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I: Michael J GARNER

Station Commander

You have been working on Antarctic stations for twenty-five years, and there's nothing you haven't seen or done, from sudden earth tremors to terrible weather conditions, to medical emergencies and frenzied huskies.

You are the station commander, and the smooth running of the outpost is your responsibility. But you're tired of it all: the cold, the wind, the bitching of the men (well, some of them anyway), the constant technical breakdowns and the boring food, despite the best efforts of the cook, Campbell. You can't wait to get this tour over then you can go home and enjoy the sunshine.

You know many of the men, and have worked with a few of them before. But you've known Pugh for over ten years – he's the closest thing you have to a friend here – and you have eaten Campbell's food for nearly a decade, on and off.

As station commander, you have the master key to all the stores and rooms in the outpost, and you have the talisman of your authority: the .45 revolver that you have at your hip all the time. But only you know you have just 12 rounds for it (and you're not sure they'll work if you have to shoot it, they're that old) and that you haven't fired a gun in at least ten years....

2: Richard STEELE

Station Doctor

You have worked on remote stations for fifteen years, on and off. You tried private practice back home after you qualified but a couple of bad days, caused by too much drinking after your wife left you, and the flood of litigation that came after, left you financially ruined and professionally an outcast. But you know you're a good doctor, a damned good doctor, in fact.

That was all a long time ago. Your ex-wife died after a while, but your children are grown up and have lives of their own. You get in touch when you're back home, but they don't seem to miss you too much. Not as much as the other way round, in any case.

You succumb to the bottle once in a while, but not all the time, hiding a bottle or two in the drugs cabinet in your infirmary (just for emergencies, of course). You think you've kept this secret from your crew mates, a few of whom you've worked with before. You're not so close to many of them, but you get on with Pugh and Sanders seems a decent guy. You've worked with Garner before too: he's a bit officious and mostly incompetent, but his heart's in the right place. You feel some sympathy for him, especially when some of the younger crew (the likes of McHanon, Carpenter and Lancaster) take the piss out of him behind his back.

3: Dr Harold PUGH

Chief Scientist

Having graduated from Harvard you followed the path your unforgiving father had planned for you: after all, you had to hold up the good name and ambitions of the Pugh family, didn't you?

Well, no, was your answer to that question. You went into post graduate study, despite your father's protestations, and did well. But eventually the weight of family was too much to bear: you dropped out of college, went and worked in Europe for a few years, until you were cut off from the family, and the allowance.

Your father expected this would make you come crawling home, begging forgiveness, but you have a determined and stubborn streak in you. So you ended up as far away as possible without joining the Astronaut Corps.

You have been working on Antarctic stations for three years now. You love the science and work down here. You are pretty easy-going and get on with just about everyone, even if Campbell and Carpenter don't really talk to you so much. Steele is a good friend and Garner is ok too. You get on with McHanon, despite the lack of anything in common, and even get on with the loner Lancaster, but then, you do have a soft spot for dogs (the huskies remind you of Brutus and Thor, your beloved dogs you were forced to leave behind).

4: Dr Ashton BRADSHAW

Geologist / Meteorologist

You grew up in England and graduated from Glasgow University 10 years ago. You worked on the North Sea oil rigs for a few years, but after an accident on your rig, Claymore Bravo, that led to a fire and several deaths, you decided that life on the rigs was just too dangerous and wasn't for you. So five years ago you ended up working in Antarctica with the National Science Institute.

You've done well in those five years, and you had expected to be appointed as the Chief Scientist for this tour. So, to say you were disappointed to be pipped to the job by Ivy League, old-American-money discrimination is more than just a huge understatement. The Chief Scientist, Pugh, is younger and less experienced than you, but he comes from old American "nobility". He goes about smiling at everyone, being nice: but you see through his pretence. Needless to say you don't like him.

You have your own computer set up in the Science Shack, and like nothing more than working there on your own science projects, on your own with nothing but the wind and snow.

5: Tony SANDERS

Electrician / Radio Operator

You're new to this life, and this is your first ever tour on an Antarctic station. You didn't really know what to expect but it's been a bit of a milk run so far, as far as you can tell. The work isn't hard, and the downtime is actually the problem: too much time on your hands, if you're honest with yourself. Garner tells you all these tall stories about things he's seen over the years, but you don't really believe them – Garner doesn't seem so well respected by the rest of the crew in any case.

You had a good if uneventful upbringing. Decent school, some college, then an electrician's training so you could do something practical. Then the chance came up to work out here for the winter and earn a stack of cash – no brainer.

The life here is pretty mundane, but you still have some novelty value in it, and the crew are all pretty decent fellas. You like the Doc, but hope you don't ever need any real medical treatment down here: you've seen Steele's hand shake until late in the afternoon, and you know where he stashes his whisky supply (in the drugs cabinet in the infirmary). But your best mate here is Carpenter, and you spend a lot of your spare time shooting the breeze with him, and smoking his supply of dope (Carpenter doesn't seem to mind).

6: Ron J McHANON

Helicopter Pilot & Mechanic

You have only recently taken to working on Antarctic stations, and this is just your third tour. You tried to make a go of civilian life, after you came back from the 'Nam, but despite lots of different starts with lots of different jobs in lots of different hick towns, you couldn't make a normal life stick.

