
A City Under Snow

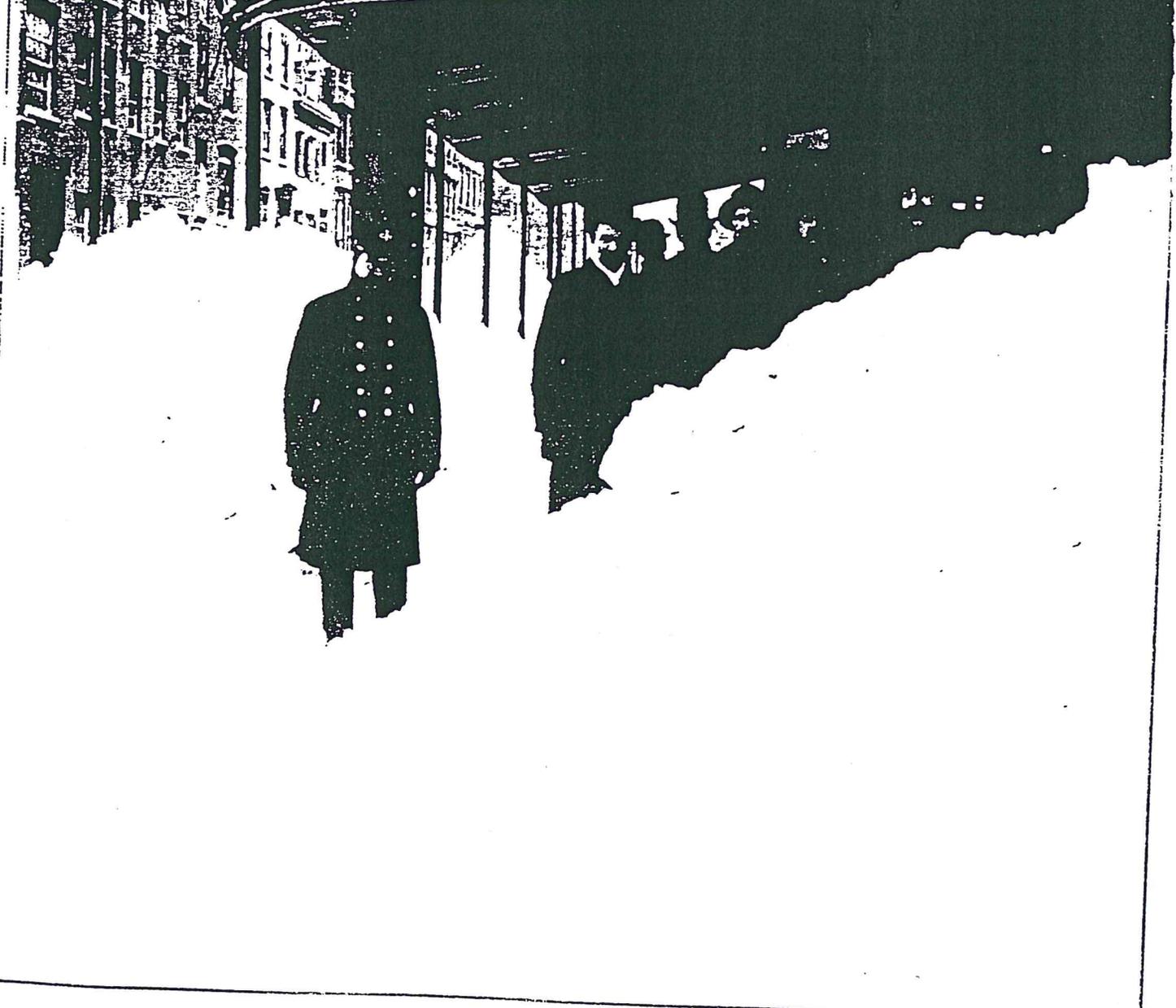
In the darkness of a late March night, a young man hurried along the streets of New York City. A hard, freezing rain poured down on him. Wind whipped at his face and clothes. He shivered and walked faster.

Suddenly a strong **gust** of wind swept by him. It picked up the front steps of a house. The steps went flying down the street.

...need to beat strawmen. Tear them or break them
His Workshop, alone is the right place to take them.
Why purchase of others, for who else can Handle.
The tools of the Mender, like dexterous Crandall.

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The man couldn't believe what he had just seen. When he got home, he checked the newspaper. The weather report said that it would be partly cloudy with strong winds, followed by clear skies. The man felt better. Perhaps the gust of wind had been a **freak** thing. But the weather report was wrong. The gust of wind was the start of the worst storm ever to hit New York City. Later this storm, which began on March 11, 1888, would be called the **Blizzard** of '8

Caught by Surprise

By dawn on March 12, the rain had turned to snow. It fell from the sky as sharp, icy **flakes**. Wind of 80 miles per hour kept the snow **swirling** madly in the air. **Snowdrifts** reached 20 feet or more. Many New Yorkers did not realize how bad the storm was. Looking out their windows, they saw nothing but white, blowing snow. Still, they thought it would end soon. They thought it was just a small snowstorm.

