their shovels echoing against the mountain. Each scoop of dirt was a declaration of intent, a silent shout to the world that they would not be defeated by this desolate place. The wind howled around them, as if in protest of their invasion, but they persevered. The soil was rocky and unforgiving, but they managed to carve out small pockets for the trees, filling them with a mixture of earth and compost brought from their supplies.

The sapling was a gamble, a symbol of life in this harsh environment. They had chosen it with care, a young birch that had a fighting chance of taking root in the crevice they had prepared for it. The squirrels watched with keen interest, their tiny paws clutching the bars of their cage as they chattered excitedly. It was a moment of unity, humans and animals bound by a shared hope for the future.

As they worked, the helicopter made several trips, bringing in the construction workers and materials. The men looked around, wide-eyed, at the stark beauty of their surroundings, the grandeur of the mountain and the fury of the sea a stark contrast to the cramped, dusty room they had been living in. They were locals, weathered by the harshness of the Icelandic winters, and they approached the task with a mix of curiosity and determination.

The first order of business was the back door. Marcus and Elena had hoped to tackle it themselves, but the reality of the impending winter had made it clear that they needed professional help. The two workers set to work immediately, their tools a stark contrast to the natural elements that had sculpted the land around them. The sound of hammering and drilling filled the air, a cacophony of modernity in a place that felt centuries old.

The workers were named Sigurður and Björn, hardy men with hands rough from a lifetime of battling the Icelandic climate. They moved with the precision of a well-oiled machine, their every gesture a testament to their years of experience. They had seen their fair share of the world's harshest conditions and had the scars to prove it. They worked tirelessly, pausing only to wipe the sweat from their brows and to sip the coffee that Jenna had brewed for them.

The door was a makeshift affair, a patchwork of metal sheets and insulation that would have to hold against the onslaught of the winter storms. Sigurður and Björn approached it with the seriousness of surgeons operating on a heart, their every move calculated and precise. The room grew warmer with each nail hammered into place, the smell of paint and sawdust a stark contrast to the salty tang of the sea. The drone of the drill and the clank of tools was a reassuring symphony of progress.

With each trip, the helicopter brought more than just supplies. It brought a slice of civilization, a reminder that they were not entirely alone in the world. The pilot would hover, the blades slicing through the air with an almost rhythmic intensity, as the workers threw ropes and secured the cargo. The air was a frenzy of motion, the only constant the unchanging grey of the sky above.

The back door was a marvel of improvisation, a patchwork of metal sheets and insulation that had been welded together to create a barricade against the elements. It was a testament to the ingenuity of the men who had crafted it. Sigurður and Björn

had worked tirelessly, their hands steady and sure as they transformed the entrance into a bastion of protection.

Behind them, the two boxwood hydrangeas and the sour cherry trees they had planted stood tall, their branches reaching out to each other like the tentative embrace of old friends. The shrubs, hardy and resilient, had taken root in the rocky soil, a green tapestry that softened the harshness of the mountain. The LED lights had been placed with care, a constellation of warmth and guidance that stretched from the far stern of the lighthouse to the precarious bridge leading to the platform. The sight was nothing short of breathtaking, a man-made aurora that defied the impending winter's gloom.

They worked with a fervor that belied their weariness, knowing that every moment counted. The helicopter's visits grew more frequent as they raced against the ticking clock of the season. The air grew colder with each passing day, and the storms grew more intense, but they remained steadfast in their mission. They had transformed the lighthouse into a bastion of warmth and life, and they were determined to keep it that way.

The boxwood hydrangeas and the sour cherry trees grew stronger with each passing day, their roots digging deep into the unforgiving earth. The shrubs they had planted flourished under their careful attention, providing a much-needed splash of color against the monochromatic backdrop of rock and sea. The LED lights, a constellation of artificial stars, cast a warm glow over the new garden, creating a path that seemed to invite the lost sailor to find refuge in their sanctuary.

The helicopter had become a regular presence in their lives, a lifeline to the world beyond the lighthouse. Each visit brought not just supplies but a reminder of the people who had sent them, a tangible connection to humanity that grew more precious with each passing day. When the aircraft arrived with the final delivery, the team was surprised to find a spare stove, two small Canary palms, and two Buxus Hyrcana bushes. The addition of the UV-B heat lamps and Infrared lamps was a stroke of genius; they would not only keep the plants alive but also provide a much-needed source of warmth as the days grew shorter and the nights grew colder.

Sigurður and Bjørn, the stoic Icelandic workers, returned with the helicopter, their faces etched with lines of experience that told tales of countless battles with the elements. They approached the task of setting up the small storage shed and the new amenities with the same quiet determination they had brought to the door. The shed was a tiny oasis of order in the chaos of the mountain, a place where they could keep their supplies organized and protected from the relentless sea. Cat flaps were made in the front and back doors through which the squirrels could also pass.

