

# **The Eternal Maiden eBook**

## **The Eternal Maiden**

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# Page 1

TO

EDGAR WILSON RIDDELL

JANUARY 31, 1892—JULY 2, 1912

IN MEMORY OF

**A LIFE'S SUPREME FRIENDSHIP**

THE ETERNAL MAIDEN

## PRELUDE

*Long ages ago, darkness brooded over the frozen world and held in its thrall the unreleased waters of the glacial seas. There was no animal life upon the land, and in the depth of the waters no living thing stirred. Kokoyah, the water god, breathed not; Tornahhuchsuah, the earth spirit, who rules above the spirits of the wind and air, was veiled in slumber. Men had risen like willows from the frozen earth; but, although they lived, they were as the dead. They spake not, neither did they hunt, nor eat, nor did they die. Then the Great Spirit, whose name is not known, placed upon earth a man, in his arms the strength to kill, in his heart the primal urge of love. And in that flowerless arctic Eden, out of its bounteous compassion, the Great Spirit placed also a maiden, her face beautiful with the young virginity of the world, in her bosom implanted a yearning, not unmixed with fear, for love. Gazing upon her, the youth's heart stirred, with desire, the maiden's with virginal terror. The maiden fled, the youth followed. Over the desolate icy mountains the fleet feet of the youth sped with the swiftness of the wind gods, over the silent white seas the maiden with the elusiveness of the air spirits. In the heart of the youth throbbed the passion of love, indomitable, eternal, which the blasting breath of time should never kill. In the maiden's bosom quaked a reasonless shame, an unconquerable terror. Surrounded by her whirling cloud of hair, the maiden sprang, untiring, across the wild white world. His strength failing, the youth pantingly followed. Thousands of years passed; the breathless pursuit continued; the maiden's nebulous hair became shot with streaks of golden fire, from her eyes beams of light streamed across the expanses over which she exultantly, fearfully bounded; the tremulous faltering youth's face paled until it shone silvery in the darkness, and the beads of perspiration on his forehead glowed with a strange lustre. Reaching, in their mad race, the very edge of the earth, the maiden leaped, fiery, into space, and her hair becoming suddenly molten, she became the sun—the eternal maiden Sukh-eh-nukh, the beautiful, the all-desired. Utterly exhausted, his wan arms yearningly outstretched, the youth swooned after her into the heavens, and was transformed into the moon—the*

*ever-desiring, ever-sorrowing moon. In the smile of Sukh-eh-nukh the seas melted.  
Walrus and narwhals, seals and whales came into being on the bosom of Kokoyah; on  
the earth the snows disappeared, and the brow of Tornahhuchsuah*



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*was crowned with green grasses and starry flowers. Men hunted game, women laughed for joy; they beat drums, they danced, they sang. By the eternal, unrequited passion of the lovers in the skies, happiness and plenty came upon the earth. But, with Light, came also Death. Jealous of men's happiness, Perdlugssuaq, the Great Evil, brought sickness; he struck men on the hunt, on the seas, in the mountains. He was ever feared. He made the Great Dark terrible. But when the night became bright with the love-lorn glamour of the moon, Perdlugssuaq was for the time forgotten; in their hearts men felt a vague, tender, and ineffable stirring—the lure of a passion stronger and stranger even than death. They gazed upon the moon with instinctive, undefined pity. So, as the years passed, and ages melted and remade the snows, the long day was golden with the Beauty that is ever desired, the Ideal never attained; the night was softly silver with the melancholy and eternal hope of the deathless love that eternally desires, eternally pursues, and is eternally denied.*

Thus runs the Eskimo legend.

I

*“Her cheeks were flushed delicately with the soft pink of the lichen flowers that bloom in the rare days of early summer. Her eyes played with a light as elusive, as quick as the golden radiance on the seas.”*

Great excitement prevailed among the members of the tribe. Along a mottled green-and-brown stretch of shore, which rolled undulatingly toward the icy fringe of the polar sea, more than twoscore hunters were engaged in unusual activity. Some were lacing tight over the framework the taut skin of their kayaks. Others sharpened harpoon points with bits of flint. Tateraq busily cut long lashings from tanned walrus hides. Maisanguaq deftly took these and pieced them together into long lines, which were rolled in coils lasso-fashion. Arnaluk and a half dozen others sat on their haunches, between their knees great balls made of the entire hides of seals. With cheeks extended they blew into these with gusto. Filled with air, the hides became floats, which were attached to the leather lasso lines. The lines in turn were fastened by Attalaq and Papik to harpoons, which were to be driven into the walrus, the natives' chief prey of the arctic sea.

A babel of conversation swayed to and fro among this northernmost fringe of the human race. Now and then it was drowned in the raucous, deafening shriek of auks which swarmed from nearby cliffs and soared in clouds over the shore.

“Aveq soah! Walrus! Walrus!” shouted Papik, tossing up his arms and dancing, his brown face twisting with grotesque grimaces of joy.

*"Aveq soah! Aveq soah!"* He leaped in frenzy. He seized his harpoon in mimicry of striking, and darted it up and down in the air. *"Walrus! Walrus!"* he cried, and his feverish contagion spread through the crowd.

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“*Aveq tedicksoah!* A great many walrus,” echoed Arnaluk. “*Aveq tedicksoah!* Walrus too many to count!”

They stopped their work and gathered in a group, Papik before them, his arms pointing toward the sea. His eyes glistened.

To the south, *Im-nag-i-na*, the entrance to the polar sea, was hidden by grayish mists which, as they shifted across the sun, palpitated with running streaks of gold. From the veiled distance the sound of a glacier exploding pealed over the waters like the muffled roar of artillery. The sun, magnified into a great swimming disc by the rising vapors, poured a rich and colorful light over the sea—it was a light without warmth. In the turquoise sky overhead, the moving clouds changed in hue from crimson to silver, and straggling flecks, like diaphanous ribbons, became stained with mottled dyes. Against the horizon, the arctic armada of eternally moving icebergs drifted slowly southward and, like the spectral ships of the long dead Norsemen who had braved these regions, flaunted the semblance of silver-gleaming sails. The sea rose in great green emerald swells, the wave crests broke in seething curls of silver foam, and in the troughs of descending waters glittered cascades of celestial jewels. It was late summer—the hour, midnight.

The keen eyes of the natives searched the seas.

To the south of where the watchers were gathered, the glacial heels of the inland mountains step precipitously into the sea and rise to a height of several thousand feet. At the base of these iron rocks, corroded with the rust of interminable ages, the fragments of great floes, like catapults, are tossed by the intruding sea. Above, in summertime, rises and falls constantly a black mist resembling shifting cloud smoke. Millions of auks swarm from their moss-ensconced grottos; an oppressive clamor beats the air. Along the ocean, where crevices of the descending iron-chiselled cliffs are fugitively green with ribbons of pale grass, downy-winged ducks purr, mating guillemots coo incessantly, and tremulous oogzooks chirrup joyously to their young.

As the natives listened, a deep nasal bellowing from the far ocean trembled in the air.

Not a man stirred. The sound vibrated into silence. The auks screamed. Hawks shrilled. From the far interior valleys came the echoed wolf-howling of Eskimo dogs. There the mountain tops, perpetually covered with ice and snow, gleamed through the clouds with running colors of amaranth, green and mottled gold. The air swam with frigid fire. As the tribe stood in silence along the shore, a roar as of gatling guns pealed from the mist-hidden heights. After a taut moment of silence, a frightened scream rose from every living thing on land and sea. Yet the group of men only bent their heads. Then, like an undertone in the chorus of animate life, their quick ears detected the long-drawn, hoarse call of walrus bulls. The howls of the dogs from the distant mountain passes came nearer. More distant receded the stertorous nasal bellow on the sea.

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The natives feverishly leaped to their tasks. There was a note of anxiety in their voices. Onto the forepart of the kayaks they placed their weapons, leather lines, floats and drags. More than twoscore boats were drawn over the land-adhering ice to the edge of the sea. A fierce chatter brought all the women to the doors of their seal-skin tents. They looked seaward and shook their heads with dismay.

"Many walrus—far away," the men shouted.

"No, no," the timid women returned. "Walrus too far away—*Perdlugssuaq will strike you there!*"

Against the distant horizon mighty bergs loomed. In swift eddies of water great floes swirled. The walrus were too far away to be seen. Yet the opportunity of securing walrus was too rare to be missed; for unless food and fuel were soon secured, starvation during the coming winter confronted the tribe. The previous winter had been one of unprecedented severity and had wiped out bears, and herds of caribou and musk oxen. The summer season, which was now drawing to a close, had been destitute of every kind of game. Musk oxen had been seldom found and then only in the far inland valleys. Some blight of nature seemed to have exterminated even the animals of the sea. The natives had lived mainly on the teeming bird life. From the scrawny bodies of the arctic birds, however, neither food that could be preserved nor fuel to be burned in the lamps could be secured. On musk oxen the tribes depend chiefly for hides and meat, and on walrus for both food and fuel. The ammunition, brought by Danish traders the summer before, was exhausted, so in the hunt they had for many sleeps to rely solely upon their skill with their own primitive weapons. For months the doughty hunters had gathered but few supplies. The prospect of the coming winter was ominous indeed. Wandering up and down the coast in their migrating excursions the tribes had scoured land and sea with but meagre results. At the village from which they now heard the inspiring walrus calls, a dozen visiting tribesmen—most of them in search for wives as well as game—had gathered. Joy filled them in the prospect of securing supplies—and possible success in love—at last.

As they launched their kayaks, in impatient haste lest the walrus drift too far seaward, some one called:

"Ootah! Ootah!"

They gazed anxiously about. Ootah, the bravest and most distinguished of the hunters, was missing. All the young men would gladly have started without Ootah, but the elders, who knew his skill and the might of his arm, were not willing.

To the younger men there was an added zest in the hunt; each felt in the other a rival, and Ootah the one most to be feared. A feverish anxiety, a burning desire to distinguish himself flushed the heart of each brave hunter. For whoever brought back the most

game, so they believed, stood the best chance of winning the hand of Annadoah. Of all the unmarried maidens of the tribes, none cooked so well, none could sew so well as Annadoah, none was so skilled in the art of making *ahttees* and *kamiks* as Annadoah. And, moreover, Annadoah was very fair.

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“Ootah! *aveq soah!* Hasten thou! The walrus are drifting to sea.”

Attalaq rushed up to the village and paused at the tent of Annadoah.

“Ootah!” he called.

A voice from within replied.

“We start—the wind drifts—the walrus are carried to sea.”

“I come!” replied Ootah.

The flap of the tent opened. The sunlight poured upon the face of the young hunter. He smiled radiantly, with the self-assertion of youth, the joy of life.

Ootah was graced with unwonted beauty. He was slight and agile of limb; his body was supple and lithe; his face was immobile, beardless, and with curving lips vividly red, a nose, small, with nostrils dilating sensitively, and eyebrows heavily lashed, it possessed something of the softness of a woman. His glistening black hair, bound about his forehead by a narrow fillet of skins, fell riotously over his shoulders. His eyes were large and dark and swam with an ardent light.

He turned.

“Thou wilt not place thy face to mine, Annadoah? Yet I love thee, Annadoah. My heart melts as streams in springtime, Annadoah. My arms grow strong as the wind, and my hand swift as an arrow for love of thee, Annadoah. The joy the sight of thee gives me is greater than that of food after starving in the long winter! Yea, thou wilt be mine? Surely for my heart bursts for love of thee, Annadoah.”

He leaned back, stretching his arms, but Annadoah shyly drew further inside her shelter.

With a sigh he flung his leather line over his shoulder, seized his harpoons, and stepped from the tent. His step was resilient and buoyant, his slim body moved with the grace of an arctic deer. He looked back as he reached the icy shore. Annadoah stood at the door of her tent. Her parting laughter rang after him with the sweetness of buntings singing in spring.

Ootah’s heart leaped within him. Annadoah possessed a beauty rare among her people. From her father, one of the brave white men who had died with the Greely party years before at Cape Sabine, Annadoah had inherited a delicacy and beauty more common indeed with the unknown peoples of the south. Her face was fresh and smooth, and of a pale golden hue. Her cheeks were flushed delicately with the soft pink of the lichen flowers that bloom in the rare days of early summer. Her eyes played with a light as elusive, as quick as the golden radiance on the seas. Her dark silken hair

straggled luxuriantly from under the loose hood of immaculate white fox fur which had fallen back from her head. The soft skins of blue foxes and of young birds clothed her. From her sleeves her hands peeped; they were small, dainty, childlike. Almost childlike, too, was her face, so palely golden, so fresh, so lovely, so petite. There were mingled in her the coyness of a child and the irresistible coquetry of a woman.

She waved her hands joyously to the hunters leaving the shore. They called back to her. Some of the women frowned. One shook her fist at Annadoah.

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Papik, lingering behind, approached Annadoah timidly.

"Thou art beautiful, Annadoah; thou canst sew with great skill. With the needles the white men brought thee, thou hast made garments such as no other maiden. Papik would wed thee, Annadoah."

"Thou art a good lad, Papik," Annadoah replied, laughing gaily. "But thy fingers are very long—and long, indeed, thy nose!"

Papik flushed, for to him this was a tragedy.

"But with my fingers I speed the arrow with skill," he replied.

"True, but the fate of him who shoots with a skill such as thine is unfortunate indeed; for soon the day will come when thou wilt not speed the arrow, when thy hands will be robbed of their cunning. When *ookiah* (winter) comes with his lashes of frost he will smite thy fingers—they will fall off. Then how wilt thou get food for thy wife? *Ookiah* will twist thy nose, and it will freeze. Poor Papik!"

Annadoah lay her hand gently on his arm, and a brief sorrow clouded her smiles.

Papik bowed his head. He understood the blight nature had set upon him and it made his heart cold. Truly his fingers were long and his nose was long—and either was a misfortune to a tribesman. He knew, as all the natives knew, that sooner or later during a long winter his fingers would inevitably freeze, then he would lose his skill with weapons; consequently he would not be able to provide for a wife. His nose, too, in all probability would freeze; then he would be disfigured and the trials of life would be more complicated.

From the inherited experience of ages the natives know that a hunter with short hands and feet is most likely to live long; a man's length of life can be pretty accurately gauged by the stubbiness of his nose. The degree of radiation of the human body is such that it can prevent freezing in this northern region only when the extremities are short; thus a man with long feet is almost for a certainty doomed to lose his toes, and the most fortunate is he whose feet and hands are short, whose nose is stubby and whose ears are small. The exigencies of life place an economic value on the structure of a hunter's body, and the little Eskimo women—endowed with a crude social conscience which demands that a father shall live and remain efficient so as to care for his own children—are loath to marry one afflicted as was Papik.

"But I care for thee, Annadoah," Papik protested.

"And well do I know thou art a brave lad, but seek thou another maiden; thou dost not touch my heart, Papik, and thy fingers are very, very long."



With native spontaneity, Papik laughed and turned shoreward. As he passed the assembled maidens he paused momentarily and greeted them. He made a brief proposal of marriage to Ahningnetty, a fat maiden, and was met with laughter.

“Go on, Long Fingers,” one called. “How wilt thou strike the bear when thy fingers are gone? How wilt thou seek the musk ox when *ookiah* hath bitten off thy feet?”

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The maiden who spoke was extremely thin.

“Ha, ha!” Papik returned. “How wilt thou warm thy husband when the winter comes? How wilt thou warm the little baby when thou art like the bear after a famished winter, thou maid of skin and bones!”

“Long-nose! Long-nose! may thy nose freeze!” she called.

The other maidens laughed and giped at her. In anger she fled into her *tupik*, or tent. Being very thin she, too, like Papik, suffered from the bar sinister of nature. For, in selecting a wife, a native comes down to the practical consideration of choosing a maid who will likely grow fat, so that, during the long cold winters, her body will be a sort of human radiator to keep the husband and children warm. So love, you see, in this region, is largely influenced by an instinctive knowledge of natural economies.

As he launched his kayak, Ootah turned toward Annadoah.

“Thou art the sun, Annadoah!” he called.

“And thou the moon, Ootah,” she replied. “I shall await thee, Ootah! Bring thou back fat and blubber, Ootah, to warm thy fires, Ootah.” And she laughed gaily. Then she turned her back to Ootah, bent her head coyly and did not turn around again. To Ootah this was a good augury—for when a maiden turns her back upon a suitor she thinks favorably of him. This is the custom.

Ootah felt a new strength in his veins. He felt himself master of all the prey in the sea.

At the entrance of the tent of Sipsu, the *angakoq*, or native magician, stood Maisanguaq, one of the rivals for the hand of Annadoah. His face twisted with jealous rage as he heard Annadoah calling to the speeding Ootah. His narrow eyes glittered vindictively. Turning on his heel he entered Sipsu’s dwelling place.

Sipsu sat on the floor near his oil lamp. When Maisanguaq entered he did not stir. He was as still, as grotesque, as evil-looking as the tortured idols of the Chinese; like theirs his eyes were beadlike, expressionless, dull; such are the eyes of dead seal. His face was brown and cracked like old leather, and was covered with a crust of dirt; his gray-streaked hair was matted and straggled over his face; it teemed with lice. He held his knotty hands motionless over the flame of his lamp. His nails were long and curled like sharp talons. As Maisanguaq saw him he could not repress a shudder.

Sipsu was feared, and as correspondingly hated, by the tribe. They brought to him, it is true, offerings of musk ox meat and walrus blubber when members fell ill. But that was the urge of necessity. Of late years Sipsu’s conjurations for recovery had resulted in few cures; his heart was not in them; but with greater vehemence did he enter upon seances of malediction. With almost unerring exactness he prophesied many deaths.

For this the tribe did not love him. Nor did Sipsu love the tribe; especially did he hate the youthful, and those who courted and were newly wed. When Maisanguaq touched his shoulder, he turned with a growl.

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"Canst thou invoke the curse of death upon one who goes hunting upon the seas?"

Through the rheum of years Sipsu's eyes gleamed.

The aged, gnarled thing found voice. It was hollow and thin.

"Ha, thou art Maisanguaq," his toothless jaws chattered. "Thou bearest no one good will. Seldom dost thou smile. For this I like thee."

He laughed harshly. Maisanguaq impatiently repeated his question:

"Can Sipsu invoke the great curse? Ha, what dost thou mean? Art thou a fool? Have not many died upon the word of Sipsu, Sipsu whose spirits never desert him! Harken! Did not Sipsu go unto the mountains in his youth? Did he not hear the hill spirits speaking? Did he not carry food to them, and wood and arrow points for weapons? And in *ookiah* (winter) did they not strike? Did they not kill one Otaq, who hated Sipsu? Did Sipsu not go unto the lower land of the dead—did he not speak to those who freeze in the dark? Yea, did Sipsu not learn how the world is kept up, and the souls of nature are bound together? And hath he not the power to separate them, yea, as a man from his shadow?"

"Thou evil-tongued wretch, well doth Maisanguaq believe thee! Here—I promise thee meat. I follow Ootah upon the chase. There are walrus on the sea. Invoke the curse of destruction upon Ootah—and I will give thee meat for the long winter."

"Ootah—Ootah—yah—hah! Ootah!" Sipsu snapped the name viciously. "With joy shall I bring the great evil unto Ootah. For hath he not despised my art, hath he not scoffed at my spirits! But thou—what reason hast thou to desire his death?"

"Ootah findeth favor with Annadoah," said Maisanguaq briefly. "I would she never make his *kamiks* (boots)."

"Yea, and she shall not. She shall not!" the old man shrieked in a sudden access of rage. "So saith Sipsu, whose spirits never fail."

Lying on the floor Sipsu closed his eyes and, moving his head up and down, called repeatedly:

"*Quilaka Nauk! Quilaka Nauk!* Where are my spirits? Where are my spirits?"

Presently he rose, and swaying his body crooned:

"*Tassa quilivagit! Tassa quilivagit!* My spirits are here—they are here! *Tassa quilivagit!*"



Grasping a drum made of animal tissue strung over a rib-bone he began to dance. He beat a slow, uneasy measure on the drum. His face grinned hideously. His voice at times rose to a harsh shriek, then suddenly it trailed away until it seemed like the voice of one speaking very far off. In a curious sort of intermittent crooning and shrieking ventriloquism he called down curses upon Ootah. His dance increased; he beat the drum frenziedly. His legs twisted under him, he described short running circles and jumped up and down in accesses of hysteria. His scraggy arms, with their tattered clothes, writhed in the air as he beat the drum above him. His head began to nod from side to side; his eyes glowed like coals; his tongue hung from his mouth; foam gathered at his lips.

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“Ootah! Ootah! May his *kaneg* (head) swell with the great fire! May he see horrors that do not exist—what the wicked dead dream in their frigid hell! May the wrath of the spirits descend upon him! May the wrath of the spirits descend upon him!”

Sipsu uttered short howls. Maisanguaq joined in the incantation, and re-echoed the blighting curses.

“May he suffer from *kangerdlugpoq* (terrible body pains). May they end not! May he lie awake forever! May he never sleep! May his teeth chatter during the great dark!”

Sipsu groaned. He worked himself into an ecstasy of torture. His form became a black whirling figure in the dim tent.

“May Ootah’s eyes close, may the lids swell; may they burn with fire.”

“May he never see the light of day—may he never aim the arrow—may his harpoons strike forever in the darkness!” Maisanguaq replied rancorously. “May the wrath of the spirits descend upon him!”

“May Ootah’s tongue fasten to his mouth—may it be as the tongues of dead *ahmingmah* (musk oxen),” chanted Sipsu. “May he never speak—may Annadoah never hear his voice,” chorused Maisanguaq.

“May Ootah lose his *pungo* (dogs); may they all die!”

Maisanguaq, caught by the evil contagion, began to sway his body in rhythm to the weird dance.

“May Ootah become a cripple! May he break his bones! May he lie helpless for years! May his shadow leave him! May he suffer with the greatest of all pains!”

As he uttered this terrible curse, desiring that Ootah’s shadow, wherein exists the soul, might depart from his still-living body, and thus cause the most excruciating bodily anguish, Sipsu sank exhausted to the ground. He writhed in a paroxysm.

“May Ootah die slowly; may his legs die, may his hands die—yea, may the spirits of his body be severed from one another as ice fields in the breaking; may the spirit of his hands, the spirit of his feet, the spirit of his lungs, the spirit of his head, the spirit of his heart wander apart—may they be torn asunder as the clouds in a storm! May they wander apart forever seeking and may they never find themselves! May Ootah suffer as never suffered the unhappy dead!”

And Maisanguaq’s deep voice growled hatefully:

“May Ootah’s body lie unburied! May he rot upon the earth! May the ravens peck out his eyes! May a murderer drink his blood! May the wolves eat his heart! May the spirit of the fog grow fat upon his entrails! And may the spirits of his body scatter—as the clouds in the wild *anore* (winds) scatter! May his soul forever seek to find its kindred spirits unavailingly and suffer in *Sila*, (throughout the universe) forever!”

From under a pile of skins Sipsu, his chant subsiding, brought forth a bundle. Opening it, he revealed a collection of old bones; there were the bones of musk oxen, seals, walrus and smaller animals.

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“Yah-hah-hah! I shall create a *tupilak*!” he crooned vindictively. “I shall create a *tupilak*! And from the depths of the waters the *tupilak* shall see Ootah. Yah-hah-hah! I shall create a *tupilak*, and from the hands of Sipsu it shall carry destruction to Ootah on the sea. Yah-hah-hah!” He laughed crazily. Continuing his chant he constructed of the bones a crude likeness to an animal skeleton. Over this he sprinkled a handful of dried turf. Then, from beneath the cover of his bed he brought a stone pot and from it poured a sluggish red liquid over the strange object of his creation. This was a mixture of clotted animal blood and water kept for such purposes of conjuration. This done, he threw over the bones an aged sealskin. Then he rose to his feet, and in a low voice uttered the secret formulas whereby, in the depths of the sea, the result of his labor should take the form of an artificial walrus.

Maisanguaq stood by, silent, evil exultation shining in his eyes.

While the Sipsu was moaning his spell over the pile of bones, Maisanguaq turned and left the tent. Out on the sea he saw the kayaks of his departing companions.

“Good luck, Maisanguaq, have courage in the chase! Remember Annadoah awaits you all!” Annadoah called blithely and coquettishly after him.

Maisanguaq's lips tightened, his heart leaped, but well he knew that he meant nothing to the maiden, well he knew what little chance he had, and envy filled him, and bitter doubt, for he knew Ootah's prowess, his strength of limb, and braveness of heart. However, he put out with quick powerful strokes, and with a sense of anticipated triumph, for he was confident that the magician by his necromancy had created in the depths of the sea a *tupilak*, or artificial walrus, which should attack Ootah. He knew it might upset Ootah's kayak and cause him to be drowned. The probabilities were, however, that it would permit itself to be harpooned, in which case its blighting curse would fall upon Ootah, who would lose all power and strength of limb, whose body would become bent and crippled and racked with the *kangerdlugpoq*, and who would die slowly, inch by inch. Thus, Ootah would be helpless the rest of his days and as he died all the dreadful horrors of the curses would come upon him. Thus would Maisanguaq be revenged.

As the midnight sun dipped below the horizon, the sea became more deeply golden. To the women watching along the shore, the multitude of kayaks became mere black specks. They disappeared now and then behind the crests of leaping waves, and reappearing moved with the swiftness of birds along the horizon.

At the entrance of her tent Annadoah stood, one hand shading her eyes as they pierced the radiant distance. From the mountain passes behind the village echoed the joyous howls of approaching dogs. Something stirred in the heart of Annadoah—something fluttered there like the wings of a frightened bird.



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Ootah's paddle touched the water with the softness of a feather, yet so quickly that the double blades emitted constant flashes of light intermittently on either side. His arms moved with consummate ease. His kayak made a dark blurred line as it sped forward over the yellow waters. Soon he had outdistanced the party. Then his speed slackened, he glanced behind.

The other kayaks darted after him like erratic bugs. The land was a mere curve on the horizon; all about him the sea rose and fell, and from the shimmering mirror of every wave the sunlight shot backward in various directions. A thousand golden searchlights seemed playing over the sea. Now and then through the coppery mists an emerald green berg loomed titanically, and as it slowly bore down upon him, Ootah would gracefully manipulate one end of his paddle and shift his kayak about while the berg lurched toweringly onward. As he gained distance from the land the ocean swelled with increasing volume. His frail skin kayak was lifted high on the oily crests of waves, and as it descended with swift rushes, Ootah felt exultant thrills in his heart. Far away he heard the resounding explosion of ice bergs colliding. A low bellow arose from a floe immediately ahead. Ootah's blood leaped, the spirit of the hunter throbbed in his veins, his nostrils sensitively quivered. With a slow silent movement of the paddle, he prevented his kayak from going too great a distance forward in order to await the others. Judging by the sound of the muffled bellowing, he assumed that the great animals were sunning themselves on the southern ridge of the floe. His tactics were to paddle about to the north, land on the floe, and descend upon the walrus from the protection of the ridges of crushed ice which always abound on these rafts of the arctic sea.

While he retarded the kayak and played with his paddle, Ootah became conscious of disquieting things in the world about him.

In the heavens he saw low lying clouds moving slowly southward. Higher above, clouds moved more swiftly in another direction.

