

DEAD and COLD

ROB KOVITZ

“Listen to me,” said the Demon, as he placed his hand upon my head. “The region of which I speak is a dreary region in Libya ...

Edgar Allan Poe, Silence: A Fable

As they neared the coffin lid, the wind picked up dramatically and a massive, black thunder cloud moved over the site. The walls of the tent covering the excavation began to snap loudly, and as the weather continued to worsen the five researchers finally stopped their work and looked at one another. The conditions had suddenly become so strange that Kowal observed, “This is like something out of a horror film.”

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EXCERPTS FROM THE ICE FISHING IN GIMLI SERIES

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sample preview

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EXCERPTS FROM THE ICE FISHING IN GIMLI SERIES



Prime Minister Stephen Harper talks about the find from the Victoria Strait Expedition as Parks Canada's Ryan Harris looks on in Ottawa on Sept. 9, 2014. (The Canadian Press/Sean Kilpatrick)

ANNOUNCEMENT

“This is a good historic event,” Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced Tuesday.

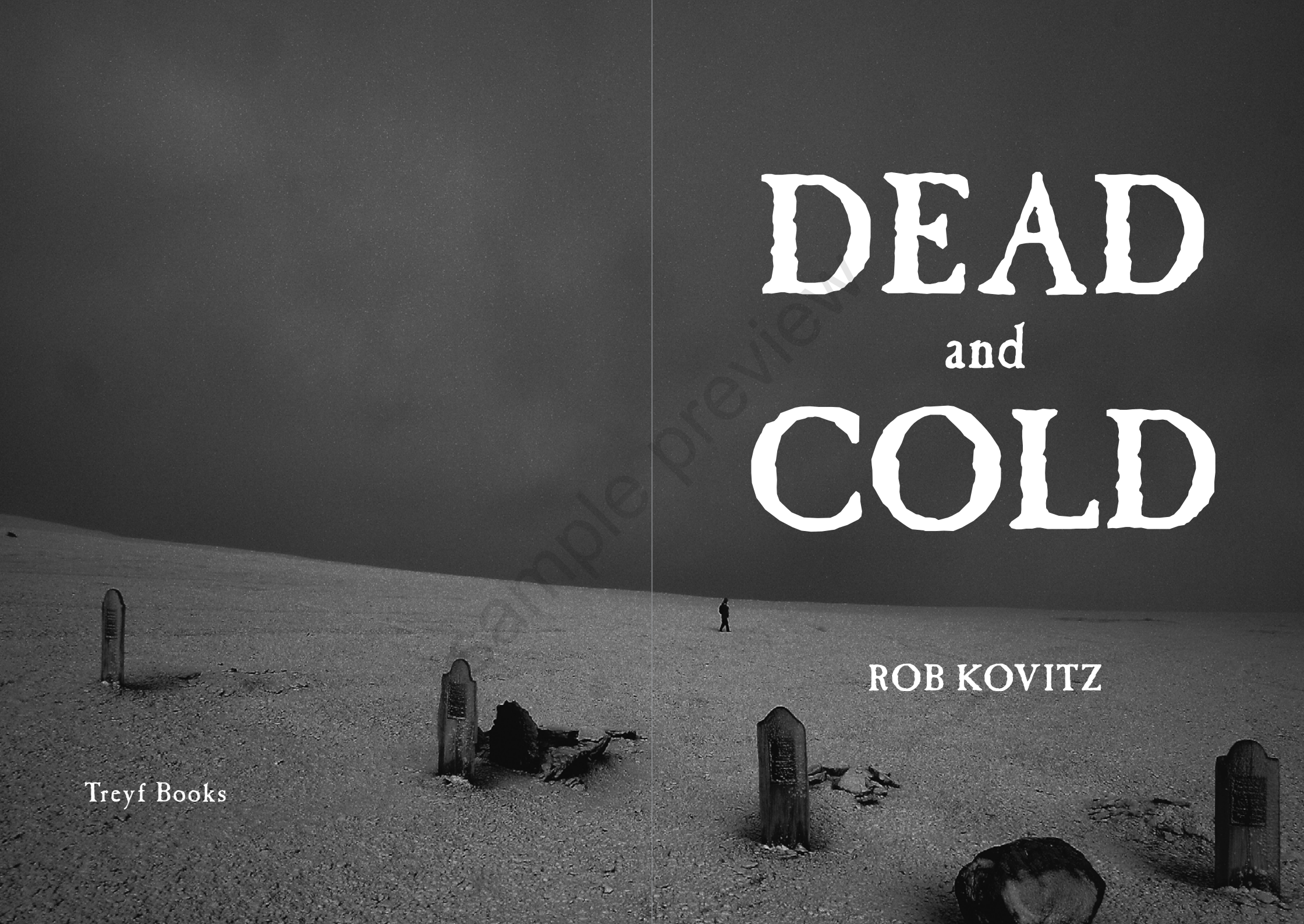
*Alex Boutilier and Bruce Campion-Smith, Ship From Lost Franklin Expedition Found
(The Toronto Star, 9 September 2014)*

