

Chapter 27

NORTHERN BERING SEA:

Mark Hess, the Captain of the Canadian cargo freighter, sets the engines to stop, walks out of the bridge to join his crew, and shoves his hands deep into his thick coat pockets. Directly ahead, a one-hundred-foot high wall of transparent ice is blocking their passage across the north Beaufort Sea to northern Canada. His first mate turns to face him, an imploring look in his eyes.

“I know what you’re thinking”, Hess tells him. “We’ll just have to accept the fact that we’ll lose some money on this trip. We’ll have to go further south until we can go around this thing.”

“I know. I wonder how far this goes. How in the hell can a glacier reach this far into the Bering Sea? Something’s not right about all this.”

Brilliant blue light suddenly fills the ice and a soft crackling sound disturbs the air. A crewman standing at the railing looks over the side of the ship. His mouth opens slightly before his eyes go wide, then he spins around and runs across the deck to the opposite railing. He stares in numb fascination as the sheet of transparent ice races across the water, away from the ship. He turns to look at the captain. “The water just froze around the ship!”

Everyone runs to the opposite side and stares at the ice sheet as it disappears over the horizon. Captain Hess hears a cracking sound and turns to look at the ice wall. Thin fracture lines begin forming on the surface, racing toward the top, then the deck shakes so hard it tosses him off his feet. He crashes onto the deck, his head slamming against the steel. He rolls onto his hands and knees and stares at the wall as massive slabs of ice crash down onto the ship.

The shaking continues as he crawls across to the railing. He watches his men jumping from the ship onto the ice sheet. Hopefully, they can get far enough away.

He is about to jump over the railing when he notices something odd. His men suddenly stop running and stare down at their shoes. They all start screaming and he watches one man grab his leg with both hands, but when he pulls, his foot breaks away at the ankle and he topples over onto the ice. When he frantically tries to get up, his hand sticks to the surface and his arm suddenly turns frosty white. When he pulls, it shatters into a thousand colored pieces that bounce off the surface like chunks of pink metal.

Hess notices frost climbing up onto another man’s legs, and when it reaches his chest, he starts gasping for air. In an instant, his mouth becomes frozen into a permanent scream of agony.

Hess can’t keep watching and turns away from the grisly scene as massive slabs of ice continue battering his ship. Half of the bridge suddenly crumples. When he looks up, the top of the slab rising out of his ship looks like a clear obelisk.

His entire ship feels like it’s rising into the air, then abruptly stops. He stares up at the obelisk while the sound of crashing ice slowly subsides and the air grows deathly quiet.

He grabs the railing, slowly pulling himself up off the deck, then stands to look around. His ship is now a battered pile of twisted steel and massive blocks of ice. He slowly turns back to the railing, dreading what he will see. When he sees the frozen red shards of his men scattered across the ice sheet, he feels nauseas and spins away from the rail, retching violently onto the deck. He stays bent over, spitting out remnants of the foul bile and catching his breath. He can’t get the image of his

frozen crew out of his mind. He leans back against the railing, then slowly slides down onto the deck as tears roll down his cheeks.