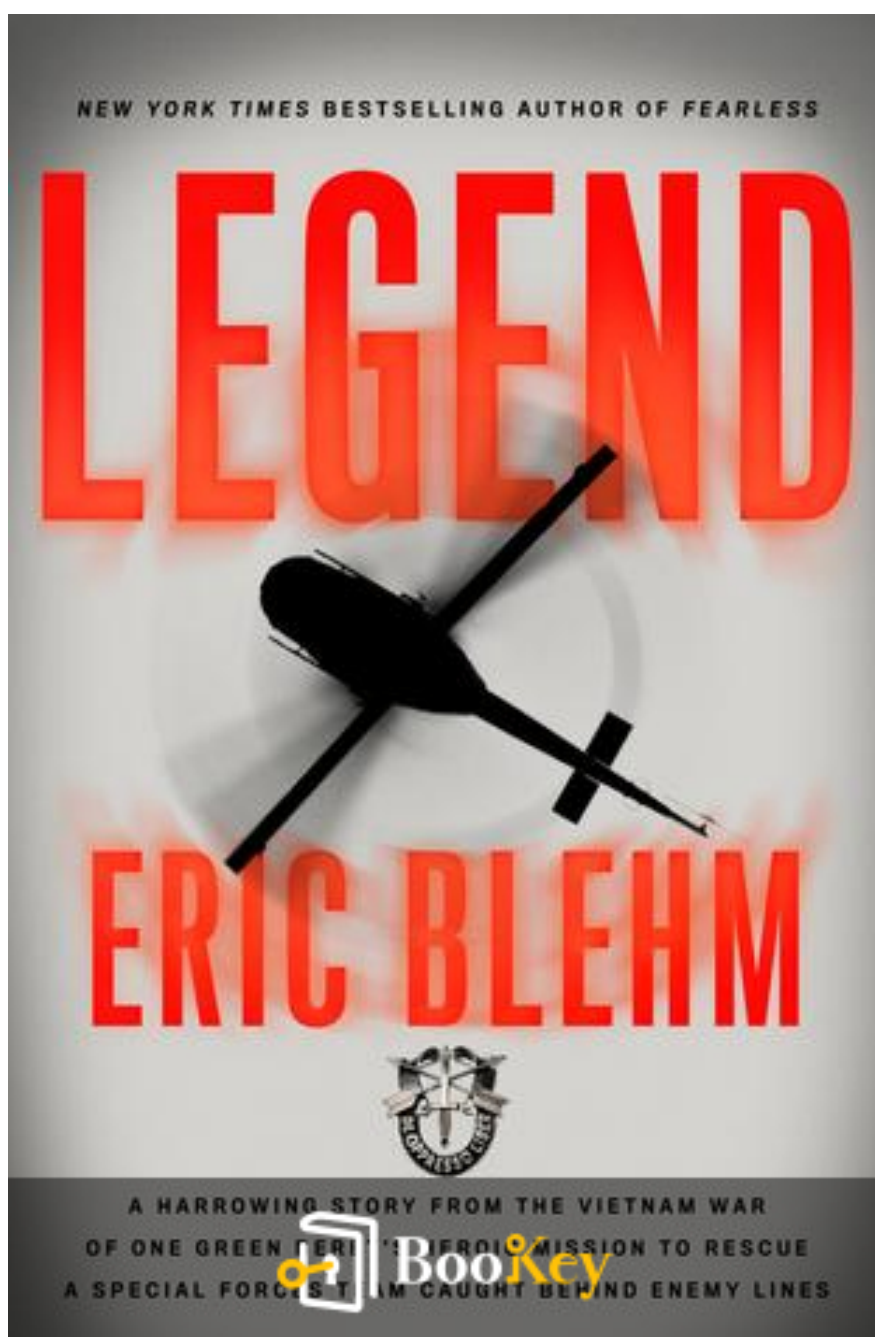


# Legend By Eric Blehm PDF (Limited Copy)

Eric Blehm



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## **Legend By Eric Blehm Summary**

"The Courage of a Green Beret True Hero."

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## About the book

In "Legend," Eric Blehm masterfully immerses readers into the valorous world of Roy Benavidez, a stoic Green Beret whose extraordinary acts of heroism during the harrowing Vietnam War earned him the Medal of Honor. Through meticulously researched narratives, the book delves deep into a fierce and brutal battle that tested the courage and resilience of soldiers willing to risk everything for their comrades. With a unique blend of factual history and engaging storytelling, Blehm not only honors the unyielding spirit of an unsung hero but also challenges readers to reflect on the power of perseverance, brotherhood, and the indomitable human spirit. Whether you're a history enthusiast or seeking a tale of courage that defies all odds, "Legend" promises to captivate and inspire, leaving an indelible impression of what it truly means to be legendary.

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## About the author

Eric Blehm is an acclaimed American author renowned for his compelling non-fiction works that capture the essence of adventure, courage, and heroism. With a talent for blending meticulous research with evocative storytelling, Blehm has consistently drawn readers into the lives of extraordinary individuals who have faced insurmountable odds. His background as a seasoned outdoor journalist and editor for Adventure magazine has sharpened his narrative skills, enabling him to vividly document the valiant exploits of military personnel, explorers, and risk-takers. Among his notable works is "Legend," a New York Times bestseller that chronicles the bravery of Vietnam War Green Beret Roy Benavidez, showcasing Blehm's passion for recounting stories that inspire strength, resilience, and the profound impact of human resolve.

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# Chapter 1 Summary: Roots

## Chapter 1: Roots

The story begins on Christmas morning of 1965 with Sherman Poppen, a businessman from Muskegon, Michigan, who revolutionizes winter sports. In an attempt to keep his two candy-cane-fueled daughters occupied, he invents the "Snurfer" by binding two child-sized skis to create a surfboard for the snow. His daughters' enjoyment soon attracts neighborhood kids, leading Poppen to patent the Snurfer in March 1966. His patent lays the groundwork for snowboarding by combining elements of surfing and skateboarding, predicting a future subculture of winter athletes.

Around this same period, Craig Elmer Kelly is born on April 1, 1966, to teenage parents Janet and Patrick Kelly. After moving to Richland, Washington, to live with Janet's family, Craig undergoes a modest, albeit challenging, childhood. Though he has difficulties such as needing leg braces for pigeon toes, he grows into a strong-willed and active child. His formative years involve a growing family dynamic, with both biological and foster siblings, including Imogene and Johnny, joining the household. Despite some tensions and challenges, the Kelly family supports each other, all striving for betterment.



Throughout his early years, Craig shows aptitude for sports and an eagerness to take on challenges, like when he is moved up a grade due to boredom, indicating his voracious appetite for learning and competition. This same drive is evident in his love for BMX biking, funded by his own paper route, and his adeptness in sports, much like his participation in Little League and his competitive nature.

Meanwhile, around 1979-1980, snowboarding emerges as a sport. Jake Burton Carpenter, an enthusiast, showcases a snowboard of his own design at the World Snow Snurfing Championships. His innovation, featuring bindings for better control, marks a turning point in the sport's evolution. As the snowboarding movement spreads, more entrepreneurs jump on the bandwagon, creating boards that resonate with the younger generation hungry for new winter activities.

The narrative shifts to Washington, where the town of Mount Vernon catches wind of this budding sport. A local shop, Fulton's Schwinn Cyclery, begins carrying Burton boards at the urging of Jeff Fulton, the shop owner's son, despite low awareness of snowboarding at the time. Yet, by renting these snowboards, Jeff hopes to ignite interest among local youth.

Craig Kelly, living with his father Pat, becomes part of the South Twenty-First Street bike gang, a loose group of neighborhood kids. Craig has a reputation as their unofficial leader, thanks to his impressive



Mongoose BMX bike and fearless attitude, both assets that help him build connections and friendships. Among his peers, he stands out as fiercely competitive, extending this competitiveness to BMX racing where he gains recognition for successfully navigating expert classes, a reputation enhanced by his casual, confident approach to races. His charisma, coupled with his success in BMX, makes him a natural draw to new adventures like snowboarding.

Introduced to snowboarding by Jeff Fulton in early 1981, Craig, along with friends like Dano Donnelly, quickly falls in love with the sport. Their initial forays into the snowy slopes near Mount Baker are characterized by trial and error but also exhilaration and newfound freedom. Craig's early experiences in snowboarding, from fumbling first attempts to achieving fluid movement down the slopes, kindle an enduring passion. Snowboarding becomes not just a sport, but a new way of being—a winter outlet bringing with it the same adrenaline rush as BMX, but with an added twist: the sensation of surfing on snow.

As they gain more experience, the young snowboarders increasingly explore new slopes and embrace the challenges of backcountry territory, learning from close calls with natural elements like avalanches. Craig, drawn by the camaraderie and thrill of snowboarding, embraces these formative experiences, laying the groundwork for a future where this burgeoning sport becomes an integral part of his life and identity.

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In the backdrop of this blossoming sport, Craig's personal life evolves with the shifting dynamics of his family. Yet, it is on those cold, snow-laden hills that he begins carving out his path—both literally and metaphorically—in the world of snowboarding.

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# Chapter 2 Summary: This Is the Year!

## Chapter 2: This Is the Year!

In the winters of 1980 and '81, a new craze began to emerge as small groups of adventurous youths across the United States took up snowboarding. Inspired by surfing, skateboarding, and BMX biking, these pioneers saw mountains as frozen waves and powder as the perfect medium for their new activity. Snowboarding was liberating due to its lack of formal structure, rules, or governing bodies, drawing in risk-takers and free spirits.

The early snowboarding community, devoid of conventional sports' rigid rules and historical baggage, created its own path. Snowboarders faced significant opposition from ski resorts, which viewed them as reckless outsiders and often banned them from the slopes. However, a pivotal moment occurred when Cooper Hill in Colorado hosted the first significant snowboarding competition in April 1981. Richard Christiansen, a surf shop owner, organized the contest, inviting brands like Winterstick, Burton, and Sims to compete in slalom, downhill, and freestyle events modeled after skateboarding contests.

This event pitted key figures of the fledgling sport against each other, including Jake Burton Carpenter and Tom Sims. Although Craig Kelly, a

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rising star from Mount Vernon, Washington, was not involved in snowboarding at the time, the landscape was set for monumental changes. Meanwhile, Craig was deeply entrenched in BMX racing, idolizing top racers and steadily climbing the ranks.

In high school, Craig's world was packed with activity. His entrepreneurial spirit led him to buy his first car, a 1979 Subaru, with his savings and a loan, showcasing his foresight and independence. This car symbolized freedom, enabling him to manage a complex schedule that included racing, school, and family responsibilities. His relationship with his younger sister was close, marked by late-night drives and scary stories, creating a lasting bond.

As the sport of snowboarding began to take shape, Craig's world intersected with it through his connections with local enthusiasts and shops. Fulton, a key figure in his life, petitioned ski area managers like Duncan Howat at Mount Baker to permit snowboarders access to the ski lifts. Howat, cautious about the new sport's safety and impact, eventually agreed to a trial basis, marking a significant turning point. Craig and Fulton seized this opportunity, riding the chairlifts for the first time, which highlighted the potential of snowboarding as an exhilarating pastime.

Craig's innate talent and graceful style on the snowboard impressed even skeptical observers. His presence on the mountain demonstrated the sport's potential, convincing figures like Duncan Howat that snowboarding had a



promising future. This pivotal era signified a turning point for both Craig Kelly and the sport itself, with transformations that would unleash snowboarding into a broader cultural phenomenon in the years to come.

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## Chapter 3 Summary: Mount Baker Hard Core

### ### Chapter 3: Mount Baker Hard Core

As September arrived and Craig Kelly began his senior year of high school, his interests started to pivot away from his former BMX idols to a new passion: snowboarding. Influenced by an image of Jake Burton Carpenter, a pioneer in snowboarding, Craig felt an irresistible call from the mountains. The allure wasn't about competition or acclaim, as the sport was still nascent with no established races or trophies, and it was even uncertain if Mount Baker would allow snowboarders on its lifts.

When the first snow arrived, Craig and his friend Fulton set off in Craig's Subaru, braving harsh winter weather to reach the slopes. Their journey often began in the small town of Glacier, where they stocked up on essentials at a quirky local store named Graham's. The snowy expeditions, characterized by tire-spinning and trail-breaking adventures, offered freedom and excitement, untethered from the rigid structures of organized sports.

