

# Chapter VII

Chapter VII opens with Commander Gore leading a small group, including two officers from an ice-bound ship, across the difficult and unforgiving terrain of pack ice, navigating a treacherous 16-mile journey to reach Cape Felix. The harsh winter conditions have taken their toll, and the hunting efforts have been woefully inadequate, yielding only a modest amount of meat for the crew to share. Despite their best efforts, the animals hunted are few and far between, leaving the men with only scraps to sustain them. The hunters retain the heads and hearts of the larger game, which are seen as valuable and carefully rationed. In an attempt to maintain some semblance of normalcy, Gore shares his first caribou heart with Goodsir, who, despite his youth, eagerly takes the opportunity to expound on his knowledge of parasitic creatures, displaying a youthful enthusiasm for science that brings some lightness to the otherwise grim situation. At Cape Felix, the camp serves a dual purpose as both a magnetic observatory and a temporary base for hunting, as the long and exhausting journeys from the ship leave the hunters physically drained, with many sporting disfigured faces from the constant exposure to the brutal elements.

Lieutenant Hodgson, an officer from the *Terror*, is depicted as brave and charming, yet his inexperience becomes increasingly apparent. This lack of experience is seen by some as a troubling sign, hinting that Crozier, despite his impressive scientific abilities, may not be fully invested in the work at hand or might not expect any meaningful results from the ongoing research. Earlier in the year, Gore had taken the initiative to lead a group to leave a critical note for the Admiralty, but, as time passes, no response or communication arrives, leaving the crew demoralized and their spirits flagging. This absence of any feedback from the outside world begins to weigh heavily on the group, with a sense of hopelessness slowly creeping in. The ongoing hunger only exacerbates the fatigue and frustration that has set in among the men. Gore, aware of the fragile

morale, attempts to maintain order within the camp, relying on his natural charisma and the looming threat of discipline to keep the men from descending into complete despair. His leadership is critical, as he struggles to keep the camp functional, despite the growing sense of disillusionment that threatens to consume them.

Each day brings new struggles for the men as the frozen sleeping bags and damp clothing make basic tasks almost impossible. Mealtimes are marked by the cold, unappetizing rations that are becoming increasingly difficult to stomach. The absence of the Esquimaux, who had previously made regular visits to the ships to trade, compounds the crew's isolation. Without their familiar interactions, the camp feels more desolate and disconnected from the outside world. Gore's health begins to deteriorate under the constant strain of the harsh conditions, with his fingers swelling and becoming numb from the freezing cold. Despite these growing health issues, Gore remains determined to push forward, knowing that the survival of the crew depends on his ability to secure a successful hunt. His perseverance, despite his physical decline, illustrates the deep sense of responsibility he feels, not only for his own survival but for the wellbeing of those under his command.

As the tension builds, an inexplicable event shifts the mood dramatically. Gore witnesses a flash of blue light that splits the horizon, an occurrence so strange and otherworldly that it causes him to instinctively raise his gun, unsure of the threat he faces but feeling an undeniable need to be prepared. This flash of light, though unexplained, serves as a metaphorical turning point in Gore's journey. In this moment, he begins to reflect on the potential future paths his life could take, and he is left to wonder how this event will influence the direction of his expedition. This sudden occurrence represents more than just a physical anomaly; it hints at deeper internal changes for Gore as he begins to grapple with the reality of his survival, the emotional toll of leadership, and the profound responsibility he carries for the fate of his crew. This event marks the beginning of a significant transformation for Gore, one that will challenge his understanding of the journey ahead and the choices he must make in the face of overwhelming adversity.