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ESKIMO





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BY

PETER FREUCHEN

TRANSLATED BY

A. PAUL MAERKER-BRANDEN

AND

ELSA BRANDEN

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I N T R O D U C T I O N



GOD, HEAVEN
DEVIL, HELL
SANTA CLAUS, NORTH POLE
PETER FREUCHEN, DENMARK

and there are many other gods and demi-gods and men of whose mere *being* millions are aware. There are a lot of them—and not enough. And if we can lift a personality from the seclusion of a merely national prominence into the consciousness of a larger world, good for us all.

He's almost six feet seven inches tall; he stands erect, his head and shoulders back, his chin stuck out. A great red curly beard adorns that chin and lends the man a fierceness that his eyes belie. He's lean, big boned and loosely knit. One of his legs is made of wood (he froze the real one off, they say, in a sleeping gesture of defiance at God). He limps a little.

Peter Freuchen is a great and distinguished character. He is a hard man. He believes in the equality of man, and calls his fellow beings fools. He lives his creed and brings his servants and his laborers to his board—that he may teach them, so it seems, humility. He is warm-hearted and generous. "I don't need money," he says, "because, you see, I am poor." He *is* generous. "What a wonderful beard!" said my wife to Peter Freuchen. "You like it?"—and he cut off a great piece and gave it to her. (We still have that beard, and can't imagine what to

do with it.) Peter Freuchen is ingenuous—and shrewd, hard and soft, good and bad. He is black and white—a Great Dane, harlequin. He's maybe not a character but a personality. He knows that. Peter Freuchen knows a great deal. He tells a great deal; he knows more.

"I am a plain man," writes Peter Freuchen, "born on the 20th of February, 1886, in Nykobing, Falster, Denmark. My father was a merchant, and my mother was the daughter of a very nice fellow. He ran into all kinds of trouble and fights in South America. He was a sailor, a captain of great vessels. He came from the tropics, and died out of coldness in the White Sea. I am scared of the heat.

"I went to school in my homestead and was a very good boy at cricket and foot-ball and sailing and fishing; so I became a student with second character.

"In 1904 I started at the University of Copenhagen; I was supposed to study medicine. So I went out sailing now and then—as a seaman and as a stoker."

He went as meteorologist on the Mylius Ericson expedition to Greenland. That made Greenland his career. On his return, looking about for a good reason not to continue his medical studies, he saw a man, who had just recovered from a six months' hospital illness, run over by a wagon and killed. "Good," thought Peter Freuchen, "I'll spend no life repairing people who have to die anyway."

So he went to Greenland with Knud Rasmussen; and from that time, 1910 to 1924, he lived in Greenland.

Thule, on the North-west coast of Greenland, is the last inhabited spot of our polar regions; it is the ultimate or farthest north where men now live. Here Knud Rasmussen centralized the Polar Eskimos, establishing for them a colony or trading post. Peter Freuchen was the governor. He was, besides, through-

out the years that he lived there, the companion of Rasmussen on his prolonged and hazardous expeditions over the inland ice and the remote lands of northern Canada. It was a life of hard conditions. He met it as a native. The Eskimos were his associates and friends. He spoke their language, shared their thoughts. He became of them. He married Navaranna, of that tribe, and lived with her until her death. She bore him two children.

Peter Freuchen is a traveler, a wise and understanding man. And many things have happened in his life; so that his contact with the human heart is close. And his memory of Navaranna is of the finest human being he has ever known.

It is out of such love for the remote people of the far north that Peter Freuchen writes—not as a traveler who has chanced upon them, but as one of themselves who, traveling, comes to us. And now, in the seclusion and quiet of his island farm in Denmark, with his horses, cows, pigs, sheep, dogs, "fools" around him, Peter Freuchen looks back into the primitive years that were his own, and tells to us what he was privileged to understand.

ROCKWELL KENT

PART ONE



P A R T O N E



I

SHOUTS and howls. Mala lashed his team. The dogs huddled together, hiding their heads between their front legs so that the whip-cord would not hit them in the eyes.

"Ai, ai, aua—ai."

Another crack of the whip. At last the dogs started pulling and the traces tightened. Mala and Orsokidok, kicking against the sides of the sledge, loosened the snow from the runners. The heavy load moved slowly uphill. Now the thing was to keep on going. They labored with all their might and before long made the grade. Looking down from the height, they saw the women and boys directly ahead of them.

Going down hill was much easier for the dogs but much more difficult for the sledge leader. Whenever a stone appeared through the snow, it was necessary to swing the front of the sledge to one side with a quick, powerful jerk so as to avoid scraping off the indispensable coat of ice that covered the runners. Once that was gone, it would be impossible to travel further.

The two women and the boy formed the vanguard. Although the driving snow powdered their hair and the wind bit their ears, it was too warm for them to put up their fur hoods.

As always, Naterk was carrying many things in her knapsack. She used a stick because she was old and her feet easily became sore, but she kept up with the others and frequently led little Upik by the hand. That made walking much easier for him when they had to climb uphill over the soft snow. Yes, grandmother knew how to be good to everybody. In the bottom of her knapsack she had a piece of matak, all cut into little bits, just the thing for a bite, and almost thawed from the warmth of her body. Such snacks lent new strength for the journey. Naterk and Iva would thoroughly soften these pieces by keeping them in their mouths for some time. Then they would give them to the boys who swallowed them eagerly and nagged for more.

The sledge caught up with them. Puala and Upik, with a running start, jumped on top of the load for a short hitch. Mala drove on but slowly, because nobody was walking ahead any more. The leader-dog must be encouraged by a fresh track and when he needs prodding all the other dogs too display little ambition.

The snow was soft and the load heavy; it was one of the first days of the journey. The dogs, not sufficiently worked out yet, were still lazy and much too fat. Mushing was a hard job but time flew because there was so much to think about. They were traveling through the interior of Melville Peninsula to Tajarnak to barter with the white men who had arrived there on big ships. Mala had heard lots about these whalers who had loads and loads of desirable things; rifles and matches, tobacco, knives and many other things of which Mala knew nothing about before. He had taken along all his skins to trade in.

It did not matter that the trip took so long. The boys were sufficiently occupied by all the new things that surrounded them. The women were looking forward with lively expectation to the visit to the ships and dreaming of the many marvelous things they would procure from the white men. Mala and Orsokidok kept their eyes open for reindeer; tracks of foxes and lemmings claimed their attention. Mala especially had much to think about; he was the family head taking his wife on a trip together with his sons, his mother and a foster-

son. They had found the latter, a poor orphaned boy, in a deserted camp, starved to a skeleton and in an altogether deplorable state; they had therefore called him Orsokidok. Mala explained the new sights to the boys, eagerly anticipating an early meeting with the white men. Surely remarkable, these men. He had met them once before.

That had been far up in the north. He was to get his first rifle and he well remembered all the details. He had traded in his fox skins for that rifle. The skins had been heaped one on top of the other and pressed down; a heap of skins as high as the firearm was long to pay for a rifle. All those whites were gentlemen. One had to be careful with them; they were so easily insulted. They had a great hankering for native women and they simply took them. Mala thought that the white men should at least ask first, but Iva only laughed; one simply could not talk about such things with her. Of course, she knew everything so much better than he did because those masterful men had taken her into the house aboard the ship and she had stayed there many days. When she returned, she had brought along food and tobacco and matches. Iva had taught Mala how to smoke and how she had laughed when he vomited at his first attempt.

Mala had seen the ship from the outside only. Whenever he remembered his experiences with the white men, he still glowed with shame. After they had given him his rifle he had seen some wonderful wood and asked for it, wishing to build a sledge for himself. But the white master had said "no" because his fox skins were not enough payment after he had already received a rifle.

He had stood there dumbfounded, stripped of all his pride. He did not know how much the wood was worth compared to the value of some measly fox skins. Everybody had laughed at him because he had been so greedy, and surely the white man despised him for that. Many, many days he had kept away from the ship and then Iva had brought him the wood he had wanted so badly. And lots of it, too.

Iva had only said: "Look, Mala, here it is."

When he finally went back to the ship, the white man had apparently forgotten his greediness.

How would he fare this time? Surely, things would turn out differently from what he expected. The nice speech he had prepared for the white man would not be suitable, and he would have to choose other words.

When the boys tired, Mala stopped. He sunk his stick into the snow to find out whether it had the right consistency for building a hut. It was here that a man could show his mettle; probing building snow was like bargaining with some mysterious powers. Mala became unapproachable when he deftly tested the snow. He did not deem it necessary to tell the others of his findings. Twice, three times he drilled his stick into the ground and then silently moved on, to the despair of the dogs and the wailing anger of the children. However, Mala was the master here and when he went ahead the others simply had to follow.

There was a strong wind when at last Mala found a likely spot. He pulled out his big snow knife and soon he was piling up blocks of snow. Standing in the center, he first arranged a circle of blocks the size of the hut he intended to build, then he piled other blocks on top of them. The walls grew higher and higher and soon the women started to fill in the cracks from the outside and cover the whole structure with loose snow, so that the igloo would be warm and cozy.

"Upik wants to go inside and warm himself," the grandmother said to Mala, who, building from the inside, was gradually walling himself in. "Cut the entrance now. The boy is all tired out."

"Let him come right in," the father answered, carving a hole in the snow wall.

The older boy, Puala, remained outside, assisting Orsokidok in unharnessing the dogs.

Mala was all covered with snow and breathless and warm when he crawled out of the completed hut. The others were cold, and glad to go inside. Iva and Naterk each entered with their lamps. An enormous bulging seal bag was carried in. The bag was full of frozen blubber, enough to furnish heat and

light for the duration of the whole trip. The women, by stepping on the bag, squeezed out enough blubber to fill the lamps; then the bag was stored outside. Soon there was light and a little warmth inside the hut. Bundles of skins were opened; Upik took his clothes off and stripped, then he rolled himself up in the warm reindeer pelts. He fell asleep immediately and did not wake until the food was all prepared.

Outside it was snowing, but inside the igloo it was nice and warm; life was as comfortable as it could be. The family was thoroughly happy.

REINDEER! The dogs lifted their heads and sniffed. Sure enough there was reindeer in the neighborhood. Just at the right time, too, because all the fresh meat had been consumed during the last few days and no more thawed-out food remained for the dogs. Mala quieted the dogs and told the women to mind the sledge while he and Orsokidok took their bows and arrows and departed.

Old Naterk attended to the dogs, seeing to it that they made no noise that would serve to warn the reindeer, undoubtedly close by. Iva took a knife and cut up a good slice of frozen meat. The two women ate and the children jumped around playing happily.

Time passed and Iva grew weary. She pulled a couple of skins out of the load, spread them out in the shelter of the sledge, and lay down to rest her tired limbs and perhaps to sleep a little. After all, the reindeer seemed to be far away. The old grandmother, too, sat down near the sledge; the children left off playing. Their game no longer amused them. Upik could not run as fast as Puala; he always fell down when he tried to jump, and each time he stumbled he ran crying to his grandmother who would pick a few lice off his head and thoroughly clean his nose. Puala himself would have liked to be petted that way, but after all, he was too big a boy now. Had he not already caught two foxes and a hare? No, Puala could not very well run to the women for help any more. Really, his father should have taken him along on the hunt.

Iva rose, and walking up to the nearest snow mound, she scanned the horizon for her husband. Puala ran along, but neither of them could see any more than a far-flung valley, framed by a mountain range in the dim distance.

"Let's go back to the sledge and wait there. They'll soon be here. And then we shall have wonderful reindeer tallow and tongue and marrow bones," the mother said.

Iva knew very well that this was not the season for much tallow unless the men were lucky enough to kill a reindeer cow with calf, but her words revived Puala's spirits.

"It would be good to have a house for one's old bones," Naterk complained when they returned. "Women should build houses themselves."

They sat in silence for a long while. The children, huddled together, slept a few winks but as it grew more windy they suffered from the cold.

"Little Upik, you ought to have warm water to drink." Grandmother thought only of the little one, forgetting completely the gout that tortured her, making it hard even for her to raise her arms. It was very tiresome to sit around and just wait, wait. . . .

"To think . . ." Old Naterk continued wistfully, "to think of boiled meat and of warmth that penetrates your entire body and fills you with a sense of well-being!—I was once told that Inatdliak built an igloo when her husband had shot himself in the arm. She made a good job of it and no man who passed it ever laughed."

"Why should they laugh?" Iva asked. "Aren't women permitted to shelter their young? I myself have built a wind break of snow blocks often enough."

Iva then arose, took the knife and started to cut the snow. One after another, the blocks were piled in a heap. The exercise made her comfortably warm.

"What are you doing?" asked the older one. "Are you building a house?"

"I don't know. I really don't know whether I can build a house. I have never yet seen a simple woman who could build one."

Work progressed speedily. The years when she had filled in cracks with drift snow and replaced old melting blocks with new ones now stood her in good stead. She used the knife with skill, looking not at all clumsy.

Old Naterk got up with difficulty.

"Cold, cold," the boys mumbled in their sleep. "Cover me up. I'm freezing," they wailed.

Their Grandmother moved close to them, warming them with her body.

She went over to Iva who, working like a mole, was now fashioning a dome over her head. She took a small knife and plastered the cracks. The women did not speak to each other. Why admit in so many words that a house was being built here?

Iva, strong and clever, finished her house and put everything in order. Soon there was wonderful warm water to make their limbs supple, and boiled meat that lent heat to their chilled bodies. They fell asleep and slept far into the next day. As long as Mala did not return, there was no reason in the world to get up.

However, a day is a long time. Once Iva went to the little mound to see if the weather would change soon and bring back Mala. There was no trace of him, but she discovered a spot where the snow had been blown from the stony ground and where ptarmigans had rested. The spot was strewn with the dung of birds. Iva collected it, nice round pieces, a whole mitten full. She always liked to bring something home to the boys.

"Orolok, see, do you want some of it?"

Grandmother got busy. She had a gift for preparing the finest dishes; she was a regular gourmet. She carefully chewed meat and fat, spat everything into a bowl, and then mixed it with the birds' tasty dung. It did not take long for little Upik to sample the dish even before it was ready. And although he kept on sampling of it, later he ate a generous portion of the delicacy with great relish. The boys grumbled when some of it was put aside for their father and Orsokidok. When finally the children fell asleep again, Iva busied herself with some

sewing. Old Naterk just sat there, rocking her body to and fro and humming a song of the old days.

"We women are a lucky lot. When the men go out into the snow and the cold, we stay behind, keeping warm, and just comfortably waiting for the food to be brought home."

MALA had killed a reindeer.

He had cut off the choicest pieces, placed them in the skins and tied them up so that he could drag the load on a strap. The hair on the skins made them slide easily over the surface of the snow. He hardly noticed that he was pulling a heavy burden. It was lucky, too, that the wind came from behind, and so he walked on and on. But he was not sure whether he was striking out in the right direction or whether the wind had shifted. Still he hurried not only because he was afraid that his boys might be cold and he had a house to build for them, but also because of all the good things he had brought for his family. The reindeer stomachs were full of bitter-sweet herbs, and the entrails of the animals were well filled, too. If pressed out, they would furnish the finest broth. Yes, there would be great joy when he got back to the camp.

It was growing darker and soon the light failed altogether. The wind blew stronger than before. It was impossible now to find the trail. As Mala did not know where to look for the sledge, he stopped and built himself a little hut, just big enough to shelter him and his burden of reindeer meat. Then he lay down to sleep, thinking of his boys and of the ships he was soon to visit. He thought of the white men he would see again and their marvelous language which he would hear once more.

Next day, he started out early and at last he found his way back to his home.

"My, oh my, big men must be living here. Big men who built a big house! I am so afraid to enter!"

Mala was always full of fun when he came home from the hunt. He invariably returned in the best of humor and today, especially, he was in good spirits. Was he not bringing

reindeer meat, and marrow bones, and tallow and other delicious things?

"Reindeer, reindeer, big reindeer," shouted the boys.

"Leave it to Mala," said Old Naterk.

Iva only smiled at the husband.

Mala liked to see his folk gay and so he grew still more jovial.

"Oh, I only got a couple of pitifully lean animals," he remarked with mock modesty. "Really nothing much to speak of. Merely two of a big herd. Now, if I could only learn to hunt reindeer! It's a shame, you poor people hardly ever get reindeer meat to eat. You see, I have all but forgotten how to hunt them. I really do not know any more how to stalk them."

The women laughed and shook their heads over big, strong, funny Mala who never went hunting in vain.

"I am certainly a poor hunter. I am afraid I don't even know how to skin reindeer," Mala ranted on in a good-humored way. "Oh, why don't you take pity on me? And why don't you tell me who built this snow house here?"

"Just an attempt of a simple woman to put some blocks together," Iva replied. "Do you think, Mala, that women can't build houses at all?"

"How marvelous! Isn't it splendid that my wife can do what I left undone because I'm a lazy good-for-nothing."

The festive meal was soon ready. They ate and ate of the marrow bones and tallow and frozen meat and boiled meat and broth made from the half-digested contents of the reindeer's paunch. This certainly was a happy home, and nobody was upset at all that Orsokidok had not come back yet. He had not returned to Mala after following a wounded reindeer. But he would find his way back to the sledge all right. After all, it was only the orphan who was missing, a boy without any family. He was just a little assistant who happened to be around.

Orsokidok arrived the next day at noon. He was hungry and tired. He had not killed an animal, and for two days he had gone hungry. He was in poor humor when he returned but when the others laughed—why shouldn't he join in? Wasn't

it funny that there were people who just lay around eating lots of meat while others stayed away simply because they did not want to return? It was the old story that he who tries to get more, in the end gets nothing at all. Finally Orsokidok was given a whole pot of meat which he ate with relish.

They did not continue their journey that day, sleeping instead. Old Naterk was grateful for the rest, for her old legs often hurt her now, and when she breathed there was a rattling noise in her windpipe.

For a little while she walked beside the sledge, half leaning against it for support. Soon, however, she could not keep up with the dogs at all. They had to stop and wait for her. When she finally caught up with them, her face was as red as if she had run a race on a hot summer's day.

"Sit on the sledge and rest," Mala said.

"As if the sledge were not hard enough for the dogs to pull and for you to steer. It is always best for a human being to walk."

Again she stumbled on ahead of the team as was her wont. Mala now saw to it that the dogs did not run too fast. Each time there was a stop he would make it his business to examine the runners very thoroughly and smooth the ice that covered them. He always took so long that Old Naterk, for the greater part of the day, succeeded in keeping well ahead of the sledge. However, she was too weak to find any satisfaction in this feat. The exertion was altogether too great for her. Mala stopped early that day, out of consideration for his brave, old mother.

During the evening, Old Naterk had no appetite; she just lay around, panting heavily like a walrus rising to the surface of the sea.

Puala took a marrow bone which Mala had broken open for him, picked out the marrow, which was not unlike a long, fat worm. Holding the delicacy in front of his grandmother's mouth, he smeared her lips with the choice morsel.

"Eat," he encouraged her. "I shall go out and kill a big reindeer for you."

Old Naterk was touched and told him he was a great hunter who brought his grandmother wonderful things.

"No, I am not," objected Puala, "but I want you to eat when everybody else is eating. If one does not eat, one can't be happy."

"Good, then your old grandmother will eat some of your prey."

Old Naterk could find no rest while the others slept soundly. Her head was hot, there was that rattling noise whenever she took a breath, and she had aches and pains all over her body. She put a few pieces of snow on her forehead and concentrated on some formulas of powerful magic which had helped her frequently before. But the magic words brought no relief. Perhaps she shouldn't have mumbled them while the others were around. She was afraid that she would wake them if she got up now and left the snow hut. So she stayed where she was but somehow could not sleep. She remembered all the amusing nonsense that men had told her when she was young and they were making love to her. Simply everything crowded into her head. She was glad when morning came and the others awoke.

Old Naterk needed a good long time to dress Upik in his clothes, his shoes and mittens. It was even harder for her to get into her own furs and crawl out into the fresh air. How her back ached, when she tried to raise herself! Slowly she walked up a little knoll, sat down and looked around. Then, loosening her belt, she tied the strap around her left foot. There Old Naterk sat, with nobody near her, summoning the spirits to ascertain her fate. She tried to invoke the spirit that had guided her feet and had always solved her problems before. Today, however, the spirit would not respond. One must be strong minded and convinced of one's power to commune with these spirits, otherwise they simply will not come.

She returned just as Mala was preparing the sledge for an early departure.

"I have something to say to you and it is important too," Naterk said.

Mala understood that his mother had something on her

mind that was more than the usual woman's talk. Her eyes had an expression that made him feel once more like a little boy. He bowed his head and listened.

"I am tired and I am old. You must build me a snow house because I shall go on a very long journey all alone."

"Please do not speak like that, mother. We all wish to see your face among us always. I shall certainly not build a snow house for you. Let us hurry down to the white men and the ships, where we can get tea and tobacco."

"Oh, Mala my son, but I am tired and must have rest."

"Remember the children, mother. How badly they will miss you. They are sure to cry. Iva always needs your help and good advice. And I—have I not always had you with me? I could not do without you, mother."

Old Naterk did not answer. She mumbled a few words and stared at the horizon. In the far distance, she perceived the bare mountains where the Great Spirit inhaled reindeer through his nostrils whenever he breathed. Here she had lived as long as she could remember.

"Give me my stick," she ordered. "I shall go ahead."

Mala rushed over to the pot, sucked his mouth full of water from it, and squirted it against the runners of the sledge for a new ice coating. Nobody must see how his mother's words affected him. He was dirty with soot because each time he took a mouthful of water the lampblack smudged his face.

Old Naterk stumbled on as well as she could and it took the others quite long before they finally caught up with her. There were so many obstacles to surmount that day!

In the middle of the day, Naterk tired once more. Mala, being the leader of the party, demanded that she ride on the sledge. There she sat and shivered while the others pulled her along and Iva alone broke the path for the dogs.

During the night, Naterk complained that her old back bothered her and that she had severe pains in her whole body. She did not stir when Iva lighted the lamp. Perspiration ran down her wrinkled face; she had strange thoughts and mumbled strange words which nobody understood.

Iva dressed, sat down next to Naterk and spoke to her.

But Naterk would not answer. Iva finally pulled a strand of hair from Naterk's head. She threw it into the fire so that the smell of the burning hair might chase away the evil spirits and the root of the disease might be destroyed in the flames. This magic really helped. Old Naterk's thoughts were orderly once more. She took a couple of pieces of dried reindeer meat left over from last year. The pieces were all mouldy but she cleaned them with her finger nails and handed them to the children.

Next morning the sun shone brightly and the journey was continued. But in the course of the day, Naterk put up her fur hood and waited for Mala to come abreast of her.

"My son," she addressed him. "I have firm words to say to you and you must not make any objection. I have lived many years and my legs are tired. Build me a snow hut. When I asked this favor of you before you would not listen to me. Don't wait until it will be necessary for me to command my son to do what his mother bids him."

She busied herself with the load and brushed some snow off Upik who had fallen while playing.

Mala did not answer this time. He took his stick, probed the snow and started to build a house.

"Are we resting for the day already?" the children asked.

"Yes," answered Iva. "That is what father has decided to do."

Thus Mala built a house.

As usual the two women unloaded the sledge, filled in the cracks between the blocks and covered the whole structure with loose snow. The boys took a seal's skin, tied a strap to it and used it for a sledge. As Puala, being a big boy already, wanted to help his father with the building, Upik was left alone. He wanted to play and called to his grandmother.

"Come, grandmother, and pull me. I want to go asledging."

The old woman came.

"You must run quickly."

But her old legs were too weak. Suddenly, her lips quivering, she stopped and tears streamed down her cheeks.

"Grandmother is crying. It's no fun to play with her when

she is crying." Upik decided he would rather play alone after all.

When they came in later on, Old Naterk started to get busy on a pair of mittens for the little one. Upik lost so many of them.

Mala went outside and built another igloo. Nobody helped him and he did not ask for any assistance either. Orsokidok had gone with bow and arrows to look for some likely prey. When Mala had finished the house he came in and brushed the snow off his clothes.

"Has anything happened?" Iva asked.

"Nothing at all. I've built a house, that's all." He turned away quickly and walked over to a little mound to look around for Orsokidok.

THE old woman collected her belongings. She took one skin after the other, scrutinized it and put it aside. Finally she picked an old, almost hairless skin, rolled it up and was ready to leave the hut. Then she stopped and looked around. Emotion almost overcame her. She stepped over to the sleeping children, put her mouth to their noses and sucked. There was a squirting noise and Puala awoke. What was that for? He was no little boy any more. He could blow his nose himself! But grandmother was so strange today and so rough. She pulled off the boys' hoods, exposing their left shoulders. Right there she dug her teeth in, because the bite of an old woman is a lucky omen for children. Although it did not hurt much, as grandmother's teeth were dull from chewing skins for years and years, the two boys were thoroughly aroused by now and they cried without restraint.

Grandmother was certainly acting strangely today. And there were new mittens and new pants at her place. But she did not speak about it.

"The time to leave has arrived," she said simply, and took her old skin and departed.

"Are you going outside?" asked Iva but she kept on sewing.

The boys lay down and quickly fell asleep again. Life inside the snow hut was just as it had been before.

Outside, the old woman first looked around. The world was beautiful, but her back was so tired and, oh, how she longed to rest her weary bones. Then she crawled into the house built for her and quietly stretched herself out on the old skin.

Soon Mala came. He had seen her enter the hut. He now took his knife, cut a block of snow and walled up the entrance with it. There was not one word spoken when Mala closed up Old Naterk's last house.

There, then, the old woman reposed, waiting for death. She seemingly never tired of thinking. She listened to the children come out of the other house and ask questions about her snow hut. She heard the father tell the children that they must not go into grandmother's hut. She heard Orsokidok come home. He had killed a reindeer, a young calf, a mere yearling. Naterk always used to get a piece of Tongue. Tongue of a yearling was soft and easy to chew for old teeth. But why should she think of that now? And then again she heard the boys playing with the sledge they had fashioned from skins. Once the children came so near the hut that she could hear the snow crunching under their little feet. Upik fell down and hurt himself; he set up a great wail.

"I'm hurt, I'm bleeding, oh, mother, grandmother!"

How hard it was to play dead. But Old Naterk was no longer to be reckoned among the living. To the others she had passed on; she was gone. Iva came out and called: "Come in for your food. I have nice boiled meat for you."

"Where is grandmother?" Puala inquired. "Isn't grandmother coming to eat with us?"

Tears welled in Naterk's eyes and her mouth watered. Now she was lying here prostrate. Life, surely, was much more wearisome than death. But the most wearisome thing of all was this slow transition from life to death.

She was still tossing sleeplessly on her hairless skin when dawn came. She listened intently when she heard Mala getting the sledge ready. In her thoughts, Old Naterk followed their

every movement: Now the dogs would rush into the deserted hut to fight for the bones left there. Now the load was strapped on the sledge; now the children inquired whether grandmother would walk ahead as usual.—Then the travelers departed and everything became quiet.

Alas, they had started and left her all alone. Perhaps, after all, Mala should not have permitted her to remain behind. He, who was always so good a son—had he really deserted her now? Naterk arose and tried to leave the house but her old limbs were too weak to carry her. She wanted to follow the others and she wanted to stay behind.

