



scared

colin haley

Under fluorescent lights in the emergency room of the Sallanches hospital, Andreas Fransson squeezes my hand and looks up into my eyes. His own are half-swollen shut. I think that even bold Andreas, one of the world's best steep skiers, might be scared now.



INTRAVENOUS FLUID DRIPS into his arm, his nostrils are plugged with clear plastic tubes, and mysterious machines surround him. He can't say much. His neck is broken; his pelvis is fractured and so are a few ribs. A plastic bag in the corner contains the clothes I last saw him in. The thick plastic shell of his ski helmet is cracked and deeply dented in several places. Our last conversation was a few hours ago. Almost done with a ski descent of the Y-Couloir on the Aiguille Verte, we were discussing whether two knifeblades were adequate for the rappel anchor.

Earlier I'd been crossing the main gully in the warm sun when a large wet slide came roaring down from above. I dug in my self-arrest poles and pressed as hard as I could into the side of the gully. Snow pummeled my pack and pulled hard at the tails of my skis. I felt its force start to overcome my strength. *I'm going to be swept off three hundred meters of cliffs. I'm going to die.* The avalanche passed, and I traversed out of the gully trembling with adrenaline. *That was really close. Way too close.*

Only a half hour later, while on rappel from the knifeblades, Andreas was hit with another avalanche. The ropes went taut and then slackened as he was ripped off them, engulfed in the torrent of snow, and dragged down two hundred meters of icy gully and cliffbands. As I slowly rappelled down an adjacent rib of rock, I watched the rescuers on the glacier below place Andreas in a stretcher and then winch him up to the hovering helicopter. When they came back for me, I had to ask if Andreas was alive.

The doctors won't let him drink anything, so Andreas motions for a wet piece of gauze to moisten his lips. We have just a few minutes before he is rolled away to a waiting helicopter and on to another hospital in Grenoble with surgeons who specialize in spinal injuries. What is going on this season? Kelly Cordes shattered his lower leg ice climbing

in Montana; Steve House took a nearly fatal whipper on Mt. Temple; a camping stove blew up in Rolo Garibotti's face. A few days ago my friend Magnus Kastengren hit a patch of ice on the first few turns of Les Courtes' Northeast Face. I watched in disbelief as he lost control and tomahawked seven hundred meters. Miraculously, he survived. *And now Andreas?*

A FEW DAYS LATER, after a clandestine bivouac in the Aiguille du Midi téléphérique station, I start up the Supercouloir on Mont Blanc du Tacul, encouraged by the pink morning sunlight. Fresh snow dusts the coarse granite holds, so I scrape them clean with fingers not quite numb enough to ignore the abrasion. The surface of my mind is precisely focused on the tangible present, as it always is when I'm soloing, but an undercurrent of consciousness flows beneath.

I think about Andreas, immobilized in a hospital bed, and about what my life would be—or not be—if I had been first on that rappel. I think about Lara Kellogg's exuberant smile, illuminated by the campfire, as she told jokes after a day of cragging. I was living on a friend's floor in Seattle's U-District, doing my homework on a rainy evening when Mark Westman called. *Lara is dead.* For the hundredth time I try to imagine what Jed Brown felt when he saw her fall out of sight down Mt. Wake, and for the first time I think I know. Imagining what Lara experienced—*losing control of that skinny rope in your big, iced-up gloves, watching it zip out of your belay device, and falling down a mountain conscious of your imminent death*—is too terrifying to dwell on for long.