Two weeks ago, as Americans were preoccupied playing Groundhog War in Iraq, a significant discovery was announced in Canada. Yes, yes, of course this is an accepted ground for joking—“Worthwhile Canadian Initiative Yields Results” being the world’s most boring headline, and so on—but in this case the initiative in question really was worthwhile, at least to anyone with an appreciation for Victorian mystery, the winter sublime, and the far north. What had taken place was the discovery, intact and underwater, of one of the two ships of the Franklin expedition, the British naval voyage that went out in search of the Northwest Passage, in 1845, got stranded in the Arctic ice, and was never seen again.

The finding of the Franklin ship—there were two, the H.M.S. Erebus and the H.M.S. Terror; no one is yet sure which has been spotted down there—is, for Canadians, a very big deal (“Canada’s Moon Shot,” the *Toronto Star* called it), since the Franklin expedition has long provided the single most eventful mythological moment in Canada’s admittedly not-exactly-limitlessly mythologized history. Margaret Atwood, in her essay “Concerning Franklin and His Gallant Crew,” from 1991, identifies it as a kind of origin myth of disaster in the Canadian experience. To translate it from Canadian into American terms, it is as if someone had found, in a single moment, the hull of the Titanic, the solution to the mystery of the lost colony at Roanoke, the original flag of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” and the menu for the Donner Party’s last meal.

The basic outlines of what happened to Franklin and his crew after they foundered in the Victoria Strait had long been surmised from various kinds of evidence ...

Adam Gopnik, The Franklin Ship Myth, Verified (The New Yorker, 24 September 2014)



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Treyf Books

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Front/back cover image: The graves of three of Franklin's crewmen on Beechey Island, from Elisha Kent Kane, *The U.S. Grinnell Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin: A Personal Narrative* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1854)

Title page image: Volker Meinberg, Franklin Expedition Graveyard, Beechey Island, August 27, 2008 (www.pbase.com)

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The Walter Benjamin Research Syndicate



Farley Mowat, *Ordeal by Ice*

Commanders of the Arctic Searching Squadron, sent out in 1850 in search of Sir John Franklin. Leopold M'Clintock is third from the left. (John Ross Robertson Collection, Metropolitan Toronto Library)

¹ ABACUK PRICKET. "A Large Discourse of the Said Voyage, And the Success Thereof, Written By Abacuk Pricket, Who Lived to Come Home." In *Narrative of Voyages toward the North-West*, edited by T. Rundall. London: Hakluyt Society, 1849. ² THOMAS JAMES. *The Dangerous Voyage of Captain Thomas James, in His Intended Discovery of a North West Passage Into The South Sea*. 2nd ed. London: O. Payne, 1633. Reprint, Facsimile edition: Coles Publishing Company, Toronto, 1973. ³ CHARLES FRANCIS HALL. *Life with the Esquimaux: The Narrative Of Captain Charles Francis Hall, of the Whaling Barque "George Henry," from the 29th May, 1860, to the 13th September, 1862*. London: S. Low, Son, and Marston, 1864. ⁴ RUSSELL ALAN POTTER. "Dead Reckoning." Russell A. Potter, Ph.D., Associate Professor of English, Rhode Island College, <http://www.ric.edu/rpotter/deadreck.html>.

