

Part One: The Expedition

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No one knew the man who built it. The fortress upon Bouvet Island was an intimidating thing to behold, a testament to the power of mankind and one's will to subjugate nature. For surely, to construct such a marvel on top of that god forsaken rock is a display of ego and meant to cement one's name into this world.

Part One: The Expedition

The island of Bouvet is located in the frigid southern oceans near Antarctica and is as horrible a place to live as any I could imagine. It is a slumbering titan, a volcano, that erupted from the earth, forming a small rocky piece of hell in the middle of nowhere. The island is surrounded by cliffs that tower over the wretched waters of the South Atlantic Ocean, constantly thrashing upon the jagged shoreline.

For its entire life, the isle was completely cut off from human interaction, as no one could brave the cliffs and make it to the top. It wasn't until a volcanic eruption leveled a portion of the walls, carving a plateau, and allowing for some attempt to access. Even still, it was a treacherous trip that took many lives, as soul after soul attempted to claim the island for themselves but instead succumbed to the accursed journey and cold sea.

However, on one perfect yet unassuming day, the odds were on the side of a small expedition team set out from South Africa. The weather cleared and the waters calmed, taming the sea for their arrival upon that prehistoric land. The atmosphere came to a perfect stillness, with no clouds in the sky or waves in the sea. Absolutely perfect.

So, they set off with a moderate company of varying levels of experience. Young men and old sailors, degenerates and addicts. A crew of the downtrodden and forgotten, outcasts of society who could be bought with a pittance of a sum. The only people who would even dare attempt such a journey.

After months of sailing the men were beaten and broken. The weather

was unnaturally calm for the entire trip yet the journey took three times as long as it should have. Supplies ran out quickly. They stared distantly outwards towards the horizon, as if there was a God, beckoning them with some sort of divine purpose. They looked like a crew from hell, maddened from their expedition across the river Styx, diving deep into the layers of Pandemonium.

After 173 days of seemingly aimless sailing, they saw a darkness on the horizon. This darkness would turn to land and they would finally find themselves staring up at their prize, Bouvet Island. The namesake came from the first explorer to chart these waters and find the island. A French sailor who happened upon it during one of his expeditions. His accounts were of an impregnable barrier of rocky cliffs that bordered a tall volcano. He would write in his journal that it was a remarkable and horrifying beauty. Surely, this was a house of God and not meant for mortal kind.

Sailors are a superstitious bunch and of course many rumors, stories and tall tales erupted over Bouvet Island. Some would say it was simply a volcano, empty and barren with nothing worth exploring. Others theorized that it was haunted by the ghosts of a long dead civilization that rose up out of the sea. And others suggested it was the Garden of Eden itself, tainted and cursed, permeated with evil.

Without hesitation, the crew began their climb up the rock face. Using iron hooks, they attacked the cliff with an intense determination. There was no sense of tiring from their trip. Their bodies moved as if propelled by some unknown force. The rock was harsh and unforgiving, any mistake would surely be fatal.

The air began to shift and the weather darkened. The perfect stillness that greeted them was turning to dark stormy skies and cold winds. The change came on suddenly as if governed by the Devil itself, and yet the crew continued climbing with an unwavering resilience. They did not seem to even notice the clouds that were building in the east nor the harsh wind as it bit down on their flesh. Their eyes remained fixed on their goal.

The storm continued to build and batter the men. Winds cut through their bodies like cold steel and freezing rain pelted their skin. Rain turned to

hail and then to snow, and then back to rain. Thunder boomed louder than anything they had ever heard before and lightning lit up the sky. The weather was in turmoil. It was almost as if their journey had angered the gods of the sea and sky themselves.

One of the crew, a young man no more than seventeen years of age, slipped on a rockface and plummeted down. His body smashed against the rocks and was swallowed by the ocean. Another member of the crew, old and weathered, succumbed to the freezing temperature and followed the young man into sea. Seemingly unphased by the unceremonious demise of their comrades, the remaining men continued on.

Finally, they reached the top of the cliff and found themselves looking out upon a flat patch of rock. Before them they saw a landscape consisting of pure black rock. It was an obsidian table that stretched out for many miles ahead of them. It was a perfect sort of black, polished and clean, and it mirrored seemingly everything above it. Ahead, could be seen the great volcano that gave birth to this wretched place, towering over the island.

Time seemed to stop then. The storm that greeted the crew upon their arrival, the sudden and terrible shift in weather, was now completely gone. The air was dry and salty, and the sun hung high in the sky. There was a powerful odor of Sulphur and it burned to breathe.

The crew began walking forward and their reflections moved beneath them, perfect in every way. It was a remarkable sight. It was other worldly and beyond anything they could have imagined upon first setting out from Cape Town. Versions of themselves continued to walk with them, in the darkened mirror image. What failed to reflect however, was the sun. In fact, it seemed to absorb all light entirely.

Everyone was silent. They did not look at each other nor did they survey the rest of their surroundings. They looked ragged and starved, the journey had taken its toll, yet they did not show signs of hunger or pain. Whatever it was that motivated them had now taken complete control. The men who set sail from South Africa were no more. Their minds were gone and replaced with something else, something dark and old. There was only one thought dominating their minds. **Build.**