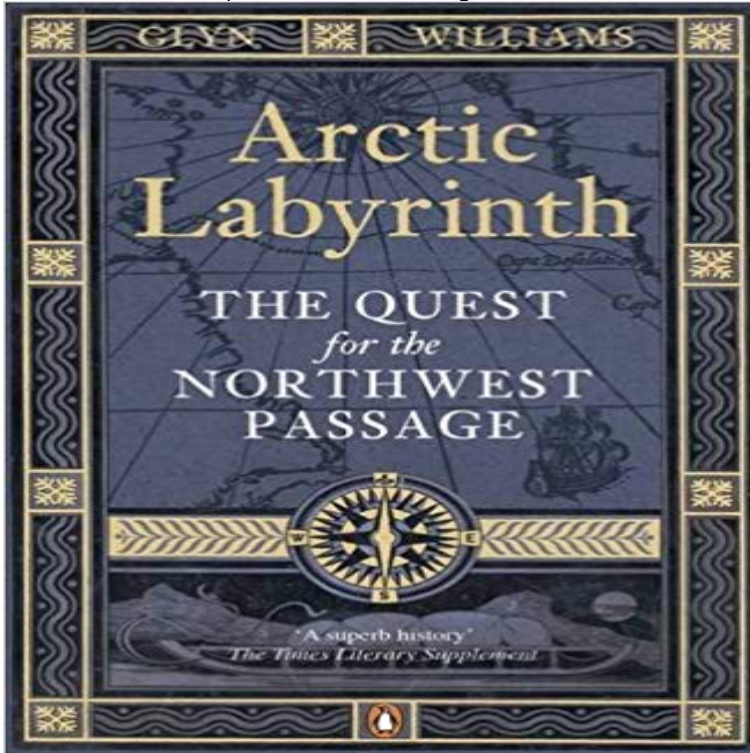


Arctic Labyrinth: The Quest for the Northwest Passage. Glyn Williams



For centuries British navigators dreamt of finding the Northwest Passage - the route over the top of North America that would open up the fabulous wealth of Asia to British merchants. We know now that, while several such passages exist, during the period of the search by sailing vessels they were choked by impassable ice. But this knowledge was slowly won, as expedition after expedition, under the most terrible conditions, slowly filled in the sailors patchy and sometimes fatally misleading charts. Arctic Labyrinth tells this extraordinary story with great skill and brilliance. From the tiny, woefully equipped ships of the first Tudor expeditions, to the icebreakers and nuclear submarines of the modern era, Glyn Williams describes how every form of ingenuity has been used to break through or try to get round the nightmarish ice barriers set in a maze of sterile islands. The heroism, folly and horror of these voyages seem almost unbelievable, with entire ships crushed, mass starvation, epics of endurance - and all in pursuit of a goal that ultimately proved futile. Williams book is both an important work of exploration and naval history, and a remarkable study in human delusion and fortitude.

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