DEAD and COLD

or

A Large DISCOURSE of the Said Voyage

And The SUCCESS Thereof,

Written By Abacuk Pricket,

Who Lived To Come HOME¹

WHEREIN

The Miferies indured,
and the Rarities observ'd Philofo-
phical, Mathematic and Natural are related in
this Journal of it, publih'd by the Special
Command of King Charles I.²

To which is added,

The RESULTS Of A Long Intercourse With The Innuits,
The Discovery Of ACTUAL RELICS Of The Expedition Of Martin Frobisher
Of Three Centuries Ago, And DEDUCTIONS In Favour Of Yet Discovering Some
Of The Survivors Of Sir John Franklin's EXPEDITION.³

and also,

A CATALOGUE of the Library of
H.M.S. "Erebus" and H.M.S. "Terror"
Along with transcriptions of the ship-board newspaper,
The North Devon
Gazette, and King William Informer⁴

The Whole Compiled by
Capt. Edgar Arnason Poe
Gimli: Sisters of the Rotarians, 1863

The SECOND EDITION, Revifed and Corrected.²



Samuel Gurney Cresswell, "Melville Island from Banks Land," from *A Series of Eight Sketches in Colour (together with a Chart of the Route)* by Lieut. S. Gurney Cresswell, of the Voyage of the *H.M.S. Investigator* (Captain M'Clure), during the Discovery of the North-West Passage, London, 1854

Footprints

The tale is a story within a story. During a thunderstorm, the narrator's fishing companion tells him about something that happened to him on a similar excursion. First Blake sets the scene:

So we were two alone in one of the loneliest places this wide earth knows ...

W. H. Blake, Brown Waters and Other Sketches

The Arctic Ocean encircles with a belt of eternal ice the desert confines of Siberia and North America—the uttermost limits of the Old and New worlds, separated by the narrow, channel, known as Behring's Straits.

The last days of September have arrived.

The equinox has brought with it darkness and Northern storms, and night will quickly close the short and dismal polar day. The sky of a dull and leaden blue is faintly lighted by a sun without warmth, whose white disk, scarcely seen above the horizon, pales before the dazzling, brilliancy of the snow that covers, as far as the eyes can reach, the boundless steppes.

To the North, this desert is bounded by a ragged coast, bristling with huge black rocks.

At the base of this Titanic mass lied enchained the petrified ocean, whose spell-bound waves appear fired as vast ranges of ice mountains, their blue peaks fading away in the far-off frost smoke, or snow vapor.

Between the twin-peaks of Cape East, the termination of Siberia, the sullen sea is seen to drive tall icebergs across a streak of dead green. There lies Behring's Straits.

Opposite, and towering over the channel, rise the granite masses of Cape Prince of Wales, the headland of North America.

These lonely latitudes do not belong to the habitable world; for the piercing cold shivers the stones, splits the trees, and causes the earth to burst asunder, which, throwing forth showers of icy spangles seems capable of enduring this solitude of frost and tempest, of famine and death.

And yet, strange to say, footprints may be traced on the snow, covering these headlands on either side of Behring's Straits.

I. S. Maclaren, *The Aesthetic Map of the North*

On the American shore, the footprints are small and light, thus betraying the passage of a woman.

She has been hastening up the rocky peak, whence the drifts of Siberia are visible.

On the latter ground, footprints larger and deeper betoken the passing of a man. He also was on his way to the Straits.

It would seem that this man and woman had arrived here from opposite directions, in hope of catching a glimpse of one another, across the arm of the sea dividing the two worlds—the Old and the New.

More strange still! the man and the woman have crossed the solitudes during a terrific storm! Black pines, the growth of centuries, pointing their bent heads in different parts of the solitude like crosses in a churchyard, have been uprooted, rent, and hurled aside by the blasts!

Yet the two travellers face this furious tempest, which has plucked up trees, and pounded the frozen masses into splinters, with the roar of thunder.

They face it, without for one single instant deviating from the straight line hitherto followed by them.

