



The Blue Ice

Hammond Innes

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George Farnell's legacy came to light ten years after his disappearance. Two lines of poetry and a lump of mineral ore were all he left. Yet they were enough to send mineral expert, Bill Gansert, to Norway. But word of Farnell's findings had already leaked out -- and Gansert found himself caught in a maze of ambition and treachery with roots lying deep in years of German occupation.

The Blue Ice Details

Date : Published June 1st 1973 by Ulverscroft (first published 1948)

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Author : Hammond Innes

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Niall O'Leary says

Ho, hum.... It's not very demanding, full of incident, and features a large cast of characters. These are shallow waters though and there's something slightly hasty and unresolved (in a bad way) about the ending. To be fair, I thought this was a Boys' Own version of 'The Third Man' until I discovered this preceded that film and novella. I suspect Graham Greene was influenced by this rather than the other way around. However, I don't begrudge Greene taking some of the basic ideas of Innes' book and doing something far more interesting. A little less chasing, a little more depth, and a bit more care might have made this something more than the average adventure story it is. And do people really make their life's work out of finding metals? What exactly did Farnell want to do with his discovery if not just make money? There's something sadly hollow about the whole thing.

Andrew Mcdonald says

Written at a time when whaling and starting a massive mine in pristine wilderness were not considered questionable activities for a "good guy". Some lovely writing, but not one of his best.

Hayley Dunning says

Third star for landscape, exertion descriptions.

Nick Davies says

I picked this from my shelf to read, despite the 'adventure' genre not exactly being an area I am massively familiar with, because I read earlier in the week that it was a century since Hammond Innes' birth. I wasn't wholly sure what to expect, and was slightly anxious that, being written in the 1940s, it would feel dated.

But no, it wasn't awkward or dated in the expected manner. This tale of sailing and skiing and industrial espionage and adventure was slightly 'Boys Own' in places and a touch unbelievable, but the writing style was so straightforward and storytelling, it kept me utterly involved - despite my not being particularly interested in the genre. I'm not going to rush to read more Innes, but this was a decent little tale and I've certainly developed an appreciation of his oeuvre.

AndyS says

Books was not for me.

I know there are fans of this author... I just like more action.

Susan says

This book was originally published in 1948 with the story being set in the 1950s. So, today, it reads a bit like historical fiction with plenty of action and a little romance thread woven in. George Farnell, a mineralogist, disappeared 10 years ago. Now a lump of thorite and a poem in a whale meat shipment from Norway has turned up, along with news that a war hero's body was discovered on the largest Norwegian glacier. Bill Gansert, another mineral expert, reluctantly heads to Norway to investigate the possibility of a rich thorite deposit. He's joined by a sturdy ship crew, including his sidekick Dick Everard. Jill Summers joins the team at the last minute along with two questionable characters with murky pasts, Mr. Dahler and Mr. Jorgensen.

First, let's address Mr. Dick Everard. I'm listening to this audiobook and every time they said his name, I had to giggle a little bit. The description of this book makes it sound like an action-packed suspense novel but then we have Everard. I wondered if the book was going to take a turn into a completely different genre, but it didn't. No worries! This book truly is an adventure novel full of Norwegian ski escapades, whale meat, aliases, war stories, and sailing. Dick Everard truly is just a trusty sidekick and he has nothing to do with the minor romance in the novel.

Jill Summers turned out to be quite the gem in this book. At first, her being the only female character for 3/4 of the book, I expected her to be coddled by the men and placed in a minimal role as 'love interest'. I was delightfully surprised when she had a significant role in the book. She grew up sailing, skiing, and speaking Norwegian so she gets to do everything the men do in this book. I found this awesome, especially since this was originally published in 1948.

There's a bit of a mystery surrounding George Farnell, the mineralogist that disappeared so many years ago. Both Bill and Jill knew him and have their own ideas about his disappearance. Now a body matching his description, but under a different name, has turned up on a glacier. The thorite sample smuggled out of Norway adds a financial incentive, and this later leads to some steep competition for finding the source of that mineral sample.

The story starts off a little slow, but once Jill joins the group along with Mr. Dahler, who she knew when she was a child, things really pick up. Once the crew reaches Norway, there's bits of Norwegian sprinkled throughout the story, which I really liked as it added to the ambiance. Perhaps it's a bit of a taboo today, but I also found the tour of the whale factory to be interesting. It's a suspenseful mystery that ends in a harrowing chase over a glacier. The story was so good I didn't even mind the romance.

Narration: Jerry Farden did a really good job with this book. He never smirked when he had to say Dick Everard's name. He did a decent job with the Norwegian accents and the bits of Norwegian. While there were few female characters, Farden's female voices were believable.

Bev says

In *Blue Ice* (1948) by Hammond Innes "Big" Bill Gansert has given up his job as Production Manager with Base Metals and Industries (B.M.I.). He all set to board his personally redesigned and outfitted sailing yacht (the *Diviner* has been fitted with an ex-naval engine) and set his course for the warm waters of the Mediterranean. But before he and his crew can sail, his former boss comes to him with a mystery to solve and an offer he just can't refuse. A message has reached Sir Clinton Mann--a message that seems to come

from the grave.

A chunk of rock with a valuable sample of thorite has been found in a shipment of whale meat sent from Norway. The packaging is ruined from traveling with the meat, but enough of the handwriting was salvaged to be proved to have come from George Farnell, one of the most knowledgeable metallurgists in the field. There's just one problem. Farnell was supposed to have died a fortnight ago.

