

## **BEDTIME ADVENTURE STORIES FOR GROWN UPS**

### **The Snow-Tipped Silence**

#### **Extract 1 (198 words)**

It's 8 a.m. on the Trans-Canada Highway and we're heading west. It's still dark outside and cold too, around  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and the blackish green evergreens that line our route are dusted with snow – spiky tops whizzing past the window at full size but getting smaller and smaller until they disappear behind us. I've got a coffee in my hand, there's country music playing on the radio, and the road ahead of us is straight. In fact, I can't remember the last time we rounded a bend.

I look into the passenger wing mirror and catch sight of the sun beginning to rise behind us in the east. Swirls of scarlet and tangerine are fused with a backdrop of midnight blue, making the image in the wing mirror a precious snapshot in time – a quiet moment on the threshold between night and day. Delicate frost crystals have formed around the edges of the mirror so that the sunrise within it appears like a painting with a glistening white frame. It's a work of art that I'd like hang above my mantelpiece and look at in years to come, when I want to be transported to another time and place.

#### **Extract 2 (1104 words)**

Spurred on by novel place names and flasks of weak takeaway coffee, we made good headway west and were three quarters of the way across Newfoundland when I decided that we'd earned a day off from driving. It was time to do some exploring instead.

'There's a park to the north called Gros Morne... It's got a mountain in the middle of it,' said I to Jamie.

'Sounds lovely, my dear. Let's go,' said he to me. And off we went.

Early the following morning we trundled down a gravel track to a car park at the foot of Gros Morne mountain. There were no other cars around and I started to wonder whether we were idiots to head up a mountain in the middle of winter, but I shoved those thoughts aside. I tucked some honey sandwiches into our packs, took one last glug of coffee and we set off down the trail – under cloudy skies and in light rain, for a 9-mile round trip to the summit and back.

It was a cold morning and the temperature began to drop as we weaved our way through light forest to a fork in the trail. The air was whipping at our already frozen, reddened cheeks and the tip of my nose had started to tingle in the chill. We took the left-hand track, around the base of Gros Morne, before starting the ascent up the north side of the mountain. Soon, the rocks beneath our feet became a mix of scree-like stones and large red-grey boulders dominated the trail ahead.

We pushed onwards and upwards, past small shrubs and chest-high trees – many were just bare branches, but others had clumps of wind-ravaged green on show, the pine needles doing what they could to survive the harsh conditions. Four miles into the hike, we started up a small gulley which was filled with a thick fog. I stopped to watch how it moved – a pallid soup of white and grey rolling over the ridge to the west, behaving just as steam would on the top of a witch’s cauldron.

Further up the gulley, the climb steepened and the wind picked up. Gradually the trees disappeared entirely, until the only vegetation among a sea of rock were straw-coloured tufts of grass and brown-red shrubs – all of their branches encased in ice. I couldn’t believe how intricate the shrub sculptures were. Each one appeared to be fighting the good fight on the exposed face of Gros Morne, tinkling and cracking as we passed, shattering like glass.

Despite the wind, there was a stillness in the air which made the ice-encrusted gulley feel eerie. And, if I’m honest, it freaked me out. We hadn’t seen anyone in two hours of hiking and it was getting colder by the minute. There was more snow and ice too, making the trail slippery underfoot. The still air and worsening conditions caused my imagination to run wild. *What if we shouldn’t be up here in winter? What if the trail up ahead is too slippery? What if we make the top but then can’t get back down safely?*

The trail kicked up steeply again so that we were now scrambling on our hands and knees through the snow. I was busy doing battle with my imagination and just beginning to wonder if things were tipping over to the wrong side of dicey when my head popped over the top of a rocky lip and my jaw dropped.

‘Oh. My. Word,’ I said aloud, standing up and staring. ‘Jamie! Jamie! Get up here – you have to see this!’ I called back down the trail. I had made it to the summit of Gros Morne. The terrain in front of me had flattened out and I was now on an icicle-encrusted plateau. For as far as I could see, the land was white, a mixture of frost and snow, as if someone had exploded a bag of glitter and it had coated every square inch of the land. I was still surrounded by fog, but it was clearing, and the sun was beginning to peek through, which made the pearly white ground glisten.

‘Woah!’ said Jamie, appearing behind me and pausing briefly to catch his breath. ‘That is insane!’

‘Isn’t it?’ I said, letting out a long sigh. I crunched over the snow on the plateau without saying anything else, propelled, or so it felt, by a will that wasn’t my own. It was the will of the mountain – pure and powerful.

For the next 10 minutes, we ran around at the top of the mountain like giddy school kids, taking photos and inspecting frozen plants – doing our best to record the experience but, all the while, knowing that we couldn’t possibly capture *this*. Not through a camera lens anyway. It was a landscape that only the richness of a memory could do justice to.

We were midway through congratulating ourselves for such a bold and daring decision to climb a mountain in winter when a new sight on the horizon stopped me in my tracks.

‘What in the world?’

‘Rainbow!’ shouted Jamie.

‘Raaaiiinboooowwww!’ I hollered back. Except... it didn’t look like any rainbow I’d ever seen before. And then I realised. ‘FOGGGGBOWWWW!’ I yelled, even louder this time.

‘Whhhat?’ said Jamie, confused.

‘A fogbow – look... it’s come out of the fog,’ I said, pointing to the wall of grey that we’d been climbing through to make the summit.

I’d never seen a fogbow before. I’d only ever heard about them and I had always wondered if they were mythical things, like unicorns. A fogbow is similar to a rainbow, but it forms, not when light passes through rain but, instead, when light passes through fog. The smaller water droplets of the fog mean that the colours of the bow are muted, so much so that fogbows are often called ‘white rainbows’. Although, in the fogbow in front of us, I could clearly see ghostly arcs of red and blue on either curve of the arch. The whiteness in between added a luminescent glow that made the fogbow all the more majestic.

We stood and marvelled at the bodacious bow for a few more minutes, unwilling to drag ourselves away, watching rays of sun dance along the stream of pale colours in that beautiful full arc across a grey-blue sky. I have a photo that Jamie took of me in that moment; I’m standing beneath the fogbow in a pair of blue leggings and a black coat, arms outstretched, my glove-covered hands reaching up towards the arc, fingertips almost touching its other-worldly magic.