It's not that you're broken, or psychotic, or mad. But after what you saw and went through the mundane bullshit of normal people made you see red. So, you decided to get away and take the good paycheck for using the things you're good at at the asshole end of the world.

But you don't mind it so much. Most men here are getting away from something and you feel like you have a lot in common with many of them – well, the non-university educated ones. The Doc's a good guy, Carpenter's okay but he smokes too much shit, Sanders is a laugh and Campbell lets you raid the fridge late at night. Garner is pointless in his job as station commander, and Lancaster keeps either to himself or his dogs.

Some of the others seem to seek out your company, but you're happiest all on your lonesome, in the pilot's shack out from the main compound. That's where you keep the shotgun they let you bring, but no one but you knows that the shells you brought are rock salt rather than shot (they make a nice noise but aren't going to kill anything...).

7: Arnold CARPENTER

Mechanic

You have been working on Antarctic stations for five or six years. You like the cold and wind, especially when you're safe indoors with some old game show recording on the VCR, a decent porn mag and a great big spliff.

You grew up in a shithole town at the arse end of shitsville. You hated school, got no education to speak of, and growing up were facing life in a factory or – the other escape for the youth of the US – the military. You weren't good enough to join a really cool outfit, like the Marines or the Army Air Cavalry, so you joined the navy as a mechanic.

You did pretty well. But the military life didn't agree with you. Discipline problems and smoking shit got you in trouble: not enough to court martial your ass, but enough for the navy to hint that you shouldn't re-enlist after your five years was up. You got the message.

You're pretty chilled and get on with just about all your crew mates. You and Sanders get on like a house on fire, and he's your best pal down here (he likes smoking shit too, as long as it's a secret and he's smoking your supply...). You don't have so much to say to the scientists and the Doc, and McHanon obviously thinks you're a useless waster. But as long as they don't stop you smoking whatever you want to smoke, then that's ok with you. Garner doesn't seem to care about it too much...

8: Johnny CAMPBELL

Station Chef

Ten years working these tours and you still have a thankful look about you. Everyone here just thinks you're a permanently happy kind of bloke, but you know better: you don't deserve this job (and if you hadn't falsified your application, to say you had no criminal record, you wouldn't have it!). You spent the best part of ten years as a convicted killer, a gang member serving time. You were guilty, but it wasn't all your fault: you were young, under-privileged, dragged into the gangs in Baltimore – what chance did you have?

But that life is well past now, and no one here knows that your real name was Joe Clennon. The angry and violent beast that lived within you has been laid to rest, or at least, it's quiet and subdued and has been for years. But it's still there, deep down...

But you have known Garner for nearly ten years – you just seem to pull the same tours. And that's fine – Garner's a dick but it's good to be on good terms with the boss. And strangely, you seem to get on well with that Vietnam Vet, McHanon. He's a cool guy, and sometimes you just get on with someone. You let him raid the fridge late at night sometimes, as long as he doesn't swipe too much!

9: Bill LANCASTER

Dog Handler & Handyman

You don't really like people. Dogs are much easier to relate to. You've always had an affinity with dogs. They're better than people, after all. More trustworthy. More reliable.

You were an orphan. As long as you can remember you were in homes and orphanages. No one could ever tell you what happened to your parents, but you've chosen to believe they died, rather than gave you up. It's easier that way: that way you can still believe that they loved you as much as any mother and father would love their child. But you're not sure that you really believe that, deep down.

You've been on the Antarctic stations for nearly five years now. It's easy work. You look after the dogs, keep yourself to yourself, collect the money. A good life for a man like you.

It's not that you don't get on with the other men, it's just that they bore you, and you can't find it in yourself to trust them. Especially that cook, Campbell. You were a dog handler for a few years, at the State Penitentiary at Briar Ridge, Ohio, and there was a guy there in for a gang killing who looks just like Campbell, called Joe Clennon...

10: Anders MÖRK

Swedish Mechanic

Eight weeks into the tour at the Swedish Roskilde science station the team found something weird in the ice. It was strange, it was amazing, it was possibly world changing.

So we excavated it, found something even stranger. A frozen creature, a fossil, in the ice. We dug it up, and thawed it out despite Doctor Ryberg's concerns about contamination. But base leader Haag was so excited, there was no stopping him. I agreed with him then – this find was earth-shaking – how wrong we were.

A day later and things were different. First, Matthias Stenstörmsaid he saw the thing was moving – we all laughed at him, until Bergson found the thing wrapped around Stenstörms neck. It was too late for poor Matty: even though we got him away from those disgusting tentacles he seemed possessed and we had to set him on fire. We did the same with the creature – it certainly was no fossil. But it had already infected others.

We tried to hunt it down, Svensson and me. But it had infected the men, infected the dogs, infected everything but us. Not only infected them, but impersonated them, imitated them perfectly. I tripped up the thing that was impersonating Haag – just a hunch but he broke apart into a mess of shit, I don't know what.

Svensson and me killed Haag and the crew, burned them all up. But they weren't our friends anymore, our friends were gone, eaten up by this thing. Just the dogs to check now, but I think we might just want to kill them all and incinerate them, just to be safe...

If I don't survive the world needs to know that they cannot trust *anyone* from the base, and if anyone is alive after the winter you must, for the sake of all mankind, kill us all...