"The *quilanialeqisut* (air spirits) are not at rest," murmured Ootah. "O spirits of the air, what disturbs your ease?"

The clouds in the higher ether circled as if in an eddy of wind. Certainly the spirits were not at peace among themselves.

"Spirits of the air," spake Ootah, "waft your caresses to Annadoah's cheeks. Tell her Ootah waits to kill the walrus, that Ootah loves her and would make Annadoah his wife—*neuilacto* Annadoah; tell Annadoah Ootah presses his nose to hers and calls her *Mamacadosa* (of all things that which tastes the most delightful)."

A gust swept the clouds from the zenith. Still no breath of air touched the sea.

To the lee a group of small icebergs passed. They rocked and eddied, and from their glacial sides the light poured in changing colors.

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"O spirit of the light, carry thy bright message to the eyes of Annadoah, tell her Ootah has loved her for many, many moons."

The bergs crashed into one another, and in the impact sank into the sea.

Ootah bit his lips. A vague misgiving was cold within his heart.

A flock of gulls passed low over the waters.

He called to them—that they should take his love to Annadoah. They were to tell Annadoah that he would soon return, laden with food and fuel for the winter. Their raucous cries mocked him. He demanded what they meant. "Ootah—Ootah," they seemed to call, "how foolish art thou, Ootah, how foolish art thou to love Annadoah. For fickle is Annadoah—fickle, fickle the heart of the maiden Annadoah!"

Ootah shrieked an enraged defiance. His eyes sought the horizon. *Kokoyah*, the sea god, was breathing deeply, and in the mists which rose like fire-shot smoke before the sun, singular forms took shape. Ootah saw the magnified shadows of great dogs. They seemed to be dashing along the horizon. Then, with crushing strides, behind the adumbration a great sled, a titan figure gathered substance in the clouds. It moved with terrific speed; it dominated the sky. Its dress was not that of the northern tribes. Ootah felt a resentful stirring, as, looking upward, in the clouds overhead, a white face, hard, fierce, scowling, with burning blue eyes, momentarily appeared.

"A white warrior from the south," Ootah murmured. "And he comes with swift tread. What can it mean?"

In common with many primitive peoples, Ootah possessed the soul of a poet—nature was vocal with him, and the disembodied beings of other worlds made themselves manifest and spoke in the light and in the clouds. To him everything lived; the clouds were the habitation of spirits, the waves were alive, all the animals and fish possessed souls; the very winds were endowed with sex functions and loved and quarreled among themselves. The interrelation of man and the forces of the universe were inseparably intimate and familiar; integral parts of one another, their destinies were bound together. And to Ootah nature found much to gossip about in the affairs of men.

Eagerly Ootah sought the clouds. Along the horizon they resolved themselves into a phantasmagoria of Eskimo maidens and white men resembling the Danes who came each summer to gather riches of ivories and furs. And the Eskimo maidens and white men danced together. As these mirage-forms melted, Ootah glanced into the water by his side. Looking up from the ultramarine depths he saw something white. For an instant it assumed the likeness of the face of Annadoah. He saw her golden skin, her cheeks flushed with the pink of spring lichen blossoms, her lips red as the mountain poppies of late summer. He started back and called aloud:

“Annadoah! Annadoah!” For she had smiled, cruelly and disdainfully. Hoarse laughter answered him—the laughter of white men from the south. A flock of hawks passed over the water. He was about to shout when he heard the sound of kayak paddles behind him. He recalled himself and beckoned silence.

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### II

*"The thought of Annadoah in the embrace of the big blond man, of her face pressed to his in the white men's strange kiss of abomination, aroused in Ootah a sense of violation. . . . He heard Annadoah murmur tenderly, 'Thou art a great man, thou art strong; thy arms hurt me, thy hands make me ache.'"*

Slowly, with silent paddles, the hunters moved over the limpid waters to the north of the floe. On the far side they saw a horde of walrus bulls dozing in the sunlight. Behind a ridge of ice they landed, drawing their kayaks after them. With skin lassos, harpoons and floats, the party crouched low and crept toward the prey. Thus they would be mistaken for other walrus by the unsuspecting animals. Ootah was ahead. Softly they all muttered the magic formulas to prevent themselves from being seen:

*"Nunavdlo sermitdlo-akorngakut-tamarnuga!"* In the rear, his eyes evilly alight, Maisanguaq followed.

As they approached the herd they scattered. Along the edge of the floe lay about twenty monstrous animals, steam rising from their nostrils as they snorted in their slumber. There were a half dozen mother walrus with half-grown young about them. Now and then they sleepily opened their eyes and made low maternal noises.

Before the others realized what had happened, Ootah sprang toward a bull and delivered his harpoon. It rose in the air and roared deafeningly. Ootah struck a second time. The animal floundered in a pool of blood, whipping the floe furiously with its huge tail.

With a thunderous roar all the others leaped with one glide into the sea. The floe rocked, the water churned like a boiling cauldron. In a few minutes Ootah had despatched the beast. Standing erect, he gazed in defiance at the clouds, at the distant gulls. He forgot the omens, and laughed with joy.

Not a moment was to be lost, however. Springing into their kayaks, the Eskimos put to sea. Now the battle began in earnest. Attacking enraged walrus in these frail skin boats is probably the most dangerous form of hunting in the world. At any moment an infuriated animal is liable to rise from the sea immediately beneath a kayak and upturn it.

Forming a semi-circle on the water about the swimming herd, the fearless hunters sat in their tossing boats, each with one arm upraised ready to strike, and with the other manipulating the paddle. Whenever a whiskered head rose above the water one of the hunters let a harpoon descend. After each attack they waited breathlessly.



Tateraq suddenly let his arm descend—his harpoon point struck home. He shouted with joy—for he, too, sought Annadoah. Roaring with rage the lanced sea-horse dived into the deep. The foaming water became red with blood, and a few snorting, bellowing heads appeared. All about glared enraged, fiery eyes. The animals plunged and tossed furiously in the water—the savor of blood maddened them. They began a series of attacks upon the kayaks.

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Alive to their danger the men kept an alert watch. As they saw a seething streak described on the surface of the water, as an animal raged toward them, they would skillfully shift their positions. The animal would rush snortingly by.

With dexterous movements of the paddle, Ootah playfully moved his kayak among the herd, in one hand his harpoon ready to strike. A feverish desire to make the greatest kill possessed him. Each time a hunter made an attack he felt a pang of anxiety. Tense rivalry spurred the young hunters.

In the midst of the battle Arnaluk struck a beast. Ootah summoned all his skill, and dashed in succession after a number of appearing heads—he forgot his danger. Before the others realized it, he had killed two. Maisanguaq’s harpoon went wild. He jealously watched Ootah and struck without skill, carried away by chagrin and rage. Ere made valiant attacks for he, too, thought of Annadoah, but the walrus invariably went skimming from under his blows. Papik’s harpoon glanced the backs of half a dozen. Finally it landed. He shouted with glee. The inflated floats attached to the harpoon lines bobbed crazily on the surface of the ensanguined waters as the animals tossed in their death struggles below.

Two white tusks appeared near Ootah’s kayak. His arm cut the air—his harpoon sped into the water—an enraged bellow followed. He withdrew the handle, free of its line and the attached metal point—the point, with the sinew, descended into the water. It had struck home.

Suddenly a cry went up. One of the natives waved his arms frantically. A great monster had risen by his kayak and fastened one of its tusks in the skin covering the boat from gunwale to gunwale. To strike it with the harpoon meant that it would plunge and capsize the frail craft. Crazy with excitement, the native began hissing and spitting in the beast’s face.

“Lift his head!” cried Ootah, paddling near. “Lift—*tugaq!*—lift his tusk!”

“Lift his head!” echoed the others.

“*Aureti! Aureti!* Behave! Behave!” the panic stricken man ludicrously shrieked at the animal.

Ootah paddled his kayak to the side of his companion’s and, leaning forward, with a quick movement, threw a lasso over the animal’s nose and under one tusk. With a terrific jerk of the body, he gave a backward pull—the walrus rose on the water, the kayak was freed of the tusk and slipped away. With a roar the animal sank into the sea. A number now rose angrily about Ootah’s kayak. They were bent upon a combined assault.

Ootah warded off the attacking bulls on all sides with his harpoon. The air trembled with infuriated calls, the animals were insane with brute rage. The other natives, alarmed, paddled to a safe distance and watched the unequal conflict. While Ootah manipulated his harpoons, Maisanguaq, in the shelter of the floe, watched him with eager eyes.



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He saw Ootah, with almost superhuman dexterity, striking constantly. Repeatedly he had to renew the metal points on his weapon-handle. One by one the animals gave up the attack and dispersed, until only an obdurate bull remained. The battle between man and beast continued, finally Ootah let the harpoon fly with full strength. It struck the animal near the heart. Ootah uncoiled the free line attached to the harpoon point quickly—and the walrus, weighing probably three thousand pounds, plunged with the impetus of a bulk of iron into the sea. Then a strange thing happened.

The pan-shaped drag, attached to the extreme end of the long line securing the harpoon which Ootah had driven into the animal, became entangled in the lashings on the forepart of Ootah's kayak. Leaning forward, Ootah tried to disentangle it. He feared that the beast, in its struggle, might drag all his weapons and paraphernalia into the sea. He felt it tugging at the line while he unknotted the tangle. While he was doing this Maisanguaq saw the beast rise to the surface of the water not far from Ootah and describe a quick circle about his kayak. Before he realized it, the leather line had wrapped itself about his chest and under his arms. It took but a minute for the animal to circle the boat—then it plunged. Maisanguaq saw Ootah struggle to release himself; then he saw the kayak tilt as the hunter was drawn, by the mighty impetus of the plunging sea-horse, into the water. He heard Ootah's cry—saw the blood red waters seethe as they closed over him. In a brief interval the kayak righted itself—it was empty.

A murmur of dismay rose from the others. "The *tupilak!* the *tupilak!*" Maisanguaq exultantly murmured, his eyes alight. "Happy *angakoq!* Thou shalt have much of Ootah's meat!"

Over the spot where Ootah sank the sun flamed. The water seethed with the threshing of the animals beneath the sea. Ootah's float finally rose. The natives watched breathlessly for the reappearance of Ootah. The float bobbed up and down as the animal's death struggles beneath the water subsided.

Maisanguaq, looking at the floats which marked the dead animals, called out:

"Ootah hath won Annadoah—hah-hah-hah! Hah! Ootah hath won Annadoah only to lose her! We shall take Ootah's catch to Annadoah, but Ootah sleeps. Ootah hath gone to taste the water in the country of the dead! Hah-hah!"

At that moment Maisanguaq nearly fell from his kayak.

"Methinks thou wilt perhaps join the fishes first, friend Maisanguaq," a familiar voice laughed joyously behind him.

Maisanguaq's face became livid with dismay. Had the *angakoq* failed? And why?

Turning, he saw Ootah, not far away, clambering from the water onto the floe. He was unscathed by the mishap—the water even had not penetrated his skin garments. A joyous cry arose from the hunters as they saw him running to and fro, working his arms to get up circulation. Noting Maisanguaq's scowling face, Ootah twitted him:

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“Laugh, friend Maisanguaq,” he said, “for winter comes and then thy teeth will chatter.” Maisanguaq scowled deeply—Ootah’s blithesome remarks filled him with rancor.

“Peace, Maisanguaq. Methinks thou, too, lovest Annadoah,” continued Ootah kindly. “Therefor, I hear thee no spite! For who cannot love Annadoah. *Ka—ka!* Come—come!” Shaking the water from him, he bade the others tow his kayak to the floe.

Ootah entered his kayak. The struggles of the walrus had subsided, and only two skin floats bobbed feebly on top of the waves. The hunters now strung series of kayaks together with strong leather ropes, three skin boats being attached in a catamaran. Taking up the leather floats one by one, to the rear kayak of each series the hunters fastened the harpoon lines which secured the prey. Thus the animals were to be towed slowly ashore.

Altogether eight walrus had been secured; four of these had fallen to the skill of Ootah. Ootah sang for joy. Again he had achieved distinction on the hunt, and so, with all the better chances of success, he believed he might pursue his suit for the hand of Annadoah. With powerful, steady strokes of their paddles the hunters, in their processions of kayaks, towed the walrus through the sea shoreward. They joined unrestrainedly in Ootah’s hunting chant. Only Maisanguaq was silent.

Now and then, unable to restrain his exuberant joy, Ootah sang his love to the clouds, the waves, the winds.

“O winds, O happy winds, speed my message to Annadoah!” he called. “Tell her that I return with the food of the sea! O spirits of the air, breathe to her that Ootah’s heart hungers for her as starving *ahmingmah* desire green grass in winter time. O happy, happy waters, I return to Annadoah with food and fuel for winter—say Ootah *meuilacto*—would wed—Annadoah. Tell her Ootah calls her *Mamacadosa!*”

The others, although disappointed in being outwon, in spontaneous recognition of his superior feat, chimed a chorus of congratulations. Suddenly Maisanguaq gleefully pointed a significant finger to the sky.

“Pst!” he said.

A black guillemot, like an omen of evil, passed over Ootah’s head.

By all the immemorial customs of their people, because of the established pre-eminence of his prowess, Ootah should now find favor in the eyes of Annadoah. Scarce seventeen summers had passed over Annadoah’s head and of wooers she had a score. The young hunters, not only of her own tribe, but of others far south, sought her hand. The fame of her beauty and skill had travelled far. None, it was said, equalled her dexterity in plaiting sinew thread; none cut and sewed garments as this maid with

tender child's hands. She made weapons, she brewed marvellous broths. Since the death of her mother she had served the tribe with her skill. Yet, as the summers passed, she remained carefree

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and to all suitors shook her head. "Become a great chief," she would say. "Win in the games, bring back the musk oxen, then perhaps Annadoah will listen." Each summer the young men pursued the hunt with the hope of becoming chief hunter among the tribesmen. But for three summers Ootah had won signally above them all. To the remote regions of their world the name of Ootah was whispered with awe. Ootah carried off honors in the muscle-tapping and finger-pulling matches; he out-distanced all rivals in kayak races on the sea; he left everyone behind on perilous journeys to the inland mountains. Of every living animal on land and sea he had killed, and in quantity of game he excelled them all. Only of late had Annadoah listened with some degree of favor to his pleadings. In the days of want he brought blubber to her for fuel, and provided her with meat. And she was grateful. Perhaps her heart stirred, but she feared the quiet passion of Ootah, and by a perverse feminine instinct she resented a tenderness so gentle that it seemed almost womanly. With winter approaching, and food scarce, it was inevitable that Annadoah should wed. And now that Ootah in the quest of the walrus had made the greatest kill, none doubted that he should be chosen.

As the kayaks approached the village an unexpected sight greeted the eyes of the hunters.

Along the shore, the women of the tribe and strange men were dancing.

Before the village tents they were gathered in groups. While the elder women of the tribe beat a savage dance on membrane drums, the chubby-bodied maidens, dressed in fur trousers, swayed in the arms of the foreigners.

As the boats approached the shore, the natives recognized the visitors. They were one of a half dozen parties of Danish traders who came north yearly from Uppernavik to gather the results of the season's hunt. Their visit meant an untold distribution of wealth among the tribe, for they brought needles, knives, axes, guns, ammunition, and in return secured a fortune in furs and ivory tusks. They also doled out tea, biscuits, matches, tobacco, thread, and gaudy handkerchiefs beloved by the women. Their coming had not been expected this season because of the dearth of game.

The men in the boats shouted to one another joyously. Only Ootah felt a heavy sinking at his heart. He saw the big blond-bearded men chucking the little women under their chins. Their method of kissing was strange and repugnant to him. Accustomed only to the chaste touching of a maiden's face, the kiss of the white men he instinctively regarded as unnameably unclean. He resented their freedom with the women. But, children of the heart and brain, primitive, innocent, the women did not understand the white men's strange behavior. And the husbands, not comprehending, did not care. A gun, ammunition, a few boxes of matches—these constituted wealth in value exceeding a wife.

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Now and then Ootah saw some of the visitors raising flasks to their lips. Then their hilarity rang out more boisterously.

When they saw the kayaks approaching the shore the strangers shouted. The hunters replied. Only Ootah remained silent. Disapproving of the spectacle, his thoughts were busier elsewhere; his heart glowed.

"Ho, ho, what there?" some called.

"*Aveq soah*," Maisanguaq replied.

"Jolly for you!" shouted a Newfoundland sailor, whom Ootah recognized as having been in the region with some sportsmen from far away America several years before.

As they danced the visitors broke into the fragments of a wild sailor's chorus.

When they had finished, the Newfoundlander, a tall, tough, red-faced whaler, drank again from his flask and strode to the shore. His bulky body reeled unsteadily.

"Come on up—bring 'er in—hurry up! Gawd, but you'r' blazin' slow!"

Ootah and his companions landed. Tugging at the leather lines they drew the walrus one by one from the water to the ice. In these monstrous palpitating black bodies were tons of food and fuel. Without wasting time, they fell to their task and dressed the animals. Meanwhile sleds were brought from the tents and the masses of steaming meat and blubber were loaded. While the natives were thus busily engaged, the half-drunken Newfoundlander strode about uttering great oaths. The strangers' dogs, attracted by the meat, with shrill howling descended to the ice and surrounded the sled-loads of blubber. Ootah seized an oar and beat them away.

"What the hell d'ye mean," the Newfoundlander demanded. "Youh'd beat our dogs? Eh? Get away, damn youh!" He lifted his fist above Ootah. His face purpled, Ootah raised his lithe body, his muscles quivered like drawn rubber. His black eyes flashed proud defiance.

"Youh'd fight me, eh?—youh defy me, youh damn candle-suckin' heathen!"

His hand descended. Beyond, the drum beaters ceased, the dancers turned—a surprised cry went up.

Ootah drew hack, his face flushed. There was a red spot on his cheek where the white man's fist had struck. He felt a sense of momentary terror. The white men's methods of fighting were unfamiliar to the natives. A blow from the fist is a thing unknown among them. Ootah drew away—the bullying Newfoundlander followed.

“Youh’d beat our dogs, eh? Well, I’ll show youh, youh oily, tallow-eatin’ husky!”

He called the dogs, and stooping to the treasured mass of blubber threw a great mass to the howling animals.

“Ha! ha! ha! guess youh thought youh were smart, eh?” A second team of dogs, released from their tethering, came wildly dashing shoreward. The whaler seized another mass of meat and flung it to the animals.

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Ootah felt a flush of fierce indignation rise within him. His food for the winter, whereby he hoped to win Annadoah, that which might keep away the wolves of starvation, was being wantonly wasted. He saw his companions cowering at the sight of the white man—he drew himself erect. He saw the Newfoundlander turn and shout to his companions on the shore. Ootah thought of the saying, “Strike thy enemy when his back is turned.” He seized a heavy harpoon handle, made of a great narwhal tusk, and swinging it high struck the Newfoundlander a terrific blow on the head. He fell senseless to the earth, his face bleeding. Half stunned he tried to struggle to his feet, but Ootah leaped upon him, and, as was ethical in the native method of fighting, trampled him into insensibility. The man lay unconscious, his face bleeding effusively.

Without a word Ootah continued loading his share of the game onto his sleds. Attracted by the attack, the other members of the trading party descended and surrounded the fallen man.

“Nice trick, eh?” laughed one. “Sam got his all right. ’Minds him right for being so damned fresh.” They surveyed Ootah. “Slick little devil,” one said, handing Ootah his gun.

“Take it, son,” he said, with maudlin magnanimity. “You’ve got nerve!”

Ootah smiled bashfully, and shook his head in quiet refusal.

The half-drunken traders, laughing at what they considered a clever trick, carried their companion into one of the tents and poured brandy into his mouth. Then they left him lying alone, half sodden, and returned to the shore. Some watched the natives working, while others clasped the native maidens in their arms and danced. Half afraid of the whites, flattered by their attentions, and extremely embarrassed, the little women jumped and danced in the visitors’ arms.

Papik finally drew his single sledge load of walrus toward his tent. He had been rejected repeatedly, but now—with a load of blubber—he knew he could not afford to miss the opportunity of seeking a wife.

“Ahningnetty! Ahningnetty!” he hailed a chubby maiden who, breaking from the arms of one of the white men, was seen running toward her shelter.

“What wouldst thou, Papik?” she called.

“Papik would speak with thee. *Ookiah* (winter) comes, and his teeth are sharp. They will bite thee with pangs of hunger, and the meat Papik brings will make joyful Papik’s wife.”

Ahningnetty, summoning some of the other maidens, surveyed Papik’s load of blubber.



“Truly, as he saith, there is little food, and happy will be Papik’s wife,” said one.

“But when thy blubber is gone with what shalt thou provide her?” asked Ahningnetty.

“Perchance the bears will come,” Papik said. “And skillful is Papik’s hand with the lance.”

“But thy hand is long, Papik, and long fingers soon lose their skill.”

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Ahningnetty dubiously shook her head.

“But thou art chubby—yea,” said Papik admiringly—“thou art fat as the mother bears after a fat summer, and thy body is warm; it giveth heat; Papik would give thee food, and thou shalt keep him warm during the long winter.”

The maiden smiled delightedly. For, as Papik indicated, whereas a man may admire a slimmer beauty during the summer, when the long night comes a maiden fat and chubby is a wife to be prized.

“But alas, thy nose is long, Papik,” she said, shaking her head.

And the others chorused:

“Long nose, short life! Long nose—short life! Long nose—short life!” In anger Papik struck the offending member, and drawing his sledge after him proceeded toward his tent.

Assisted by a number of the natives, Ootah, smiling, exultant, drew five sled-loads of blubber up over the ice toward Annadoah’s tent. With their comparatively meagre portions the others followed. To Annadoah Ootah meant to show the spoils of his quest. To her he desired to present the greater portion of the riches he had by his prowess secured. Here was meat to serve them during the long winter, and in that region the catch was a priceless fortune. Surely Annadoah could not refuse him now. He had proved himself beyond question the chief hunter of the tribe. His eyes filled, his temples excitedly throbbed. He felt a greater joy than that the natives feel when the sun dawns after the long night. In his heart pulsed the sweet song of spring’s first ineffable bird.

Not far from Annadoah’s tent he paused. About him the natives, wondering, admiring, had gathered. He turned to them; he felt a strength, a dignity, an assertion he had never experienced before. His voice rose in a happy, ingenuously proud chant of exultation:

“From the bosom of *Nerrvik*, queen of the sea, have I not brought food for the long winter; yea, have I not for many moons sought to win in the chase that I might claim Annadoah? Annadoah! Annadoah!”

“Yea, that thou mightest claim Annadoah! Thou art the strongest hunter of the tribe,” the natives rejoicingly chorused.

“Did I not win in the muscle-tapping games?” he sang. “Did I not speed the arrow as none other—did I not speed the arrows as the birds fly?”



“Yea,” they replied, “thou didst speed the arrow with the skill of the happy dead playing in the aurora—over the earth as the birds fly didst thou send the arrows. Strong is thy arm, Ootah.”

Not far away some of the natives, joining in the chorus, began beating drums. The white men hilariously drank from bottles and joined in the merry dances.

“Did I not call the walrus and seal from the sea—as none other? Have I not lured the caribou from their hidden lair? Have I not enticed the birds, the foxes, and the bear by my calls—as none other of the tribes?”

In succession Ootah uttered imitations of the calls of the walrus bulls, the female caribou, and cries of the various birds.

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"Have I not held converse with the animals of the land, the birds of the air, and shall I not one day perchance comb the hair of *Nerrvik* in the sea!"

The drums beat more loudly; the dancers hopped and leaped. The chorus replied:

"Thou lurest the walrus and seal from the sea, thou enticest the caribou, *ahmingmah* and birds unto thee! Thou hast learned the language of nature, and the happy spirits are kind to thee! Marvellous is thy power, Ootah."

And in the chorus, deep, hoarse, sneeringly ironical rang the words of Maisanguaq:

"Marvellous is thy power, Ootah," and his low bitter laughter followed.

The white men began to sing as they danced with the chubby women. In couples they rocked to and fro.

"Have I not killed of all the birds of the air, the animals of the land and sea! Have I not observed the customs of the august dead? Have I done aught to bring misfortune to the tribe?"

In spontaneous recognition of his pre-eminence the young men freely yielded Annadoah. Only Maisanguaq felt bitter.

Ootah summoned his helpers and the sleds of blubber were drawn to the immediate entrance of Annadoah's tent. He seemed to step upon air. His heart bounded.

"Annadoah! Annadoah!" he called. "Ootah waits thee. Ootah hath brought thee treasure from the depths of the sea. Strong is the arm and brave is the heart of Ootah when the arm strikes and the heart beats with the thought of thee."

Seeing him there, the natives ceased dancing. The white men, curious, drew near the tent.

As he stood there, his head erect, proud, expectant, he became conscious of a sudden ominous silence on the part of his companions. Some distance away the women were whispering to one another, and above, in the sky, circled a black guillemot.

"Annadoah," he softly called.

Only the hawk replied.

"Annadoah, I bring thee my love, as constant as my shadow! I bring thee riches! Ootah would give thy couch new furs and caress thee."

From the brown, weather worn sealskin tent came the murmurous sound of voices. Ootah heard the voice of Annadoah—and that of another.

The black bird in the sky screamed.

Not far distant in the tent of the *angakoq* Ootah heard the low disquieting sound of a drum beaten in some malevolent incantation.

His heart sank as heavily as a dead walrus sinks in the sea.

Something stifled him. Then the flap of the tent parted and Annadoah stepped forth, her head tossed haughtily, her beautiful eyes flashing.

“Get hence,” she said. “Thou art a boy, thy tongue is that of a boy. Thou art soft—thou hast the heart of a woman.”

“Annadoah . . .” Ootah’s voice wailed. The stretch of shore seemed to heave and writhe. He put out his hands as if to ward off a blow.

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Behind Annadoah, at the door of the tent, the form of a man stooped. As he emerged, Ootah saw he was taller than Annadoah's tent. His shoulders were broad and massive. His face, bronzed by the burning sun, was like tanned leather, hard, wrinkled; his expression was as grim as graven stone. His large blue eyes glittered with the coldness of flint. His hair and long curling moustache were blond. Ootah recognized "Olafaksoah"—Olaf, the great white trader—whom he had seen two seasons before at a southern village. He was noted for his brutality and hard bargaining.

"What's all the noise about?" he growled. His voice was deep and gruff.

Ootah staggered back.

"Annadoah, Annadoah," he moaned softly, supporting himself on the upstander of his loaded sled.

Olafaksoah strode forward with great steps, scowling. He critically surveyed the loads of blubber and gleaming walrus tusks.

"Good haul, boy—good haul! Game's been pretty scarce all along the coast. It's lucky we got here in time, eh, comrades? What'll you take"—he turned to Ootah—"I don't know your name." He spoke in broken Eskimo.

"Ootah," Annadoah whispered, "that is his name. Ha-ha, thou callest him a boy."

Ootah winced.

Olafaksoah, with heavy strides, passed down the line of sledges. Turning to his men, he called:

"Bring the junk."

A sled of matches, needles, tea, biscuits, knives, tin cups, a few hatchets, and several guns and cases of ammunition were brought. While these were unloaded a half-dozen eager natives hastened into their tents and hurriedly brought out their portions of the precious preserved skins and ivories of the meagre summer hunt. Clamorous, insistent, they presented these to Olafaksoah. They clustered around him so that he could not walk. Ootah watched as the bargaining began. He saw Annadoah clinging near the white trader. A number of the white men began dickering down the line with Arnaluk.