By the time Mount Baker officially opened to snowboarders after Thanksgiving, Craig's initial intention to continue BMX racing gave way to the intoxicating thrill of snowboarding pristine powder. The mountain, known for its record annual snowfall, provided an unparalleled playground



for Craig and his friends. They quickly learned the nuances of navigating deep snow—Craig, in particular, devised a strategy of hanging back to take third or fourth position on the chairlift to avoid getting stuck in deep snow and to capitalize on established tracks.

The skill and camaraderie among the riders did not go unnoticed. Lift operators, like Carter Turk and Eric Janko, observed the snowboarders' prowess and eventually joined their burgeoning community, fueled by the exciting and uncommercialized nature of the new sport.

The group identified themselves as the Mount Baker Hard Core (MBHC), a title that emerged during an intense stormy race between Fulton and Swanson, wherein a gust of wind nearly halted their descent, leading them to acknowledge how "hard-core" their snowboarding adventures were.

Snowboarding brands like Burton and Sims were just beginning to gain prominence. This period was marked by a rivalry between Tom Sims, who claimed to have invented snowboarding, and Jake Burton Carpenter, who promoted Burton as a leader in snowboarding innovation. This competitive spirit extended to the burgeoning snowboard circuits, where events like the National Snowboarding Championships and World Snowboarding Championships were shaping the sport. Tom Sims often played multiple roles—organizer, competitor, celebrity—while fostering a laid-back yet fiercely competitive atmosphere.



Amid this dynamic environment, Craig Kelly was balancing his newfound passion with academic rigor. Graduating from high school in 1983 with top marks, he entered the University of Washington's chemical engineering program. Despite his demanding schedule, Craig maintained his love for adventure, joining a fraternity where he became known for his charismatic spontaneity—whether by organizing camping trips in blizzards or pursuing new interests like surfing.

His dedication to snowboarding never waned. Frequent trips to Mount Baker allowed him to stay connected with the MBHC, who embraced him back like family. This tight-knit community of riders thrived on challenge and friendship, engaging in playful rivalries such as trying to put each other in "the white room" by spraying snow at each other.

In Seattle, young snowboarders like Mike Ranquet found mentors in more experienced riders such as Craig, who often encouraged them to pursue both their education and their passion for snowboarding.

In 1985, a chance encounter with Ken Achenbach at Sunshine Village in Canada, a fellow snowboarder and entrepreneur, highlighted the universal camaraderie among riders. Craig's enthusiasm translated into introductions and sharing opportunities to compete, including a landmark event—the Sims Open "banked slalom" at Mount Baker. During this event, Craig's talent was



recognized by Tom Sims himself, who invited Craig to further competitions, affirming his potential in snowboarding's rising competitive scene. This acknowledgment from Sims, an iconic figure, was a significant endorsement of Craig's abilities, signaling his promising future in the sport.

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## Chapter 4: Team Rider

### Chapter 4: Team Rider

The story follows Craig, a former BMX racer who revives his competitive spirit as he prepares for his first halfpipe snowboarding competition in years. Encouraged by recent accolades from Tom Sims, a key figure in the snowboarding world, Craig starts practicing diligently. Despite a shaky slalom performance, he secures third place in the halfpipe at the Sierra Snowboarding Championships but is outperformed by legendary snowboarder Terry Kidwell. Shaun "Mini Shred" Palmer, a rising star from Team Sims, clinches a victory in the junior division. Palmer's candid recruitment story adds levity, as he's approached by Sims on a chairlift while smoking weed.

Despite not placing first, Craig's performance catches Sims's attention, earning him a place on Team Sims. Craig finds himself amidst a dynamic scene at the championships, where the debut of high-back bindings revolutionizes snowboard turning capabilities. In this evolving landscape, young snowboarding advocate Thomas Hsieh Jr. garners attention for his newly launched "Absolutely Radical Snowboard Magazine." His publication quickly becomes a hit among snowboarders and contributes to popularizing the sport.

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Craig's father, recognizing his son's newfound confidence, sees a spark not present in Craig's BMX racing days. Craig's achievements at the competition earn him prize money, providing relief for a college student with car troubles. Reflecting on the radical snowboarding culture and newfound recognition, Craig is particularly excited about an offer from Sims to cover costs for the upcoming North American Snowboarding Championships.

The release of the James Bond film "A View to a Kill" further propels snowboarding into the mainstream, showcasing the sport's thrilling appeal to audiences worldwide. This exposure benefits Sims, who, along with team rider Steve Link, serves as stunt doubles in the film. New technology like high-back bindings and increased media exposure contribute to snowboarding's burgeoning popularity.

Throughout this period, Craig bonds with the Mount Baker Hard Core (MBHC), a group passionate about pushing the limits of snowboarding. The MBHC members draw inspiration from local legend George Dobis, who shares his mountaineering wisdom and instills a sense of community and independence.

The narrative also describes Craig's budding relationship with Kelly Jo Legaz, a kindred spirit who shares his love for the sport. Despite the growing demands of his professional snowboarding career and academic



commitments, Craig remains driven. His dedication to training, highlighted by solitary practice sessions, pays off with impressive results at the U.S. Open, despite not achieving a podium finish.

Negotiations with Sims for a team rider contract emphasize Craig's ambitions, including designing his own pro model snowboard. While Sims juggles financial pressures, Craig remains committed to his goal of winning the world championships. His dedication to practice, even in the absence of formal halfpipes, underscores his competitive drive and sets the stage for future successes.

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# Chapter 5 Summary: World Champion

## Chapter 5: World Champion

As the World Snowboarding Championships moved from Soda Springs to Breckenridge, Colorado, snowboarders were welcomed to one of the country's largest ski resorts. This move was made possible by Paul Alden, whose connections in the ski industry and personal interest, driven by his snowboarder son David, allowed him to negotiate snowboarding access at major resorts. Paul's efforts to persuade resort managers about the business potential of snowboarding were pivotal, and soon Breckenridge was poised to host a major contest: the World Snowboard Classic, taking over from Sims' discontinued contests.

Craig Kelly, determined to participate, faced an unexpected setback when his car broke down. A friend's mom intervened by lending him a van, and he, along with his friends, made it to Breckenridge, albeit with a quirky detour to practice at a rare halfpipe in Lake Tahoe. During the competition, Craig executed a stellar performance in the slalom, earning him the title of world champion for that event, though Terry Kidwell claimed the overall championship, demonstrating consistent excellence across disciplines.

Craig's remarkable performance, alongside competitors from various



countries, underscored the event's international significance. Despite a fourth-place finish in the halfpipe, Craig's skills impressed many, raising his profile in snowboarding circles. After the competition, he and his girlfriend Kelly Jo settled in Seattle, where Craig contemplated shifting focus from his studies in chemical engineering to pursuing snowboarding full-time.

Encouraged by the potential income and recognition that professional snowboarding offered, Craig made the bold decision to prioritize his snowboarding career. His dedication involved rigorous training, building his skills and style through relentless practice, and analyzing his technical prowess to enhance performance.

The 1986-1987 snowboarding season saw Craig traveling and competing relentlessly. He won critical acclaim at various prestigious events, including emerging victorious at the European leg of the World Snowboarding Championships, an affirmation of his global standing. Craig's successes indicated his ability to dominate both the racing and freestyle aspects of snowboarding, establishing him as a formidable contender worldwide.

A pivotal moment came during the U.S. Open at Stratton Mountain, Vermont, where Craig managed to outshine local Burton heroes. At the Grand Prix of Snowboarding in Aspen, his dominance continued. His adaptability was evident as he switched seamlessly from racing disciplines to freestyle, showcasing his versatile talent.



Breckenridge once again witnessed his competing prowess, although an impressive newcomer, Bert LaMar, took the halfpipe crown. Craig finished second in the halfpipe but excelled in other disciplines, securing his standing as a well-rounded world champion. LaMar's unexpected victory highlighted the dynamic nature of the sport, where new talent could emerge and challenge established figures like Craig.

Behind the scenes, internal dynamics at Sims Snowboards began to shift. Under Brad Dorfman's leadership, the brand aimed to expand and professionalize, prompting Craig to engage in contractual negotiations to secure better terms and recognition for his contributions.

Craig's summer training in Europe, alongside Kelly Jo, aimed at maintaining his edge and exploring the burgeoning camp industry. While forging connections and gaining insights, Craig remained focused on his dual goals: continuing his winning streak and ensuring fair financial recognition in the evolving landscape of professional snowboarding.

Amidst his continued success, the strategic alliances and contractual negotiations off the slopes signaled Craig's growing awareness of the business intricacies in snowboarding. His interactions with fellow competitors like LaMar provided valuable lessons about self-advocacy, highlighting the balance between sporting passion and professional



pragmatism in the evolving world of competitive snowboarding.

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# Chapter 6 Summary: Changing Teams

## Chapter 6: Changing Teams

Craig Kelly, a prominent figure in snowboarding, makes his last stop in Europe at Jose Fernandes's camp on Austria's Stubai Glacier. There, he discovers a Sims advertisement on the back cover of ISM magazine, featuring him performing a method air at the Wolf Creek halfpipe event, which he had won seven months earlier. Despite the victory, Craig still hasn't been reimbursed for his expenses by Sims Snowboards Inc. Frustrated, he contacts his father, Pat, to check if any payment has arrived, but the answer is negative.

During his time at the Stubai halfpipe, Craig encounters Donna Carpenter, wife of Jake Burton Carpenter, the founder of Burton Snowboards, along with members of the Burton team. Seizing the opportunity, Craig casually suggests his interest in joining Burton, and Donna invites him to reach out to Jake if he's not tied to Sims.

In August, Craig returns home to find himself on the cover of the September 1987 issue of ISM, which praises his snowboarding prowess. Enthused by the coverage, he diligently researches sports contracts and negotiation strategies. He subsequently sends a proposal to Sims, requesting a monthly



salary, expenses, incentives, medical insurance, and specific training tools.

Sims promptly rejects the proposal, with representatives asserting that Craig's demands exceed their annual budget. After several attempts, Craig contacts the head of Sims, who implies that Craig should pursue other opportunities if possible.

In October 1987, Craig visits Burton Snowboards' facility in Vermont. Impressed by the environment, Craig discusses his engineering background and ideas for a revolutionary snowboard design that combines race and freestyle board characteristics. While Sims had previously dismissed his concepts, Jake Burton is receptive and eager to create Craig's dream board, promising swift prototype production.

Following successful discussions with Burton, Craig solidifies a three-year contract with a base salary of \$24,000 for the first year, performance-based incentives, royalties on his pro model board, and benefits. The contract also includes terms for his partner, Kelly Jo, cementing their professional partnership. Craig insists on being listened to, and Jake assures him of their commitment.

After signing with Burton, Craig quickly begins working on his model and tests it in Austria, where a "Rider Roundtable" encourages collaborative product development among the team. Craig's dedication and ideas inspire

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the team and mark Burton's transition toward a rider-driven company.

Back in the U.S., Craig faces legal challenges as Sims Snowboards sues him and Burton for breach of contract, and seeks damages for alleged interference. An emergency court ruling permits Craig to compete in events on a logo-less snowboard while the case is pending, allowing him to secure a second-place finish at Copper Mountain.

The legal battle becomes a hot topic in the snowboarding community, and Craig's situation is sympathetically covered by industry media, enhancing his reputation as a rider willing to challenge industry norms. Amidst ongoing legal proceedings, Craig maintains his focus on competition and sweeps the national contests, ultimately being crowned the 1988 Freestyle World Champion and Overall World Champion.

The chapter concludes by highlighting the mixed reception of snowboarding's rise, with mainstream media like Time magazine criticizing it as a "clumsy intrusion" on skiing's tradition, reflecting societal resistance to the sport's growing popularity and cultural impact.

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# Chapter 7 Summary: The Mystery Air

## Chapter 7: The Mystery Air

In 1988, amid ongoing legal battles, Craig Kelly became a double world champion in freestyle and overall categories, riding on prototype boards without Burton logos—a unique strategy imposed by a court order. Despite this, Burton cleverly marketed an all-black freestyle board known as the Mystery Air, heightening its allure by transporting it in a padlocked crate marked "TOP SECRET." This mystery only fueled demand, as enthusiasts quickly identified the board as Kelly's design, leading to a surge in orders.

Returning to Vermont, Craig informed Jake Carpenter, the founder of Burton, that he intended to focus on the halfpipe discipline. At the time, the snowboarding world did not favor specialization, yet Craig saw halfpipe and banked slalom as the purest forms of "freeriding," his true passion. Despite Carpenter's reservations, Craig was determined to train hard in the pipe. Concurrently, he used his earnings to purchase a home in Mount Vernon, a milestone signifying his financial independence, predominantly funded through his snowboarding successes.

Craig's training regimen evolved to focus on "air awareness," incorporating unique exercises like trampoline flips, in-line skating, and mountain biking.