But mostly I think about *my* life. Relieved only momentarily after the tricky start of the Gervasutti Pillar, I take off my rock shoes and gaze anxiously at the gully above as I clip on my crampons. *Hard soloing*

again? Already? I've been soloing a lot this year. Freddie Wilkinson once cancelled a Patagonia trip en route to the airport. He said he felt a bull's eye on his back. *Should I feel that way? Do I? Is it all going to catch up with me?*

I think of Hiroomi Sakuma, the quiet Japanese climber I met on a frosty morning last fall in the Yosemite Lodge cafeteria. He had been soloing lots of routes in the Valley. On his computer he had bookmarked my report of soloing Fitz Roy's Supercanaleta. He told me his plans to do the same and asked for bits of advice. A few weeks later, by coincidence, we arrived in the Buenos Aires airport at the same time. We split a taxi and spent a jet-lagged day together, eating pizza in the corner of a crowded restaurant with our luggage stacked around us. Omi's English was rudimentary, but as we passed photos and topos back and forth across the sticky table our mutual excitement for the Patagonia season came through clearly.

That evening was the last time I saw Omi alive. A week later, I recovered his body below the bergschrund. It was a gruesome reminder of the realities of soloing. He had fallen a thousand meters down the Supercanaleta.

In the shadowed gut of the Supercouloir, I work tensely up steps of thin ice splattered over dark, compact rock. I want to move quickly, to escape this route, but any lax placement could be fatal. *What am I doing? This is too stressful, too dangerous.* A sport climber strives to expel fears of falling, but here I cling to them—the awareness of death as the consequence of any mistake wards off complacency. After the crux pitch of vertical ice, I kick steps up narrow snow gullies and scrape through some blocky mixed terrain on the final ridge. Emerging onto the bright, snowy summit, I am released from the dangers of the face. I feel the fear flush out of me, and let it seep into the porous snow. In warm afternoon sun, I run and glissade down the *voie normale* in a race for the last téléphérique. I feel elated and very alive, and revel in the throb of blood pounding through my veins.

BARELY A WEEK AFTER the Supercouloir I fly from Talkeetna to the Kahiltna Glacier with a handful of Denali suitors and my Norwegian partner, Bjørn-Eivind Årtun. With shaggy, dirty-blond hair, a sharply cut face, blue eyes and a lean body, Bjørn-Eivind resembles a classic Viking, but he is gentle. Polite, kind, and always upbeat, he sits across the plane in a bright Norrøna hard shell, the de facto uniform of



Scandinavian skiers in Chamonix. One of the fittest alpinists I know, Bjørn-Eivind comes from a competitive Nordic skiing background. A technician on steep rock and ice, he has less alpine-climbing experience than I, but he has the head for it. We are here to attempt an unclimbed wall on Mt. Foraker—one that we both became infatuated with while descending Mt. Hunter in 2009. I am excited, but the past several days have been filled with too much packing, travel and organization. As the Denali suitors snap photos, I succumb to the drone of the engine and fall asleep against the window of the small ski plane.

To acclimatize, Bjørn-Eivind and I summit Denali a couple of times by easy routes and we ski powder above the fourteen-thousand-foot camp. Bjørn-Eivind proves, as usual, to be super-fit and capable, but he is impatient with all the bad weather. "We've been here over two weeks and still haven't gone climbing," he complains. "It's hardly even a climbing trip!" The forecast is marginal. I feel lame insisting that we need to be patient, yet I know it's true.

"Just wait till we go to the Himalaya," I joke. "Then you'll know how bad it can get!" We satiate the boredom by playing chess and listening to Datarock, the Norwegian tongue-in-cheek duo that always performs in red track suits. We read Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and joke about our fantasies of sexy vampire women.

On a partly cloudy but calm evening we depart the fourteen camp with light daypacks for the Cassin Ridge. In the bergschrund below the Japanese Couloir we stop to eat dinner and melt snow with two young Belgian friends, Sam Van Brempt and Joris Van Reeth. Our stove is barely functioning, and they help us out with a homemade heat exchanger. Amid heavy, wet snowflakes we stand outside their vestibule, stuffing snow into the pot and stooping down to peer inside and chat. Still motivated after so much bad weather, they both had to extend their tickets home for a go at the Cassin. Joris convinced his co-workers at a climbing shop to cover for him a few days more. We top off our water bladders and climb over the 'schrund into the evening twilight. "See you guys in a few days," I shout. "Have fun!"

