



*Frosty The Snowman
Always had his way!
He'd say 'buy, buy, buy!'
and 'now don't you die!
I need you to work all day!'*

- Traditional Elvish Labour Hymn

Mall Jesus

“Tis’ the season for great savings!”

“Get them what they really want this Christmas!”

“Make sure you’ve got gifts for everyone on your list!”

“He’s making a list, checking it twice!”

“Be a holiday hero this Christmas!”

“We wish you a merry Christmas, and a happy new year!”

The speakers in the Brookshire County mall blared out a litany of incessant advertisements. They pleaded and begged and rid thee with guilt, and each one was interspersed by the occasional Christmas song.

Darrell Kolohov sat inside the staff bathroom, staring at himself in the mirror. He was fifty-eight, tired, and currently wearing an ill-fitting, questionably fragrant Father Christmas costume. Golden buttons that were flaking and tarnished ran down his chest, which fell rather baggy around his thin frame. The trousers were too big, and the hat itched his scalp. The greyish beard and scraggly white hair were real, however.

Darrel tried his best to smile. He tried his best to imagine the laughter of the children, and the beaming faces of parents, young and old...

“Be a holiday hero this Christmas!”

“Get them what they really want this Christmas!”

“Get great savings when you shop in-store!”

“Trying to find that perfect gift?”

He let his face fall into his calloused, gnarled palms, and let his eyes flicker up to the clock. It was ten fifty-five. It was almost time. With a sigh, he walked towards the door, and out into the staff room. It was filled with a half-dozen bleary-eyed mall workers. They were all on their respective cell-phones. No one looked up as Santa walked past, and Darrell descended the small flight of stairs and out into the greater mall. He slung his Father Christmas sack over his back and did his best to put a jolly swagger to his plodding steps.

The mall was packed. People surged about from store-to-store, arms piled high with bulging bags. Christmas ornaments and trees were everywhere, and the sound of sleighbells was audible up ahead. As he walked, he looked at the stores all around him. The clerks within were besieged by legions of customers, and the entirety of each store seemed to be coated in 'sale' signs.

Darrell shook his head when he saw just how many were open on Christmas Eve.

"What do you want for Christmas?"

"Get them everything on their list, for less!"

"I'm dreaming of a white Christmas..."

Darrell walked out into the centre of the mall, where a large throne was placed, surrounded by presents. Workers dressed as Christmas Elves surrounded the throne, and a large group of children and their parents stood in an orderly line before it, patiently anticipating the appearance of Santa Claus.

Darrell took in a breath, broke out into a jolly skip, and bounded towards the throne. Two of the elves noticed him coming, and lifted the rope railing to allow him access to the mighty display. Darrell ducked under it and took a moment to himself, hiding behind Santa's opulent throne.

"It's the most wonderful time of the year!"

"What do you want this Christmas?"

"Save on everything that's hot this Christmas!"

He could hear Children laughing and talking amongst themselves. He could feel the eyes of the young elves boring into him.

Darrell took a breath and then, raced out onto the stage.

“Ho ho ho!” he boomed, as heartily as he could muster.

The children began to cheer and clap, and he waved to them and sat himself down on the throne.

“Ho ho ho!” he boomed again. “Merry Christmas!”

He looked down into the faces of the children. Fat faces, bundled up in tuques and winter coats. They were beaming up at him, and he waved and winked, and one by one, the elves let a child come up and sit upon his lap.

The first child to come up to him was a little girl missing her two front teeth.

“And what would you like for Christmas this year?” Darrell asked, looking down into the girl’s sparkling eyes.

The Girl’s mother stood back a few feet from the throne and watched.

“I want a puppy!”

“A puppy?” Darrell asked. “Ho, ho, ho! And do you think you’d be able to take care of a puppy?” he asked, gaze flickering up to the mother, who nodded slightly.

“Yep!” the girl said.

“Well, I’ll see what my elves and I can do for you. Ho, ho, ho!”

The girl beamed and a picture was taken. Then she hopped off of him and walked away.

“You’re welcome,” Darrell muttered under his breath.

Then, the next child was unleashed and a fat boy with yellow teeth crushed Darrell’s legs against the throne.

“And have you been a good boy this year?” he asked.

“I think so,” the boy replied.

“Ho, ho, ho!” Darrell boomed. “And what would you like for Christmas this year, lad?”

“I want a new gaming computer!” the boy said.

