

The chairlift

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Four people find themselves stuck on a chairlift.

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The four of them sat on the chairlift in silence. The puffy clouds had a cold reverence, swooping down and blowing wind into the four faces from time to time. The youngest one shivered as the wind snipped his face like tiny shards of glass. He quivered and cuddled close to his mother, Mrs. Levitz, a woman of thirty and in no place to take charge in such a situation.

Thirty feet above the ground with no way of knowing what had caused the chairlift to stop, they waited patiently, routinely, for someone to restore order. The boy looked behind him, a thousand feet down, noticing the trailing water over the rocks and the snowy, ivory green tress.

A man, Mr. Milovic, a prospering entrepreneur in Finland for his work in exports, a tall, lean build wears skis twice his size. He took this fine Sunday afternoon to explore the back bowls of one of the Grandeur Mountains in the world, without this time, the selfish intention of creating jealousy among his associates.

"I'm sure this will all start-up soon. There's nothing to worry about," he said calmly.

The last company on the chairlift, a young man, Alkatrov Robert Gorditch, by the looks of it twenty-one, with a pierced diamond in his left ear and green goggles masking his face. His enigmatic girlfriend of six months dumped him, so he decided to take back the white snowboard with matching boots he bought her. He also grudgingly ripped up the ski ticket he bought her and told her "I would have so much more fun if YOU weren't there." He sold the board and boots for half the price earlier the same morning to an employee working at the front desk.

"What do you know?"

"Excuse me?"

"How can you be so sure everything will be alright? Are you a psychic?! Are you an operator of this machine?"

The man hoisted himself into his argumentative stance, readjusting his hips and folding his arms. "Why, yes. I'm an operator of this machine. Can't you tell? You must be one of the smarter ones in your class."

"So, if you're an operator, why don't you do something, big guy?"

The woman caressed her child and brought her son close. She wiped away the snowflakes around his cheeks and could tell frostbite was beginning to form on his face.

The man remained silent.

"Everything is going to be just fine. How are your feet?? Are you cold??" asked Mrs. Levitz.

The little boy nodded his head upwards and downwards. His cheeks were rosy red and his deep blue jacket made him look like a marsh mellow. He was wearing a thin red neckpiece that covered his mouth, which was moist and cold. He wore a ushanka hat that had images of white horses on it, which matched the horses on his dark blue mittens. When his mother pulled him close, his boots clinked against one another. Mrs. Levitz took

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off her glove and reached down to grab a hold of the boy's boot. She slipped her hand in and felt an icicle for a foot.

"Oh, my goodness! Your feet are freezing. Why didn't you tell me you were cold? Here, give me your feet!"

Mr. Milovic and Alkatrov looked at the little boy and then looked at each other.

"So? Do you have an idea or what?"

Mr. Milovic looked around and contemplated, "The metal poll is far too away from us. There are no ways to get to a tree. We can't climb up the cable to the top or bottom. We surely can't jump. Could we?"

"Here, give me your jacket." Mr. Milovic said holding out his glove.

"What?"

"You want me to do something, I need you to do something. There's a large patch of snow underneath us. I think we could guide ourselves down far enough and drop safely."

Mrs. Levits looked down worryingly at the snowy mountain.

"It does seem pretty close," Alkatrov said.

Mrs. Levits thoughtfully weighed her options.

"I really need to get my boy inside," Mrs. Levits said.

"Fine. Take it." Alkatrov said, handing his jacket to Mr. Milovic. Mr. Milovic took off his jacket as well. He reached under the bar, unclasped his ski from his boot, and pulled it up through the bar. He tied the arms of the jackets together tightly, first sliding the ski down one of the arms and then tying the other arm around it in a knot.

Mr. Milovic leaned over the side of the bar and held out the joint jackets.

"If we can climb down this, we should only have about a fifteen foot drop."

"Oh, great. So once we get down, we only have two broken legs and a broken back to deal with."

"Or one of us, maybe."

"No, No. There's no way we are doing this. It's far too dangerous," the woman said.

"Okay, don't do it then. The boy needs to get inside right? You think he'll be fine out here for another hour? Your call."

The woman didn't respond.

The wind began to blow fiercely in their direction. Mr. Milovic and Alkatrov experienced a frightening cold gust of wind on their jacketless sides and back.

"Give me my jacket back." Alkatrov said.

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"No. It's the only way to get down."

"Give. Me. My. Jacket!"

Alkatrov leaned over the boy and Mrs. Levits and tried to grab a hold of his jacket.

"No! We are going to do this."

"Dammit! It's fre- - ezing. Why does this hap-pen to m-ee?"

Alkatrov leaped over the woman and grabbed a hold of his jacket. He started yanking it towards him as Mr. Milovic held his grip.

"What the fuck, old man? Give me my jacket!"

"No. It's kids like you who are the reason nothing ever gets done. You procrastinating, afraid, foolish, young man. You will kill us all!"

"Yea, and itâs incompetent adults like you who make lousy machines and still manage to profit on it."

Mr. Milovic released his grip. Alkatrov's jacket sprung back, almost tipping him over the other side of the bar. The ski that was holding the jackets together flung out and dropped straight down, disappearing into the snow.

"Holy shit. That must have been another twelve feet down."

Alkatrov zipped up his jacket and shook the snow off of his body.

"Here, I have an idea," said Alkatrov. He began swinging in his seat, rocking the metal chairlift back and forth. The hinges of the metal screeched and the woman gripped onto her child tightly.

"How the hell do you suppose that's an idea?" said Mr. Milovic.

"It's better than doing nothing, isn't it?"

Mr. Milovic gripped the side of the bar, "Look here, stop that this instant!"

"Or what? I'll kill us all? Woo-Hoo! Now, at least I am having some fun of this trip!"

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