

Chapter IV

In this chapter, set in the stark Arctic landscape, the cold of the next day is a familiar touchstone for the crew of the *Erebus*. Despite the biting chill, the stewards are busy drying laundry on the rigging, while Gore opts for leather breeches under wool as a precaution against the elements. The chapter vividly details the disorienting effects of the sun reflecting off the ice—turning the vast emptiness into a place where movements can inspire hallucinations, making mundane objects appear threatening.

Gore prefers solitary hunting in this harsh environment, preferring to immerse himself in the moment, becoming a simple embodiment of instinct and focus. Recollecting a ten-hour stint on the ice a decade prior—where he battled extreme cold and isolation—he reflects on his endurance and the subsequent toll it took on his body. Now, older and physically diminished, he finds solitude a sweet reprieve from the burdens of companionship.

On his solitary perambulation, he shoots a couple of partridges, their meager meat hardly worth the effort. His quest for wildlife remains unfulfilled, as he encounters nothing more stimulating than the stark emptiness of the terrain. Thirst becomes his decisive factor for returning, leading him through the frozen landscape piled high like a ruined temple.

As he traverses the inhospitable terrain of King William Land, he is reminded of etchings he has seen, which simplify the complex and treacherous details of the Arctic. The reality he faces is fraught with challenging pressure ridges that impede his journey back to the ship. Gore is aware of an impending storm that threatens as he struggles toward safety.

His mental state is one of calm acceptance. Life on the edge of survival doesn't compel him to dramatize peril. When Fitzjames inquires about his lack of fear or hope, Gore's response encapsulates his stark pragmatism: recognizing love as perhaps the greatest catastrophe. As the winds sharpen and fatigue sets in, he becomes hyper-focused, moving through the snow like a mechanical process, mindlessly pushing forward. Eventually, he spots a seal near a hole in the ice, instinctively drawing his gun and firing, eliciting a sound that horrifies him, echoing humanity amid the wilderness .