

Cold

by Roland Foster

COLD IS.

God considers his eternal existence, his omnipresence, his all-sufficiency, his lordship over all that exists, and sums it up thus: I AM.

In this place Cold usurps every prerogative even of God, and arrogantly declares that it is lord of all.

I try to remember a time before Cold, a time when there was something else — Comfort? Warmth? Heat, even? Am I remembering or imagining? Are Heat and Warmth and Comfort real things? I don't know. Not here, anyway. Not now.

My body fights the cold constantly. Awake, I shiver almost constantly. I use precious fuel to heat water for a cup of soup, and my hands shake so that I can hardly drink it without spilling it. When I lie down to sleep, my chilled muscles will not relax and take their rest. I grow weaker and wearier each day.

Exercise would help, if I could afford it, but I must conserve food and fuel. They will rescue me, if I can hold out long enough. But it is so cold.

I awake, bone-weary as usual, long before the dawn. Somehow I think I know that today is the day, my last day in this freezing hell. Without surprise I analyze my feelings. Expectancy? Relief? Hope? No, those are mere words, like Warmth and Comfort. They have no meaning, no reality here. Here there is only Cold, and the things I must do, and not do, in order to survive it.

Why survive? For some reason the question has not occurred to me before this moment, but now it demands an answer. If the answer is "no reason," maybe I can just die. Listlessly my mind wanders through dusty library stacks of knowledge and the haunted, shadowy halls of memory. Eventually, as the weak glow of dawn begins to lighten the frosted window of the hut, I find an answer. Relieved, and astonished at my relief, I embrace it, like a mother hugging a lost-then-found child.

I must survive because there is a tiny spark of God in me. Because I, too, AM.