"Load blubber—one tin cup—box black powder."

Arnaluk shook his head. Olafaksoah cuffed him with his fist. The timid native did not have the courage to resent this brutality.



“What d’ye want, you greedy savage—two boxes matches!”

“Two boxes matches—one box shooting fire—one tin cup.”

Still he could not be persuaded to part with the precious meat. Olafaksoah swore and shook his fists. Fearful of offending the stranger, the women joined in and shrieked at Arnaluk, urging him to consent.

Unprotesting, he let them draw away his sled of blubber and tusks. He had a tin cup, matches and cartridges—which he could not eat.

“Rotten lot,” Olafaksoah said to Papik, surveying his single catch of a young walrus. Papik winced at this reproach.

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"Two boxes fire powder," said Olafaksoah. Papik refused. Olafaksoah browbeat him in a high voice. Finally he kicked him. "One case needles." He called Papik's mother and chucked her under the chin. She smiled at him, awed, flattered, half afraid. Papik parted with his load for a box of ammunition and a few needles. Meanwhile the bartering went on for the hoarded wealth of the tribe. Eager to precede one another, the natives rushed to and fro, bringing armfuls of ivories and furs from their tents. In exchange for stuff of trifling value the white men secured, by their method of threatening bargaining, loads of blue and white fox skins, caribou hides, and walrus and narwhal tusks which the natives had previously preserved. One man parted with five tusks, worth as many hundred dollars, for two gaudy handkerchiefs for his wife. Another gave several exquisite fox skins for a plug of tobacco. When they demanded more biscuits, tobacco or matches than were offered, Olafaksoah bullied them with threats. Yet they hung about him, eager for the almost worthless barter, for the time being valuing a box of crackers and allotments of tea more than their substantial supply of walrus meat. Finally the leader paused before Ootah's loaded sledges.

"What'll you take—a gun, fire-powder?"

Ootah shook his head.

Olafaksoah had recourse to his stock-in-trade of oaths, and told his men to bring a gun, two hatchets, ammunition.

Ootah was still obdurate. The natives' voices arose murmurously, for they felt it was not well to offend the strangers. During future seasons they might not come again, as they threatened, with ammunition and guns. This the natives feared as a calamity.

"Bring some crackers—tea," Olafaksoah paused. Ootah watched Annadoah nestling near the "white trader." He had forgotten all about the sledges of meat. He did not hear Olafaksoah. He still continued shaking his head.

"I'll be liberal with you, son," Olafaksoah indulgently increased his offer.

Six more boxes of ammunition, more tea and crackers were added to the pile.

Ootah again mechanically shook his head. Amid all of those about him, he saw only the face of Annadoah, golden as sunlight and pink as the lichen blossoms of spring. Through her open *ahttee*, or fur garment, he saw her breasts as tender as those of eider-feathered birds. The sight of her melted his heart, the streams of spring were loosened within him. Yet, with an agonized pang, he observed her gaze adoringly and eagerly at the tall stranger's hard face; he saw her quiver at the sound of his harsh, gruff voice. Olafaksoah's brutal masculinity for the time dominated the shrinking femininity of the girl. Ootah saw Annadoah beseechingly, almost fawningly, touch the white chief's horny hand and nestle it close against her cheek.



Olaf, the trader, was oblivious to this.

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"Greedy, eh? Well, we need the meat! If we're goin' to stay here to chance hunting our dogs got to be fed!" More supplies were brought. Still Ootah did not speak.

The white chief presently gazed hard at Ootah. Then his eyes brightened with amused mirth. He saw the despairing, yearning gaze of the youth toward the girl he had selected to favor.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed good-naturedly. "I see. I've keel-hauled your Romeo stunt, eh? Want the stuff?" He kicked the supplies interrogatively.

Ootah sadly shook his head. He dully heard the vulgar gibes of the white men and the mocking laughter of Maisanguaq.

One of the natives began beating a drum. Ootah giddily caught an evanescent vision of women dancing with reeling traders. He heard Olafaksoah as he entered Annadoah's tent laughing heartily.

The thought of Annadoah in the embrace of the big blond man, of her face pressed to his in the white men's strange kiss of abomination, aroused in Ootah a sense of violation, an instinctive repugnance akin to the horror a native feels for the dead. All the ardent hopes of his life for many moons had centered upon his bringing the results of a successful hunt to Annadoah and asking her to share his igloo, to become his wife. And now, in his hour of high victory, after everyone had acclaimed him, he was crushed.

A fervid fever seemed to take fire in his forehead and flush his veins, yet his heart was colder than ice, his hands and feet were cold. He felt as though someone were strangling him; he felt giddy, suddenly sick. At that moment he was too stunned to realize fully the blighting tragedy which had annihilated his hopes.

Nearby in her tent he heard Annadoah's voice, sweet as the song of buntings.

"Olafaksoah, Olafaksoah," he heard her murmur tenderly, "thou art a great man. Thou art strong. Thy arms hurt me, thy hands make me ache." Then Ootah heard the man's hard voice and Annadoah's repressed murmurs of mingled pain and delight. The day became black about him. He felt that he must get away; a wild madness to run seized him. He felt the impetus of the winds in his feet. Turning on his heel, his face to the northwest, he fled.

In the sky overhead the black guillemot screamed.

### III

*"Her lips are red—red as a wound in the throat of a deer."*

For seven weeks Ootah lived in the mountains. The violence of his bitterness and grief scared away the wild hawks in whose high nesting place he found shelter. At the door of that icy cave above the clouds, he called upon the spirits of the mountains for vengeance.

*"loh—ioh!"* he wailed. "Spirits of the glaciers, lift your hands—strike! Descend and smite Olafaksoah! carry him to the narwhals; let the whales feed upon his body. May the soul of his hands, and the soul of his feet, and the soul of his heart, and the soul of his head struggle with one another. May he never rest! *loh—ioh—ioh—ioh!"*

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The boom of sliding avalanches answered him. The sound was like that of muffled thunder. Wild cries arose from the mountain birds. They sounded demoniacal in the taut air.

Far below soared the black vultures of the arctic. In a fit of anger Ootah shook his arms frantically at the shrieking birds. For they seemed to mock him.

"Spirits of the clouds," he wailed, "*loh—ioh—ioh-h!* Ye that wander to the south! Ye that fly to the north! Ye that struggle hither and yon, from the east to the west. Bear my curses to Annadoah. Tell her that the heart of Ootah is bitter. Tell her Ootah would that her voice become as harsh as the winds of *ookiah* (winter). Tell her Ootah would that her face become withered as frozen lands in winter. Tell her Ootah would that her heart rot within her, that the wild beasts feed upon her breasts. *loh-h—ioh-h-h!* Sing unto her the curses of Ootah, and may she not rest!"

Below him the clouds, burning with vivid fire, moved in the varying strata of air currents—to Ootah they were conveying his messages. The sun, circling low about the horizon, shifted its rays, and within the nebulous cloud-masses in the valleys, fountains of prism light played. In this radiant phantasmagoria messages in turn came to Ootah.

He saw the figuration of Annadoah's tent, and within, reclining upon her couch, the form of Annadoah. At the mirage picture of the beauteous and beloved maiden his heart throbbed violently. In the high altitude he found respiration difficult, and now he almost suffocated for lack of breath. He felt a pang at his heart as he saw the white chief enter the tent. The winds wailed sibilant and agonizing messages into the ears of Ootah:

"Thou hast cursed Annadoah. Foolish Ootah! For thou lovest Annadoah! Yea, her voice is as sweet as the sound of melting streams in springtime. Lo, she whispers into the ears of Olafaksoah: 'Thou art strong, Olafaksoah; Ootah hath the heart of a woman. Thou hurtest me, Olafaksoah; thy arms bruise me, thy hands make me ache; but thou art strong, thou art great, Olafaksoah; the heart of Annadoah trembles for joy of thee.' Thus saith Annadoah!"

And in the winds Ootah heard Olafaksoah's coarse laughter.

"*loh—ioh-h-h!*" Ootah moaned.

"Thou wouldst that Annadoah's face be blighted as frozen land in winter," laughed the winds, mockingly. "Thou dotard Ootah! Thou lovest the face of Annadoah. It is very fair. It is golden as the radiant face of *Sukh-eh-nukh*. Her eyes are as bright as stars in the winter night. Oh-h-h, Ootah! Into the eyes of Olafaksoah Annadoah gazes, yea, she faints with joy, thou silly Ootah!"

"*loh—ioh-h-h!*" wailed Ootah.

“Her lips are red, Ootah—red as a wound in the throat of a deer.”

And in the cloud vision Ootah saw the blond chief take the head of Annadoah between his two palms and press her lips fiercely upon his own. Ootah's heart trembled as water.

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*"Ioh—io-h-h!"* he sobbed, and tears coursed from his eyes.

The constant haunting thought of Annadoah's face pressed close to that of Olafaksoah somehow made his face burn and his bosom ache.

"Ootah, Ootah, thou wouldst that Annadoah's heart might wither, yea, as a frozen bird in the blast of winter, foolish Ootah, who lovest Annadoah! Soft beats the heart of Annadoah upon the bosom of Olafaksoah; yea, for very joy it flutters as a mating bird in summer time. Thou wouldst that beasts might rend her little breasts—safe are they now in the embrace of the strong man from the south. Ootah! Ootah!"

Ootah wrung his hands.

"Thy curses fall dead upon the ears of Annadoah, she who hears only the voice of Olafaksoah."

In the winds Ootah heard the whisper of Olafaksoah in the dim tent. He heard Annadoah's rapturously murmurous replies.

"Olafaksoah shareth the igloo of Annadoah," whispered the winds suggestively. And Ootah knew the Eskimo custom.

Annadoah, by sharing her simple habitation with him, had by choice formally become the wife of Olafaksoah. And according to the unwritten law of ages she was now as much his property as his dogs. He might abuse her, and desert—and thus divorce—her whenever he chose. She might, at his pleasure, be loaned as a wife to another, and in this she would have no word. Or she might be given away, and dare not protest. Ootah felt that she was lost to him irretrievably.

For hours Ootah stood at the mouth of his mountain eyrie in dumb agony. All that he suffered it is beyond me to tell you. For days he crouched there, motionless, stark dumb, every fibre of him aching.

In the valleys below, as the hours of the burning days and golden nights passed, the sunlight constantly shifted. In the palpitating mists Ootah read of the days' doings at the camp. He saw the white men bartering for the meagre remaining furs and ivories gathered by the tribe. With the natives he saw them going on long fruitless hunts. Finally one day he witnessed them harpoon a half dozen walrus on the sea. They laboriously towed the catch ashore and rejoiced over the unexpected wealth of oil and blubber. But the white men claimed the entire prize, loaded their extra sledges, liberally fed their dogs, and doled out but a penurious allotment of meat and blubber to the tribe.

But in all this Ootah had no concern. Day by day the cloud-swimming valleys below blazed with crimson-shot conflagrations . . . Ootah knew the dead were lighting their

monstrous camp fires—but even in this he found no interest. Daily he became fainter and fainter from lack of food, and daily, constantly, the winds whispered:

“The mouth of Annadoah is very red—red as a wound in the throat of a deer . . .” and then sibilantly—“softly beats the heart of Annadoah against the bosom of Olafaksoah.” Then every fibre of him burned and ached.

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One day the radiant valley darkened . . . Out of the sky, as if rising from worlds beyond the horizon, a cyclopean phantasm of clouds took form. Rising higher and higher toward the zenith, ominous and sinister, it gathered substance and spread across the glowing heavens like a film of smoke . . . It took upon itself the awful semblance of a mighty thing, half-beast, half-man. As if to strike, it slowly lifted the likeness of a gigantic arm shrouded with tattered clouds . . . The baleful shade shut off the sunlight from the earth . . . Ootah's heart quailed . . . Terror gripped him . . . For he saw—what few men had ever beheld—the shadow of *Perdlugssuaq*, the Great Evil. Finally he found voice.

“O most dreadful of the *tornarssuit* (spirits),” he called, grovelling on his knees, “smite me! Smite me!”

During the tragic days of his isolation the full realization of all that he had lost had come to Ootah. He fed upon the memory of Annadoah's face. He remembered how, with the vision of that face before him, he had excelled in the hunts and games, and for many moons had felt confident of winning her. He dwelt for hours upon her stunning rejection, of how she clung to the white man; he visioned with heart corroding bitterness her days with Olafaksoah, and he burned with unnameable anguished pangs as he conjured her nights. Now, the violence of his grief exhausted, he invoked death.

Expectant, fearful, with closed eyes, he waited.

In the valley a storm gathered, and the low whine of the winds Ootah believed to be the breath of the descending terror. The air became unbearably colder as the dreaded creator of death, darkness and ice descended. The taut suspense was terrible. Finally Ootah reached the limits of human endurance—merciful unconsciousness blotted out the long agony.

When he recovered the storm had passed. Scores of birds, driven against the rocks by the terrible winds, lay dead at the entrance of the cave. Surely the Great Evil had struck, but he lived. Hunger stirred within him and he fell upon the birds.

Later he sought game in the lower valleys. He had lances and bows and arrows with him. He found an inland vale, where a patch of green grass was exposed despite a recent fall of snow—there a herd of musk oxen grazed. He drew his bow of bone and sinew. One fell after the first quiver of his arrow. His skill was marvellous. He had struck a vital spot. He finished his killing of the fallen animal with a lance. He feasted upon the raw meat, and carried away with him up to his eyrie enough to last for many days.



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The sun meanwhile sank lower and lower; there were long hours of twilight; snow storms came; the cold increased. Ootah felt the first whip of approaching winter. Ootah's spirit melted. Disquieting messages came in the cold winds and darkening clouds. His heart beat quickly at what the frightened birds told him. Olafaksoah, they said, struck Annadoah. As she lay on the ground he kicked her. In the snow-driven wind Ootah heard the echo of her heart-broken weeping. He revoked the curses he had uttered; he cursed his own weakness whereby he had invoked harm to her. Then in the winds Ootah heard the beat of drums. In the clouds he saw the white men dancing with the Eskimo maidens. Day after day they danced—day after day Annadoah wept. Olafaksoah had become wearied. Disappointed in the failure to secure greater supplies, he vented his impatience upon Annadoah. Cruelly he bruised her little hands, he mocked and jeered her when she pleaded with him. In fits of anger he often struck her. Finally, one day, in the cloud phantasmagoria, Ootah saw Olafaksoah reeling from the strange red-gold water the white men drank. He entered Annadoah's tent. She crouched, terrified, in a corner. With him were three of his rough blond companions. They staggered—and in the winds they sang. Olafaksoah pointed consentingly to Annadoah. One of the men attempted to embrace her. Then she rose defiantly and did what few Eskimo women ever dared. She smote the man's leering face and, sobbing, sank on her knees before Olafaksoah. He roared out things the Eskimos do not understand. "*Goddmighty!*" and more awful words. His fist descended. In the winds Ootah heard Annadoah scream and call his name.

That day he descended from the mountains.

Much that Ootah conjured in his mind, or imagined he saw in the clouds, really happened. Whether he actually sensed these things by some wonderful power of clairvoyance, which the natives themselves believe—or whether he just accurately guessed what occurred, I do not know. But of this I can tell:

By that strange contradictoriness of the feminine—much the same all the world over—by that inherent, inborn desire of subjugation to the brutal and domineering in the male, Annadoah had given herself unreservedly to Olafaksoah. At the sound of his firm step she trembled. His hard, brutal embraces caused her heart to flutter with joy. At first he told her he would take her with him to the south. Annadoah believed him. Then he changed his mind, and said she must wait until the next season for him. She silently acquiesced. She called upon all her simple arts to please him. Carefully she oiled her face and made the golden skin soft by rubbing it with the fur of animals; with a broken comb, left with her mother years before by a party of explorers, she combed her long, black and wonderful hair and elaborately arranged it behind her. About her

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forehead she bound a narrow fillet of fine, furry hares' skin. She donned new garments; her *ahttee* was made of the delicate skins of birds, her hood of white fox hides. To all this Olafaksoah seemed blind; at times, with coarse, half-maudlin tenderness, he caressed her, called her his "little girl" and promised to "come back next spring." But Annadoah was useful to him otherwise.

During the days when Olafaksoah and his men were hunting or gathering furs and ivory at nearby villages along the coast, Annadoah sewed skins into garments for Olafaksoah and his men. Sometimes she went with Olafaksoah on his expeditions and employed her coquetry upon the susceptible men of the migrating tribes to secure bargains for him. For a box of matches she would cajole from her people ivories worth hundreds of dollars. She persuaded them to rob themselves of the walrus meat and blubber they had gathered for winter and give them to her master in exchange for tin cups and ammunition, all of which would be useless when the night came on. To Ootah she gave no thought until one day the white man struck her. As he vented his rage at not securing more riches upon her during the ensuing days, her heart more and more instinctively turned to the youth "with the heart of a woman" whom she had rejected. When Olafaksoah brought his companions to the tent her soul rose in rebellion. In the camp there was an orgy. None of the married men, who for a slight consideration were willing to permit their wives to dance with the traders, objected to the drunken carousal. Ribald songs sounded strange in this region of the world. Yet after Olafaksoah had kicked her and left her lying in the tent, high above the sound of the sailors' doggerel songs, Annadoah frantically called aloud:

"Ootah! Ootah!"

For a long time she lay in a stupor. Her face was bleeding. When she regained consciousness the white chief and his men had left. They had taken with them all available furs, ivories and provisions in the village.

At the door of her tent Annadoah stood, dry-eyed, her hair dishevelled. To the south she yearningly extended her arms. Her heart still ached toward the man who had lied to her and deserted her. She was left, a divorced woman, alone among her people, with no one to care for her during the long winter night.

As she stood there the light of the descending sun, which was now far below the rim of the horizon, paled. Driven by a frigid wind, howling raucously from the mountains, great snow clouds piled along the sky line. Out at sea the tips of the waves became capped—leprous white arms seemed reaching hopelessly for help from the depths of the sea. The sky blackened. The increasing gusts tore at the frail tents. The wolf-dogs crouched low to the ground and whined. A tremor of anxiety filled the hearts of the tribe. Presently the clouds were torn to shreds and whipped furiously over the sky. In the

thickening grey gloom Annadoah watched the men of the tribe fastening their sleds and belongings to the earth . . . mere dark shadows. Above her tent, tossed by the wind in its eddying flight, a raven screamed.

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Annadoah finally entered and threw herself upon the rocky floor of her dwelling. As the furies were loosed outside her voice rose and fell with the wailing grief and wrath of the wind. “Olafaksoah! Olafaksoah!” But only the hoarse evil call of the black bird answered during lulls in the storm. And Annadoah heard it, with a sinking of her cold heart, as the voice of fate.

### IV

*“Do the gulls that freeze to death in winter fly in springtime?” she asked, simply. . . ‘The teeth of the wolves are in my heart’ . . .”*

Desolate and alone, Annadoah walked along a crevice in the land-adhering ice of the polar sea.

The prolonged grey evening of the arctic was resolving into the long dark, and the Eskimo women, as is their custom at this time of the year, had gathered along the last lane of open water—which writhed like a sable snake over the ice—to celebrate that period of mourning which precedes the dreadful night, and to give their last messages and farewells to the unhappy and disconsolate souls of the drowned, who, when the ice closed, should for many moons be imprisoned in the sea.

An unearthly twilight, not unlike that dim greenish luminescence which filters through emerald panes in the high nave of a great cathedral, lay upon the earth. The forms of the mourning women were strangely magnified in the curious semi-luminance and, as their bodies moved to and fro in the throes of their grief, they might have been, for all they seemed, shadowy ghosts bemoaning their sins in some weird purgatory of the dead.

In the northern sky a faint quivering streak of light, resembling the reflection of far away lightning, played—the first herald of the aurora. To the south a gash of reddish orange, like the tip of a bloody-gleaming knife-blade, severed the thick purple clouds. There was a faint reflected glimmer on the unfrozen southern sea.

Snow had fallen on the land, igloos had been built. Over the village and against the frozen promontories loomed a majestic yet fearful shadowy shape—that of a giant thing, swathed in purple, its arm uplifted threateningly—the spectre of suffering and famine.

This wraith, brought into being by the gathering blackness in the gulches and crevices of the mountains, filled the hearts of the natives with unwonted foreboding.

Profound silence prevailed.

Already the sea for miles along the shore was frozen. The open water lay at so great a distance from the land that the sound of the waves was stilled. The birds had

disappeared. Even the voices of the sinister black guillemots and ravens were heard no more.

Annadoah's sobs rose softly over the ice.

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“Spirit of my mother, thou who wast carried by the storm-winds into the sea! Hear me! Annadoah loved one Olafaksoah, a chief from the south; for him the heart of Annadoah became very great within her. And now the heart of Annadoah aches. For he hath gone to the south. And not until the birds sing in spring will he return. And Annadoah is left alone. *Ookiah* comes with the lash of wicked walrus thongs, and there is no blubber buried outside Annadoah’s shelter. Neither is there oil. And the couch of Annadoah is cold—so very cold. Yea, listen, spirit of my mother, and bring Olafaksoah back, that he may bruise Annadoah’s hands, that he may cast Annadoah to the ground and crush Annadoah if he wills with his feet! Io-oh-h!”

She moaned this in a curious sing-song sort of chant. Over the ice the voices of the other women rose, and each, to her departed relatives and friends who had died in the sea, told about the important incidents of the year and the misgivings for the winter, in a varying crooning song.

Annadoah passed Tongiguaq, who jumped and danced in a frenzy of grief. Tongiguaq had lost three children; two had been drowned, and a new-born baby, three months before, was born maimed. According to the custom of the people, a fatherless defective child is doomed to death. So rigorous is their struggle to survive, so limited the means of existence, that a tribe cannot bear the burden of a single unnecessary life. So in keeping with this Lycurgean law, worked out by instinct after the stern experience of ages, a rope had been twisted about the neck of Tongiguaq’s baby and it had been cast into the sea.

All this the weeping woman told in her chant to the departed. When she saw Annadoah approaching, she paused.

“Here cometh the she-wolf that hath devoured the food of our tribe,” she wailed, intense bitterness in her voice. “Yea, by her cajolery she persuaded our men to give unto the traders from the south our precious food. And now we starve! Yea, she hath robbed us. She is as the breath of winter, as the blackness of the night.”

Along the line of wailing women Tongiguaq’s reproach was suddenly taken up. As Annadoah walked by them they did a strange thing. The natives fear their dead—they never even mention their names. For possessed of great power are the dead, and they can wreak, as befits their moods, unlimited good or ill. Believing they could persuade the dead to array themselves against Annadoah, the women took up Tongiguaq’s denunciation and reviled Annadoah in their weird chant to the departed. Annadoah wrung her hands and wept. Bitter and jealous because the white chief had selected her during his stay, their bosoms full of the harbored ill will and envy of years because she had been the most desired by the young men of the tribes, the women now invoked curses upon the deserted and unprotected girl through the medium of the incorporeal powers.

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The dread of it filled poor Annadoah's heart. She quailed at the bitter execrations called upon her head. Instinctively her hand reached through the opening of her *ahttee* and she clutched at a piece of old half-decayed skin. This was a remnant of her mother's father's clothing, a amulet given her as a child, when saliva from the maternal grandfather's mouth had been rubbed on her lips, and which she believed protected her from ill fortune.

"Io-oooh! io-oh!" Annadoah moaned in pain.

The women forgot their own tragedies. They forgot the messages they were imparting to the dead. Directly they might not be able to invoke any effective curse upon Annadoah; but well they knew, indeed, the awful power of the disembodied. And to the dead in the cold shuddering sea they told how Annadoah had played with the men, how she had betrayed them to the white traders, cajoling them to rob themselves of food, and how, because of her, famine now confronted the tribe; they told of the long devotion of Ootah, the desired of all the maidens, and how Annadoah had rejected him.

Possessed by a frantic contagion of released rage, their voices rose and fell in a frightful chanting malediction. In the weird gloom their vague forms leaped about, their arms writhing like black things in the air as they called the names of their individual dead to hear.

As their voices approached a crescendo they danced with increasing hysteria. Some shrieked and fell to the ice groaning, their bodies twisting in convulsions. Others laughed madly—laughed at the dreadful horrors with which the dead would smite Annadoah. Losing all control they were carried away by their delirious malevolence; their voices reached a high shrill pitch. Their arms clawed the air. Through the dead curses were invoked upon Olafaksoah, the great trader, who had cowed them and robbed them. They begged of the *tornarssuit* that he might be rended by wolves, that his body might rot unburied, and that the spirits of his limbs might be severed and be compelled to wander in restless torment forever. They called anathemas upon his unborn children; and of their dead, who should be imprisoned in darkness in the depths of the sea, they furiously invoked upon Annadoah's offspring the curse of the long night . . . Their voices shuddered over the ice as they demanded that most dreadful of all dreaded evils—that Annadoah's child might be born as blind to light and the joy of light as the dead in the sea.

Annadoah crouched in frantic terror upon the ice. From the Greenland highlands a moaning echo answered the women. To Annadoah the hill spirits had joined in cursing her—all nature seemed to upbraid her. Tremblingly, with a last lingering hope, she crept on her knees to the edge of the lane of lapping black water. She whispered a pathetic plea to *Nerrvik*, the gentle queen of the sea, whose hand had been severed by those she loved, and who felt great tenderness for men. Annadoah listened.

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"Thou art cold of heart to him who loves thee, Annadoah," a voice seemed to whisper in the lapping waves. "Thou art beautiful as the sun, but as *Sukh-eh-nukh* shall thou be eternally sad. Thou shalt lose because of thine own self the greatest of all treasures. That is fate."

Far out on the open ocean spectral fire-flecks flashed like mast-lights on swinging ships. These mysterious jack o' lanterns of the arctic are caused by the crashing together of icebergs covered with phosphorescent algae.

To Annadoah the dead were lighting their oil lamps for the long night. As she watched the weird illuminations a paralyzing fear of the vague unknown world beyond the gate of death filled her, and her blood ran cold. She felt utterly crushed, utterly helpless, and utterly deserted, both in the affection of the living and that of the dead. She uttered a despairing cry and fell back in a cold faint. The women drew about as if to leap upon her.

A momentary wavering of the northern lights revealed her face grown sad and wan. The women stood still, however, for approaching in the distance they heard a man's voice calling:

"Avatarpay—avatarpay,  
akorgani—akorgani,  
anagpungah . . ."

Those mystic words, believed to give magic speed to the one who utters them, came in the well known tones of Ootah. A joyous cry went up from the women.

When Annadoah opened her eyes Ootah was bending over her.

"I was held in the mountains, Annadoah. The hill spirits were at war. The snow came, the storm spirits loosed the ice. I fell into an abyss . . . I lay asleep . . . for very long. It seemed like many moons. I could barely walk when I awoke. I had no food. I became very weak, but I uttered the *serrit* (magic formula;), those words of the days when man's sap was stronger, and the good winds bore me hither."

A mystical silver light had risen over the horizon, and in the soft glimmer Annadoah saw that the face of Ootah was haggard and drawn. His voice was weak.

"The sun hath gone," murmured Ootah. "The long night comes. Ootah heard thy cry and has come to care for thee, Annadoah."

