Plot Summary

In 1914 Sir Ernest Shackleton leads twenty-seven men on the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition. The expedition intends to transverse the Antarctic continent by dog sledge. In December, 1914, the expedition, aboard the purpose-built polar exploration ship Endurance, enters the pack ice of the Weddell Sea off the coast of Antarctica some 1,100 nautical miles east of the Palmer Peninsula. By January, 1915, Endurance is a scant 60 nautical miles from its intended landfall—but it is also frozen immobile in pack ice that extends to all horizons. Endurance drifts with the pack ice for several months, eventually losing sight of land as the typical Weddell Sea current spins the vast pack ice floe in a slow clockwise direction.

As the pack ice transcribes its giant clockwise rotation, so ends the Antarctic summer. By late October, 1915, Endurance drifts some 500 nautical miles to the north-east, frozen fast...