Darrell frowned and risked a glance to the boy’s father, who was not paying any attention and had his eyes rooted on his cell phone.

“Well, I’ll see what we can do. Ho, ho, ho!” Darrell said,

attempting to rock the child on his knee, but being unable to.

Another picture was taken, and soon the fat boy was replaced by another child.

“I want a PlayStation 5!”

“I want a new iPhone!”

“I want a Pony!”

“I want a Switch!”

“Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer...”

“Get the perfect present for everyone on your list!”

“Last minute plans? Make us your everything Christmas destination!”

“Get them what they really want this Christmas!”

“I want a new Dirt Bike!”

“I want an Xbox!”

“I want a new Phone!”

“I want a new Phone!”

“I want a new Phone!”

“Treat yourself this holiday!”

“I want two new PlayStation controllers and the new ‘assassin’s Creed’ game and a subscription to the PlayStation network and a new phone as my one is pretty old now and-”

Darrell looked down at the kid sitting on his lap, reading off an extensive list of all the things he wanted this Christmas.

“Make sure you get everything on their list!”

“Don’t be a Scrooge this year!”

“Have you found the perfect gift yet?”

“Give me all your money, you washed-up-old man dressed as Santa in some lame attempt to pay your medical bills! Give me all your money so your grandchildren don’t hate you this year!

HHHHHHHHHHHHH!”

“Isn’t that enough?” Darrell cut in.

The child stopped, another demand lodged in his throat, eyes welling with tears.

His mother’s eyes narrow and she steps forward.

“What?” she said icily.

“You heard me,” Darrell snapped. “Isn’t that enough? I

mean, this kid's here reading me a list of demands like Hans fucking Gruber."

There was a collective gasp from all assembled parents.

"I'm sorry," Darrel continued, practically pushing the boy off of him and getting to his feet, "but this is crazy! iPhone? PlayStation? Computers? I remember when you used to ask Santa for toy soldiers or Star Wars figures. Hell, kids used to ask me for Bionicles only twenty years ago! But now what? I want, I want, I want! I get it, they're kids, but you lot!" he gestured to the adults. "You just let them do it! You let them sit here and make demands of me! Holy shit!"

The elves were stepping in now. Some of them horrified, most of them trying not to laugh. Some of them had called for Mall security.

"I've had enough!" Darrell continued. "I've bloody-well had enough! Just listen! Listen to this shit! I think I've heard maybe five Christmas songs since I got in here, the rest is all ads! Christmas is a time for being thankful and giving gifts to each other, sure, but its more than that! It's a time when families are supposed to get together and play games and things, and just be a family for a few days. But, oh no! Now you've got the wage slaves working through Christmas? Who the fuck is shopping on boxing day? WHO THE FUCK?"

Children were crying all around him now, but Darrel was past caring. He walked towards Santa's throne, picked it up, and slammed it into the ground, The cheap chair shattered, and more kids began to wail. Darrell let out a growl of frustration and started kicking around the fake presents that were stacked behind it, then turned his attention to the Christmas trees.

People from all over the mall were stopping to watch the excitement, and a legion of phone cameras presented themselves, even as the security tried to fight their way through.

"Christmas means more spending, let us help you with that!"

"What do you want for Christmas this year?"

"Make sure you get everything on their lists!"

“LOOK AT THIS OLD GEEZER RUINING CHRISTMAS FOR ALL THESE CHILDREN!
HHAHAHA! NOW STOP THIS NONSENSE AND GIVE ME ALL YOUR MONEY!”

Darrell tore tinsel from Christmas Trees, sent baubles flying everywhere, and even managed to kick a fake Christmas tree over, shattering dozens of cheap ornaments as it hit the tiled floor.

Then, two sets of arms clamped themselves around him, and began to drag him away.

Darrell fought against the iron grip of the mall security, but it was no use. He flailed and kicked, but they were too strong.

“Ho ho ho!” he screamed shrilly. “Happy Christmas to all, and to all, a good night!”

“Get them what they really want this year!”

The two police officers loomed over Darrell. He sat in an interrogation room, still in his Santa outfit. The two policemen had picked him up after his debacle and taken him to the station, where he now sat, avoiding their eyes.

“Darrell Kolohov,” one of the officers said. “I hope you’re proud of yourself.... I mean, what the hell man? Those were kids...”

Darrell didn’t reply.

“Listen, buddy,” the second officer cut in. “The mall will be pressing charges for vandalism, so, unless you can post bail-”

“Ho, ho, ho!” a mighty voice boomed from somewhere out in the corridor.

