July 30th 1915

The night never ends. We are trapped in what seems to be eternal darkness, never to see the sun again. Although I was warned, I was not prepared for the blackness that would engulf our ship for the winter months.

Slowly over the last 6 months, things have got worse with every passing day. We seemed plagued by bad luck and agonising weather. When Dr Macklin had to amputate Henry’s (the carpenter) finger because of frost bite, the very ship itself seemed to mourn the loss. Will we ever escape this?

I thought I had suffered the worst that fate had to offer but little did I know that my luck was well and truly out. It happened 10 days ago, whilst out hunting for seals. The last 3 hunting parties had returned empty-handed; there were no penguins or seals anywhere on the icepack. Me and Bakey were just ambling along when suddenly he stopped and pointed to our left. There, right in front of us, was the biggest Leopard Seal we had ever seen. It would feed the whole crew for a month!

Instinctively, we both dropped to our knees and froze. We hadn’t been seen. Slowly, I reached for the rifle and brought it up to my shoulder to take aim. A snow pile was blocking my way so I gradually inched forward to obtain a clear sight of my quarry. When he was almost within sight, I suddenly felt my foot slip. Before I could react, my foot and most of my leg was disappearing down a Weddle Seal’s breathing hole. In my panic, I not only fired the rifle, scaring away my prey, but I dropped the rifle into the frigid waters. It sunk quickly and I had no chance to save it.

I couldn’t help it: I cried. I knew Bakey would never tell the others what happened but I would still have to explain the missing weapon. More than that though, I recognised what a loss that seal was. It would have been a feast for 28 famished men and it was all my fault that the 4th hunting party would return a failure.

Will this torment ever end?