Darkness came, spreading its sheltering wings over her. Old Naterk, once born into this world, had lived her full life.—Now she was no more.

IN the evening it was very quiet in Mala's snow house; gaiety had fled. Little Upik wanted to know why they were building a house before grandmother had caught up with them. Iva told him to keep still, and nobody said one word more that night than was absolutely necessary. Upik finally cried himself to sleep. Next day they rested and this day and the succeeding days, Mala went hunting but he did not go far; he stayed right in the proximity of the house. The boys became impatient and wanted to know whether they would not soon get down to the ships.

At last Mala went back to the spot where his old mother had gone into her last house. Drifting snow had covered the igloo. No animal had approached it; all around was the silence of death. Mala took his knife and cut a hole in the roof of the house so that Old Naterk's soul could depart.

Returning to Iva, he did not bring any prey that night. He told her that he had come from a visit that grieved him terribly.

"I opened the roof," was all he said and he sat down silently without taking a bite of food.

The children were not permitted to play; they were not even allowed to talk. Iva herself cut snow for drinking water

and it was she, too, who cut the meat for the pot—just as if she were a man. Mala did not stir. His hood put up, he sat inside the house all night long, fully dressed. The children, too, were not undressed. Everything seemed so strange.

"The lice are eating me, the lice are eating me," the boys whimpered during the night and scratched themselves furiously. But they were not permitted to take off their furs.

After five days had passed, the children were left alone. The others went back to Naterk's snow house. Mala went ahead and the others followed in his tracks. He cut a hole through the rear of the hut, and they entered Old Naterk's last abode. There she lay in a huddled heap, her pelt hood over her face, her knees pulled up. Mala suddenly remembered when his mother was a young woman and he a little boy. She had always so much to tell him about the men who were ready to fight for her but had never won her. What a splendid mother she had been, what a brave mother—and now—

They dragged the body out of the house to a nearby spot. Where loose stones were scattered over a mighty rock they prepared Old Naterk's grave. She, who had lived, was now dead, and her name must nevermore be mentioned by any living soul. Only those who still breathe are human, and only in their company may one abide. Because they had touched the corpse, they took off their mittens and stuffed them between the stones.

On the way home, they were careful to step into the tracks they had made before. They held their hands close to their bodies so they would not freeze. Now and then Mala would turn back, effacing their tracks with his knife, so that Death should not follow them.

It was evening when they returned. Iva at once took two bags with new clothes and they put on new garments. As Orsokidok had no suit to spare, he just turned his fur coat inside out. All the old clothes were packed up in a bundle and next morning Mala returned to the grave with it. He stayed away a long time and when he retraced his steps, he took care to obliterate his tracks.

At last they journeyed on. Every day they painstakingly

wiped out their tracks. Eventually they forgot about it in their eagerness to make quick progress. Ships and the white men beckoned to them and spring was almost upon them. Eider ducks winged their way inland, sea swallows arrived, and big flocks of wild geese, screeching madly overhead, made for the north.



II

ONE day they made out two black spots just ahead of them. Mala, with his keen hunter's eyes, saw them first, although Iva was walking in front of the team. He told her they would soon meet men.

The sledge stopped. Iva quickly pulled her clothes bag from the load and dressed in a new fur, new brow-band and new mittens. However, she did not put on her new trousers and her new seal skin boots. Only little by little did she intend to display her new clothes. Mala wanted to say something but thought better of it. Why shouldn't women dress up? After all, a man's value is of an entirely different sort.

They journeyed on, Iva always ahead, but as soon as the newcomers could be perceived clearly, she waited for the sledge. They finally rested in an open space that was free from pack-ice. Here they tied up the dogs and sat down. They, who came with Death for a guest, could never make the first step of welcome.

As the strangers drew near, the dogs grew restless and Mala handed the whip to Orsokidok. He cracked the lash over the heads of the team. The dogs hid their noses between their front legs and ceased their efforts to pull the sledge ahead.

As soon as the dogs had quieted down, Orsokidok joined the others, who were now resting on the sledge. They all put up their fur hoods and gazed indifferently at the sea where nothing was to be seen. It behooved them to pretend that they had not seen the approaching sledge at all and they tried to

appear as if nothing in the whole world could claim their interest.

The newcomers drove up. They had to use their whips freely to prevent their dogs from attacking Mala's. Mala and his family seemed utterly unmoved; they sat and looked across the sea. The children could remain still no longer. They leaned across the sledge and stared at the strangers. Iva, however, gripped them by the scruff of their necks and made them sit up straight.

"You are not to stare at the newcomers or talk to them either," she told her sons.

One of the men, by the name of Papi, whom they knew well, stepped up to them and, without uttering a sound, sat next to them on the sledge.

"One always meets somebody when journeying," he said after a little while. Mala just replied: "That is so."

"Are you coming from up north?" Papi inquired, well aware that such was the case.

"It isn't impossible that we come from up north," Mala remarked carelessly. "As a matter of fact, we do come from there."

There was a long silence. Papi's party—men and women and children—were all standing around Mala's sledge. They studiously kept away from the dogs as they were afraid of being bitten. Papi informed the others that these were people from far up north. This information created rather lively interest but another long silence followed. That someone had died in Mala's party was apparent to the others, judging from their behavior, but as long as it remained unknown who had died, it would be very unseemly to ask any pointed questions. Only obvious matters might be discussed under such circumstances. However, the women soon stepped aside, and the children started to play with one another, while the men remained sitting together.

Puala took a loose block of ice and toppled it over to show his strength. Then he took his father's whip and flourished it about, making a cracking noise. Soon the children were playing as if they had grown up together.

MEANWHILE the women gossiped, but none of them would impart any real news. They cast appraising glances at one another's garments, each assuring the other that she admired her clothes.

"Oh, my skins are simply terrible. We did not catch any good reindeer this summer. And when I got ready to dry the skins, bad weather set in. Somehow it seems I can never get any clothes that are really nice looking. I wish I could have stayed home so I wouldn't feel so ashamed now," Iva complained in a low voice.

Aba lit a pipe. It took her a good long while as she carefully unwrapped the pipe from glossy tin foil which was covered with red letters. Iva watched her silently. With distended nostrils she scented the smell of tobacco which reminded her of Pond's Inlet with its ships and white people. She thought of the master of the ship who had favored her so much that all the others had come to her and asked for her intervention whenever they wanted food, or wood, or gunpowder.

"You want to try?" Aba asked, offering the pipe to Iva.

"If I may." The smoke crept up her nostrils, filling her mouth and throat. Yes, that really was the taste she knew so well. How reminiscent it was of white men who have possessions so strange one could not help dreaming of them. Like the white men themselves, who were so full of ardor and strength, all their things indicated power.

Another woman, who was not making half the impression Aba made, was called Hanne. But she, too, attracted the attention of the woman from far up north. She was older and very lean and had never been much of a favorite with the whalers. Nevertheless she wore a necklace consisting of a white strap with black edges. Once when she inadvertently lifted her fur, Iva could see that she was wearing the same kind of underwear white men wore.

Then there was a young girl whose name was Inupaujak. She had hardly anything to her name. After all, she was an orphan, and what would possessions of any kind mean to a girl like that anyway? She returned from the ships just as poor as she had gone there. To own things a girl had to

have a husband, and Inupaujak was only now on the way to meet her man. She came from the south; her future husband, Ujarak, who had recently sent for her, lived up north. The match had been arranged by her parents when she was born and now she simply obeyed his call. Although she was young, Inupaujak was well developed for her age. She was known as a clever needlewoman and when it came to tending lamps she was just as good a hand as any old woman. The young men of her village had not liked the idea of her leaving at all. There had been many joyful experiences, strong and passionate, since Inupaujak had recently come to know sex. After she left, life became dull in the village.

Inupaujak had sojourned in many places. She had finally stayed for some time at Four Islands where the whaleboats anchored. But even there she had remained a short time only. Inupaujak liked diversion—being an unattached woman. . . .

The cook had met her first. He was the mighty man who prepared all meals for the ship's whole company. Some of the dishes she had liked but there were others which only the white men relished. The cook would ladle flour out of big bags and mix it in big bowls, and then he would boil it in pots. Sometimes he prepared meat and sometimes he boiled plants, but almost invariably she enjoyed the strange dishes. Frequently he took meat out of big barrels. This meat was even saltier than the sea water; it burned one's tongue and could not be eaten at all. Coffee and tea he took from heavy crocks, and he fetched other things from big cases. He never bothered with a little bag of the size her people would get sometimes; he cook's stores were always much more than a single man could ever hope to lift. As soon as one case was empty, he would crack open another, and the old box was thrown overboard to be picked up by her own people.

The cook had interested himself in Inupaujak. He lived in a little house right next to the place where he cooked. Inupaujak had understood very well that it was he who fed all the white men and he himself could eat anything he fancied. He had taught her to like the taste of sugar and bread. And he had given her a spoon, too—the same spoon with which

she had helped herself to so much sugar one day that she finally vomited and did not like it at all any more.

Once, when one of the sailors had laid hands on her and tried to carry her to the crew's quarters, the cook came rushing out of his house and got so furious that the sailor had to put Inupaujak back on board again. Then the cook had asked her to come to his house. Inupaujak had seen men fight over women before but here on board they used only angry words and did not resort to knives or harpoons.

What a mighty man the cook was! Nevertheless, there was a man still mightier than he, and that man lived in a bigger house. One day this man had appeared, spoken a few loud words to the cook, taken her by the hand and led her into his house. His house had little windows and she was supposed to live there. But she had not liked it and had cried a good deal. She had been given food but not too much, and all day long he had made her sew. In the morning the man had chased her out of bed while he had kept on sleeping.

But white men were queer. One day it became apparent that even this man had to obey some other man. Inupaujak had entered many houses which, all off a big entrance, were situated at the stern of the ship. There men sat on benches, and there was a mirror on the wall. Not one of the small round mirrors she knew, but one big enough to see a man's whole figure. The man had a big, big pot into which he poured warm water. As a matter of fact, the pot was so big that Inupaujak could lie in it all stretched out, her whole body covered with soapy water. After that he had made her walk around the house all day long without a shred of clothing. Frequently he had given her a liquid that burned her throat and that made her say other words than those she wanted to say.

Even though the man was old and nothing like the cook at all, Inupaujak had realized that everybody had to obey him. She had received many presents while she was in his house. She had taken them to the snow hut of her brother-in-law down by the shore. Her brother-in-law was Taparte, Aba's husband. He had kept Inupaujak's needles and her scissors,

her mirror and her shirts, and much sugar and lots of little cakes. Everything she had seen and pointed out to the master of the house he gave to her if she promised not to stay away too long. But whenever she had gone to see the cook or had smiled when somebody spoke to her, the master had become very angry. He had used loud words and made her come home with him immediately.

One day when the white men had left in two boats to hunt whales, Taparte decided to go north and Inupaujak had to accompany them. It had seemed a real pity to leave that beautiful ship but, on the other hand, she was getting tired of all the men and the easy life. So she had departed a few days ago and since then nothing of importance had happened.

THE women gossiped a long time with one another. Once in a while, one of them would go over to her sledge and, returning, display some new things. She would pretend to be utterly unmoved when the others admired them.

The men, standing aside, glanced critically at each other's sledges and dog teams but exchanged only a few words. After a while they decided to build houses. Each man pulled out his knife and then they scattered to probe the snow. As soon as the women saw this they knew that they would remain for a few days and that there would be plenty of time to gossip about last winter's events.

When they had moved into the snow huts, the women promptly repeated to their menfolk all the gossip they had heard. They also tried to draw out the men but they were mostly unsuccessful. Of course, men would not stoop to gossip with women!

A little while later, Taparte invited them to tea. Orsokidok, too, got some tea but as he was considered still a boy, he received only a little sugar. Each one had his own cup! That was the latest style, a new fad they had picked up aboard the ship. With the tea they had big, hard biscuits that made a crunching noise when ground between the teeth. If this

was real food, it was a queer kind as it did not satisfy their hunger. It was white man's food. Of course it would account for their queerness if white men ate this outlandish food that was not prepared from any killed beast.

Mala took along some of the hard biscuits for the boys and ordered Iva to boil meat—reindeer with lots of tallow! He had just killed a fat reindeer cow and that was the finest dish to offer guests.

Iva, putting the kettle with water over the fire, thought of nothing but the ships she would visit soon and the tea they would offer her there. How long it had been since she had tasted of white men's food! She looked forward to the adventure with great anticipation. Her heart gladdened while her impatience grew.

Then Papi came and invited the men. Orsokidok, too, was permitted to join them. In Papi's house they were offered some soft kind of food to be eaten with a spoon after lots of syrup had been poured over it from a big cup. The syrup had been warmed, first, over the lamp.

As soon as her reindeer meat was done, Iva came over to Papi's house and called all the men back to her house. Big chunks of meat were passed from hand to hand and everybody took a good bite out of them. There was also a bowl with broth that went around. The guests who had lived for some time on the food of the white men, without once tasting a piece of reindeer, only now discovered that they had never had their fill while down along the shore. This was the first time they could really appease their appetites.

There was a little talk, but much was hinted at; generally the kernel of a story had to be surmised. This was always a safe way to avoid criticism from others.

They had decided to remain a few days because Mala reported that the reindeer were already traveling north on their annual migration. As the others told him that the ice all the way down to the ships was still in a very good condition, there was no reason for Mala to leave in haste.

Mala liked the idea of staying. He cast longing glances

at the fine rifles. How amusing it was to squint through the little groove near the breech and get the tiny piece of iron near the muzzle in line with the target. He always imagined then that he was aiming at reindeer or seal. And everything pointed at in that way had to die. Hunting was child's play and nothing could escape any more.

He pulled the trigger, cocked it again, and cast longing glances at lock, stock and barrel. This rifle was entirely different from the rifles he had seen before. These white men were marvelous! There were always new thoughts in their heads; they were creating new things right along. There were new ships, and new men, and new languages, new things all the time. Mala wondered whether these white men came into the world as little children and then grew up just as his people did? White men had told him that there were women, too, in their country, but they never brought any along on the ships. However, they liked the women here, and when they wanted them, they simply took them without much asking. That, of course, was perfectly all right. Mala had once been told about a ship with many, many men on board that had anchored far down along the shore. The men aboard that ship had not taken any of the women but they also had not given any presents. That ship had been a great disappointment for everyone. Perhaps those men had been condemned to live without women-folk at all. One could never tell, white men were so queer!

"Let's go after reindeer and get some fresh meat," someone suggested.

Mala, jolted from his absorption, responded with alacrity. Wouldn't it be wonderful to hear the report of a rifle again! The crackling of guns made hunting so much more amusing! He examined his left thumb, still swollen and sensitive from the snapping of the bow-cord when shooting arrows. How much easier to pull the trigger of a rifle! No strength at all was necessary for that and the left thumb wouldn't hurt either.

During the last two years, when he had been without fire-arms, Mala had always retrieved his arrows by cutting them out of the carcass of his prey. How much easier if he could use bullets! The little ball whizzed through the air so quickly

one couldn't even see it. And inside each ball was some mighty magic that brought down the prey.

"How much does a rifle cost now?" he asked, thinking of his fox skins. Papi stretched out one hand and started to count.

"Here are ten skins—that's the little finger. And here are ten, and another ten, still another ten and then ten more. That's one hand. And on the other hand, ten here and ten there." He did not count the remaining three fingers.

Mala was satisfied. He had enough fox skins and he must have a rifle before he could ever think of trading in tobacco and wood. Iva must have sewing needles because the few needles she still had were bent and very short from constant sharpening. Yes, needles and a rifle, Mala nodded to himself.

THEY soon picked up the tracks of reindeer in the mountains. Pleasure was the main purpose of their hunt, so the three men remained together. As soon as the reindeer were near enough, Papi and Taparte stalked them from opposite directions. These two, owning rifles, naturally were the masters of the chase. Mala smiled silently. He used to give meat from his abundance to these two. If it had not been for him, Papi's and Taparte's dogs would have starved last year! Ah, but now they had rifles and had killed two reindeer before poor Mala was able to get close enough to the herd to try bow and arrow. Today there would be no game for him. He had to be satisfied just to help the others and all he got were the hindquarters of the animals. Yes, rifles were much better!

The men rested and ate of the fresh meat. Stalking reindeer made them tired and thirsty, but fortunately there was no lack of big gadfly larvæ. They were imbedded in the inside of the skin, waiting for warm weather before boring their way through the reindeers' hide to the outer world. These worm-like maggots hung in clusters like ripe berries, tasting as

sweet as fresh water. If one ate enough of them, they quenched one's thirst.

The sun poured down on them and they rested in the snow and talked of many things. But how uninteresting was Mala's story about Paumi, who had killed two bears last winter, and Odark, who had been sick for months, or of men who had exchanged their wives. What was Mala's news compared to all the news that came from the ship? Yes, the other two really had something to tell! They had seen big books on the pages of which white men were living in great houses. In those houses, many people could walk back and forth without once bumping against the walls. And there were many more ships in the white man's land than one had ever imagined. And animals bigger than anybody would think of—and on the backs of these animals white men would sit with their legs spread apart. Besides, the white men had women, too, as one could learn from those pages.

"How about the white men and your womenfolk?" Mala asked.

Papi did not wish to speak about this. None of the white men had liked his Hanne except an old man who had to take orders from everybody. The old man could never give Hanne anything but a piece of tobacco now and then. It was for this reason that Papi met Mala's question with silence.

Taparte, on the other hand, had much to tell. All the white men enjoyed the company of his wife. He had been away frequently catching foxes but every time he returned he had found some man with his wife and quantities of food and all kinds of things stacked up in his house.

Mala did not like their boasting. He knew that he had more skins on his sled than the two together had taken down to the white men. And, on former visits to the ships, his wife had had more admirers than anybody.

"Let the women gossip about love," Mala said. "I'm going home now. It looks as if it will storm."

Iva was dressing when Mala returned. He flung the meat into the hut. There was warm water in the pot and very

soon the meat was boiled. But none of the neighbors was invited; they ate all by themselves.

Mala remained silent and soon lay down. Husband and wife crawled under the pelts and related to each other what they had heard from the newcomers, and what they had seen of their wealth. Mutual envy brought the two very close to each other; though they always got along well enough. They hardly ever quarreled and Mala had never beaten Iva. Both were strong and industrious. They were well supplied and they did not have to thank anybody for that but themselves. Their children, too, were healthy and wide-awake. But the two other men were lucky enough to own rifles now. That certainly was food for thought.

Papi had asked whether Mala would like to shoot, and Aba had offered Iva some needles and thread. The thread was white and wound around a little piece of smooth wood. Iva, however, had refused everything except a few biscuits and tea for her children. In turn she had given Aba some reindeer skins; as a matter of fact, more skins than she would have paid the white men if she had been trading with them. It had never happened yet that the Malas had not paid freely and much more than was necessary.

"We shall continue our trip tomorrow," Mala decided. "They asked me to stay another day, but we are going to leave. Let them build their sledges themselves and see how they get along with all the junk they have to carry. Anyway, it seems to me that poor people should not hang around these rich ones here."

Next morning the big black dog was missing. When Mala returned the night before, the dog had been sleeping, but now he was gone and nobody knew where to look for him. They called for the dog and searched the neighborhood but all in vain. Taparte expressed to Mala his regret for the loss of the dog.

"Dogs bear young so easily," Mala answered. "Some get lost and others are born in their stead." And quietly he continued to get the sledge ready for an early departure. Soon

they left, leaving behind the harness and the traces of the lost dog.

The two boys were somewhat unhappy at leaving. They would have liked to stay on a little and play with the other children. However, their disappointment was somewhat lessened by the fact that both of them had received little pieces of candles for presents. It was such fun to chew them! It was almost as good, and lasted as long, as the sweetmeat prepared from old bacon and pussy-willows. Of course candles were much finer!

When Mala stopped for the night, Iva did not help him build the hut. Mala was a little taken aback but Iva pretended not to notice. She stayed at a distance. Probably there is some reason, Mala thought, and he went on building while Orsokidok plastered the cracks. When the hut was all finished, Iva came back.

"You took a little walk?" Mala asked, just to break the silence.

"I suppose I did," Iva replied. Nothing more was said.

Snow was melted over the lamp and everybody drank except Iva. Mala chopped the reindeer meat into chunks and put them into the pot. While he fed the dogs, the meat boiled, and what delicious soup it made! Everybody ate with great relish except Iva who did not touch a bite. Later on she got up, put on her boots and went outside. She returned with the little pot Mala used when he squirted water on the sledge runners for a new ice coating. Iva put snow into the pot, melted it, and then boiled meat in it. The others looked on as if all this had no meaning whatever. Mala, however, felt pride and joy rising in his heart.

"Are you eating later on?" he asked with the manner of one who does not really expect an answer.

"Perhaps, I really don't know. I am just boiling a little meat."

Nothing more was said but from this day on Iva, to protect the young life within her, always prepared her food in the

little pot, fetched snow for herself and would never touch the food of the others.

Mala made for Malugsitak Fjord which was in the vicinity of the ships. All during the trip he had been a good teacher to his children, showing the boys where hunting was good and pointing out to them spots where the snow was impassable for safe traveling.

The boys had learned much from their father's words. Only two more nights and they would reach the ships. Father, who knew the country well, had told them so. Mala did not show how the prospect excited him. How could he, when he was the master of the house and had to do the thinking for all the others? Mala could hardly sleep nights; his thoughts dwelt on the white men, their rifles and many other desirable things.



III

THERE lay the ships. Two huge vessels, not unlike mighty rocks. The most impressive feature about them was the tremendous wooden sticks reaching high up into the air. They were higher, even, than the islands where the ships anchored. Nobody could doubt the white men's wealth after seeing that their wood had undreamed of length and thickness.

Nobody uttered a loud word. The subdued tone in which they spoke gave evidence of their awe. And Iva was glad, she was wearing her new skin boots and the children their finest fur pants.

A good thing Mala had kept his family closely around the sledge when they had come across the ridge. It had been hard going up the steep incline, although tracks showed plainly that recently travelers had passed here. The knowledge that they were about to meet strangers made them cling closer to one another.

It would not have done at all had the children run ahead.

Now it was Mala who first saw the ships lying out in the fjord and that gave him a chance to show his superiority. Very quietly he mentioned that out there were the vessels; meanwhile he busied himself with repairing the traces of the leader dog. It was only natural that he, the great hunter and master of the house, should think more about his dog team than about a few unimportant ships.

Emotion such as women and children display was no part of his character. No one could tell by Mala's behavior that he did not see ships every day; to all appearances he bartered with white men so frequently that he took almost no interest in them any more.

The boys were excited and asked many questions. Whether there were many of the white men; whether those tall, upright trees could be lowered; whether the ships were made of wood or whether the men on board were walking on stone? All simple questions which Mala could answer easily, while slowly shaking his head or smiling indulgently. The impatience of the others suited him for it covered up his own excitement. As a path down to the ships was broken, there was no reason for anyone to walk ahead and all could ride on the sledge. Soon the ice was reached and anybody who wanted to could see that here were people arriving—a man with his whole family, who perhaps could be induced to trade with the white men, provided they would give him whatever he demanded.

DRAWING nearer, Mala saw that many people were encamped in snow huts on a point reaching out into the sea. How lively it was there! Dogs howled and children ran about playing. As soon as Mala stopped near the ice and sat down, looking with smiles at the thickly inhabited settlement, all of them came rushing over to the sledge. Their elegance and fine manners overwhelmed the newcomers. Some of the settlement people wore hats, and two men were even clad in shirts of thin, light material; all of them were smoking pipes. An abundance of wood, carelessly strewn about, was proof that these people were in close touch with white men.

There was nothing for Mala to do in defense of his dignity but to remain silent while, with the assistance of the men, he steered his team through the pack-ice towards the settlement.

Arola was there, with his wife Minik, and Kritlak' and Akrat—all of them far inferior to Mala and his family. How often had these same people marveled at the game he captured and how many times he had treated them to some leftovers from his kill! Nevertheless, he did not feel any too sure of himself now. It took a man off his guard to come upon people wearing shirts and hats and pants made in the country of the white men! And to top it all, smoke rose from their pipes so that their faces were almost hidden.

Iva had meanwhile entered one of the igloos for a little chat, accompanied by her children who were awestruck by all the new things surrounding them.

Quietly, Mala started to build his hut near the others. Once in a while one of the other men helped him; Akrat came over with his knife, and assisted him with the piling of the snow blocks. Mala intended to build a large, wonderful, really pretentious house of great big blocks. He would not permit his curiosity to interfere with the building of the house and Akrat, almost bursting with news, did not get a chance to tell Mala anything. Mala had a real gift of pretending to be absolutely uninterested. Although he had built an igloo here, no one knew whether Mala would continue his journey on the morrow or not.

As soon as the house was finished, the entire load of the sledge was stowed away inside. Only the meat was left outside on a rack. Let the white men see that a man had arrived with great quantities of meat bagged in the summer; as a matter of fact, so much meat that he still had some left after a long, long trip.

Suddenly, the two boys came running over to Mala, who was busy building a little annex to the big house. Three white men were coming across the ice. Mala only glanced at them and then, cutting a big block of snow, he lifted it into the wall with a great show of absorption in his work. Why should

it bother him that these men were making straight for his house?

"Hello," one of them said, "a new Eskimo, I see. What a lot of meat and bags this man has!"

He came closer, feeling the bags and, opening one of them, saw that it was filled with fox skins.

Mala kept on building; only the two boys stared, in admiring silence, at the strange men. They were tall and slender and had pinkish faces. Two of them had big beards; the sound of their voices reminded one of the yelping foxes in spring and their laughter was like the giggling of women. Apparently they were to be feared, for you could not know what was going on by the expression of their faces. The boys had heard lots about the Kravdlunaken and now they were actually looking at some of them. Probably it would be best for little boys to run to their mother before they displeased these men.

Mala finished the igloo. After all, he was a mighty hunter, and white men could not be expected to impress him greatly. He stepped over to his sledge, took a number of harpoon thongs and, tying them up in a bundle, threw them into the little annex he had just built. Next he took the traces off the sledge—yes, he surely was a man who knew his work well! To have a couple of white men linger about didn't mean anything to him. Let them stand around; let them have a good look at his fox pelts—they would get them only if they paid well for them.

Secretly Mala's heart beat fast with excitement. When would they start to trade? Apparently things would not run as smoothly as last time, when Iva had been the woman of the great white man. And while Mala was thinking over all this, the white men turned on their heels, laughed aloud, and entered Arola's house.

No doubt Arola had some advantages here. He knew the queer language of the white men; he had gone south with them for a few years to their own country, where they sailed on mighty rivers and where all the white men carried rifles and were always ready to fight and kill many of their enemies.

Three full years Arola had dwelt among them. Minik had accompanied him and during all that time had been the only woman among many men, with the result that, since her return, she had not borne children any more. Mala had heard gossip that the master of the white men had been angry with Arola because he had thought his behavior unseemly and others, too, had said that Arola was entirely undependable. Yet Arola was a widely traveled man and although he had forgotten to speak the truth, out here he was a big man now that he knew the language of the strangers. Why, hadn't the white men walked straight into his house before Mala's own eyes!