This regimen was combined with summer glacier training at Mount Hood and filming a segment in New Zealand for Warren Miller's film, "White Magic." Experiencing heli-riding, Craig was forever altered in how he viewed traditional ski resorts.

Amid his physical pursuits, Craig navigated a relentless legal battle. His character was attacked by Judge James Burns, who accused him of being crafty and evasive, a claim that fueled Craig's competitive drive. However, his passion was slightly dulled by legal disillusionment. Finally, a breakthrough came when the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed a prior ruling, allowing Craig to don Burton graphics on his board, a move celebrated with the headline "FREE AT LAST."

In January 1989, Craig debuted the Mystery Air with full Burton graphics at the OP Pro of Snowboarding in California. His performance was stellar, earning him the overall OP Pro champion title. However, his celebratory antics with fellow riders, including an audacious jump from a lodge roof, nearly resulted in arrest and spawned critical media coverage about the sport's image.

Despite this, Craig managed the fallout diplomatically and swiftly moved on to compete in the European leg of the World Cup, where his dedication shone. When faced with a challenging slalom course, Craig employed his mental fortitude to view it as an opportunity, ultimately winning the race



with unmatched skill.

As the World Cup season wrapped up, Craig once again stood out, securing the Halfpipe World Champion title—the first for a Burton rider—and maintaining his Overall World Champion status for the third year running. His accomplishments were capped at the U.S. Open, where he publicly acknowledged the Sims legal ordeal, highlighting its role in motivating his stellar performance.

This chapter vividly demonstrates Craig's resilience, showcasing his ability to transform challenges into triumphant victories both on court and on the slopes. Despite the ongoing legal strife with Sims Snowboards, Craig's prowess and Burton's strategic prompt fulfillment of orders saw the Mystery Air wrongly predicted to cause Sims' downfall become a best-seller, keeping the brand thriving amidst adversity.

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## Chapter 8: The Smooth Groove

\*Chapter 8: The Smooth Groove\*

Craig Kelly, like many from Generation X, grew up on a steady diet of Jacques Cousteau's underwater escapades and the comedic antics of Inspector Clouseau from \*The Pink Panther\*. In 1989, when a man with a French accent named Jacques Russo contacted Craig about making a documentary, Craig initially thought it was a prank. However, Russo was serious about crafting the first biographic documentary on snowboarding, focusing on Craig's life and career. They began filming shortly after, capturing Craig both on and off the slopes. The documentary, titled \*The Smooth Groove\*, showcased Craig's unpretentious journey from a boy-next-door to world snowboard champion, interlaced with dynamic footage of him at his Craig Kelly World Snowboard Camp and his exhilarating exploits across various snow-covered terrains.

The release of \*The Smooth Groove\* sent ripples through the mainstream media, garnering attention from heavyweights like \*National Geographic\* and \*Rolling Stone\*. Craig was presented as not only a top snowboarder but also a humble and introspective figure, his past mischievousness giving way to a mature champion persona. His early "Dennis the Menace" days were reconciled with his current disciplined and thoughtful demeanor.

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The late 1980s and early 1990s were a period of explosive growth for snowboarding. The sport saw a massive surge, with participants in North America skyrocketing from a few thousand to nearly two million. Simultaneously, major ski resorts opened their doors to snowboarders, and new magazines sprang up to meet the demands of this burgeoning industry. Within this expanding universe, Craig Kelly stood as a pivotal figure.

In summer 1989, while promoting his newly released Mystery Air snowboard in Oslo, Craig met a young Terje Haakonsen, a promising Norwegian rider who would go on to become a snowboarding legend himself. This meeting was seen almost as a passing of the torch from the current world titan to a future star. Meanwhile, a large lawsuit involving Craig and Burton Snowboards was quietly settled behind closed doors, further solidifying Craig's association with Burton.

Fast forward to the 1990 World Championships at Breckenridge, Colorado, where Craig faced off against rivals like Shaun Palmer. These competitions were intense, with Craig known for his technical prowess and consistent performance, and his focus and dedication were reflected in his final run. Despite the competitive tension, mutual respect characterized his relationship with Palmer, who acknowledged Craig as a major influence.

By 1991, though Craig was a dominant force with numerous titles and a

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hefty sponsor salary, his heart leaned towards freeriding, valuing the freedom and soulfulness of the sport. In meetings with Burton's Jake and Donna Carpenter, Craig expressed his desire to transition from competitive snowboarding to freeriding and filming. Initially skeptical, the Carpenters eventually supported Craig's vision, recognizing his intrinsic understanding

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# Chapter 9 Summary: Wild Snow

## Chapter 9: Wild Snow

Craig Kelly, a renowned snowboarder, begins to shift away from the crowded and competitive environments of ski resorts to explore the uncharted backcountry, where the beauty of untouched snow hides the ever-present threat of avalanches. Avalanches, powerful enough to rival natural disasters like earthquakes and hurricanes, have a long history of causing devastation. Historical accounts reveal their deadly force, from incidents dating as far back as 218 BC, such as Hannibal's fateful Alpine crossing, to more recent events like the catastrophic avalanches in the Swiss village of Leukerbad in the 16th and 18th centuries.

The chapter delves into the historical fears and superstitions surrounding avalanches. In the Middle Ages, avalanches were believed to be acts of God or evil spirits. The fear of these deadly snow slides was widespread until mountaineering became popular, turning mountain regions into tourist destinations. As climbers began to conquer peaks, locals found economic opportunities, often becoming guides. Alexander Burgener emerged as a legendary Swiss mountaineering guide. However, even he met a tragic end in an avalanche, illustrating the unpredictable nature of these snow slides.

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In 1992, Craig Kelly married Kelly Jo Legaz at Artist Point with Mount Shuksan as a backdrop. Settling into a life in Glacier, Washington, Kelly Jo opened a restaurant while Craig continued his snowboarding career, designing products for Burton and chasing snowstorms worldwide. A pivotal personality in snowboarding, Kelly's style and innovation spoke volumes to those around him.

Amidst the bustling life at Mount Baker, the snowboarder made time to expand his horizons. In 1995, he embarked on an adventurous journey to Siberia with skier Scott Schmidt and filmmaker Greg Stump. The trip aimed to showcase harmony between skiers and snowboarders, as well as to promote a new heli-skiing venture. The conditions were perilous, with unstable snow and inexperienced pilots adding to the challenge. Although they encountered dangerous snowpacks, the team navigated carefully, showcasing the thrill and danger of the sport.

After the Siberian adventure, the crew moved to Island Lake Lodge in British Columbia, a cat-skiing operation where they could safely complete their project. Here, Craig's riding reached new heights, capturing the essence of snowboarding finesse. His ability to masterfully navigate avalanches highlighted his skill and understanding of mountain dynamics, earning accolades from surfing legends and film director Stump for his "avalanche save of a lifetime."

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Throughout his snowboarding career, Craig Kelly emphasized the importance of calculated risk and intuition. His holistic approach to snowboarding involved visualizing potential paths, assessing snow stability, and identifying escape routes, minimizing danger even in challenging conditions. Despite the risk, Craig's methodical preparation allowed him to tackle formidable descents with confidence.

Meanwhile, Craig and his wife Kelly Jo faced personal challenges. She wasn't interested in Craig's dream of driving the length of the Americas in a converted van, contributing to their realization that their paths were diverging. With mutual respect, they began the process of separating in 1996, determined to remain friends and handle their divorce amicably.

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## Chapter 10 Summary: Getting Schooled

Chapter 10, titled "Getting Schooled," delves into the evolution of snowboarding in the mid-1990s, highlighting the shift from bright, Day-Glo styles to a darker, grungier aesthetic influenced by urban skateboarding culture. This period marked the emergence of "jibbing," where snowboarders focused on tricks and spins on non-traditional surfaces like logs and fences, a style referred to as "new school." Meanwhile, the "old school" style, represented by freeriding in the backcountry, continued to captivate seasoned snowboarders like Craig, who preferred natural terrains as his playground and classroom.

Craig's curiosity extended beyond just riding; he wanted to deeply understand the mechanics of the mountains, particularly the science of avalanches. His journey into avalanche education began informally in December 1995 when he attended an avalanche class at Island Lake Lodge. Though not officially enrolled, he "shadowed" the course attended by an eclectic mix of snowboarders, as well as the narrator, who was on assignment for TransWorld SNOWboarding.

The course, labeled as a Level 1 Avalanche Course for Ski Operations, was a rigorous, week-long intensive conducted by the Canadian Avalanche Association. It focused on studying snow at a granular level to understand snowpacks and predict avalanche risks, a field the narrator compared to the

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careful excavation in archaeology. Avalanche realities hit close to home for many, including Craig, highlighted by personal stories shared during the course. The death of a seasoned guide, Brian Ebert, underlining the unpredictable dangers even experienced individuals faced, left a lasting impact on the participants.

During the avalanche boot camp, the participants, including Craig, also encountered the concept of a splitboard—a snowboard cut lengthwise to function as touring skis uphill and reconverted to a board for descent. Though initially skeptical about its practicality, Craig’s exposure to new equipment and his experience at the boot camp underscored the importance of knowledge and safety in freeriding.

By the following December, Craig committed to a formal avalanche course, not only to test his knowledge gained from over eight years of working with certified guides but also to learn the process of teaching others. Recognizing his influence on young snowboarders, Craig resolved to advocate for avalanche safety alongside promoting freeriding. Understanding the cultural impact of professional snowboarders, he took his newfound mission abroad, particularly to Japan, where he conducted avalanche safety courses and shifted focus from stunts to education. Craig emphasized the importance of safety in snowboarding, delivering the message that snowboarding is about living, not dying, in hopes of saving lives and fostering a culture of safety among riders venturing into the backcountry.



# Chapter 11 Summary: Follow Your Bliss

## Chapter 11 - Follow Your Bliss

After parting ways with Kelly Jo, Craig settled at the Seaside house, using it as a base for his global adventures, which included surfing and snowboarding across continents from Africa to Greenland. He always felt that paradise was just a trip away, caught between the thrill of his pursuits and the feeling of never truly arriving there.

In December 1998, Craig joined photographer Jeff Curtes, his brother Joe, and pro snowboarder Dave Downing in the Pacific Northwest for some early-season snowboarding. Their adventure was hindered by continuous snowfall, trapping them in the backcountry with limited mobility from snowshoes. Downing introduced Craig to a splitboard, a nascent innovation allowing for easier uphill travel and more efficient descents. Initially skeptical of this clunky, heavy equipment, Craig was surprised by its effectiveness. After testing it, he declared it life-changing and decided to ditch snowshoes for good.

This revelation spurred Craig to focus on improving the splitboard with Burton. It was like a multi-functional tool for snowboarding, enabling smoother transitions in backcountry terrain. Though the system required

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refinement, Craig believed it would become the future of freeriding—projecting its potential to revolutionize backcountry snowboarding.

With a growing interest in backcountry riding, Craig accepted an offer to guest edit the first backcountry issue of "Snowboard Life" magazine. He sought to honor all those who supported him throughout his career and highlight individuals who loved to ride purely for the experience, away from the limelight. His editorial emphasized the limitless freedom the mountains offered beyond the constraints of ski-lifts, highlighting respect for the simplest riders who cherished the experience over accolades.

As his designated interview feature, Craig opted to spotlight John Buffery, a guide from Nelson, British Columbia, who had been a pioneer in splitboarding. Craig had met Buffery while filming in the Yukon, impressed by his mastery of ropes and anchors—a skillset crucial for mountain safety. Buffery's adaptation of a splitboard from a Craig Kelly Air model represented grassroots innovation, capturing Craig's admiration and earning Buffery his respect as a guide and mentor.

Meanwhile, plans for snowboarding ventures continued to grow. Jeff Pensiero's vision to open Baldface Lodge, a snowboarder-friendly operation near Nelson, attracted Craig's interest. He became an investor, seeing potential in both the business and the community it would build, predicting

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its eventual popularity and expansion.

A personal chapter began when Craig met Savina Findlay, a massage therapist and student of traditional Chinese medicine in Nelson. Despite his reputation within snowboarding circles, Savina saw Craig as a passionate adventurer. They connected deeply, sharing experiences that bridged their worlds, and Savina grew into her role in his ride-centric life. Meanwhile, Craig found a profound fulfillment outside the competitive arena, appreciating the purity of shared pursuits.

