



The Elder Ice

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Lovecraftian weird fiction set in 1920s London.

In this atmospheric novella, ex-boxer Harry Stubbs is on the trail of a mysterious legacy. A polar explorer has died, leaving huge debts and hints of a priceless find. His informants seem to be talking in riddles, and Harry soon finds he isn't the only one on the trail -- and what he's looking for is as lethal as it is valuable. The key to the enigma lies in an ancient Arabian book and it leads to something stranger and more horrifying than Harry could ever imagine.

Harry may not be an educated man, but he has an open mind, the bulldog persistence and a piledriver punch -- all vital for survival when you're boxing the darkest of shadows.

The story of mystery and horror draws on HP Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos and is inspired by Ernest Shackleton's incredible real-life adventures.

The Elder Ice Details

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Author : David Hambling

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From Reader Review The Elder Ice for online ebook

Damien Black says

Harry Stubbs, a Great War veteran and ex boxer-turned-investigator, finds himself embroiled in an increasingly gruesome case in this excellent novella, which taps Lovecraft and transposes the Cthulhu mythos to 1920s London. The prose is very well written and edited and reads like a crime/detective thriller laced with eldritch horror that becomes more apparent as the story progresses. The denouement is horrific and unexpected, the fight scenes tightly described, and the literary and historical references indicate a well-read author who has done his research thoroughly: fans of vintage speculative fiction should be well pleased with this one.

See my comments below for more observations (with a minimum of spoilers).

? Irena ? says

This particular premise is always a plus where I am concerned.

In *The Elder Ice* an ex-boxer Harry Stubbs is working for a law firm that is trying to sort out the estate of Sir Ernest Shackleton. Stubbs is their investigator of sorts. The whole book revolves around a question whether the adventurer had discovered something on his expedition to Antarctica.

The rare horrors you see here are pretty good, but you don't get too many chances to be afraid for the protagonist.

A longer *The Elder Ice* would have been way better. In any case, I would like to read more about Harry Stubbs.

Alex Sarll says

Cthulhu Mythos antics set in Norwood, which is to say, my neighbourhood. Yes, I don't have the appetite for Yog-Sothothery I once did (reading Derleth and Lumley will do that to a man), and yes, as soon as Shackleton had been mentioned and certain key words were used in a description of tardigrades, the broad lineaments of the plot were clear. And there's a fairly baffling section wherein the narrator, former boxer and Shackleton fanboy Harry Stubbs, objects to the name 'Scott of the Antarctic' on the grounds that "the title is not genuine at all. It is simply a made-up epithet, no more official than Harry 'The Norwood Titan' Stubbs". Well...if the papers had christened Harry 'The Norwood Titan', as they did Scott 'of the Antarctic', then isn't that pretty much how titles have always worked? The main rule is just that you shouldn't come up with your own, unless you can really style it out. Anyway. Cunning ruse on the author's part to have a narrator who admits his education isn't what it might be, because then stuff like this, or the odd typo and homophone, can be laid at his door rather than your own. But still...the characters are solid and lively, rather than as thin as Lovecraft's own tended to be. The descriptions of the horrors don't rely on a dog-eared HPL Thesaurus in which everything is blasphemous and eldritch. And above all, if you happen to live in the area, you will find yourself taking that little bit longer to change from train to bus, going for a wander through the sunset streets with a sense of what might be hiding around each corner. And I'm not sure that Norwood Lovecraft fans will ever be the most profitable demographic for a writer to target, but I'm glad this one did it nonetheless.

Despite the not-entirely-successful meta bit about ebooks here, I'm tempted to see if his other work is available in physical copies, the better to be perused over a pint at The Conquering Hero.

Mercedes Rochelle says

Harry Stubbs sucks us into his universe in first person POV, which delightfully leaves us in the dark as he tries to figure out what dangerous mission he has gotten himself into. An ex-boxer who has risen from thug-style debt-collecting to almost legitimate investigative work for an attorney, Stubbs is not afraid of the underworld. But his current job has brought him more than he bargained for, as would-be assassins end up dead with unexplained injuries and mysterious forces terrorize the neighborhood. All this while he investigates the possible treasure left behind by the intrepid Shackleton, whose Antarctic missions caused such a stir. The atmosphere of the book is appropriately dark and creepy, as the author sets us up for a Lovecraftian world where nothing is as it seems. The action is non-stop and the writing is well-researched. It was a roller coaster ride all the way to the end—very satisfying. I felt there were a couple of loose ends I would have preferred to see tied up, but overall it was a great read.