Less than a day later, when we descend to the seventeen-thousand-foot camp on the West Buttress, the rangers greet us with warm tea and bad news: Joris is dead. A big fall in the Japanese Couloir sent him headfirst into rocks.

Back at the fourteen camp I learn that Josh Wharton just took a

[Opening Spread] Colin Haley following Bjørn-Eivind Årtun on Mt. Foraker (5304m) in the Alaska Range. Årtun says, "We agreed that icefields are a terrible evil created for the sole purpose of torturing climbers." | [Facing Page] Haley on the Cassin Ridge of Denali (6198m). He and Årtun hoped to surpass Mugs Stump's 1991 speed record of fifteen hours, but deep snow slowed them. Nonetheless, they managed the ridge in seventeen

hours. | [This Page, Top] "We became friends with some Finnish guys on Denali," says Årtun. "They shared their 95% liquor generously and gave us a strong reminder to take care of our limbs in the cold." | [This Page, Bottom] Sam Van Brempt and Joris Van Reeth helping Haley and Årtun melt water on the night that the latter pair started the Cassin. During the descent, they learned that Van Reeth had died. Bjørn-Eivind Årtun (all)



ground fall at Rifle and broke his back. BJØRN-EIVIND'S GREATEST STRENGTH is also his one flaw: he *always* wants to go for it. As we stand outside our tent in the cold morning, I argue on behalf of prudence. Above us rears the enormous southeast face of Foraker. We study the diamond-shaped rock wall, crossed with streaks of white, for which we have spent the past month eating shitty food and drinking dirty, ramen-tinged water. There hasn't been a weather window in weeks, and we fell asleep last night to the sound of snow pattering against the tent walls. We couldn't even see the face for a single minute yesterday. But now the sky is clearing. We have a forecast for a single day of good weather.

We are here, it's our last chance and we're well acclimatized. *But will she kill us?* "Well, this is what we came for!" Bjørn-Eivind prods. "I dunno, Bjørn. The forecast isn't that good." Passing the binoculars back and forth, and shoving some food down our throats, we waste more time on indecision. All the bad weather and unreliable forecasts have shot my confidence, especially for an attempt without bivy gear. But I want it bad, too.

"OK," I finally admit. "Let's go for it." Once the decision is made there is no room for doubt. *If we go, we go all out.*

Seracs threaten the lower portion of our line, on the previously established False Dawn. The piles of ice blocks at the base of the face—frozen,

silent and snow-covered—scream at me. Last summer in Pakistan, Dylan Johnson and I had to run to escape a falling serac; Dylan's wife still doesn't know. *I've passed under seracs many times before. Am I bound to get unlucky soon?* It doesn't matter how well you climb or how much experience you have—it's simple gambling.

We leave our skis below a rock buttress and, driven by these thoughts, I set off at full speed. *I don't care how dehydrated or worn-out I get from this pace, as long as we make it through the gauntlet unharmed.* One serac looms above to the right and another to the left, like the lions that guard the entrance to a Chinese temple. They seem to lift a watchful eye when we, two little mice, scurry between them. I race up steep snow

and furiously swing at the ice steps. For the only time on our expedition, Bjørn-Eivind struggles to keep up with me. Sweat runs down from the foam of my helmet and my legs burn, but we gain a thousand meters and leave behind the danger zone in just over two hours. Fear is potent.

Below the rock wall, we chop a small platform and stop to rest, eat and melt snow in the warmth of the sun. The left-trending ramp system we had spied from afar looks promising: ice *goulottes* between ribs of good granite, reminiscent of Chamonix. Bjørn-Eivind dropped his sunglasses while he was running under the seracs; undeterred, he pulls his hat down over his face. Sufficiently recovered, I tighten my boots, we tie into the ropes, and I set off on the first block.