The spare stove was a godsend, providing not just extra cooking capacity but also a secondary source of heat. Marcus and Elena set it up in the corner of the main room, the warmth it emitted a comforting presence in the chilly air. They placed the Canary palms in the two Buxus Hyrcana's they had painted to match the rest of the interior, creating a small island of greenery that brought a touch of the exotic to their otherwise sparse living space.

As the first snowflakes danced in the air outside, the team made the decision to release the animals. The parrot, now named Pippin, took to the air with a squawk of excitement, his vibrant plumage a stark contrast against the monochrome sky. The squirrels, whom they had affectionately named Thelma and Louise, scurried around the lighthouse, their tiny paws leaving faint tracks in the dusting of snow that had begun to accumulate. The cat, a creature of habit, remained in its basket, watching the chaos with a look of disdain before deigning to step out and explore the new world.

The moment the door was cracked open, a flurry of activity erupted. They had to be quick, the cold air rushing in a stark reminder of the unforgiving environment just beyond the threshold. The animals, sensing freedom, moved with lightning speed. Marcus managed to grab Thelma before she could dart away, her tiny heart racing in his palm. Elena scooped up Louise, her cheek brushing against the soft fur as the squirrel chattered in protest. They were both let go in the warmth of the lighthouse, their eyes wide with wonder at their newfound freedom.

The next day, the cat and squirrels were let out for a while. The parrot was also taken outside for a while. It was clear that the parrot was used to other places than snow-capped mountain peaks in the ice sea.

The cat, however, was more adaptable. Its fur thick and water-repellent, it stalked around the lighthouse with a regal grace, tail held high as it surveyed the untouched landscape. The squirrels, on the other hand, seemed overwhelmed by the vastness and cold. They stuck close to the building, their little bodies quivering in the chilly breeze.

As the winter months settled in, the team grew accustomed to their new companions. The cat took to curling up by the stove, its eyes gleaming with contentment as it watched the squirrels scamper around the lighthouse. The parrot, Pippin, had decided to stay inside and wait for warmer days. It inspected the Box wood plants and both Palm trees.

Their days were filled with a strange rhythm of solitude and companionship. They worked in shifts, tending to the lighthouse's duties and the animals. The nights were long, but the warmth of their painted haven and the glow of their electronic screens

kept them connected to the outside world. They had become custodians of this solitary beacon, a bastion of warmth in the heart of the Arctic's icy embrace.

Occasionally, the animals ventured outside, driven by instincts that the humans could only guess at. The squirrels would dart out into the cold, their tiny bodies bobbing through the snow like tiny boats in a frozen sea. The cat, with its fur thick and eyes sharp, would prowl the perimeter, leaving a trail of paw prints that would soon be erased by the relentless wind. But they always returned, as if drawn back to the warmth and safety of the lighthouse, a silent pact formed between them and their human caretakers.

The presence of birds of prey was a stark reminder of the harsh realities of survival in this desolate place. The team had spotted a snowy owl perched on a distant crag, watching them with unblinking eyes that seemed to pierce through the fog. It was a predator, a creature of the wild, and it was a stark contrast to the domestic life they had brought with them. Yet, even in this alien world, the animals had found a way to coexist, a delicate balance that kept them safe from the ever-present dangers outside.

The squirrels, Thelma and Louise, grew bolder with each passing week. They would scurry out into the snow, their tiny bodies a blur of movement as they searched for food and adventure. They had discovered a cache of berries in a crevice of the mountain, and each day they would race each other to be the first to claim the prize. Their squeaks and chitters filled the air, a reminder of life's resilience in the face of adversity.

The cat, now named Freyja, had become an adept hunter, bringing back small gifts of mice and birds to lay at their feet. Her fur had thickened to withstand the cold, and her eyes had grown sharper, always on the lookout for the next meal or a warm place to rest. Despite her newfound freedom, she remained a constant presence in their lives, seeking refuge from the storms that raged outside.

The squirrels, however, had grown more adventurous. They would disappear for hours at a time, only to reappear with tales of their escapades etched in their wide-eyed stares and shivering tails. Each time they ventured out, the team held their breath, fearing the worst, but Thelma and Louise had proven to be more than mere pets; they were survivors, embodying the very spirit of the lighthouse itself.

The storm raged on, the wind howling like a chorus of lost souls. The lighthouse trembled with each gust, its ancient stones protesting the intrusion of the tempest. Inside, the team huddled around the stove, sipping hot cocoa, and watching the animals play. They had become a strange family, brought together by fate and the unyielding hand of the Arctic.

The decision to go to the compost toilet was not taken lightly. They had learned the hard way that the elements were not to be underestimated. Marcus and Elena donned their thickest parkas and gloves, the fabric straining against the gale as they stepped outside. Jenna held the rope, her eyes fixed on the door, ready to pull them back at the first sign of trouble.

The wind was a beast, howling and biting at their faces as they inched their way around the corner of the lighthouse. The snow stung their cheeks, and the world beyond the warmth of their painted shelter had turned into a frozen wasteland. They reached the toilet, a small wooden box that stood stoically against the storm, its lid already frozen shut. With a grunt, Marcus pried it open, the cold metal giving way to the warmth within. It was a stark reminder of their vulnerability in this unforgiving environment.