In 2000, Craig embarked on a transformative journey with Savina, driving from Alaska's Haines to the tip of South America, "following the bliss" not just of adventure, but of shared life. The trip was a test and evolution of their bond, culminating in the birth of their daughter Olivia in Puerto Montt, Chile. As new parents, they envisioned a future in the mountains, dreaming of starting a lodge that would combine the stability of a home with the excitement of snowboarding adventures. Despite the shifting landscapes, the essence of Craig's journey was constant: a relentless pursuit of joy and connection in the boundless realms beyond the everyday.

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## Chapter 12: The Plan

Chapter 12, "The Plan," provides a pivotal moment in the lives of Craig and Savina as they return to the mountains they love after a transformative journey to South America. They establish roots in Nelson, British Columbia, a place that encapsulates the adventurous spirit they cherish, and where Savina plans to complete her degree. The couple arrives in town with their daughter, Olivia, whom Craig affectionately introduces as a "souvenir from South America," signifying a deeper commitment to family life and their future.

Craig's decision to become a mountain guide underlines his desire for personal growth and adventure. His inspiration is likened to Santiago from Paulo Coelho's "The Alchemist," a character who discovers enlightenment and purpose where his journey began. Craig's vision of settling in the rugged Selkirks—a snowboarding paradise—includes building a splitboarding lodge where he and Savina can nurture a community of like-minded souls while raising their children. To accomplish this, Craig decides to pursue rigorous training to become a certified mountain guide, a path fraught with challenges likened to a master's pursuit in academia.

Despite the discouraging institutional biases against snowboarders—echoing past exclusions from ski resorts—Craig maintains his resolve. He and Buffery, an experienced guide and friend, conclude that the path through the



Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG) is the gold standard, albeit closed to snowboarders like Craig. Reasoning there are parallels with Buffery's experience adapting to changing professional criteria, Craig embraces the challenge head-on.

With unwavering determination, Craig meticulously documents his extensive backcountry and snowboarding experiences around the world, a resume that includes extensive tours and climbs across six continents. He acknowledges the daunting prerequisites required for acceptance into the ACMG's certification program, realizing a different level of respect for the dedicated mountain guides he admires.

Throughout the next year, Craig ambitiously pursues the extensive requirements for acceptance into the program. He manages to balance his goals with family responsibilities, especially as Savina engages in her studies. Their shared vision of the lodge and their future in the mountains keeps them motivated. Craig delves into the history of Canadian mountain guiding, drawing inspiration from the pioneering adventurers who blazed these trails over a century ago, as well as the guide Alan Bard's reflections on the broader responsibilities of guiding beyond technical mastery.

As the season advances, Craig and Savina prepare for an adventurous life combining career aspirations and quality family time, embodying the spirit of pioneers establishing a new life amid the breathtaking scenery of the



Canadian wilderness. Their journey involves more than tangible achievements; it captures an adventurous ethos where the process is as valuable as the goal, a philosophy emphasizing the beauty in the pursuit itself.

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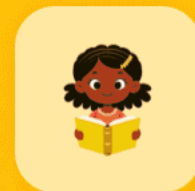
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# Chapter 13 Summary: Breaking Down the Walls

## Chapter 13: Breaking Down the Walls

In early October 2001, Buffery engaged in promising discussions with Colin Zacharias, the technical director of the ACMG, about Craig's aspiration to become a certified guide. Both Buffery and Zacharias held prominent positions within the avalanche control community and shared a unique perspective on the inclusion of snowboarding guides into the ACMG program. However, skepticism and resistance were prevalent among the association's traditional members, who were predominantly ski-oriented.

Lyle Fast, a pioneering snowboarder, had faced similar opposition years earlier when he pursued his mission to become a mountain guide. Fast had to compromise and qualify through traditional skiing measures, despite his snowboarding background, which highlighted the biases within the guiding community. Despite passing rigorous exams, Fast was initially denied recognition as a snowboarder, only finding acceptance gradually through determination and adaptability.

Another trailblazer, Johann Slam, navigated the ACMG's rigidity by becoming the first snowshoeing snowboarder to pass Level 1 of the Canadian Avalanche Association in 1993. He later advanced his



qualifications using a splitboard and became a certified avalanche rescue dog handler. The influx of snowboarders hiring ACMG guides pointed to a growing demand for snowboard-oriented guidance, yet the association remained skeptical about snowboarders' abilities to meet the rigorous standards of guiding.

Buffery was resolute in his effort to advance Craig within the ACMG. He proposed that the existing system could include snowboarders, urging that performance in guiding duties should transcend the particular equipment used, such as a snowboard or splitboard. Despite Zacharias' friendly banter and interest, he couldn't make unilateral decisions, although he agreed to escalate the conversation to higher authority levels within the association.

At the same time, Craig, his partner Savina, and their infant daughter, Oli, settled into a new home in Nelson, adapting to a more stable lifestyle after extensive travel. As the family adjusted, Craig remained committed to his guiding aspirations but also explored alternative pathways. Buffery recommended contacting Bob Sayer, an influential figure in the CSGA, which had historically trained guides for mechanized ski operations. Sayer provided Craig insight into the different philosophies of the ACMG and CSGA, emphasizing the latter's focus on customer service and mechanized skiing.

Craig considered advice from those like Don Schwartz, a respected figure in



the snowboarding community, who had taken a different route through the CSGA. Schwartz recounted surviving a tragic helicopter crash and how his guiding career was shaped by mentorship and caution rather than the ACMG's prerequisites, which Craig, with his expertise and Buffery's support, was better positioned to fulfill.

To keep his options open, Craig pursued Occupational First Aid Level 3, a requisite for both ACMG and CSGA applications. With experience in hazardous snowboarding stunts—not unlike the significant stakes and duties involved in guiding—Craig committed to the intense course. Upon completion, he finetuned his skills as a tailguide at Baldface Lodge under Buffery's mentorship. Embracing the challenging role, he transitioned from enjoying first tracks as a snowboarding icon to supporting and teaching clients.

Craig's new responsibilities extended beyond guiding, evolving his approach to snowboarding through fatherhood alongside Oli. His stories of adjusting bindings or encouraging guests illustrated a shift towards sharing his passion. When not on the slopes, Craig cherished time with his daughter, often seen with her on his back as they explored nature or relaxed at home. His evolution from competitive snowboarding to guiding mirrored his parenting journey, where sharing expertise became fulfilling.

Meanwhile, within the snowboarding industry, Craig's contributions were

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further recognized. When TransWorld SNOWboarding prepared to honor its one hundredth issue, Craig emerged as the most featured rider historically. This enduring influence placed him as a candidate for TransWorld's lifetime achievement award, a nod to his lasting impact on snowboarding as both a sport and profession.

In summary, the chapter encapsulates Craig's endeavors in breaking traditional barriers while embracing personal growth through guiding and fatherhood. His determination to integrate snowboarding within established guiding bodies while nurturing new life experiences underscores a broader narrative of innovation and legacy in the snowboarding world.

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# Chapter 14 Summary: Tailgunner

## Chapter 14 Summary: Tailgunner

In the world of backcountry skiing and snowboarding, understanding avalanche danger is crucial for safety. On January 24, 2002, the avalanche risk was high in the southern Columbia Mountains, a region known for its breathtaking but dangerous snowfields. Craig, a skilled snowboarder and tailguide working with Buffery at Baldface Lodge, observed the conditions with great concern. Fresh snowfalls, strong winds, and warming temperatures had created unstable layers of snow, increasing the likelihood of avalanches.

Craig's field notes tracked the natural and human-triggered avalanches they encountered. These events became valuable lessons in their daily debriefs, helping them understand the complexities of snow science and the impact of weather on snow stability. Buffery strategically kept his group on safer, forested slopes to minimize risks, demonstrating the delicate balance between thrilling experiences and safety on the mountains.

As the storm receded and clear skies returned on January 28, the allure of the sparkling powdery slopes was strong. However, Buffery, seasoned by past tragedies, cautioned against the "blue-sky factor"—the temptation to push

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boundaries despite latent dangers. His experience with avalanches underscored the grim realities of accidents and the importance of cautious decision-making.

As the day closed, a radio call informed Buffery of a fatal avalanche involving a group of experienced American backcountry skiers near Mount Carlyle. Despite their skills and preparation, they misjudged the lingering dangers post-storm, leading to three tragic deaths. The incident prompted reflection on the human factors in decision-making under risky conditions. It highlighted that even experienced skiers can overlook critical signs, emphasizing the need for humility and constant vigilance in the mountains.

Craig's commitment to mastering his craft and understanding these risks led him to pursue further training with experienced guides. He connected with Paul Norrie, a seasoned guide, to gain multiday touring experience. This opportunity at Rogers Pass offered insights into the practical challenges faced by snowboarders in mixed terrain and enriched Craig's understanding of guiding principles and expectations.

Craig's journey to mastering snow safety and guiding wasn't just technical; it was about understanding the human factors that influence decisions in the mountains. Conversations with mentors like Norrie offered perspectives on the rigorous and sometimes unforgiving nature of the guiding profession, highlighting the influence of mentors like Rudi Kranabitter and Ruedi



Beglinger—legends in the guiding community.

Craig's experiences reaffirmed the importance of learning from seasoned professionals and understanding the dynamics of decision-making beyond the granular details of snow science. His journey also hinted at a future interest in establishing a lodge, exploring territories that resonated with his vision of nurturing a safe yet adventurous environment for backcountry enthusiasts.

As the chapter closes, Craig's actions reflect a deepening appreciation for both the scientific and human elements in guiding, anchoring his resolve to navigate the complex and dangerous terrain of the Columbia Mountains.

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## Chapter 15 Summary: Checking All the Boxes

In April 2002, Craig found himself amidst the vibrant world of snowboarding once more when he, along with Savina and Olivia, attended the twelfth TransWorld SNOWboarding conference at Alyeska Resort in Girdwood, Alaska. The event was a celebration of the snowboarding industry, but also a personal milestone for Craig as he was set to receive the prestigious Tranny Award. Joined by Jake Burton Carpenter and other industry friends, Craig engaged in an exhilarating session of heli-boarding, marking a reunion on the slopes with Carpenter after several years. The Tranny Awards, although less ostentatious compared to the flashy celebrations the industry had in Vegas or Southern California, were meaningful. During the award presentation, Carpenter emphasized Craig's influential transition within snowboarding—from dominating competitions to focusing on the more soulful aspects of freeriding and guiding.

Craig's retreat from competitive snowboarding had led to a period of reflection and a newfound passion for guiding others in the backcountry. His speech at the awards reflected this shift in priorities, highlighting the importance of family and personal fulfillment. The atmosphere at the awards was one of camaraderie, with snowboarding pioneers and enthusiasts sharing stories of how snowboarding had shaped their lives.

Back in Nelson, Craig's focus returned to the ambitious goal of becoming a

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certified mountain guide. He joined forces with aspiring guide Mark Karlstrom and Mark Fawcett, a former Olympian, for a planned expedition to the Horseshoe Glacier in the Purcell Mountains. This challenging venture was integral for Craig to meet the prerequisites required for his guide certification. The team aimed to summit six peaks in four days, beginning with Toad Mountain and extending to ornate peaks like Quibble, Truce, Cauldron, Covenant, and finally, Ochre Peak.

Craig meticulously prepared for the journey, mindful of the blend of technical skills and sheer endurance required. With gear and experience varying among the team members, Craig set the stage for a rich learning environment. Despite Fawcett's lack of winter camping experience and Karlstrom's greater proficiency, the expedition unfolded as a rigorous educational exercise, pushing Craig to refine his alpine and guiding skills.

Along the expedition, Craig faced a gamut of challenges, from enduring the grueling ascent of Truce Mountain without crampons to navigating through treacherous whiteouts on the glacier. These experiences tested his mettle and honed his decision-making under duress—skills paramount for guiding. In these moments of vulnerability and determination, Craig deepened his appreciation for the intricate dance of human and mountain.

