

Excerpt from *Iditarod Nights* by Cindy Hiday (Ooligan Press, April 2020):

Heavy CE/Line Edit with Fact-Checking

“Weren’t his,” George, the whip-thin, sixty-year-old flight service owner, replied. His office chair gave a rusty squawk as he leaned across his desk and handed Claire a slip of yellow note-paper. “Got the call about ten minutes ago. Some of his dogs came down with kennel cough.”

“Oh.” Claire’s irritation gave way to concern ~~as she glanced at the note~~. The canine malady was a highly contagious respiratory infection that could develop into pneumonia if not properly treated. She glanced at the note: *Antibiotics and rest. Tell Matt and Janey I’ll see them next year.*

“He apologized for not getting word to you sooner,” George said. “Guess he was hoping the dogs would pull out of it in time to make the trip.”

“He must be terribly disappointed.” Claire had put her career on hold for two years to train and qualify for the Iditarod. ~~To have to withdraw ten days before the race would be heartbreaking.~~ But the Alaskan bush was no place for a sick dog. She shoved the note into the pocket of her parka. “Well then, I suppose that’s —”

The office door ~~flew~~ blew open, cutting her off mid-sentence. A surge of frigid Alaskan air entered on the heels of a tall, solitary figure in a forest-green parka and moose-hide mukluks laced to the knees ~~over~~ of faded denim. His dark ~~—~~ brown hair was swept back, untamed. Clear blue eyes, like glacier ice, ~~traveled over~~ tracked the small room and settled on Claire. Despite the iciness of his gaze ~~Unlike ice~~, she felt heat prickle the skin beneath her thick flannel shirt.

George asked, “Can I help you?”

Commented [OC1]: Or “roved over”

Those intense eyes held Claire's a second longer, then shifted to the man behind the desk. "I'm looking for Ted Warren," he said, a raw huskiness in his voice.

He moved away from the door and stood with his back to the room's only windowless wall ~~without a window. Whether a conscious move or not,~~ Claire couldn't be sure whether this was a conscious move or not. ~~But~~ her experience as an attorney had taught her to notice the ~~learned~~ habits of a cautious man ~~a~~ cop, perhaps.

"You just get off the plane from Nome?" George asked.

"That's right."

The older man referred to another slip of paper. "You must be Dillon Cord."

"Yes."

George shoved his knit cap higher on his forehead, exposing a thick shock of white hair.

"I'm afraid Ted won't be showing. He's in intensive care at Providence Hospital, down in Anchorage."

Commented [OC2]: For Emma: fact-checked—this exists.

Claire drew a sharp breath. Ted and Helen were her neighbors. "What happened?"

Commented [OC3]: Is this the intended meaning? The original wording implies that Ted and Helen are neighbors with each other.

"Heart attack, late last night," George replied. "His wife called just a bit ago from the hospital."

"What's his condition?"

"He's stabilized ~~is~~ that's all Helen could tell me." George returned his attention to the man named Dillon Cord. "You a friend of Ted's?"

"No. Somebody I know put me in touch with him. I had arrangements to board my team at his place until the race."

"Those were your dogs I saw being unloaded," Claire said.

"Yes, ma'am." Fatigue pulled at the lines around his mouth. "Would either of you know

where I can put up sixteen dogs?”

Claire ~~didn't waste time analyzing the feeling that~~ suddenly felt as though some force beyond her control had taken charge of the moment; ~~she didn't waste time analyzing this feeling.~~ “I was supposed to pick up a musher and his team from Teller,” she said, “but I just got word he won't be coming. The vacancy is yours if you want it.”

Commented [OC4]: For Emma: Fact-checked—real place.

She could have called Janey and Matt first, but she knew her friends well enough to ~~already~~ have a good idea what they'd say. The fact that Ted and Helen Warren had been willing to take the man in helped; ~~b~~ But Claire relied on her intuition more than anything; ~~else.~~ ~~A~~ After seven years in criminal defense, she considered herself an accurate judge of character.

~~That is, w~~ With one notable exception; ~~T~~ the memory ~~caused~~ bringing a familiar, bitter knot to ~~form in~~ her stomach.