pure white, freezing cold, and deafening noise. For a moment, you suspect that you’re experiencing death at the hands of an I-Witness malfunction, but the faint sound of another voice rouses you from such thoughts.

The voice is just loud enough to make out – or would be, if it were in English.

“I only speak English!” you call back to the disembodied foreign ghost, remembering to add, “And Japanese!” Not for the first time, you promise yourself you’ll learn the basics of at least two dozen languages after this ordeal.

A strong hand grabs you, and hauls you back five metres before slamming shut a wooden door. The hand’s owner is an athletic fellow, carrying no less than three pairs of skis over his other shoulder.

“Bad weather to hang around outside the door;” he jokes in a thick accent, setting the skis down by the door. “Is that the warmest coat you brought?”

You look down. The snow now covering your trenchcoat is already beginning to melt in the warmth of the fire-lit cabin. Meanwhile, the large man takes a seat at a small dining table and prepares to dig into a surprisingly gluttonous afternoon tea, given his build.

He looks up at you as he tucks a bright pink napkin into the collar of his puffy jacket. “So, did you come to the rest cabin to just stand there? Take a seat, tell me about yourself.”

You’re happy to oblige, choosing the seat closest to the fire. Not wanting a repeat of your recent outburst, you choose your words more carefully. “I’m afraid I can’t tell you much, except that I’m on the lookout for suspicious activity.”

The man scrapes his knife and fork together, then pours a generous serving of maple syrup over his cake, filling up the square honeycomb-like array of holes on its surface. “Well here’s something about me: I come up here once a month, but I live in a special town on the other side of the country.” He waits for your nod before continuing. “If you cut the Earth in two down the middle, like an orange, so that one half has the most landmass on its surface and the other half has the least, then my town would be right in the middle of the first half.”

It feels like the sort of fact you ought to know, but you’re forced to shake your head. “What is it?”

“The town is –”
But the conversation is interrupted by a loud noise from the fireplace. Grey smoke spreads across the room, obscuring everything – E.V.I.L.! Coughing and dropping to the floor, you make out the sound of the door opening, followed by the pitter-patter of hurried footsteps over the wind. The room starts to clear up just as the door slams shut again.

The athletic man is on his feet, gesturing wildly at his now-empty plate and growling furiously in his native tongue. He picks up a single ski and charges out into the snow. You’re about to give chase as well, but become distracted by the appearance of a strange diagram pinned on top of a map of the mountains…