Upon completing their objectives, the trip's success buoyed Craig's confidence. Encouraged by favorable feedback from peers in the guiding

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community, including nods from the intimidating Rudi "Crampon-biter" Kranabitter, Craig was prompted to formally apply for certification. The changing of the guard within the ACMG, with Dwayne Congdon, a seasoned mountaineer known for his Everest conquest, stepping in as the new technical director, brought a mix of optimism and challenges. Yet, this shift seemed emblematic of Craig’s journey—navigating evolving landscapes and redefining the scope of his impact within the snowboarding and mountaineering domains.

| Aspect                 | Summary                                                                                                            |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Event                  | Craig attended the twelfth TransWorld SNOWboarding conference at Ayleska Resort in April 2002.                     |
| Milestone              | Craig received the prestigious Tranny Award, celebrating his contributions to the snowboarding industry.           |
| Camaraderie            | The event highlighted a sense of unity with snowboarding pioneers discussing how the sport influenced their lives. |
| Post-Competitive Focus | Craig transitioned his focus to backcountry guiding and personal fulfillment beyond competitive snowboarding.      |
| Expedition             | In Nelson, Craig embarked on an expedition to the Horseshoe Glacier with Mark Karlstrom and Mark Fawcett.          |
| Objectives             | To summit six peaks, including Toad Mountain and Ochre Peak, as part of Craig's guide certification process.       |
| Challenges             | Craig faced technical and endurance challenges, such as navigating icy conditions and whiteouts.                   |
| Achievements           | Completed the expedition goals, enhancing Craig's guiding skills and confidence.                                   |

| Aspect         | Summary                                                                                        |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Certification  | Buoyed by peer feedback, Craig decided to apply for a guiding certification.                   |
| Industry Shift | Changes within the ACMG aligned with Craig's evolving role in snowboarding and mountaineering. |

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# Chapter 16: A Letter from the ACMG

## Chapter 16: A Letter from the ACMG

In this chapter, we see Craig Kelly's transformation from a renowned snowboarder to a skilled mountain guide, set against the backdrop of the rugged peaks of British Columbia. Craig is keen on mastering the technicalities of snow and rock climbing to validate himself in the mountaineering community, as advised by his mentor Buffery. This journey takes a physical form when Craig, along with his new friend Greg Johnson, successfully climbs and snowboards down Mount Baker and Mount Shuksan, both formidable challenges due to their steep, often storm-bound summits.

Craig, driven by a need to integrate all aspects of mountain sports, embarks on an intensive training regimen, sharpening both his climbing skills and theoretical knowledge. While climbing with Johnson in Skaha Bluffs, Craig focuses on both their joint paper on the viability of splitboards for guiding and his personal climbing prowess, quickly advancing from beginner to managing demanding trad routes. His determination is a testament to his profound cognitive and physical capabilities, fused with his ever-enthusiastic approach to life challenges.



As the deadline for his ACMG application looms, Craig ensures that his dream of becoming a professional guide—and specifically advocating for the use of splitboards in such a role—is meticulously captured in a letter to Dwayne Congdon, the ACMG’s technical director. Craig's past experiences in extreme sports, combined with strong endorsements and his innovative approach to splitboarding, position him as an unconventional candidate.

Craig's pursuit is not only to meet but exceed the ACMG requirements, leading him to attend various workshops and events, like the International Snow Science Workshop. His thirst for knowledge blends academic discourse with real-world application, embracing the complexities of snow science to enhance his guiding skills. This dedication underscores his shift from a daredevil snowboarder to a safety-conscious guide—a transition marked by understanding avalanches, snow stability, and risk management.

Craig learns that despite the ACMG's acceptance of his splitboard proposal, demonstrating his ski skills remains a requirement. This moment of miscommunication, compounded with challenging early winter weather, forces Craig to rapidly adapt. He confronts the moments of doubt and reconsideration about how to showcase his abilities under the established norms of guiding.

Buffery, ever the mentor, offers coaching and reflections, emphasizing the unpredictable nature of the mountains while encouraging Craig to be

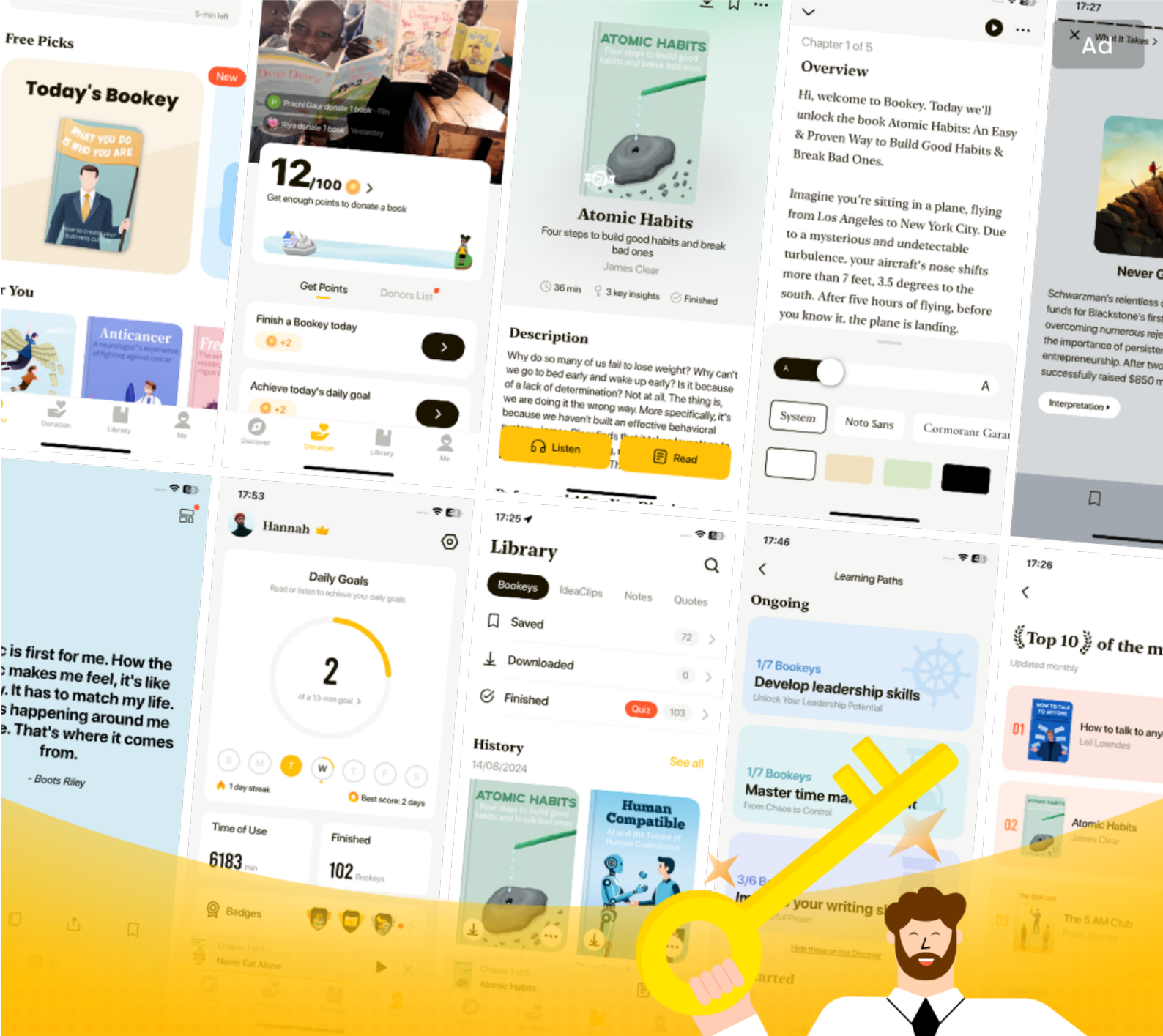


astutely cautious as the snow-packed season approaches. As Craig anticipates the official start of his training with ACMG, his journey reflects his tenacity, adaptability, and the deepening bond with colleagues who share his passion for mountain guiding. The chapter closes with impending anticipation for what lies ahead with the ACMG program, suggesting both external and internal challenges that will test Craig's resolve and competence in the months to come.

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# Chapter 17 Summary: Layers

## Chapter 17: Layers

At Whitewater Ski Resort, Craig Kelly, a renowned snowboarder, begins his unique journey into ski instructing. Though snow is on the ground, the lifts aren't operational yet, so Craig embarks on a solo mission up the bunny slope, donning his splitboard and climbing tools with a determination to adapt to skiing. However, his foray into skiing lacks the finesse he's known for in snowboarding; his initial attempts are wobbly and insecure without the pivotal heel-locking mechanism in his bindings.

Desperate for a solution, Craig contacts his friends at Burton's research facility, John "JG" Gerndt and Chris Doyle, to help turn his sketched ideas into a functional heel-lock system. After much effort and rapid prototyping, they deliver a working model to Craig, which grants him the stability needed to navigate steeper slopes, allowing him to hone his skills amidst challenging terrain in preparation for his upcoming guide course.

As Craig transitions into this new phase of his career, he sits down for an in-depth interview with Frequency: The Snowboarder's Journal. While speaking with Ari Marcopoulos, Craig reveals his disengagement from mainstream snowboarding trends, expressing a deeper connection with



adventure stories and the primal joy snowboarding brings him. He also discusses the complexities of avalanche science, acknowledging the limitations of current predictions and the necessity of intuition in understanding snowpacks—a theme echoing the unpredictability and inherent risks of mountain adventures.

A week after the interview, Craig participates in a rigorous ski guide course at Monashee Powder Adventures. His determination is put to the test as he tackles technical skiing tasks alongside other skilled athletes. Despite his nerves, Craig impresses both peers and examiners with his mastery of the splitboard, proving his adaptability and passion for mountain sports.

During the course, Craig's presence is not just an inspiration to fellow candidates but also a learning experience for the instructors, illustrating the potential of splitboards as legitimate guiding tools. Craig gives an impromptu talk on guiding snowboarders, showing a path forward for integrating snowboarding into the structured world of ski guiding.

As the holiday season approaches, Craig, his partner Savina, and their daughter Olivia, embrace a quintessentially adventurous celebration. They spend Christmas in a remote cabin and welcome the New Year with friends at the Baldface Lodge, amidst a heavy snowstorm. The joyously snowy start to 2003 includes a memorable day of snowboarding, where even young Olivia gets to experience the exhilaration of riding through fresh powder—a



magical day summed up in Craig's words describing snowboarding as akin to "flying," offering a sense of complete and joyous freedom.

In essence, Chapter 17 captures Craig Kelly's introspective journey from snowboarding legend to budding ski guide, highlighting his innovative spirit, the challenges of adaptation, and the unyielding thrill that the mountains and snow bring to his life.

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# Chapter 18 Summary: The Dragon Stirred

## Chapter 18 Summary: "The Dragon Stirred"

In "The Dragon Stirred," the focus is on Craig's rigorous journey through the demanding training and certification process needed to become a certified mountain guide. His commitment to advancing in this field is exemplified through his plan for early 2003, which involves attending the Level 2 avalanche course at Rogers Pass from January 7 to 14, then engaging in "guide training touring" from February 9 to 15. His goal is to be invited to the assistant ski guide exam, but this requires additional preparation. The ACMG (Association of Canadian Mountain Guides) advises candidates like Craig to gain real-world experience through a practicum to better understand guiding in unfamiliar terrains. Consequently, he reaches out to Ruedi Beglinger, a seasoned guide known for his expertise in the challenging terrain of Selkirk Mountain Experience (SME).

There is a pressing sense of urgency as the narrative unfolds amidst heightened avalanche activity in the region. The InfoEx system, a private exchange overseen by the Canadian Avalanche Association, details ongoing avalanches, sparking concern. January's snow conditions intensify, and by January 7, several avalanches are linked to a problematic "failure plane," ominously referred to as the "dragon."



Craig's dedication to learning and self-improvement is evident as he juggles training and personal life, exemplified by thoughtful plans around Savina's birthday. Yet, his drive to learn does not overshadow the realities and dangers of the mountains. Interactions, like an intense near-miss car accident en route to the course, reveal the risk inherent not only in the mountains but also in life itself. Despite potential brushes with danger, Craig remains focused, finishing his Level 2 avalanche education with commendable expertise in snow stability forecasts and guiding techniques.

As Craig prepares for his practicum at SME, where he will work under Beglinger's seasoned guidance, there's a palpable excitement among those aware of his journey, including Dave Finnerty, the snow shoveler at SME. Finnerty, an admirer of Craig, is particularly eager about Craig's arrival due to Craig's renown in the snowboarding world. Meanwhile, Beglinger's operations continue seamlessly despite the precarious snowpack, with his trusted methods and history devoid of accidents.

The chapter intricately weaves through Craig's training journey, personal affiliations, and the atmospheric tension of the looming avalanches. It paints a vivid picture of the extraordinary commitment required to excel in mountain guiding, emphasizing Craig's deep connection with the mountains and his resolve to advocate for safety against the backdrop of nature's unpredictability. As Craig heads towards his practicum, there's a palpable



blend of anticipation and vigilance, resonating with the chapter's tone of both awe and caution amidst the serene yet ominous beauty of the mountains.

