

Percy Janes First Novel Award
Malcolm Kempt, Green's Harbour
Nightfall

Corporal Elderick Cole pulled back the hood of his parka and switched on his flashlight. Dead. The bulb flickered once and the silhouette of the dead girl lingered on his retinas. He swore aloud, his warm breath crystallizing in the Arctic air. He removed one tactical glove using his teeth and fumbled with the battery casing, icy pins and needles pushing deep into his bone-white fingers. The furnace must have been out for hours. Cole whacked the frosted device against his palm in frustration. It flashed again, illuminating the crime scene for a heartbeat.

The body of the girl hung in the centre of the kitchen. Her head bent downward at an unnatural angle, concealing her features in its shadow. It didn't matter; he didn't need to see her face. Even from the far end of the hallway in the unlit apartment, he knew exactly who she was. This was the sixth suicide he'd responded to this year in this little Arctic town. December was only hours old.

Cole stood in the darkness, giving his eyes time to adjust, allowing her image to fade, dreading everything to come. Sliding his bare hand along the cold surface of the wall, he found the light switch for the hallway and flicked it upwards. Nothing. Before he could even consider where the main electrical panel might be, a frigid gust ripped through the inner

door behind him, so he forced it closed against the howling wind.