Thomas says

The intro adventure of accidental, but intrepid investigator Harry Stubbs. He's an ex GI and Boxer, trying to become a law clerk, and drawn into the world of the supernatural. Really good character and the setting of 1925 London gives an excellent backdrop and solid atmosphere. Check it out.

Montzalee Wittmann says

The Elder Ice: A Harry Stubbs Adventure

By: David Hambling

Narrated by: Brian J. Gill

Series: The Harry Stubbs Adventures, Book 1

Terrific adventure of Harry trying to solve a mystery but there is more to this than he was told! If you like steam-punkish, 1920's London story with supernatural elements, this might be for you! I enjoyed it. A great first book to meet Harry and introduce the series.

The narration was excellent for this type of book!

Philip Allan says

Written in the style of an inter-war novella, The Elder Ice introduces the reader to former boxer, now debt collector, Harry Stubbs in the South London suburb of Norwood. He is an engaging character, underestimated by most of those he meets, but with a dogged determination to get to the bottom of things. An apparently routine investigation into the considerable debts left by the late Polar explorer Ernest Shackleton, leads him into a strange world of mythical ancient civilisations and extraordinary Alien technology.

This is the first work of Hambling that I have read, and I was impressed. I enjoyed the way the narrative remains consistently true to the genre, without slipping into pastiche. The narrative flowed smoothly through the various plot turns and twists, with well balanced action scenes counterpointing the unfolding story. The writer creates a good feel for the period and the place in which the work is set. All in all a well paced and enjoyable read.

Kris Lugosi says

I just wanna start off by saying I've been reading a lot of Lovecraft styled fiction lately. I love the Lovecraft world and even more so the newer generation's voice given to a world created over 100 years ago by a man who could arguably be one of the greatest writers of the horror genre. Publishing houses like Myth Ink Books and Strangehouse have brought forth authors that carry on the tradition that is Lovecraft fiction and it is just as impressive as it is entertaining. I highly recommend either publishing house if you're looking to delve into the deep with these authors and their tales.

David Hambling is one such author that brings a fresh voice to an old school way of story telling. I really enjoyed this Lovecraftian-esque novella, be it short, it was certainly not lacking in content. I was asked for an honest opinion of this book so here it is:

Hambling's Lovecraft style is quite superb. He has an amazing tone and feel to his words which I found out very quickly after reading his collection SHADOWS FROM NORWOOD which I also highly recommend. (I'll be posting that review shortly).

In The Elder Ice, our main character is an ex-boxer turned debt collector named Harry Stubbs who has been hired to retrieve an ancient artifact for the law firm he works for. The artifact in question belonged to a polar explorer who had exuberant debts to be paid. After the explorer's death, Harry is sent to retrieve the valuable artifact to settle the amount owed. Harry soon finds out that his informants are not the only ones with an interest in what he is after, and what he is after is far more powerful and ancient and will truly test the ex-boxer's skills.

I love the character of Harry. Hambling really could have gone the direction of dumb, one dimensional, meat head on this one, but instead really gave him substance. One wouldn't think an ex-boxer would be a good fit for a law firm, but having him as the enforcer makes sense. I enjoyed getting to read what was going through his mind when he was being threatened. It was like getting a glimpse into the mind of a boxer, and the final scene with him and the Big Bad, is really pretty awesome.

All in all, I loved this novella, from the characters, to the plot, to the twist, the whole short book was jam packed with excitement and intrigue. I really enjoy what Hambling does with Lovecraft fiction, it's spectacular.

Ann Schwader says

Disclaimer: I received a copy from the author in exchange for a fair review.

Did Ernest Shackleton visit the Mountains of Madness? That's the premise (worked out in delicious detail) behind *The Elder Ice*, a Lovecraftian novella with a fast-moving blend of action, *Weird Tales*-style intrigue, & secret history.

When Harry Stubbs, a retired boxer turned collections agent, tries to recover a mysterious treasure from Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition, he quickly finds himself out of his depth. Armed only with his fists and his wits, Stubbs is an unusual protagonist for such an adventure – but the character works well, and Lovecraft fans who appreciate a British tale will find this one hard to put down.