His voice was a caress. His face sank dangerously near the face of the girl. She panted into full consciousness and struggled to free herself. Ootah helped her to her feet.



“The winter comes . . . and famine,” muttered Annadoah, hopelessly. She pointed to the gaunt, hollow-eyed shadow, empurpled-robed, against the frozen cliffs. “My heart is cold—I am resigned to death.”

“But I have come to give furs for thy couch,” murmured Ootah, a beseeching look in his eyes. “Thou wilt need shelter—I shall build thee an igloo. Thou wilt need food—I shall share all that I have with thee and seek more. Thou wilt need oil for heat. I shall get this for thee.”

Annadoah made a passionate gesture. A curious perverse resentment for the youth’s insistent devotion rose in her heart.

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“Nay,” she said, warding him away. “My shadow yearns only to the south . . . the far, far south.”

“Thy soul yearns to the south—forsooth, will I all the more cherish thee. Thou art frail, and the teeth of *ookiah* (winter) are sharp.”

“The teeth of *ookiah* are not so sharp as the teeth in my heart,” sobbed Annadoah.

Ootah felt a great pity for her—a pity and tenderness greater than his jealousy.

“But I shall teach thee to forget, Annadoah.”

“I cannot forget. Even as the ravens in their winter shelter dream of the summer sun, so my soul grows warm, in all my loneliness, in the memory of Olafaksoah.”

Ootah groaned with an access of misery. Frenziedly he caught her hands and pressed them. Annadoah struggled. His words beat hotly in her ears:

“But I want thee. My blood burns at the thought of thee. It is against the custom of the tribe that thou shouldst be alone. Thou must take a husband.”

“No—no,” she shook her head.

“But some one must care for thee. I love thee. Thou wilt forget Olafaksoah. Thy hurt will heal.”

Annadoah shook her head piteously.

“Do the gulls that freeze to death in winter fly in springtime?” she asked, simply.

Ootah did not reply.

“He was strong,” she murmured. “His hands bruised me. He was cruel. He hurt me. Yet he gave my heart joy. My heart is dying—dying as the birds die. I feel the teeth of the wolves in my heart.”

Ootah pointed to the women. The soft crooning of their voices reached him as they resumed the dismal dirge of their own woes.

“They hate thee,” he said. He pointed to the constellation of the Great Bear which glittered faintly in the sky. “Yonder *qiligtussat* (the barking dogs) would rend the gentle bear. Thou rememberest the old men’s tale. A woman ran away from her family. She was false at heart. The good mother bear protected her and gave her food. But yearning for her husband, she returned and to gain his favor betrayed the hiding place of the mother-bear and her young. Then the husband drove out with sledges. His dogs

attacked the bear. But they all became stars and went up into the sky. Even as the bear was good to the false woman so hast thou made clothing for those yonder, and now they would as the dogs rend thee. Thou needest a husband."

"They would be bitter to thee," she argued.

"Perchance, but I would protect thee. I love thee."

Annadoah shook her head. "The teeth of the wolves are in my heart," she said. "And I no longer care."

"Yonder *Nalagssartoq* (he who waits and listens) bends to hear thy reply." Ootah pointed to Venus, the brightest of the stars—to the Eskimos an old man who waits by a blow-hole in the heavenly icefloes and listens for the breathing of seals. "Thou wilt come to Ootah, who loves thee? Answer, Annadoah! Ootah listens."

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He soothed her little hands. A wondrous light burned in his eyes. Every fibre of his being yearned for her. But Annadoah's hands were cold, her eyes were sullenly turned away. In her heart a vague fear of him, a resentment of his very love, stirred.

"My shadow yearns to the south," she repeated pathetically. "I shall wait. Perhaps he will come as he said when the spring hunting sings." In her heart she feared that he would not.

Ootah in utter anguish dropped her hands. Annadoah sadly turned away. Falling to his knees on the ice, he covered his face with his arms. The sound of his heartbroken sobbing was drowned in the funereal chant of the women as, in a long procession, they passed near him on their way to the shore.

When he raised his head, the rim of the moon, a great quarter-disc of silver, peeped above the horizon. A mystical melancholy light flooded the gloriously gleaming desolate white world. The ice floes glistened as with the dust of diamonds. The ice covered faces of the promontories glowed with the sheen of burnished metal. The clouds became tremulous masses of argent phosphorescence. Far away the women's chants subsided. One by one they joined the men in their grotesque dances in the distant igloos. Ootah was left alone.

He gazed long upon the pearly lamp of heaven. The subtle sorrow of this world of magical moonlight filled his soul. Then the hopelessness and tragedy of all it symbolized were unfolded to him, and, extending his arms in a vague wild sympathy, in a vague wild despair, he moaned:

"Desolate and lonely moon! Oh, desolate and unhappy moon! . . . Desolate and unhappy is the heart of Ootah!"

Far away, in her shelter, Annadoah heard the sobbing voice of Ootah. And nearer, in an igloo where the men beat drums and danced, she heard the voice of Maisanguaq laughing evilly. Of late Maisanguaq had giped her with her desertion; he was bitter toward her. But nothing mattered to Annadoah. She thought of the blond man in the south, and the pleading of Ootah. As she heard his weeping, she shook her head sadly. She beat her breast and muttered over and over again:

"Do the gulls that freeze to death in winter fly in springtime?"

## V

*"What they heard was, to them all, the Voice of the Great Unknown, . . . He who made the world, created the Eternal Maiden Sukh-eh-nukh, and placed all the stars in the skies . . . Whose voice, far, far away, itself comes as the faintly remembered music of long bygone dreams preceding birth . . . And now, out of the blue-black sky, great*

*globes of swimming liquid fire floated constantly, and dispersing into feathery flakes of opal light, melted softly . . ."*

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Ootah began work on an igloo for Annadoah. None of the tribesmen had offered to do this for her, and, as only the men develop the architectural skill required to construct a snow shelter, Annadoah, until Ootah's return, was forced to continue to live in her seal-skin tent, where she suffered bitterly from the cold. His back aching, scarcely pausing to rest, Ootah constructed an icy dome of more than usual solidity. This completed, he went many miles, through the darkness, to the south, where, in the shelter of certain rocks, he knew there was much soft moss. Digging through the frozen blanket of ice he secured a quantity, and returning, made with it a soft bed for Annadoah over a tier of stones. This he covered in turn with the soft skin of caribou. Inside the immaculate house of snow he fashioned an interior tent of heavy skins to retain the heat of the oil lamps. Of his own supplies of blubber and walrus meat, which he had secretly buried early in the hunting season and which had thus escaped the rapacity of the white men, he gave more than half to Annadoah. He fixed her lamps with oil, and arranged them solicitously in positions where they would give most heat. He placed supplies in the house, and buried the rest outside so that Annadoah might readily reach them. Meanwhile Annadoah sat alone in her tent, her sad face buried in her hands, "her shadow yearning toward the south." Many of the tribe, emerging from their igloos, had paused to taunt Ootah at his labors.

"A-ha—a-ha!" they laughed. "Thinkest thou that Annadoah will let thee share her igloo when the snow closes in?" They laughed again. Ootah seriously shook his head.

"I would that Annadoah be protected from the storm," he said simply.

"A-ha—ha! No man buildeth a house wherein he may not have shelter; no man layeth a bed of soft moss whereon he doth not expect to lie. Idiot Ootah, as well mayest thou expect the willows to sprout in the long night—Annadoah thinketh naught of thee. Why seekest thou not a sensible maiden?"

"He hath given Annadoah half of his meat and fuel," the women murmured complainingly among themselves.

"He hath given her his skins; he hath thieved upon himself."

"Why hath he not taken another to wife? Verily men are few; women are many. And all gaze favorably upon Ootah."

"Yea, his arm is strong."

"There is courage in his heart."

"He feareth not the night."

"He should press his face upon the face of one who is fair; his wife should bear children."

When Annadoah passed from her tent into her new home the women scolded her bitterly. The men goodnaturedly jeered Ootah. Annadoah huddled near Ootah and gazed gratefully into his eyes. In the thought that he was there to protect her the heart of Ootah pulsed with joy. Annadoah's heart was cold. Annadoah sat inside the new little house of snow, the oil lights flickering fitfully. In the dancing shadows Annadoah saw the semblance of the form of the blond chief. Joylessly Ootah built his own home.

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And in their houses, in celebration of the fall of night, the natives continued their grotesque dances. Beating membrane drums, and singing jerky chants, they danced frenziedly, forcing a false hilarity. They felt the overwhelming approach of the dread spectre of famine. In their dances some sobbed, others passed into uncontrollable hysteria.

Ootah alone did not indulge in the fierce ceremonies. His own igloo built, day after day, night after night, he sat alone. His heart ached with the unrequited and eternal desire of all the loveless and lonely things of the world. Outside, the moon increased in fulness and soared in a low circle about the sky. The dogs crouched low on the ground, howling dismally.

During the first days of the long night the natives held a series of dog fights inside the snow and stone houses. Ordinarily Ootah would have attended these, for a dog fight is of keenest interest to a tribesman, and the Eskimos' most exciting form of sport.

To a hunter with healthy blood in his veins the dog encounter affords the same thrills as other men, in more southern lands, find in bull fights, horse racing, card playing and other games of chance. Two lovers, both desirous of a maiden, may hold a fight between their king dogs, each hoping that success may determine the girl's favor. Pieces of blubber, animal skins, ivory carvings and less valuable objects are often bet by the contestants and the onlookers.

By all logical assumptions, one might naturally suppose that the Eskimos—whose night is many months long—through many dark and rigorous ages, would have developed into a taciturn and moody people, just as the denizens of sunny climes are joyful, effervescent and pleasure loving. However, this is not so. Troublous as is their existence, they preserve until old age that playful joy of life, that carefree ignoring of danger, which we find in our children—which, alas, we lose too soon. Each day brings to them its novel delights; in their monotonous foods they find a constant variety of pleasure; in their simple games of muscle-tapping, throwing of carved ivories, and fighting of dogs they experience the exultant and exuberant fun of our schoolboys. Constant experience with jeopardous tasks has eliminated the human fear of danger, and even death, in its most tragic shapes, by long association has lost its terrors. When the long night falls, and an ominous depression makes heavy the heart of the lover or fills with anxiety the heart of the father, they turn, with a delightful spontaneity, to play.

Now great interest was aroused by the news that Papik was to fight his king dog with the magnificent brute owned by Attalaq. Both Papik and Attalaq were paying evident attentions to Ahningnetty, the chubby and ever smiling maiden, who, while she showed a certain leaning toward Papik, had misgivings as to his eligibility as a husband because of his long fingers.



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Born of noted fighters, a dog attains the position of “king” or chief dog of a team by whipping all the dogs in the team of his particular master. When he has asserted his supremacy over the dogs of his own team, he is successively set before the rulers of other teams. And by a process of elimination of those which lose, the two final victors in a village are finally aligned against one another.

In the series of fights held between the king dogs of the various teams, both Papik’s and Attalaq’s had come off with final honors. The immediate contest between the two most distinguished canines in the village was an event of exciting importance, and to the women there was a romantic zest in it, for all believed that victory would determine Ahningnetty’s favor.

At the time of the event all who could do so crowded into Attalaq’s stone house. In the centre of a tense group of onlookers the two dogs were placed before each other. They were handsome animals, with long keen noses, denoting an aristocracy of canine birth, and long shaggy coats, mottled brown and white, as soft as silk. A long line of victories lay to the credit of each.

A sharp howl announced the fight—the two lithe bodies leaped together—the air within the little circle became electric. The dogs snapped, tumbled over each other. Their sharp teeth sank into each other’s shanks. The natives cheered whenever a favorite secured an advantage. Bets were made. Papik’s eyes gleamed as he alternately watched his dog and the face of Ahningnetty as she peered interestedly over the onlookers’ shoulders. Attalaq’s countenance was grim—not a muscle moved.

Finally Attalaq’s dog, with a chagrined growl, unexpectedly rushed from the enclosure and crouched in a corner of the igloo.

The natives effusively gathered about Papik, who bent over his dog with proud affection. In the excitement Ahningnetty quickly left the igloo, and standing outside gazed meditatively at the stars. They hung in the sky above like great pendulous jewels, palpitant with interior name—there were purple stars, and blue stars, and orange-colored stars; some resembled monstrous amethysts, some emeralds fierily green, some rubies spitting sparks vindictively red; others globular sheeny pearls, creamy of lustre but shot with faint gleams of rose; and fugitively sprinkling the firmament here and there were orbs that glistened like diamonds, wonderfully and purely white. Saturn, distinct among all the heavenly bodies, throbbed with a van-colored changing glow like a bulbous opal, and about it, with a strange shimmer, visibly swirled its iridescent rings.

“Thou standest alone—thou wouldst leave me?” Papik, eager, triumphant, questioning, emerged from the stone entrance to the house and approached the girl. The other natives, homeward bent, followed.

The girl was silent.

“Methought thou wouldst be glad——”

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"Thy dog is strong," the girl replied.

"Dost thou love that dotard Attalaq?"

"No," the maid replied. "He is clumsy as the musk ox."

They turned, walking toward the igloo occupied by Ahningnetty and her aged father.

"Wilt thou not be Papik's wife?" Papik pleaded. "My shelter is cold—little meat have I. The white men robbed the tribe. But perchance the bears come—then I shall kill them; valiant is my dog." He patted the animal's shaggy head.

"But thy fingers, Papik—Papik! No—no!"

"But Papik loves thee," he protested; "his skin flushes with the thought of thee."

"That thou didst also say to Annadoah, whom thou didst seek before me."

Papik was silent; it was true that Ahningnetty was only a second choice.

At that moment an ominous noise was heard on the sea. The tide, in moving, caused the massive floe-ice to grate against that adhering to the shore. To the simple natives, the noise indicated something more sinister.

"Hearest that?" Ahningnetty asked.

"Yea," replied Papik, "*Qulutaligssuaq*, the monster who lives in the sea, cometh with his hammers."

"He cometh to steal the children. In winter he is very hungry."

"They say he frightens people to death when a baby which is fatherless screams."

"And after he heats his ladles, the babies often die."

Again the grating noise shuddered along the shore, and Ahningnetty, frightened, fled to her house. Papik, pursuing his way, accosted Ootah.

As they were speaking they saw Otaq and his wife emerge from their house. Between them they carried a small stark body. The woman was weeping piteously. It was their child, which a brief while before had died. The sea monster had again claimed its human toll.

Papik and Ootah disappeared—Papik to his shelter, Ootah to Annadoah's igloo. The parents, left alone, dug up stones and ice and buried the child. Then beneath the stars they stood in silent grief. Other natives, emerging from their houses and seeing them,

understood and disappeared, for while relatives weep over their dead none dare disturb their mourning. For five days, in commemoration of the death, the parents would visit the grave of their child, During this time no native dare cross the path leading from their igloo to the silent resting place, and while they stood beneath the stars all alien to their sorrow must remain within their houses. Only the Great Spirit, who lives beyond the golden veils of the boreal lights, may hear the sobbing of a stricken human creature over the thing of which it has been bereft.

In the course of ten sleeps—as days are called—the first moon of the long night sank below the horizon and the colorful stars fierily glittered over a world of black silence. The cold increased to an intolerable bitterness. Ootah, venturing from his igloo to dig up walrus meat, found the earth frozen so solid that it split his steel axe.

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It was not long before many white mounds appeared beneath the liquid stars. The old and the very young, unable to endure the rigorous cold and dearth of food, passed into the mysterious unknown of which the long dark of earth is only the portal. After the passing of the first moon the storms came; the sky blackened; the winds voiced the desolate woe of millions of aerial creatures. Terrific snow storms kept the tribe within their shelters for days. Often the winds tore away the membrane windows of their snow houses, and blasts of frigid cold dissipated the precious warmth within. In the lee of circular walls of ice, right at the immediate entrance of the houses, the natives kept their dogs. Inside they had only room for the mother dogs, which at this period brought into being litters of beautiful little puppies with which the Eskimo children played. Outside, scores of splendid animals, which could not be sheltered, were frozen to death in great drifts. These, during the following days, were dug out and used as food both for men and the living animals.

During a quiet period between storms, Ootah, venturing from his shelter, heard a shuffling noise near his igloo. In the northern sky a creamy light palpitated, and in one of the quick flares he saw a bear nosing about the village. He called his dogs and they soon surrounded the animal. Fortunately the incandescent light of the aurora increased—now and then a ribbon of light, palpitant with every color of the rainbow, was flung across the sky. Ootah lifted his harpoon lance—the sky was momentarily flooded with light—he struck. In the next flare he saw the bear lying on the ice—his lance had pierced the brute's heart. Attracted by the barking of Ootah's dogs, several tribesmen soon joined him in dressing the animal. During their task, one suddenly beckoned silence, and whispered softly:

“The Voice . . . the Voice . . .” And they paused.

A weird whistling sound sang eerily through the skies. The air, electrified, seemed to snap and crackle. It was the voice that comes with the aurora.

The knives fell from the natives' hands. The howling of the hungry dogs was stilled. In hushed awe, in reverence, with vague wondering, they listened. Ootah was on his knees. An inspired light transfigured his face. His pulses thrilled. For what they heard was, to them all, the Voice of the Great Unknown, He whose power is greater than that of *Perdlugssuaq*, He who made the world, created the Eternal Maiden *Sukh-eh-nukh*, and placed all the stars in the skies, who, never coming Himself earthward, instead sends in the aurora His spirits with messages of hope and encouragement to men, and Whose Voice sometimes, far, far away, itself comes as the faintly remembered music of long by-gone dreams preceding birth . . . Yea, it was the Voice . . . the Voice . . .

And now, out of the black-blue sky, as if released from invisible hands, great globes of swimming liquid fire floated constantly, and dispersing into millions of feathery flakes of opal light, melted softly . . . Along the lower heavens there was a fugitive flickering of a rich creamy light, as of the reflection of celestial fires far beyond the horizon.

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Speechless, Ootah viewed the flameous wonder, and, although he knew no prayer, he felt in his soul an instinctive love, a profound awe . . . In the silent sanctity of that auroral-shot and frigidly glorious region he seemed to feel the pulsing of an Unseen Presence—a presence of which he was a part, of which, with a glow, he felt the soul of her he loved was a part, to which all nature, everything that lives and breathes, was vitally linked . . . He felt the drawing urge, the thrilling tingling impetus, as it were, of the terrific currents of vital spirit force that sweep vastly through the universe, keeping the earth and all the planets in their orbits . . . He felt, what possibly the primitive and pure of heart feel most keenly . . . the presence of the Great Unknown, He who is the fountain source of love, and whose hands on the sable parchment of the northern skies perchance write, in irid tracteries of fire, mystic messages of hope which none, of all humanity, during all the centuries, has ever learned entirely to understand.

Not until the wonder lights were fading did the tribesmen take up the precious bear meat, and according to Ootah's instructions divide portions among the community. His arm full of meat, Ootah joyously entered Annadoah's igloo.

Annadoah, sad and lonely, sat by her lamp. Her igloo was like that of all the others. Inside, so as to retain the heat and carry off the water which dripped from the melting dome of snow, there was an interior tent of seal skin. In a great pan of soapstone was a line of moss, which absorbed the walrus fat, and served as a wick for the lamp. This emitted a line of thin, reddish blue flame. Over the light, and supported by a framework, was a large soapstone pot in which bits of walrus meat were simmering. By the side of the pot a large piece of walrus blubber hung over a rod. In the heat of the lamp this slowly exuded a thick oil which, falling into the pan below and saturating the moss wick, gave a constant and steady supply of fuel.

Like the other women, Annadoah sat by her lamp day after day. When she could endure hunger no longer she would eat ravenously of the meagre food in the pot. Regular meals are unknown in the arctic—a native abstains from food as long as he can in days of famine, but when he eats he eats unstintedly.

As Ootah entered the low enclosure Annadoah's eyes lighted.

Ootah told her of the bear encounter, and, with the joy of children, they placed bits of the meat in the pot and sat by, delightedly inhaling the odor as it cooked.

Several days later, while they were eating the last remainder of the meat, both heard an uproar outside. They crept from the igloo and discovered most of the village assembled without.

“Attalaq hath carried off Ahningnetty,” one told them.

“He broke into her father's house and seized her with violence!”

Not far away they heard Ahningnetty's screams.

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"Attalaq is strong," said one.

"Yea, as a boy did he not kill his brother?" All remembered the brutal encounter of the two brothers years before, when, throwing him to the ground, Attalaq jumped on his brother's body and striking his head with stones beat him to death. Attalaq was a type of the older warriors; unlike his more gentle tribesmen he possessed the atavistic savagery of his forebears of centuries ago when it was customary to abduct brides.

An excited crowd gathered outside of Attalaq's house. Soon Attalaq himself appeared. He was exultant.

"Ha! Ha!" he laughed. "Methinks that is the way to treat a woman!" Then with swollen-up gusto he told them all about it. Tiring of being alone he determined to carry off Ahningnetty. "A woman's mind is as the wind—it constantly changeth," he said. "Women should be driven as the dogs." Ahningnetty, still weeping, still protesting, came to the door. Attalaq turned fiercely upon her and struck her in the face. Then he laughed again. The girl screamed.

"Well," he said, turning to her. "I carried thee here—if thou wouldst return thou canst walk back. Eh?" The girl cowered away, but on her face there was the semblance of a pleased expression. The other women regarded her with a tinge of envy.

"'Tis not often in these days a lover careth sufficiently to carry a maid away," said an aged crone.

"In the days of old there were men like Attalaq," said a younger woman, admiringly.

"Where is Papik?" one asked. He was not to be seen.

"Dost thou not wish to return to thy father?" Annadoah asked Ahningnetty, approaching her.

The girl shook her head. Much as she had protested, she was unquestionably pleased by the forcible abduction.

One of the gossips, desiring to impart the unpleasant news to Papik, had gone to his house.

"Papik sits alone," she called, on her return. "And when I told him Ahningnetty hath been carried away by Attalaq, he replied, 'Tis well! 'Tis well!' And then he showed me his hands—they were frozen—frozen! Verily, he would now be a sorry husband to provide for a wife."

"Papik's fingers frozen!" took up the others. "Unhappy Papik."



“He sobs and weeps—he sobs and weeps,” said the old woman. “He saith the dreaded misfortune hath come, and the days of his skill on the hunt are over!”

“Long fingers, short hunt; long nose—short life,” remarked Maisanguaq, sententiously.

Attalaq, happy in his conquest, was broad enough to be generous. He declared that Papik should never want as long as he could shoot the arrow. Generous-hearted, many of the others joined in and bits of blubber were soon offered the lonely Papik, as he sat, nursing his frozen members, in his house. The mishap was tragic, for, his hands injured, he had lost not only his skill in the hunt but his ability to protect himself in case of accidents. And from the experience of ages all knew that, sooner or later, he was doomed to a comparatively early death.

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During the first period of the night, and after Ootah's first capture, several prowling bears were shot. The howl of occasional wolves was heard in the mountains; then all the bears disappeared, the hunger of the wolves was stilled.

When the third moon rose not a thing stirred outside the igloos. A glacial silence gripped the northern world. In their shelters the natives clustered together, warming one another with their breathing and the heat of their bodies. They lacked the courage even to speak.

Day by day their supply of food had run low. Day by day they decreased their portions; their cheeks sunk, hunger burned in their eyes. To save the precious fuel they burned only one lamp in their houses; they were unable to sleep because of the intense cold. Finally their food gave out. From his store Ootah silently doled out allotments until starvation confronted him. One by one the dogs were eaten. And this caused a dull ache, for the men loved their dogs only a little less than they did their wives and children. The quaking fear of the long hours slowly gave way to a dull lethargy. In their igloos, where single lamps smoked, they sat, and to keep up their circulation and to prevent themselves from falling into a coma, they rocked their bodies like things only half alive.

The black days and black nights slowly, tediously, achingly passed. One day was like another—one night seemed to mark no progress of time. Only the children, to whom parents gave the last bits of food, showed some animation. They played listlessly with one another. For toys they had crude carvings of soapstone—tiny soapstone lamps and pots with which they made pitiful mimicry of cooking. The little girls played with crude dolls just as do little girls in more southern lands—but they were grotesque effigies, made of skin roughly sewn together. The boys found brief zest in a game which was played by sticking ivory points in a piece of bone, hanging from the roof of the igloo, and which was perforated with holes. Finally, as the night wore on, the children lost interest in their games, and with aching stomachs, lay silent by the fires. Starvation steadily claimed its toll. Death, slowly, surely, laid its grim and terrible hands upon that pitiful fringe of earth's humanity on the desolate star-litten roof of the world. One by one a stark body would be carried from an igloo into the black, bitter cold silence without and buried under blocks of snow. And above, intense and incandescent, the Pole Star—that unerring time mark of God's inevitable and unerring laws—burned like an all-seeing, sentient and pitiless eye of fire in the heavens.

Annadoah lay upon her couch of furs. Her face was thin, and white as the snows without. The flame in her stone lamp was about to flicker into extinction.

Ootah, entering the igloo, sprang quickly to her side. Her breath came very faintly. He seized her hands. He breathed on her face. He opened her ahttee and rubbed her little breasts. He felt something very strange, and wonderful, stirring within him. And with it a ghastly fear that the thing he loved was dying.

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Into the lamp he placed the last meagre bits of remaining blubber. Then he again set to chafing the tender little hands. Cold and hunger had wrought havoc upon Annadoah. Ootah's heart ached.

Finally her eyelids stirred. Her lips parted. A smile brightened her face. Ootah leaned forward, breathlessly. Her lips framed an inaudible word:

"Olafaksoah . . . Olafaksoah . . ." She opened her eyes. The smile faded. "Thou . . . ?" she said.

"Yea, Annadoah, I have brought thee food," Ootah said. It was his last.

"I hunger," she breathed. "It is very cold . . . I was in the south . . . where the sun is warm . . . it is very cold here."

Eagerly he pressed her hands. She drifted again into a stupor and for a long while was silent. Ootah's warm panting breath finally brought blood to her cheeks.

"Thou art so big . . . and strong . . ." she smiled again. "Thy arms hurt me . . . as the embrace of *nannook* (the bear). . . ." Her smile deepened . . . her breath came more quickly. "Oh, oh, it is pleasant . . . here . . . in . . . the south."

"Annadoah!" Ootah's wail of hurt recalled her.

Her eyes sought the igloo wonderingly.

"Thou?" she repeated, dully. "Yea, it is cold here. I am hungry . . . Are there not *ahmingmah* in the mountains, Ootah? Didst thou not tell me there were *ahmingmah* in the mountains . . . why do not the men of the tribe seek the musk oxen in the mountains?"

With a sudden start Ootah remembered having told Annadoah of the herd he had found in the inland valley—it was strange, he thought, he had not remembered the herd before. And it was stranger still that now she should remind him. But the improbability of ever reaching the game, the obvious impossibility of such a journey at this time of winter, had prevented any such suggestion.

"Many musk oxen are there in the mountains," he said, soothing her hands. She drew them away. "And thou art hungry . . ."

"I am hungry," she replied, faintly.

After he had given her the last bit of meat he left her igloo. Above him the stars burned, the air was clear and still. Not a thing moved, not a sound was heard—the earth was gripped in that unrelenting spell of wintry silence. Above the imprisoned sea the



January moon was rising and for ten sleeps—ten twenty-four hour days—it would circle about the horizon of the entire sky. Already the sky above the sea was bright as a frosted globe of glass, and pearly fingers of light were stealing upward over the interior mountains.