He could hear them talking now inside the house. Suddenly a great sadness came over him and he went inside the new igloo. There they sat: Orsokidok and the children, and the food was all ready. To be sure, they did not seem very hungry; there was no tea and no little cakes nor any other of these new dishes that they associated with the ships. However, Iva had boiled tasty, fresh reindeer meat and soup to be served later in the hollow horns of a musk-deer. Because everything here was not different from any other day Mala was depressed. Suddenly, however, great energy seemed to take hold of him. He stood up, stepped in front of the hut, and shouted: "Ojut! Ojut!" Then he ordered the boys to go and call the neighbors, as boiled meat was being served and all were cordially invited to partake of it. Everybody was to know that a man of fine manners with plenty of meat had arrived at the settlement.

The boys ran off and at each house they made their little speech: "There is boiled meat in Mala's house!"

Immediately the neighbors came over, each with a knife in his hand. Arola came, and Akrat and Kritlak and many others. Mala sat on a low bench covered with luxuriously soft and well-tanned pelts; on a low snow bank near by large quantities of meat were laid out for thawing. A big vessel of walrus skin contained water. Newcomers in a new house—that was reason enough for a feast.

All of a sudden, the entrance darkened, once, twice and

a third time. Mala gazed, in startled surprise, at three white men who had entered the igloo. They were the same men who had gone into Arola's igloo before. Arola had told them that there was boiled meat waiting in Mala's house and now they came to accept the invitation. Mala had not counted on them and felt very unsure of himself now. How was he to treat these white men? Iva pointed at the snow bench and asked them to sit down. They did so, talking to each other but only smiling at Mala. The boys, who had taken off their boots, crouched timidly behind their mother.

Iva took her meat poker and fished a choice piece out of the pot. It was delicious, steaming hot reindeer meat with lots of tallow, the best parts of a fat cow, especially chosen for today's feast. Mala, being the host, took the meat first. He burned his fingers but did not mind that and bit off a piece as big as he could possibly push into his mouth. Close to his lips, he cut off whatever he could not swallow. His knife was a poor affair half broken off and sharpened so often that by now it was very thin and short. The others had big knives that could be folded so that the steel part disappeared entirely inside the haft. Mala, however, consoled himself with the thought that nobody's knife here had skinned as many animals as his. But he resolved that when it came to trading he would get many knives, many more than any of the others possessed. Now he handed the meat over to one of the whites, but the man only laughed and shook his head. Perhaps he didn't like reindeer meat! After all, each man was entitled to his own tastes and there was no reason for anybody to make excuses for them. Mala, too, laughed and offered the meat to the next white man, who also declined. It was Arola that next took hold of the chunk and, biting off a mighty piece, handed it on to Akrat. The latter, too, had quite a capacious gullet. Whatever remained was handed on to the next one as is the custom when hunters eat boiled meat in company.

Another piece was fished out of the pot but by now Iva was aware that the white men, for one reason or another, would not partake of the feast. Perhaps they had laws which did not permit them to eat in company with others. She

looked for an especially fine morsel and, in offering it to one of the guests, did not even lick it clean of soup and blood slime. Perhaps white men preferred to be the only ones to put their mouths to their meat? Iva remembered that this was a daily custom on board the ships she had visited some years ago. Sure enough, she was a woman who knew things and understood how to please the white men. The man not only took the meat from her but ate it with apparent relish and so did the two others. Then everybody laughed and Arola said that nobody on the ships would ever share the same food with anyone else. He himself was eating that way now and today only, in order not to hurt the feelings of his host, was he observing the old custom.

Too bad that such a grave error had been committed during the first meeting with the white men! Mala felt very much put out about it. An oversight of that kind might react against him, once he started to trade with them. To hide his embarrassment, Mala went over to the water pot and, shoving his whole face into it, took a long drink. In this way nobody could see his expression or notice that shame had reddened his cheeks.

The white men got up and left long before the feast was over. Arola told their names and explained that they were not masters on the ships but belonged to those who lived in the fore part of the vessels. Although they did not own much, they always had tobacco but were very slow to part with any of it. Even though they were white men, they had to obey orders given by the real masters who told them exactly what to do.

When the meat was finished, the soup was handed around. Each one took a mouthful and then handed the musk-deer horn to his neighbor.

"It would be nice to have tea now," Kritlak said. He liked to show that he was thoroughly familiar with the ways of white men. "We always have little cakes with our meals," he added.

Mala felt very small. Strange, wasn't it, that this man who was surely his inferior could shame him so. He only

laughed and said that he would soon enough be able to get food from the ships. But just now he had come from a neighborhood where people were only too glad to have meat, as they had nothing else.

After sitting around for a little while, it was decided to go on board the ships. Mala and his family were to come along to be initiated into the mysteries there. Mala wanted to know from the others whether it was hard to get along with the white men and whether they got angry easily. To his relief he was told that white men never flew into a rage provided their commands were obeyed. Then one could be sure of their good will. "Many of them are young and therefore carefree. Others not so young are sometimes moody. There is one man on each ship who prepares the food. Everybody has to go to him when hungry. They do not live by hunting. All their food is obtained from a cave below them. Some of them live in the fore part of the vessel, and others live aft."—Oh, Mala would be surprised at some of the customs of the white men!

THEY went quietly on deck. Steps led them up—a wonderful invention which the boys saw for the first time. Upik said that people who were allowed to climb such stairs should always be happy. He wanted to remain outside and go up and down the stairs. He thought nobody could ever get enough of such a wonderful pastime. But the boys had to go on deck with the others. Here they stood a little while, gazing wonderingly at everything they saw.

Tow lines were hanging down from the big, tall pieces of wood—so many of them as to make you dizzy looking at them. If you picked out a single one of the tow lines and tried to follow it with your eyes, you quickly lost track of it in the maze of tows which netted the whole ship. There could be no doubt that only very clever people could handle all these tows that hung about in such profusion. One white man after another appeared on deck. They talked to each

other and Arola informed them that new people had arrived and that Mala was here to trade with them.

While they walked down to the ships Arola had told Mala that the old master and nobody else did all the trading; the young master of the other ship had to obey him. None of the crew was permitted to buy anything at all, and if they did so, it was always done in secret. If ever the big master found out, he became very angry, and chased you away from the ship, perhaps keeping all the fox pelts. Then you had to leave in shame and some day you would surely reap suffering for having made the white men angry.

Naturally Mala had not carried along any of his goods. He was, after all, a trader who wanted first to see what was what. Under no circumstances did he intend to give the impression that he was anxious to sell. Oh no, not at all! His fox pelts were stowed away in the rear of the sledge in big bags; he would simply wait until the white men were eager enough to pay him a good price.

Arola knew his way about the ship and liked to act the part of the go-between; he wanted everyone to think that nothing could be done without him. He went down the stairs right into the house of the big master to tell him that a new man had arrived who was bringing along a great store of choice fox pelts and who wanted a rifle and tobacco. Arola did not forget to report that the man had also brought along a good-looking wife, young and desirable, handy with the needle and undoubtedly a joy for any white man. He returned directly, telling Mala that he and the family were to come below where the fine people were eating. Mala went, followed by his children and Iva. He knew that his wife had been recommended by Arola. After all, this was at least a little better than that time far up north when, as a young husband, they had only tolerated him on board the white man's ship. Now they had sent for him, and Mala felt himself more on a level of equality with the whites. He resolved to ask a high price for his fox pelts and not to sell them to the white man at his first offer.

They remained standing at the door, watching the white

men eat. It must be something very delicious. The Malas filled their nostrils with the appetizing aroma and stood waiting very quietly. The white men were so engrossed in their tasty food and in their lively talk that they did not even notice that someone had entered the house. These white men were, of course, mighty people who knew many mysterious things to talk about and who guarded marvelous wealth stored in the ships. They naturally could not be expected to pay attention to Mala and his family.

Ah, there was so much to see! In a house of this kind, nobody could ever feel bored. A clock hung on the wall, ticking evenly. The men themselves were sitting around a table with strange round columns under it. The floor was covered with some queer, glossy material, hard and smooth. There were pictures on the walls, showing foreign countries with trees as high as mountains, and there was a mirror hung in such a way that one could see the white men twice.

So impressive was the house that Mala forgot entirely what had brought him there. He did not even hear when he was finally addressed. Arola, who felt at home, walked back and forth across the floor, used difficult words and pretended to know what the white men were talking about. He stepped over to Mala and told him that the great white master wished to do business with him. But first he was going to give them all a fine meal. They were to sit right down and eat.

The white men got up from the table with so much noise that the boys became frightened and hid behind their mother. Then Mala and his people sat down and everything that was left over was heaped in front of them and they began to eat. Of course no one ate with his fingers here! Arola explained that the white men wanted each one to stick a fork into the meat and a spoon into the soup. Although it did not taste so good that way, forks and spoons were used and the children were told to eat even at the risk of burning their throats. Naturally, after eating food as salty as sea water, white men would be thirsty. But then they were given tea and sugar and white bread so soft that they could break it between their lips. Meanwhile the white men walked around, conversed with

each other, and threw appraising glances at the Mala family. One of them stepped over to Iva, pinched her cheek, and said something to her. Iva became agitated; she did not know what the white man wanted of her, and that made her feel ashamed. Instinctively she withdrew, although she was afraid to displease the white master. Arola laughed uproariously. He told her not to be afraid of the white man. If he really liked her, she would get lots of sugar and tea and tobacco.

Mala ate, absorbed in speculation as to what he should ask for his fox pelts. He resolved again not to open negotiations but to let the white man make the first step.

The white master was a stout man. One could easily tell from his grand manner that he was the most important personage around here. There was authority in his bearing, and whenever he spoke, his men would rush to obey his orders. The family had meanwhile finished eating and the cook and his helpers came in to take out the dishes and the remains of the meal. Mala felt deeply ashamed that they had been so long about their eating, keeping the white men waiting.

Arola had told them that the master's name was Captain—a word hard to pronounce: Mala had practiced the word in order not to make himself ridiculous, he had heard the name before and it seemed that white men used it frequently. It always embarrassed him greatly when he discovered that his tongue had started things it could not finish.

The Captain now beckoned to them. Mala noted that he had a house all to himself which one entered through a door that could be closed. There were many interesting things in the Captain's house. Big pictures of a white woman with queer, high-piled hair, and a few children in beautiful clothes. One could easily tell that this was the Captain's family but Mala could not understand why he had left them at home when they all were so healthy looking.

The Captain took two pipes from a holder, and handed one to each of them. He also gave each one two pieces of tobacco and a small box with little sticks of wood which were black on one end—the end that would burst into flames if one rubbed it against a stone or against a piece of wood. This

was perhaps the most remarkable thing the white men possessed but it no longer created astonishment as it had been seen before.

Arola, too, was called in by the Captain. He also received tobacco and then they were all told to sit down. The Captain asked whether they had fox pelts and whether they wished to do a little trading.

"Fox pelts—such a poor hunter as I?" Mala said. "How should I ever have fox pelts? I haven't any idea how to trap foxes. It would be very strange if I bagged any. You'd better speak to somebody else if you wish to buy fox pelts."

"Arola here told me that you brought many pelts along and that you wish to trade."

"Oh, well, yes, I have a few skins but unfortunately they are not good enough to be offered to you. You see, my wife over there does not know how to scrape them right and besides I myself spoiled them all and got them dirty. It's too bad that we cannot do a little trading but whatever I have is not good enough to be offered to you."

No doubt Mala was clever when it came to doing business. He certainly would not show how anxious he was to obtain a rifle and knives. He had been careful not to be the first one to speak about trading. But the Captain, too, knew by now that he had made a mistake and would not negotiate any further today. He said only that he wouldn't mind looking at the spoiled pelts some time. Wouldn't Mala come in some day around noon? Perhaps something might develop. . . .

When it was time to leave the ship, the Captain said something to Arola and Iva remained on board while Mala went home with his boys and Orsokidok. Little Upik cried and wanted to stay with his mother, but she assured him that she would be home the next day and that no one could be so bold as to resist the white men. Mala felt a mighty pride that the Captain fancied his wife. Until now he had had some other woman who was lingering on deck, waiting to be called below. But when Mala came up and the woman saw he was alone, she knew that she could go home that night.

Returning to his igloo, Mala lit the blubber lamp which

had gone out during his absence and lay down with his boys and his foster-son. But so many thoughts buzzed in his head that he could not sleep. Really, it was queer how the white man came along and took his wife without so much as asking his permission. Queer, too, that he simply let her go without mustering up enough courage to say no! Yes, it was all very strange. . . . Eventually he fell asleep but awoke when he heard someone stirring at the entrance. It was Iva. She brought her husband a whole package of wonderful food. The children would be delighted. Mala wondered why he did not ask her the reason for coming home so late and whether she had nothing to tell him. It was as though the two were afraid to talk to each other for fear of mentioning things they preferred to forget. Mala remembered clearly that it had been just like this the time he was up north with Iva visiting the ships. He had finally gone hunting in an effort to erase the unpleasant thoughts that had crept into his mind.

WHEN they started trading, Mala quickly saw that the Captain was much impressed with all the fox pelts he spread out for his inspection. The Captain did not know that Mala had many more in his house. It was always a good idea not to show everything one had. Mala obtained many of the things he desired. There were hatchets and knives and a whole box of tobacco. Most important of all, there was a rifle—the kind one could shoot off a number of times without reloading. For this rifle, Mala had given many fox pelts—more, as a matter of fact, than he had counted. Counting was not necessary at all, because the Captain had stacked the skins one atop the other until the pile had been as high as the rifle was long. Nevertheless, even after the Captain had pressed the whole stack well down, Mala had enough pelts left to buy some extra cartridges and powder and lead and percussion caps. So far the trip had been very profitable; as soon as he acquired some sheet iron and some big nails with which to make himself tools, he could leave. Although he liked all the novelties he saw around him, and despite the many new things he learned while

watching the white men and their ways, an inarticulate fear came over him. It hovered about him like a dark premonition that told him not to tarry too long near the ships. He resolved to be on his way as soon as possible.

There were still pelts left; he did not actually need them but he wanted to possess them in order to show to his neighbors after returning from the ships.

Iva spent the next night, too, on board. Mala was fast asleep when she returned. She undressed and crawled under the fur cover, snuggling up to him. Instinctively he withdrew, feeling resentful. Nobody had asked his permission when disposing of his wife. Arola had arranged everything. What did it matter that Iva received many presents from the white man? Mala felt that his dignity had suffered severely. Why did they not bring their own women along on those ships? He was fully awake by now and stared at his wife. But Iva pretended not to notice. She busied herself cleaning the moss wick of the blubber lamp.

"Did you stay with the Captain on board the ship?" Mala asked.

"I don't know," she replied curtly. "Why are you talking about it?"

He exclaimed angrily: "Just listen to this woman who dares to tell me what I should talk about! I have asked you something; I want you to answer me."

"Leave me alone," Iva replied, turning her back on him.

She felt hurt without knowing why. Something had come into their married life that both of them resented. They lay there, side by side, without addressing another word to each other for the longest time. At last Iva stretched out her arm and taking from her package two thin pieces of tobacco, she offered them to Mala.

"Please," she said, and held the tobacco out to him. But something strange happened. Tobacco, after all, is tobacco—a thing one longs for when the last bit is gone; the very thing one wants first when there is a chance of getting it. But Mala

took the pieces of tobacco only to throw them against the wall. He felt better after that, now that he had shown his disregard for such costly presents. He felt sure that having asserted himself, Iva must fear him. Filled with pride, he lay down again and this time it was not long before both were sound asleep.



IV

I VA was the first one up in the morning. She lit the blubber lamp and prepared the food. It was rather easy this morning for she had tea and little cakes, and when the others awoke they ate and drank with great gusto.

How much better it was here than up north near Igdlulik where their food consisted only of meat and soup. Frequently, early in the morning, they had to run over to other houses for a firebrand, or, worse yet, if the fires had gone out in all the houses, a new one had to be kindled before any food could be cooked. Orsokidok laughed when he thought of all the trouble of building a fire in the old-fashioned way, and struck one match after another. It pleased him that he could kindle a fire and quench it as often as he liked.

Later on Iva cooked for herself in a big agate cup she had received as a present. Another big cup she used for a pot and tea kettle for her personal use. When on board, however, Iva would eat with the others. She assumed that the spirits of the white men could do no harm to her unborn, but, in her own house, she must strictly observe the taboo.

"What's lying on the floor there?" the boys asked, ready to make a dash for what they had just noticed.

The two pieces of tobacco on the ground were mute evidence of Mala's rage over Iva's absence last night. Neither of the parents would answer the boys. It was quite plain that Mala did not intend to pick up the pieces nor could Iva, after her man had thrown them where they were lying now. There was tension in the air. Mala stepped outside the hut.

The pieces of tobacco remained on the floor; although nobody said a word about them, the boys were well aware that they must not question further.

All the other men were outside already, talking animatedly. There was spring in the air and as soon as the whaleboats were swung out the men were to go along with the whites. Both ships had whaleboats and the Captain was to pick the crews for them. Naturally every man wanted to go along. What a wonderful life it would be with the white men! There was always good food on hand, and how it filled one with pride to encounter the giant of the sea in a wooden boat armed with a deadly harpoon. Equipped with such hunting gear, there was no need for fear and the whales would be quick to find out that man was their superior.

"I am longing for meat," said one of the men. "I haven't had meat for the longest time. My bowels are filled with nothing but air and my body has grown very light."

Others, too, agreed that it would be a good idea to hunt reindeer. If they were going away with the white men to catch whales it would be well to leave enough meat behind for the children and women. Of course they could always go on board the ships and eat there, but that wasn't the kind of food to keep their stomachs satisfied for very long. No sooner had one eaten white man's food than one's stomach was empty again.

The Eskimos had become so refined in the company of the ships' crews that they had even received new names. It was too difficult for the sailors to pronounce their names and so they gave them names which reminded them of friends back home in their strange country. This helped to draw the Eskimos closer to the whites, who promised to return each year now, but on the other hand such intimacy could not fill their stomachs with tasty fresh reindeer meat. Besides, an amusing sport like hunting would not be such a bad pastime while waiting for the boats to be made ready.

It was finally decided to make a trip inland, as the reindeer were then on their annual move towards the north. Mala joined them only too gladly. He had a rifle now and he

was eager to show what a good shot he was. Here was an occasion to prove to the others that he was superior to them, although they could talk the language of white men and knew them so much better than he. It seemed likely that once he had proved his mettle they would come and ask for his assistance.

FIRST they went down to the ships. They quickly won the Captain over to their plan. It was agreed that part of the meat was to be brought down to the ships and that they would be back in time for the whaling season. Under no circumstances were they to stay away longer than ten days. They solemnly promised and, starting off, presently came upon large herds of reindeer.

One of their number, Umilialuk by name, soon found out that it was really terrible to be old. How he sweated when they ascended the ridge! And when they rested at the end of the day's travel and everyone was refreshed, he would still sit, panting heavily. They all laughed at him and told him he had led too easy a life down by the ships; the dainty food of the white men had enfeebled him. Umilialuk himself finally joined in the laughter over his exhaustion and next morning continued with the others.

They pitched camp at a lake near two passes where reindeer was plentiful. They all had rifles and cartridges. Many reindeer were carried to the spot where the Captain had told them to deposit their prey. The ships' crews were to fetch the meat, taking it down to the ships on sledges, as there was still sufficient snow on the ground. A few days later, the sledge arrived, drawn by white men. Mala was out in the mountains when they came and found them at the camp upon his return. They had set up a big tent and were sitting inside, around a queer hearth, burning liquid that resembled water but had a different smell and was impossible to drink. The whites were having tea and said something pleasant to Mala but he did not know the meaning of their words until Arola translated it for him. It seemed they had been told that

it was Mala who had killed more than half of all the reindeer. It filled him with pride that he had already proved to the white men how correctly they had judged him when they let him have that rifle.

Both Captains had come along but they had only walked alongside the sledge while the others pulled. As soon as they had loaded up as many reindeer as possible they returned to the ships. Strange people, these white men—eating meat of animals they had not killed themselves! To all appearances, eating the reindeer seemed more important to them than killing it. Mala felt sorry for the men who pulled the heavy sledge, dragging it over the snow like so many dogs. It certainly was queer that white men, who possessed all the riches of the world, did not mind from hitching themselves to a sledge!

After the whites had left, Old Umilialuk tottered into camp. Again he had not killed a single reindeer. He had stalked a whole herd of them but whenever he arrived on one ridge, the reindeer had already reached the next one. The young men laughed uproariously and Old Umilialuk himself bravely tried to join in their hilarity, but most of the time he sat there very quietly. To change the subject, Umilialuk began to speak about the tent which the white men had left standing as they expected to return soon. He proposed that they all go over to the tent and peep in, to see whether the white men had left behind some of their strange tools. They fell in with his suggestion at once and went over to the tent. They had a good look at the sleeping bags and knives and many other things. Then they built a fire, cooked meat, and rolled themselves into their furs for the night. The white men's tent, empty and untouched, stood near by.

The only one who could not sleep was Old Umilialuk. He sat sadly, shaking his head in resignation. "It isn't so easy to grow old," he mumbled at last, as if addressing the sleepers about him. "To find that one's strength is gone. And you all who are laughing at me now will find that out one day when you, too, will learn how hard it is to procure meat."

He lapsed into silence again, staring gloomily ahead. After a little while he mused aloud: "Fortunately tobacco has come

into our country. I have learnt to love it although I am old."

Umilialuk's two sons woke up. They, too, started to talk and told him he should not worry so much. They were well able to provide for him but now he should let them sleep. Soon after, all were fast asleep except Mala, who had been aroused by the old man's speech. He began to ponder over Umilialuk's words. He remembered his old mother whose end he had witnessed only recently. At last he too fell asleep. No doubt, it was that wonderful pipe that made one sleep so soundly that one hardly ever dreamt.

Two days later, the white men returned, again loading as many reindeer as they could on their sledge. They even took all the tongues which Mala had wanted to keep for his boys. One of the white men simply carried them away, putting them inside the reindeer which had been only disemboweled and skinned as the two Captains had ordered. Before the whites started back for the shore, they left word that everybody was to be down to the ships the next day. The white men had uttered their command, and there was nothing to do but obey.

THINGS were now entirely different on board the ships. Iva sat all day long sewing for the white men, usually for the Captain but sometimes for the mates too. Other women sewed for those white men who were called sailors and lived in the fore part of the ships. Iva was permitted to pick out the pelts herself, many of them wholly strange to her. The Captain had also told her that she could use any kind of furs she liked for sewing. It seemed that on board the ships the spirits had no power and that one could work on reindeer pelts even at a time of the year when this was taboo and it was ordinarily permissible to use seal skins only.

The white men must be so strong that they were not afraid of evil spirits. After all, what need men fear who possessed ships and rifles, sugar and tobacco?

Iva sewed and sewed. Often she stayed away from her house for days but there was no longer a feeling of constraint between her and Mala. He and Orsokidok tended the lamps

and cooked; the boys said nothing about their mother's absence. They ran about and played, sucking lumps of sugar. More and more families arrived. Never before had such a crowd assembled here, soon there would be more than twenty houses. Mala had been told that the Captain had sent for them not only because he wanted their fox pelts, but also because he needed their help with the whaling.

One day the stout Captain let Mala know that he wanted to talk to him. Perhaps he will speak about Iva, Mala thought. It was really time that he should! Like one who goes to talk to his equal, Mala marched down to the ship. He had made up his mind to insist upon his rights, as he had resolved to leave soon anyway. He did not want his wife to be just a servant and plaything for that Captain. Yes, he surely would tell him a thing or two and he would demand certain presents which he now enumerated to himself. Many, many things they should receive before leaving; it would be no more than right.

To be sure, the closer he came to the ships, the more his courage waned and the more modest his demands became. Nevertheless he felt like a man well aware of his worth when he boarded the bigger one of the two vessels.

All the sailors were busy out on the ice, repairing the boats and getting everything ready for whaling. The two Captains were issuing orders to the helmsmen. They just raised a hand, and the white men scurried about, hastening to obey their commands without a second's delay.

Near the older Captain stood Arola and another man who, as Mala knew, was called "Joe" by all the whalers. Joe had not only sailed on the ships of the white men but had even been to their country. He had acquired some of that power which was apparently the white man's natural portion.

The Captain beckoned, and Mala approached. He did not like the idea at all that the other men would hear what demands he had to make on Iva's account. A man is not supposed to waste so much thought on a mere woman. The woman belongs to him as a necessity, but whosoever permits his wife to rule his house only lays himself open to derision.

There never were angry words between Mala and Iva;

they longed for each other when they were separated and had sympathy for one another if anything went wrong. Iva was Mala's private affair but he knew very well that Arola would gossip to everybody and if he told them that Mala was demanding his wife back everyone would laugh.

"Mala," the Captain said, and Joe translated every word into comprehensible language, "I have heard that you are a brave man and the best among your crowd. I am ready to send you out in charge of a boat; you shall have command over your own people. You will take orders only from the helmsman, and you will be responsible for your people; they are to do as they are told. If you prove to be a brave and good man, we will give you a boat when we depart—a boat with which you yourself can go out and catch whales, so you will have lots of whalebone for us when we return next year. Besides, you will get many presents if you prove a loyal fellow. Go down to your boat. It's the one over there that you are to take."

These words were quite different from what Mala had expected. He intended to tell the Captain that he did not want a boat and would rather get ready to go home; that he wanted his wife back and also payment for the reindeer he had killed on which the sailors were now feasting.

Those were his thoughts but his words did not come as readily as they did with the white man. Suddenly he saw Iva coming out of one of the houses on board the ship. In her hand she was carrying a big, white pail, a marvelous pail! The pail was filled with dirty water which she now poured over the boatside. Some dogs rushed over, eager to ascertain whether the contents of the pail did not contain something eatable. Iva, he saw clearly, was in the employ of the white men; she had a pipe between her lips which she had filled from the Captain's tobacco box. All these sudden impressions seemed to silence Mala. Besides, the Captain had not asked him at all; he had just told him what he was to do. He had even added that Mala should hurry. Why was he still standing there? As soon as the boats were ready, they must

go whaling. And right there, the boat was waiting for him.

Mala's tongue proved too unwieldy to argue with the Captain.

OH, the gay confusion when the boats started out! Each craft was loaded to the gunwales. The heavy whale ropes were stowed away in wooden boxes in the stems of the boats; big bags with clothes and rifles and harpoons had found their places aft. There was food and many other things. Matches and tobacco were carried along by the helmsman in a tin box. It required hard tugging to get the boats over the ice into the open water. All the time, Mala's mind was on his splendid dogs which he had left in the care of Orsokidok. He had a heavy strap attached to his shoulders and he strained every muscle in his body to drag the boat over the rough surface. Progress was very slow; step by step they pulled the boat while all the womenfolk stood by, watching the departure of the whale killers.

