Far to the north, where the snow on proper years runs deep and the cold is so pervasive that even the ocean freezes, there is a place well known by fisherman and whalers who dare to brave such extremes, if only in stories and legend. They talk of walls of ice and massive floating crags, which appear from nowhere on frigid seas, crushing any boat foolish enough to come close.

Even worse, the wind and currents are said to suck you towards this land. Those who pass the partially submerged mountains find themselves trapped, and if no action is taken, the boat held captive against the wall until winter comes, and all crew perishes, or a section of the wall comes down and ends their struggles.

But this year has proven to be an abnormally warm winter. It started familiar enough, with gale winds and freezing rain, but barely two weeks into what many assumed would be the worst winter in memory, the rain suddenly stopped, the temperature became almost warm, and the recently fallen snow and ice began to melt.

Up in the far north then, the wall of ice groaned and screamed, sections of it falling tumultuously off into the turbulent water with thunderous cracks. And after a large example of one such fall, an object was revealed to the world that hadn't been seen in hundreds of years.

It was encased in ice, trapped there by the titanic forces of that northern prison, and even its huge size could not save it from meeting the same fate as the other objects trapped in that land of stasis. But now, the manacles of ice which held it there had been weakened, and the low yet powerful rumble of its escape could be heard miles off.

A black object, practically buried, slipped from its polar confinement and crashed into the water below it. Along side it were house sized blocks, which impacted with the ocean beside it, throwing up towers of spray. Yet it survived the avalanche, and, unhindered by the usual currents and winds which bound it in the first place, crept slowly southwards.

Locke squinted through the fog, but no matter how hard he strained his eyes, the world refused to exist any further than fifty feet away from him. He let out a dissatisfied noise and a small rock exploded away from his foot into the nondescript whiteness.

“Hrmph” He said, again, this time louder.

There was no reply.

He stopped and turned behind him to see Weatherby, engrossed in some mental quandary. The abnormally tall man was counting on his hands and tilting his head at a peculiar angle, a habit Locke had come to realize meant great concentration.

Locke sighed, knowing that if he stayed where he was, odds were, Weatherby would walk straight into him without a second thought.

He started moving again along the cobble road, his shoes clacking muffled against the stones. Behind him was the reassuring clank of Weatherby's equipment.

This whole enterprise seemed foolish to him. It made sense when they were in the city; there were lots of people with lots of problems in the city, not all of which could attract the attention of the king's men, and some of which were puzzling enough or urgent enough for people to allow Weatherby's use of his odd contraptions and bizarre remedies. But here in the far north? Locke shook his head.

And as he did so he noticed just how warm it actually was.

“Shouldn't it be… I don't know… Cold, in the north?” he said to himself as he felt the brush of another pocket of dense wet fog roll over him. He looked down at the ground and saw the remnants of what might at one time been a particularly impressive snowfall withering beneath him.

“Its just not right...” He said again, waving his hands at the fog around him, feeling its displeasing wetness cling to his clothes and skin.

Suddenly, Locke thought he saw a shape through the suffocating fog in front of him.

He was so surprised he even paused for a moment to let the occurrence fade away. However, it did not. And it looked like a person.

Locke stiffened. There had been no one along the road for the last twenty miles, and no one should know of their travels, but it never hurt to be careful.

He stopped and held a hand back to stop Weatherby who, true to form, bumped right into it, and came to a confused halt.

“Wha?” The other man managed to say in a surprisingly high voice before Locke motioned for him to be quiet.

Locke's other hand ran inside his great coat and his fingers brushed against the brace of pistols he always wore. His hand ran over the first two, and selected a normal one, with pearl inlay which he had taken off the body of the last person to duel him. His hand slipped out and presented the weapon towards the dim shape.

“Who goes there?” he thundered, in as gruff a voice as he could muster.