Darrell frowned and looked up at this.

Both officers furrowed their brows, and glanced to the door.

“Anyway,” Officer two continued.

“Ho, ho, ho!” the voice boomed again.

“What is that?” Officer one asked.

Before either could answer, the door opened to reveal a young police woman and a big fat man wearing a beautifully tailored Father Christmas costume. The man had a mighty white beard, eyes that twinkled like little stars, and a massive hat that crested his head like a festive crown.

“What is this?” Officer one asked.

“Oh, don’t worry Malcolm,” Father Christmas boomed, “I’m posting bail for my co-worker here. Ho, ho, ho!”

Both policemen exchange glances.

“It’s true,” the policewoman said. “Paid in full right now.”

“Well,” Malcolm mumbled, turning back to Darrell. “Looks like you’re free to go, Mr. Kolohov.”

Darrell stared at Father Christmas. With a certainty that defied reality, he knew that this was ‘The’ Father Christmas. There was no doubt. The fat belly, the gleaming mane, the gilded buttons.

“Come on, Darrell,” Father Christmas said, “let’s get you home. Ho, ho, ho!”

With leaden feet, Darrell rose from his chair and walked over to Father Christmas. Father Christmas put an arm around him, and the two Santa’s walked out of the police station and into the dreary December day. Idling on the curb was a sleek black car, a door open. A well-dressed man, wearing shades and an earpiece stood there, and gestured for the two Santa’s to get in.

As Darrell passed the suited man, he noticed that poking out from beneath his long blonde hair were pointed ears, and he murmured, “what the hell?”

Santa clambered into the car, and Darrell followed after.

The elf shut the door behind them and climbed into the passenger seat.

Darrell was confused to find that the car was bigger on the inside than it was on the outside. There was lots of leg room, and even a fully-stocked fridge. Santa sat opposite him and opened the fridge, revealing rows of milk and eggnog.

“Can I get you anything, Darrell?” Father Christmas asked. “Eggnog, perhaps?”

“Um,” Darrell murmured.

The elves started the car and peeled away from the police station.

“Am I dead?” Darrell asked.

“Ho, ho, ho!” Father Christmas boomed. “Afraid not!”

Darrell frowned and collapsed into his seat. “Who are you?”

“I’m Father Christmas. Or Santa Claus, if you prefer.” Santa took a mighty swig of eggnog.

“No you’re not,” Darrell said, trying to convince himself.

“Mate,” Father Christmas said, “I just bailed you out of jail, then led you to a car that’s bigger on the inside with an elf for a driver and another elf for a valet... Are you sure it’s not real?”

“No,” Darrell said, on the verge of tears.

“Listen, you work for me, right?”

“No.”

“But you’re one of my helpers!”

“No, I work for the Brookshire County Mall!”

“No,” Father Christmas said, reaching into his long red coat and producing a few papers. He rifled through them and presented one to Darrell.

Darrell reached out and read it over. Sure enough, it was the contract he had signed earlier that year.

“See?” Father Christmas said, snatching the contract back and putting it into his coat. “You work for Frosty Corp, which is also who employs me.”

“Frosty Corp?”

“Don’t worry about it,” Father Christmas said. “Let’s talk about you,” he said. “You seem to be a bit of a Scrooge this year! Ho, ho, ho! You seem to have a bit of a lack of Christmas Spirit, my friend!”

Darrell let his face fall into his calloused hands.

Father Christmas pulled a large piece of parchment out of a pocket and consulted it. “Let’s see here,” he said, putting on a pair of spectacles. “Cursing in front of Children, destroying Christmas decorations, ruining Christmas for fifty odd kids, and a refusal to buy into the consumerism surrounding our blessed holiday... Ho, ho, ho, if you were still on my list, you’d definitely be getting some coal!”

Darrell looked outside the window, and was alarmed to see that they were driving through snowy mountains, somehow.

“Where the hell are we?” he asked, frantically looking at the bleak wasteland of snow beyond the window.

“Don’t change the subject,” Father Christmas snapped. Darrell reeled on the fat old man. “Where are you taking me?”

“Why, to the North Pole, of course! Ho, ho, ho!” Father Christmas boomed. “Where’d you think?”

“Why?”

“Because The Boss wants to see you,” he replied, finishing his eggnog.

“The Boss?” Darrell queried.