Who then are these two beings who advance thus calmly amidst the storms and convulsions of nature?

Is it by chance, or design, or destiny, that the seven nails in the sole of the man's shoe form a cross—thus:

*

*
*
*

Everywhere he leaves this impress behind him.

On the smooth and polished snow, these footmarks seem imprinted by a foot of brass on a marble floor.

Night without twilight has soon succeeded day—a night of foreboding gloom.

The brilliant reflection of the snow renders the white steppes still visible beneath the azure darkness of the sky; and the pale stars glimmer on the obscure and frozen dome.

Solemn silence reigns.

But, towards the Straits, a faint light appears.

At first, a gentle, bluish light, such as precedes moonrise; it increases in brightness, and assumes a ruddy hue.

Darkness thickens in every other direction; the white wilds of the desert are now scarcely visible under the black vault of the firmament.

Strange and confused noises are heard amidst this obscurity.

They sound like the flight of large night-birds—now flapping—now heavily skimming over the steppes—now descending.

But no cry is heard.

This silent terror heralds the approach of one of those imposing phenomena that awe alike the most ferocious and the most harmless, of animated beings. An Aurora Borealis (magnificent sight!) common in the polar regions, suddenly beams forth.

A half circle of dazzling whiteness becomes visible in the horizon. Immense columns of light stream forth from this dazzling centre, rising to a great height, illuminating earth, sea, and sky. Then a brilliant reflection, like the blaze of a conflagration, steals over the snow of the desert, purples the summits of the mountains of ice, and imparts a dark red hue to the black rocks of both continents.

After attaining this magnificent brilliancy, the Northern Lights fade away gradually, and their vivid glow is lost in a luminous fog.

Just then, by a wondrous mirage an effect very common in high latitudes, the American Coast, though separated from Siberia by a broad arm of the sea, loomed so close that a bridge might seemingly be thrown from one world to other.

Then human forms appeared in the transparent azure haze overspreading both forelands.

On the Siberian Cape, a man on his knees stretched his arms towards America, with an expression of inconceivable despair.

On the American promontory, a young and handsome woman replied to the man's despairing gesture by pointing to heaven.

For some seconds, these two tall figures stood out, pale and shadowy, in the farewell gleams of the Aurora.

But the fog thickens, and all is lost in the darkness.

Whence came the two beings, who met thus amidst polar glaciers, at the extremities of the Old and New worlds?

Who were the two creatures, brought near for a moment by a deceitful mirage, but who seemed eternally separated?

Eugene Sue, The Wandering Jew

Something is uncanny—that is how it begins. But at the same time one must search for the remoter "something," which is already close at hand.

Ernst Bloch, A Philosophical View of the Detective Novel

HOLE IN SNOW A KILLER BIG, STRONG BOY, 13, ASPHYXIATED IN FREAK ACCIDENT

By Catherine Mitchell, Staff Reporter

Winnipeg—A Gimli-area teenager died in a freak accident Monday night while playing in his yard on a snowdrift.

██████████, 13, was asphyxiated after apparently tumbling head-first into a hole he had dug in his yard. He was pronounced dead hours later at Gimli General Hospital.

His mother, ██████████, said yesterday she hoped parents could learn something from the tragic death of her big, strong son, known as ███.

"No matter how strong, confident or how old the child is, never leave them alone," ██████████ said yesterday from her Gimli home.

██████████'s bungalow just outside the small town north of Winnipeg was almost hidden by the massive drift swept into the front yard by the record-breaking weekend storm. ███ was playing on that drift after supper when the accident happened.

He dug a vertical hole in the snow about 1.5 metres deep and almost a metre wide and somehow became wedged into it, Gimli RCMP spokesman Dana Worsnop said.

"For some reason, he went down in the hole head-first and couldn't get himself out." ...

"What a tragedy. This is devastating," said a mother of three young children, who would only identify herself as ██████. She said the accident gave her a new view of the dangers lurking in the yard ...

"It's pretty scary because you really wouldn't expect anything like this to happen," said 12-year old ██████████, shopping with her mother, ███.