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## Chapter 19 Summary: Welcome to Paradise

### ### Chapter 19: Welcome to Paradise

In this chapter, the scene is set against the majestic backdrop of the Selkirk Mountains, as a helicopter ascends the rugged peaks, carrying a group of eager adventurers. Among them is Craig, an avid skier, who is visiting the Durrand Glacier Chalet, a remote alpine retreat known for its sweeping views and challenging terrain. Upon landing, John Seibert, a seasoned skier and return guest, warmly welcomes everyone to what he calls "paradise."

The chalet, perched in solitude amidst the mountains, is operated by the meticulous Ruedi Beglinger, a Swiss-German guide with an unmatched reputation for safety and adventure. Craig, along with other newcomers, is introduced to the routine of the chalet and its seasoned staff, including the chef Kim Lomas and Nicoline, who oversees the chalet's operations. Amidst the hustle of arrivals and departures facilitated by Ken Wylie, a familiar face to Craig from their previous stint together, the guests settle into the rhythms of the chalet.

Tension is subtly introduced through Wylie's conversation with his partner Nancy, as they discuss the perils of skiing on the treacherous Goat Peak, revealing Wylie's unease about working in such hazardous conditions.



Nancy's departure back to Revelstoke for house-building marks a poignant moment as she leaves Wylie with the parting words, "You be safe up here."

Later, an orientation led by Beglinger captures the spirit and discipline of life at the chalet. This includes the strict house rules, especially the revered handling of the chalet's fireplace, illustrating Beglinger's notorious attention to detail and safety.

The guests, a mix of seasoned skiers and enthusiastic newcomers, are a diverse group united by their love of backcountry skiing. Among them are returning guests such as Heidi Biber, who organizes the trip for her Truckee friends, and several first-timers eager to explore the Selkirks' untamed beauty. Each guest, having signed a comprehensive waiver, acknowledges the inherent risks, including avalanches, with some participants like telemarkers and snowboarders facing additional dangers due to the nature of their gear.

As part of the safety protocol, guests undergo a thorough avalanche beacon training session, where Beglinger meticulously explains procedures for both avalanche survival and search and rescue techniques. Through this detailed instruction and a series of drills, the guests prepare for potential peril, cementing the seriousness and thrill of their alpine adventure.

The chapter closes with spirits high and anticipation building as guests



prepare to hit the slopes in a challenging yet exhilarating environment. With Beglinger's detailed safety preparations and the allure of uncharted terrains, the stage is set for what promises to be a week filled with excitement, camaraderie, and the ever-present specter of risk that comes with extreme skiing.

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# Chapter 20: Selkirk Mountain Experience

## Chapter 20: Selkirk Mountain Experience

Ruedi Beglinger, a skilled mountain guide, led a group in the challenging terrain of Selkirk Mountains, splitting them into two sub-groups to better assess their dynamics and individual capabilities. Group 1, led personally by Beglinger, included notable individuals such as Craig Kelly, a snowboarding legend known for his contributions to the sport. As they navigated through the mountain towards Woolsey Peak, Beglinger closely observed Craig, who proved his mettle by assisting other guests and showcasing exceptional skills, earning Beglinger's respect beyond Craig's celebrity status.

The skiing experience in "Boogie Basin" was marked by powdery, feathery snow, eliciting joy and camaraderie among the group. Craig, despite his fame, showed humility and a willingness to help, impressing Beglinger with his potential to become an exemplary mountain guide.

Later, during a guides' meeting, Craig demonstrated an innovative heel lockdown system he developed, sparking a conversation with Beglinger about the merits of different snowboarding bindings. Although difference in opinion about softboot versus hardboot bindings emerged, they exchanged ideas productively.



The next morning, both groups embarked on a strenuous skiing expedition covering Durrand and Forbidden Glaciers, with potential challenges like altitude and fatigue becoming apparent, particularly for guest Laura Jameson. Wylie, leading Group 2, noticed her struggle and expressed

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# Chapter 21 Summary: The Human Factor

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In this chapter, we witness a series of miscommunications and challenges that underscore the importance of human factors in high-stress environments. Ruedi Beglinger, leading Group 1, returns to the chalet later than planned, only to find that Group 2, led by Ken Wylie, is still in the field. With sundown approaching and visibility deteriorating, Beglinger grows concerned when Wylie reports via radio that he's at Goat Lake, looking for the Needle Icefall entrance. Wylie's situation is complicated by a strenuous climb back up Forbidden Peak, where he and John Seibert had to physically assist a fatigued team member, Laura Jameson, up the mountain.

Wylie, seemingly flustered by Beglinger's exasperated "Fuck" over the radio, reflects on the long, challenging day. Despite this, Wylie maintains morale, attempting to guide his group back using Beglinger's tracks. As dense fog and darkness descend, visibility drops significantly, complicating navigation across the glacier. Relying on his altimeter and GPS for guidance, Wylie attempts to keep the group together during the treacherous descent. He realizes they have missed the planned passage to Mirror Lake due to Jameson's exhaustion, opting for a longer route towards Goat Lake instead.



Despite Wylie's efforts to lead the group to safety with compass and GPS, the day extends into the night, with guests finally returning in the dark, those with headlamps illuminating the path. Jameson retreats to her room, exhausted, while other group members express fatigue and frustration with the day's unplanned detours and slow pace. The Truckee crew, unimpressed by the experience, requests to ski with Beglinger's group the following day, further emphasizing Wylie's perceived missteps.

Following their return, an audible confrontation ensues between Beglinger and Wylie, sparked by differing assessments of the day. Beglinger criticizes Wylie for straying from instructions—a sequence of miscommunications, with Beglinger misinterpreting Wylie's navigation delay and Wylie misunderstanding route directions. The confrontation highlights deeper issues of trust and communication, with Beglinger skeptical of Wylie's ability to navigate difficult terrain, particularly under poor visibility.

Despite the day's stress, Wylie only seeks rest by the end of the night. Meanwhile, Craig, another guest, contacts his partner Savina, expressing positive sentiments about the trip. Despite the day's challenges, Craig's enthusiasm for the experience suggests a sense of adventure and appreciation for the unique mountain environment they are exploring.

In summary, the day exposes the complexity of human dynamics in adventurous settings, where communication breakdowns can escalate into



significant challenges, underscoring the need for clarity, trust, and teamwork in high-stakes environments.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The significance of communication and teamwork in overcoming adversity

**Critical Interpretation:** Chapter 21 of 'Legend' reveals the pivotal role that clear communication and teamwork play, particularly in high-stress and high-stakes situations. As you reflect on Wylie's strenuous and challenging day leading Group 2, you uncover the deep impact that effective communication—or the lack thereof—can have on the outcome of any endeavor. You see Wylie struggling with miscommunications and external pressures, yet committed to guiding his team through dense fog and into safety. This resonates with the everyday challenges you might face, where maintaining clear lines of communication could significantly impact the success of a team effort. The chapter inspires you to reinforce trust and clarity in your daily interactions, reminding you that effective teamwork and communication are not just tools but the backbone of overcoming life's obstacles, ensuring mutual success and safety as you navigate your path.



## Chapter 22 Summary: January 20, 2003

Chapter 22 of the story captures a day in the aftermath of differing experiences among the guides and guests at Selkirk Mountain Experience, a well-known alpine training facility led by the renowned but controversial Ruedi Beglinger. The narrative oscillates between the perspectives of two assistant guides, Craig and Ken Wylie, as they start their day in the snowy Selkirk Mountains.

The first character we encounter is Craig, who begins his day with excitement. He is attracted by the rich aroma of breakfast wafting through the chalet and is eager to start his day as part of his guide practicum. Craig, whose family memories intertwine with his aspirations, is optimistic about the future. He cherishes a photograph of his daughter Olivia, which he keeps close, reminding him of his responsibilities and dreams. This practicum is not merely educational for Craig but a window into his future as he navigates both personal and professional realms.

On the other hand, Ken Wylie faces a starkly different reality. For Wylie, sleepless nights filled with doubt and concern mark a rough beginning. He is plagued by a sense of foreboding, a nagging feeling that has been bothering him for days. Unlike Craig, Wylie harbors apprehensions about the challenging and sometimes risky terrain, not helped by his dissatisfaction with how things are run under Beglinger. He remembers advice and



warnings from Chic Scott, a figure in the mountaineering community who cautioned him about working under Beglinger's leadership, known for its demanding and challenging nature. Wylie concludes that he will persevere only until the weekend, planning to leave the organization by then.

Beglinger, an authoritative presence in the narrative, is recognized by Craig as a legendary figure worthy of admiration and emulation. Craig is keen on learning from Beglinger, driven by tales of his prowess and the image of "Liquid Steel" portrayed in industry advertisements. To him, this represents an extraordinary opportunity to learn from the best. Craig's excitement is contagious, as he shares his enthusiasm with his brother in a message.

However, from Wylie's perspective, Beglinger's reputation as an "autocratic" and "arrogant" leader overshadows his impressive skills. Beglinger's leadership style creates tension and unease, particularly for Wylie, who feels scrutinized and undervalued. An incident involving an intense guides' meeting illustrates this tension, where Wylie confronts Beglinger regarding his management style and communication, particularly his reaction to adverse weather visibility conditions from the prior day. Despite the tension, other guides like Bullock, who have been influenced by Wylie in the past, observe the unfolding drama, noting how Wylie's usual confidence seems diminished.

An important theme in this chapter is the contrast in attitudes towards risk



and learning. Craig's excitement and positive outlook on acquiring knowledge contrast sharply with Wylie's anxiety and plans to leave. As the day unfolds, guides and guests alike prepare for a planned ski descent and exploration, including courses through promising yet challenging terrains. The chapter concludes with lingering tensions as the team heads out for a day that promises both exploration and trials in the snow-covered mountains, highlighting the underlying theme of facing fears and navigating uncertainties in pursuit of growth and mastery in a demanding environment.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Attitude towards risk and learning

**Critical Interpretation:** Reflecting upon the intertwining journeys of Craig and Ken Wylie, the chapter teaches you about the importance of adopting a positive attitude towards risk and learning. Craig's excitement and eagerness to embrace new experiences, despite inherent uncertainties, is a testament to the power of resilience and optimism in the face of the unknown. As you navigate your own life's challenges, consider embracing opportunities as Craig does, rather than allowing apprehensions to overwhelm you like they do Ken Wylie. By focusing on growth and mastering your fears, you can unlock new horizons and gain transformative insights, regardless of the daunting path ahead.

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## Chapter 23 Summary: There for the Storm

### ### Chapter 23: There for the Storm

In Chapter 23 of "There for the Storm," we're introduced to a day of adventurous skiing in the Selkirk Mountains, centering around the characters Kathy Kessler, a relentless realtor renowned locally as “the Erin Brockovich of Donner Lake” for her legal success against a water company, and ski guide Ruedi Beglinger.

Kessler, battling a sinus infection, decides to join Wylie’s slower Group 2 instead of Beglinger’s fast Group 1 to avoid slowing them down. Three other guests, including Laura Jameson, Dan DiMaria, and Erik Brentwood, opt for a rest day. Miscommunication arises when Beglinger mistakenly assigns the eager Truckee crew to Group 2, misinterpreting Kessler’s individual request as a collective one.

As the groups prepare to venture out, completing a transceiver check to ensure safety from avalanches, they head into a scenic and challenging skiing day. Descending through the magical and protective forested glades, they find sanctuary in the trees which provide better-anchored snow, especially crucial in dicey avalanche conditions.



Within Beglinger's Group 1, seasoned skier Rick Reynolds has a rare fall, much to his surprise and slight embarrassment, especially in front of snowboarder Craig. However, Craig, a skilled snowboarder with a past of guiding guests at Baldface, gracefully navigates through the snow-laden terrain, reminiscent of his home at Mount Baker. The narrative delves into Craig's instinctual snowboarding prowess, illustrating his seamless harmony with the board and environment.

Meanwhile, Wylie leads Group 2, feeling more alive with each turn as they experience the joy of skiing. Yet, tensions brew as Wylie receives what he perceives as patronizing instructions from Beglinger, culminating in his silent inner frustrations. Beglinger's mentoring style, demanding precision without room for interpretation, contrasts starkly with Wylie's more experiential and discussion-oriented Canadian training background.

The groups were moving toward Tumbledown Gully, a particularly hazardous part of the terrain due to avalanche risk, which requires caution and expertise to navigate safely. Beglinger's guiding approach is methodical and keenly attuned to the vast and imposing landscape, skillfully wending through corners and assessing snow stability, emphasizing his experience and knowledge.