“Yeah, Boss Frosty,” Father Christmas said. “Anyway, we can’t have all our Mall Santa’s becoming Mall Jesus’ and trashing all the tables, you know?”

“I just had enough,” Darrell muttered. “Enough of the constant advertising, and the constant, ‘I wants’...”

“But that’s Christmas, lad,” Father Christmas said.

“But it shouldn’t be.”

“Ho, ho, ho!” Father Christmas boomed. “It’s how it’s been for a century, at least! Don’t go getting delusions of grandeur. You’re a mall Santa, be a mall Santa.”

“I just can’t, sir,” Darrell murmured. “It’s evil.”

Father Christmas shook his head gravely. Before he could reply, the car came to a stop, the two elves got out and pulled the doors open.

“Well,” Father Christmas said, “here we are.”

He clambered out of the car, and Darrell followed. The first thing he noticed was the cold. A ghastly wind blew, sending small patches of snow drifting over the plains. Clouds smothered the winter sky, and all around him were buildings. Mighty factories with cartoonishly large smokestacks belched noxious fumes into the arctic air. Legions of elves scurried about between forges and toy shops.

Father Christmas began to lead Darrell towards a small cottage that sat at the base of one of the mountains. The Cottage was quaint and dusted with snow. Christmas trees surrounded it and strings of Christmas lights hung from its thatched roof. It was picturesque and utterly unbelievable.

The elven bodyguards pushed Darrell forwards, and that

was when he noticed the snowmen. There were dozens of them, overseeing all the industry. Big snowmen, wearing blazers and wearing Stetsons. They looked mean, with flattened carrots for noses and gnarled tree roots for arms. Darrell was alarmed to see that they were somehow alive, shuffling about on the snow and talking amongst each other in hushed voices.

Darrell caught up to Father Christmas. “What’s with the snowmen?” he asked.

“Oh, they’re Boss Frosty’s boys!” Father Christmas said, clapping Darrell on the back heartily. “Don’t worry about them.”

They continued towards the house. When they reached it, Father Christmas pulled the door open, then barked a few orders to the two elves in a strange language Darrell couldn’t understand. The two elves nodded and turned to flank the doorway.

Father Christmas gestured for Darrell to enter, and he somewhat-begrudgingly obliged.

The interior of the cottage smelled like cinnamon and mint. It was warm and cozy, and had a massive Christmas tree in its living room adorned with a venerable dragon’s-hordes-worth of decorations.

Father Christmas stepped into the house behind Darrell and let the door fall closed.

“Nicolas?” a gentle, warm voice called from the kitchen. “Is that you?”

“Yes honey,” Father Christmas called back. He batted the snow off of his boots and walked on into the house.

Darrell followed suit and wandered into the kitchen, to where a plump old woman wearing a red apron was mixing up a bowl of gingerbread. She smiled at the two men as they entered, then leaned forward to plant a kiss on Father Christmas’ cheek. Santa returned the kiss and the two shared a laugh.

Father Christmas gestured to Darrell, “this is Darrell Kolo-hov,” he said.

“Nice to meet you Darrell,” the old woman said, “I’m Mrs. Claus!”

“Nice to meet you, ma’am,” Darrell said.

“Aw, isn’t he sweet?” Mrs. Claus said as she began to turn the gingerbread into little gingerbread men. “I’m making some fresh gingerbread if you’ll be staying around.”

“Oh, no-can-do, honey,” Father Christmas said. “Darrell’s from work. One of my helpers. I’ve got to take him to meet The Boss.”

“Oh,” Mrs. Claus said, “well, then I won’t keep you boys.”

Father Christmas nodded, then gestured for Darrell to follow him. Darrell followed Father Christmas into the massive living room, and towards the oversized fireplace. Father Christmas pulled the door open, and clambered inside. Darrell frowned, looked around, then followed.

Strangely, the interior of the fireplace was much larger than it had appeared, and it resembled more of an elevator, than an actual chimney. There was even a little keypad.

Father Christmas bent down and closed the door behind them, then punched a code onto the keypad.

“Where are we?” Darrell asked.

“Oh,” Father Christmas said, “It’s a chimney. I can get anywhere from inside one of these! Ho, ho, ho!”

Slowly, the chimney began to whirl, and Darrell began to feel sick. He leant against the wall.

“This may be uncomfortable,” Father Christmas warned. “It was on my first time, at any rate! Ho, ho, ho!”