Halfway up the second pitch I crane my neck and examine the gently overhanging mixed dihedral above. The effort that I dedicated to sport climbing and bouldering pays off: I work my way up steadily, slotting my picks in good cracks and locking off holds with gloved hands.

I think of Micah Dash when we first met in Red Rocks in 2008. He felt like a close friend from the minute we met and he invited me and other dirtbags to crash in the Las Vegas hotel room his sponsors had reserved for him. Micah never hid his emotions. Over a gluttonous sushi dinner, he told me of his parents' divorce and the drug addiction he overcame. That fall in the Red River Gorge, Micah taught me sport-climbing tricks and more. I could confide in him as my own parents' marriage fell apart. And although he was broke himself, he sent money from the Red to his struggling father. With so many obstacles before him, I was amazed by how dedicated he could remain.

As Micah's China trip approached, he spent time climbing ice in Canmore, and called periodically for alpine-climbing advice. I could tell from his voice and questions that he was scared. I remember when his girlfriend Nellie Milfield called later that spring: Micah was overdue. "Don't worry. People are late coming out of the mountains all the time," I told her. "I'm sure he's fine." But I worried. A couple of days later, as I was on my way out to Index, Nellie called back with the bad news. I spent the day climbing in a sedated funk, wondering what Micah felt when he saw the avalanche come down toward him.

I HIGH-STEP MY LEFT FRONTPOINTS up to a small chip and reach my right hand into a flaring jam. A couple of years ago I would've surely been standing in slings here, taking twice as much time. And never in a million years did I think I'd throw in a heel hook on a three-thousand-meter

route in Alaska, but it works brilliantly. Even with a crampon-clad high-altitude boot, I find the rest I need to place a good cam and then pull over the lip.

Pitch by pitch, the *goulottes* of moderate ice connect together with an occasional steeper bulge or tricky mixed move; first up the left-trending ramp, and then back right on another ramp system. We've been on the rock wall almost twelve hours now. It's cold, we're tired, and we really need water. One more intimidating obstacle, a wall of steep, snow-plastered rock, and then it will kick back. "Do you have one more lead in you?" I ask Bjørn-Eivind.

Weary but resolute, he nods and re-racks for the last pitch of his block. "There'll be a place to brew up there, don't you think?"

Leaning back on the screws, I shift my weight from one foot to the other. My socks are damp and squishy. I swing my feet around and gently kick my frontpoints into the ice to shake some blood into my toes. These slow leads are freezing them, but I have no right to complain. Above me Bjørn-Eivind is delicately traversing across the crux of our route. It isn't so steep, but the rock is rotten and the protection worthless. A fall would send him crashing into the ice gully below, and some body part would probably break. *What would we do with a broken ankle here? Lose all the rack and rap slowly, dangerously, back through the serac zone?*

When I arrive at Bjørn-Eivind's belay I congratulate him on a good lead and look for a place to brew. The hoped-for snow slopes are sheets of ice, buttressed by steep rock. No ledges. We'd be chopping for an hour before we could sit down. *Shit. Well, we'll have to keep going.* "Do you have any more screws?"

We swap simul-leads up the hard, brittle ice. Our dull picks and

frontpoints require twice as much force to pierce it, and every placement is a struggle. We scan each ice rib and rock protrusion for somewhere to stop; there is nothing. *Just endless sixty-fucking-degree ice.* I swing my feet and wiggle my toes, but still I'm losing feeling. *I hope it's just from the frontpointing.*

Finally we hit the French Ridge in the first rays of the sun and collapse on the wind-scoured snow. Cooking is a long, slow process, but we need the rest. Three thousand meters of relief fall steeply away on either side to a low sea of clouds. Our heads nod down, but we struggle against sleep. With no anchor, falling asleep might mean a much bigger fall. Bjørn-Eivind finally hitches a sling around his chest and tries to doze for a few minutes clipped to his ice tool. I gingerly remove my boots to massage and examine my feet. The ends of my socks are frozen into a hard shell. *Shit.* And my toes are gray and purple and hard at the tips. *Fuck.*