This chapter captures the blend of external skiing adventure and internal group dynamics, highlighting how different personalities and backgrounds



collide within the vast, unpredictable mountain environment. Both guides and guests are there for the thrill of the powder, but the undercurrent of approaching storms—both meteorological and interpersonal—adds tension to the day. As they ascend and traverse, each character copes with their unique challenges, revealing deeper insights into their dynamics within the treacherous yet awe-inspiring Selkirk setting.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Embrace Adaptability and Unity Amidst Uncertainty

**Critical Interpretation:** In Chapter 23, the narrative culminates in a powerful lesson about adaptability and unity in the face of unpredictable challenges. As you delve into the adventurous skiing day, the focus shifts to the unexpected encounters and group dynamics within the treacherous Selkirk Mountains. This chapter serves as a vivid reminder that, like ski guide Ruedi Beglinger and his companions, we must learn to adapt swiftly to changing conditions—whether they're external in the form of a brewing storm or internal, manifesting as interpersonal tension. Embracing adaptability not only enhances personal resilience but also fosters unity among those navigating the storm with you. In moments of uncertainty, it's often cooperation and understanding, forged in the crucible of shared experiences, that lead to successful outcomes. Let this lesson inspire you to welcome change and harness collective strength, turning life's unpredictable storms into avenues of personal growth and communal triumph.

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## Chapter 24: To Ski or Not to Ski

### Chapter 24: To Ski or Not to Ski

In this chapter, we return to the world of winter sports and snow safety, focusing on the experiences of seasoned mountain guide, Ruedi Beglinger, and other key figures in the ski industry. As Beglinger leads a group of skiers across the south-facing slopes of Lower Swiss Meadows, he and his companions, including Craig and Evan Weselake, continuously assess the snowpack for stability. Weselake, an ultra-endurance athlete and a participant in Beglinger's advanced mountaineering leadership course, prefers to stay close to Beglinger to learn from his expertise.

The chapter dives into Beglinger's meticulous approach to snow safety. Over the winter, he has performed multiple snowpack stability tests, including rutschblock tests and shovel shear tests, all aimed at understanding the evolving strength of the snow layers. January 6 had seen large, naturally triggered avalanches in the area due to solar radiation following a storm cycle, but by January 20, Beglinger observed no significant signs of instability. This diligent observation gave him confidence that the snowpack was settling and becoming more stable, though he remained vigilant in monitoring conditions.



The narrative then shifts to a broader context involving avalanche risk across the region. A bulletin from the Canadian Avalanche Association highlights the ongoing risk posed by deep weak layers in the snowpack, especially during this El Niño year. The bulletin warns of potential for large avalanches if these layers are triggered, prompting Beglinger to remain cautious and selective about his routes.

Meanwhile, roughly ninety miles away at Mike Wiegele Helicopter Skiing, risk management discussions unfold differently. Don Schwartz and Bob Sayer remember their recent time guiding surfing icon Gerry Lopez, who despite his love for steep and deep conditions, had to adhere to a more conservative policy due to a notorious weak layer in the snowpack. This layer, which Sayer aptly calls "deadly, untrustworthy, unpredictable," pushed Wiegele and his team to implement a risk-averse approach, avoiding terrain over thirty degrees and steering clear of known avalanche paths.

The chapter also brings in perspectives from other operators like John Buffery at Baldface Lodge and Brad and Diny Harrison, who offer insights into the challenges of navigating and guiding in an environment where specific layers present varying levels of risk. Their experiences underscore the complexities involved in avalanche assessment, as the infamous November rain crust continues to be a concern.

Overall, while begging finds confidence in his ability to guide safely through



thorough testing and experience, other operators remain cautious, acknowledging the unpredictable nature of the snowpack. This chapter paints a vivid picture of the delicate balance between adventure and safety in mountain environments, as well as the varied approaches to managing avalanche risk across different operations.

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# Chapter 25 Summary: La Traviata

## Chapter 25: La Traviata

In the picturesque Selkirk Mountains, Ruedi Beglinger, a renowned guide, leads a group of ski and snowboard enthusiasts toward a knoll high above Twin Falls. This ascent, a regular part of Beglinger's routine, is marked by the camaraderie and adventurous spirit fostered among the group. As they pause for tea on this snowy high ground, they are joined by characters like Bullock, the Truckee crew, and an enigmatic apprentice guide, Craig, who is unknowingly a four-time world snowboard champion.

Meanwhile, back at the chalet, Nicoline, Ruedi's wife, divides her time between managing the chalet and listening in on the radio communications. Her pragmatic acceptance of the risks involved in her husband's guiding work hints at her deep understanding of mountain life, shaped over years of experience.

Back on the mountain, the weather is holding steady, although fog threatens to roll in. The group stands on the knoll, sipping tea, munching on snacks, and engaging in lighthearted banter to ease the tension of the alpine environment. They prepare for their next adventure: La Traviata, a couloir named after the opera that Beglinger loves for its natural beauty and



historical stability, even in avalanche-prone conditions.

As the group prepares to tackle La Traviata, the narrative flashes back to previous experiences and relationships. Wylie, an assistant guide, grapples with his own insecurities about guiding in unfamiliar terrain. A history of uneasy feelings in similar situations haunts him, serving as a reminder of the nuanced balance between perceived risk and real danger in the mountains.

The group moves forward, each character dealing with personal challenges. Whether it's Wylie's paralyzing anxiety or Charles Bieler's intestinal issues, individuality blends into a collective journey under Beglinger's leadership. Yet, the cohesion is threatened by small lapses and doubts—like the radio communication missed by Wylie and Jeff Bullock's inexplicable hesitation to follow the group.

Amid this backdrop of human frailty and grandeur of nature, Beglinger makes a strategic decision to switch plans, choosing the relatively safer route of La Traviata due to the approaching fog. His calm decisiveness ensures the group stays on course, providing a testament to his leadership in this breathtaking yet unpredictable wilderness.

As the chapter unfolds, it's clear that while the mountains set an exhilarating stage, each character carries their personal drama, enriching the adventurous fabric woven by nature and shared human experience.

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# Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Leadership in Uncertainty

**Critical Interpretation:** In a world often veiled by uncertainty, like the looming fog in the Selkirk Mountains, Beglinger's steadfast leadership serves as a guiding light. His ability to gauge the situation and pivot to safer terrain when needed is a testament to the profound impact that measured decisiveness and compassionate leadership can have on a group. In your life, aspire to emulate this poised assurance. Embrace the unknown, acknowledging the fears but not being governed by them. Be the calming anchor that others can rely on when the path seems obscured, and lead with purpose and clarity, navigating through challenges with a clear vision and adaptability.

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## Chapter 26 Summary: Up

In Chapter 26, a group of skiers led by the seasoned guide Beglinger embarks on an adventurous climb through the snow-covered terrain towards La Traviata. Beglinger's expertise shines as he meticulously clears a path through the fresh powder, setting a course that his team faithfully follows. The journey begins in high spirits, with Weselake buzzing with anticipation for the challenging run ahead, and Heidi Biber appreciating the sharpness of her surroundings against the looming cliff face.

As the group navigates through the dramatic landscape, Beglinger makes strategic moves, leading them safely across the slopes. His experience and techniques, such as probing the snow to assess stability, instill confidence in the others. He reassures them of the slope's strength, confident in the snowpack's solidity—a sentiment echoed by Craig, who reflects on past discussions about the importance of intuitive decision-making in such conditions.

The scene is rife with a mix of awe and tension as the skiers maneuver across switchbacks, understanding the implicit risks involved. Beglinger's cautious approach ensures that safety protocols are adhered to, especially given the size and varied experience within the group.

Further back, Wylie, another guide, grapples with an unexpected change in



plans. He realizes that Beglinger intends for them to head towards La Traviata, not Fronalp Peak as initially planned, a decision communicated via radio during a break. Despite some initial confusion, Wylie trusts Beglinger's judgment and rallies his group forward, mindful of potential communication breakdowns.

As they continue, individual stories unfold. Vern Lunsford, an experienced climber and skier, is eager to test himself beyond the confines of the slower group, while John Seibert reminisces about past experiences on La Traviata, motivated by the promise of exhilarating skiing. The camaraderie within the group surfaces through shared experiences and melodies, with Yates setting a rhythmic pace that others, like Kathy Kessler and Joe Pojar, embrace as they ascend.

Despite slight uncertainties, everyone, including the contemplative Jeff Bullock, eventually commits to the journey, tethered by trust in Beglinger's leadership. This chapter captures a snapshot of the complexities and dynamics of backcountry skiing—where decisions must be made with precision, trust is paramount, and the allure of the natural environment promises both challenge and reward.

In Chapter 27, the narrative delves into the subsequent developments and challenges the group faces, shaped by the choices and environmental conditions dictated by their commitment to the climb.



## Chapter 27 Summary: We'll Be Fine

### ### Summary of Chapter 27: "We'll Be Fine"

In Chapter 27, the narrative focuses on Craig Kelly, a legendary snowboarder, as he approaches a pivotal moment on a mountain run named La Traviata. The chapter paints a serene yet intense picture of camaraderie and the thrill of snowboarding as groups ascend a steep mountain gully. Craig is joined by his friend Dave Finnerty, and their relationship highlights the bond shared by snowboarders over their love for the sport. Craig's reverence for snowboarders who prioritize the experience over extreme stunts is noted, echoing his own philosophies about snowboarding that he articulated years earlier.

The scene then shifts to Beglinger, an experienced guide, who is leading a group across the gully. As they ascend, a sense of anticipation and unease develops among the group members, particularly for Charles Bieler. Bieler becomes increasingly aware of the steep terrain and experiences a sudden rush of adrenaline mixed with fear, prompting him to race towards the summit to escape his anxiety.

The tension builds as Beglinger's group, along with another group led by Wylie, navigate the challenging terrain. Wylie, a guide carrying the weight



of responsibility for his group, experiences a profound internal conflict about the safety of proceeding. Despite his instincts warning him against it, he defers to Beglinger's expertise. Members of both groups, including skiers like Joe Pojar, share a common apprehension about the conditions, though they trust Beglinger's seasoned judgment.

As Wylie leads his group into the gully, the narrative illustrates the intricate dynamics between guides and clients and the trust placed in the guides' decisions. The chapter ends on a suspenseful note as both groups carefully make their way up the slope, with an ominous sense of impending danger lurking in the mountain's shadows.

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## Chapter 28: Mute Terror

In Chapter 28, "Mute Terror," we delve into the terrifying and often silent world of avalanches. The chapter opens with a vivid description of the ominous "whumpf!" sound that signifies a snow layer collapse—a precursor to potential disaster when one stands on a slope. The scene quickly shifts to Wylie, who finds himself in a precarious spot, hoping against hope that the snow will hold. However, a chilling warning shout of "Avalanche!" echoes from above.

Guide Beglinger, who had just crested La Traviata, leads his group safely away from the gully. Among them are skiers such as Age Fluitman, Rick Martin, and others, making their way east to a regrouping spot for a break. Meanwhile, Charles Bieler, lagging behind, races upward, sensing impending danger.

As the story unfolds, we learn about the mechanics and terror of an avalanche. Evan Weselake, nearly overtaken by the moving snow, attempts to free himself from his skis to avoid being dragged down—a rule ingrained in his training. Bieler, reaching a summit just in time, becomes aware of the cracking snow and speeds forward, propelled by sheer instinct and adrenaline.

Rick Reynolds witnesses the destructive power of the avalanche firsthand,



likening the snowpack to a tensioned rubber band suddenly released. The impact is immediate, disorienting, and catastrophic. As Bieler scrambles in shock, Reynolds confronts the grim reality of the situation—the fractured line of snow is deep and wide, the debris field below vast.

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## Chapter 29 Summary: Thirteen Down

### ### Chapter 29: Thirteen Down

In this harrowing chapter of a mountain rescue tale, Ruedi Beglinger, a seasoned mountain guide, faces his worst nightmare as a catastrophic avalanche sweeps down La Traviata, swallowing thirteen of his guests and team members. The narrative unfolds rapidly as Ruedi sprints on his split skis back to the site of the disaster, urgently counting heads—an instinctive habit of mountain guides to ensure everyone is accounted for.

As Ruedi makes swift contact with Heidi Biber, a member of his party, he radios the Durrand Glacier Chalet declaring a "terrible accident," and calls for immediate assistance from surrounding heli-ski operations and avalanche response teams. His plea for help is picked up by Kim Lomas, the chalet cook, who coordinates the response. The snow, once pristine, now mirrors an icy abyss that has consumed his party, leaving only silence and devastation in its wake.

Following the avalanche's violent descent, Beglinger and his remaining group, including Charles Bieler and Rick Reynolds, are propelled into a desperate rescue operation. With the assistance of his radio and an avalanche beacon, Beglinger slides down the slope seeking signs of life amongst the



debris—a scene described as a chaotic field resembling the wreckage from a collapsed skyscraper.