“She is hungry,” Ootah repeated over and over again. “And the tribe starves . . . and there may be *ahmingmah* in the mountains.” Behind him they loomed, gigantic and precipitous. That such a journey meant almost certain death he knew; but that did not deter him in the resolve to essay a feat no native had ever dared in many hundreds of years.

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The face of Sipsu, the *angakoq*, as I have said, resembled dried and wrinkled leather. He had been an old man when the eldest of the tribe were children. He had seen hard times, he had suffered from starvation during many winters; yet never even in his experience had the lashes of *ookiah* struck so blastingly upon the tribe. Yea, they had even lost their fear of the *tornarssuit* and no longer brought propitiatory offerings of blubber to him. Yet being wise with age, early in the summer he had buried sufficient supplies beneath the floor of his house to keep him from starving. He scowled maliciously as he heard someone creeping through the underground entrance of his igloo. Presently the cadaverous face of Maisanguaq appeared.

The interior was heavy with the stench of oil. The room hung with soot from the lamp. A thin spiral thread of black smoke rose from the taper. In the dim light the leering face of Sipsu appeared like the face of the great demon himself. His small half-closed eyes blazed through their slits.

"The spirits are wrathful. The tribe is forgetful. What wilt thou have?"

Maisanguaq, with unconcealed hesitation, placed a bit of blubber before the magician.

"The last I have," he mumbled. Sipsu seized it avidly.

"Ootah goeth to the mountains," Maisanguaq said, panting for breath.

The old man sneered bitterly:

"He cannot brave the spirits. No man can live in the mountains. The breath of the spirits is death."

"Yea, he goeth. He says that he knows where the *ahmingmah* abound. The air is still; the moon rises for ten sleeps. By then, so he saith, he can return with meat."

"No man hath ever ventured there. The shadow of *Perdlugssuaq* is very dark."

"Yea, may he smite Ootah!" exclaimed Maisanguaq.

Sipsu laughed harshly.

"Couldst thou cause the hill spirits to strike?" Maisanguaq asked eagerly.

Sipsu faced Maisanguaq fiercely.

"In my youth I went unto the mountains and I heard the hill spirits sing. Thereupon I became a great magician. They spoke to me; I was silent; thereafter, when I called they answered. What wouldst thou?"

Maisanguaq indicated the blubber.

"I would thou call them now; that they release the glaciers, that Ootah may be carried to his death. I hate Ootah, I would that he die." He shook his fist.

Sipsu's body quivered from head to foot. "Ootah hath never consulted my familiar spirits," he rejoined bitterly. "He despiseth them."

Rising from his sitting posture Sipsu seized his drum and began moving his body. He groaned with extreme pain. By degrees his dance increased. He improvised a monotonous spirit song. His face grimaced demoniacally. As his conjuration approached the climax, his voice rose to a series of shrieks. He shuddered violently; he seemed to suffer agonies in his limbs. Finally he fell to the floor in a writhing paroxysm.

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"Pst!" Maisanguaq's eyes lighted.

Outside he heard the sharp barking of dogs. "*Huk! Huk!*" Ootah's voice called. Others joined in the clamor. The entire tribe seemed to wake as from a sleep of the dead.

"He starts for the mountains," said Maisanguaq. "Thinkest thou the spirits will strike?"

Sipsu opened his eyes—and glared wildly at Maisanguaq.

"Speak," Maisanguaq demanded. "Hast thou not the power?"

"Did I not once go to the bottom of the sea to *Nerrvik*, she who rules over the sea creatures? Hath she not only one hand, and is she not powerless to plait her hair? Doth she not obey me? For did I not plait her hair? Did I not carry wood for weapons to the spirits of the mountains? And have they not answered for nigh a thousand moons?"

"Yet there is doubt in thy voice, Sipsu!"

"Yea, to be truthful with thee, Maisanguaq, there is dispute among the spirits. I cannot determine what they say." He bent his head as if listening. Then he asked:

"Doth Ootah not go that Annadoah may have food?"

Maisanguaq nodded assent.

"And the tribe?"

Maisanguaq again nodded.

As though he suddenly heard some terrifying converse among his familiars the necromancer's face blanched. He struggled to his feet.

"Take thy food," he flung the blubber to Maisanguaq. "I dare not take thy gift. I am afraid."

Maisanguaq sprang at the old man. "Revoke not thy curse," he breathed, his fingers sinking into the *angakoq*'s throat. "Will the hill spirits strike?"

"Yea," the old man gasped, "but they say——"

Maisanguaq's fingers loosened. "What?" he demanded.

"That there is . . . some other power . . . which is very strange—which——"

"Yea, yea——"



“Protecteth Ootah . . . It concerneth . . . Annadoah. I do not wish thy gift. I fear the spirits. The magic of Ootah—what it is . . . I cannot tell thee . . . But the spirits say . . . it . . . concerneth . . . Annadoah. And against it none of the *tornarssuit* can prevail.” Maisanguaq threw the old man fiercely to the floor and, disgusted, left the igloo.

Outside, the entire tribe, with the exception of those dying of hunger, had gathered in groups. Ootah lifted his whip. His team of eight lean dogs howled.

“*Tugto! Tugto!*” he called. The dogs leaped into the air—his sled shot forward. Ootah strode forward.

In his desperate adventure Ootah was joined by one of the younger members of the tribe, Koolotah by name, a lad barely eighteen years of age. All the others had hung back. Koolotah’s mother was dying; a desperate desire to save her stirred in his heart as he lifted his whip in the signal to start. The tribe cheered.

“*Huk! Huk!*” he shouted, and his lean dogs followed Ootah’s team.



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"*Au-oo-au-oo!*" called the natives.

"*Auoo-auoo!*" the voices of Ootah and Koolotah returned.

Over the snow-covered stretch of level shoreland the moon poured a flood of silver incandescence. In this magical light the forms of Ootah and his companion were magnified into the likeness of those of the giants that the old men said once lived in the highlands. Their dogs were distended into creatures of the size of musk oxen. Their whips exploded as they dashed past the straggling line of snow and stone houses; the snow crisply cracked and splintered under their feet.

Then the village disappeared behind them. The voices of their tribesmen trailed shudderingly into silence.

The assembled tribe watched the teams diminishing in the distance. Presently someone whispered a terrible thing.

"Sipsu hath cursed Ootah."

A low ominous murmur passed from lip to lip among the gathered men and women. In the distance a black speck in the moonlight marked the departing hunters.

"Yea, he hath called upon the spirit of the mountains to destroy Ootah."

A low groan followed this.

"Methinks he hath prophesied too many deaths," said Arnaluk.

"He hath declared that Koolotah's mother will die."

"And Koolotah—did he not say two moons ago that Koolotah would depart on a long journey from which he should never return?"

"And the wife of Kyutah—did she not perish after his evil prophesy? And Piuitsoq—did not the spirit of the skin tents strike him when he lay asleep? And did not yon evil wretch tell of it long before?"

A dozen voices angrily rose in assent.

"Verily he hath found hatred in his heart for Ootah. For Ootah hath had no need of his powers. Did not Ootah's mother sew into his cap the skin from the roof of a bear's mouth? And hath he not become as strong as the bear? Did not his father place in his *ahttee* the feet of a hawk—and have not his own feet the swiftness of the wings of a bird? And doth not Sipsu hate him for his strength? Yea, as he hateth all who are young, who are brave, and who find joy in their shadow."

Their voices rose threateningly. Maisanguaq, chagrined and bitter at the old man, leered among the crowd.

“Hath he not lived too long,” he whispered softly. And the others suddenly shouted:

“Let Sipsu die!”

In a wild rush they bore down upon the *angakoq*’s igloo. Screaming with rage they kicked in the sides. The icy dome shattered about the startled old man. They leaped upon him as hungry dogs upon a dying bear. A dozen hands ferociously gripped his throat. They moved to and fro in a mad struggle over the uneven ice. They seized hold of one another in the blood-thirsty desire to lay their hands upon the old man. He made no struggle. Finally all drew away. Amid the wreck of his igloo Sipsu lay, motionless, his face sneering evilly in the moonlight. His dead lips seemed to frame a curse.

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They secured a rope of leather lashings and placed a noose about the old man's neck. Then they dragged his body from the wrecked igloo. Weak from lack of food, they still forced themselves to dig up the frozen snow at a spot where they knew there were stones, for according to their belief they had to bury the old man—otherwise, his spirit would haunt them. To this spot they brought the rotted skins of his bed, and on them placed the body, fearful lest they touch it. By the body they placed the old man's lamp, stone dishes, membrane-drum and instruments of incantation. Over the corpse they piled the ice encrusted stones, and over these in turn weighty masses of frozen snow. Then they turned in silence and entered their respective shelters. Thenceforth, until a child should be born to whom it could be given, the name of Sipsu might not pass their lips.

## VI

*"As he looked upon the descending wraiths, Koolotah saw they had the spirit-semblance of gleaming faces, and that their eyes burned, through the enveloping cloud-veils, like fire . . . 'The dead—the dead . . .' he said, 'we have come into a land of the dead.' . . ."*

"Then the glacial mountainside to which he clung trembled . . . the silver-swimming world of white dust-driven fire became suddenly black—and the earth seemed removed from under him . . . \_"

Leaving the low-lying shore, Ootah's path led up through a narrow gorge between two great cliffs. Since he had returned from the mountains the path had been covered by many successive falls of snow. At places the path sloped abruptly downward at a terrible angle, and the ice cracked and slid beneath the hardy hunters' feet. With the agility of cats, the dogs fastened their claws into the ice and climbed upward.

Constantly the two men had to hold to the jagged rocks to their right, otherwise, time after time, they would have slipped into the perilous abyss below. Through the chasm the moon poured its liquid rays. At certain points towering crags shut off the light—then Ootah and his companion had to feel their way slowly upward in the dark. Finally Ootah's dogs, with a loud chorus of barking, leaped ahead. Seizing an overhanging ledge of rock Ootah lifted himself to the top of the precipice. Koolotah's team followed.

For interminable miles a vast icy plateau stretched before them—a plain glistening with snow and reflecting like a burnished mirror the misty silveriness of the moon. Over the glacial expanse an eerily greenish phosphorescence, which palpitated and shifted at times with vivid splashes of opal and deeper tones of burning blue, hung low.

The upland was split with thousands of canyons that writhed over the white expanse like snakes in tortuous convulsions. From these bottomless abysses arose a luminous



amethystine vapor. In the depths jutting icicles took fire and glowed through the lustrous mists like burning eyes. Where the chasms joined with others or widened, ominous shapes, swathed in wind-blown blackish-purple robes, with extended arms, took form. As Ootah and Koolotah dashed forward, great spaces of clear ice palpitated on all sides of them with interior opaline fires.

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Neither spoke. Holding the rear framework of their sleds, they trusted to the instinct of their dogs. Mile after mile swept under their feet. Their road often lay along the very edges of purple-black abysses. The echoes of their sharp gliding sleds cutting the ice, of the very patter of their dogs' feet, were magnified in volume in the clear air, and it seemed as though, in the hollow depths on every side, ghostly teams were following. Koolotah was white with fear. But Ootah encouraged him onward.

They paced off twenty miles. They reached an altitude of more than a thousand feet above the sea.

The great moon slowly circled about the sky; the scurrying clouds contorted like grotesque living things.

The two hunters made precipitous descents over unexpected frozen slopes—at times it seemed as though they were about to be hurled to instantaneous death. Yet Ootah steeled his heart. His teeth chattered but he gritted them firmly.

"Annadoah needeth food," he murmured, "and——"

His eyes shone, a new pity not unmingled with a taint of bitterness filled his heart. Annadoah must live; she must have food. For a strange thing, he observed, had come upon her. Her inexplicable moods, her brief moments of tenderness, her riotous griefs, and other prefigurements of maternity—these made her dearer to Ootah. So he vigorously cracked his whip and urged the dogs.

The chasms twisted with lifelike motion all around him. Behind, as in a dream, Ootah heard the whip of Koolotah, and the barking of Koolotah's dogs. For hours his feet moved swiftly and mechanically under him. Once his foot slipped. He swerved to the right. A vast black mouth yawned hungrily to receive him; then it closed behind him. The leaping team of dogs had pulled him forward. Luckily he maintained a tenacious hold to the rear upstander of his sled.

Narrow chasms constantly cut their trail. With sharp howls the dogs leaped over these, the sleds passed safely, and by instinct Ootah would bound forward. Narrower than a man's stride in width, Ootah knew these slits in the glacial ice were hundreds of feet in depth, that a slip of the foot might plunge him to immediate death. Now and then he lost his footing on the uneven ice; his heart leaped for fear, but he held grimly to the sledge and the lithe, lean but strong dog-bodies carried him to safety. These faithful animals bounded over the glimmering ice field with amazing speed. They snapped and barked with the joy of the race. In the white moonlight the vapor of their breathing enveloped them like a silvery cloud.

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For hours the hunters continued the trail. Their mighty purpose fought off fatigue. The moon passed behind cumulous mountains of clouds along the horizon, and periods of darkness blotted the world from Ootah. Then they traveled in darkness. A chill dampness rising from the gaping abysses that sundered the ice field told them of their danger; then Ootah's heart chilled, his teeth were set chattering; but he thought of Annadoah and the grim need of food, and he gripped the upstander of his sled more determinedly. When the moon again unclosed its pearly sheen over the ice, the serpentine chasms moved their tortuous backs and writhed about them, the icy hummocks billowed, and the glittering ice-peaked horizon swam in a dizzy circle of diamonded light.

As their trail ascended higher the penetrating cold dampness somewhat moderated. In the taut air the sound of their whips was like that of splitting metal. Shuddering and sepulchral echoes answered the barking of their dogs. The faithful ghosts of the dogs of fallen hunters were following their departed masters in the amethystine mists of the canyons about them. Ootah and Koolotah trembled with the thought of the dreadful nearness of the dead. Believing other animals to be ahead, the dogs set up a wilder, shriller howling. Then the echoes came back with more startling and terrifying proximity. Ootah's flesh crept. Finally, with an explosive sound, Koolotah let his whip fall.

"*Aulate*—halt!" he called.

They came to a dead standstill.

"*Pst!*" he whispered. He hit the snapping, whining dogs. "*Pst!*" They crouched to the ground and whined mournfully.

"Dost thou hear?" Koolotah asked in a hushed voice. In the moonlight Ootah saw that the lad's face was as white as the face of the dead, and that in his eyes was a wild fear. From the mountain ridges, which loomed beyond, came an ominous noise—resembling a low wind. Ootah bent his head and listened to the sobbing monotone, then whispered:

"The breathing of the spirits of the hills who sleep."

"Perchance we waken them," Koolotah ventured.

"That would be bad," Ootah replied.

"I have left my mother forever," Koolotah wailed.

"Be brave, lad; they need food; beseech the spirits of those who lived when men's sap was stronger, thy ancestors, for strength. Come!"

Koolotah raised his head—then uttered a low cry of alarm. He drew back, fearfully, pointing with a trembling arm to the mountain pass ahead.

Covered with glacial snow and ice the slopes of the first ridge of the interior mountains gleamed with frosted silver. Over the white expanse, formed by the countless clefts and indentations of the slope, cyclopean shadows took form, and like eldritch figures joining their hands in a wild dance, loomed terrifyingly before the two men. Their trail now ascended through a gorge which abruptly opened immediately before them. Into this rugged chasm the argent moonlight poured, and from unseen caverns in the pass glowered monstrous phosphorescent green and ruby eyes.

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From the heights above fragments of clouds descended through the chasm. In the full moonlight they were transformed into tall aerial beings, of unearthly beauty. They were swathed in luminous robes that fluttered gently upon the air, and like the birds they soared, with tremulous wings resembling films of silver. They moved softly, with great majesty. As he looked upon the descending wraiths, Koolotah saw they had the spirit-semblance of gleaming faces, and that their eyes burned, through the enveloping cloud-veils, like fire. He drew back, afraid.

"The dead . . ." he murmured . . . "We have come unto the land of the dead."

Both stood in silence, reverent, awed, half-afraid.

Then Ootah snapped his whip. He called to the dogs.

"Let us go unto them . . . Let us show that men are not afraid. *Huk! Huk! Huk!* Come!"

The dogs howled, the traces tightened, the sleds sped forward. They entered the defile. The trail twisted up the side of the abyss. Less than three feet wide for long stretches, the dogs had to slacken and pass upward in line, one by one. Covered with new ice it was dangerously slippery, and in climbing the men had to hold to jutting icicles for support.

Ootah was ahead. At times sheer walls of ice confronted him. At certain places there had been drifts, at others glacial fragments had slipped from the mountain above. Before these almost insuperable walls Ootah would pause and with his axe hew steps in the hard ice.

They slowly toiled ahead for an hour. Then a blank sloping ice wall, twice the height of Ootah, blocked the path. He grasped his axe and began hewing a series of ascending steps. He breathed with difficulty; the air in the high altitude made respiration difficult. He was soon bathed in perspiration. The moisture of his breath and beads of sweat froze about his face, covering him with an icy mask. His eyelashes froze together. He had to pause to melt the quickly congealing tears. He suffered unendurably. Finally his axe split; the ice was harder than his steel. He uttered an impatient exclamation.

"Thy axe!" he called to Koolotah.

Koolotah swung his axe in the air and over the dog team separating them. Ootah leaped from his feet and caught the axe as it soared above him. In a half hour the step-like trail was cut, and he clambered over the wall. Digging their nails into the indentations, the dogs followed. Then Koolotah and his team scaled the obstruction.

Koolotah felt his heart choking him as it seemed to enlarge within; Ootah, in truth, was not entirely unafraid. Both knew that a slip of the foot would plunge them to instant death. As they ascended the trail, the gathering clouds surrounded them. They could



no longer see their dogs. They could not even perceive the blackness of the chasm to their right. Above and below they were enveloped in a silver mist. Only the reflected glitter of the moonlight on jutting icicles on the opposite indicated the depths so perilously near. Through the mist Koolotah saw the green and crimson eyes of baleful creatures that might, at any moment, spring upon him.

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When they reached the inland valley they were both spent in strength. In sheer relief from the agonized suspense of the journey they sank on their sledges and lay palpitating for an hour or more. But the cold froze their perspiring garments and they had to rise and exercise so as not to freeze to death. Ootah knew that no time could be lost. In the interior mountains the breathing of the hill spirits was becoming more uneasy. And Ootah noted with anxiety the increasing moderation of the atmosphere. That was not well. When the cold relented the hill spirits released the glaciers.

With frantic eagerness they explored the valley. The green grass whereon Ootah had seen the splendid animals grazing months before was covered with ice. There was no sign of the *ahmingmah*. Ootah's heart sank. He felt very much like weeping.

Suddenly the dogs began to sniff the air and bark hungrily.

"*Ahmingmah!*" Koolotah cried, joyfully.

Ootah released the team—the dogs made a misty black streak in their dash over the ice. The men followed.

In the shelter of a cave they found five musk oxen. They were huddled together and half numb with cold. They roared dully as the howling dogs assaulted them, and rushed lumberingly from the cave into the moonlight. Five great black hulks, with mighty manes of coarse hair, they ambled over the ice for a space of five hundred feet and then, surrounded by the dogs, assembled in a circle, their backs together, their heads facing the howling dogs. Thus they were prepared to protect themselves from attack.

The dogs, frantic with hunger, made fierce rushes at the animals. Now and then, as the dogs dashed forward, one of the great beasts would charge, its head lowered, and the dogs would leap backward into the air and scatter. Then turning, the animal would rush back to its companions as fast as its numbed legs could carry it.

Through the white vapor of their breath, which half hid their great horned heads, Ootah could see the eyes of the musk-oxen—they were greenish and phosphorescent. Occasionally the creatures roared sullenly, but the fight was less exciting than it would have been had they been less torpid from hunger and cold.

Ootah called away the dogs, and raised his gun, one which Olafaksoah, in payment for the five sledloads of walrus blubber which he confiscated after Ootah's flight to the mountains, had left with a generous supply of ammunition with a companion. Ootah now realized the value of the payment which he had scorned.

There was a yellow flash in the moonlight—a mighty roar went up. The dogs, with a cyclonic dash, swooped upon the fallen monster, snapping viciously at it as it roared in its death agony. Frightened, the other four scattered—one rushed into the shelter of the

cave, the other three, dispersing, soon became diminishing black specks in the moonlight. The dogs would have followed, but Ootah called them back. One animal was even more than they could manage.

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With quick despatch they fell upon the animal with their knives. Neither spoke—they worked breathlessly. With marvellous skill they peeled off the heavy skin, and with amazing dexterity carved great masses of bleeding meat clean from the bones. When they had finished, only a great skeleton remained. Outside the cave, eager, whining, the starving dogs obediently crouched. When they had completed the task of dressing, Ootah lifted his hand and the canines, with howling avidity, fell upon the steaming mass of entrails.

Upon the two sledges the hunters loaded and lashed securely their treasure of meat. In the moonlight the hot steam rose from the tremulous masses and Ootah's nostrils dilated with eager, anticipatory delight. The blood dripped upon the snow and Ootah's stomach ached. He had not dared to think of eating until now. Their hands shaking with nervous hunger, the two fell upon the remaining meat. They feasted with that savage hungry joy known only to human creatures who have faced starvation. When they started on the return journey there was a new vibrant elasticity in their steps.

Ootah snapped his whip and sang.

And his heart sang, too, of Annadoah.

Looking at the clouds, as they drifted through the valley, Ootah imagined he saw Annadoah lying upon her couch asleep, and in the faint light of an oil lamp he saw upon her face a pleased smile.

"Of what doth Annadoah dream?" Ootah asked the winds.

"Of springtime when the flowers bloom," the winds replied.

"And Annadoah will move to a new skin tent with Ootah!" he said, joyously, exultantly. "Ootah will bring food unto Annadoah and she will reward him with her love."

"Foolish Ootah," moaned the wind, "love cannot be won with food, neither with *ahmingmah* meat nor walrus blubber." Ootah felt his heart sink; a vague and heavy misgiving filled him. Being very simple, he had always thought that by securing wealth, in dogs and food, in guns and ammunition, and by achieving pre-eminence on the hunt, he should win Annadoah's confidence and love. But now, upon the breath of the winds, by the voices of nature, doubt came into his heart. The mistake of many men the world over, and of many wiser than he, he could not understand just why this was—this thing the winds said, and which his own heart correspondingly whispered. With food he might possibly win Annadoah's consent to be his wife, yes, he knew that; but Annadoah's love—that was another thing. Surely, he now realized, as he strode along, that by simply giving her food he could not expect to stir in her heart a response to that which throbbed in his. But why? Singularly he never thought of the bravery of his seeking food on this

perilous adventure, an act which, had he known it, had indeed touched the heart of the beautiful maiden.

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With the quick atmospheric change of the arctic—a phenomenon common to zones of extreme temperature—the wind steadily increased in velocity and warmth. The shallow moon-shot clouds on the ice thickened and swept softly under the two travellers' feet. Above their waists the air was clear—they saw each other distinctly in the moonlight. Yet their dogs, hidden in the low-lying vapor, were invisible. Great masses of clouds slowly piled along the horizon and the moon was often obscured. Then the two walked in a darkness so thick it seemed palpable.

"Hark!" Ootah called, during one of these spells. "What is that?" A shuddering sound split the air; the ice field on which they travelled vibrated with an ominous jar. The echoes of splitting ice came like distant explosions.

"Have we disturbed the spirits of the hills?" asked Koolotah, in a whisper.

"No, no," answered Ootah, anxiously. "*Huk! Huk!*" He snapped his whip and urged the dogs. They had not gone twenty paces when from the interior heights of Greenland came a series of muffled explosions. Undoubtedly the hill spirits had wakened, and, angry, were hurling their terrible weapons.

They reached, in due course, the top of a mountain ridge down part of the glassy slopes of which they had to make their way to the entrance of the cleft in which the trail they had so laboriously hewn lay. The gorge yawned blackly some five hundred feet below. In anticipation of their return with loaded sledges, Ootah, on the last reach of their upland climb, had chopped on the smooth snows of the mountainside a narrow path that ran backward and forward in the fashion of a gently inclining elongated spiral. The mountain sloped at an angle of eighty degrees, but by descending cautiously along this circuitous trail a safe descent was possible.

While Ootah and his companion stood on the peak, the moon passed behind a veil of clouds and Ootah felt two soft wraith-like hands pass over his face—cloud-hands which his simple mind believed were sentient things. His heart for the moment seemed to stop. Thus the kind spirits warn men of danger.

At that instant a stinging sound smote the air. The glacial side of the mountain trembled, and as the moon reappeared, on the icy slopes Ootah saw narrow black cracks zigzagging in various directions. A cataclysmic rumbling sounded deep in the earth.

When the echoes died away he turned to Koolotah.

"Be brave of heart. Let us go—there is no time to lose."

"*Huk! Huk! Huk!*" They urged the dogs gently. Arranging themselves instinctively in single file, the traces slackening, the wonderful dogs, with feline caution, crept ahead.

Lowering their bodies, each behind his sledge, Ootah and Koolotah began moving stealthily downward. With one hand each clung to the rough icy projections of the slope; with the other they held the rear upstander of their sleds to prevent them from sliding, with their precious loads of meat, down the mountainside.

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Half way down, Ootah uttered a cry.

His quick ear detected a faint splitting noise, like the crack of young ice in forming, under his feet. In an instant he realized their danger.

At the time he had reached a hollow in the perilous slope. The dogs ahead, with quick instinct, retreated and crouched at his feet in the sheltering cradle.

Ootah saw Koolotah turn and look inquiringly upward. The next moment, driven downward by the wind, a mass of clouds, glittering with bleached moonfire, rolled over the slopes and hid Koolotah. Ootah only heard his voice.

Then the glacial mountainside to which he clung trembled. A terrific crash, like that of cannon, followed. The very mountain seemed to shake. For a brief awful spell everything was still—then, with an appalling thunder, the ice split and began to move. The moon reappeared and Ootah—in a tense moment—saw chasms widening about him on the glistening slope. He heard the deafening echoing explosions of splitting ice in the distance . . . With fierce ferocity he instinctively fastened one bleeding hand to an icy projection above him, with the other he held with grimly desperate determination to the sled . . . In the next dizzy instant he felt the icy floor beneath him lurch itself forward and downward . . . before his very eyes he saw Koolotah and his team—not twenty feet below—wiped from existence by the descending glacier to which he clung and in the hollow crevice of which he found security . . . In a second's space he caught a clear vision of tremendous masses of green and purple glaciers being ground to fine powder in their swift descent on all sides of him, . . . he saw the feathery ice fragments catch fire in the moonlight, . . . he heard the elemental roar and grinding crash of ice mountains sundering in a titanic convulsion . . . then he lost hearing . . . In that same sick bewildering moment of preternatural consciousness he thought wildly of Annadoah . . . he saw her appealing wan face amid the blur of white moonlight . . . he knew she needed food . . . and he felt an ache at his heart . . . he called upon the spirits of his ancestors. Then the silvery swimming world of white dust-driven fire became suddenly black—and the earth seemed removed from under him.