The real fun here, however, is in the details. Hambling is obviously familiar with the history of early Antarctic exploration and the intricacies of HPL's short novel – and uses both to good effect. Recommended for those in search of a “ripping yarn” with some thought behind it.

Timy says

Full review with personal notes as usual: starlitbook.com/2018/05/09/the-elder-...

Harry Stubbs, ex-boxer works his way up from debt collector to clerk in a law firm with his persistence and will as steel. He doesn't have high ambitions, or extraordinary intelligence, but he is a hard worker and sets reachable goals for himself and has a curiosity which gets him through the not-so-exciting part of his job: writing reports. His current case leads him to investigate the late adventurer, Ernest Shackleton's legacy. Apart from studying the available documents of his expeditions, Harry sets out to interview people who was in contact with Shackleton and might know something about the mysterious treasure worth a fortune. But as Harry digs deeper, the more dangerous the quest becomes, and not only the treasure is at stake but his own life as well. And when he finally gets the answers, he never sees them coming.

This book is set in London, 1925. Although we don't get to see much about the city, the atmosphere created by David Hambling is realistic and makes one feel back in a time when gentlemen wore bowler hats and people corresponded via handwritten letters instead of telephones and so you had to wait for days to arrange a meeting with someone. In a time when you didn't just pop up by the other's door or called from the corner letting them know you are coming. When people still walked and weren't running around like crazed ants in their hive. Harry Stubbs is not your typical MC. He is not a knowing-it-all, I-am-above-everyone-else, I-will-solve-all-the-problems-just-watch-me kind of character and that's good. He is an avarage guy, who follows orders but has some brain himself to know when to act and how to talk to people to get the information he wants. He is not witty, but observant, efficient, doesn't waste time on small talk, and above else, loyal.

In this book historical fiction mixes with horror, mystery, some sci-fi and surprisingly they mix pretty well despite The Elder Ice being a really short novel. I felt like it needed at least 50 more pages for the story to be pulled out even better. In the first half, Harry interviews key figures in the mystery, in the second half or so, the events take place more rapidly, and the reader just tries to keep up with all the information and revelation coming. And they are quite surprising too. Some hints are hidden cleverly and you never recognize them until it's too late. The other characters besides Harry are well built, they are distinct and easily recognisable like the austere Mrs Crawford the secretary at the firm, the overly friendly Arthur who looks after Harry when in need or the cunning and little mad Collector. It's no easy task to put together a compelling story, with 3 dimensional characters having their own backgrounds and also recount some real historical events

into 88 (or 128 in paperback) pages. It takes some talent and great editing.

The reason why this book doesn't get 5 stars is that sometimes I struggled with the writing style. Might be because of my aforementioned lack of sleep, or that I don't seem to get used to British English for some reasons. There is something with their use of words, or vocabulary which doesn't bode well with me. The other reason is that we get far too less explanation about the myths and research regarding the treasure and its history. Sure, it's more than enough to explain to the reader the importance and significance of the mentioned item, but the more curious ones like me might want more.

The Elder Ice is a book which is perfect for a nice afternoon read when you want to get away from reality and be thrown into the icy English winter to search for mysteries and receive a few punches along the way. You will also discover a new twist to a well-known story which will leave you wonder again, about humanity and their ability of telling stories and making them into something else with sheer will. If you are ready to face a new kind of truth about our world and what lies under the ice, of Antarctica then go ahead, and read this book! You might be looking at some things differently after that, but hey, I warned you! ?

Kristen says

Full review is here, on my blog!~

Well then. This was a very short audiobook (only coming in at about 3 hours) so this review is probably going to be pretty short as well!

This follows the exploits of Harry Stubbs, a former boxer and now solicitor who specializes in collecting on debts. He ends up following quite a mystery after investigating a rumor that Ernest Shackleton, despite being very much in debt at the time of his death, had found and brought back something priceless on one of his earlier Antarctic expeditions. Dun... dun.... duuuuuuuuuuuunnnnn.

The prose was quite well done, and the story was well written. A fair amount of historical research regarding Shackleton's expeditions went into this story, which was nice. A fair bit of boxing knowledge was in there too. I think it could have been a tad longer, but at the same time, I don't mind a short audiobook to accompany an afternoon of work, and the story did wrap itself up before the end of the book. It wasn't too short, I just wish it was longer is all.

