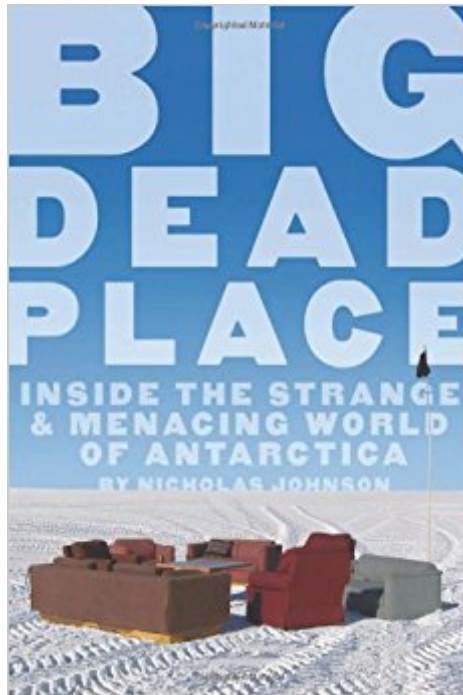


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Big Dead Place: Inside The Strange And Menacing World Of Antarctica



Synopsis

Johnson's savagely funny [book] is a grunt's-eye view of fear and loathing, arrogance and insanity in a dysfunctional, dystopian closed community. It's like M*A*S*H on ice, a bleak, black comedy. •The Times of London

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When Johnson went to work for the U.S. Antarctic Program (devoted to scientific research and education in support of the national interest in the Antarctic), he figured he'd find adventure, beauty, penguins and lofty-minded scientists. Instead, he found boredom, alcohol and bureaucracy. As a dishwasher and garbage man at McMurdo Station, Johnson quickly shed his illusions about Antarctica. Since he and his co-workers seldom ventured beyond the station's grim, functional buildings, they spent most of their time finding ways to entertain themselves, drinking beer, bowling and making home movies. The dormlike atmosphere, complete with sexual hijinks and obscene costume parties, sometimes made life there feel like "a cheap knock-off of some original meaty experience." What dangers there were existed mostly in the psychological realm; most people who were there through the winter developed the "Antarctica stare," an unnerving tendency to forget what they were saying mid-sentence and gaze dumbly at the station walls. And if the cold and isolation didn't drive one crazy, the petty hatreds and mindless red tape might. Though occasionally rambling and uneven, this memoir offers an insider's look at a place that few people know anything about and fewer still have ever seen. Photos. (July) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"No one has done more to change the way we understand Antarctica. Nick was unflinching in his critique of bureaucracy and authority in the United States Antarctic Program, but mainly he sought to create a dialogue within and about Antarctica that cut through cliché and hypocrisy in order to describe things as they really are, in all their glory and strangeness." -Progressive Review

"It took a full century and the building of centrally heated infrastructure for the island at the bottom of the world to produce something like a minor classic. Its author was a young American writer and itinerant contract worker named Nicholas Johnson, whose memoir Big Dead Place upon publication superseded a century's worth of self-serving ice-beard memoirs and press-junket hackery." - Alternet

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A great book from the late Nick Johnson, it reveals the world of the people who do the blue collar work at the south pole...and the administrators who play political games with their lives(I can verify what Mr. Johnson says about the Raytheon bureaucracy BS, as I worked for the company for many years, and experienced the same games, with the difference that I could go home and leave it behind at the end of most days). A must read, it details the real details of life at the south pole, I highly recommend it.

Great behind the scenes look at life in the US Antarctic Program.

Why is Antarctica filled with welders, IT guys, garbage men, and dish washers? Because it serves the national interest to have a permanent base in Antarctica. "Science" is the justification for this base. Loved this book, and the authors bone dry humor, from page one.

I really enjoy the writing style of Nicolas Johnson, as well as his point of view. However, there is only

so much one can read about the tedium of living inside a bureaucratic ice station before reading the book becomes tedious as well. I got about 100 pages in before putting it on the shelf for good.

A very lively and accurate account of the organized dysfunction of life on the ice. Spent portions of three summer seasons at MacTown in mid 2000s.

As someone who hopes to get to Antarctica as a grantee of the NSF, I found this book enlightening, sobering, at times enraging, smart, and really, really funny. Where ever we go, there we are after all.

To all the Romantics out there who think of voids (the sea, space, polar regions) in poetic, flowering terms... This is a fine antidote, and a funny one.

This book was hilarious. Also a searing critique of bureaucracy and government contracting.

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