In the village the natives were awakened from their lethargic sleep by the far-away crash of the avalanche. Their faces blanched as they thought of the hunters. "The hill spirits have smitten! *Ioh! Ioh!*" they moaned. In her igloo Annadoah, who had waited with sleepless anxiety, wept alone. Of all in the village only the heart of one, Maisanguaq, was glad.

## VII

*"The utter tragedy of her devotion to the man who had deserted her, and the utter hopelessness of his own deep passion, blighting, horribly forced itself upon him . . .*





*Ootah asked himself all the questions men ask in such a crisis . . . and he demanded with wild weeping their answer from the dead rejoicing in the auroral Valhalla. But there was no answer—as perhaps there may be no answer; or, if there is, that God fearing lest, in attaining the Great Desire, men should cease to endeavor; to serve and to labor has kept it locked where He and the dead live beyond the skies.”*

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The moon dipped behind the horizon. For five sleeps naught had been heard from Ootah and his companion. Inetlia, the sister of Koolotah, followed in turn by some of the other women, visited the igloo of Annadoah. Upon her couch of moss Annadoah lay, and over her a cover given by Ootah and lined with the feathers of birds.

"'Twas thou who sent Ootah to the mountains," one complained. "May the ravens peck thine eyes!" cried another. Annadoah shook her head sadly and wept.

"'Twas thou who chose Olafaksoah, the robber from the south, that thou mightest be his wife; and 'twas thou, his wife, who beguiled the men and robbed thy tribe. Did we not give away our skins, and didst thou not make garments for Olafaksoah? And do we not now shudder from the cold? 'Twas thou who put the madness into the head of Ootah, the strongest of the tribe. Many are the maidens who are husbandless and yet Ootah pined for thee. Why didst thou not choose Ootah? Then he would have remained and prevented the thievery of the strangers, we should not have been robbed, and he would not have had to go far unto the mountains, where the spirits have struck him in their wrath? Nay, nay, thou didst make the men of our tribe sick with thoughts of thee. They have quarrelled among themselves. And before the white men came, did they not reproach us, their wives and their betrothed, with thy name and the vaunted skill of thee? Thou art as the woman with an iron tail, she who killed men when they came to her, their skins flushed with love. Thou destroyest men! Thou didst send Ootah and Koolotah to the mountains! And they have perished! *loh-h! loh-h!*"

Entering her igloo two or three at a time they reproachfully recited in chiding chants to Annadoah the story of her life; how her worthy mother and august grand-parents had died, hoping she would choose a husband from the hunters, and how she had refused all who sought her; they told, with reiterant detail, how she had caused quarrels among the men, and sent many of the warriors in their competitive hunts to death; and how, finally, when Ootah, the bravest of the hunters, wanted to wed her, she had chosen a foreign man, who deserted her and left her a burden on the tribe. Sometimes they shook her roughly.

To the native women the brutality and virility of the men from the south exert a potent appeal; and the fact that Olafaksoah had chosen Annadoah many moons since still made their mouth taste bitter. This jealousy rankling within them, they now with angry exultation took occasion to mock and abuse her. The girl lay still and did not reply. Her heart indeed seemed like a bird lying dead in wintertime.

Then one of three women who stood by Annadoah's couch leaned forward and whispered a terrible thing. The others looked at the girl and fear, mingled with hatred, shone in their eyes.

"Thou sayest this thing," said one, "how dost thou know?"

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And the other, pointing accusingly to the girl who lay before them, her face hidden in her arms, replied:

“The night my baby died . . . I heard her voice.”

They stood in silence, rigid, implacable, bitter.

During the latter dark days a terrible calamity had made itself felt among the tribe. This was the death of many of the newly born. Outside the igloos during the past months, as the babies had come, the number of tiny mounds had increased, and when the aurora flooded the skies heart-broken mothers could be seen weeping over these graves of snow. It is not uncommon in this land for babies to die at birth or come prematurely; but the number of recent deaths and tragic accidents to expectant mothers was unprecedented. This was undoubtedly due to the depleted vitality of the starving mothers—but to the natives there was some other, some unaccountable, some sinister, cause. In their hearts they experienced, each time a new mound rose white in the moonlight, that tremulous terror of a people who instinctively fear extinction. The grief of a mother was for a personal loss; to the tribe each death meant an even greater, more significant loss, a thing of more than personal consequence.

And when, out of the dim regions of her brain, one of the women now conjured the terrible thing which she whispered concerning Annadoah, it was little wonder the other two regarded the girl as a thing hateful and accursed.

*“She stealeth souls!”*

Nothing more frightful could have been said.

“Yea, the night my baby died I heard her voice,” repeated Inetlia angrily.

And the other, among the superstitious voices in her memory, found it not difficult to recall a similar thing:

“Methinks I heard her sing the night my own little one came—too soon.”

And the third whispered:

“She is as the hungry hill spirit who feasts upon the entrails of the dead. Yea, she carrieth off the souls of the children. *loh! looh!*”

Their voices rose in a maniacal cry of terror and denunciation.

Annadoah rose. Claspings her hands, she demanded piteously:

“Why . . . sayest ye this of me?”

And they shrieked:

"Thou stealest souls! By the *angakoq* shalt thou be accursed!"

"No, no! No, no!" the girl pleaded, falling on her knees and weeping.

Although they suddenly ceased their reviling, hearing outside the barking of dogs, the women thereafter in secret often assembled together; there were ominous whisperings; and each time a child died visits were paid to the *angakoq*, and the unseen powers were invoked to bring misfortune to Annadoah.

Outside the silenced women detected the barking of dogs approaching the village from the distance. They heard the excited calls of tribesmen and the chatter of other women. One by one they crept from the igloo. A strange light in her eyes, Annadoah followed.

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Over the mountains to the north a soft and wondrous light began to palpitate tremulously . . . While the men of the tribe rushed to meet the oncoming team of dogs in the distance, the women stood and gazed with awe upon the increasing wonder in the skies . . . The northern lights, seen nowhere else so splendidly in all the world, had begun the weaving of their glorious and eerie imagery. A nebulous film of silvery light wavered with incredible swiftness over the heavens . . . The snow-blanketed land took instantaneous fire in the sudden flares . . . In the torridly tropic heaven of the virtuous dead an Unknown God, so the tribes believe, makes fire—just as in the nether regions beneath the earth the Great Evil, who has revealed himself with a more terrible reality than the Great Benign, creates cold and forges ice. In that land of the happy dead, disclosed in the aurora, there is never any night, nor is it ever cold. So the souls there are always happy. Sometimes in their revels they troop earthward to cheer the mortals who suffer from *Perdlugssuaq*'s frigid breath as it comes during winter from hell . . . The women looked at one another. The augury was good.

"The spirits of the dead," one whispered, "are happy . . . They are playing ball."

Into their midst, surrounded by the glad cheering men of the tribe, Ootah staggered. His face was cut and covered with black clotted blood. His legs dragged with utter exhaustion. His features were gaunt and marked by lines of frightful suffering. His eyes were bright with the light of fever. When he saw Annadoah a faint but very glad smile passed over his countenance; he made an effort to forget the anguished throes of pain in his limbs and the intermittent shudderings of cold and flushes of intense fever. He tried to speak, but then shook his head sadly. Instead, he pointed to the dilapidated sledge. Three of his dogs had perished—five had been saved. The sled had been battered, but was lashed together. Upon it, however, the precious load of meat was intact. The subtle aroma of it sent a wave of gladness through the crowd. They danced about Ootah, asking questions. Ootah staggered backward and sank helpless against the sledge. After a while he found voice.

"I am very weak," he managed to say.

Several of the women disappeared and soon returned with a bit of walrus blubber. This, having undergone a process of fermentation in the earth, possessed the intoxicating qualities of alcohol. It is used by the natives for purposes of stimulation in such cases and in their celebrations. Ootah with difficulty ate this.

He felt stronger, and rose.

"Thou art ill," said Annadoah, approaching him, and gently touching his wounded face. "Enter, Annadoah will care for thee."

Her face was perilously near him; it was very wan and beautiful in the auroral light—Ootah felt his heart beat wildly. But it was pity, not love, that shone softly from Annadoah's eyes.

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"Thy igloo is cold, thy lamp unlighted," Annadoah insisted. "Come! The others will prepare thy couch and light thy lamps. Until then my bed is thine. It is warm within."

With difficulty Ootah bent low and followed Annadoah through the underground entrance of her igloo. His dogs, which the men had unhitched, and as many as could enter the small enclosure, followed. The stench of the oil lamp at first almost suffocated him. He sank to Annadoah's couch from sheer weakness, and his dogs, licking his face and hands, crept about him.

Meanwhile Annadoah began melting snow over her lamp. The others plied Ootah with questions. Did he go far into the mountains? Were there many *ahmingmah*? Did Koolotah perish? Was he in the mountains when the spirits struck? To all of this he could only move his head in response. While he sipped the warm water gratefully, Annadoah cut away his leather boots and bathed his injuries. His flesh was torn and one ankle was sprained—by a miracle not a bone had been broken in the fall. With unguents left years before by white men, Annadoah treated his many cuts and bruises and bound them securely with clean leather. After he lay back on the couch she bathed his face, and rubbed into the wounds salves which her father had given to her mother and which for years had been precious preserved.

Ootah lay with his eyes closed; he seemed to float in the auroral skies without, in the very happy land of the dead. He forgot the pain in his limbs, the furnace in his forehead. He felt only the soothing touch of Annadoah's dear hands, and her breath at times very near, fanning his face; he heard her voice murmuring to the onlooking natives. Not satisfied with these ministrations, in which they really had little faith, the others presently brought a young *angakoq*, one better loved than the dead Sipsu. For being young he had not prophesied many deaths.

All moved away as the magician began beating his membrane drum over Ootah's body. Working himself into frenzy, he called upon his familiar spirits. For, according to their belief, illness, and the suffering resultant from wounds, are actually caused by the spirits of the various members of the body falling out of harmony. Then the *angakoq* must persuade his friends in the other world to restore peace among the spirits of the human hands, feet, head, or whatever limbs may be affected. The soul, or great spirit, they say resides in one's shadow, and sometimes this falls out of agreement with the minor spirits of the body. Then one is in bad shape, indeed.

For half an hour the chant and dance continued. Meanwhile Ootah opened his eyes and often smiled at Annadoah. He was better, he told them, and motioned the *angakoq* to go. He bade Annadoah sit beside him. He felt unquestionably better.

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"You have asked me whether I went far over the mountains? Yea, we travelled many sleeps, yet we scarcely rested. The world was white about us. The spirits carried us over dark places in the hills, wherein *Perdlugssuaq* makes his home. But he did not strike. We were borne over abysses. The spirits of one's ancestors are often kind. We went through the world of the fog, she who was the wife of that hill spirit who carried the dead from their graves and ate them. Yea, she passed beneath our feet. We came to the high mountains. We passed upward where the eyes of strange beasts glared upon us. I was afraid. But I called upon my father. Then the spirits of the great dead came down upon us. They wove *kamiks* and *ahttees* of fire. Their eyes burned as the great light of the stars. They did not regard us. We came unto the *ahmingmah* . . . But upon our return the hill spirits who live in the caves wakened and struck with their great harpoons. They shook the mountains. Then the good ancestors carried me through *sila*—the world of the air—yea, my dogs, my sledge, and the *ahmingmah* meat. I had called upon those who went before me. I woke at the bottom of the mountain, three of my dogs were crushed, my sledge was broken . . . I lay there a while . . . I slept again . . . often . . . Then I lashed the sled, ate a little of the *ahmingmah* meat, and came . . . hither . . . How . . . Ootah knows not . . . It was hard at times . . . I could hardly walk . . . the ice moved about me . . . always . . . so—" He described a circle with his hand. "But I bethought me of Annadoah—" he smiled—"and I said I go to Annadoah . . . That is how I came . . . I said Annadoah is hungry—yea, as I said it when the eyes looked at me on the mountains, when the hill spirits made my heart grow cold, when Koolotah desired to return . . . Koolotah—he hath gone . . . Koolotah's dogs are gone . . . But I called upon my dead father, my dead grandfather, and the older ones—and I thought of Annadoah." He leaned toward her yearningly, his voice trembling. Fearfully the girl drew away. "It is she who brought the *ahmingmah* meat," he said. "It is she who led me to the *ahmingmah*. Yea, she brings you the *ahmingmah* meat. For the thought of her brings Ootah back after the spirits strike . . . It is she, who lives in the heart of Ootah, who has done all this . . . But you are hungry. Come!"

He rose slowly and crept through the underground tunnel leading from the igloo. The others followed. Without, most of the tribe were waiting. At Ootah's command the men unlashed the sledge-load of meat, and the division began. To Annadoah Ootah gave one-eighth of the load, enough to last by frugal use for more than two moons, or months. Among the others, of whom there were about twenty-five, the remainder was proportionately divided. For himself Ootah reserved only as much as he gave the others.



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Outside Annadoah's igloo all engaged in a joyous revel. Hungrily they feasted upon the raw meat. Then they beat drums and danced. Their voices rose in hilarious chants. Wild joy shook them. Ootah was acclaimed hero of the tribe. Although they have no chiefs, he was accorded the honor of being the bravest and strongest among them. And to the strongest and most heroic the last word in all things belongs.

Of all who were able to participate in the celebration, Maisanguaq alone retired. From the seclusion of his igloo entrance he watched the scene with rancor in his heart.

Over the northern skies the auroral lights played, lighting the scene of spontaneous rejoicing with magical glory. Great silver coronas—or rings of light—constantly arose in the north, passed to the zenith and melted as they descended to the south. Luminous curtain-like films closed and parted alternately like the veils of a Valhalla drawn back and forth before the warrior souls of the north. Tremendous fan-shaped shafts of opalescent fire shot toward the zenith and like search-lights moved to and fro across the sky. The clouds became illumined with an interior flame and glowed like diaphanous mists of gold half concealing the vague faces of the beauteous spirits of the dead. Their billowing edges palpitated with a tremor as of quicksilver. Within and through this empyreal web of light marvellous scenes were simultaneously woven. They lasted a moment's space and vanished. The natives, dancing unrestrainedly, saw heavenly mountain slopes covered with grass of emerald fire and glittering with starry flowers. They saw the gigantic shadows of celestial *ahmingmah* passing behind the clouds . . . and here and there were the cyclopean adumbrations of great caribou, and creatures for which they did not have a name. A tossing sea of rippling waves of light was presently unfolded, and over it they saw millions of birds, with wings of fire, soaring with bewildering rapidity from horizon to zenith . . . This faded . . . Monstrous and gorgeous flowers of living rainbow tints burst into bloom—fields of them momentarily covered the heaven. These the natives regarded with only half accustomed wonder, for they knew there were strange flowers in the land of the dead.

As they danced, the colored imageries steadily faded in the growing intensity of the great banded coronas that rose from the north. A light of cold electric fire increasingly blazed over the heavens until a frigid silver day, brighter than any day of sunshine, reached its brief noon upon the earth.

Rocking their bodies and singing, the natives dispersed to their respective igloos. Sitting on his sledge by Annadoah, Ootah dimly heard their voices echoing into silence; he experienced terrible pains again in his limbs and the fever in his head. Everything became dizzy, and with a sick feeling of faintness he crept into Annadoah's igloo and fell upon her couch.

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It was in his heart to ask her once again to be his, to repeat the protestation of his love; he felt that he had shown he deserved to win her. But his utter weakness, and the very enthralling delight of her soft hands on his forehead, kept him still. He lay in a semi-delirium suffering greatly, but at heart very happy. A new peace possessed him. Never had Annadoah caressed him before, never had he felt the tingling thrill of her tender hands, never had her breath so perilously warmed his face. For an hour she sat by him, perfunctorily bathing his wounds with the white men's ointment and rubbing a yellow salve upon his face. And while she did this, often, very often, she closed her eyes. Sometimes her hands, as they passed over his forehead, absently wandered to the couch, sometimes they soothed the air near the suffering man. Then she would recall herself. Gazing upon Ootah, pity would fill her; and then—well, then her mind would wander. She was faint herself, tired and half-asleep.

Once, as she touched Ootah's hand, he closed it impulsively over hers. Her heart gave a thud. Her eyelids quivered. A smile appeared on her face. Ootah pressed her hand more firmly—he did not realize how fiercely in his fever. His blood ran high; in a mingled delirium of pain and transport he drew her slowly toward him. Her one hand soothed his brow, softly, very gently. The smile on her face deepened. She gasped with a throe of the old memories.

"Olafaksoah," she breathed, rapturously.

Ootah felt a horrible pain grip his heart. He opened his eyes, stark conscious. He saw the eyes of Annadoah were closed. On her face he observed the fond, far-away smile; he knew her heart was in the south. And in that frightful moment his untutored mind by instinct realized why she had bandaged and soothed him so tenderly, realized, indeed, that in doing so, in his stead, her mind had conjured up the vision of Olafaksoah. His hands were strong, she had said, they hurt her. Ootah, with ferocity, gripped her little hand tighter.

"Olafaksoah," she murmured again, with delight—then, recalling herself, suddenly uttered a sharp cry of dismay as she opened her eyes.

Ootah staggered to his feet. The utter tragedy of her devotion to the man who had deserted her, the utter hopelessness of his own deep passion blighting, horribly forced itself upon him.

"Annadoah! Annadoah! Annadoah!" he wailed, his voice sobbing the beloved name.

The igloo was stifling; he felt that he was suffocating. Everything reeling about him, he crept painfully from the igloo into the night. He felt he must be alone.



Outside the aurora was paling with intermittent cascades of resolving lights. Over the snows glittering rosy fingers painted running rainbow trceries. It seemed as though the spirit revellers were pouring fiery jewels from the skies.

Ootah stood before that revealed and radiant land of the dead—the dead who danced and were happy—his hands clenched and upraised above him.

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"Annadoah! Annadoah!" he sobbed the name again and again, and in his voice throbbed all the piteousness, all the bitterness of his utter heartbreak. There was no reproach in his shuddering sobs; only sorrow, only the desolation and eternal heart-ache of that which loves mightily, unrequitedly, and realizes that all it desires can never, never be.

Ootah asked himself all the questions men ask in such a crisis; why, when he loved so indomitably, the heart of Annadoah should stir only with the thought of another; why the spirits that weave the fabric of men's fate had designed it thus. Why the ultimate desire of the heart is forever ungranted and an intrinsically unselfish love too often finds itself defeated—these questions, in his way, he asked of his soul, and he demanded, with wild weeping, their answer from the dead rejoicing in the paling Valhalla. But there was no answer—as perhaps there may be no answer; or, if there is, that God, fearing lest in attaining the Great Desire men should cease to endeavor, to serve and to labor, has kept it locked where He and the dead live beyond the skies.

Ootah fell prostrate to the ground and his body throbbed on the ice in uncontrollable throes of grief. The aurora faded above him. Darkness closed upon the earth. Sitting in her igloo, startled, vaguely perplexed and half-afraid, Annadoah heard him sobbing throughout the night.

## VIII

*"For a long black hour of horror they were driven over the thundering seas and through a frigid whirlwind of snow sharp as flakes of steel . . .*

"Seeing Ootah turn slightly toward Annadoah, Maisanguaq sprang at his throat. Their arms closed about one another . . . The floe rocked beneath them—they slipped to and fro on the ice . . . About them the frightful darkness roared; they felt the heaving sea under them. And while they struggled in their brief death-to-death fight, the floe was tossed steadily onward."

The long night began to lift its sable pall, and at midday, for a brief period, a pale glow appeared above the eastern horizon. In this brief spell of daily increasing twilight the desolate region took on a grey-blue hue; the natives, as they appeared outside their shelters, looked like greyish spectres. Ootah felt the grim grey desolation color his soul.

He had regained his strength, and his wounds had healed with the remarkable rapidity that nature effects in people who lead a primitive life; only the hurt in his heart remained. Annadoah had often visited him, and while he lay on his bed of furs she had boiled *ahmingmah* meat and made hot water over the lamp very solicitously. Once, half-hesitating, she looked into his eyes, and as though she had a confession to make, said quietly:

“Thou art very brave, Ootah.”

This pleased him—once she had said he had the heart of a woman.

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He had thrilled when she soothed him, and now he was half sorry that the injuries no longer needed attention. He loved Annadoah more deeply than ever, and his greatest concern was for her. He might win her—yes, perhaps some day, but he could not forget that, whenever she had touched him with tenderness, she thought of Olafaksoah.

Standing before his igloo, musing upon these things, Ootah espied in the semi-light a dark speck moving on the ice.

“*Nannook! (Bear)*” he called, and the men rushed from their houses. Without pausing to get his gun Ootah ran down to the ice-sheeted shore. Nature, as if repenting of her bitterness, had sent milder weather, and the bear, emerging from its winter retreat, made its way over the ice in search of seal. Lifting his harpoon, Ootah attacked the bear. It rose on its haunches and parried the thrusts. A half-dozen lean dogs came dashing from the shelters and jumped about the creature. The bear grunted viciously—the dogs howled. The bear was lean and faint from hunger, and its fight was brief—the lances of four natives pierced the gaunt body. The bear meat was divided after the communal custom of the tribe, and the gnawing of their stomachs was again somewhat appeased. Some days later three bears were killed near the village. The hearts of the tribe arose, for spring was surely dawning.

Early in March Arnaluk, skirmishing along the shore, saw a bear disappearing in the distance. The animal was making its direction seaward, and this indicated to the astute native that its quick senses had detected the presence of seal.

“Ootah! Ootah!” he called. “Attalaq! Attalaq!” The two tribesmen responded. With harpoons and lances they followed the trail of the bear. Less than a mile from shore they found it sitting near a seal blow hole in the ice. At the sight of the men it fled. A close inspection resulted in the discovery of a half dozen blow holes—or open places to which the seal rise under the ice and come to the surface to breathe. For a long while the men waited. Standing near the holes, their weapons ready to strike, they imitated the call of seals. Finally there was a snorting noise beneath one of the holes. Ootah detected a slight rise of vapor. Attalaq’s harpoon descended. A joyous cry arose. Breaking open the ice about the hole a seal was drawn to the surface. Daily visits were thereafter made to the vicinity and the hunters, patiently watching near the holes, succeeded in catching several seals. Other blow holes were later detected along the ice, then they disappeared and for a period no seal rewarded the hunters.

The weather continued to moderate, and these excursions on the sea ice became more and more dangerous. One day Attalaq and Ootah, while walking along the shore, heard a familiar call in the far distance, out toward the open sea.

“Walrus,” said Ootah, the zest of the hunt tingling in his veins.

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"But the danger is great—the ice splits," said Attalaq.

"But we need food." Ootah thought of Annadoah. She had not been well, she needed food—that was sufficient. Moreover, he thought of the children; three were dying of lack of food. So he called the tribesmen and gave the signal for preparations to depart. A selection had to be made of the best dogs for the dangerous trip. Few dogs remained in the village; many had been frozen by the bitter cold; others had to be killed as food for their companions; some had occasionally been devoured by the famished natives. And this the desperate people had done with reluctance and great sorrow—for, as I have said, a native loves his dog but little less than his child.

Ootah in the lead, with five others, started on the hunt, with three sledges, each of which was drawn by a team of five lean, hungry dogs. After some urging Maisanguaq had sullenly consented to accompany the party.

Joy flushed the natives' skin, for a thin film of sunlight trembled low over the eastern horizon. As they sped northward past great promontories they saw several auks. Later two ptarmigan were spotted, and still later an eider duck. They began chanting songs of the race.

Quickly, however, the brief sunlight faded, heavy grey clouds piled along the sky-line, the atmosphere became perceptibly warmer, and intermittent gusts of wind blew downward from the inland mountains.

They directed their steps over the ice to a distant black spot, somewhat more than a mile distant, which they knew to be open water. There, if there were any, the walrus would be found. As they were marching, a very faint crackling noise vibrated through the ice under their feet. They ceased singing. Four of the party paused and would have turned back. Ootah urged them onward. They paced off half a mile. The wind increased in volume and whined dolefully. Their steps lagged. Suddenly they heard the harsh nasal bellow they knew so well. The hearts of all expanded with the joy of the hunt.

The dogs howled hungrily and, with tails swishing savagely, tore ahead. As they approached the edge of the sea ice they passed great lakes of open water. The twilight still continued to thicken, the wind came in increasingly furious blasts. Nearer and nearer came the low call of walrus bulls.

In a lake of lapping black water, about five hundred feet from the open sea, a small herd rose to the surface intermittently for breath. In the deep gloom the hunters saw fountains of spray ascending as they breathed. Hitching their dogs to harpoon stakes driven in the ice, they separated and quietly took positions about the open water.

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“Wu-r-r!” The low walrus call rose over the ice. Ootah leaned over the edge of the ice and imitated the animal cry. “Woor-r,” Maisanguaq, near him, replied. The water seethed, and two glistening white tusks appeared. Ootah raised his harpoon—it hissingly cut the air. A terrific bellow followed. The little lake seethed. A dozen fiery eyes, of a phosphorescent green, appeared above the water. Maisanguaq struck, so did Arnaluk. They let out their harpoon lines—the savage beasts dove downward, then rose for breath. In their frantic struggle their heads beat against the ice about the edge of the space of open water. The natives fled backward—the ice broke into thousands of fragments. Each time the animals came up the hunters delivered more harpoons so as to pinion securely and at the same time despatch the prey. In the gathering gloom they had to aim by instinct. For an hour the struggle between the alert men and the enraged beasts continued. Several times Ootah and Arnaluk fired their guns as the green eyes appeared so as to finish the task of killing.

Meanwhile the grey reflection of the descending sun entirely faded along the horizon; a bluish gloom blotted out the landscape. The wind swept over the ice with fiendish hisses. With a quick change the air became colder and snow flakes fell. The natives became alarmed. As they were drawing the first walrus to the ice a sound, like the discharge of a gun beneath the sea, startled them. Seizing their knives they dexterously fell upon the animal and lifted the meat and blubber in long slices from the bones. A great quantity was cast to the ravenous dogs. Two more walrus were lumberingly drawn to the ice; the first sledge load and two hunters started shoreward; soon the second sledge was loaded. Ootah and Maisanguaq remained to dress the third beast.

Like scorpions in the hands of the mighty *tornarssuit* the wind now steadily beat upon the ice. The two men were almost lifted from their feet. Not far away they heard the tumultuous crash of the rising waves. As they were lashing the blubber to Ootah’s sledge, a resounding detonation vibrated through the ice under him—the field on which they stood slowly but unmistakably began to move!

Maisanguaq spoke. The wind drowned his voice. Above its clamor they heard the ice separating with the splitting sound of artillery. Whipped by the terrific gale the snow cut their faces like bits of steel. In the darkness, which steadily thickened, they heard the appalling boom of bergs and the grind of floes colliding on the sea.

Ootah leaped to the team of dogs and interrupted their feast. He knew they had not a single moment to lose—the field had surely parted from the land ice and it was now a dreadful question as to whether a return was possible. As he was hitching the dogs to the loaded sledge he suddenly gave a start. Was he dreaming? Was he hearing the disembodied speak, as men did in dreams? He listened intently—surely he heard a soft sweet voice calling piteously through the wind. His heart gave a great thud.



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Through the gathering gloom he saw something . . . a blur of blackness . . . gathering substance as it approached over the ice. It moved uncertainly . . . and seemed to be driven toward him by the furious wind.

