

HUMANITY

GLYNN OWEN BARRASS

AUTHOR PROOF

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HUMANITY

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Lake and Myers were the final survivors of the 1951 Miskatonic Antarctica mission. They hid in a barren octagonal chamber, sitting and reminiscing as the cold gradually killed them.

“I hope it’s snowing back home, like Christmas Eve last year,” Lake said.

Myers, huddled and shivering, looked up.

He examined Lake. Wrapped heavily in blankets, his beard was frozen with ice. The man grinned. Or was it a grimace?

Frostbite had darkened his nose and cheeks, just as it had worked on Myers’s own extremities.

“Stockings above the fireplace. Milk and cookies out for Satan?” Myers replied.

Lake snorted with laughter. “Ow,” he said, placing a hand to his nose.

He’ll lose that nose before the night is through, Myers thought. Seeing how blackened and puffy his hands appeared, he worried about the man’s fingers too.

“Stay as wrapped up as possible,” Myers said. “I’m off to stretch my legs.”

Lake nodded. “Don’t venture far. That’s how Stockton disappeared.”

Stockton, gone like the others, massacred while exploring this city older than time.

Myers stood unsteadily. His feet were numb, making balance precarious.

“I think we’re safe for now,” Myers said.

The entrance loomed nearby, tall and wide, designed for beings far from human in size. Intricate bas-reliefs lined the walls around it, as they did the rest of the ancient city.

“I won’t be long.” He looked to Lake. The man’s eyes were shut now, his face buried deep within the folds of his blankets.

Myers shuffled towards the entrance. He wore fewer blankets than Lake, the other man being in greater need of them.

Once inside the tunnel, he leant against a wall, sighed deeply.

He had absorbed and duplicated Myers soon after the humans entered the city. At the time, masquerading as one of them seemed the ideal way to escape this aeons-old prison. The other, less mentally evolved shoggoths had finished the remaining human explorers off, crushing and dissolving them to death.

And now, I’m Myers, possessing all his memories and emotions, his hopes and fears.

Too cold and weak to return to shoggoth form, he would most certainly die here.

There was an option. Go back to the chamber and consume Lake. Sustenance for fission.

But taking this form had changed him drastically. No longer a genderless, bio-engineered guardian, he *felt* human, in body and mind, in soul.

Base camp stood far across the mountains, a plane ride away. Even if he made it topside, would the plane still be there? The patrolling shoggoths may well have destroyed it.

I can't make it up there as Myers, but I'll have to kill Lake to take my original shape.

He considered this, thought about the risks. *Could I even change back to this form?* No guarantees, this was very new to him.

If I remain like this, I'll die.

Given the choice of becoming a monster, or dying as a man, he chose the latter.

Myers returned to the chamber to sit and reminisce beside his friend.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Glynn Owen Barrass lives in the Northeast of England and has been writing since 2006. He specializes in Cthulhu Mythos fiction.