“Where are we going, though?” Darrell asked. “You’ve not said. Who is Boss Frosty?”

“Well,” Father Christmas began, lacing his fingers and looking at Darrell square in the eyes. “Christmas is a pretty big affair, and it takes some management.”

“I thought you were in charge,” Darrell said.

“I’m more of a general manager,” Father Christmas replied. “Boss Frosty is like the Regional Manager.”

“Who’s the CEO?” Darrell asked.

Before their conversation could continue, the fireplace came to a stop and the doors sprung open with the tolling of a bell.

“Here we are,” Father Christmas said. He clambered out of

the fireplace, and Darrell followed.

The two men exited out onto the peak of a mountain. Snow coated it, and the clouds were so close to the peak that Darrell found himself reaching up to touch them. Then he noticed the cold and pulled his ill-fitting Santa costume tighter.

“Come on,” Father Christmas said, gesturing for them to continue onwards.

Father Christmas led Darrell towards a dense fog, and soon, the icy vapours had completely enshrouded them. As they walked, Darrell suddenly became aware that the floor beneath him was no longer the snowy mountain-top, but white tiles. There seemed to be walls around them, and then, he almost tripped over a white desk.

The clouds parted slightly to reveal a white desk with nothing atop it save for a plaque. It read: Boss Frosty.

Standing behind the desk was a fat snowman. It didn't look quite like any snowman Darrell had ever seen before, however. It was comprised of three bulbous balls of snow and wore an ill-fitting blazer. There was a wide-brimmed black Stetson perched atop its head, and its carrot nose was gnarled and misshapen. Instead of coal for eyes it had two large golden coins, and its mouth was comprised of sharp bristles of jagged metal. Its arms were made from twisted dead tree branches, and one of them held a walking stick topped by a Christmas star, the other, a large candy cane that was lit at one end, smoldering and casting off a cloud of noxious, sugary smoke.

Boss frosty brought the smouldering candy cane up to his mouth, inhaled mightily, and then blew out a cloud of candied smoke right into Darrell's face.

Darrell hacked and gagged on the sweet, sickly smoke.

Then, Boss Frosty spoke. “Nick!” he drawled in a strangely new-yorkish accent. “How are things goin'?”

“Great, as always! Ho, ho, ho!” Father Christmas replied. “This is Darrell, he's the helper I told you about.”

“Right,” Boss Frosty drawled, taking in another puff of smoke and giving Darrell a once-over with his golden eyes. “You Darrell?” he asked, gesturing with his walking stick.

Darrell managed to form words and replied. “Y-yes, sir,” he said, stiffly bowing.

“Boss Frosty, nice to meet ya. Listen! Christmas is a big deal, and I’m a busy snowman, so let’s make this quick.” Boss Frosty took another mighty puff of his candy cane. “I read your file. You got some nasty cancer, bub, I’ll give ya that, but that ain’t no excuse to go ruinin’ Christmas for all them kids, eh?”

“Sir, I-”

“Hey, I’m not done talkin’! It was rhetorical. Anyways! You goin’ full Mall Jesus on us ain’t good, so, here’s the thing, you gonna keep causin’ problems, or are ya gonna get back to work?”

“Um, Boss frosty,” Darrell began slowly, “I’m not sure who you even are?”

“I’m the Boss of Christmas, okay, that’s all you need to know!” boss Frosty snapped. “I’m your employer, as per that contract you signed but never read, capiche?”

Darrell nodded slowly.

“Your job is to get all the kids hooked on consumerism, and then get some nice money from their parents.”

“Wait-”

“That’s your job. I can’t have you getting all moral on me, okay? So, here’s the thing. I know you are dying of cancer. I know that’s the reason you’re a Mall Santa in the first place. I can cut you a cheque for whatever you need for your cancer treatment, if you just go back and be a Mall Santa again.” Boss Frosty reached into his blazer and pulled out a check book. “I’ll write it right now!”

“Wait one moment Mr. Frosty I-” Darrel was once again cut off.

“It’s no trouble, really!” Boss Frosty continued. The bloated Snowman opened his chequebook, pulled a pen out of his top pocket, and began to scribble into it. “Let’s see here... The sum of one hundred thousand dollars to be paid to one Mr. Darrell Kolo-hov on behalf of Frosty Corp.”

“Boss Frosty!” Darrel shouted, slamming his hand down onto the frigid desk. “Listen to me! I don’t want your money!”