Farnell is a complicated man--single-minded in his pursuit of metals before the war, he had felt no compunction at forging the name of his partner to gain funds for his research. Caught and convicted he managed to escape imprisonment, fled to Norway and joined the Norwegian forces under the name of Bernt Olsen, earning hero's honors in the war. Recently, Olsen's body had been found after a snowstorm on the Jostedal, Europe's largest glacier and papers on the body revealed the connection between Olsen and Farnell. How did this man send a package if he was already dead?

If the scraps of legible writing are true and the thorite sample represents a tiny portion of the treasure trove Farnell had found in the glacier area of Norway, then somebody could get rich quick. Gansert had worked with Farnell and knew that the man knew his metals and knew those mountains like the back of his hand. He can't resist trying to piece together Farnell's last days and have a shot at finding the thorite himself--not for his own gain, but because he loves the thrill of discovery. He and his crew head to Norway to solve the mystery--but they aren't the only ones interested in Farnell and what he discovered. It will all end on the glacial mountains themselves with a high-speed ski chase and a last-ditch effort to catch a speeding train.

Innes writes a fairly compelling adventure story. It is a treasure hunt filled with treachery, missing men, tough double-crossing fishermen, nefarious moneyed mangers, and a hint of romance. We get adventure on the high seas (on the journey to Norway) and danger in the mountains when Gansert goes searching for Farnell's secrets. Innes also provides terrific descriptions of the dangerous, brooding landscape. He delivers more good storytelling in an action-packed genre. The second half of the novel moves more quickly and packs more action than the second half and the ending is satisfying, if a bit abrupt.

First posted on my blog My Reader's Block. Please request permission before reposting. Thanks.

Frank says

Another great adventure novel by Hammond Innes
After I started, I couldn't put it down until finished.

Philip S says

You'll need a good map of Norway to follow this story.

Innes gives us a huge caste of characters to keep track of: George Farnell (Bernt Oldsen), Dick Evard, Wilson, Carter, Bill Gansert, Sir Clinton Mann, Pritchard, Einar Jacobsen, Kults, Williamson, Kurt Jorgensen, Vincent Clegg, Johan Ulvik, Jill Somers, Curtis Wright, Dahler, Mueller, Hans Schreuder, Paal Lovaas, Albert Kiellard, Martha Keillard, Nordchl, Alf Suende, Peer Storjohann, Einar Sanven, Halvorsen, Max Bakke, Gerda, Harald, and Olaaf Steer. I have to write them down to keep track of them.

A great tale in the Innes tradition. I you'll never fail to learn a great deal of geography reading an Innes

novel.

Mark says

A good book in parts. Chiefly the plot is clear and entices the reader to continue, however the story is slowed by periods of lucidly described scenery when in my case, a faster pace would have been appreciated.

The chief protagonists all have well developed characters and are portrayed in an interesting manner, there aren't too many to keep tabs on either. The story reaches an exciting conclusion and I was left with the satisfaction of having read a good book.

Having read other tales from the Innes stable, I'd recommend this book to others.

Lili says

One of my favourite writers, I'm never disappointed. He always write a gripping good story, and the reader is never disappointed.

Algernon says

A solid thriller from an author I rate close to Alistair McLean and Douglass Reeman. The plot is not really surprising, but it has a classic elegance of the 1940-1950 noir style with several shady characters chasing a McGuffin across a North Sea storm, a nausea inducing whaling station, the fjords and iced mountains of Norway. There's even the mandatory femme fatale, one I kept picturing as Veronika Lake in one of her less brooding roles. One harrowing skiing epic reminded me of Hammond Innes first book - The Lonely Skier. Straightforward prose, vivid imagery and tight control of plot puts this book in my recommended reading category.

Mary says

I am so glad I picked up this book. The attention to detail is amazing, and it is obvious that the author has experienced what he is writing about. As the setting was so well described and the content so interesting I didnt realise until quite near the end that I was slightly confused as to what was really going on and that there were a couple of characters that I really didnt know very well. However, despite the slightly gory ending of one of the characters at the end, this book kept me reading because I wanted to understand what was going on. The ending I think was quite fast, but that may just be because I kept reading until I had finished!

Ilse says

Good story but the part on the boat took way too long for me.

Alton Motobu says

Hammond Innes' books are like travelogues and adventures combined. He may take you to the Arctic Circle to sub-Saharan Africa to the Canadian Rockies, and you will get a flavorful experience of the lands and the people while embroiled in killings, natural disasters, and lots of excitement - except for this one. The Blue Ice is surprisingly boring with minimal action until the very end. After a long sea voyage to western Norway in search of a mysterious Norwegian WW II underground member named George Farnell or Bernt Olsen, who may have the secret to a rich mineral reserve near a glacier in the interior, the searchers fight each other as well as various interlopers who want the secret. Not as exciting as it sounds. But there certainly is a wealth of detail about sailing, navigation, and the conditions in the North Sea. The story line is convoluted as some of the dialogue is in Norwegian and one of the characters is a cockney who switches between a cockney accent and English. The cockney is written phonetically so "I" is written as "Oi" and so forth. All of this detracts from the plot and frustrates the reader who just wants to know what is going on instead of trying to translate the dialogue. For a better Hammand Innes experience try Campbell's Kingdom or Maddon's Rock - these were terrific adventures.