Elena and Jenna held the rope taut, their knuckles white with the effort of keeping the line taut. They shouted encouragements over the din of the wind, their voices swallowed by the maelstrom. Marcus disappeared into the tiny enclosure, the wind trying to steal the warmth from his body. He emerged moments later, his face a mask of relief, the rope tugging at him like an impatient child eager to get back inside.

The storm grew more ferocious, the snow now a blinding curtain that obscured the world beyond the lighthouse. The cat, Freyja, grew restless, her eyes reflecting the flickering light of the stove. With a suddenness that belied her size, she shot out of the door before any of them could react, a flash of white disappearing into the maelstrom. The team exchanged worried glances, but there was nothing to be done. They had to trust in her instincts.

They waited, the tension in the room palpable, as the wind howled and the snow piled up outside. The squirrels, sensing the change in the air, grew quieter, huddling together under a blanket. The parrot, Pippin, ruffled its feathers, its eyes half-closed in a display of stoicism. Minutes ticked by, each second stretching into an eternity.

Suddenly, the radio crackled to life. "Thridrangaviti, this is Coast Guard Iceland. We have a tornado warning in your area. Seek shelter immediately and remain in the lighthouse." The voice was calm, but the urgency was unmistakable. Jenna's hand hovered over the button, ready to respond, but what was there to say? They had already anticipated this moment, had already prepared.

The storm had been building all day, the winds growing stronger, the snow thickening into a blizzard that swallowed the world outside. Now the squirrels also escaped while Marcus was pooping.

Jenna and Elena stared at each other in horror as the door to the lighthouse slammed shut behind the tiny figures, their eyes wide with fear. "We have to get them back!" Elena shouted over the wind, her voice straining to be heard above the howling gale.

Marcus, however, was still in the throes of his toilet break, the wind tugging at his pants as he worked to pull them up with one hand while clutching the rope with the other. His face was red with effort and the cold, but he managed to shout back, "I'm coming! Hold on!" His words were barely audible as they were whipped away by the storm.

Jenna and Elena exchanged a panicked glance, knowing they couldn't leave him out there. The squirrels and cat were one thing, but Marcus was their team member, their friend. They braced themselves against the wind, holding the door open a crack, and shouted encouragement. The squirrels had vanished into the whiteness, and there was no sign of Freyja, the cat.

Marcus emerged from the toilet, his face a mask of discomfort. The rope still in hand, he took a tentative step, then another, his boots crunching through the fresh snow. "I can't hold it much longer," he yelled, his voice strained with the effort of trying to keep his balance and his pants up simultaneously. The storm had picked up, the winds whipping the snow into a frenzy that stung their eyes and made it hard to breathe.

The radio squawked again, the voice more urgent this time. "Thridrangaviti Lighthouse, tornado confirmed, ETA five minutes. Seek shelter immediately." The squirrels had gone out of sight, and the cat had vanished into the blizzard. Marcus's heart raced, his concern for his animal companions momentarily overriding his own plight. He took a deep breath, braced himself against the wind, and shouted, "We have to find them!"

Elena and Jenna looked at each other, their eyes filled with a mix of fear and determination. They knew they couldn't leave Marcus out in the storm, but they couldn't abandon their furry friends either. "You stay here," Elena yelled over the wind. "We'll go find them!"

They bundled up, wrapping themselves in the warmest clothes they had brought with them. The cold air bit at their faces as they stepped out into the storm, the wind tearing at their clothes. The snow was a blinding maelstrom, obscuring everything beyond a few meters. They stumbled forward, leaning into the wind, their eyes scanning the ground for any sign of the squirrels.

The mountain top was not big. Under normal circumstances, he would have detected the animals in no time. But now he could not see a hand in front of his eyes. He understood it was better to get himself to safety and return to the cabin. He could not

risk his life for a wayward cat and two more even more wayward squirrels. But the worst had happened. he could not see a hand in front of his eyes and was lost on a small patch of rock where, under normal circumstances, no one could get lost. He thought he heard 'meow'. 'Puss!' he called out. 'Meow' he heard again. Before he knew it, the cat jumped into his arms. That was one, now those squirrels. But he wanted to get back to the cabin.

Now he had to poop incredibly. He let go of the cat and quickly unbuttoned his trousers. He squatted down to defecate. Again, the cat disappeared from sight. Again he could not defecate. Now came a huge gust of wind. He released the rope. Marcus felt himself being lifted up. He cried out. He flew through the air and the next thing he saw was the giant sea of ice beneath him getting closer. He knew it was over for him.

The other two team members were back in the building, back with the parrot, the only sane one who had realised it was better to stay inside. They had opened the cat flap and for good reason. Almost immediately, the hatch opened and the cat stumbled in. He walked straight to the electric heater and lay down in front of it as if nothing had happened. But where was Marcus? An hour passed. The storm raged on. A back door went ajar.

'Marcuuuussssss!' cried two voices in the dark night