

The Ridgeline: Day 1

by Thomas Shaggy

The fire burned slowly in the distance. I built a small fire to keep warm and watched the smoldering scrap heap from a safe distance.

Snow covered the area as far as the eye could see. The sun burned bright in the sky above and the mountains disappeared onto the horizon. My gear had some wear and tear from the crash, but all my supplies seemed to be accounted for. I needed to find the best way. I was the only survivor.

I put my sun glasses on and inspected to area again. Nothing. I know I planned to be out here for a week, but judging by my situation now, I think I may need to extend my trip. Tree cover was limited. I needed to be around trees in hopes of finding some shelter, food or water. I took out my compass. I searched on a ENE direction and found my bearings. I remembered from the captains announcements. High mountain tops, wide open plateau's and a cross wind of about 40 mph. The first day across the the ridge shouldn't be so bad, the cross winds aren't as harsh as usual. As long as they don't break 40 mph consistently I should make it across safely.

I gathered my things, strapped on my snowshoes, and headed back towards the flames of the downed plane. We had gotten caught in the fierce winds over the mountain range. The clouds were thick and the pilot lost track of our altitude, the plane caught the peak of Mt. York. The four men behind me were sucked out from underneath the plane. The plane went into a nose dive and the engine caught fire. Finally we plowed through the snow fields at the 14,000 ft. base camp of Mt. Locke. The impact cracked the fuel tanks and with the plane nearly in two pieces the fire sparked the fuel and the front half of the plane became a furnace. The emergency door was blown open. I was able to jump over the back of my seat and exit. The fire spread rapidly through the plane,

trapping the survivors in the remaining piece of the plane. The screams of everyone trapped inside was unbearable so I ran.

I looked up at the now smoldering pile of metal. I laid two ice picks crossed in front of the cabin of the plane. I lowered myself to one knee and closed my eyes for a few moments. My wallet fell from my jacket pocket. The family portrait fell out onto the black snow. I looked down and placed the picture of my family with my fallen friends. In case, I shouldn't return, my family and I stood by all that couldn't attempt to make it back.

I stood up and turned back towards the endless wildness. The days ahead would be long and fierce from here. I walked away from the wreckage a new man. I was left alive for a reason on Mt. Locke and now I needed to discover that reason.

