

Highly Commended

The Land of Silence by Rebekah MacPherson, Culbokie Primary

Everything was very quiet and still. The freezing water swirled silently, under a dense layer of ice. Not even the birds dare sing now. I saw myself under the water, eyes closed, pale skin, blue lips. Maybe if I had stayed 'there' it would have been fine, and I wouldn't be submerged under the great Siberian lake.

My name is Ash. I've lived in a prison camp in Siberia for six years now. That's half my life. I think it helps to think of the camp as an overflow car-park. They put the spares here, the ones nobody wants. Although, they don't have guards or barbed-wire fences to stop you getting out at an overflow car-park. Each day there became more difficult to bear. How could people be so selfish and evil, to forcibly keep innocent men and women there! So I decided to leave. I still don't know how it had worked, but I managed to escape one night.

As soon as I had set foot on the outer snow of the camp, I ran. I remember how perfectly wonderful it was to be free! I was on top of the world until I realised you can't survive out there. It was hard to keep walking. Harder to find food. Impossible to keep warm.

What an idiot I was, doomed to die out here in the snow...unless, I made it? I knew deep down I could never make it to the border, but it felt like even deeper down I knew I could! With new-found hope I stumbled to a lake, frozen over with ice. There was no way around but I blindly carried on.

About a quarter of the way across the lake I stopped, from complete astonishment and reverence. Looking around I realised just how majestic it was here. It had stopped snowing, leaving all the trees with an aura of certain mystery, entrancing and beckoning me to follow them. Mountains in all their splendour stood towering above me. Great birds looked down on me from their outspread wings. I breathed it all in, and knew what freedom was.

All too soon, the ice gave way. It gave the most dreadful sound, resounding far over the scenic land. Then I fell into the freezing cold water. Shouting, I fought to get out. No-one could last long in there. It was like a silent storm had erupted all around me. After about twenty seconds I stopped fighting the numbing cold. It was useless to resist. The crack I had made in the ice portrayed the sun's rays, deep to the bed of the lake. Memories of the camp, and my life before, came flooding back to me. Slowly, all feeling and emotion went from my body. Finally, a last cry of desolation moaned through the awe-inspiring mountains.

"So this is death?"

If there was one thing I remembered above all, it was the silence, and utter stillness of the waters.