Winnipeg Free Press, 9 April 1997



One of the passages, with steps, under the snow
Roland Huntford, The Amundsen Photographs

MYSTERY HOLE DISCOVERED IN FROZEN LAKE WINNIPEG

Gimli, Manitoba—Bob Gretchen can't be certain he's found a crater made by a meteorite, but he's already got a name for it if he has.

"It's called Bob's Rock," he said with a laugh yesterday.

Reports of fire in the sky near Gimli and Camp Morton remain a hot topic in the Interlake region thanks to Gretchen's discovery of a strange hole in Lake Winnipeg.

Yesterday Gretchen contacted experts at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature's Planetarium, who are searching for what could be a rare find.

Gretchen, a Gimli resident, couldn't believe his eyes when he recently found a hole "about 30 feet by 30 feet" while snowmobiling on the shore of Lake Winnipeg.

He thought a truck or something had fallen through the ice, but there were no tracks near the hole and nothing floating on the surface.

Adding to his confusion were massive chips of ice that were stacked around the hole "like there was an explosion or something."

"Then I thought about the (Feb. 21 reported sightings)," said Gretchen, who estimated the ice at the scene to be about a metre thick.

The planetarium had more than 100 calls to report sightings of the meteor.

Far Shores ParaUFO Website—24 HR Worldwide Anomaly Reporting



Roland Huntford, The Amundsen Photographs

Listen To Me

*A*re you all here?

Yes. Yes. Sure. Uh-huh. Yes. Here. Yes. I'm here. Yes. Of course. Here. Here. Yes. Present. Yes. I guess so. Yes. Looks like it. Yes.

Uncle smiled with satisfaction. "I give this documentation out of duty, for I fear that sometimes my sorrow does violence to the facts, and I do not wish to alienate the fact, for the fact is one of the possibilities I cannot afford to ignore. The fact is a crude spade but my fingernails are blue and bleeding. The fact is like a bright new coin, and you do not want to spend it until it has picked up scratches in your jewelry box."

Leonard Cohen, Beautiful Losers

You may easily perceive, Captain Walton, that I have suffered great and unparalleled misfortunes. I had determined at one time that the memory of these evils should die with me, but you have won me to alter my determination. You seek for knowledge and wisdom, as I once did; and I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine has been ... Prepare to hear of occurrences which are usually deemed marvellous. Were we among the tamer scenes of nature I might fear to encounter your unbelief, perhaps your ridicule; but many things will appear possible in these wild and mysterious regions which would provoke the laughter of those unacquainted with the ever-varied powers of nature; nor can I doubt but that my tale conveys in its series internal evidence of the truth of the events of which it is composed.

Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus



Guy Maddin (director), Tales from the Gimli Hospital

*I*t has often struck me as odd that so many early civilizations emerge on our historical horizon fully formed. It sometimes seems as if the people of the Indus valley or Sumeria suddenly decided to build cities and went out and bought the plans at Canadian Tire.

John Wilson, Entertaining Saga of Lost Civilizations Is Waterlogged by Speculation, Review of Underworld: Flooded Kingdoms of the Ice Age, by Graham Hancock

While digging on his farm near Fort Moxie, N.D., Tom Lasker discovers a yacht, complete with sail. It looks almost new, but no one knows how it was buried there. The yacht has other oddities as well, such as writing in strange characters and the lack of a registration number.

Max Collingswood, one of Tom's friends, takes a sample of the sail to Colson Laboratories for analysis. When April Cannon performs the tests, she is astounded. The material consists of a new element with an atomic number of 161—something well beyond modern technology. It's also extremely resistant to wear and other damage. Fibers from the mooring cables are found to come from spruce trees, which have long since disappeared from the area. But 10,000 years ago, Tom's farm was at the bottom of Lake Agassiz, a great inland sea larger than all the Great Lakes combined. April hypothesizes that the yacht once sailed the lake, and that it could be evidence of extraterrestrial visits.

Clinton Lawrence, Ancient Shores: Is A Yacht Found Buried on a North Dakota Farm Evidence of Extraterrestrial Visits?