In Harlem, Mrs. Charles Green bundled up her ten-year-old nephew, Sam Strong. She helped him put on his boots, hat, coat, and gloves.

"There, you could go to the North Pole in that outfit," she said cheerfully. "Hurry now, so you won't be late for school."

Sam couldn't see a thing as he walked outside. The wind drove icy snow into his cheeks and down his neck. When he turned onto Lenox Avenue, the wind grabbed him and threw him into the air. He landed in a deep snowdrift. The snow was way over his head. Sam tried to move his hands and feet. He tried to dig himself out of the drift. But he couldn't. Five minutes passed. Then ten. Then fifteen. Panic began to sweep over him. He feared he might die buried in the snow.



One of the Lucky Ones

At last a police officer passed the snowdrift. He heard young Sam's cries. The officer clawed away at the snowdrift. Finally, he reached Sam and pulled him out.

"You shouldn't be out in this, Sonny," he said. "You go straight home."

It took Sam hours to get back home. His ears were stinging. His face hurt. He barely had enough energy to crawl through the drift to his front porch. But he was one of the lucky ones. The blizzard caused nearly 100 people to die that day in New York City alone.

A City Buried in Snow

All over the city, things came to a sudden stop. Milk couldn't be delivered, so babies went hungry. Because coal deliveries stopped, families could not heat their homes. Street cars and cabs stopped running. Thousands of workers had no way to get home.

As the day went on, the city took on an eerie look. The wind flung boxes, signs, and benches down the street. Thousands of sparrows dropped from the sky. They had frozen. Horses, too, lay dead in the streets. Many were still tied to the wagons they had been pulling.



And still the blizzard did not stop. People staggered through the streets, looking for open grocery stores. The icy snow cut at their faces until they bled. At stores they bought gloves and shovels. They begged for food and coal.

Later, these people searched for words to describe the snow and wind.

"It felt like lashes of a whip," said one person.

"The air was full of fine needles of snow," one man remembered. "The **sleet** striking my face made me feel as if it was raining carpet tacks. Little **icicles** formed on my eyelashes and got into my eyes. They felt like hot cinders."

The End of the Blizzard

By the third day, the blizzard started dying down. The wind dropped, and the snow stopped falling. That afternoon the sun poked through the clouds. Slowly, New York City came to life again.

The blizzard was over. But the memory of it stayed. The storm had destroyed homes all along the East Coast. It did \$20 million worth of damage in New York City alone. It also took the lives of almost 300 people.

Those who lived never forgot it. Certainly Sam Strong never did. The little boy who almost died in the snowdrift went on to become head of the Society of Blizzard Men and Blizzard Ladies. Every year he met with other people who had lived through the storm. As long as he lived, he never forgot the force of the wind that March day. He never forgot the terror of being trapped in a huge mountain of snow. And he never forgot the kind police officer who saved his life.

Do You Remember?

■ Read each sentence below. Write T if the sentence is true. Write F if the sentence is false.

- _____ 1. The blizzard started as a hard, freezing rain.
 - _____ 2. Snowdrifts reached 20 feet.
 - _____ 3. Sam Strong almost died in a river.
 - _____ 4. Milk was delivered as usual.
 - _____ 5. Thousands of sparrows froze.
 - _____ 6. The blizzard lasted less than 24 hours.
 - _____ 7. The blizzard did very little property damage.
 - _____ 8. People who lived through the blizzard never forgot it.
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Express Yourself

■ Pretend you are Sam Strong. You have just made it home after being saved by the police officer. Write an entry in your journal telling about this day.

Exploring Words

■ Read each sentence. Fill in the circle next to the best meaning for the word in dark print. If you need help, use the Glossary.

1. A **gust** of wind blew the steps off a house.
 a. steady force b. small amount c. sudden blast
2. The blizzard was **freak** weather.
 a. good b. unusual c. exciting
3. People had no warning that a **blizzard** was coming.
 a. heavy snowstorm with high winds
 b. thunderstorm
 c. dust storm
4. Icy **flakes** cut people's faces.
 a. small bits of snow b. winds c. drops
5. The high winds kept the snow **swirling** in the air.
 a. hanging b. moving c. freezing
6. Sam had trouble getting through the deep **snowdrifts**.
 a. piles of snow b. snowstorms c. puddles
7. The dark streets looked **eerie**.
 a. strange b. quiet c. dangerous
8. The wind **flung** signs to the ground.
 a. flew b. stretched c. threw
9. During the first night, the rain turned to **sleet**.
 a. icy rain b. gentle mist c. soft snow
10. **Icicles** stuck to one man's eyelashes.
 a. drops of rain b. spikes of ice c. frost