Iva, too, was there. She had been attacked by the big cook with the red beard only a few days ago. She had screamed for help, knowing that the Captain would not approve of the cook's boldness. The Captain had spoken loudly and angrily to the man, following his words with a good hard punch under the chin that sent the cook crashing to the ground where he lay like a dead man. But after a while the cook got to his feet and staggered away. Well, well, that was the kind of woman Iva was,—the kind for whom a Captain would almost kill another white man just so he could be the only one to have her! No wonder she wore pearls around her neck! She was giggling now and probably had no thought of anything but the good times she would have with the white men on board the ships.

Mala glanced at her in passing. Here he was bending his neck under a yoke, dragging a heavy boat for others—he, the master hunter. For a moment he was sorry that he had not

returned to the solitude up north, but soon all his thoughts dwelt on the coming hunting trip.

The sea, wide and free of ice, stretched out calmly before his eyes. Big chunks of ice, splinters broken loose from tremendous floes, drifted by. Eider ducks screeched and sea gulls and sea swallows flew about in the bright sunlight.

How good it felt to take off that leather strap and straighten your back. The men, resting for a little while, said they were sorry that they had not thought of having the dogs drag the boats to the open water; the boys could have taken the dogs back to the shore later. However, here they were and from now on there would be nothing but open water.

Mala had never before been in a boat but he had known how to paddle since he had been in his first kayak. Now he, with one white man and a number of his own people, took the oars while another white man steered. A third white man, the harpooner, sat in the stem of the boat and scanned the water's surface for likely prey. How easily the boat slid through the water! The one white man, who handled an oar and who sat close to the man who steered, told the others how fast they must go and kept them in time. It only took a little while until the whole flotilla of whaleboats was dispersed over the wide sea.

They were rowing continuously for hours. Some of the boats made for the south, others for the east. Mala's boat kept slightly away from the others. Occasionally, when they encountered high piled floes of ice, they stopped. Then the harpooner would get on top of the stack of ice floes, take a long tube, pull it out, look through it in all directions, push it together and come back into the boat. Then they would start rowing again. . . .

Finally the first day came to an end. The white men said that enough had been done for one day; Mala and his people had been of the same opinion for some hours already. It was remarkable that the one white man who rowed with them did not seem to be tired at all. His fists were as hard as wood and he kept on rowing with even strokes. His calm

endurance was an example to the others, forcing them to go on in spite of aching backs and big blisters on their hands. At last they tied up somewhere along the edge of the ice; the bigger part of the load was carried ashore and then the boat was pulled out of the water. Sails were stretched out over it and preparations made for the night. The white men surely knew how to do things and did everything in their own way.

A man was given two kettles and sent for fresh water; another was cutting up the food for the pot. The food was curious; different from anything Mala and his people had ever tasted before. It was very salty and filling. After they had eaten, all the men belched from the surfeit of delicious food on which they had feasted. Then everybody was permitted to rest and do as he pleased.

Mala took his rifle, sat a little apart from the others, and waited for seals to raise their heads near the edge of the ice. After a few shots he hit one but the current of the sea swept his prey away. He had the same experience with a number of eider ducks. It was then that the helmsman came over to Mala and explained that they could not very well put the boat back into the water just to go out for his game. He was only wasting cartridges by popping away like that. But Mala remained sitting where he was. It gave him a feeling of pride to know his power over animals, no matter how great the distance between them might be. He kept on shooting until he got sleepy and then he went over and joined the others. The three white men lay in the stern of the boat; the Eskimos were to sleep under the sail in the stem and there, where the box with the ropes was usually stowed away, they were now lying dry and snug.

"Just let it snow and blow; we are sleeping in a wonderful house!" they told one another.

Next day, when a breeze sprang up, they set sails and cruised around. There was an almost unbroken chain of amusing incidents and no necessity to waste strength on those tiring oars; the wind did all the work, carrying them on while they kept a close lookout and now and then tied up

to a pile of ice floes so that the harpooner could climb up and look about.

At last they sighted a whale. The water which the whale spouted each time it came to the surface, showed from afar where it was. The blowing indicated that the animal must be a good-sized one and easy to approach closely. Here was a splendid chance for a good catch and helmsman and harpooner kept an alert watch on their distant prey. First they must discover the direction the whale was taking. They made all preparations for the animal was making straight for their boat and Mala realized that they would soon make their first catch. The excitement of the hunt gripped them all as they rowed toward the whale. The animal apparently suspected nothing and was speeding calmly through the water.

Can any life be happier than that of a whale? thought Mala. The whale need only dive deep enough to obtain its food; it opens its mouth, pushes out its mighty tongue and keeps on swimming while its gullet rakes in the small fish. As soon as its mouth is filled sufficiently the whale locks in the prey with its tongue and presses out the water while the food is retained by the baleen, which forms a fringelike sieve extending from the upper jaw. The food of the whale consists of millions of little fish and the only thing the whale has to do after locking up his prey is to swallow it and that, after all, is the greatest joy of every living being. There cannot be any doubt that whales have every reason to be satisfied with their lot.

Now the boat was quite close to the whale. The men who had never before caught whales felt their hearts pounding, and were very careful to observe all precautionary measures. As soon as they reached the wake of the whale, they pulled in the oars, laying them very quietly in the bottom of the boat, so that no noise should scare the whale away. The water around them seemed to be boiling with tiny air bubbles ejected by the gigantic creature. The telltale bubbles made it possible for them to follow its trail. Whales are very wary; they know from great distances when a boat is crossing their course. Since they usually keep on in a straight line, it is pos-

sible either to follow them or, with luck, to approach them from straight ahead when they float on the surface breathing in air. They cannot see straight ahead as their eyes are on either side of their heads and, if approached noiselessly from the front, they are a sure prey. However, should they suddenly turn and catch a glimpse of the boat, they lose no time in vanishing from sight.

The men used small paddles and brought the boat to without a ripple. They could see nothing, but they felt instinctively that the mighty animal was coming to the surface. Presently the colossus became visible; a mighty spout of water rose high in the air. Fetid air had to be exhaled and fresh air inhaled repeatedly before the whale could dive for food again. After all there was nothing in the world for it to fear—not for an animal of such great bulk as this giant! There were no enemies here. The whale floated serenely on the surface and the helmsman did not dare to utter a word of command. Everyone thought of the instructions he had been given before and tried to do his best. The most important thing now was to get ahead, speedily and noiselessly. In case they bungled the job, hell would break loose.

Then everything happened quickly:—The harpooner hurled his spear-like weapon deep into the body of the whale.

At that moment, the fear of death nearly overcame them. What a tremendous lashing of the tail! How the water boiled all around them! And then, with indescribable speed, the whale made for the sheltering depths. The swiftness with which the line unrolled from the box! It rushed out of the containers, first out of the one, then out of the other. If anybody had stood in the way, the line would have snapped off his legs. If the line should become entangled now, the whale would pull the boat beneath the surface of the sea.

Mala felt a sinking sensation in his stomach. This, certainly, was different from hunting a miserable little seal which one could hold on to with one hand, provided one's line was strong. How excitement could bring out the

sweat! Big beads of perspiration gathered on his forehead.

Not before the whale had reached the bottom of the sea and the line had stopped uncoiling, did they receive an order, "Back Water!" They obeyed and the harpooner took a deep breath. As soon as the line tightened, there was a jerk. It was certain that the barbed hooks of the harpoon had stuck, despite the tremendous pull exerted by the whale when it made its wild rush for safety. There was a muffled detonation. An explosive, imbedded in the head of the harpoon, had been discharged by the desperate struggling of the beast. The charge must have torn terrible holes in the mighty body. Now all depended on whether the harpoon had penetrated the body of the animal in a straight line; otherwise the explosive would do no more harm to the whale than injure one side and pass out of the body again.

To all appearances the shot had been a bull's eye, and the giant was even now resting on the bottom of the sea, limp with terror and excruciating pain. Perhaps its whole belly had been ripped open! And up above, on the surface of the sea, the men tore and pulled on the line, enlarging the wound and increasing the whale's agonies.

"Row on—and keep rowing," the helmsman shouted. Now they must locate the hiding place of the whale. Besides, a steady pull had to be exerted on the line so that the whale could not turn over and draw the boat under the water. If this should happen, one quick motion must sever the line; a hatchet was held in readiness. Then the prey would be lost forever.

What terrible tension this waiting meant! The kind of suspense that sets one's nerves atingle when some terrific danger looms near might be so racking as to be nigh unbearable but, at the same time, it furnishes good sport for hardy men. It seemed to Mala as if there was no end to their trying wait. The whale must have stored up a great amount of air in its lungs to last so long beneath the waves!

Suddenly it appeared! The line slackened with incredible speed. The whale rose quickly to the surface, plainly exhausted.

The white men consulted their watches. Mala, looking at the sky, judged that the sun had traveled the breadth of two fingers since the whale had been harpooned. The water, spouting through the nostrils of the whale, was reddened with blood, proof that the lungs had been punctured and that the battle would be over soon. All at once, however, the whale rallied; it no longer seemed in the least exhausted. Now they must get close to the animal and hurl into his huge bulk additional harpoons in order to finish it off—a dangerous job that required great care.

Carefully, they paddled close to the whale and again the beast was harpooned, this time with a smaller barbed spear. The animal hardly moved from the spot. As soon as the harpoon penetrated the body of the whale, the trigger line was pulled and there was an explosion opening new wounds. And then it rushed ahead madly through the water, pulling along the boat at a terrific rate of speed. There was still strength in the King of the Seas. Northward the boat sped. Like wounded reindeer in the snow, the whale left behind tracks, easy to discern. How brave this whale was! Now it made straight for the mountainous shore whence the hunters had come.

"Just race ahead, whale, you are traveling the very route we would have to tow you, once you are dead. Each flip of your tale saves us many strokes of our oars. The closer you get to the ships, the easier it will be to bring your blubber home."

But this was no time for thinking. The helmsman ordered one of the white sailors to hoist a red flag on a boathook as a signal to the other boats that they had made a catch and needed assistance in cutting up the carcass.

Often a whale which is already considered a sure catch causes much trouble; in case the animal should take its course through fields of dangerous ice floes, the line must be severed to avoid disaster. Game and line and everything is lost then. This time, however, the whale gradually weakened, the men once more pulled at the oars and when the edge of the ice was reached, the King of the Seas was dead. It was Mala's boat which had made the first catch of the season. The skipper heaped unstinting praise upon the entire crew.

Mala concluded that after all it was much better he had not gone back north. There he would only have assisted in landing dead whales which, harpooned by others, had either managed to get away or else had been abandoned by their hunters. Up north, he had often stood on the shore observing these great big whales he could never hope to kill with his puny weapons. Now that he had taken part in this exciting sport, he would stay on with the whalers. Surely there was nothing finer in life than to steer a boat from the stern and superintend the work of his people when they stripped the whales of blubber.

THE other boats had apparently stayed right in the neighborhood; they all assembled in the course of the afternoon when the Captain and all the crew came out to look the catch over. The entire settlement came down to the shore, the women proudly wearing their brow-bands, in order to pay homage to the dead whale and show their respect for the brave men who had caught the mighty beast. There was a feast right at the edge of the ice with lots to eat, while the cutting up of the whale got under way.

White man's food held no attraction now! What could the cook prepare in his little house that could compare with delicious whale skin? What wonderful matak, freshly caught, and what big chunks of it, too! The Eskimos were overjoyed. A veritable banquet was spread before them and there was still much more to come!

There was shouting and merriment, and presently the process of cutting away the whale's blubber began. A number of men and boys conveyed big slices of blubber from the ice to the ship. They were to be hoisted on board later, but for the time being it was important to bring them ashore to some safe place as a storm might come up and sweep everything away.

Reverently, the women stood along the shore, singing their song. The white stones in the center of their brow-bands shone brightly. The men, too, grew ever gayer, showing off their

proWess and scarcely listening to the song. They attended industriously to the cutting up of the whale, pretending to be unmoved by all the excitement. But they knew very well that they were the center of everything. It was a good thing that all the other boats came in so much later that there could be no mistaking who had caught the first whale of the season. How fortunate, too, that the beast had not died before they had almost reached the edge of the ice. Because of this, hardly any towing had been necessary and much time was saved. Both Captains seemed to be in the best of humor and even the sun shone brightly as if to demonstrate its approval. Mala laughed to himself when he remembered that he had wanted to leave for the north. What a foolish idea! This whale would be followed by many others and, later, he would do the actual catching himself.

Mala took an enormous piece of whale skin, and, interrupting his work for a moment, threw it over to Iva. He had no time to speak a single word to his wife. He had shed his outer fur and slipped on an oilcloth garment the white men had given him, rolling up the sleeves to his shoulders. Spikes were tied to his feet to prevent him from sliding when he crawled over the slippery whale. What joy to walk on top of that springy mass which had been alive only a short while ago and with a huge, long-hafted knife to remove the blubber. As all the other men working with knives were white, Mala naturally felt honored and labored as hard as he could. Slowly the huge carcass was turned and systematically stripped of all blubber.

When they got down to the meat, this, too, was cut into big pieces and thrown on the ice. How wonderful it tasted after all that tiresome food that had to be eaten with a spoon! Taking a good bite of matak was not unlike looking into the sun rising on the horizon after a long, dark winter. They were permitted to take as much of the meat as they pleased, and their womenfolk stowed away huge chunks of the delicacy on each sledge that carried blubber to the ships. This surely was a festive occasion, although the work was so hard that their bones hurt and their eyes burned from lack of sleep. No doubt but that whaling was a laborious but glorious business.

While everybody was at work, the cook came out with a bottle of that strong, burning liquid that stung the throat. Mala and the rest of his people who had been along in the boat got just as much of it as any of the white men; the Captain, too, drank some of that strong medicine and after awhile everybody's speech grew more powerful. But each and every one of them had to knuckle down to real hard work. There seemed to be a storm in the offing. They must hurry, hurry! After all, the whale was not quite so big as it had seemed at first. With each cut, the giant shrunk in size. The animal was rolled over in the water and cut up lengthwise. A tremendous slash through its belly laid the entrails open. They drifted on the surface of the water like huge air bubbles. Nobody paid any attention to the fact that the belly of the whale slowly filled with water, and threatened to sink the entire carcass. The white men were bent upon discovering what the entrails of the whale contained. Joe told the Eskimos that they were looking for something that would smell sweet to white women. However, they could not find anything like that, although they kept on, looking and looking, while life on the ice became more and more hilarious. Everybody was in high spirits. It was remarkable how the white men never tired of driving on the others. Perhaps the white men amassed so much wealth only because they never stopped until the task they had undertaken was finished. Mala thought that now he understood more of the mysteries of the Kravdlunaken; he wanted to learn as much as he could about them.

It was late when Iva returned, accompanied by two men. Now what could they want here, with Mala asleep? The boys were scared when Iva entered, reeling as if the very ground beneath her feet were going up and down; her breath smelled strange and her eyes stared vacantly. All three laughed boisterously; Iva was muttering in the language of the white people but nobody seemed to understand her. The white men ate and drank. They had brought a bottle along and offered it to Mala

but the fluid was too strong and burned his throat. It seemed as if tobacco had been mixed with the water, and Mala could not take even one swallow of it. One of the white men, however, finished the whole bottle.

"Iva," Mala asked, "are you sick?"

Iva did not reply; she took a piece of meat from the pot and began to eat. Mala jumped up and gripped her arm.

"Iva, not from the pot," he said. "This food is taboo for you. How can you eat from the common pot?"

He clasped her wrists and stared at her but Iva's glance was unsteady; she looked around and laughed uproariously. The white men seemed to be ready to jump on him and Mala knew he need not expect his wife to stand by his side now. He understood that this was a time when strength would avail nothing. They all jeered at him and it seemed to Mala that they were obsessed by some evil spirit. He had never heard before that the Kravdlunaken exorcised spirits. He sat down silently, not a little frightened. Perhaps they had insulted the whale's soul and now the slain animal's spirit was making the people here mad, even tempting a pregnant woman to eat out of the same pot with other people? What injury that could inflict on the unborn!

More and more people entered the snow hut. Some of them seemed scared while others were visibly obsessed by the evil spirits. Mala got dressed and tried to talk to his wife, but she would not listen to him. She threw her arms around one of the white men and edged closer to him in undisguised sensuality. Some of the white men embraced her and pressed their faces against hers. Perhaps this was the way to exorcise the spirits? There were strange mutterings all around and by now Mala was thoroughly terrorized. The boys were crying, but their mother only laughed at them. Maybe it would be a good idea to give Iva a sound beating, but with so many strangers present, Mala thought better of it. He vaguely realized that something stronger than Iva herself had gained power over her and that she could not be altogether blamed for what was going on now.

When the others started off, Iva wanted to accompany them, but Mala jumped up, caught her around the body and threw her down on the floor. There she lay, too weak to rise. She spoke with a thick tongue, complaining that her husband was keeping her in the house by sheer force, but everybody laughed at her. One of the men tried to come to Iva's assistance, but the others dragged him off. Their ribald laughter was clearly audible until they reached the ships.

Iva remained lying where she was, speaking of strange things and frequently using words that were taboo. She babbled that she was going to journey to the country of the white men to fetch everything that was promised to her. And then she sang for a little while, but eventually lapsed into silence. She was as helpless as a little child and Mala had to undress her. He surmised that the evil spirit was ready to leave her body and he watched her closely. Perhaps it might be best to leave the settlement, he thought, after Iva had finally fallen asleep. He pulled a few hairs from her head to see whether she was conscious and to help bring her thoughts back into the right channels. Suddenly Iva jumped up, vomiting over the lamp and the bench. She spoiled the pelts and all the fine things she had received on the ships. No doubt the Evil One was now leaving her, freeing her body from the curse.

"Are you sick, Iva? Can't I help you?"

"It's nothing, nothing. I won't throw up any more," she replied.

Nevertheless, saliva was running down her breast. Only once had Mala seen anything similar to this and that was when a man had been given dog's liver to eat. Perhaps it was her unborn, protesting because she had eaten from the common pot? Iva's abdomen seemed so unnaturally bloated that Mala worried about it.

Iva was very sick when she awoke the next morning. Her head was heavy; it seemed difficult for her to smile even a little. She ate nothing and drank lots of water. Nobody, however, mentioned her obsession of the previous night. Besides, Mala had been sent for as they needed him to help pull the

boats further ashore. There was a chance that the rim of the ice might break up and, with a rough sea, there was no use trying to catch whales anyway.

THE white men certainly had curious customs! They had in their possession thin skins without any hair on them which came in long rolls. From this, the women were sewing garments which were made all of one piece and were of the same color above as below. They were very long and looked ever so odd, closely resembling the funny clothes worn by the white women on the pictures. Joe's wife and Minik had been the first to own such things and now all of them were to dress up like that. How changed they looked, especially when they pinned their hair up just like the picture ladies. Iva even regretted, now, that her face was tattooed, because the Captain did not like it. And they were taught to hop around in a queer fashion. They had danced before, but only with their torsos and without moving their legs. Their bodies were now kept rigid; jumping up and down in pairs, they held one another's hands, and hopped back and forth. It certainly was very amusing to watch and everybody roared with laughter when one of them fell down or could not remember the different motions that must be executed. The dancing took place on the decks of the ships. It seemed that since more women arrived there was less peace in the settlement. Sometimes one of the Eskimos, very much to the distress of his wife, chose a new mate. Frequently, too, members of the ships' crews would come to blows.

SOON the boats were sent out once more, but only half of the number that had gone before. Open water was creeping closer and closer to the icebound ships and enough men had to be kept on board to get everything clear and to steer the ships in case a sudden storm set the vessels adrift.

They slew several more whales and each time a big wooden keg with that burning liquid was brought out, and before long

everyone would hop around and sing and shout, using words not generally used. The powerful magic of the water would often make the men angry. Then fights followed. Once two men attacked each other with knives and were injured severely. It was then that the Captains and some of the men who were almost as important as the ships' masters, interfered. They threw themselves between the fighters, placing iron rings around their wrists so they could not use their hands any longer. The men were dragged into a tiny house on board the bigger ship and one could clearly hear angry words addressed to them. The men sat in the little house for many days and when they finally came out again, nothing was said about the fight. Joe, however, explained that there had been talk about killing the men because they had intended to murder each other. He said that this was the custom in the country of the white men.

Mala learned much from the whites. Not everything they said was right. Frequently their deeds were not at all in accord with their promises. Of course that might be because they had such strange thoughts.

Iva had changed entirely. She was hardly ever home any more. When she came to the house she only scolded Orsokidok. She had even told Mala to wash himself with soap! Mala had just laughed in her face, but she repeated that she meant what she said and then she left.

The boys were running around in torn boots. But Iva insisted that on account of her work for the Captain she could not do any sewing for her own family. Really, there were more puzzling things in this world than Mala had ever thought possible. . . .



V

ONCE again the men went out to hunt whales. With the air growing warmer and the ice melting more and more from day to day, big puddles of slush collected in the sledge tracks.

Seals were sunning themselves lazily with nothing to disturb their peace. As all the able-bodied men were out hunting whales, leaving only a few boys and old men behind, very few of them were caught. Seal meat was as tasty as ever and the skins were useful. The women scraped hides industriously, laying them out flat on the ground to dry, or stretching them by means of long nails or wooden pegs. Yes, the importance of the women was certainly more evident now than ever before, what with the white men favoring them and their own men longing to embrace them as soon as they came home.

Open water seeped more and more inshore. The whales, as usual, came to Tajarnak Point to rest, drawn there inexplicably. It was for this reason that the whaling ships always anchored there.

The recent warm weather had softened the snow houses. The side walls sagged more and more and it became necessary to take the roofs off and cover the huts with skins. Soon tents would be pitched. How wonderfully good and fresh the air was, after all the varied smells that had permeated the igloos. Only now one came to realize it.

There is nothing finer than the first spring tent. Later on, there would be enough furs for a big summer tent, but in the beginning of the spring a few skins left over from last season must do. Just the same, it is wonderful; one feels so strong and happy! The birds chirp in a gay chorus and the bright rays of the sun penetrate the many chinks and tears in the tents.

Umiliuluk's wife, too, felt spring coming; she became more lively, and one day she started to tell the children stories. They all gathered around her and listened, spellbound. She was a wise and experienced woman in the eyes of the children, who did not yet know the simplest demands exacted by merciless Nature.

"Once people rested on an island near the red rock where whales come close inshore. There were many tents and the men went out in their kayaks to catch seals. Often they would stay out very long, collecting the eggs of eider ducks which they

brought home in their kayaks. They made a great catch that season.

"There was a man by the name of Saokré with them, a man who always had new ideas. One day, when out hunting, he suggested that they should trade wives in a different way than is customary. Usually the women are left behind in the tents by the men; this time the men were to stay behind. The women were to go to those to whom their own husbands would send them.

"When the men returned from the hunt, they did not breathe a word about this to their wives but when evening came and everybody was ready to go to sleep, each woman was told to leave the tent and visit a certain man whom her husband had picked out for her. What good, after all, would it do a wife to argue with her husband even though he might act unreasonable and come home with new ideas?

"Thus the women departed, but even as they stood in front of their tents, they perceived two gigantic whales swimming slowly inshore.

"'As long as we are supposed to copy the custom of men in one respect, why not act as they do in other respects?' one of them demanded, and she rushed down to the shore. A huge harpoon, used to catch whales, had been tied to the rock with a stout leather strap.

"One of the women hurled the harpoon. The others took hold of the line, resisting with all their might when the rope tightened by the whale's pull. The animal was astonished to find that it had been harpooned by women. As a matter of fact, the beast was so put out about it, that it gave one powerful tug and the line broke. Without losing a moment's time, both whales then made for the open water.

"After that the whales kept away from the coast until a great Spirit Controller * traveled to the homeland of the whales and promised them that they would never again be dishonored by the presence of a woman. Thus, no woman now

* Spirit Controllers or *Angakoks* are shamans similar to the medicine men of the North-American Indian whose function it is to propitiate mysterious powers.

is ever permitted to leave the tent while whales are about. The entrances to the tents, too, must be kept closed so that the whales may not even scent women. Only little girls and old women are permitted to move as freely as men and only when the whale is killed and dragged ashore are the other women allowed to come out of their tents. But even then, the women must be sure to wear a head-band of black fur with a white stone, as a token of contrition because they once made so bold as to imitate men in catching whales."

No doubt but that old people were very clever and full of words of wisdom. The children understood now that a good catch of whales depended on the women being obedient and staying inside their tents when the hunt was under way.

The white men, too, felt the spring. When night fell, there was dancing on the ships. The women had meanwhile learned to move their feet to the tune of the man who pulled and pushed on a box-like contrivance which produced noises. They danced fairly well by this time and could easily follow the instructions of the one who told them what steps to take.

THE big festival of the year had arrived. The old whale catcher's dance was in progress. "Everybody pull to the west," intoned the dancing master. They took one another's hands and danced in the form of a chain, first to the west, then back again to the east, and again towards the west and back to the east, on and on. There was no end to the dancing and everybody grew moist from their prolonged efforts. Perspiration rolled down their backs, but still they kept at it. The men caught hold of the women and shouted with wild delight and merriment. The music player, David, pushed and pulled on the accordion with such strength that it sounded like a full orchestra. Like savages they stamped across the deck, huge, husky men, adventurers who welcomed a chance to give a free rein to their passions.

"Faster, David, still faster."

One couple stumbled, fell, and another collapsed on top of them; there was much shouting and laughter.

"Why can't you leave my girl alone?" But no fight followed, only raucous laughter filled the air. The crews of both vessels were assembled on the deck of the bigger ship.

How they stamped! And now, the Captains, too, came on deck for a little dancing. Everybody had to step back and clear a space for them. Even the mates had to stand aside. The cook appeared with a little wooden barrel and tin cups. There had been hardly any evidence of restraint before, but things became still more boisterous after the drinks were handed around. Hair hung limply on their foreheads, as wet as if drenched with water; untiring feet kept on stamping. Old Jimmy, who had seen many summers with happy whale festivals, shouted: "Let's dance another chain around the main mast!" and everybody rushed across the deck with his woman. Some collided with one another and fell, or stumbled over the hatches.

Iva would never have believed that men could act like that. They had given her a tin cup full of some liquid they called rum; her lips burned from it and her throat felt as if it were afire. Fire flamed in her body; she shrieked with abandon and danced without shame. The men stood around, or sat along the railing with the children; everybody looked on, highly amused. No doubt, all this was the doing of the spirits.

Their pipes lit, they danced around, drinking more and more. As soon as the first barrel was emptied, another one was brought up on deck. The contents of these kegs was more powerful than anybody would believe. By now, the Captains did not act any differently from the others; they had discarded their dignity and were dancing around like all the rest of them, shouting and roaring with laughter. To all appearances, the entire ship was in the power of the spirits now.

Presently, the stout old Captain caught Iva by both shoulders, lifted her up high over the heads of the others, and

carried her off. Iva, shrieking with delight, held tight to the Captain's beard, and pulled it wildly. He laughed in high glee and pressed her close to him.

Eventually the paroxysm of the dancers abated. The little Captain of the other ship was the last one to stand on deck. Clothing, strewn all over the ship, gave the impression that the men had stripped themselves, with the intention of running around stark naked in the future. During the dance, coats and shirts had been shed. Now, the little Captain, standing all alone, gazed at the débris and thought of his young wife at home. He had married her only a short time before going on this trip. Was she, perhaps, sitting in the house under the tall trees, thinking of the husband who was already away more than a year? How she had cried when he left! It was the first time he had shipped as Captain and all the sensuality he had just witnessed revolted him. He felt deeply ashamed because he was part of this life and had even joined in the general merriment. He went back on board his own ship, heavy at heart. He was tired and his head ached from the punch he had drunk. But he had not taken enough to make him forget how hateful all this was to him.

