

# Punished

Words By Pete Oswald

**"Hey Gus! I don't think we're gonna get the sluff we want for this shot, this shit is pretty crusty up here."**

**"I'll just ski it, hit the smaller exit point and we can call this a practice run."**

**"Yeah its your call fella but probably a good idea. Ok we have a light window approaching, ten second count."**

**"Sweet, dropping in 10."**

I see Gus the photographer put his radio down and pick up his camera. I'm standing at the top of a line in Chamonix, France with a perfect view of an angry looking Mont Blanc. Patchy cloud is coming in and out and the temperature is warm. Conditions are not ideal for this line so I am somewhat relieved that we are opting for the smaller option.

I put my radio in my pocket and I'm ready to ski. I have been looking, scoping and thinking about this line for two months now, so I know exactly what I need to do. Or so I thought...

As I ski the pad before the cliff I am pushing hard turns, trying to get whatever sluff I can going for the camera. My third turn triggers a point release that I do not see behind me. I cut left on a bigger arc and prepare to cut back right towards my planned exit. But as I turn right there is a nasty sight in my peripheral vision; a large wave of heavy snow. I had trapped myself on the wrong side - rookie mistake! It hits me full force from the side and drags me straight down towards the bad exposure. I fight hard to get through the sluff to a safer exit point and try to avoid bouncing my carcass down the huge sloping cliff face below.

As I fight to get to the right, much more snow releases. I can hardly move anything, the snow is so heavy. I know there is no stopping now, I am going over the edge. It is like those dreams where you just cannot move or run from something that you must get away from, the haunting realisation dawns on you that things are out of your control. All I can do is try to keep my skis pointing down and dig any edge I can to get to the right. I must get to the right! The edge is coming, I lose vision as I am swallowed by snow, my skis scrape rocks. Then, a very eerie but relaxed feeling of weightlessness.

I am blinded by the snowy cloud that has engulfed me and I keep falling for what seems like an eternity then at last out of the cloud of snow shines a welcoming but extremely fast approaching sight: a snowy landing. My body smashes into it and I tumble twice.

I cannot see anything as I stand in a massive cloud of snow. There is not a single sound to be heard and everything is white once again. I cannot feel any pain, I am so utterly surprised to find that I am absolutely unscathed! As the cloud clears I give a wave and a huge noise erupts from the crowd below, it is apparent that they are equally as surprised. I dig my skis from my crater and head straight to the bar.

I got served a lesson in skiing that day. The next two days it snowed. On the third day I rose again ... and slayed that bitch...



**"Hey Gus, did I get enough sluff ?"**  
PHOTO: GUS HURST



REDEMPTION!  
PHOTO: GUS HURST