

# [1]: The Walk

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Tonight I will walk. I will walk because that is the only response to the acts I have committed, the revenge I have taken upon my fellow scientists. I did not expect this and likewise I do not expect to live. In some ways this is a walk of shame, of depravity and self-loathing. It is a walk of self-perpetuated torture, of forcing myself to deal with my acts and to ultimately act as my own judge and executioner. It is a walk designed for a single purpose, to prevent me from interfering or destroying the dreams and goals of others. To protect them from what I have become and to shield them from the knowledge that one of their own, a person no different from themselves, could act in this way.

Under these stars, in this cold valley I wait, it is only a matter of time. Each step takes me closer to my end, but each step also takes me closer to redemption and towards freedom from my thoughts.

There is bare rock to my right, and solid ice below me. Above me, in a halo I am unworthy of seeing, are the stars. They pity me as I pity myself, and they will judge me as I judge myself. This is Antarctica and there is no hope for one that walks out onto the ice.

As with the desert, madness will soon take me, although I suspect that my actions, my headaches, my premeditated plans, and the manner in which I've killed, would identify me as a man at high risk of mental instability even if the cold had not affected me so. Is it wrong to wish for madness, is it wrong to wish for death if it prevents you from committing those sins? Is it pointless to hope ethical judgement will be satisfied if I submit myself to this final act, this final walk of shame?

To say I am alone is an understatement, for I am in somewhat of a unique predicament. I have killed, I have tortured and I have maimed. I have forced my views on the others in the most singularly despicable and depraved manner. I have forced myself to ruin my own soul and my own salvation in the process and now this walk, my last walk, can be the only response.

There is an end to this valley, I am walking towards it, but it seems ever elusive. The cold bites at my cheeks and I can no longer feel my toes. My fingers that were once warm and sticky with the blood of my guests now register only a vague sting and are far from the power they felt extinguishing life before my eyes. I remember leaving the confines of the research station in the seconds after my last victim. Her death had shocked me to my core and I knew what I must do to repent, to profess my sins and to attempt with a naive sense of personal responsibility to ensure they did not die only to satisfy my longstanding temptations.

A meteor streaked across the sky, I felt blessed in that my final walk would be observed in some way by the heavens, but I knew that realistically any external viewer would view me with pure vile hatred, with the contempt humans show to each other when another acts against the ideals of social cohesion, when one sees themselves in the hateful actions of others.

What we had found must not be documented, it must not be studied or reported, it must not be disseminated throughout the scientific literature and it must not be allowed to perpetuate into human life. My final act was an act of ultimate sacrifice, and yes I am ready to sacrifice myself to this cause. As a scientist I accept I must question observation and I must document in order to learn. I understand also that it is my responsibility to see that results - important for the next stages of human understanding - are published and for us to fit or mould our all too self-important egos in with the fabric and shapes of nature.

Each step now comes with a click. The cold is starting to interfere with my ability to walk, my ability to recognise or understand my end. The cold is freezing my joints just as the murder of my own daughter has frozen me. Families should not be encouraged on these expeditions; it forces decisions like mine to be made in haste. I do regret it, I hate myself for it, I cannot bring myself to even explain it to myself, let alone accept my actions.

She didnt scream, I had been surprised by that. It was most unique in that it was diametrically opposite to my expectations. Her face will take some analysis, for it tore through me too fast for me to be able to comprehend that fleeting moment. I had been surprised too by the speed the ice had taken her. Thirty-seven degrees to negative ten in the time it took me to remove my hands from her throat.

In the last hour Ive lost three fingers and a section of my heel, the cold which I knew would take me is taking me in sections. I would have thought Id have passed out by now, Id have thought this final walk, this stroll under the stars would have been quick. It seems god, a higher power or the personification of judgement itself is prolonging me in order to extract its own revenge, its own pound of flesh. While this walk had been my own sub-conscious desire to punish myself, I suspect I had wanted a quick end. Leaving the winter jackets and forcing myself outside in only a tee-shirt must have been my own self-protection mechanism, my own way of dealing myself a judgement of death but also providing myself with a quick end. Not so, not on this walk. My desire to kill others has now transformed into a desire to kill myself, my desire to watch them die has now transformed into a desire, nay a requirement, to watch myself die.

In the cold, in the dark, I was alone. As a matter of scientific fact I knew there was no chances of being saved, of facing a human jury in a warm court of law. For I knew I had killed all. I stumbled then on a bare boulder of glaciated rock. The cold froze the blood I shed onto the ice in a matter of seconds, my outstretched gloveless arm saved my face from contact with the ice, but the revenge of nature was profound at that point. My skin, no longer able to prevent movement induced fatigue at these temperatures cracked, blood filled the ridges of my skin and froze forming a wet, continually cracking and refreezing surface.