WHEN Iva awoke, she was still under the influence of the spirits which had made everybody crazy the night before. Carefully, lest she wake the Captain, she arose and dressed. She remembered her two boys who were sleeping with Orsokidok in the tent pitched by Mala when he had been home the last time. Only yesterday the boats had left again and Mala had gone with them. Mala went along in the boat almost always now, for he was the best man among his own people and the white men knew it. Joe and Arola envied him because they were no longer so much in demand. These two had very quick tongues but when it came to quick hands, Mala beat them. Iva longed for her husband. Had they not decided that they would go far into the hinterland with their children this season? When they were all alone there was peace in the little family; her head never ached this way; there was never

any strife and no man ever dared to touch her because Mala exacted respect. Down here, however, the Captain simply took her, and, if he did not watch out, others snatched her from him.

Iva realized that she did not belong with these white men. Her children were slovenly dressed—they, the sons of the big hunter, who brought home so many furs that he could freely give to orphans and old people who had nobody to provide for them. Iva was seized with a longing to see her boys and she immediately started out for home.

How soothing was the air and how splendid the sun, shining very low on the horizon. Why had she partaken of that bad-tasting water? Her head was hot and she had the impulse to rest it on the ice. As soon as the pain left, she would go home to her boys and sew for them. She clearly recalled now that the children had cast lingering glances at her when she had left them the last time.

She knelt down, and cooled her face against the ice. Perhaps Mala would return home soon? All her thoughts were with her husband and her two boys now. Yes, she wanted to go North. Her whole family was there. What was she doing here anyway?

How she longed to go to Igdlulik. All these men down here brought joy for a short while, only to leave one tired and listless. She closed her eyes and thought of all the happiness of life with her family. Only now could she fully appreciate it.

Iva, who had danced and made merry, Iva who was on her way home to her children, fell sound asleep where she had lain down to rest on the ice.

THE young Captain could not sleep. Once he got up and shouted to his neighbors to keep quiet so that a fellow could get up in the morning rested and fit to do his work. He turned and tossed for a long time, pondering and staring at the picture of the young woman that hung over his berth.

Somebody slunk across the deck. The skipper awoke again

from a fitful slumber, rushed above, swore and roared that he wanted quiet and if he didn't get it right away he would wake up every man jack on board in such a way as to make him always remember this trip. Trembling with rage, he went below again. He was sorry that he had not laid his hands on a few of the crew and given them the beating of their lives. He surely would feel better after knocking the everlasting daylight out of a few of them. How he longed for the happiness of his home! Loneliness gripped him, making sleep impossible. The nights were as light as day now; he might just as well go out and take a walk. He arose, took his rifle, and started out across the ice. A lucky shot at some seal or other game that he might stir up would make him forget all the thoughts that disturbed him. He felt the urge to be out in the open, away from drunken, obnoxious people.

The sun was shining brightly; peace and quiet spread over land and ice. He walked briskly and his mood gradually improved. Why, right there a seal was popping up far out in the distance. After all, here was at least something to take his mind off his troubles. Stealthily he sneaked up to the prey. It was relaxation for him to fall under the spell of hunting; he forgot all his longings and his dissatisfaction. By now, the seal had scented him. The animal raised its head to get a good look at the approaching object. Ready to dive into its breathing-hole in the ice, near which it lay, the seal seemed not at all sure that danger threatened. The sun was so nice and warm that the seal lingered. Often, during the cold winter, deep beneath heavy layers of ice, the seal had dreamt of the sun. Now, at a right angle to the seal, the hunter stretched himself on the ice. He, too, raised his head, but the seal apparently regarded him as a fellow creature coming up for air. There seemed no reason for alarm. The seal gazed, unafraid, at the newcomer; then laid his head on the ice to sleep and give the sun a chance to dry his hide thoroughly for once.

The Captain crept nearer; each time the seal raised its head, he would lie quietly, then raise his head again only to lower it once more. Moving his feet just a little at a time, he flipped his hand in imitation of a seal scratching itself. He

was quite clever in stalking game of this kind and gradually he got up very close to the seal.

"What a silly fellow," the seal thought. "What's he so restless for? However, let him keep on the look-out—that will safeguard my peace." And the seal turned his back to the Captain, who was coming closer and closer all the time. The seal was now scanning the horizon straight ahead. Why, that fellow seal over there, protecting him from the rear would surely not play any mean trick on him!

The hunter crept closer and closer. Now he could distinguish the markings on the back of the seal; next he saw his nostrils and eyes clearly. The time had come to take good aim and shoot the animal right through the head. The Captain turned the least bit to get into the right position, aimed and was just ready to pull the trigger, when suddenly there was no seal to be seen any more. The animal had cast just one more glance when something had seemed wrong. Once its suspicion was aroused, the seal had disappeared through the air hole, down into the depths of the sea, where, after all, it was so much safer.

The water leapt up through the air hole in the ice and the skipper stared blankly at the spot where only a moment before the seal had rested. Disappointed, he threw the rifle over his shoulder and walked on. What were seals to him? He would have to give the seal to the Eskimos as a present, retaining for himself only a piece of the liver and some of the meat. Nevertheless, it was annoying to be fooled by these crafty beasts time and again!

Suddenly, to his great delight, he noticed another seal lying far out on the ice. Some stupid little animal, apparently, that never gave a thought that any little hummock would serve as cover to a hunter. The Captain cut around the seal in a wide circle, approaching the ice mound in such a way as to use it for a cover. Once more, the thrill of the chase came over him. He bent low so the seal might not become aware of him. Now and then he raised his head. Sure enough, the seal was still where it had been before. Once in a while the seal moved its back flippers only to settle down quietly again. The

Captain was not going to lose his prey this time. He crawled forward on his knees. The seal seemed to shake its head a bit. The Captain could not distinguish the markings of the skin, but he saw clearly where the head rested. There was another little hummock and right behind it was just the spot to take a shot at the animal. It would not be long now before the seal was his! The animal was resting quietly, apparently fast asleep. This fellow here was not going to fool him like the one before. He pulled the trigger; the animal did not even stir. Well, well, so he got his seal after all. Although tingling with the excitement of the chase, he remembered that dying seals often writhe so violently that the dead body tumbles into the water and is lost for good. He therefore threw his rifle quickly on the ice and rushed over to pull the seal away from the air hole.

He had only taken a few steps when his heart seemed to stop beating. Terror gripped him, spurring him on to run still faster. A human being was lying there on the ice! An Eskimo woman, shot through the head! Blood was trickling out of a little hole at the nape of her neck.

It was Iva, Iva who had fallen asleep on this very spot to find relief from drunkenness and degradation in a dream and now she lay there with a bullet in her head!

How indescribably fearful she looked! The tremendous pressure of the bullet penetrating her brain was apparent from the condition of her glassy eyes; they bulged from their sockets and the pupils were fixed in a horrible stare. She was frothing at her mouth which had fallen slightly open, revealing the tongue. Her shoulders were still trembling ever so little but she was unquestionably dead—dead!—and he had killed her. He could not bring himself to touch her. He had killed an innocent human being. A human being with whom he had never even had the slightest disagreement.

What had come over him this morning?—after that revolting rampage of the night before and those agonizing thoughts that would not let him rest? And here was this woman whom he had killed, mistaking her for a seal. Of course, she was only a wretched Eskimo woman! After all, he had shot at

human beings before—that time he was catching seals along the Chilean coast, serving as mate under Captain Grait. Nor had it meant anything to him the time he fired at a mutinous crew. And hadn't he been present when Black Bill was hung on one of the South Sea islands? He suddenly remembered how the man had tried to fight off the hangman, attempting to get hold of the rope while they were already stringing him up.

Why should he be so shaken that he had accidentally killed a mere Eskimo woman? He did not know,—but there was no denying that he was shocked to his very soul. Suddenly he started to run in the direction of the ships, plunging ahead, panic-stricken. Without losing a second, he rushed into the senior Captain's cabin. The skipper was lying naked in his berth, not unlike a huge, hairy bear with a bloated face, sleeping peacefully. The older Captain was a man who would never lose his equanimity by the sort of carousing indulged in last night. As soon as he got his forty winks, the least trace of intoxication was gone and he was the "Old Man" again.

"George," the younger Captain called. "For God's sake, wake up! I've killed Iva! Don't you hear me? Wake up, wake up, I've killed your woman!"

The senior skipper was fully awake in a moment. He rested his head on his elbows and, rubbing his eyes, fired questions at the younger man:

"What are you saying? What the devil is the matter with you anyway, waking a man out of a sound sleep! What the deuce has happened? Where is Iva? What's all this about? Did you kill a whale? Why in blazes don't you answer me?"

The young Captain explained quickly what had happened. "She was the only worthwhile woman among the whole crowd . . . and I killed her! She is lying on the ice with her eyes popping out of her head. For heaven's sake, George, what are we going to do until we get away from here? Iva was like one of us—she and her husband Mala, real human beings. And she was your woman, too. We've got to get away from here. I can't stay here any longer; I simply can't stand it."

The older Captain dressed in an instant. Although he was still somewhat under the influence of liquor he had himself

well in hand and he never was one who shirked a responsibility. In a loud voice he called for the mate and some of the crew, and without delay they started out over the ice, the unintentional murderer acting as guide.

Soon they reached the spot where Iva's body lay in a pool of blood, her eyes bulging horribly and blood dripping from her nose. Death, sometimes soothing to gaze upon, here manifested itself in its ugliest form. Violent death, the sudden cutting of life's thread, never means repose.

First they pulled the big fur hood over Iva's face, then carefully they lifted the body and carried it home. The Eskimos, seeing the sad procession, came rushing out of their huts. Mala's boys were let into the tent and lots of food was sent to them from the ships, while their mother was being buried by the white men. Sailors from both vessels heaped a mound over her grave; some of the men appeared grieved by this sudden death and others indulged in coarse jokes about the Captain who had lost his woman; even some rumors of jealousy between the two skippers sprang up.

A great quiet settled over the camp and its inhabitants. For five full days no woman did any sewing nor did the men go out hunting. Joe and Arola were instructed what to tell Mala about the accident and both felt important in their parts as mediators. Probably they would add a few words, unable to resist the temptation to elaborate upon the whole story. Iva's soul, however, must find peace; nobody did anything that was taboo until her spirit and her name had left her body, to find refuge in the realm of the departed.



VI

ON the seventh day Mala's boat came home. They had caught a whale far out, many days' journey away from the

anchorage, too far to tow the giant back, so they had cut out only the whalebone. The boat was loaded up to the gunwales with valuable baleen. This was just one more instance of the superiority of this boat over all the others, proving perfect teamwork, especially between Mala, the old harpooner, and the helmsman.

Nobody came down to the edge of the ice to welcome them. That seemed strange because by now open water extended well-nigh up to the ships. There was no more snow on the mountain sides and the birds were nesting already. Usually many people were down at the shore and as it was nice and warm it seemed very odd to them that today nobody was there.

Even if all the adults were fast asleep a few children, playing around the tents, should have discovered the homecoming crew and given the news to the others. Women, children and old men, as a rule, came rushing over to see how big the catch had been. Queer, then, that nobody showed his face this time. Had Death, perhaps, visited the settlement during their absence? The men began to throw the whalebone ashore and the harpooner went over to the ships to get some hands to assist in unloading the boat.

The next moment they saw a man coming toward them; it was Old Umilialuk. He approached the boat slowly, stumblingly. Before he had quite reached them he stopped, turned half sideways and looked out across the sea without uttering a sound. Then and there, the returning crew knew that his message was a sad one and they did not hurry to meet him.

THE two Captains were standing together on the ice near a stack of boxes when Mala came ashore. He did not know what to say, but he felt it necessary to address some words to these white masters. One of the Captains had seduced his wife, the other, he had just heard, had killed her—his wife, with whom he had lived these many years. Something had to be said! Now, as he faced the two men, he hoped that the right words would come to his tongue. But he remained mute and stood rooted to the ground. The young Captain, tears

running down his cheeks, stepped over to Mala and put his hands on his shoulders.

"Mala," he said, "you have heard what happened. Yes, it is terrible. Never again shall I touch a rifle nor shall I ever be happy again in all my life."

Mala pondered. He understood a good deal of what the young Captain said. What a strange promise, what a curious penance for a man possessing all kinds of weapons! Mala could not utter a word; his throat was choked with tears.

"I shall give you many, many things," the little Captain said.

"I, too, shall give you presents," the other one joined in. "Iva was a good girl; she worked hard at her sewing for us. She died because of a deplorable accident. You shall stay here with us and we will give you whatever you desire."

Still Mala did not utter a sound. He thought how strange it was that they were ready to give him everything he wanted. He swallowed his tears, turned his back on them and went home. He had not seen his boys yet; probably the two were inside the tent, crying for their dead mother.

Oh, why had they not left for the North as soon as they had done their trading? Why had he gone whaling with the white men? Had he not heard, time and again, that the good things brought by the ships were followed only too frequently by death and sorrow?

The boys and Orsokidok were sitting in the tent, eating. They had been given choice tidbits of all kinds. When their father entered, they dropped their spoons into the bowl. Mala sat down silently and tears came into his eyes as he looked upon his motherless boys. Only now he noticed the wretched condition of their clothes; he felt that his children had lost their mother even before the fatal shot rang out. Nevertheless, he could have won Iva back. Now, alas, she was gone forever. He was relieved that there was nobody around now to make him feel ashamed of the tears that welled into his eyes. The children and even Orsokidok cried. They all lay together on the bench for a long time. At last their sobbing subsided; a merciful fatigue brought them sleep.

Noise and shouting down along the shore roused them. A troop of white men came across the ice, pulling two big sledges piled high with boxes and wooden boards, rifles and other exceedingly precious things. It seemed the whites had already forgotten that an accident had happened here recently. They cursed and laughed boisterously.

The old boatswain stepped up to Mala. "Here are two loads of stuff for you. You are to have all this because you lost your wife."

To Mala it seemed as if the cargo of an entire ship was being deposited in front of his tent. A crowd collected quickly, but they kept at a respectful distance, while Mala wandered to and fro, silently appraising all the merchandise which had been given him in recompense for Iva's tragic end.

There were boxes full of tin cans of food, and two barrels of biscuits. There were bolts of material and rifles, and all the innumerable other things that people of the North appreciate most.

Mala's sadness increased as he viewed his newly acquired riches. After all, Iva's death was much more of a loss to him than the death of his mother or even his father, and now all the wealth in the world seemed to be his. He was the most powerful man among his people. When the ships departed, they had promised to leave him a whaleboat and hunting gear and no less than three whale-lines! Really, all this was too much for a simple man to grasp. He had to sit down quietly, inside the tent, and think about it. When Arola and Joe approached and offered unsolicited advice, Mala turned his back on them.

"I want to be left alone," he stated very calmly and then nobody dared disturb him. Presently, however, Mala emerged once more from the tent, accompanied by his two boys and Orsokidok. They took bolts of material from the pile of goods; tea kettles and matches and many other things. Why, one could take and take off this pile and still lots and lots remained! As much as they could, they carried to the spot where Iva's body was buried. The grave was marked by an immense cairn, erected by the white men, as was

apparently the custom in the country whence the ships came.

They walked slowly around the grave, placing at the foot of the stone pile the gifts they had brought along; then they sat down quietly and, without talking, thought of the dead. Mala pondered the longest; at last he was aroused from his thoughts by his two boys who had begun to play. Why not; they were mere children; what else could be expected of them?

Late that night, word was sent from the ships that the white men wished to speak to Mala; he was to appear on board early in the morning. The whaleboats were leaving for an extended trip and the old Captain wished Mala to go along again. Later on, the ships would follow. Mala was to assist in the hunt all summer long and then was to be put ashore at some spot from which he could either travel home for the winter, or wait the return of the ships the following year.

MALA longed for his mountains. It seemed as though his legs had forgotten how to climb. At first the load pressed heavily on his shoulders and hurt his forehead, around which one of the packstraps was slung, but as soon as he became more accustomed to the burden, the strain ceased. Mala carried the heaviest pieces while the others were burdened according to their strength. The dogs, too, carried all they could. The sledge had been left behind as it was of no use in summer. They had not yet come across any traces of reindeer although they had almost reached the big lakes. Reindeer used to graze there in profusion and a whole encampment of summer tents was usually pitched there. The shores of the big lakes were good places for summering—what with meeting lots of new people there and basking in the midnight sun.

Mala had left the very morning they had expected him on board to see the senior skipper. He had sent a man to the younger Captain who had killed Iva and who had assured her husband that he would never again touch a rifle. Mala had given the man a bag to take along, containing many fox pelts which he had craftily retained when he traded. He had never

used them because he had been busy catching all this time. As more riches than a man and his family is able to carry on their backs are useless, Mala had abandoned many of the gifts piled high in front of his tent. His family was smaller now and Mala thought of all the precious things Iva could have carried along. He sighed wistfully when he remembered with what hope he had looked forward to the advent of a little daughter. He had longed intensely for a girl child.

"Let's walk a little faster. I don't want all those thoughts to come back to me. Let's strike out right for the North. We shall stop for the day when we are tired, eat when we are hungry and start again after having slept." And forward they pushed through thick clouds of gnats and across seemingly endless barren lands.

Mala rested near a brook and drank his fill. How wonderful was this fresh water, tasting of the rich earth. It seemed to him as if one long draught cleansed body and soul of everything connected with the ships. Each day they traveled onward until the boys pleaded fatigue. Then a tent was pitched, and heather gathered for a camp fire. When the flames leapt high Mala thought sadly how Iva, too, if she were still alive, would enjoy the wonders Nature provides for man.

Eventually they arrived at the big lakes where they saw many reindeer that had already begun to fatten. Many calves were with the herds—delicious little calves whose meat was so tender as to melt on the tongue. They were cute little animals, traveling north with their mothers. How timid they were when a mountain slope had to be traversed! The rough stones were cruel to their soft hoofs and their mothers had to push them forward or they would not so much as budge.

Mala explained everything to his boys. When a little belated snow fell, he pointed out to his children the wisdom of Nature, always providing for some snow after the reindeer had calved in order to protect the offspring against the gnats. The boys understood and were convinced that their father knew Nature well, because he had observed its manifestations for years.

They shot reindeer every day. The hindquarters of the

game were tied to the dogs, who were so fat and satisfied by this time that they did not even make an attempt to feed on one another's burdens. They trotted slowly behind Mala's party, often reaching camp after everybody had eaten. As soon as they were unhitched, they lay down and slept, right next to the most appetizing and tempting meat. The dogs never seemed to be hungry; to all appearances, they lived on the balmy air, and on sunlight and water, becoming fatter each day.

One day Mala observed a couple of wolves near by. They, too, were fat, and trotted along lazily. He hated these animals because they lived off the reindeer; he took his rifle and fired. One of the wolves jumped high in the air and then fell down, dead. Mala did not even touch the beast. What good were the skins now that he was not bound for the ships to do trading? It might be many, many years before he would see a ship again. Should he ever need some of the white men's goods, he would send his pelts down. But now—all he wanted was to travel on and on, and escape from his sad thoughts.

When rain fell, they crouched together under the tent and slept, but as soon as the sun shone once more, they continued their journey. Wet from the recent rain, the tent made heavy carrying, but this could be easily coped with by not walking too fast. Even traveling at a slower pace, good progress was made.

A few times they crossed wide rivers. They would then collect big bunches of heather which, together with their reindeer bags, were stuffed into their tent. Everything was lashed together tightly and rolled down into the water, where the bundle floated on its surface like a gigantic air bubble. Mala and the others seated themselves on top of the makeshift float and poled it to the opposite shore. They often got a good wetting, but what of that? Did they not always reach the other side? The dogs swam after them or sometimes, whipped on, preceded them. Traveling in this manner, under the guidance of a man like Mala who knew everything and always found a way to surmount difficulties, was surely great sport.

One day shots were heard. They struck out at once in the direction whence the rifle report had come, eager to be with people again. Presently they came to a spot where reindeer had been recently killed and they knew that an encampment must be close by. They were certain to meet people from the North shortly. Soon they would be at home once more. Although Mala had longed to get home, now, so near the end of the journey, he did not feel like hurrying. What difference would it make whether they traveled a day more or less? He wanted to sleep, once more, with his little family and Orsokidok.

They pitched their tent, built a fire, and soon rested side by side while the midnight sun shone brightly and a wonderful earthy scent arose from the ground. Nobody spoke a word; they all wondered what the next day might hold in store. There was so much that Mala had to think of now. He knew he would have to take a wife again if he wished their clothes kept in order. Winter garments had to be prepared for the boys. Running around in rags did them no harm now because in summer clothes are only used for protection from the sun. But it would be different in the cold winter when one envied the reindeer for their thick, hairy hides.

Probably Mala would have to hire help, which would mean unrest, perhaps even dissension, until he had trained a new wife to the sort of life he liked to live. Not that he really desired a new wife, but it seemed a futile waste of time for him to repair the soles of his shoes and attend to the cooking himself. Of course on a journey one could put up with such things, but in the long run, a womanless existence would be hard on any man. He longed vaguely for something new, but, at the same time, an obscure apprehension stirred within him. He tossed long that night before he fell asleep; the sun stood high when they once more shouldered their burdens and proceeded to the nearby camp, which they soon recognized to be Taparte's. Here again they met the same people they had encountered on their way down to the ships.

Mala pitched his tent close to the others. There was an

abundance of reindeer in the neighborhood and the river was full of salmon. Taparte had decided to stay here for a little while and Mala joined his party, hunting with them in the neighborhood, caching reindeer meat in the ground and covering it up with layers of heavy stones. When winter came, it would be easy to journey through the valley and fetch meat whenever it was needed.

Taparte was chieftain of the camp. His sister-in-law, Inupaujak, had met her husband and both had remained with Taparte's party. The young couple lived in a tent of their own, but often came to the older folk for advice. Papi and Hanne were here, also Illubalik and his wife, the latter a relative of Aba. Taparte was waiting for the arrival of his brothers and their families.

They would settle near the coast for the winter. Dried reindeer meat and dried salmon collected here in camp during the summer, would come in handy then. They had enough rifles, and many reindeer were killed. The pelts were good for stockings and summer furs, and the sinews were used for sewing clothes.

Everybody was busy in the camp and Taparte's loud voice was audible all over. It was he who did all the thinking for the others and issued orders pertaining to the hunt. His two rifles and his splendid equipment were the reasons the others submitted to his overbearing behavior and accepted orders from him. After all, was it not a good thing that one of them assumed the responsibility of telling the others what to do so that they need only listen and obey?

Mala accompanied them on the hunt and presently found himself in need of new boots and soles. He went to Taparte and asked whether Aba could not do some sewing for him.

"Yes, Aba will sew for you," Taparte replied, "and you can give her some tobacco."

That sounded almost as if Mala was expected to pay for the little sewing he needed. However, he kept silent; was he not a man without a wife? After all, nobody could blame Taparte if he did not want his wife to sew for somebody else!

Mala gave Aba two pieces of tobacco and she mended his soles.

Next day he announced that he was in need of new pants.

"Hanne will make them for you," offered Papi. "Just bring your pelts along." And Papi instructed his wife to sew for Mala and to be sure to make a good job of it, too. "He is one who demands good clothes."

Eventually the boys got new garments, as some of the men, hearing about Mala's predicament, came forward with offers to let their wives do some sewing.

"In case you have no scraped pelts, we have lots of them," Mala was told.

That, of course, was nothing but bluff, as he very well knew; he did the same himself. Although there was no denying that Taparte insisted on payment if his wife did any work, Mala decided that Aba should do all the sewing for his family.

"Orsokidok needs new boots," he said to Taparte one night after they had eaten. "Let Aba make a pair for him."

"Why, Mala, do you really think that this orphan brat must wear shoes sewed by my own wife! Let him go and see Inupaujak about it. She has no children. She knows how to sew, too."

Mala did not say a word and Orsokidok received a pair of boots sewed with long stitches, with soles crooked and full of wrinkles. After all, how could a young woman be expected to sew to order? She knew quite well how to fit her own folk, but she had to ask the assistance of older women when it came to cutting soles which were either bigger or smaller than those she usually cut from the skin of the bearded seal. Then, too, Mala had asked her, through her husband, to sew Orsokidok's boots at a time when it was much more amusing for a young woman to play ball with the children or assume her part as a grown-up woman, sitting with the other women, gossiping. Inupaujak still liked to join in the games of the children as well as to be in the company of the adults; she was not yet settled enough to be satisfied with chewing skins and sewing kammikey for someone who was an utter stranger to her.

ONE day, Taparte decided that they should employ the old method of hunting once more, driving the reindeer into the lake and killing them there. There were enough women and children around to serve as beaters; they were to shout and howl as loudly as they could, and throw stones to frighten the animals and drive them in the desired direction.

"You go up to that knoll, and you over to this side and you to the other. Some of you go farther up front and others down towards the rear. As soon as the reindeer enter the valley, everybody is to shout at the top of his lungs. The hunters, hiding near the lake shore, will shoot the reindeer as soon as they wade into the water. Mala's boys may go with my wife and act as beaters."

Thus Taparte issued orders. Down by the ships he had learned how to do that. He used his arms freely, pointing hither and thither, then turned around and walked away. He certainly acted like a man who expected his orders to be executed without dispute.

A very young fellow, Katluk by name, a nephew of Taparte's, was sent on the look-out for the reindeer. He was to return and report as soon as he discovered a herd. Taparte ordered Orsokidok to go after him and be quick about it, too. "Didn't I get you a pair of new boots? You certainly should be quicker on your feet now!" he said.

Had Mala sunk so low that he need stand by and permit Taparte to give orders to one of his boys? Besides, his foster-son was sent after Katluk who had never yet caught even so much as a seal! On the other hand, it had been years ago that Mala and his neighbors had partaken of Orsokidok's first catch. And how about Mala himself? To be sure, he was allotted a spot in the valley with the other hunters. Like the others, he was expected to sit there and shoot if there was an occasion. It seemed that nobody around here knew that Mala had been the first of his people who had been permitted by the white men to hurl a harpoon at a whale. And had he not been the only man the whites consulted when it came to assigning the crews to the different boats?

No, Mala did not intend to remain a man without a household much longer, inviting condescension!

All of those who used to eat of his catch when their own stores of meat became depleted in the course of a long winter were assembled here with their families. But he was the only one among them who had to ask other men for the services of their women when he needed a little sewing on his boots or a little patch on his mittens. And to top all this, he was supposed to stand for Taparte's overbearing behavior. Taparte who cut such a ludicrous figure in a kayak; Taparte who had married Aba whom Mala could have taken for a wife years ago if he had only wanted to, when he was younger.

Of course, Aba was a clever, industrious wife, healthy and still young looking, but she had lived so long with Taparte that by now her disposition had slightly soured.