“Look—who is it?” he called to Maisanguaq.

For answer, through the din of the elements, a voice called brokenly, sobbingly:

“Ootah! . . . Ootah!”

Ootah leaped to his feet. Out of the snow-driven blackness a frail figure staggered toward him.

“Annadoah,” Ootah murmured, seizing the trembling woman in his arms. She seemed about to faint.

“Why hast thou come hither?” He hugged her fiercely to his bosom. He felt a throb of ecstatic delight; for the first time she had surrendered to his arms; for the first time he held her close to him; death—for the moment—lost its terrors—he felt that he would be willing to die, in that storming darkness, with her heart beating, so that he felt its every pulse, close, close to his.

The wild winds almost drowned Annadoah’s words.

“The women came to me,” she panted with difficulty, and Ootah had to bend his ear to her mouth so as to hear. “They were angry. They said ‘She stealeth souls! Annadoah stealeth souls!’ They said, ‘Annadoah hath caused the death of many children!’ Ootah! Ootah! They came, as they do when thou art absent. They threatened me—they called upon the spirits, as they once called to them beneath the sea. And the curse of the long night—of darkness—hunger—death . . . they invoked . . . of the dead . . . upon me . . . I was afraid.” Ootah felt her shuddering in his arms. “The women came unto my igloo,” she repeated wildly—“they desired that ravens peck my eyes—that I rest without a grave—that my body lie unburied and that my spirit never rest. And the curse of darkness—*io-o-h-h!*—they called the curse of darkness upon me. They trampled upon me with their feet, and they tore at my hair . . . They came unto my igloo as the storm came and called upon the spirits of the skins to strike me; for they said I had again driven thee to thy death, that I had sent the others to their death. Thou knowest I lay ill when thou didst depart. But they fell on me one by one and hurt me—I feared they would kill me. They were angry and they called upon the dead. The storm strikes; the spirits of the winds are angry; the ice breaks, and it is the fault of Annadoah. So they said.”

Her eyes were wild, her hair dishevelled. Ootah felt her forehead—it burned with fever.

“How didst thou come hither—and why?” he asked, his heart bounding in the thought that she had followed him, that of him she sought protection.

“I know not—methinks I called upon the spirits. I knew thou didst come this way—I knew thou wouldst save me from the women. And I followed. The way was dark. The wind held me back. But I knew thou wert here—my heart led me; my heart found thee as birds find grass in the mountains. Ootah! Ootah! I fear I shall die!” She collapsed in his arms. The wind shrieked! In the distance two icebergs exploded—there was a flash of phosphorus on the sea as the arctic dinosaurs collided.

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"Come! Or we perish in the sea!" Maisanguaq, his head bent near so as to hear, now yelled into Ootah's ear.

Annadoah cowered at the sound of his voice. Ootah felt her trembling, in his arms.

"And he . . . is here?" she whispered. "I am afraid."

They felt the great ice field rocking on the waves imprisoned beneath them. It trembled whenever it touched a passing berg.

Maisanguaq prodded the terror-stricken dogs. Their howls shrilled through the storm,

"*Huk! Huk! Huk!*" he urged.

Supporting Annadoah with one arm Ootah pushed forward after the moving team. He knew they were being carried steadily and slowly seaward, but he had hopes that the ice field would swerve landward toward the south where an armlike glacier jutted, elbow-fashion, into the sea and caught the current.

Snapping their whips and frantically urging the dogs, they fought through the snow-driven darkness and over the moving field of ice. Annadoah murmured wild and incoherent things in her delirium. They paced off half a mile.

"*Aulate!*" Ootah suddenly called, panic-stricken. "Halt! halt!" Maisanguaq stopped the dogs. Before them a snaky space of water, blacker than the darkness about them, and capped with faintly phosphorescent crests of tossing waves, separated them—Ootah knew not how far—from the land.

"To the right!" Ootah called. "Let us go onward!"

"*Huk! Huk!*" Maisanguaq encouraged the dogs.

"The floe may land near the glacier," Ootah cried.

He spoke to Annadoah. She made an irrelevant reply about the women who called upon the spirits—and their terrible maledictions.

With Maisanguaq ahead driving the dogs, they turned to the south. Annadoah sank helpless in Ootah's arms—she could no longer walk. Ootah supported her. At times his feet slipped. He felt himself becoming dizzy. The beloved burden in his arms became unsupportably heavy. They travelled in utter darkness, near them the desirous clamor of the waves. Seaward, at times, where the splitting floes crashed against one another, there ran zigzag lines of phosphorescence. The winds howled in the ears of Ootah like the voices of the unhappy dead. Occasionally he heard the voice of Maisanguaq ahead urging the team.

Ice froze on their faces, frigid water swept the floe. Their garments became saturated and froze to the skin. Finally the dogs refused to move. “We can go no further,” said Maisanguaq, in terror. “I am resigned to die.” Ootah stubbornly invoked the spirits of his ancestors for succor. He called to the dogs.

Thereupon a terrific shock caused both men to reel. The ice field trembled under them—then stopped.

Ootah realized that a section of it had swept against one of the many land-adhering glaciers. There was hope—and greater danger.

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With a rumbling crash that reverberated above the storm the field separated into countless tossing fragments. The cake on which the terror-stricken party cowered swirled dizzily in an eddy of the released foaming waters. On all sides the inky waves seethed up among the crevices of the sundering floes. To the south Ootah heard the breakers booming against the ice cliffs, which perilously barred the currents of the angry sea. The caps of the curling waves took on a pale white and appalling luminescence.

"The faces of the dead!" cried Maisanguaq in superstitious terror. "From the bosom of *Nerrvik* they come to greet us."

Ootah, however, felt no fear. For once he felt unheedful of those in the other world. His mind was occupied with a more immediate interest—that of saving the life of the woman he loved.

With quick presence of mind, Ootah grasped the rear upstander of the sled, which had begun to slide to and fro, and planted his harpoon in the ice.

"Thy axe!" he shouted. Maisanguaq passed the axe. Ootah grappled for it in the darkness. "Hold the harpoon," he directed. Mechanically Maisanguaq groped for the harpoon and held it while Ootah, with his one free hand, lifted the axe and drove it into the ice. With the other hand he still gripped the unconscious woman. Her hair swished about his legs in the howling wind. Maisanguaq planted his own weapon in the ice on the opposite side of the sledge, and Ootah, with unerring strokes, hardly able to see it in the darkness, pounded it firmly into the ice.

"Thy lashings," he called. Maisanguaq passed a coil of skin rope.

About the improvised stakes which secured the sled Ootah whipped the lashings, then he passed them under and over the sled until it was securely pinioned. Very gently he placed Annadoah upon the mass of walrus meat and lashed her body in turn to the sled and about the stakes. With Maisanguaq's assistance he tied the cowering dogs to the harpoons. This done, the two men, benumbed and dazed, clung to the anchor for support.

As the severed ice cakes dispersed, a curling wave lifted the floe on which they clung high on its crest and tossed it southward. As it rose on the surging breakers Ootah felt the dread presence of *Perdlugssuaq* ready to strike. Each time they made swift, sickening descents in the seething troughs he felt all consciousness pass away. On all sides the waves hissed. Torrents of water swept over the floe. Ootah felt his limbs freezing; he felt his arms becoming numb. He feared that at any moment he should lose his grip and be swept into the raging sea. Then he thought of Annadoah and conjured new courage. For a while the dogs whined—then they became silent. One already was drowned. Ootah bent over Annadoah to protect her from the mountainous onslaughts of icy water. His teeth chattered—he suffered agonies. For a long black

hour of horror they were driven over the thundering seas and through a frigid whirlwind of snow, sharp as flakes of steel.

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The recoiling impetus of the waters gradually increased under them. Ootah knew this indicated an approach to land. The waves came in shorter, but quicker swells. The floe bumped into others. Ootah roused himself and hopefully turned toward Maisanguaq.

"We approach the land," he called. "We must bide our time—then jump."

The waves washed the floe toward the distant shore. Land ice steadily thickened about them. Maisanguaq realized that they were actually being carried to the sheltering harbor of the arm-like glacier south of the village. Ootah quickly began unlashng Annadoah so as to be prepared to seize her and spring, when the opportunity came, from cake to cake, to safety.

Impelled by a warning instinct, Ootah suddenly looked up from his task, and felt rather than saw Maisanguaq near and about to leap upon him. Maisanguaq's eyes dimly glowered in the dark. Ootah rose quickly. Maisanguaq drew back and uttered an exclamation of chagrin. Ootah understood. With rescue possible, Maisanguaq had quickly come to a desperate resolution.

The girl lay between them.

Ootah braced himself.

"I hate thee, Ootah," Maisanguaq shouted, no longer able to suppress the baffled jealousy and seething envy endured quietly for many seasons. He moved about, parleying for time and a chance to spring upon Ootah when he was unguarded.

"I hate thee not, Maisanguaq," Ootah replied.

He steeled himself, for he knew Maisanguaq was strong, he knew the ice was treacherous; he waited for the man to strike.

"My heart warms for Annadoah; so doth thine: therefore, thou or I must die." Maisanguaq's deep voice sounded hoarse through the storm.

"As thou sayest," Ootah replied, "but why?"

"Annadoah must be thine or mine; dead, she cannot choose thee, and with thee dead, my strength shall cow her. As men did of old I shall carry her away by force. She shall be mine."

"Annadoah hath already chosen—her heart is in the south," Ootah replied, sadly.

"Fool!" the other man shrieked. "Didst thou not go to the mountains to get her food; didst thou not thief from thine own self to give oil to her; didst thou not fawn upon her

and perform the services of a woman? Thou liest if thou sayest thou wilt not have her for thy wife. No man doeth this unseeking of reward."

"I love Annadoah," Ootah said, bitterly.

"Yea, and thou hast hope."

"Perchance—perchance I have hope."

"And Annadoah looks with favor upon thee—I have seen it in her eyes. Did she not greet thee as women greet their lovers when thou camest from the mountains, and did she not bind thy wounds with strange ointment?"

"She thought of another—her heart was in the south."

"Hath she not sought thee hither—upon the ice—when the women fell upon her with their curses? Her heart wings to thee, did she not say, as birds to green grasses in the mountains?"



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"Her heart is in the south," Ootah sadly moaned.

"The heart of woman changes always," cried Maisanguaq. "The heart of woman always yields to force. *Pst?*"

Seeing Ootah turn slightly toward Annadoah, Maisanguaq sprang at his throat. Their arms closed about one another. Maisanguaq breathed the wrath of the spirits upon Ootah. He fought with the fierce strength of one insane with jealous, murderous rage. The icy floe rocked beneath them. They slipped to and fro on the treacherous ice. The sharp snow beat their faces. Water washed under their feet. At times they reached, in their frightful struggle, the very edge of the floe, and seemed about to tumble into the seething sea. Ootah felt Maisanguaq trying to force him into the watery abyss—but he fought backward . . . time and time again . . . They constantly fell over the unconscious woman on the sledge. About them the darkness roared; they felt the heaving sea beneath them. And while they struggled, in their brief terrible death-to-the-death fight, the floe was tossed steadily onward. Ootah felt his breath giving out. Maisanguaq felt Ootah's hands closing about his throat. He felt the blood pound in his temples. Desperation filled him—he determined to kill Ootah by any means. A grim suggestion came to him. He endeavored to release himself.

In a lull of the wind both heard something that made them start. Aroused from her feverish coma by the two men falling against her, Annadoah suddenly cried aloud. The two men stood stone-still, locked in a deadly grip. At that moment Annadoah felt the warmth of their panting breath as they paused near her. Where she was at first she did not realize. She heard a clamor of wind and breaking waters. She imagined herself being tossed through the air in the arms of the *tornarssuit*. At the same time she became vividly aware of the desperate struggle nearby. Subconsciously she realized Maisanguaq and Ootah were engaged in a fight to the death. In the darkness she sensed them moving away from her. Straining her eyes she began, very dimly—as Eskimos can even in pitch darkness—to descry the black outlines of the two men wrestling as they shifted nearer and nearer the edge of the ice. Then it dawned upon Annadoah's mind that they were being carried, in the jeopardy of an awful storm, on a floe that was tossed hither and thither in a maelstrom of angry waters. A frantic desire to save Ootah surged up within her. Behind him she saw the swimming blackness of the heaving waves. She attempted to rise. Her head swam; there was loud ringing in her ears. Her hands were not free, her ankles were bound—she struggled to release herself. Twisting her wrists and ankles in the tight lashings until they bled, it suddenly flashed upon her that she was lashed to the sled. She knew that at any moment the floe might crash into a glacier and be crushed to atoms. She knew that Maisanguaq and Ootah were fighting for the possession of her—that both might perish, or, what was worse, that Maisanguaq might win. Chaotic terror filled her. Struggling frantically but ineffectually, she uttered a maniacal scream.

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“Ootah! Ootah!”

Ootah did not reply.

The storm howled. The wind lashed the floe—it fell like a whip on her face. Annadoah felt the surging impetus of the angry sea under them. She felt herself rising on the crests of mighty waves and being swiftly hurled into foaming troughs of water. Frigid spray bathed her face. Still the two vague shadows, darker than the night, slowly and laboriously moved about her. At times they brushed her lashed body—then she felt the quick gasps of their breath; she sensed the strain of Ootah’s limbs twisting in the struggle.

Again she perceived the two shifting away and being merged into the swimming blackness. Presently she saw only the phosphorescent crest of a mountainous wave . . . rising in the distance . . . She became cold with white fear—she felt her blood turn to ice . . . She screamed and struggled vainly with the lashings . . . She felt the floe rise, felt herself being steadily lifted into the sheer air, and of paralyzed fright again swooned.

Maisanguaq, by a fierce wrench, managed to release one hand, struck Ootah a heavy blow and broke away. Leaping to the opposite side of the sledge, with a terrific pull, he drew one of the harpoons out of the ice and with his knife speedily cut it loose from the lashings. Ootah, stunned for a moment, turned upon him. Maisanguaq desperately raised the weapon. Ootah heard it hiss through the air. He reeled backward—the harpoon grazed his arm and struck the ice.

At that very instant the oncoming breaker descended with a rush from behind—a torrent of water washed the floe. Ootah was lifted from his feet and dashed against the sled. When he rose he waited in silence for an attack. There was none. He moved over the floe cautiously, feeling the darkness. Creeping to the edge he saw something dimly white and blurred on the receding wave. “Maisanguaq,” he called, softly. There was a pang at his heart, for he was truly gentle. He strained his ears to hear through the din of the elements. The floe suddenly jolted him as it was carried, with a thud, against shore-clinging ice. Ootah peered seaward, and called again, loudly—

“Maisanguaq!”

Only the waves replied.

Hurriedly he cut the leather lashings and, leaping from floe to floe, carried Annadoah to the shelter of the shore. Returning he loosened the dogs. Only three lived. Biding his time until the floe was ground securely among others, he then dragged his load of meat ashore. Sinking to the earth he rubbed Annadoah’s hands and breathed with eager and enraptured transport into her face.



He called her name. Presently she stirred.

“Ootah,” she murmured. “It is very dark—very dark—I wonder . . . whether . . . it will soon . . . be spring.”

He chafed her hands. For a lucid moment she nestled to him and in a terrified voice whispered——

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“Maisanguaq—where is he?” She heard Ootah’s reply.

“He hath gone the long journey of the dead.”

Annadoah breathed a sigh of relief and again floated into the coma of fever and exhaustion.

The journey before Ootah was desperately difficult in the storm and darkness. In his way of reckoning he knew they had floated about two miles south of the village. The return lay along the sea and over crushed, blocked ice. Much as he regretted it, he was compelled to leave the precious load of walrus blubber behind, so as to carry Annadoah, who was unable to walk, on the sledge. He covered the blubber with cakes of ice, hopeful that it might by chance escape the ravaging bears. His companions might come for it after his return. He knew the probabilities were, however, that the keen noses of bears or wolves would detect it.

After lashing Annadoah to the sledge, so she might not be jolted from it, Ootah, with a brave heart, started in the teeth of the biting wind. The half-frozen dogs rose to their task nobly and pulled at the traces. Ootah pushed the sledge from behind. He trusted to the sure instinct of the animals to find a safe way. Progress was necessarily slow. Fortunately the snow stopped falling and one agony was removed.

In lulls of the storm Ootah heard Annadoah moaning in her delirium.

When they reached the village, a half dozen men were assembled outside their houses. They rejoicingly hailed Ootah, whom they had counted among the dead. He learned that two of his companions had gone to join Maisanguaq. The first party had safely reached the shore before the breaking away of the ice. The news of Ootah’s arrival brought out the women. When they saw Annadoah they crowded about her, scolding. Ootah silenced the garrulous throng with a fierce command. They shrank away.

“She came to me on the ice,” he said. “Knew ye not that the spirits fared not well within her, that she was ill, ye she-wolves? She sees things that are not so and raves of the curses ye invoked, barking she-dogs! Aga! Aga! Go—go!”

Assisted by several of the men, Ootah conveyed Annadoah into her igloo and laid her upon her couch. Her face was flushed, and as she lay there Ootah thought she was very beautiful. She had become much emaciated—Ootah did not like that. But when she opened her eyes Ootah saw in them a soft, new light.

“Thou art brave, Ootah,” she said, essaying a smile of gratitude. “Thou art brave of heart . . . and kind.”

Ootah's heart stirred. Once she had said that his heart was as soft as that of a woman; this was, indeed, to him reward for all the frightful terrors he had endured on the storming sea.

"And do the wings of thy heart not stir, Annadoah?" he asked softly, a world of pleading in his voice. "Wilt thou not be mine in the spring?"

"In the spring," she said, dreamily, and her voice quavered . . . "in the spring . . ."

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A far-away look came into her eyes, and Ootah felt an infinite ache at his heart.

"I am afraid, Ootah," she said presently, in a trembling voice . . . "Afraid . . . my head burns—the igloo is black . . . Dost thou remember what the women told their dead? . . . They invoked the dead to curse me . . . as I stood by the open sea . . . when the moon rose . . . Ootah! Ootah! I cannot see thee . . . It is very . . . dark." Ootah laid his hand upon Annadoah's head.

"The spirits do not fare well within thee," he said. "But I will care for thee."

For nearly a moon Annadoah lay ill with a strange fever. And in her disturbed dreams, as Ootah watched through the long hours, she murmured vaguely, but longingly, for the spring.

## IX

*"Turning softly, she found a tiny naked baby . . . Annadoah leaned forward, gazing at it intently, wildly—then uttered a scream as though she had been stabbed to the heart . . ."*

The sun rose above the horizon and flooded the earth with liquid gold; again the sea ran with running light; the melting glaciers shimmered with burning amethystine hues; the snow-covered mountains took fire and glowed with burning bars of chrysoberyl and sapphire, while on the limpid sea the moving bergs glittered like monstrous diamonds electrically white. On the sequestered slopes of the low mountain valleys green mosses once more carpeted the earth, buttercups and dandelions peeped pale golden eyes from the ground, in the teeming crevices of the high promontories delicate green and crimson lichens wove a marvellous lacery, and wherever the sun poured its encouraging springtime light beauteous small star- and bell-shaped flowers burst into an effulgence of pale rose and glistening white bloom. The suggestion of a very faint, sweet aroma pervaded the air.

Above the promontories millions of auks again made black clouds against the sky,—eider ducks floated on the molten waters of sheltering fjords,—along the icy shores puffins, with white swelling breasts, sat in military line,—guillemots cooed their spring love songs and fulmar gulls uttered amorous calls,—on the green slopes the white hare of the arctic gambolled, and tiny bears, soft and silken flossed, played at the entrances of moss-ensconced caves. Out on the sea unexpected herds of walrus lay sleeping on floating ice; harp seals sported joyously in the waves; a white whale spouted shafts of blue water high into the air. From the interior mountains came the howl of wolves and foxes, the sound of rushing waters and the roar of released glaciers. Nature was vocal with awakening life.

In her igloo Annadoah lay alone—for with spring the time of her trial had come.

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In the customary preparations for the coming of Annadoah's unborn child Ootah had entered with rare tenderness and solicitude. When a little one is expected among these northern people, new clothing, of the rarest skins of animals and the feathers of birds, must be made for both mother and child; a new igloo is built for the event by the happy father, for the little one they believe should come in a house unspotted and white as the driven snow. Annadoah was deserted, husbandless; the women of the tribe remained aloof from her; Ootah alone stood by her. And Ootah helped her with unselfish, eager gladness.

For several summers, in anticipation of the day when he might be a father, Ootah had gathered exquisite and delicate skins. These he now brought to Annadoah. There were silken young caribou hides, soft, fluffy white and blue fox pelts, as well as the skins of hares and the young of bears. Of these, Annadoah, in the last week of fading winter, made, according to custom, new garments for herself. Then, as the sun rose in early spring and the birds mated, Ootah went away to the high cliffs, where the auks nested, and jumping from crag to crag, hundreds of feet above the sea, gathered a thousand tiny baby auks, with crests of wondrous down, of which the hood for the unborn child was made. In these high crevices, from which at any moment he might be plunged to death, Ootah gathered mosses of ineffable softness, which were placed in the hood as a cushion for the little one.

Near her winter home, Ootah built a new igloo for Annadoah, and never was one made with more infinite patience and greater care. Inside it was immaculately white, and when he lighted the new lamp the walls glistened like silver; over the light he placed a new pot of soap stone, for everything in that place in which a new life was to come into being must by an unwritten law be freshly made and never used before. He built a bed of ice, laid it thick with moss, and over this tenderly placed, in turn, first walrus hides, then thick reindeer and warm fox skins. He brought to the igloo a supply of walrus meat, and then, fearful to be present at an event in which he had no right of participation, prepared to depart to the mountains to hunt game.

Before leaving he crept half fearfully into Annadoah's old igloo and told her all was ready. She smiled fondly and reached forth her little hands. "Thou art very kind, Ootah," she said, "thou art brave and kind." Ootah was at a loss for words, but his heart beat high, and he was very glad.

The natives watched Annadoah, as, arrayed in her immaculate garments, she made her way, with bowed head, to her new home; they whispered among themselves as they saw the *ilisitok* (wise woman) follow later.

When she sank on the new and wonderful couch, gratitude filled Annadoah's heart, and she murmured over and over again: "Thou art very kind, Ootah: thou art brave and kind." Somehow the bright igloo became black and she seemed to be floating on clouds. She remembered the Eskimo women wailing in the moonlight . . . by the open



sea . . . and the curse they invoked upon her through the dead. She trembled and felt inordinately cold. But she knew it was spring, for outside the igloo, with blithesome and silvery sweetness, a bunting was singing.

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When Annadoah awoke from her delirium of agony she saw that the wise woman had left her. The walls of the igloo sparkled as the flames of the lamp flickered. Over it a pot sizzled with walrus meat frying in fat. In her half-waking condition Annadoah realized that something lay by her, and turning, softly, she found a tiny, naked baby. Its skin was pale golden, its hair, unlike that of other babies, was of the color of the rays of the sun. With half-fearful gentleness she turned it over and over. Speechless with wonder, an inexplicable stirring in her bosom, she regarded its face—she observed its nose, the contour of its cheeks, the arrogance of its little chin; she noted in her child that curious and often brief resemblance of the new-born to the father—and this immediately recalled vividly and achingly the face of Olafaksoah. This was her child, and his. Surely, surely, with great joy she understood! With this thought, an impetuous longing for the father filled her. Passionately pressing the little creature to her breast she gave vent to the homesickness and ache of her heart in wild, convulsed sobs. The touch of the little one, the resemblance of its tiny face to that of the blond man—these brought back the old passion and longing in all their bitterness. Yet at the same time the child brought a new satisfying solace to her; it filled an immeasurable void in her heart. Now and again she held it from her, and suppressing her violent sobs, solemnly regarded its face. She could not get over the wonder and half-surprise that possessed her. With utter abandon she finally fiercely clutched it to her. The infant began to cry. Annadoah, with slow, cautious gentleness laid it down by her side, scared, amazed. Thereupon the baby for the first time opened its eyes. Annadoah leaned forward, gazing at it intently, wildly—then uttered a scream as though she had been stabbed to the heart.

When the wise woman—who had left Annadoah alone for a long sleep—returned to prepare food and to seek of the spirits the destined name of the child, she saw Annadoah lying still, her face upturned, tear drops glistening beneath her eyes. The wise woman placed some of the fried walrus meat, or *seralatoq*—the prescribed food for a mother the day her child is born—into a stone plate and put it on the floor within reach of Annadoah. Then she melted some snow and placed it by the couch. Slowly approaching the bed she lifted the naked infant.

“When thy mother wakes,” she muttered, “I shall call upon the spirits. I shall give thee the name they gave thee in the great dark ere thou earnest hither—the name which was born with thee and which shall be as thy shadow.”

As she laid the little creature by the unconscious mother she saw a strange and frightful thing. The curse! And thereupon she knew she would not be called upon to learn of the spirits any name for this unhappy child. It had, indeed, been named by the dead and with it the unuttered name must soon return to the great dark. With set lips, and the grim determination of duty on her face, she crept softly from the igloo.

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Annadoah awoke. At first she gazed about dazedly. Then she realized that the *ilisitok* had been with her—she observed the meat and warm water by her couch. She realized also that the wise woman must have seen the horror which had gripped her heart like the teeth of wolves. Beneath lids scarred as by the claws of a hawk, the baby's eyes had been blasted by some unknown prenatal disease—the terrible dead, with their talon-hands, had smitten! The child was organically blind, and, being defective and fatherless, Annadoah knew that, by the law of her people, it was doomed to immediate death. While she shook with terror, withal a grim determination rose within her. All the tremendous urge of that mighty mother-love which has beautified and ennobled the world clamored in the heart of this simple woman that her child *must not* die.

As she touched the infant with a sacred tenderness, her very hands warmed with the impassioned affection that throbbed through her with every heart-beat. As she gazed upon the features, faintly suggestive of its father's, she felt that she could never part from this familiar and intimate link with the spontaneous and powerful passion of her girlhood. When she peered into those piteous, blighted eyes, mighty sobs of pity shook her, but she felt that she must be silent, and she forced back the tears. Outside, a spring bunting was still singing, sweetly, ineffably.

As she caressed it, the child's face twisted as if in pain.

"Well do I know, little one, thou dost desire thy name—*ategarumadlune*," she said. "Thou dost desire it as that which is as precious as thy shadow. But the *ilisitok* has gone and never will she breathe o'er thee the name I know . . . the name I felt stirring within me since the night . . . when the women addressed the dead . . . Sweetly didst thou sing within my heart—but thy song came from the darkness. Yea . . . from the darkness. *loh-iooh!*"

Very gently, very softly, she pressed her fingers upon the baby's sightless eyes.

"I shall call thee little Blind Spring Bunting," she softly murmured, lifting the baby and pressing its tender face to her own. "Poor Little Blind Spring Bunting." She soothed its face, infinite pity in her eyes. "Thou wilt never see *Sukh-eh-nukh*, nor the *ahmingmah*, nor the birds that fly in the air, Spring Bunting. All thy days shall be as the long night, and thy whole life shall be without any light of moon. But thy heart is warm and bright as the sun in the south, whence Olafaksoah came, and it makes the heart of Annadoah very warm. Poor . . . Little . . . Blind Spring Bunting!"