Even when I'm moving again, my body feels stiff and cold. As we traverse under the south summit, I'm reminded of Sue Nott and Karen McNeill, who disappeared a few years ago on top of the Infinite Spur. No one knows exactly what happened during the windstorm that overtook them, but searchers spotted their last tracks in this area. They found Sue's pack at the base of the south face, so she and Karen were probably ill equipped for bivouacs, much as we are. *Perhaps they*

are sitting huddled and frozen inside that crevasse? Or maybe that one right below the ridge? Streaks of clouds materialize in the sky, underscoring the urgency to get off this mountain before the weather breaks down. We can clearly see Kahiltna Base Camp, and through binoculars the people there can see us, but we are worlds apart. The ridge is easy plodding, and I want to escape quickly, but my depleted body responds slowly. Fortunately something is working for Bjørn-Eivind, and he breaks trail for a long section of the summit ridge. I'm thankful to be here with someone so capable.

We pause briefly and uneasily on the summit in the buffeting winds. The clouds have swallowed Hunter, and now, with open jaws and sharp, flashing canines, they are coming for us. We scurry down the heavily crevassed Northeast Ridge on a crust of sastrugi. Warm blood surges into my toes and collides with the ice that has crystallized there. I'm accustomed to the dull, engulfing pain of the screaming barfies, but this time it doesn't stop. Moaning, I crouch down on the snow, pop some of Bjørn-Eivind's prescription opiates, and keep moving. When the Northeast Ridge flattens out into the long, snowy Sultana Ridge, it's time to eat and drink, and we crawl into a crevasse to escape the wind.

WE'VE DONE IT. Now it's just a long, non-technical slog back home, one ridge the whole way, so route finding should be straightforward.

[Previous Spread] **Ártun leading the crux on the first ascent of Dracula (A14+ M6R A0) on the southeast face of Mt. Foraker. This was the last pitch of the steep rock wall that he and Haley had been climbing for about twelve hours. They were now out of water. Although they hoped to make a brew stop after this section, they found no ledges on which to rest and no snow. As a result, they had to keep climbing up ice slopes for**

several more hours, while Haley continued to lose feeling in his feet. | [Facing Page] Ártun rappels toward the "horrible moat" with a diminishing rack. Colin Haley (both) | [This Page] Haley pulling the ropes on the last rappel before the moat. They soon realized they would have to climb a ropelength of vertical ice to get back out of this dark, wide chasm. According to Ártun, they could only laugh at the situation. Bjørn-Eivind Ártun



Bjørn-Eivind tilts the pot above his head and downs the rest of the lukewarm water. Somehow he can drink the same amount in one gulp that takes me numerous timid sips over many minutes. We pee, put our harnesses back on, and throw our few pieces of equipment into flaccid little daypacks.

“Ready to go?” Bjørn-Eivind asks, grinning.

We exit the serene crevasse into a full-on blizzard. West winds, loaded with snow and ice, rake across the ridge. I hold a gloved hand against my face to keep my cheek from freezing. We stumble a hundred meters along in the whiteout, stop and turn to one another. There’s no chance to speak over the wind, but the decision is obvious. With a gesture back toward the crevasse we retreat.

“We need to wait for better weather,” Bjørn-Eivind says.

“Wait?” I ask. “We have no bivy gear, half a canister of fuel, and a few snacks. I don’t really see how waiting is an option. We won’t survive long on this mountain.”