Mala, walking slowly down to the lake with the other hunters, decided that the situation was becoming increasingly intolerable. Where the valley ended, he sat down between the boulders waiting with the others.

How the women scolded and how silent the men were when they returned late the next day! Everything had gone wrong! Taparte, he who was the master of the chase, had not told them that, farther up, a ridge cut through the valley and opened into a ravine.

The splendid results of former hunting trips, when somebody more experienced had been the leader, had led Taparte into making very great errors. He was mistaken when he assumed that he possessed the wisdom of older men. Everything had been favorable for a successful chase. Big herds of reindeer had passed Orsokidok and Katluk who shouting and howling had pursued the animals. The reindeer promptly fled into the valley and here again the women and children had done their duty.

The animals ran as fast as they could, more and more frightened. The children were after them and so were the

women, and everybody was gay, shouting in joyous excitement. The bigger boys led, followed by the younger ones and the younger women; the older women lagged behind somewhat and all the way in the rear came the stout ones, rolling along at a leisurely pace. The sound of their laughter frightened the reindeer.

Then they came to the ridge that ran across the valley. The reindeer reared, drew back, and the women shrieked. Meanwhile, the dogs had joined in the excitement, noisily attacking the reindeer. Suddenly, a big reindeer buck broke away from the others; the animal had discovered the ravine which nobody else had noticed before. Through the ravine all the reindeer now pushed, escaping into the plains down below. They fled quickly, their hind legs flying up high and the drumming beat of their hoofs sounding from afar. Not one of the animals went down to the lake where the men were sitting and waiting; not one shot was fired. No less than a day and a half the men sat and waited; then they assembled and, dead tired, marched back the long, weary stretch to the tents. All their exertions had been for nothing!

Some laughed off their disappointment, others taunted Taparte. Mala did not say one word. Taparte, however, did not feel very comfortable. He scolded and tried to explain away things, but secretly thought that it would be better for him to go to some other place if he wanted to be chief-tain. But even that would not help much, as news of this kind was likely to spread rapidly through all the other encampments.



VII

RETURNING from the chase, Mala walked with the others, leading his boys by the hand. He felt that he had been humbled and must take revenge.

As soon as he perceived Aba standing among the other women, he stepped up to her unhesitatingly and addressed her:

"I've got to have my tent enlarged. After all, it is not so heavy and can be carried with ease. Can you come over and sew for me, as soon as you have rested?"

Aba appeared somewhat uncertain: "Did you speak to my husband? He did not say anything about it to me."

"I have spoken and must insist upon your coming. Otherwise I shall have to come and get you."

And quietly he joined the men. The women, however, had heard Mala's words and they knew that Aba had caught his fancy.

Illubalik said that naturally a man like Mala could not be without a wife; besides, Taparte surely did not have so very many skins to be prepared by Aba. Also, it was true that he had been unsuccessful just now, when as chieftain of the camp, he had ordered everybody out on a futile chase. And, thinking back, he remembered the time Taparte tried to act as Spirit Controller to aid a sick man; he had said that the man would die, but he had recovered very nicely!

Two ptarmigan winged their way over the encampment. Mala lifted his rifle and fired. Both birds fluttered to the ground, bullet holes drilled squarely through their breasts. The others looked on admiringly. Mala gave a bird to each of the boys, and they ate the delicacy with great relish while it was still warm.

"The birds crossed my path; they were shot," Mala stated simply and walked on as if nothing had happened. They all knew, then, that great things were in store for the little community.

When the camp was reached, Mala squatted in front of his tent, and, smoking his pipe, stared ahead in silent contemplation. The others, tired from the hunt, soon fell asleep. Mala pondered on his lonesome life. Would Aba really come on the morrow? During warm weather he could not stand being alone.

Aba did not come. Taparte watched over her and forbade her to go. Seeing how things were, Mala went hunting for a few days, returning home with lots of meat. He went to Aba's tent. Throwing down three reindeer tongues, he said:

"Here are a few tongues for you. I suppose it's quite some time since your able husband brought you something to eat."

Without waiting for a reply, he walked off.

A little later, Taparte emerged from his tent, pretending to notice the three tongues for the first time.

"Who brought this meat? Haven't we got enough to eat?"

"Mala gave these tongues to me."

Taparte seized the tongues and flung them as far as he could; immediately the dogs rushed for them and gulped them down ravenously.

Taparte upbraided Aba, kicking her savagely. "So, you accept meat behind your husband's back! Haven't you plenty to eat?" Then he took the skin that Aba was busy scraping and tore it to shreds. Taparte was very angry, but his wife refused to be intimidated. She jumped up and, planting herself defiantly in front of him, she demanded: "If you feel like beating someone, why don't you go after the one who brought these tongues? Why don't you punish the hunter who threw them on the ground here? I have nothing to do with all this; these tongues do not belong to me. Of course, you'd only dare to hit a woman!"

Snickers were audible from behind the other tents where everybody was listening intently, ready to rush right to the scene as soon as the excitement passed ordinary bounds.

Aba's mockery infuriated Taparte. Not knowing how else to reply to her taunts, he brought his clenched fist down upon her head. As she fell to the ground, Aba hit her husband below the belt so that he swayed and struggled to regain his balance. He slipped over a stone, lost his footing, and crashed to the ground. A woman had thrown Taparte down! His ignoble defeat was greeted with shouts of derisive laughter from the neighboring tents. Aba, still stretched out on the ground, enjoyed her victory tremendously; she glanced at her husband with contempt. A few people came forward now. One of the men bent over Taparte and asked what he was doing on the ground?

Taparte, stripped of all his greatness, was now the laughing stock of the community. A mere woman had thrown him to the ground! He jumped up in a wild rage, threw himself upon his wife, and hammered her head with his fists. Then he dragged her by her hair around the tent; but not so much as a sound of pain came from Aba's tightly sealed lips. Her self-control drove him to further cruelty. Taparte, grasping a club, beat her mercilessly. Still not one word crossed Aba's lips. But suddenly she staggered to her feet, raised a big stone over her head with both hands, and hurled it at Taparte. He dropped his stick and barely escaped the missile. Again there were appreciative roars of laughter from all sides. Children and half-grown boys taunted him: "Look, look, he lost his stick. Who is the stronger of the two?"

What should he do now? Taparte pondered for a moment how he might reinstate himself in the eyes of the camp but meanwhile the spectacle reached the crisis: Aba, turning her back to him, resolutely rushed for the stick. She had conceived a really splendid idea! She picked up the stick and with both her hands broke it into pieces. All eyes were upon her; all ears heard the breaking of the stick. Here was final proof of Aba's scathing disregard for her husband.

Her action met with thunderous applause from the bystanders. Mala, who had watched the entire scene through a chink in his tent, now stepped out and, laughing, joined the others. Taparte appeared to see things in a red haze. There followed more beating and hitting. Aba, like an experienced boxer, made a leap for Taparte, throwing her arms around him. Being tall and heavy, she pulled him down with her weight, making it impossible for him to strike her again. He made a number of futile attempts but could not land another blow upon Aba. Nevertheless, he eventually shook her off, forced her to the ground and belabored her abdomen and kidneys with his fists.

Suddenly something unheard of happened. Mala stepped forward very calmly and took hold of Aba. What did that mean? The bystanders relished this new development hugely.

What luck that they had camped here! An outsider was actually mixing in a fight between husband and wife! Can there be any greater insult than such interference? And to top it all, Mala now took Aba by the hand and simply walked off with her. Abduction in broad daylight without the husband daring to resist!

Mala stopped in front of his tent. He picked up a number of things, then threw his rifle over his shoulder, handed Aba a pot and marched on, Aba dutifully following him. Taparte did not interfere in their abrupt leave-taking in the least. He cringed from the mocking laughter of the others as if from physical pain. Finally he wheeled about and called out to his wife but she was already a good distance away. He noticed that Mala said something to her. Probably he told her not to answer her husband. Both proceeded on their way with such unconcern that nobody would think they were running off together. To all appearances, a man and his wife were just taking a little walk. Taparte took one of the spears used to kill salmon and hurled it at Mala's big dog, lying near by. The dog jumped up but he had been fatally hit, and fell to the ground immediately.

Really, big things were happening in the encampment. General attention was focused on the two leaving the camp; they had walked a good stretch by now and were hardly more than tiny dots against the horizon. Aba had just reached the ridge; they could see her turn around, as if she had been seized with the impulse to return. Apparently she was no longer resentful towards Taparte. But just then Mala rushed over to her, grabbed her around the body and lifted her up. It was obvious that she offered strenuous resistance for they could see her kicking Mala. But her efforts were in vain. Mala simply threw her over his shoulder and, with the full weight of her resting upon him, bent down, picked up the pot which had fallen to the ground, and disappeared with her over the ridge.

A number of curious women immediately started to run over to a spot from which it would be possible to watch what went on between the two after they had crossed the ridge.

The men and the older women stayed behind, the latter diligently busying themselves again with their skin scraping. But they all slyly watched Taparte, who plainly perceived that they held him up to ridicule. However, he was not yet ready to give in. He went inside the tent and was heard to rummage noisily among his things. He reappeared presently, threw his rifle over his shoulder, grabbed his big knife and started out with a firm tread, following the path over which Mala and Aba had just disappeared.

ORSOKIDOK had left the camp to hunt reindeer. As he had taken along Mala's second rifle and a box of matches, he could remain away for a good long time. He had tramped quite a stretch because he had been unlucky with a number of reindeer; they usually disappeared from the range of his rifle and if he caught up with them and fired, he missed them. He did not want to return empty-handed and so continued to follow the herd. Becoming exhausted from the heat of the chase, he finally stretched out in the sun and slept.

He awoke in the grip of an uncanny sensation. Had he just had a fearful dream or had something actually happened to him? Why, now he remembered! Kukiaktarnak, the terrible demon of the plains, the Talon, had pursued and overpowered him in his dream. The Talon, that ominous specter that preys upon lonely reindeer hunters, had seduced him in his dream to make of him a Spirit Controller. A weird foreboding settled upon Orsokidok; he still seemed to hear the rasping voice of the Talon, bidding him keep his lips sealed if he wished to become a Spirit Controller. As such, in the course of the next winter, Orsokidok would give birth to a mountain goblin, which, together with the Talon, would then act as his guardian spirit. However, if he did not choose to be a Spirit Controller, he was free to tell about his experience; then the embryo would shrivel eventually. It would leave only a collection of matter in his rectum, the seed of the Talon, which must be evacuated.

Orsokidok trembled with fear. He noticed that he was weak and unable to rise. What dreadful thing had happened to him? He suffered a severe chill, growing hot and cold by turns. His head was burning and his feet were as cold as ice. Presently, something down in the valley, which was surely no reindeer, attracted his attention. He made out the figure of a man and wondered if it could be the Talon who might still be roaming the neighborhood? The figure moved slowly, but gradually drew near enough so that Orsokidok recognized it to be Taparte. Orsokidok welcomed company, for his three days' absence from camp seemed an eternity to him. Then, too, he felt ill and in need of the proximity of another human being. The mere fact that somebody whom he knew was coming gave him new strength. He got up, shouldered his rifle and struck out slowly to meet him.

Taparte, however, would not speak to him nor would he offer him the word of welcome; his face was drawn and angry. He was ready to pass Orsokidok without according him a second glance, when the latter spoke and informed him that he was sick and exhausted.

"Since when do young boys address their elders without being asked?" inquired Taparte. "You are nothing but a common, low worm and I despise you. Did you see Mala? I am looking for him."

"I don't know where Mala is," stammered the boy in reply. "He was still in the tent when I left the camp. Didn't he go hunting? I myself have not killed a thing. Some of the reindeer ran away; I missed the others."

"Naturally you would miss, but there are men who know how to shoot. That which is hit by them must die. Let me have your rifle a moment. I want to see it."

"This rifle belongs to Mala who only lent it to me. But why are you so furious? Why do you speak that way? Who has angered you?"

"Hand that rifle over or I shall take it away from you by force. And be quick about it."

Orsokidok obeyed. How could he refuse the command of a mature man?

Taparte grasped the rifle with both hands and flung it against a boulder, smashing it into pieces. Once more he brought it down, this time breaking the lock completely.

After he had rendered the rifle entirely useless, he flung the parts over his head, saying:

"That is what happens to one of Mala's rifles. You, being his foster-son, shall also be dealt with, together with all the rest of his family."

He caught Orsokidok by the chest, lifted him up and began to hammer the boy's temples with his fists; then he threw him to the ground. Orsokidok, taken completely by surprise, was unable to resist.

Taparte stood there, irresolute. Should he kill the boy or let him live? Mala was the man on whom he wished to wreak his vengeance—Mala who had taken his wife Aba with him to the mountains. Mala would feel his revenge. Why had he come into the encampment at all? He would teach him to fear Taparte and to remain forever out of his sight. He took his rifle and, loading it, got ready to shoot the boy. Orsokidok, almost paralyzed with terror, shouted breathlessly:

"Are you going to shoot me? Do you want to kill me? Kukiaktarnak, my guardian spirit, come quickly! Here is a man who thinks I am without protection! Kukiaktarnak, I see you coming already to save me!"

Perhaps he really saw something, perhaps it was just a ruse? Nevertheless, Taparte became uneasy. It was not at all impossible that he was facing a Spirit Controller—a young fellow able to rule the unseen ones. Taparte was not afraid of mortal man, but if he were to kill anyone who enjoyed the favor of the mountain spirits, revenge would follow him wherever he went; he had even been told that a bullet would turn in its flight and hit the one who pulled the trigger—just as harpoons and salmon lances hit back at him who hurls them, if they are aimed at a Spirit Controller.

Taparte did not say a word but merely shouldered his rifle, turned and walked onward.

Orsokidok looked after him, his fever had gone and his strength was returning again. So Mala and Taparte were ene-

mies now! He had always, with the intuition of the adolescent, expected as much. He also felt, in a vague sort of way, that now he would rise to some semblance of importance as comrade-in-arms of his foster-father; he would have to be taken into account, especially as he was going to be a Spirit Controller. He picked up the fragments of the shattered rifle and slowly made his way home.

Two days after Orsokidok had reached the encampment, Mala and Aba returned. They came over the same path by which they had left. Mala, besides a bunch of reindeer tongues, was carrying a heavy load of meat; both also brought skins along. No doubt Mala's new mate had brought him luck in the chase.

They moved into Mala's tent. Taparte was absent from the encampment. Anyway, he did not matter at all. Mala never thought of asking about him and none of the other campers so much as mentioned his name. However, when among themselves, the others would gossip, but nobody dared to question Mala. Orsokidok never revealed how the rifle came to be broken, but it was generally surmised that he had encountered Taparte and that the latter would not be seen any more.

Nevertheless, when evening came, Taparte walked into the encampment. He did not speak to anybody but made straight for his tent. Inupaujak and Ujarak made a great show of joining him and he ate out of their pot.

Orsokidok had reported to his foster-father alone his encounter with Taparte, and Mala had pondered over the broken rifle, that precious piece of arms he had paid for so dearly with fox skins and baleen. He placed it on a big stone in front of the tent, so that everyone could see it. No explanation was made to his fellow campers who collected in little groups and gazed at the display or else passed it by silently. What wealth had been destroyed here! A rifle which could have served many a year to catch foxes, had been smashed, broken to useless bits!

The air was vibrant with impending events. Aba, going down to the river for water, had to pass Taparte's tent on her way. He jumped out, grabbed hold of her and shoved her roughly inside. Mute wrestling went on in the tent but eventually everything became quiet. Taparte had simply taken back his wife.

Mala was rummaging among his hunting gear when he discovered his dead dog. Taparte had not even extracted his salmon spear from the body of the animal. Nobody had made any mention of it although many had passed the dog's body. Aba had not come back to Mala, whose patience was exhausted by now. By nightfall, Inupaujak and Ujarak left Taparte's tent to return to their own. Mala fairly itched for a fight. With a defiant toss of his head, he blocked the way of the couple, staring at them with hard eyes. He grabbed Inupaujak by the arm, forcing her to stand rooted to the spot.

"I want a woman," he stated briefly. "I shall take your wife, Ujarak. You may have her back on the morrow."

What could Ujarak do, being only a young man and unarmed? Besides, what harm could there be in it? "Go ahead and take my wife. Why shouldn't you have her? I shall go hunting meanwhile."

"Your wife, your wife," growled Mala. "A boy like you has a wife only as long as grown men consent to it."

Not another word was exchanged between them. Mala pushed Inupaujak into his tent and there she remained throughout the night. Everybody noticed the incident, of course. In an encampment nothing can transpire without it soon becoming known to all. Whispers ran from tent to tent, the gossip spreading quickly. Mala, however, stayed at home, keeping Inupaujak at his side. Inupaujak was dainty and desirable—really clever, too. She was still a child but she reminded him of Iva. She came of a good family and Mala wondered whether he should let Aba go and keep her instead.

FROM one of the tents issued the sound of a gun shot and the whizzing of a flying bullet through the air.

Mala had gone down to the river to spear salmon. As he passed Taparte's tent, a shot was fired at him through a rent in the skins. It was plain to everybody that Taparte had lain in wait for his enemy, opening fire on him as soon as he appeared.

Mala jumped back quickly just as a second bullet whizzed by his ear. He ran into his tent and grabbed his rifle. He resolved to go down to the river and show the men here that Taparte could not stop him from doing what he had set out to do. His finger on the trigger, he passed the tent once again. He walked firmly, seemingly undisturbed.

Sure enough, there were lots of salmon in the weel. It was a wonderful catch. He shouted a single word and one of the men came rushing down with another directly behind him; all wanted to be in on the killing. What a commotion and noise! Here they were clubbing salmon, there they were stepping on one another's feet. In order to drive the catch towards spots where the water was shallow, some jumped into the water where it was deepest—reaching up to their chests. The frightened salmon tried to find refuge between the cracks of the river beds only to entrap themselves. The fish leapt high in the air, trying to overcome obstacles in their way, but were clubbed and speared. Some of the men had bruises to show for their pains, but there was nobody who did not get a good mess of fish. Taparte and Mala stood right next to each other; both were dexterous and caught many fish and when everything was over, each one carried home his catch. Illubalik's wife offered to clean and dry the salmon for Mala. She thought of the coming winter and wondered what woman among them would share Mala's fish. That Mala wanted a wife, everybody knew. But who would she be?

A few more days passed. Both men, who were attracting the attention of all their camp neighbors, went their respective ways quietly. Taparte stayed inside his tent most of the time, but Mala attended to his work as usual. Camp life in general did not seem changed at all and no outsider would ever have noticed anything but peace and contentment beneath a warm

sun, fanned by a mild wind. But suddenly and overwhelmingly, the day of settlement dawned.

THEY met some distance from the camp. Taparte had been away and Mala had lain in wait for him. He crouched behind a big boulder and when Taparte returned, he jumped out. Mala did not carry a rifle as it was to be a fair fight; he would never attack an enemy from behind.

He walked straight up to Taparte who saw the promise of death in his opponent's eyes. There were no bystanders around before whom a man might feel tempted to show off. Taparte arrested his step and contemplated flight.

"It seems to me that a harpoon was hurled at some dog. That hardly appears to be the place for a harpoon."

Without waiting for a reply, Mala, with tremendous strength, unlimbered his lance at Taparte who drew aside quickly, turning away. Thus the lance did not penetrate the chest at which it was aimed but as Taparte had turned half way around, the weapon lodged in his right kidney. The wound was by no means fatal but Taparte collapsed, howling for help. In an instant, Mala was standing over him, his big knife in his hand, ready to finish him.

Taparte tried to defend himself but Mala, slashing him across the hand, drew a big spout of red blood.

"Now aren't you a great man," Mala challenged and aimed the knife at Taparte's throat. But Taparte squirmed and the knife cut his mouth. Mala withdrew his knife and, severing Taparte's cheek, laid open his teeth. Mala's fury grew minute by minute. He drove his knife through his enemy's eye. Taparte, by now, had lost consciousness. One stab after another penetrated his throat and the blood gushed from many wounds. Mala slashed him sideways, severing Taparte's nose. In his rage, he felt a fine satisfaction in digging his knife in time and again, deep, deep into his victim's body. At last Mala drove the knife through Taparte's ribs right into his heart and Taparte was dead.

Nevertheless, Mala's lust for blood was not quite allayed. Everybody must know who was the strongest and who was accustomed to rule whatever encampment he chose for his home. Was he not the man the great Captain had picked to command his own people? And again and again, he plunged the knife down into his adversary's lifeless form. The noseless face looked uncanny. No more blood gushed out now! only a trickle, growing always thinner until it was no more than a single red thread. Mala's paroxysm mounted higher when he saw blood on his hands. Blood of man! How different from the blood of seals and reindeer! He forced Taparte's left eye out of the socket with his knife; it glared at him as if in agony. He tore it out entirely, repeating the performance with the right eye.

What a wretch of a man was here at his feet! No man at all any more! Mala took his knife and dug it into the abdomen of the dead one. Crazed with the lust for blood, he slashed his victim's arms, cut off his right hand, hurling it into the river.

"There," he gloated, "your strength is swimming away."

In a loud voice, Mala broke into a bloodcurdling song—the song of the killer who gazes proudly upon his terrible handiwork. He thought himself equal to the best of killers. He wiped his harpoon and his knife with his hands, rinsing neither hands nor weapons; then he picked up the eyes and went home. Nobody had seen him commit the deed but everybody was to know about it. He walked upright, untremblingly. When he passed Taparte's tent, he tore the skin from the entrance, and flung on the ground the eyes of his erstwhile foe.

"Here is something of your mighty master. Let it shine under your blubber lamp."

A killer's chant upon his lips, he went into his own tent. His boys screamed in fear when they saw him; his face, encrusted with blood, struck terror into their hearts.

Gradually, his wildness subsided and sober thoughts returned. Had it been right, what he had done? Of course! Taparte had to be destroyed and his memory forever blotted out. That was exactly what would happen as soon as the body was found, with Taparte's nose above the head. But Mala was

no longer elated over his victory. He was still singing a monotonous chant, but it no longer resembled that appalling song of the killer. Before Mala's eyes appeared a blurred picture of Iva, who had been the mother of his two sons, and who had always been favored by luck. Was Aba to tend his lamp in the future, and to sleep with him on the bench? Was not Inupaujak much more preferable?—a beautiful woman, still young and soft-skinned; her voice was like Iva's and her speech was gentle. Who was Aba, after all? An overfat female who had gone from hand to hand. More and more he coveted Inupaujak but that could not be! He had taken Aba away from her husband, and if he did not keep her now for his wife, it might look as if he were afraid. Nevertheless, Inupaujak—why, where had his thoughts been all this time? He could and he would take the two of them! All men of might had two wives and he, Mala, the mightiest in the camp, would be no exception.

Orsokidok came into the tent. The boys were still playing outside. What do children know about the passions of their elders?

"Go and call Aba. Tell her to come here."

Orsokidok went. Presently he returned, remaining near the tent flap.

"She is crying. She says she is not going to come."

Mala did not reply but proceeded with quick strides to Aba's tent and called to her in a gruff voice.

"Come into my tent and sit on the bench. There are lots of clothes for you to sew."

"No, no!" came her answer. "I am afraid of you."

"Come at once into my tent or I shall take you there. And be quick about it, too. Your disobedience annoys me."

Slowly Aba pushed the tent flap aside. He grabbed her hand and shook her so violently that she staggered and fell to the ground. But she got up at once. "Go into my tent. There are clothes in need of attention."

Blinded by her tears, Aba ran ahead of Mala into the tent. She sat on the bench and took off her boots. Then she

busied herself with the garments of the children; they had been neglected as no woman had been in the tent for some time. She started to repair the clothes, ripping the pelt stockings from the inner lining and the outer boot. Water had penetrated them and everything had to be thoroughly repaired. She worked industriously, the tears running down her dirty cheeks in a continual flow.

Mala seated himself and leaned back comfortably, filled with the joy of the possessor. Aba's tears did not soften him; he rested quietly, humming his monotonous singsong.

Finally Aba's tears annoyed him because they reminded him of what had happened, and in an angry voice he cried:

"Gay women are wanted in the tent. Stop your weeping. There is reason only for joy. And mark you, our clothes must be put in shape quickly as we are going to depart from here soon."

But his words were received with a fresh storm of heart-rending sobs. Mala got up, took his rifle and left. He went into the mountains, dissatisfied yet imbued with a feeling of triumph such as any man would enjoy.

A TERRIBLE shouting rent the air. A man had discovered Taparte. He was mutilated in a manner more horrible than ever had been seen or heard of before. The news caused great excitement in the encampment. Everybody rushed to the spot where Taparte had been found. Only three old women stayed behind and ran to Aba to hold her back. She must not see her husband's mutilated body.

A great babble of words flew among them. Where were Taparte's eyes? They were missing! And his nose was lying atop his head! The men resolved to bury Taparte immediately and carried him into a nearby rocky glen where stones were heaped over the body.

Taparte had died, but not as any of the others had who were forgotten so readily. As long as there were people to listen, the story of the murder would be related. Those who had seen the victim of the terrible murder with their own

eyes would never finish describing it for the rest of their lives.

Mala brought reindeer along when he returned. He carried the whole animal, not yet disemboweled or skinned, on his shoulder. Although it was only a small animal, it nevertheless constituted a burden not every man could carry.

"Here's a little meat," he said, throwing it in front of the tent. A few men stepped closer and inspected the animal.

"You killed reindeer as usual," one of them finally broke the silence.

"Just some small game," Mala replied. "At last I've brought a little meat home. I hadn't caught anything for quite some time. I ran across it in the mountains and shot it from a good distance. It so happened that this time my rifle really hit the mark. Alas, if I only knew how to handle my rifle a little better."

"We went up to the table-land but we did not see any reindeer there. They must have scented the encampment."

"Has anything happened around here?" Mala asked.

"Happened?" the man repeated. "Nothing at all. What should have happened? My little boy is growing up to be quite a hunter. He caught a bird by hurling a stone at it. We broke its wings and now he is playing in the tent with it. That little one is so clever and cunning; he's telling everybody he caught a seal."

Mala smiled understandingly. "If only my sons were that way. Too bad, it will take a long time yet before they catch seals." He got out his pipe, cut some tobacco and rested on a big stone. The other men grouped themselves around him.

"Hey there," he shouted imperiously. "Hey, you in the tent, bring out a pair of boots! I had to wade through a river and mine are all wet."

Here was a man who was sure that his wife would come when he called her. The others remained seated. They were eager to see what would happen. Presently Aba came out of the tent as if she had not been used to anything else for many a year. She brought dry boots along and pulled off the wet ones.

"Is meat boiled?" Mala asked.

"Yes, the meat is boiled."

"I shall eat out here.—Do you want to join me?" Mala asked the men when Aba came with a big bowl, heaped with meat. Mala took a big chunk of meat. There was still dried blood on the back of his hand, and red spots on his clothes. He cut off a piece, handing the rest to his guests. Each one of them took a bite, passing the meat around. The fourth man, after taking his share, handed what was left back to Mala. They ate as always, speaking of the hunt and discussing their dogs. Nothing untoward appeared to have occurred in the encampment.