Ken Gigliotti, Winnipeg Free Press

York boat, Gimli, 2 August 2000

The story, like a fairy tale, begins in a far-off time, when the last Ice Age was drawing to a close. The vast northlands of America lay bare and flat and lifeless, scraped clean by the once advancing ice ...

Paul Fenimore Cooper, Island of the Lost

In September, 1876, an unfamiliar disease appeared among the settlers, at the Icelandic River. For the first six weeks it spread slowly, and was little heeded, but afterwards it began to spread like wildfire throughout the entire colony, and was identified as smallpox. The terrified people then began to isolate themselves in their huts, but far too late.

The disaster was compounded by the overcrowded housing that permitted no isolation, as well as the total lack of hospitals, medical supplies, trained nurses and qualified doctors. There was not even a minister in the colony to console the living, comfort the dying, or conduct last rites for the dead. Neighbour feared neighbour, dreading the contagion.

The Gimli Saga

It seemed impossibly strange somehow, McFarlane thought, to be trudging through the center of this nothingness, this child's globe of white, toward a huge mysterious rock, listening to this old man relate the legend of Isla Desolación.

Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child, The Ice Limit

Referring to the time of an alleged cataclysm, 12,000 B.P., Mr. Hancock in *The Mysterious Origins of Man* continues:

A kind of zone of death all over the northern hemisphere, northern Siberia, and northern Canada. We find the frozen carcasses of hundreds of thousands of large mammal species.

The “zone of death” mentioned above is a melodramatic exaggeration that has no basis in fact. First, their claim that hundreds of thousands of frozen carcasses have been found is simply incorrect. At most, only a few tens of frozen carcasses have been documented in all of Siberia and Alaska. In Canada, the frozen mammal material found consists of scraps of hide and muscle found attached to bones. All of these “frozen carcasses” that have been carefully examined show evidence of decomposition, scavenging, or both prior to being buried, e.g. Guthrie (1990). Also, the sediments in which these carcasses occur are clearly of noncatastrophic origin (Guthrie 1990, Lister and Bahn 1994, Pewe 1975, Uraintseva 1993).

Paul Heinrich, The Mysterious Origins of Man: Atlantis, Mammoths, and Crustal Shift



The white rock in its original position
The Gimli Saga: The History of Gimli, Manitoba

No documentary evidence from European sources remains to tell us what happened to the Knutsson expedition; but there may be documentation of a sort from North America. In 1898 a stone inscribed with runic characters was found enmeshed in the roots of a tree near Kensington, Minnesota. The inscription translates as follows:

8 Goths [Swedes] and 22 Norwegians on exploration journey from [or for] Vinland across West. We had camp by two skerries [islands] one day's journey north from this stone. We were and fished one day. After we came home found 10 men red with blood and dead. AVM [Ave Maria] save from evil. Have 10 men by the sea to look after our ships 14 days journey from this island. Year 1362.

The Kensington Stone has been the centre of bitter controversy ever since it came to light. Some scholars insist it must be a forgery. Others point out that, considering all the circumstances, it is more difficult to believe it is a forgery than to accept it as genuine.

Farley Mowat, Ordeal by Ice

“Listen to me,” said the Demon, as he placed his hand upon my head. “The region of which I speak is a dreary region in Libya ...

Edgar Allan Poe, Silence: A Fable

As they neared the coffin lid, the wind picked up dramatically and a massive, black thunder cloud moved over the site. The walls of the tent covering the excavation began to snap loudly, and as the weather continued to worsen the five researchers finally stopped their work and looked at one another. The conditions had suddenly become so strange that Kowal observed, “This is like something out of a horror film.”

Owen Beattie and John Geiger, Frozen in Time: The Fate of the Franklin Expedition

Amoth's scowl of concentration intensified as she carefully threaded her instructions into the dream.

Charity pulled the door inwards, revealing the stunningly cold landscape of snow and ice that now lay before her.

“Amoth!” Myron warned her in a commanding but unconcerned voice. “Stop this foolishness. It is not her time. You overstep your bounds.”