The Snowman froze, the coins in his eyes trembled, and he

took a deep puff of his candy-cane cigar.

Father Christmas cringed and stiffened.

“Christmas isn’t supposed to be about this!” Darrel yelled, his voice echoing into the clouds around him. “It’s supposed to be about family and friends and buying some little gifts for them to show how you love them. It’s not supposed to be about commercials, and black Friday deals, and money, and endless shitty trinkets!” Darrell rammed his fist into the table once again.

Boss Frosty glowered, then slowly began to speak. “No. Christmas is about money. Spending it. Lots of it. It’s about runnin’ from shop to shop hectically, and then blowin’ your money on shit for unappreciative people. It’s about stuffin’ your fat ape faces with fat and grease and chunks of hot wet meat. It’s about being a drunkard and getting fat...” The Snowman trailed off. “But fine. If you’re not willing to play the game, who am I to stop you, eh?”

Boss Frosty reached down and shredded the cheque he had been writing, then took another big gulp of candied smoke.

Darrell looked at the snowman, his heart pounding.

“Well, Mr. Darrell Kolohov, we’ll terminate your employment asap, it was a pleasure doin’ business with ya.” Boss Frosty held out a gnarled hand.

Darrell gingerly took it, and the two beings shook.

Frosty turned back to Father Christmas. “Nick!”

“Yes, sir?”

“Take Mr. Kolohov back to Brookshire. I heard the Snowmen are lovely there this time o’ year.”

Darrel frowned. He was fairly certain there was no snow in Brookshire. At least, not enough to make snowmen out of. However, before he could ponder it further Father Christmas gave a grave nod, and began to guide Darrell back towards the elevator.

“Come on then,” he said, “let’s let Boss Frosty get back to work.” Then, after a brief delay. “Ho, ho, ho.”

Darrell let Father Christmas take him back to the elevator, leaving Boss Frosty to get back to work. They then entered the fireplace, which lowered them back down into Father Christmas’s house. Father Christmas led Darrell back out the front door, where

the black car was waiting, the two tall, blonde-haired elves still standing vigil outside.

One of the elves walked over and opened a door as they approached.

Darrell turned to Father Christmas. "So, what happens?" he asked. "I just leave?"

"Yes," Father Christmas said. "You go home, and you have yourself a merry little Christmas, ho, ho, ho!"

Darrell frowned, but then the elf gestured for him to enter the car, and he folded himself into the back seat.

Father Christmas peered into the car as the other elf got back into the driver's seat. "Don't worry about those charges!" he boomed, "it's all sorted out, ho, ho, ho!"

"Um, thanks," Darrell said.

The elf shut the door.

Darrell saw Father Christmas say a few things to the other elf before he got back into the car.

The doors locked and they pulled away. Pulled away from the quaint little house sandwiched between arctic factories and burley snow-bouncers.

As they drove, the landscape became a blur. Darrell gazed out the window at it, and as he did so, he began to feel an impending sense of dread.

"Hey!" he called to the elves. "Legolas! What did Saint Nick say to you back there?"

The elves remained silent.

Darrell felt cold, like ice was running through his veins. "What did Boss Frosty mean about the snowmen? There's no snow in Brookshire!"

The elves remained silent.

"Let me out the car!" Darrell cried.

Still, the elves did not react.

Slowly, the landscape came back into focus, and Darrell saw that they were in the middle of nowhere. Snow surrounded them, but nothing else.

"What the hell is going on here?" Darrell cried.

Then Legolas brandished a gun. “Get out the car,” he instructed in a cold, emotionless voice.

Darrell gulped.

The engine stopped. The doors unlocked. The elves got out.

Before he could run, or muster a fight, the doors were opened, and he was seized by the deceptively strong hands of the elves.

Darrell flailed and cursed, but after one of the elves launched his boot into Darrell’s face, he became dazed, and soon found himself kneeling in front of Legolas.

The elf pressed the barrel of his gun to Darrell’s forehead, and as he pulled the trigger, the second elf pulled a tarp out of the boot of the car.

Darrell’s corpse fell to the blood-stained snow, and the elves wasted no time in wrapping him, and all evidence of his death, up in the tarp.

After a few minutes, the cooling corpse stood erect in the snow, a large snowman built around it. The elves put some sticks in its sides, a top hat on its head, some stones for eyes and a mouth, and then got back in the car.

Standing alone in the eternal winter was a quaint little snowman, soon to be enveloped by an arctic blizzard...