

14 February 1847. After thirty-six-hours continuous trek across the ice, we have finally set up camp on this godforsaken promontory that the crew have designated Victory Point. Why? I cannot deliberate their insight. Our suffering is no triumph. We have not reached safety, just jumped off the ice and onto this barren nightmare called King William Island. A tenuous canvas relief from the windchill and whirlwind demons that freeze marrow brittle. We are now only 13, three never left the sea ice. They disappeared in the whiteout. Fell off the end of our ghostly caravan. Pierce, Gorman and Peddle, all good men. Vanished, abandoned on the floes. I pray that their last dance was a relief. Here the two-step trot is always the next turn on our cards. Despite consuming so little, our guts are operating all hands to the pump. The loss of their crewmates haunts the whole party. All now convene with their own torments and devils. None of us is without frost-nip and Jones will have to have his toes amputated when we reach civility if not before. Though how we can complete that procedure in this hostile environment without Pitts our surgeon torments me. He never made it off the Terror. Contrary to our own issues, the poor man hadn't crapped for a month. His hands and feet tingled with a malady and he had reverted to a puking and wailing babe; his brain turned to mush. I wish the ice was as soft as his constitution and we could sail away from purgatory. The first mate endeavours to keep a tight ship, though dressing for dinner is long in the past, I still cling to my silver spoon. It promotes memories of my wife and family back in London. If I squeeze it tight, my stomach and heart, fill for a moment with a true feast. Cook tried boiling up the last slivers of our pemmican into a soup that froze into a waterfall of ice as it was served. Sucking its nutrition, burns our mouths, consumes energy that we simply don't possess. The joke is no one has the teeth to chew. I braved the force eight winds and spindrift earlier to deliver a last flask of tea to what is left of my tormented crew in the other tent. Here, I had an empty paraffin tin shaken at me. No insubordination, but their way of saying, 'Boss, it's not only our primus on its last stand'. I pray for our souls not to run out of fuel; because then, only God can help us.

17 February 1847. I detailed the First Mate to take out a party of three of our strongest sailors today to search for the Esquimaux. We have had little contact with the indigenous people, but when we do, they are desperate for anything metal. It seems that they can live a subsistence lifestyle, hunting and fishing but rely on bone and antler tools that would stand pride of place as an exhibit in any London Museum. We could trade for food as they have limited iron. I was proudly shown an example of their wares. A selection of iron tipped bone knives and flensing tools were on parade, but no matter how hard I haggled,

the iron was too precious to the Esquimaux for them to part. On examination I concluded the iron was gleaned from a meteorite. I have given the First Mate leave to barter anything we have for food and fuel.

22 February 1847. The First Mate returned empty handed. It took an age for his beard and jaw to warm up and loosen his tongue. A nil report. I cannot hold him responsible. He has carried out my orders in full. There were no Esquimaux. Have they left this god-forsaken place to winter inland? Or have we been unlucky and missed the polar bear in the snowstorm?

28 February 1847. No let-up in the storm. We have been trapped here now for a fortnight and our provisions are all consumed. I have my pistol drawn and stand guard dog over my own life. I will not succumb to the barbaric actions of the minority. The camp is fragmented. Some have mutinied, disobeyed my direct orders and set out by themselves in a futile attempt to trek to the tip of a settlement at Disco Bay. I dare they will never make it; so there will be no courts marshal. Those of us who remain, have made peace with our maker's salvation. I will place my diary in a rum bottle and cache it in the Victory Point cairn. God that there was a tot left to warm my cockles. I smell Christmas pudding, call up-spirits and remember warmer times...