*Amoth turned on Myron. Her dark eyes, **dead and cold** as the Canadian landscape that lay before young Charity. Her once beautiful face, twisted and dark with pain eons old.*

R. A. Cox, Mysterious Ways

Who was the Ice Maiden? How had she lived? And how did she die? She was 5 foot 6, extremely tall for her time—as tall as many of the powerful men found in the richest Pazyryk graves. X-rays didn't reveal the exact cause of her death, but they did expose a suspicious 2-inch hole in the back of her skull ... The Ice Maiden's eyes had been cut out and her eye sockets stuffed with fur.

Andrew Thompson and Susan K. Lewis (producers), NOVA #251—Ice Mummies

Until you get to the North Pole, 'North', being a direction, is relative. 'The North' is thought of as a place, but it's a place with shifting boundaries. It's also a state of mind. It can mean 'wilderness' or 'frontier'. But we know—or think we know—what sorts of things go on there.

Margaret Atwood, Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature

The earliest reported fatality in a York boat occurred in 1855 ... From York, Miss Greenleaf set out for Red River in the same boat as the wife of another Anglican cleric, Mrs. William Hunter, the daughter of Donald Ross, HBC chief factor at Norway House. Mrs. Hunter was pregnant and just south of Norway House ... The party was near Berens River when the weather turned and without warning, a storm struck. The York boat hit a sandbar, capsized and all were thrown into the water. By a miracle, the newborn was saved by his clothes, which kept him afloat. The new mother and her 18-year-old sister were also saved but of Miss Greenleaf there was no sign.

Frances Russell, The Great Lake: The Beauty and Treachery of Lake Winnipeg

Then there was the matter of the fish. Some townspeople who fished the St Giles Pond said a lot of the fish were acting strangely. When they were hooked, they didn't fight; they just swam around in the pond in tighter and tighter circles before rising to the surface, belly up. Or when they were landed, they didn't thrash about, but lay in the bracken, quite placid.

The fishermen got no pleasure out of catching fish that didn't mind being caught. But they blamed the excess of rain for the problem. These winter spates in the streams that fed the pond always disoriented the fish, they said. Granted the numbers of crazy fish were very large this year, granted a lot of fish were dying even without the assistance of the fishermen—but their deaths were from natural causes.

Eric McCormack, The Mysterium

At this point I will put forward two considerations which, I think, contain the gist of this short study ... This uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression ... The uncanny [is] something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light.

Sigmund Freud, The Uncanny



Lake Winnipeg freezing over, November 1996



Something Dreadful

Eighty-five years after a famous but ill-equipped Canadian Arctic expedition of 1913 had sacrificed 16 lives, some artifacts appeared on an Internet auction site. They had originated at a “ghost camp,” discovered in 1924, where four of the expedition’s 28 men, one woman, and two children had perished.

Amazon.com, Editorial review of The Ice Master, by Jennifer Niven

Shortly after midnight of the 24th May, when slowly walking along a gravel ridge near the beach, which the winds kept partially bare of snow, I came upon a human skeleton, partly exposed, with here and there a few fragments of clothing appearing through the snow. The skeleton—now perfectly bleached—was lying upon its face, the limbs and smaller bones either dismembered or gnawed away by small animals.

A most careful examination of the spot was of course made, the snow removed, and every scrap of clothing gathered up. A pocket-book afforded strong grounds of hope that some information might be subsequently obtained respecting the unfortunate owner and the calamitous march of the lost crews, but at the time it was frozen hard.

Leopold M’Clintock, The Voyage of the Fox in the Arctic Sea

How we all love extreme cases and apocalypses, fires, drownings, stranglings, and the rest of it ...

Saul Bellow, Herzog

“Apocalypse” is a Greek word meaning “revelation” or “unveiling.” An apocalyptic book claims to reveal things which are normally hidden and to unveil the future. The word is applied to a particular type of Jewish writing produced between 200 B.C. and 100 A.D. Apocalyptic refers to a genre of literature and to a type of religious thought generally embodied in this genre.

John Navone, A Theology of Failure

Owen Beattie and John Geiger, *Frozen In Time: The Fate of the Franklin Expedition*

M’Clintock discovers a lifeboat containing skeletons