VIII

ORSOKIDOK felt he could not bear the responsibilities of a Spirit Controller, so he related his experience to Mala and thus ended the spell the Talon had cast upon him. No longer had he any power to command the spirits who had wooed him. The embryo died without Orsokidok noticing anything except an affliction of his rectum. There was a swelling and presently a boil developed which hurt him excruciatingly. Finally, it burst, releasing a great amount of yellow matter. Thus the seed of the Talon, the mountain spirit, was discharged. Orsokidok immediately felt relieved and rejoiced because he need not fear the spirits again. Rejected once, they would never return to trouble him.

There was no happiness in Mala's tent. There was something strange about Aba. She cried all the time when Mala was present but when she was among the women she could be quite gay. She obeyed the commands of her new master but she was not clever with the needle. Nothing was as it had been in the old days, and Mala did not derive any joy from her.

"Stop your whimpering," Mala demanded time and again, keeping his anger under control with an effort. When he slept, Aba would lie awake, frequently disturbing him by her sob-

bing. Full of sympathy, then, he would inquire the reason for her grief.

"I'm afraid of you," was her reply.

She had never returned to her former tent. Nobody dared to enter it. Taparte's eyes were still there on the ground, slowly drying up.

One day Aba sat around crying as usual when Mala entered the tent. He did not say a word, but when he wished to drink some water, there was none around.

"I want water. Why is there none in the pail?" She took the pail and went outside the tent. When she returned, an uncanny sight awaited her, under her lamp. Taparte's eyes which Mala had gouged out of their sockets, had been brought in by him to keep spooks away. After all, one could not know whether the perpetual crying of Aba was not the result of Taparte's appearing before her in his spirit self, in this way keeping alive her fear of Mala.

When Aba sobbed still more violently, Mala, greatly put out, left the tent. He was thoroughly disappointed. Even his new fur clothes did not fit right and in an angry mood he started to inspect his hunting gear. Just then, little Puala came home; he had lost one of his mittens.

"Run over to Aba. Make her give you another one. Get an entirely new pair," the father told him, bent on repairing his harpoon.

Presently the boy returned: "There are no other mittens," he reported.

"Hey, you in the tent," Mala shouted in a loud voice. "Why are there no mittens for the boy?"

"I thought one pair of mittens would be enough for the summer," answered Aba. "Nobody ever told me that new mittens were to be made."

"Do I have to tell you that the boys need clothes? I don't have to tell you to eat, do I? Oh, what a woman!" Mala despaired and continued with his work.

Next evening, his boys, together with some other children, wanted to go into the mountains to hunt young ptarmigan.

"I still haven't any mittens. Orsokidok must lend me his,"

said Puala, his hands stretched out so that Aba could put on the mittens for him.

"Where are the new mittens? Are they already gone?" Mala looked at Aba. She did not answer, but there simply were no mittens.

"Well, maybe you don't know how to sew mittens. Perhaps you never made any in your former tent?"

Aba sank to the ground, crushed by Mala's jeers. What cruelty to speak of the dead, especially when he had been slain by Mala's own hands!

UJARAK and Inupaujak intended to go on a journey. They wanted to go up North to gossip about the events which had taken place during the summer. It would be thrilling to be the first ones to spread the news. Ujarak had taken Taparte's dogs and tied them to his tent preparatory to strapping on their burden. At that moment Mala put in his appearance. He loosened the traces, flung them away, and chased the dogs over to his own tent.

"Seems here's a man who doesn't know what dogs are his!" Mala exclaimed, loud enough for many to hear. "Of course, he's no real man—just a boy trying hard to pass himself off as a man."

Ujarak did not dare to object. He only wished to leave the encampment as quickly as possible; as a matter of fact, he was on the point of departure now. The tent had been taken down and Inupaujak, a stick in her hand, was waiting for him. She carried a burden attached to her forehead by means of a brow-strap.

"A mere youth shouldn't have a wife," Mala continued, sudden passion gripping him. He threw his arms around Inupaujak who was utterly unprepared for Mala's attack. A moment ago, he himself had not thought of it but now he raised her up, threw her over his shoulder and carried her into his tent.

Aba looked aghast when he entered. He flung his new wife on the bench where she remained prostrate, at first sobbing

loudly but gradually quieting down. She peered through her hands at her new master. There was an enticing expression in her eyes and her mouth was that of a very young girl.

Mala was happy, now that he was a man with two wives. However, he was too much of a man to show his pride, and he quietly left the tent. His fellow campers must be impressed with the fact that he did not regard his domestic affairs as anything out of the ordinary.

Ujarak, feeling intensely humiliated by this latest affront, stepped up to Mala. So angry was he that he forgot his fears.

"What are you doing with my wife?" he demanded loudly. "Watch out! Don't think that you can do as you please. I want my wife back! Get out of my way! I want to go into the tent."

He tried to push Mala aside in order to enter the tent but Mala caught him around the chest and one thigh. If, up to now, Mala's great strength had gone unappreciated, he made it forever plain to them all by the way he flung Ujarak through the air. The young man landed in a ridiculous posture on top of a heap of skins and everybody started to laugh.

Oh, how they cackled! What an interesting camp was theirs! What an amusing summer! How was all this to end?

Ujarak jumped up, grabbed an axe that was lying right next to him—a precious axe made of steel—which belonged to Mala and hurled it through the air. Had the axe landed on Mala's head it would surely have killed him, but Mala sprang aside and the axe landed on a heap of stones.

"Well, well, you impudent cub," chided Mala. "You'd better be more careful in your mighty temper! Remember, when a bear cub puts up a fight, it generally gets its teeth knocked out. Clear out of this encampment quick now! Get away from here."

Ujarak looked around for some other likely weapon. His eyes fell upon a shaft with a blunt point. He seized it and hurled it with all his might at Mala. Although it missed its target, Mala decided that he had had enough of Ujarak's nonsense. He grasped that same terrible spear with which he had killed Taparte and which he used when hunting walrus and bear. Weighing it in his hand he got ready to hurl it. Then

It was that Ujarak understood he would have to pay with his life if he were hit. Suddenly panic overwhelmed him. He ran and ran, passing through the row of tents down through the valley and up the mountainside. As far as their eyes could follow him, they saw him running for safety. Ujarak, fleeing for his very life, left behind his wife, his dogs, his tent,—everything he possessed in the world.

MALA went into his tent. He was an abductor and knew that one and all in the encampment feared him greatly. But he was also clever enough to surmise that he had made enemies who sought an opportunity for revenge. A man who is a danger to others must himself beware, for his life is constantly jeopardized. Such a man is likely to be rough-spoken and unbending.

Mala sat down on the bench where the women were already resting, one on either side of him.

"We shall have to enlarge the tent," he said. "It wasn't built for a wife, and now I find myself with two."

Both gazed at him in silent fright, tears springing to their eyes.

"What am I crying for anyway?" Inupaujak thought, but she kept on whimpering nevertheless. "I am the wife of a much feared man," Aba told herself, yet she cried only the harder.

The boys came in and saw Inupaujak. Upik handed her a ball that required mending and asked whether she would not play with him a little.

"Inupaujak cannot play today," Mala answered. After all, it was not advisable to permit her to leave the tent.

"Are you going to stay here?" the boys questioned.

"Yes, Inupaujak is going to live here," replied Mala.

Satisfied with this information, the children ran out. "Inupaujak is going to live in our tent," the boys told their little playmates, and soon enough the whole encampment knew about it. Just another plain fact that must be accepted by them.

Of course, taking Inupaujak was only a whim of Mala's—but leave it to him to straighten the matter out satisfactorily!

He stayed at home for two days while the women sewed on a big new tent. Then Mala prepared for an early departure. He strapped burdens on some of the dogs, covering the load with dried skins; one of the dogs carried a little canvas bag, brought from the ships. To all appearances, Mala contemplated a lengthy journey.

"We are going to leave," he informed Inupaujak when everything was ready. "Take this pot and this bundle with tea and sugar. You may also have this pipe." Without waiting for her to answer, he left the tent.

So Inupaujak was to go along! She had been given the word of command and her master had gone ahead already. He had chosen her for a wife and there was nothing to do but to follow him. She got up, crying, and gathered her boots together. If he had only announced his plans yesterday, she would have repaired her boots, or could, perhaps, have fled after Ujarak. All these thoughts crowded into her head as she collected her belongings, taking sewing needles, kettle and tea bag.

Mala did not even turn his head to see whether she was coming but walked slowly enough for her to catch up with him. Together they went on a great reindeer hunt.

CERTAIN spirits assist man. Ujarak ran, his helpful spirit was the fear which spurred him on to run and run. Occasionally he would rest near a river, drinking his fill, and then press onward. He had lost count of how many times the sun had traveled around the horizon. He never slept. He just ran and ran and finally he met people. It was in the plains near the little village called Amitok where he came across the very tents for which he had been searching. Two of Taparte's brothers, who always traveled together, were living there. Two other tents, inhabited by relatives, were pitched there too. Although it had been to save his life that he had fled from the encampment on the shores of the Lake of the Black Foxes,

Ujarak was a brave fellow who could not be downed for long. He thought of revenge and he intended to seek assistance. Taparte's brothers must help him wreak vengeance on Mala, slaying the wretch as he deserved. Ujarak wanted his little wife back and all his property and that of Mala too.

As soon as he reached the camp and everybody had assembled, he related the story. Mala was a wanton killer who abducted women; he must die. When he had finished, Taparte's two brothers sat in silence. Finally, Semik spoke up:

"Let Ujarak eat and have a good long sleep. Meanwhile, we shall think and talk things over."

Ujarak ate and slept while Semik and Asarpana took counsel. They resolved to go with him. They were men who owned rifles and were not afraid to seek out Mala and demand their brother's rifles and his dogs. They would lose no time but would start out on the morrow. One brother left behind his wife, and the other took his family along. They were to take their tents and dogs, as the trip might easily be a protracted one.

What a distance Ujarak had fled! The first night they rested at the spot where Ujarak had had his last drink; the second night they stopped at a place in the mountains where he had tried to pick up the trail; the third night they camped where Ujarak had paused for a little while; finally, they reached the encampment.

Mala was not there, but his sons and Orsokidok were among those who received them.

"We are glad to see you," some shouted when the party arrived.

"No more than we are to see you," the newcomers replied and seated themselves. "We wouldn't mind catching some game," they stated after a short interval. "We only have a few reindeer."

There was modesty in their speech. The conversation dwelt on unimportant matters only. Aba was sitting among the women. Nobody spoke of Mala; not a single word was mentioned of the fact that he had killed and mutilated the brother of the two newcomers. Nevertheless, everybody knew what

was coming. Now that the two men had arrived at the encampment, speedy developments were to be expected. Terrible things would probably happen before the sun once again touched the horizon.

The newcomers pitched their tent a little distance away from the others. From this fact, too, it was concluded that they desired an unobstructed view in all directions so that no enemy could approach unseen.

"Let us pitch tent here on the sods," Semik said.

"Why, we thought you would live over there," some of the old campers remarked.

This, of course, had not been expected at all, but they had to infer that they well understood their special reason for picking the particular spot. The two brothers took their loaded rifles and their harpoons and lances into their tent with them. Evidently, they wished to be ready for defense in case of a surprise attack.

That night, Orsokidok disappeared. Nobody saw him leave. He had gone to shoot a hare but missed the animal and when he pursued it over a little ridge, the hare was gone. Nobody actually discussed it, but there was whispering in the tents that Orsokidok—an orphan to whom nobody ever gave a thought—had gone to warn Mala. But who would voice an opinion or take sides?

Orsokidok traveled up the mountains and down the valleys. He journeyed on and on and finally arrived at the conclusion that it would be impossible for him to locate Mala and Inupaujak. However, he knew that his foster-father would return soon. He had left his little boys at the encampment with his second wife, together with Taparte's valuable property and Ujarak's few belongings. Their tent skins had already been sewed together with Mala's own skins and Taparte's rifle reposed under Mala's bench.

A few days passed by, during which Orsokidok discovered some caches with reindeer meat but he ate only his fill; he took nothing with him and traveled onward. Further and further he went, finally becoming convinced that he had missed the

two; probably they had already started back for the encampment he thought, and so he turned back. Mala had perhaps walked straight into a trap; he had not had a word of warning, and nobody could guess what might have happened. Orsokidok felt that Mala's fate was his own. Throwing his lot with Mala, he was somebody, but if Mala were to die, then he would be just a poor young fellow and it would take him a long time before he would stand on his own feet and have his own dogs.

Shortly before he arrived at the encampment, he spied something moving in the distance. People, possibly, or perhaps reindeer. But it turned out to be Mala and Inupaujak. They did not look very presentable. Their faces were covered with sweat and dirt, their clothes were in rags, and they seemed utterly exhausted from the long journey. They were anxious to get home for a good rest. They had established numerous meat caches. Their dogs were burdened with loads of dried skins and they themselves were carrying many bundles. Yes, it was Mala there in front of him; Mala, the great man, the master hunter who boasted two wives.

"Mala, Mala!" Orsokidok called. "Semik has come, and Asarpana and Ujarak are with them. They are living in a tent a little way from the river. I just left the encampment and now that I have met you, I would like to come along."

"Well, will you look at this lad who aches for company? Can't you find home by yourself?"

These two hid their true sentiments because they did not care to admit the real object of their meeting. Inupaujak kept silent. She sat with half closed eyes, and stared ahead thoughtfully. It was Ujarak to whom she really belonged and from whom she had been taken away. What would be her lot, now that Ujarak had come back? She had tasted of the sweetness of being the wife of a big man—a man who was feared and respected by all. She had accompanied him on a long journey and had witnessed how resourceful he was in every emergency. Mala, after all, was a mature man, not a mere youth to whom scant attention was paid; her life had been changed greatly. She sat for a long time, wondering which of the two men she preferred.

"It's possible that we might sleep here," Mala said. "My feet are somewhat tired. Yes, let's rest now. Unhitch the dogs and feed them some meat if they are hungry."

The weather was fair and so they stretched out on the skins. Mala took a couple of marrow bones out of the bundle, smashed them with a stone and offered them to the others.

"Shall I go and gather in some heather?" inquired Inupaujak.

"Why should we have a fire? I am tired of boiled meat, I want to eat mine raw. There is no need for a fire."

And so they ate their meat raw, knowing well that the real reason against a fire was the smoke that might betray them.

FALLING snow aroused them. It was coming down thickly in big, white, soft flakes that covered everything. They were drenched and made haste to pitch their tent. Inupaujak and Orsokidok crawled inside while Mala remained outside. It would be easy enough for him to flee for safety, but if he left his wife and his property to his enemy, his reputation would be gone forever. True, there were three against him, but then he could count on the snow as a great help. He was pleased that his spirit helper, Great Fog, was now clothing the land in a white blanket. When he went only a short distance from the tent, he could not make it out. It was fortunate to be so close to the encampment where he knew each stone and could follow the bed of the river. He succeeded in making his way close to the tents without being seen by anybody. From Orsokidok's report he knew where the newcomers were camping. His rifle in his hand, he approached the tent.

"Who is it? Who is out there?" a voice called from inside the tent, but there was no reply. Then the flap of the tent was pushed aside by a bare arm and a head protruded. At the same moment a shot rang out. Mala had one enemy less. There was a roar in the tent followed by long drawn-out howling of the dogs. The others must have guessed what had happened for

there was a great stirring in all the tents; the report of the shot had been heard. But who had fired the rifle? Asarpana was lying dead, his wife was paralyzed with fear. Their two children did not utter a sound. They were too young to understand what was going on.

"Be still," Mala told the woman. He noticed immediately that Semik was not around. Ujarak, too, was not in the tent. They had either gone hunting or else...? Mala kicked the dead body aside and looked out through the tent flap. Sure enough; Semik was just coming out of Mala's tent—from Mala's wife! There could be no doubt but that theirs had been a mission of vengeance.

Mala felt a terrible fury rising in him. If he had killed Taparte, it had been only because he needed a wife to tend his children and to scrape his many skins. Then, too, Taparte had taunted him and had been disliked generally. Inupaujak had merely been the passion of a moment and he surely did not regret having taken her. Now Semik and his brother had come with the intention to slay him. That he had shot first, everybody would readily understand. Nobody would reproach him for that. He really had nothing against the men. They were splendid hunters, but after all, it was either he or they. Life is like that. But now he had been insulted; he had seen Semik coming from his wife. Certainly Mala was justified in his anger!

Semik approached the tent; Asarpana's wife, crying, did not see him coming. Semik had heard the shot, and, being without weapons, he came rushing back to get his rifle. Suddenly, he staggered and fell. Mala's bullet had hit him right in the forehead. He expired even as the report of the shot rang out.

Two men with two shots! Surely Mala was a great killer. Shivering with excitement, he flourished the rifle over his head. He shouted to those who gathered about that if there was anyone against him, he would be promptly slain. "I know that Ujarak is here. If he will come out now, I promise him peace. But if he hides from me, I will kill him in the end. Can't you see I'm a killer? Tell Ujarak to come here at once."

Ujarak lay trembling on a bench. He had seen Semik collapse and he suspected that he would be the next one.

"Ujarak, come out," Illubalik called. "Mala will not harm you if you come. Don't you hear, Ujarak? We don't want any more dead men around here. It's no use resisting the terrible Mala. Better come out and speak to him."

Ujarak's teeth chattered audibly when he faced Mala, but there was apparently nothing to fear from the terrible one.

"Cowardly man, so fleet on your feet, you ran for help, eh? I should kill you. But do you know what I am going to do? I shall not kill you. I have taken your wife, because you are too cowardly to deserve her. Nevertheless, I shall give you Asarpana's wife. Take the mate of the dead man, take also his tent and his dogs and leave this camp at once. The very sight of you reminds me of my anger! And when you go amongst other people, tell them that anyone who dares to come here, bent on opposing me, will be shot like these two. And you, comrades, go bury the dead in the ground and remember there is nobody else like me! I am Mala." He put his rifle aside to show that he was not afraid of anybody and went inside his tent.

"Aba," he called when he did not find her inside.

Aba was standing among the women who had watched the whole scene. But she came rushing over now because no woman would dare to keep such a man waiting. She was the wife of a leader among men and she must obey quickly. The boys, too, went over to their father. They had seen him kill but they felt secure. Their father had never been cross or hard with them. Mala, seated on a bench, regarded his boys standing before him; he patted their heads and spoke softly to them. He had a piece of meat brought in and divided it between the boys. Jokingly, he told them that he was giving them cakes such as they had received from the white men.

"I hope you still remember what it tasted like. We are going there again very soon and you shall have more of it."

Suddenly, a fresh paroxysm overwhelmed him. He jumped up and seized his knife. Breaking into his killer's song, he rushed out.

The men had brought Semik's body into the tent and placed it next to the dead Asarpana. The women sat around crying, ready to sew the corpses into reindeer hides. They screamed when suddenly Mala, the long blubber knife in his hands, stood next to them, his eyes rolling wildly.

"The terrible Mala," they shouted, "Look at his eyes! Hear his song!"

"Ah, yes, yes—I killed my enemies. Ha, yes, yes—just in an angry mood. I'm only an ordinary man, yet you see I am still here, alive. Ah, yes . . . ah, yes . . ."

Mala was intoxicated with the lust for further butchery. The dead bodies had not been sewed into the reindeer skins yet. He made a dive for the first one, cutting off the nose. He then rushed for the second one, slashing the mouth from ear to ear. And then the insane impulse to wield his knife left him as suddenly as it had come. He wiped the blade clean on the clothing of one of the murdered men and slowly left the tent.

Ujarak stood outside, full of fear. He dared not flee nor so much as glance at Mala. But Mala was again quiet and soft spoken.

"If you haven't dogs enough you may have some of mine," he offered. "And what about meat and tobacco? Have you enough on hand for your journey?" He pulled two pieces of tobacco out of his pocket and handed them over to the surprised young man.

Only after two days did Mala go back into the tent to his new young wife and his family. The other campers quickly realized that Nature favored Mala because no sooner had he killed his enemies than the sun shone once again, the snow thawed and the land was covered with grass and round hillocks. The sun was warm and the river tinted blue; the spray of the waterfalls was green and white. Red and yellow flowers blossomed, and the snow sparrow sang its little song.



IX

A SPELL of disquiet lingered over the encampment. Of course nobody would discuss what had happened. They would not even hint at the fact that Ujarak was departing from their midst. He merely left and none of the other campers accompanied him. As soon as the burdens were strapped on the dogs, Ujarak took to the same road on which Asarpana and Semik had come. Ujarak left a wife behind, but had been given another one instead.

There was enough meat in the camp and big herds of reindeer roamed the neighborhood. Nevertheless, some longed for walrus; others wondered if it would not still be possible to reach the ships. A long iron rod was needed by one to be fashioned into a spear for harpooning seals, and others desired different things. Presently the whole camp broke up. Illubalik and his family were the last to depart. Illubalik was always in good humor and Mala liked him. His wife was clever and his two sons quick, lively boys. They all surmised that the real reason for their fellow-campers to move on was the urge to be the first to spread the news of what had occurred in the settlement and to relate the tale of Mala, the big killer.

Mala had changed his mind. He did not want to go back to the ships. He remembered how sadly Iva had changed there. He still missed Iva terribly; when he thought of her, a lump formed in his throat. Neither of his wives filled her place.

Big Aba was industrious enough but she had to be held well under the thumb. She sewed quite neatly but her words were coarse and she openly longed for the little daughter she had left in the care of her sister. She wanted the child back and, morning and night, implored Mala to travel North in order that she might fetch her child. Then, too, Aba, who was much too stout, was not so quick on her legs any more and

could not cover wide stretches. It was better for her to remain at home and sew.

Inupaujak was entirely different. She was as nimble as a reindeer calf. When the children played, she jumped around with them, the most eager of them all. She was a sweet little woman, agile and lively, and Mala took her along whenever he went on long journeys. She never tired. She and Mala were well mated, but she had a silly habit of starting to giggle just when he was talking seriously to her. The boys were a little neglected. They had to have clothes, and clothes they got, but they had been sewn under compulsion and never looked the way they should. Their garments fitted tolerably well and were quite nicely stitched, but Mala thought that his boys were not dressed well enough. Nobody took a real interest in them; life was rather cheerless for these two children.

Mala, therefore, gave more and more time to his young sons. Day after day, he would hunt reindeer, taking Puala along, and leaving Upik to assist in caching the meat. But after a time all the reindeer disappeared; there were no more new tracks and not one animal was to be seen about. The reason for this was easily discovered. Packs of wolves were overrunning the neighborhood. They had scented the encampment and the meat in the caches, and they set up a terrific howling on all sides.

The boys were angry at the wolves because they spoiled the reindeer hunt, and robbed their caches; Puala suggested shooting them.

"We can easily do that," Mala replied, "because wolves haven't much sense. But stupid as they are, it cannot be denied that they are good enough reindeer hunters. They scare the animals with their howling so that they flee, crowding together in certain spots where the wolves then attack them. They leap at them from behind, burying their teeth into their hindquarters and when the reindeer turn around to defend themselves, the wolves jump for their throats and hang on until the animals fall dead. Otherwise, wolves don't know much. They are even afraid of the horns of reindeer and especially of their hoofs with which they can trample a wolf to death. The wolves are

afraid of man, too. But we will kill them in a different way."

Mala showed the boys how to kill the wolves with whalebone. He cut baleen into narrow strips, about a span long, putting sharp points on both ends. Then he rolled the strips up tightly, tying sinew around the small coil. Next he hid the whole contrivance in little chunks of meat which he laid out as bait wherever wolves had attacked reindeer. The wolf would swallow the bait whole and, once in the stomach of the beast, the sinew would dissolve, releasing the springlike whalebone coil. Its sharp points would puncture the wolf's bowels, bringing about its early death.

Mala and the boys caught many wolves in this manner. As it was just the season when the wolves shed their furs, their hides were worthless. Nevertheless, they were glad to exterminate the troublesome beasts.

Mala also showed his boys how to catch salmon in the fall, when the fish would collect in holes in the bottom of the river. He snared ptarmigan for them and one day they found a little lake on which swam a whole flock of geese, unable to fly as it was moulting time. They chased them out of the lake and the geese ran almost as fast as a man, but not for long. As soon as their pursuers had caught up with them, they crouched close to the ground and sometimes were passed by because they looked like so many stones.

WINTER was approaching. It was decided that Mala and Ilubalik should go to the coast with the dogs to fetch the sledges. He himself had no sledge there but they were going to take Taparte's and drive along the coast to their wintering place—the mouth of the river. There were many walrus and seals; besides, the spot was near the caches.

As usual, Mala wanted to take Inupaujak along, but this time Aba protested.

"You are always taking her along. Of course, it must be wonderful to have a young wife around. Just leave me at home to sew clothes for you and her. But then why did you make

such efforts to get me? Am I not a good enough wife for you that you are always leaving me behind? When will you ever take me along? Besides, is there enough meat until you return?"

Mala did not answer. Naturally he would not deign to answer a woman, which would be according her objections an importance they did not deserve. But during the night, the idea struck him that it had been quite costly for him, as well as others, to gain possession of Aba.

"How stupid people are," he exclaimed, and made up his mind to trade Aba at the very first opportunity, finding a man up North whose wife he liked better. He had two wives now and he enjoyed the comfort this gave him; moreover, everybody could tell immediately by this fact that he was the great Mala. What sweetness there is in power and what joy in giving orders to inferiors! Had he not observed as much on the ships?

"Boil meat," he told Aba, the morning before they left.

"Why should I do the cooking? Let Inupaujak prepare your meal."

Mala did not answer. He went in front of the tent where the reindeer meat was stored away under skins, took a piece and threw it into the pot.

"Aba, go and cook the meat," he repeated the second time. "I have already put it into the pot."

There was no reply from Aba. She went back into the tent, sat down, and started to play a game.

"Can it be that you didn't hear me talking to you?"

Aba kept on playing.

Mala hit her in the neck so hard that she toppled over, bowling; she remained inert and silent on the ground.

"Cook meat," Mala commanded again in a quiet voice.

But Aba was defiant. "I shall not cook meat. You have killed my husband and I am only staying with you because I am afraid of you and because I was sorry for your children. But now that you have another wife whom you seem to like much more, let her cook your meat."

This was the first time it had been necessary for Mala to whip Aba. She soon enough felt the strength behind his blows. When he finally ceased, Aba sat down, seemingly crest-fallen. But then she got up again and walked over to the bench. She took the precious meat knife that was lying there, put it on a stone, and, before the man could interfere, broke the blade by smashing it with another stone. Then she proceeded to cook the meat.

She had already chewed tallow and now she spread it on a piece of peat, touching a match to it. The melting tallow fed the fire which flared up like a torch. Then she put willow boughs and heather on the fire, threw herself on the ground and blew into the flames, her head surrounded by a cloud of smoke. At that moment, Mala went over to her and gave her a kick that sent her spinning. Then he sat down and watched Aba who, trembling with fright, crawled back to blow again into the fire. Mala continued to watch her, remaining motionless until the meat was cooked.

Ilubalik had naturally taken in the scene. He had heard everything through the tent but when the meat was boiled and Mala cried out to him: "Come here and eat meat," he came over with his sons pretending not to have noticed anything. His face was perfectly expressionless.