Murmuring softly she rocked the little baby gently in her arms. Then she heard the ominous sound of a native rushing by the igloo and voices upraised. What were they saying? That Annadoah's child was blind?

A frantic determination to escape filled her. The danger was immediate—she must act at once. But what should she do? Where should she go?

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She rose and moved bewilderedly about the igloo. She felt weak and dazed. At any moment they might break into her immaculate new home and seize the child from her arms. At any instant they might come with wicked ropes to wrap about the baby's tender neck. That she must flee she knew—but where? Where? She thought of Ootah. But Ootah was in the mountains. And not a moment could be lost. In these matters the natives lose little time. Moreover, she knew the women hated her; and that they had succeeded in making the men gradually bitter.

“Olafaksoah! Olafaksoah!” she called tragically. Then she recalled with a start that Olafaksoah had summer headquarters some twenty miles to the south. It was a boxhouse, built on a promontory of the Greenland coast. She remembered it, as she had seen it on a journey south some summers before; the way thither, dangerous at this season of the year when the ice was breaking, she well knew. Yes, she would seek refuge there.

“Perchance Olafaksoah hath returned—did he not say he would return in the spring? When the buntings sing?” She laughed spontaneously. “Yea, yea! We will go there, Little Blind Spring Bunting.”

Quickly she adjusted her own new garments, and then she took the little golden baby and over its head and shoulders laced a tight-fitting hood of soft young fox skin. This done she gently placed the child into the hood on her back. Inside this was lined with the breasts of baby auks and made downy with fibrous moss. She hurriedly secured the child to herself by means of a sinew thread which passed about its body as it reposed in the hood, and which in turn, passing under her arms, she tied about the upper portion of her waist. The voices outside had ceased.

Suppressing her very breath, she crept through the long tunnel leading from the igloo and peeped cautiously from the entrance. She could hear her heart throb. She feared the natives might detect it.

Five hundred feet to the north a group were engaged in excited conversation. Annadoah's brain whirled with the fragments of what they said. She knew the moment had come to depart. She emerged and on all fours crept to the protecting lee of her igloo where she was hidden from their view.

An open space of six hundred feet lay between her and the cliff around which the trail to the southern shelter lay. Annadoah summoned all her strength of will, and then proceeded to walk slowly, with her head bent and her face concealed, so as to avoid arousing suspicion, over the dangerous area. Her heart trembled within her—at any moment she expected to hear the savage cries. When she reached the cliff she felt as if she were about to faint.



Looking fearfully backward, with a sigh of immeasurable relief, she saw that she was unobserved. Raising her head heavenward she breathed her thanks to the dead father and mother who were undoubtedly watching. She turned about the cliff, her heart bounding tumultuously, and, panting the words of the magic spell, asked that her legs be given the swiftness of the wind spirits. She was very faint, she had scarcely any feeling whatever in her limbs; but summoning all her courage, bringing to bear all the love of this child she sought to save, she turned and ran.

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It was not long before she heard—or imagined—the angry cries of pursuing natives behind her.

### X

*“A frail, pitiful figure Annadoah stood on the cliff, wringing her hands toward the declining sun . . . ‘I-o-h-h-h,’ she moaned, and her voice sobbed its pathos over the seas. ‘I-o-h-h-h! I-o-h-h-h, Sukh-eh-nukh! Unhappy sun—unhappy sun! I-o-h-h-h, Annadoah—unhappy, unhappy Annadoah!’”*

Twenty miles to the south, on a great cliff which stepped stridently into the polar sea, stood a house built of stray timber and boxes which, for a half decade, had been the summer headquarters of parties of Danish and Newfoundland traders who came north annually and scoured Greenland for ivories and furs. The hulk of a house was weather-beaten, dilapidated, and scarred black by the burning cold. A more desolate habitation could not be imagined in all the world, a more devastated land could nowhere else on all the globe be found. For leagues and leagues to the north and south, the scrofulous promontories lay barren under the blight of the merciless northern blasts. Over the corroded iron rocks strata of red earth and deeper crimson ore ran like the streaky stains of monstrous and unhuman murders committed in aeons past. Not a particle of vegetation was visible; there were no lichens nor starry flowers. There was no life save that of the black birds which winged restlessly about the sky and squawked in grotesque mockery at the region and its doom. In strange contrast, the sky was as blue as the limpid skies of Umbria,—and nearly two hundred feet below the gnarled gashed cliff the ocean broke in terrific cascades of diamonded foam.

The top of the cliff on which the house stood overleaped the sea, so that, looking below, one saw only the recoiling waters of a rich, deep gold, capped with silver crescents of broken spray. From the sheer precipitous receding face of the cliff, knife-like granite spars projected, and in the crevices and nooks of these countless birds nested. Hungry, desirous, insatiate—the voice of that fearful and balefully luring world—there sounded eternally the roar and crash of the breaking golden waves.

Over the uneven scraggy promontory, blinded by the fierce sunlight, Annadoah staggered. The world reeled about her; the sky above her had become black. Before her—a small speck in the distance—she saw the black wooden house silhouetted against the molten sea. She could scarcely move her legs; she ached in every limb; every moment she felt as if she would swoon, but the frenzied fear in her heart urged her on. She suffered intolerably.

Of that long, tortuous journey Annadoah had no clear remembrance—with each step her one urging, predominant thought had been to forge ahead, to keep from swooning,—to escape those who were angrily calling far behind.

Leaving her village, along the difficult broken coast her trail lay; it crept painfully up over the slippery sides of melting glaciers, some of them a thousand feet high, and made sheer descents over places where the ice was splitting; it writhed about hundreds of irregular sounds and twisted fjords.

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In her desperation to escape, Annadoah, without a thought of the danger, essayed to cross fjords where the ice was breaking. As she sped over deceptive unbroken areas the ice often split under her feet. In one of the sounds jammed ice was moving. To go around it she knew would mean a loss of three miles. She leaped upon the heaving ice. It rocked dangerously beneath her feet. As she left the shore the current increased, the ice moved more swiftly. From cake to cake she leaped with the agility of an arctic deer. The ice floes swirled under her and tilted as her feet alighted. Half way across, her foot slipped—the ice fragment eluded her wild grasp and she sank into the frigid water. She felt herself sinking; for a moment she seemed unable to continue the struggle—then she recalled the dear burden upon her back. She fought the swift current and grappled madly with the jamming ice. It gathered about her—she feared she would be buried by the force of the impact. But with a mighty struggle she finally grasped hold of a fortunate ridge on a cake and clambered to its surface. The baby was unscathed. It was crying loudly in its hood. Although her hands were almost frozen, the cold water had not entered her garments. She leaped into the air and fled. She next scaled the rocky face of a precipice to gain time—the rocks cut her face and hands. Swarms of birds, frightened from their nests, surrounded her. Their cries filled her with terror. Reaching, on the farther side, shallow streams over which thin ice lay, she bravely forged ahead—the ice broke—her feet sank into the mud. Her breath gave out—she felt paralyzing pangs in her lungs. Yet the cries behind—which had become somewhat more distant—urged her on. Again and again, in crossing water moving with broken ice her feet slipped into black, treacherous streams, and, swimming with native skill, she saved the child from the least harm. By degrees its cries ceased and it fell into slumber. Occasionally Annadoah was compelled to rest, to regain her breath. Her reserve strength—as is that of her people—was tremendous. Staggering slowly ahead, she often sank into engulfing morasses where the earth had melted and willows were sprouting. Panting, trembling in every limb, she fought her way out. For the better part of the journey her legs moved mechanically—she was only half conscious. Urged by her superhuman determination, the little woman struggled over twenty miles, and when she reached the great promontory where the house stood, her *kamiks* were torn, her clothing was soaked with frigid water, and her hands were bleeding from wounds inflicted by the sharp rocks.[1]

Behind her, in her delirious flight, Annadoah ever heard the threatening cries of pursuing tribesmen.

As she approached the wooden house she staggered to and fro, and at one time was perilously near the edge of the cliff.

Upon her back the infant slept peacefully.



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“Olafaksoah! Olafaksoah!” she struggled to call, but her voice fell to a whisper.

The windows of the grim house were as black as burnt holes; they glared at her unseeingly, without welcome—like blind eyes.

Desperately she raised her voice. Only a panting, breathless plaint quavered over the dumb, unreplying rocks. The sea licked its yellow, hungry tongues below.

At the door of the frame house Annadoah paused and still without losing hope again essayed to call. Her voice broke. The house was undoubtedly vacant. There was no reply.

She bent her head to listen. She could hardly hear because of the pound of blood in her ears.

Surely he had come—did he not say he would come in the spring?

She tried the door. It was locked.

She beat it frenziedly with her fists. She beat it until her fingers bled.

Then she threw her body against it like a mad thing. With crooked fingers she clawed savagely at the wood. At last she quelled the tumult in her bosom and found voice.

“Olafaksoah—Olafaksoah—Olafaksoah—*loh-h-h!* *loh-h-h!*” she screamed. She sank to her knees and pounded at the door-sill with her fists.

When the native tribesmen, furious at her flight, at her temerity in trying to evade their inviolable law, clambered up the cliff, they saw a dark, stark figure lying still before the door of the box-house. Their voices rose in a raucous clamor.

Like wolves descending eagerly upon their prey they bore down upon the unconscious woman. Some of the women of the tribe had accompanied them. Their voices rose with eager, glad calls to vengeance; they demanded the life of Annadoah’s child without delay. The shrill howl of their dogs was mingled in that vindictive, savage chorus.

“Little Blind Spring Bunting,” Annadoah murmured, awakened from her trance by the approaching calls.

Opening her eyes she saw the troop descending. Staggering to her feet she stood with her back against the door, facing the clamoring crowd defiantly. In their veins the savage blood of fierce centuries was aroused, in Annadoah’s heart all the primitive ferocity of maternal protection.

They surrounded her. The struggle was brief. In a moment—while strong hands held her—they cut the sinew lashing and rudely tore the baby from its hood. Annadoah fell back, half-stunned, against the floor; in their midst the merciless howling natives had the helpless infant.

As they bore it over the promontory Annadoah uttered a savage, snarling cry, as of a mountain wolf robbed of its youngling, and furiously rushed after them.

Grasping hold of two of the men, she piteously begged them to give her the child. She made frantic promises. She pleaded, she sobbed, she raved incoherently. Holding to the men with a fierce grip she was dragged along on her knees. Then letting go, she cursed the tribe; she called upon them the malediction of all the spirits. Her voice broke—she could only scream. She tore her hair and fell prostrate, her body throbbing on the rocks.

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Above the clamor Annadoah suddenly heard a strangely familiar voice shouting from the distance. Raising herself slightly, she saw a well-known figure bounding over the promontory toward the murderous natives. Her heart bounded—she recognized Ootah.

Having returned from the mountains Ootah had learned of Annadoah's flight and the pursuit; and with an unselfish determination to save the child he had immediately followed.

At the very edge of the cliff the natives paused. In his hands, Attalaq, the leader of the pursuit, held the crying babe. Their voices were raised to an uproar; the women were chattering fiercely. With quick dexterity Attalaq loosely twisted a leather thong about the baby's neck, and in haste to finish the tragic task began swaying it in his hands so as to give the helpless creature momentum in its plunge to death. Ootah bounded toward them.

"*Aulate! Aulate!* Halt!" Ootah cried. "I will be father to Annadoah's child."

The crowd turned—for a moment they gazed with mingled feelings of awed surprise, half-incredulous wonder and speechless admiration upon this man who offered to make the greatest sacrifice possible to one of the tribe; to become the father, protector and supporter of another man's helpless, defective infant. For, according to their custom, they just as spontaneously grant life to a defective child when a member offers to assume sole responsibility for its keeping as they are implacably determined upon its death if its mother is husbandless. But seldom does any man make this sacrifice; in this land of rigorous hardship and starvation it means much.

Ootah fought his way among them. They gave way, and a low groan arose—his noble offer had come too late!

On the crest of a golden wave a tiny white speck of a baby face gazed in open-eyed, frightened astonishment skyward, and in a lull of the intermittent rush of waters a thin, piercing baby cry arose from the golden sea.

Awe-stricken, abashed, suddenly overwhelmed with regret and shame, the natives silently drew back . . . Ootah paused at the very edge of the cliff . . . he saw Annadoah's pleading white face . . . he extended his arms as a bird opens its wings for flight and brought the finger tips of his hands together above his head. For a moment his body slightly swayed, then poising to secure unerring aim, he leaped into the dashing sea . . .

Still and statuesque as a figure of stone, but wild-eyed, Annadoah stood alone on the extreme edge of the precipitous cliff and watched the struggle in the dizzy depths below . . .

Awed by the splendor of a heroism so dauntless, a love so overwhelming, unselfish and great, the natives retreated to a far distance and waited in fearful silence.

The prolonged infinity of suspense and horror of many long arctic nights seemed concentrated in the brief spell that Annadoah tensely, breathlessly, watched the struggle of the man to save her child.



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Annadoah saw Ootah disappear in the waters after his desperate dive from the cliff and rise with unerring precision on the surface near the sinking babe. The sea came thundering against the jagged rocks in long, terrific swells, and was hurled back in a torrential tumult of breaking foam. Ootah fought the seething waves in his effort to grapple the living thing which was to Annadoah as the heart of her bosom. The tiny speck had begun to sink—Ootah made a dive under the water—and rose with the infant clasped in his left arm. With only one hand free, he made a desperate struggle against the onslaught of the terrible watery catapults as they hurled him, nearer and nearer, toward the rocks beneath the cliff. Annadoah saw his white hand, glistening with water, shine in the sunlight as he tried to climb against the impetus of the sea. Sometimes his head sank—then only the struggling hand was seen. She crept dangerously closer to the edge of the cliff . . . Slowly, but steadily, Ootah and the child were being swept backward . . . By degrees the steady strokes of Ootah's arm began to waver. Annadoah saw him being carried further and further under the cliff by the irresistible momentum of the waves . . . To be dashed against the jagged rocks beneath she knew meant death. Her heart seemed to stop . . . but presently, swirling helplessly in the foaming cauldron of a receding breaker, she saw Ootah, still clasping the baby, emerge from under the rocks. He still lived. He still fought. Annadoah watched each desperate, failing stroke. She saw his strength giving out in that unequal struggle, saw his arm frenziedly but ineffectually beating the water, saw his head disappear . . . for longer and still longer periods . . . She caught a last vision of his white upturned face, of his eyes, filled with importunate devotion, gazing directly at her from out the blinding waters . . .

Then she fell to her knees, and lowering her body, gazed wildly, for a long, long time, into the sea . . .

Suddenly she uttered a low, sharp, involuntary cry—and the waiting tribesmen, recoiling as though stunned, understood. They all loved Ootah—none dared, none could speak. Silent, grief-stricken, they turned away their faces—even their dogs were still. Annadoah still peered, searchingly, for a long time, into the sea.

No, there was nothing there—nothing. On the aureate waves was no speck of life.

Rising, Annadoah gazed with wide-open, solemn eyes seaward; for the moment she felt in her heart only a dull ache.

Along the horizon to the east the sun, irradiant and magnified, lay low over the heaving seas. Over its face, like a veil of gold, translucent vapors—the breath of *Kokoyah*, the god of waters—rose from the melting flocs. A strange spell seemed suddenly to have fallen over the earth. Out on the ocean the great bergs, which had majestically moved southward like the phantoms of perished ships, seemed to pause. The little birds which had clustered about the rocks disappeared. High in the sky above her, a sinister black bird poised motionless in the air.

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At her feet the roaring clamor of the waves seemed resolved into the solemn sobbing measure of some chant for the dead.

Slowly and by degrees the utter realization of her loss dawned upon the soul of Annadoah. And to her in that magical spell the spirits of nature and the souls of the dead began to manifest themselves.

Out of the crimson-shot vapors mystical forms took shape. Annadoah saw the beautiful face of *Nerrvik*, and in the mists saw her watery green and wondrous tresses of uncombed hair. She saw the nebulous shadow of the dreaded *Kokoyah*, the pitiless god of the waters, to whose cold, compassionless bosom had been gathered Ootah and Little Blind Spring Bunting.

Along the horizon Annadoah saw the clouds moving to the south. Higher up they moved to the west, and toward the zenith stray flecks moved to the north. The spirits of the air were not at peace among themselves. And dire things were brooding. From the inland highlands of Greenland now came a series of swift explosions, and in the brief succeeding interval there was an unearthly silence. Then a grinding crash rent the air. The spirits of the mountains had engaged in combat. And in the swift downward surge of the glacial avalanches Annadoah saw tribes wiped from existence and villages swept into the sun-litten sea. But Annadoah knew that the sun-litten sea was a treacherous sea; she knew that *Koyokah*, whose face in the mist was wan, whose lips were golden, had no love for men, and she knew that the spirits of the air, who moved in the diversely soaring clouds, were engaged in some fell conspiracy against her helpless race.

A vague realization of the impotence of humanity against fate, against the forces that weave the loom of life within and without one's heart, weighed crushingly upon her.

Radiant indeed was the sky and softly molten golden the glorious sea, but yet, grim and grisly, behind this smiling face of nature, Annadoah, primitive child of the human race, shudderingly felt the malevolent and evil eyes of *Perdlugssuaq*, the spirit of great evil, he who brings sickness and death. Annadoah felt that instinctive fear which humanity has felt from the beginning—the superstitious terror of tribes who confront extinction, in the face of famine; the quiet white tremor of the hard working hordes of modern cities in the face of poverty and starvation; the dread of savage and civilized races alike of the incomprehensible factor in the universe which wreaks destruction, that original and ultimate evil which all the world's religions recognize, interpret, and offer to placate—the force that is hostile to man and the happiness of man.

On the smooth tossing waters, reflecting the glory of the sky, there was no sign of those who had perished.

Then, after the first crushing sense of helplessness, an instinctive, insurgent hope that would not be defeated asserted itself. Annadoah called upon *Nerrvik*, for surely *Nerrvik*

was kind to men. She pleaded with *Kokoyah*. She importuned the spirits of the sea and air to return her beloved ones to her.

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"*Nerrvik! Nerrvik!*" Annadoah supplicated persuasively, "gentle spirit of the sea, lift Ootah unto me! Thou who art kind to man and givest him fishes from the deep for food, give unto Annadoah's arms Little Blind Spring Bunting."

She swayed her frail body to and fro, and in a tremulous, plaintive chant told unto the gentle and gracious spirit of the waters all that Ootah had been, all that he had done for the tribe; of his prowess, of his love for her, of her own hardness, and how she had turned a deaf ear to his pleading. Incident after incident she recalled. She told of the long night, when Ootah went by moonlight into the mountains, how he had braved the hill spirits, how they struck him in the frigid highlands, and how the beneficent *quilanialequisut* had brought him home. Her exquisite voice rose to a splendid crescendo as she described that valorous adventure, and in the chant ran the *motifs* of the hill spirit's anger, the brave leaping steps of Ootah, the tremor of the mountains as they were struck, and the deep tenderness of Ootah's love. In that customary chanting address to the spirits, Annadoah told of Ootah's return from the mountains, of the suffering he endured, and how, when she soothed him, she thought of the great trader from the south. She recalled how he had staggered from the igloo, the agony in his eyes, and how she heard him sobbing his heart-break in the auroral silence without her igloo through the long sleep.

Extending her arms over the sea, Annadoah reiterated, after each statement of Ootah's bravery, her plea to *Nerrvik* that Ootah be given back to her.

"*Nerrvik! Nerrvik!*" she called, "surely thou art kind! O thou whom, when the great petrel raised a storm, wast cast into the depths by those thou didst love, thou whose heart ached for affection—hear me, hear me, and Annadoah will surely come to thee very soon and comb thy hair in the depths of the cold, cold sea." [2]

Tears fell from her eyes. With self-reproach she told of her old longing for Olafaksoah, the blond man from the south, whose grim, fierce face had cowed her, yet whose brutality had thrilled her, to whose beast-strength and to whose beast-passion all that was feminine in her had surrendered itself. But he had left her—he said that he would come back in the spring. Now, she knew he would not come back—and she did not care. As if to convince the spirit of this, she compared Olafaksoah with Ootah; she knew now that he had used her to rob her people, that his heart was as stone. Ootah, she had once said, had the heart of a woman; but now she realized the difference between them. She knew the arms of Ootah were strong, that the words of Ootah were true, that the heart of Ootah was kind. And she felt stirring in her bosom things she could not express; a vague comprehension of the pure spirituality of the man who had died to save her child, a response



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to the love that had stirred in the bosom now cold beneath the sea. All the primitive deep profundity of the devotion of that wild-hearted man who had brought a wealth of food to her from over the mountains, who had faced death for her on the frozen seas, who had tended her in her time of trial with the gentleness of a woman, his indomitable heroism, the splendor, the dauntless unselfishness and bravery of his offering to father her sightless child—all this—all this, and more—welled up in the heart of Annadoah.

*“Nerrvik! Nerrvik! To him who loved her Annadoah lied. Dead, she told him, was her heart as a frozen bird in wintertime—but her heart was only sleeping! And now the wings are beating—beating within her breast! Ootah! Ootah! Ioh-h, ioh-h!”*

Her voice broke. She beat her little breasts. She bent over the sea and listened. For a long while she watched.

Then, from the shadows in the clouds, the answer came. Truly Ootah was brave, and his heart was marvellously kind; unsurpassed was his skill on the hunt and of every animal did he kill; and great was his love for Annadoah. Even the spirits had marvelled and spoken of it among themselves; but Annadoah had chosen her fate; she had denied the love that had unfalteringly pursued her, and now that she desired it, even so to her was that love to be denied. That was fate.

Then in a clamorous outbreak did Annadoah plead with Kokoyah. She grovelled on the ground. She called upon all the spirits of the winds and air. In a tremulous, heart-broken plaint she finally called upon the spirits of her father, her mother, and those who had gone before them.

But unrelenting, passionless, the answer came—from the shadows in the clouds, from the winds, from the moaning sea. To warm the wild heart under the water was beyond the power of all the spirits. They repeated to her, as in mockery, all that she had told them that Ootah had done, of his mighty love for her; but nevermore might she soothe his injured limbs, nevermore might she touch his gentle hands, nevermore might she look into his tender and adoring eyes. His hands were cold, his eyes were closed, his heart was still. It throbbed with the thought of her no more—and that would be forever. That was fate.

A frail, pitiful figure, Annadoah stood on the cliff, wringing her hands toward the declining sun. In the midst of that wild golden-burning desolation, Annadoah felt her utter loneliness, her tragic helplessness. In all the universe she felt herself utterly alone.

Far away, awed by the heroism, the very splendor of the bravery of the man who had perished, the tribe stood murmuring. In their hearts was no little unkindness toward Annadoah. But, forsaken, outcast, she did not care.

Over the aureate shimmering seas she wrung her little hands and into the waves lapping at her feet her tears fell like rain. For the heart of Annadoah ached. Nothing in the world any more mattered. All that she had loved had perished in the sea. And she loved too late.

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Gazing at the low-lying sun, veiled as in a vapor of tears, remote, and sadly golden in its self-destined isolation, an instinctive wild-world-understanding of that tragedy of all life, of all the universe perchance—of that unselfish love that is too often denied and the unhappy love that accents only too late—vaguely filled her primitive heart.

Sinking to her knees, convulsed sobs shaking her, she wrung her hands toward the sun, the eternal maiden *Sukh-eh-nukh*, the beautiful, the all-desired.

*"I-o-h-h-h!"* she moaned, and her voice sobbed its pathos over the seas. *"I-o-h-h-h! I-o-h-h-h! I-o-h-h-h, Sukh-eh-nukh! I-o-o-h-h, Sukh-eh-nukh! Unhappy sun—unhappy sun! I-o-o-h-h-h-h, Annadoah! I-o-o-o-h-h-h-h, Annadoah! Unhappy, unhappy Annadoah!"*

Annadoah's head sank lower and lower. Her weeping voice melted in the melancholy sobbing of the aureate sea. One by one the natives departed. She was left alone. To the north the sky darkened with one of those sudden arctic storms which come, as in a moment's space, and blast the tender flowers of spring. A cold wind moaned a pitiless lament from the interior mountains. Yellow vapors gathered about the dimming sun. Ominous shadows took form on the shimmering sea.

*"I-o-h-h-h—iooh! Unhappy sun—unhappy, unhappy Annadoah!"*

Taking fire in the subdued sunlight—and descending from heaven like a gentle benediction of feathery flakes of gold—over and about the dark, crouched figure, softly . . . very softly . . . the snow began to fall.

[1] Annadoah's flight, extraordinary as it is, is not without even more remarkable precedents. In one case a woman who had been rejected by her husband made a forty-mile journey during winter to a spot south of her village where a child, some years before, had been buried. There the woman wept and thus consoled herself. Having exhausted her grief, she returned to her people. On the trip she had no food whatever.

[2] *Nerrvik*, a beautiful maiden, according to the legend, married a storm-petrel who had disguised himself as a man. When she discovered the deception she was filled with horror, so that later, when her relatives visited her, she determined to escape with them. When the petrel returned from a hunting trip and discovered that his wife had gone, he followed, and flapping his great wings raised a terrible storm at sea. Water filled the boat in which *Nerrvik* was escaping. When they realized that *Nerrvik* was the cause of the storm her brothers cast her into the sea. With one hand she clung to the boat; her grandfather lifted his knife and struck. *Nerrvik* descended into the ocean and became the queen of the fishes. Possessing only one hand she cannot plait her hair. A magician who can go to *Nerrvik* in a trance and arrange her tresses wins her gratitude and can secure from her for the hunters quantities of fish. It is interesting to note the similarity of the legend of *Nerrvik* to that of Jonah. But just as the Eskimos have

changed the masculine sun of southern mythologies to the feminine, so the victim of the mythological sea storm in the arctic becomes a woman.

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### FINALE

*According to the legends of the tribes, not for many long and aching ages shall the melancholy moon win the radiant but desolate Sukh-eh-nukh. For having refused love she is compelled to flee in her elected lot from the love she now desires but which she once denied, and this by a fate more relentless than the power of Perdlugssuaq, a fate which they do not comprehend, but which is, perchance, the Will of Him Whose Voice sometimes comes as a strange whistling singing in the boreal lights, and Who, to the creatures of His making, teaches the lessons of life through the sorrows which result from the acts of their own choosing . . . Sometime—when, they do not know—the sun and moon will meet. They will then, having endured loneliness and long yearning, be immeasurably happy, and in the consummation of their desire all mankind will share . . . For as ultimate darkness closes, all who have been true to the highest ideals of the chase will be lifted into celestial hunting grounds, where no one is ever hungry nor where is it ever cold; all who have done noble deeds will be hailed as celestial heroes. He who died to save another will attain immortal life; he who gave of his substance to feed the starving will find ineffable food and in abundance; he who loved greatly, who suffered rejection uncomplainingly, and who sought untiringly—even as the moon pursued Sukh-eh-nukh for ages—will, in that land where the heart never aches and where there are no tears, see the very fair face of his beloved smiling a divine welcome, and her eyes filled with a radiant response, gazing into his own. The end of the world will come, and with it will cease the suffering struggles of all the world's races. And then all the highest hopes of men will find their realisation in an undreamed-of heaven to which all who have lived without cowardice, ingratitude or taint of selfishness in their hearts, will be translated as the world's last aurora closes its mystic veils in the northern skies.*