We decide to try again, this time ready for battle. We put on puff pants, parkas and warm gloves, and cinch down every closure. We make it fifty meters farther in the maelstrom, but there is no visibility and Bjørn-Eivind almost walks off a humongous cornice. *It’s too crazy. We retreat again.*

“We’ve got four liters melted,” I say. “We need to ration it, and we can’t use the stove until those four liters are gone. Even then, we should

only melt the snow—we can’t afford to make the water warm.” *We might not make it down, I think. But without an imminent threat, my mind stays calm. Is this what it was like for Sue and Karen? If I were to die in the mountains, would my family resent what I’d done? Would I resent what I’d done if I were one of them? Could I forgive myself for it? I guess not, because I wouldn’t be able to.*

We spend the night huddled in the cold, blue, tranquil crevasse. We try to share body heat, but with only our daypacks between us and the snow we cannot lie down. Every half hour we get up to swing our feet and arms, and to run in place. Bjørn-Eivind talks about his “crazy love” back in Oslo, and their emotional crisis this spring. I talk about another Norwegian girl, Camilla, whom I still miss. She says she wants to visit this summer, but I’ve learned not to get my hopes up with her. We take turns housing the water bladder in our parkas and nibble on the few snacks we allow ourselves.

Sometimes I have morbid daydreams, picturing how my family would react if I left on a climbing trip one day and never came back. *Someone would send an email to a climbing friend in Seattle, and they would then have to tell my parents. I can see my mother, emotional Italian blood running through her, her cheeks wet with tears, screaming and throwing a plate across the room. I wonder how Camilla would react?*

I study the photocopies I brought, and keep returning to one: an old photo of Foraker’s east side from *High Alaska*. A crude line is drawn

down a rib descending from the non-technical Sultana Ridge: the original Japanese Northeast Ridge. It hasn’t been touched in a decade and a half, and I know almost nothing about it, but one advantage is obvious: it is sheltered from the west winds that are battering the Sultana. Bjørn-Eivind is reluctant to change plans, but when the blizzard hasn’t abated in the morning, he agrees it is our best option. Although the crevasse is peaceful, with time it will only become a peaceful grave.

We have to continue a short way along the horizontal, wind-pummeled Sultana before reaching the Japanese rib. Rime plasters instantly to my left side, and gusts shove me to the right. Bjørn-Eivind puts in the track, until during a momentary break in the whiteout, we recognize the rib below us. We take our plunge of faith off the Sultana, and I start down in the lead. Everything is obscured in the lacerating, ice-filled air, and the snow is knee-to-waist deep, but I’m in my element. Reading the nuances in the snow, interpreting the brief glimpses of terrain through the clouds, understanding the physics of the crevasses and picking a route through them, is, I feel, my greatest climbing skill. It is a skill gained from hundreds of descents in the North Cascades, often in winter, often in storm, and often by night.

Slowly but steadily we explore our way down the rib, our spirits rising as we escape the high winds. My frostbitten toes wail with every kick, but there is nothing to do except pop more of the seemingly useless painkillers. As we near the glacier, the original route traverses off the rib into an icefall. It looks broken and shattered—like the plate my mom might have thrown against the wall. I scan for a route through: every potential option would dead-end in rappels and steep climbing up crevasse walls, all the while under the massive seracs on the east face. We decide instead to rappel the steep rock buttress the icefall avoids.

Everything in the Alaska Range is bigger than it looks from afar. Even the sides of the rock buttress, which appear clean and simple in the photo, are covered with seracs bigger than Talkeetna airplane hangars. I set anchor after anchor, first using V-threads, and then eating through nuts, pins and slings on the rotten rock. I equalize a couple of pieces for the last rappel and drop the ropes into an abyss of overhanging rock. They disappear into the darkness of a moat thirty meters across and hundreds of meters wide. There is no alternative, so I slide down. Fortunately the moat has a floor, and luckily our ropes make it there, but it takes a pitch of vertical ice climbing to get out.

Bjørn-Eivind leads most of the long, delirious, post-holing slog across the glacier to base camp. The mental battle is over and I relax, knowing now that we’ll make it. Although it does nothing to help, I scream, wail and moan almost constantly from the pain in my toes. When we finally reach the beaten track of the Denali suitors I take off my boot shells and hobble up the final hill in just the liners.