Amidst the turmoil, two survivors are sighted, John Seibert and Paula Couturier, both partially buried yet conscious. Nearby, Couturier struggles to free Joe Pojar, pinned under snow. Her unsuccessful attempts at freeing him starkly contrast with her immediate memories of the avalanche: the dramatic "thunder" of collapsing snow and attempts to escape its clutch, leaving her grateful to remain partially above the snow's grip.

Ruedi's team systematically navigates the debris, marking spots where their avalanche transceivers pick up signals of buried victims. Intense trauma tests the survivors' mental and physical endurance, reminiscent of familiar search and rescue training: "The beacon is the guide for the probe and the probe is the guide for the shovel."

Multiple burials, including Evan Weselake, who compares his descent to a forced surrender to a waterfall, demand precise coordination and unyielding effort as survivors transform into rescuers. Each fully or partially buried individual, like Jean-Luc Schwendener, represents critical signals that must be triangulated by equally anxious rescuers, steadfast in concentrating on their transceivers amidst the chaos.

As the urgency of survival dissipates amongst cries for shovels and attempts

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to free trapped limbs, the narrative chillingly captures the essence of claustrophobic desperation faced by Jeff Bullock, who wrestles with impending suffocation. Meanwhile, amid this near-certain dread, some victims, like Weselake, reflect on the overwhelming responsibility of what being rescued would mean for them now as a part of the immediate effort to save others.

Through systematic, almost mechanical labor, Reynolds, Bieler, Stewart, and others remain focused even as challenges arise—with drills iterated through practice guiding their actions of alternating digging and probing.

Under this evolving crisis, Beglinger remains the resilient, unwavering force driven by accountability for his party and the undeterred hope of recovering the lost. His actions echo the behavior of a relentless leader, both decisive and nurturing, who, despite the nature of these icy highlands, never underestimates the heartbeat of human life.

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## Chapter 30 Summary: Nobody on Standby

In Chapter 30, the tranquility at the Selkirk Mountain Experience is shattered when Nicoline Beglinger, the wife of mountain guide Ruedi Beglinger, is informed about a devastating avalanche by their cook, Kim Lomas. The urgency of the situation is immediately felt as Nicoline contacts the Selkirk Mountain Helicopters (SMH) dispatcher to request maximum assistance, emphasizing that no one should be on standby.

SMH pilots Paul Maloney and Gerry Richard swiftly react to the emergency. Maloney, already airborne on a different mission, detours to assess the situation, while Richard takes off shortly thereafter, navigating under challenging fog conditions. Meanwhile, the urgent need for assistance mobilizes other local experts, including guides from Selkirk Tangiers, a neighboring heli-ski operation, and pilot Troy Kirwan of SMH, who hurries to the scene as well.

The narrative shifts to Eriks Suchovs, a guide who recalls his own grim history with avalanches. Fifteen years earlier, Suchovs faced a near-fatal incident when he was buried during an avalanche at Selkirk Tangiers. His life was saved by Begliniger, who now is leading rescue efforts for this avalanche. Suchovs wrestles with his memories as he rushes to assist in the present crisis, understanding both the fear and slim hope those buried may be experiencing.



In response to the avalanche, Ruedi Beglinger demonstrates exceptional leadership and decisiveness, quickly organizing rescue efforts and delegating responsibilities among those present. Despite extensive preparations and transceiver drills, the overwhelming number of burials and the depth of the snow present significant challenges. Nevertheless, the team—both those digging and those coordinating above—work methodically under immense pressure to locate and save those trapped beneath.

Amid this unfolding disaster, personal and emotional stories emerge. Efforts to rescue Naomi Heffler, whose head is uncovered after being buried, are unfruitful despite desperate CPR attempts. Similarly, attempts to resuscitate Kathy Kessler by her best friend, Heidi Biber, end in heartbreak when Kessler doesn't respond. The tense efforts showcase the fragile line between life and death in avalanche conditions.

Amid the chaos, there are miracles too. Jeff Bullock regains consciousness after being successfully dug out, demonstrating a miraculous survival against the odds. Yet, as hope finds foothold in some areas, the grim reality of loss settles in others as the team continues to unearth victims—some too late for recovery.

This chapter highlights not only the physical but also the emotional toll of the avalanche as rescuers, many with personal ties to the victims, face both



individual and collective tragedies. Beglinger's brief moment of emotion before pressing onward captures the intense humanity and perseverance of those confronting the raw power of nature and the urgency of life-and-death rescues.

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# Chapter 31 Summary: All but the Dead

## Chapter 31: All but the Dead

In the aftermath of a catastrophic avalanche, a frantic rescue effort is underway. Heidi Biber races toward Rick Reynolds, who is desperately trying to clear snow from a deep pit to reach buried victims. Keith Lindsay is already in the pit, working to free and revive Dave Finnerty, whose head protrudes from the snow. Despite the Herculean efforts of Reynolds, Charles Bieler, Rick Martin, and Paula Couturier, it's clear that the narrow, icy shaft makes it nearly impossible to perform effective CPR. Biber decides to risk her safety, instructing Reynolds to hold her boots so she can hang upside down and try to breathe life into Finnerty.

As Lindsay clears snow from Finnerty's chest, Biber attempts chest compressions and rescue breaths but senses the battle is futile. Memories of Finnerty, a vibrant presence whose humor and optimism imbued the group with energy, flood her mind. Observing the scene, Bob Pojar, who has just left the bodies of Dennis Yates and Kathy Kessler, recalls the camaraderie he shared with Kessler and others like Finnerty, who were lively and spirited just hours before.

Meanwhile, John Seibert, who was buried up to his neck, finally frees



himself from the snow and looks around at the devastation and heroic efforts of his companions who dig with relentless determination. Charles Bieler and others frantically search for missing members, but spirits remain high as they recover Ken Wylie, who, miraculously alive, is described as a "gift" after being trapped for over 25 minutes.

As Wylie is saved, hope reignites among the groups. They intensify their efforts to locate Craig, driven by adrenaline and the slim chance of finding another survivor. Biber, exhausted, knows Finnerty is beyond help and, despite her deep sadness, joins the others, determined to fight despair with action.

Surrounded by chaos and tragedy, Biber and the team press on, digging into the snow with renewed ferocity. Pojar and Seibert become instrumental in aiding Wylie, keeping him conscious as they struggle with the emotional toll of the situation. Despite the exhaustion and growing sense of loss, camaraderie and determination drive everyone to keep working. As they labor tirelessly to possibly unearth more survivors, the scene is one of conflicting despair and hope—a testament to human resilience and the unyielding drive to save those who remain.



# Chapter 32: Fly

## Chapter 32: Fly

In the aftermath of a devastating avalanche at the Selkirk Mountain Experience (SME), rescue efforts came from three directions. Pilot Paul Maloney of Selkirk Mountain Helicopters (SMH) was at the helm of Rescue One. He was determined to navigate through dense clouds that plagued the mountainous terrain. Maloney, alongside Dan DiMaria, was inbound from the east, the duo having been delayed temporarily at the Durrand Glacier Chalet. From the west, Rescue Two, led by Gerry Richard, brought reinforcement in the form of three guides: Niffeler, McAllister, and Eriks Suchovs, the latter being trusted associates of SME founder, Ruedi Beglinger. Meanwhile, Troy Kirwan piloted Rescue Three from the southeast, carrying guide Bernie Wiatzka, unfamiliar with SME's landscape but resolute in providing aid.

The SME rescue protocol was straightforward: Rescue One, closest to the catastrophe, would assess the scene, and if necessary, coordinate the arrival of other helicopters. This plan accounted for scenarios where both groups in the area were involved, thus requiring Maloney to prepare the landing zone, ready to transport victims to the Queen Victoria Hospital in Revelstoke.



However, reaching the site was fraught with challenges. Navigating through unpredictable air currents in the visually obscured mountainous terrain required sheer skill and unyielding determination—a trademark of mountain helicopter pilots. Maloney adeptly maneuvered his aircraft, hovering intermittently to find pathways through the fog, always maintaining a crucial visual reference to avoid disorientation, which the pilots dread as "going vertigo."

Gaining a clear sight of La Traviata at last, Maloney landed Rescue One, allowing DiMaria to swiftly join the rescue operation. Simultaneously, Gerry Richard's Rescue Two executed its approach, deftly landing beside Rescue One. The newly arrived guides reinvigorated the efforts to rescue buried skiers, providing much-needed manpower as exhaustion settled on the guests who initially engaged in the frantic excavation efforts.

Complicating matters, visibility issues hampered Kirwan in Rescue Three, who, despite uncertainties, pressed on, driven by an instinctive resolve as both a pilot and a guide to assist, particularly aware of the possibility his wife could be among the skiers.

While survivors like Joe Pojar and Jeff Bullock experienced relief post-rescue, Ken Wylie's emergence from burial was laden with guilt and confusion. Pulled out after an arduous dig, Wylie was in a hypothermic state, prompting immediate medical evacuation.



Meanwhile, the grim reality of the disaster weighed heavily on everyone, particularly for those like Bullock, who attended the same guiding course with Craig, one of the buried victims. Bullock's memories contrasted sharply against the current reality—a once hopeful future now overshadowed by

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# Chapter 33 Summary: The Aftermath and Memorial

## Chapter 33: The Aftermath and Memorial

In the wake of the devastating avalanche, Bruce Stewart wanders through the snow, feeling the surreal, war-torn ambiance as helicopters ferry bodies from the site. Survivors, including members of the Truckee crew, retreat in shock to their chalet, grappling with the loss and passing around a bottle of whiskey as they listen to heart-wrenching news over satellite calls. Ruedi Beglinger, the guide leading the ski mountaineering trip, takes a moment with each of the deceased before examining the fracture line from above to comprehend the tragedy's unfolding.

As responders show care in handling the bodies, transporting them to Selkirk Mountain Helicopters' hangar, Gavin Buffery at Baldface Lodge gets caught up in a cycle of fear and suspicion about who might be responsible, suspecting Ruedi. Families start receiving notices of their loved ones' demise, and grief overtakes loved ones like Pat and Brian on their way to support Savina, Craig's partner. Buffery, overwhelmed by sorrow, leads a tribute on the mountain, placing a cross in a spot significant to Craig and those he left behind.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police release an official report, noting the

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avalanche's size and impact, which struck both upper and lower skiing groups. Friends, families, and the snowboarding community mourn profound losses, particularly bewildered by Craig Kelly's death, who was known for his cautiousness and expertise in avalanches. Survivors, including Wylie, internally struggle with guilt and question their actions leading up to and during the incident.

Amid interviews and investigations by avalanche specialists, survivors disperse to process their grief. Savina, Craig's partner, visits the avalanche location with Pat and Brian, seeking answers from Beglinger. Despite recognizing their heartbreak, Savina doesn't blame Beglinger, understanding Craig's ability to make autonomous decisions.

The media reports on the avalanche clarify it as an unavoidable accident despite speculation about the skiers' placements possibly triggering it. Beglinger appears at a press conference, expressing regret but maintaining his decisions were justified under the circumstances. A subsequent news avalanche strikes as a school group is caught in a slide nearby, adding to the community's distress.

Craig's memorial service in Bellingham, Washington, gathers hundreds, including family and friends, to celebrate his life. His father, Pat, starts the service by honoring everyone lost. Tributes share stories of Craig's impact on their lives, further emphasizing his monumental role in the snowboarding



world.

Ruedi Beglinger, seen at the memorial service, faces scrutiny in the aftermath. Articles appear in major magazines, pondering ethics in such guiding expeditions. Debates arise within the community about responsibility and Beglinger's decisions, yet no formal fault is established.

A year later, a symbol of comfort arises: a raven visits the Durrand Glacier Chalet, believed to embody one of the victim's spirits. The Beglinger family builds a trail named "Seven Ravens Trail" to honor those lost, offering loved ones a means to process grief. Janet, Craig's mother, finds peace through a recovered, bent ski pole of Craig's, drawing solace from holding what her son grasped in his final moments. The gesture becomes a metaphorical guide for her as she winds her way back down the path, with Craig forever in her heart.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Honoring and Remembering Lost Loved Ones

**Critical Interpretation:** In moments of unimaginable loss, you find solace and strength in coming together to honor and remember those who have left an indelible mark on your life. Witness the profound impact of Craig's memorial service, which offers not only a space for shared grief but also a celebration of his achievements and spirit. Let this serve as a reminder to cherish your memories with lost loved ones and to find peace in holding onto what they left behind, transforming sorrow into a guiding light that leads you through the darkest times.

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