Was this damnation; a desire to walk and a seeming inability to pass-out, while ones own body was being punished for its earlier transgressions against the bodies of others? I could feel my heart rate increase to compensate for my blood loss. I could feel arrhythmia as my body experienced shock.

Each step now brought a jolt of pain, a pain intense enough to force me to blink despite the ice crystals around my eyes. From a physiological perspective the pain was necessary as it forced my brain to recognise my injuries and to force my failing self-will to the next step and the next.

As I walked I became acutely aware of my own death. As a doctor I became aware that there must be some external force keeping me alive just long enough for me to repent. I knew that the combination of hypothermia, severe frostbite, blood loss and heart arrhythmia spelt the end and I acknowledged that by all medical reasoning I should be either dead or unconscious. I walked on, each step spurring on the next.

I looked up at the stars, the beauty of them reminding me of the beauty of my daughter. I stared at the North star and Orions belt just as I had done as a child and just as I had done when I had been teaching her. A single tear froze by my tear duct, forcing me to rub my eyes. Perhaps it was the violent nature of my pained arms movements at that point or perhaps it was the cold, but the immediate effect was blindness in my left eye. I knew I must have damaged or removed the outer layers of my eye. I used my other hand to touch my eye but as I did so I noticed the discolouration and freshly frozen slick of aqueous humor on my already bloodied and cracked arm.

I stumbled and reached a nearby boulder. Curious All sensations of pain were now gone, but what was left was the memory of a single event, the memory of love and the memory of self-hatred I had felt as my daughters eyes had clouded over with ice.

I pulled myself up using my remaining fingers. I stumbled on in the full knowledge that at least two fingers or part fingers were now frozen solid to that boulder two meters behind me. Each step now felt light, far too easy for a human so close to death and far too easy to comprehend for someone that by all medical and indeed ethical reasoning should be dead.

There must be an end to this? Of course there was, death. But why was I being kept alive? Was this some sick joke to pay me back for my sins, or was this some form of self-preservation, some self-induced desire to redeem myself prior to death? I considered if their actions had required me to exact revenge.

No, I see that as a scientist, a lover and a father I was wrong to consider them expendable either in terms of what they had done or in terms of what we, collectively, had discovered.

My breathing was ragged, gasping. My lips, in terms of the shreds of flesh that were left, were a solid mass of frozen blood. My empty eye socket now a refuse container of cold burnt flesh and a brown, sticky to the touch, mass. My right leg was the next to go, a slight crack, a lurch to one side then a fall as I continued to walk through the snapping of my own limbs. Redemption seemed nearer somehow as I knew this, surely this, would spell the end and the end of this self-prescribed torture.

True, the walk was now over for me, but damnation was not ready to take me. That higher being, or my own self-preservation, whichever was the more vindictive, decided it was not the time to die.

I sat there, bloodied, mutilated, broken and blind. Through my remaining eye, I could just see my hands, my legs and the shin and foot that had shattered. My leg was solid, clearly it had been frozen for some time, but as I watched it I felt the cold ascend from that stump into my very core. My bladder began to freeze and in a final humiliation I wet myself, welding myself to my final sitting place with both blood and urine. My hands, fingerless and black no longer registered the commands to move, to twitch, or to feel. I could feel the cold begin to attack my heart and my head. Of course my heart was already cold, I had already passed the line at which a parent must accept their child as dead, and in my case I must accept that it was of my own hands and my own free will.

In the dark, in the cold, alone. The walk was over, yet life was not. By all medical training there should not be warmth, let alone life within this body of mine. Too many layers of my psyche had been stripped away during this walk, perhaps in the same way I had stripped to only a tee-shirt. The experience was no holiday, no laughing matter. This experience was damnation; it was a forum for me to openly repent.

As brain activity slowed, as the cold began to rot the outer layers of my grey matter, I forgot the reason behind my murderous actions, I forgot the manner in which I killed them and I forgot who I had been. In this place I was a new man, a dying man yes, but a new man non-the-less. A man is measured by his actions. The previous man I had been had killed his peers and murdered his own daughter, but that was a previous man. This man, this man sat dying on the frozen ice sheets of Antarctica, had no memory of those actions. In this moment I am me, a being of limited experience, of diminished capacity, of no murderous intent. Without the grey matter defining my memories and experiences, I am as innocent as a child, and with the knowledge and intellect. I am a separate being, born new from the ashes of my previous self. I accept my fate and I accept responsibility for my previous bodily actions.

I am ready to be judged.

The End....