Seventy-one hours without sleep catch up with me, and I am enveloped in hallucinations. My feet and legs buzz with static discharge. Patterns of rainbow spectrum spread out across the snow, lackluster and crystalline. The air feels dense and viscous against my throat. Every



crunch of the snow and creak of my backpack is crisp and loud, as if it were captured on a small microphone and piped directly into my ears. My surroundings seem bright and vivid, even in the gloomy 2 a.m. twilight. Since I quit drugs four years ago the only ones I’ve missed are the psychedelics, so it is an unexpected joy to relive the sensation on the last leg of our journey.

I RELIVE MOMENTS of Foraker from my mom’s apartment in Bellingham, still surrounded by the detritus of a monthlong expedition. I talked with Andreas a couple of weeks ago. He’d

spent the weekend in Stockholm dancing in a crowd of 30,000 people, and is heading out soon on a climbing trip to the Lofoten Islands. Magnus is fine and so is Rolo. My frostbite is almost totally healed. Kelly has been training on a hangboard while his leg recovers. He says he’s never been rock climbing so well. Steve is recovering well, and so is Josh. Lara, Micah, Omi and Joris are gone forever.

There’s no magical revelation, solution or conclusion. Alpinism is a beautiful, powerful, life-defining pursuit. But it’s dangerous, and I’m scared. I don’t enjoy fear, but I don’t fight it. It is fear, after all, that helps keep us alive. And without the fear of a primal fight for survival, would alpinism mean what it does to us?

I don’t want to miss out on the rest of a lifetime. I don’t want to miss out on light-hearted adventures in the Cascades with my brother, Booth, who recites poetry as he hikes, brings outdated equipment, and reminds me that I can climb all day on just canned herring. I don’t want to miss out on the glowing camaraderie of friends at the end of a powder day, stuffed into a humid little apartment in Chamonix, with the joy of deep snow written on red cheeks, music playing, and snow melting from the cuffs of our pants. I don’t want to miss falling in love again and embracing her on a belay ledge, looking out from The Chief upon Squamish and Howe Sound.

But I might die climbing. You might too. We can make efforts to minimize the risks, but ultimately we either accept the possibility of dying on a mountain, fool ourselves that the possibility doesn’t exist—or we quit.

The doubts never stay for long, though. I sit on the porch eating a yam, basking in the sun and drifting away. Life at home, amid deep-green cedars, permeated with the smell of salt water and sweetened with fresh raspberries, feels comfortable and safe. But I’m getting hungry again. After Andreas’ accident, I swore off steep skiing, but I know now I was wrong. Scheming of projects for next year in Alaska, I can see myself from above, climbing steep ice runnels with the Kahiltna far below. I’ve already been sending Bjørn-Eivind photos of Pakistan. And daydreams of Patagonia, only a few months away, slip from the confines of my brain and morph into an excited smile.

I’m more certain of the path than ever before. ■

SUMMARY OF STATISTICS: Dracula (AI4+ M6R A0, 3170m), Mt. Foraker (5304m), central Alaska Range, Alaska, June 13–15, 2010, Bjørn-Eivind Årtun and Colin Haley, first ascent.

[This Page] **Mt. Foraker, showing (from left to right): Infinite Spur (Lowe-Kennedy, 1977); the French Ridge (Agresti-Agresti-Bouquier-Créton-Galmiche-Landry-Thivierge, 1976); Dracula (Årtun-Haley, 2010); False Dawn (Phelan-Sharman, 1990); Viper Ridge (Donini-**

Tackle, 1991 [to the Southeast Ridge]); Southeast Ridge (Duenwald-Richardson, 1963). Bradford Washburn | [Facing Page] **Haley and Årtun at Kahiltna Base Camp after the first ascent of Dracula. Haley’s frostbite made it painful to wear his boot shells.** Colin Haley