This audiobook is narrated by Brian J. Gill, and I will tell you that if he didn't do the introduction to the audiobook in his natural accent, I would have had no clue that he wasn't British. He performed this one absolutely beautifully, making each character unique and bringing them all to life with really great accents. Very entertaining, at any rate. Doctor Evans, the tardigrade doctor was my favorite character. So excited about tardigrades! So, so excited.

It's refreshing when you get a self-published audiobook that has such great narration. I listen to many of them, and have found many with such good narration, but there were also quite a lot that weren't so good, so I'm always curious when I pick up one where it'll fall on that spectrum. This one is on the really good side, so hooray! :D

All told I had a really good 3 hours with this one. It was quite an entertaining listen, with some really interesting and unique ideas that were presented really well. All and all, I think I can safely say that I had 4/5

stars of a good time with this one.

*This honest review is based on a free review copy of the audiobook.

C.T. Phipps says

THE ELDER ICE is a short investigative novel which is either set in the Cthulhu Mythos of H.P. Lovecraft or somewhere very similar. It's very much like a Call of Cthulhu tabletop adventure with the premise of a solicitor finding out about a man's possible occult encounters from his estate relics. In this case, I was genuinely surprised to find out it was set in the Cthulhu Mythos and kind of feel bad for bringing it up except I think it will encourage people who wouldn't read the novel normally to give it a shot.

The novel doesn't waste much time and doesn't deal with much actual occult content but deals, more, with the implications of it. Basically, this is a novel about an expedition to Antarctica which never actually gets to Antarctica. It might be resolved in future volumes but I felt a little disappointment there. On the other hand, I liked the Maltese Falcon-esque quest between multiple factions to determine if there's anything worth actually going to Antarctica for.

Harry is an enjoyable everyman protagonist who isn't quite educated enough in theology, biology, physics, or other matters to understand the implications of what he's encountering. He's too "normal" of a person to be effected by it the way a hardened scientist or warrior might be. Still, he's likable enough and I want to pick up the rest of the series because of it.

I appreciated the research done into concepts like the search for the North Pole and the horrific human cost involved in exploring Antarctica. I also like the serious question over whether the man who "might" have found the city of the Elder Things (which might not actually be the Elder Things but an entirely different race which inspired H.P. Lovecraft's writings) was just delusional or even the subject of a fantasy by his own investors desperate to recoup their losses by believing he found more than he did. The ambiguity works well and I liken it to a man who has a fragment of a UFO or a piece of the Holy Grail...or might not.

If I had any complaints, it's that this really does feel like the first half of a larger novel and it's instead more of an intimate journey rather than something big and epic. Sort of like how the Five Orange Pips ended not with Sherlock Holmes going out to fight the Ku Klux Klan in America but all of his enemies dying in a shipwreck.

9/10

Steve says

Meh. I wanted to like this one since I'm a big fan of Lovecraft's *Mountains of Madness*, but it just never gelled for me. And that's too bad, because Hambling can write. The prose is smooth, the (too) infrequent horrors are pretty good, the main character, an ex-boxer named Stubbs, has a two-fisted Victor McLaglen charm. But in the end, that's not enough since everything just seemed so Baker Street in tone, which doesn't actually fit the post WW I timing of the story. I did like how Hambling anchored the story w/ Shackleton's exploits, but I also feel that this would of worked better in a longer piece (novel) with a more realized,

deeper horror to accompany the historic facts.

Ken says

Bruiser Harry Stubbs is hired by a respectable law firm to collect debts and as an odd jobs man. Happy for the opportunity, all Harry wants is to someday become a clerk in the law firm and earn a lifestyle that a washed-up boxer could not normally expect.

Harry is given the task of hunting down anything of value left by polar explorer Ernest Shackleton in an attempt to settle some of the massive debts left by the adventurer after a series of apparently failed expeditions. But, that is just a bluff. What Harry is really sent after is much older, much more valuable and much, much more dangerous.

"The Elder Ice" is a tightly written novella written in the style of HP Lovecraft and is an encouraging preview of the upcoming collection "The Dulwich Horror and Others".

Worth checking out!

4 STARS