"Boiled meat as usual? Let's sit down and eat."

It was then that Aba took her revenge. As she fished the meat out of the pot, she purposely knocked against it, upsetting it. The soup, pouring into the fire, extinguished the flame.

Mala did not say anything. Quietly he stepped over to Aba, picked up the meat and with the back of his hand boxed her ears so hard that she fell over. She crawled into the tent while Mala put the meat back into the pot. He did not seem excited in the least. "Let's eat," was all he said. He scraped off as much ashes from the meat as he could with his knife. He took a bite and then handed the chunk to his friend. Nobody said a word while the meat went back and forth and nobody gave a thought to Aba whose embittered ranting penetrated the tent. Nothing could disturb them. They were men

and they were engaged in the business of eating. Should they permit the angry words of a woman to disturb them?

It was in the best of humor that Illubalik, Mala and their families arrived at the coast. Behind them came the dogs, bearing a light burden.

Cold weather had set in and the little puddles all along the shore were frozen over. The ice on the big lakes, of course, was not yet thick enough for traveling but that did not matter. On the thinly frozen surface, flocks of geese had alighted, in some spots even swans that could not fly because they were moulting. They fell easy prey to Mala's rifles. He relished the oily taste of these geese. Mala also shot some seal. It was wonderful to eat seal meat once more, after their reindeer diet during the summer. Meat of sea animals is more filling and satisfies the appetite more readily.

When the others went out on the peninsula to look for likely prey, Inupaujak was bored. They were not living in a real tent; they were under only a few skins spread out between the turned-over sledges. Inupaujak gathered in sheaves of grass to prepare for herself a soft place to rest. Then she took off her boots and began to repair the soles. But she was really tired of being alone and she was a little afraid, too. Dusk fell, and Inupaujak hoped that the others would return before nightfall. She had heard so much about the mountain spirits, ever ready to pounce upon and seduce lonely women, and she was also intimidated by the tales about the terrible fate of women raped by the men of the hinterland.

A number of good-sized young seagulls alighted on the carcass of a seal. The birds did not know fear. Inupaujak took a stone and, hurling it, hit one of the birds, breaking its wing so that it could not fly away without help from the other birds. Joyfully she rushed over to catch her prey, but the seagull managed to keep well ahead of her. Each time she bent down to take hold of the seagull, it would flutter away. Inupaujak did not lose patience; she wanted to catch the bird alive and finally succeeded in cornering it.

She was very pleased over her catch because a live bird was a good bait to attract many others. She put the seagull on its back, weighing down its outspread wings with stones, so that the bird was unable to rise from the ground.

Presently the predicament of the young seagull was discovered by the other birds. It was not quite clear what their intentions were; perhaps they were just curious or maybe they really wanted to lend assistance. One bird of the flock swooped quickly down, trying to carry off the captured one by its feet. But it proved impossible. The second bird, held in the clutch of the first, fell an easy prey to Inupaujak who now proceeded to lay it on its back, spreading out its wings in the same manner as before. Then she killed her first prey. As there were many seagulls flying about, soon there were no less than three lying on the ground to trap others.

When Mala and Illubalik returned for the evening there was a savory dish of boiled seagulls all ready for them. This they ate, with a delicious seawater soup in which the seagulls had been prepared.

No doubt Mala's little woman was a clever one!

WHEN the sledges had been put away, Mala's keen eyes discovered at once that something ailed one of his boys. He soon discovered that Aba had scratched little Upik's nose with a file, and that was a thing he could never forgive. She had deliberately hurt the child of her man! A child who did not belong to her—and besides she had used a file! Mala was aghast. Illubalik's wife had already told her husband about it. She in turn had heard the story from Orsokidok. Silence, pregnant with meaning, spread over the group. Mala was greatly feared. He was a killer and, besides, a highly respected master hunter. Should a child of his be punished by a woman? Was it not obvious what this would lead to?

But night passed and nothing happened. Nor did anything untoward occur the next day. When evening came peace still reigned in Mala's house. This was unbelievable; almost uncanny. Illubalik's wife, as an excuse to go to Mala's tent,

pretended that she wished to borrow some tools. Once there, she asked for a file to sharpen her skin knife, in this way directing attention to the instrument of crime. Something simply had to happen to relieve the tension. To her astonishment, Illubalik's wife saw that Mala had prepared for sleep. And not only that—he was lying with Aba, under the same skin cover and Inupaujak was alone on the opposite side of the tent.

"You'll find the file over there," Mala said. Illubalik's wife took it and went.

"What a strange man Mala is," she whispered to her husband. Illubalik became indignant at the thought that Mala would stand for anything like that. He and his two sons, who naturally knew the whole story, lay awake for a long time, exchanging excited whispers.

"Perhaps," Illubalik thought, "Mala is not so terrible at all with his own kin. He is brutal only to outsiders. But I am living here all alone with him; I am even supposed to stay with him all winter. After all, Mala does not think much about killing a man. Shall I, perhaps, be his next victim?"

Thoughts like these troubled him but he did not tell his fears to anyone. The next morning, Mala proposed to Illubalik that they go hunting reindeer. Since the wolves had left the neighborhood, there were again reindeer tracks about. Illubalik was to go through the one valley and Mala and Orsokidok would take the other. The rain would make it easy to stalk reindeer. The main herd had already traveled south but there were still three young reindeer bucks around that had been chased away by older males during the mating season. They roamed the neighborhood and it would not be difficult to get within range of them.

PUALA and Upik were playing with Illubalik's children. They were very happy running about the place, down along the river, getting their clothes wet. They never thought of that. The rain beat down upon their reindeer furs, which were new. But why should they worry about them? They did not have

to sew them. Inupaujak would have to do that. But soon other sledges would put in their appearance and then the children's clothes had to be in good order. Inupaujak, envied the children; she would have loved to join them in their play. But she had to think of sewing first.

"The children's clothes are getting all wet," she complained to the older wife. Aba stepped to the opening of the tent. The rain was coming down now harder than before; it seeped in through rips in the tent. Aba realized that the men would return drenched and their clothes would have to be dried immediately. That meant there would not be any drying space for the children's garments. It was much better, then, not to permit them to stay out in the rain but to see that their furs were dry before the men returned.

"Puala and Upik, don't you notice that it is raining? Come in or you will spoil your clothes." The children reluctantly entered the tent.

In her nearby tent, Sivaganguak heard indistinctly what was going on outside for the rain drummed noisily. Nevertheless, she gathered that somebody had been urged to go inside and, soon after, her two boys came into the tents, dripping wet.

"Are you coming in?" she asked somewhat surprised.

"Yes. Aba told us to go in because our clothes are getting wet."

"Aba told you to go in?" Sivaganguak wondered. "Did she really tell you to go in? Nobody has to give orders to Illubalik's children."

"Yes," the children reported, "that's what she said. And it's too bad it's raining so hard because we'd like to play some more."

The rain was falling in torrents now. It was terrible outdoors. Mala was glad when he had killed his reindeer. He and Orsokidok shouldered it on their backs and returned. The fresh meat was immediately prepared over the lamp and their wet clothes hung to dry. Soon they lay down to sleep, pulling their fur hoods over their ears.

Illubalik came home much later. He had not caught a

thing and this added to his wife's anger. She had been alone all day long while Mala's two wives had lots to gossip about in their tent. Besides, Aba had been presumptuous enough to issue orders.

"Really, Mala's wives are too conceited," she complained to Illubalik, "and you, who are you anyway? I thought Illubalik was a master hunter and a strong man, but after all, you are just Mala's helper. Didn't he send you through the little valley today while he himself took the big one? He, of course, came home with reindeer but you didn't kill a thing. Oh my, I surely have a brave man, a big man who has lots to say in his camp. Yo-ur children should feel honored because the wife of Mala chased them home on account of the rain."

Illubalik kept his silence, but his wife continued scolding.

"Perhaps it's a good thing that Mala's wife looks to it that our children's clothes are not spoiled. We have no skins for new clothes. This year we'll most probably have to beg Mala for some of his pelts."

Now she had broached a delicate subject and she knew it; but she went on. "After all, it's for the best. You are so terribly afraid of that dreadful man. It might always be advisable for us to ask Mala's permission when we want to go out. Oh, how sorry I am for my poor children who must take orders from women of some other tent."

The man has not yet been born who will suffer a woman's derision without finally becoming incensed. Illubalik jumped up, grabbed an axe, and rushed out.

Everything was quiet in Mala's tent. Everybody was resting peacefully when they were suddenly aroused by a terrific noise behind the tent. Something pulled at the tent skins and hammered against the poles in such a way that they threatened to break down. Mala, taken by surprise, jumped up, wondering what was going on.

"Who is it? What has happened," he shouted. He took his rifle. Had enemies arrived in camp to take revenge for the murders he had committed? With his rifle ready to shoot he sat down on the bench. There was no sense in going outside

because his enemies might kill him as soon as he emerged from the tent.

"Who is there? What's happened?" he shouted again. "Can't you hear me?"

"It's I," Illubalik replied. "Come out of the tent. I must talk to you. And mind, I am a dangerous man. I have an axe here in my hand. Come out, come out, I want to talk to you."

Mala was surprised.

"Illubalik, have you gone mad? Stop knocking at my tent poles. Stop it immediately. Don't you hear me? What has happened to make you wake us up in this manner?"

"What has happened?" Illubalik shouted, who had worked himself into a rage. "Expect the worst from me. I have an axe in my hand. You'd better come out and defend yourself."

Mala laughed at first. Happy, good-natured Illubalik! He would never have expected him to be looking for a fight with him—Mala, the man whom everybody feared.

"Come in here," Mala shouted. "Come in here with your nonsense. Can't you understand me when I say I won't come out and that I want you to come in?"

Mala was a man used to giving orders and Illubalik was accustomed to obeying them. Automatically he climbed down from the tent. He came around to the entrance, wild with fury. One of Mala's dogs, blocking his way, received such a terrible blow from the axe that it fell, howling with pain. Mala's drying rack for skins, too, was in Illubalik's way. Another blow with the axe broke the pole and the whole rack toppled over.

Finally he pulled aside the tent flap and entered—an enemy aghast at his own boldness but one who is not taken seriously by others.

"What is the matter with you?" Mala asked astonished. "Why are you raving . . . disturbing us in our sleep?"

"You always want to be the first one in a place," Illubalik growled resentfully. "You issue commands and you even give orders to my children. I will tell them myself what they are to do, and I will not permit them to suffer from your tyranny."

That, of course, was sheer nonsense, thought Mala. "When did I ever give orders to your children?" he inquired, becoming

impatient. "What do I care about your children? You are crazy. What nonsense are you talking?"

"You and your wife Aba,—you are always finding fault with my poor children. Aba, who never dared to be impudent before she became your wife, forbade my children to play so they wouldn't spoil their clothes. As if I hadn't enough skins for clothes."

Mala grew angry. To seek a fight on such flimsy grounds amounted to nothing less than insanity. He had never told those children what to do; he did not know what his wives had said and he surely didn't intend to stoop so low as to argue about the matter. He simply kept silent. Illubalik gradually subsided and it was then that Aba, the woman, mixed into the quarrel between the two men.

"What nonsense! Why are you talking that way? It was Mala's sons that I called inside because their clothes were getting wet. There would not have been enough space to dry their garments when Mala and Orsokidok came back. I never gave a thought to your children's furs."

There stood Illubalik, a laughing stock before them all. He knew these people did not lie. His wife probably had not heard aright. This was a defeat, impossible to make good. The axe slipped out of his hand and fell to the ground. The expression of his face changed and he said quietly: "It seems I have made a mistake . . . as usual."

In mute contempt, Mala lay down again. He would not even speak a word to Aba. Orsokidok, however, who was lying on a bench nearby spoke up, adding to the shame Illubalik already felt.

"What makes an old man like you come here and pick a quarrel with my foster-parents? Why don't you go home to your wife and tell her to stop gossiping about her fellow campers? I thought we had gone to rest and now we are aroused by the nonsense of a fool. You have only succeeded in making yourself ridiculous."

What reply could Illubalik make to Orsokidok's words? Nothing. Alas, the mocking words of this half-grown boy echoed in his ears as he crept away. A different man left the

tent from the one who had entered like a hero, eager for battle. His was a miserable retreat. Happily, in his own tent he was the master. There sat that stupid wife of his, who had misunderstood everything, twisting words. His humiliation and anger found relief in a terrible beating which he administered to Sivaganguak. He dragged her by the hair, pulled her over to the bench, and seized a stick with which he beat her mercilessly. Her screams rent the air and greatly amused everybody in Mala's tent.

Sivaganguak was getting her deserts for her gossip. Everybody was awake by now. The children talked and the adults laughed. The incident furnished fun for them all for quite some time. It was very late when they finally fell asleep once more.

Illubalik felt that the shame he had suffered could not be eradicated simply through the beating he had given his wife. How often during the course of the winter would he be reminded of it. No, he could not stay with Mala any longer!

They strapped their bundles to the dogs, and then took down the tent, which Illubalik loaded on his back. He abandoned all the meat which he had stored away in a convenient hole. He even left behind skins which he had already dried; carrying only the most necessary things on their backs, they departed.

When Mala arose in the morning, his tent was the only one there. His fellow campers had left, fleeing from the shame which the gossip of a woman had brought upon them.

Mala first thought of rushing after them and forcing them to return, but even if he succeeded, it would never make him happy. A forced fellow camper never brings any luck and so Mala gave up the idea of following Illubalik. He glanced at the mountains, mute witnesses of the events of the summer. That which had happened had made Mala a much feared man; he himself felt that he had greatly changed. Fear had driven away the others. They all knew that where Mala was, there was never any lack of meat and hunger would never invade his camp. Nevertheless, they had gone looking for some other

camping ground and Mala felt very lonely. Man, after all, loves company.



X

EARLY on the morning after Mala had left the ships and the white men, Arola ran over to the senior Captain to tell him that Mala had departed.

The Captain became very angry. "Gone, you say? Where could he go to? Who is that fellow Mala that he dares to leave like that? We need him. Can't some other woman take the place of his dead wife? Suppose she was a good-looking girl? After all, we are here to catch whales. Mala promised to go whaling with us and he is the best of all the natives. Where did he go? Perhaps he even stole the boat."

"He did not steal a boat," Arola answered, "and all his belongings were left in front of his tent. He took only a small traveling tent and his dogs."

"Gone," the skipper mused, "to travel through this crazy country where one stone looks exactly like the other. Do you know the road he took?"

"No," Arola answered, "he went north and most surely has struck out for the big lake. But I don't know how he is going there. He left last night."

"Tell the men to get ready quickly. Catch up with Mala and tell him that I wish to talk with him. Be sure to make him turn back. Then I shall settle everything with him. I'll even get him a new wife. But don't lose time and see that you get him. He is too good a man to let go."

Arola did not like to hear Mala praised so much; he had been receiving too much praise altogether. Arola saw that while his own reputation was gradually diminishing, Mala was finding more and more appreciation. He was, therefore, none too eager to search for Mala; he did nothing but walk over to his fellow campers and inquire in what direction Mala had struck out. Nobody could tell him that and so he informed

the others that it was the wish of the Captain that they should go inland to look for Mala and, if possible, bring him back.

"But remember," Arola added, "that Mala is looking for a wife. He is sure to take one of ours. There can't be any doubt about that! And then, of course, we'll have fights and murders here. The white master naturally does not understand that. He doesn't know that one of us would have to kill Mala, in defending his wife, or his wife might be abducted by Mala. I do not believe it would be so desirable to have Mala come back."

The others kept silent and just stared at the ground. They knew very well what was on Arola's mind. As a matter of fact, Arola had moved so much with white men that he had acquired the habit of expressing his thoughts almost openly instead of just dropping a slight hint.

Joe agreed with them. "It's dangerous to bring back Mala. He's a fighter. Besides, it would be hardly possible for us to find him."

Everybody was amazed at the frank way in which Joe and Arola discussed the matter. They did not belong among their own people any more. It was obvious that they looked down upon the others, and that they tried to maintain their importance in the eyes of the white men by keeping away from the skippers everybody who could in any way interfere with their own plans.

"Mala couldn't be found. He was already too far ahead of us," Arola reported to the Captain that evening. "Mala wouldn't have come back anyhow. He's a restless, changeable sort of fellow, driven on by wanderlust. Besides, I don't think you would care very much to have him around here any more because Mala said the white man who killed his wife should beware. He did not believe that she was killed accidentally and he would be likely to seek revenge. It's a good thing he's gone."

The Captain sighed. That sounded plausible enough of course. These Eskimos among whom he had lived for twenty years were unfathomable. One thought one really knew them, only to discover new traits of character in them. Then, too,

the skipper very well knew that it takes only a little to change a friendly, happy Eskimo into a revengeful fellow without ever finding out what that little was that really changed him. And here, where a woman had been killed and the husband left with two boys, it seemed only too probable that an Eskimo might become unmanageable. After all, it might be a good thing that the younger Captain was not exposed to the danger of having Mala around any more. But why, then, had Mala sent a gift of furs to the younger skipper? Incomprehensible, these Eskimos! Well, let Mala go! There were others to take his place. He forgot about Mala, and the whaleboats started out once more.

THE summer sun was burning and puddles of water were eating holes in the ice. Big fissures opened; in a few days, the ships would be able to weigh anchors. They were to follow the boats and the annual journey of the whales. Soon their blubber tanks would be filled and, plentifully supplied with whalebone, they would return to New Bedford.

The younger Captain trembled with impatience as he thought of all the happiness that awaited him at home. Oh, the wonderful wide open sea which now broke up the ice!

All was ready for an early departure when something unexpected happened. The day after the whaling boats left, two Eskimos climbed on board. This was quite difficult by now as the warm fresh water, rushing into the fjord from nearby rivers, had opened wide cracks along the shore. It was impossible to cross the ice without getting one's feet wet but that could not stop the Eskimos. They climbed up the rope ladder of the bigger of the two vessels and rushed aft, down into the Captain's cabin. They did not even care whether he was asleep or not; they were as excited as all that because they brought important news.

It was Arola and Joe who thus intruded upon the Captain, and they knew very well what it meant to disturb the skipper in his sleep. They must be bringing especially good news, otherwise the Captain would certainly curse them roundly.

"Captain, there's a ship coming in from far out at sea. One with smoke and three masts. We could see it from the mountains and we came at once to tell you!" The Captain jumped up; he was wide awake immediately and the strong oath he uttered proved that he realized the importance of their news. Now another ship put in its appearance, just when they had almost as much freight as they could carry and only needed to pick up a little more cargo before starting on their way home! That meant the new ship would be lying here until the next winter, would buy up all the fox skins from the Eskimos and, in spring, work with them. That, after all, was his very own plan; he intended to stay home over the winter and return in the spring. Some of the best men among the natives would receive a whaleboat apiece, together with harpoons and lines, and next year when he returned, the Eskimos were to deliver the baleen they had meanwhile collected. Besides, he had expected to get all the fox skins which the Eskimos would be storing up during the winter. And now someone else was going to come here to the very spot where he thought he had a monopoly. No doubt one of these damn Portuguese half niggers who went whaling all over, always horning in where some other fellow tried to make an honest penny. If this newcomer really was one of them, it would be a pretty bad thing,—but it would be still worse if he turned out to be a Scotchman. Not even the devil himself could compete with the Scotch. They worked as hard as animals and were as frugal as the raven. Shrewd and clever into the bargain, too. For the last twenty years nobody had horned in here, and now a newcomer had suddenly bobbed up. The Devil!

He ran to the deck, took his telescope and rushed up into the crow's nest.

Sure enough, here was that damn ship. It was a fast little vessel, too, trim and with nice lines, a modern bark, with an auxiliary engine. It was only too plain that here were people with sufficient capital; his own ships were certainly not in as good shape as the one which now headed for the shore.

On the other whaling vessel, the young skipper, too, was looking through his telescope. Perhaps mail is coming, he

thought. Mail from home! Nothing else mattered for him. Here was communication with other people, and whaling vessels usually brought news, newspapers, and sometimes a pouch of consular mail. He could not see any reason in the world why the arrival of this ship should annoy him. He was only too glad of the chance of receiving a greeting from the wife he thought of every hour of the day.

The newcomer was approaching quickly. It was a speedy little craft, steering very well and sailing smartly. The crews on both ships collected on the decks, talking excitedly about this unexpected event. Quite a crowd of them stood around, and soon they were joined by some Eskimos who came across the ice. Joe, as well as Arola, was a bit nervous. They did not know what was best for them to do. They wished to profit by their knowledge of the white man's language. However, they could not quite make up their minds whether it would be better to throw in their lot with the newcomers, who would probably stay here until next winter, or to remain loyal to their old friends whom they had known these many years.

THE new ship laid her course directly for the rim of the ice and pushed ahead. Her stem broke up the thawing floes; she forced her way through the ice for more than a full ship's length before she stopped. The skipper was sitting in the crow's nest, giving his orders with quiet motions of his hands. Both Captains of the two whaling vessels saw at once that here was a man who knew his job, and soon they saw too that he wished to communicate with them. The newcomer backed water, reached the open sea again and then went full speed ahead; gaining new momentum, she widened the channel she had broken before. The pack-ice groaned and the little ship trembled but succeeded in pushing forward over a good distance. She finally entered the stretch of open water, and only came to a stop when she had reached ice solid enough to cross by foot.

She dropped anchor, fastened her tows, and presently a number of young men jumped over the bowsprit onto the ice.

The Union Jack was hoisted on the little vessel and only then did the whalers recognize who had arrived. It was the new police cutter of the Canadian government, whose job it would be to patrol the arctic harbors and keep an eye on the whaling vessels. A new post of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police was probably to be established here to keep order among the Eskimos. To all appearances, it was true that this country was now officially annexed by Canada. Once again Old England was reaching for the very ends of the world.

The newcomers approached the whaling vessels. They greeted the whalers cordially and asked the names of the ships and the skippers, informing them that they must take out a license permitting them to pursue their calling in foreign waters. The American whalers were to pay one hundred dollars each. That, of course, was no big amount and was only in the nature of a demonstration on the part of the Canadian Government to show her sovereignty over this territory.

The Canadians came into the cabin and were dined and wineed. The old Captain figured that even if he would have to submit to Canadian regulations from now on, it was nevertheless good to see white men once again. Besides, the Canadian government cutter had brought along mail for both vessels. As soon as the young Captain got wind of this, he rushed over to the Police Inspector, the crew following in his wake.

The mail pouch was brought on board and presently the junior Captain, clutching a number of bulky letters, disappeared below the deck. He looked for a quiet spot to read his mail. He completely forgot his duties as a host to the company he had on board and the great feasting that was going on in the Captain's mess.

Meanwhile the others agreed that an experienced man, who had been whaling in this neighborhood for many years, should act as an adviser to the police. A Royal Canadian Mounted Police post was to be established at some suitable spot along the west coast of the Hudson Bay. It would be garrisoned by a force of "Mounties" consisting of a sergeant and three constables. As a matter of fact, the entire cargo of the government cutter was composed of building material and

provisions enough to last two years for the new post. As soon as they had selected a suitable spot, the cutter was to return, leaving behind those men chosen to act as pioneers of civilization.

"Navigating Repulse Bay is quite a difficult undertaking," the senior Captain said. "It is not possible every year to get through the ice barrier there. I'd advise you to establish the post farther to the south, somewhere in the neighborhood of Fullerton. If you care to wait until I sail home, I will point out a good place and pilot your cutter to a safe anchorage."

The Police Inspector accepted this offer gratefully. He was correct in assuming that the whalers preferred not to have any police around at all. Still, as long as the authorities were to be in command there, they naturally wished to be on good terms with them.

THEY had to wait for days and days, the ice held them prisoner; meanwhile the whaleboats came in with two more whales. There was lots of work again, and noisy festivities to celebrate the catch. The Canadians, especially a number of young scientists and some tourists traveling on board the government vessel, were very much interested in watching the American whalers. Life here among the Eskimos, and Nature in general, made a tremendous impression upon the strangers, who thought they had found the paradise of the North.

Weather conditions varied with surprising rapidity. Southerly winds sprang up and the ice started drifting. During one night, so many floes collected that open water could no longer be seen from the crow's nest. As the wind was not strong enough to break up the ice, coming from the south, it pushed more and more floes against the shore. There was no possibility of the vessels breaking through the ice barrier. They remained tied up for one full month and the greater part of a second without witnessing any change in the conditions of the ice. The newcomers soon became acquainted with the surrounding region. The Chief of Police admitted that the whalers had

been right in advising him that Tajarnak was unsuitable for a post. They scanned the horizon day after day for signs of wind from the north which would open the way for them to the south.

They were hunting reindeer, and the report of their rifles was heard all over. They visited the Eskimos in their tents, and the two natives who spoke English had a wonderful time. Joe had hired himself out to the newcomers, and Arola had stuck to the whalers. Both were very busy and not a little conceited over the importance they had achieved. They felt themselves highly superior to all the other Eskimos. They had apparently forgotten that the natives were their blood brethren.

One day Joe came ashore wearing a big cap. The visor surrounded his head almost entirely; besides this he wore the clothes of the white man with shining buttons and narrow trousers. He naturally felt impelled to show off in this resplendent new uniform. He had come to fetch his entire family, his dogs and all his belongings and take them on board. He had actually succeeded in convincing the Chief that it would be best if he would come on board without delay, as there was a possibility of the ice breaking up suddenly without any warning.

The natives had lots to talk about now. It was plain to see that Joe had become a very big man. They never tired of gossiping about him unless something more exciting turned up.

A new Eskimo family trekked into the encampment. They came from far, far up north. They were dirty and their quaint summer garments, consisting of the cast-off clothing of others, were in tatters. They did not look the way one should when coming into a strange camp. Undoubtedly, their arrival in such a condition must be attributed to something serious. But nobody said a word. The thrill of unsatisfied curiosity must be enjoyed as long as possible.

"Where are you coming from?" the new arrivals were finally asked. "Are you going to stay with us?"

"We are only on a little journey," the man answered. "You see, I am a very bad provider for my family. I was hunting reindeer and when we came into this neighborhood and noticed

the ships, I decided to come down here to give my children a little pleasure."

Everybody knew that the man was telling a lie, and that he had actually come with important news. Who, after all, would otherwise go traveling at this season? This was the best time of the year to collect furs and store up meat against the winter. But nobody ventured to ask any more questions and they all squatted on the ground and spoke about everything under the sun, according the newcomers friendly hospitality. Everybody invited them into their tents, promising them delicacies. It was simply taken for granted that the strangers were bursting with news and everyone wanted to be the first to hear about it.

The newcomer, aware that they were all eager to hear his tale, started out by inquiring craftily whether it would be possible to obtain a rifle from the ships because there was a lack of them up north.

"Why, yes, rifles can be had here," was the answer, and everybody seemed amused. "Of course, having only bows and arrows, you need rifles badly. I myself am really longing to draw the cord of a bow once more. How long it is since I have done that! But didn't you run across Mala? He left here with two rifles."

"It might be the case that I met Mala," the man replied. "Come to think of it. when I left his camp, one of his two rifles was broken."

So now it came out and everybody cocked his ears. A rifle, only recently acquired, broken? Perhaps by somebody who did not know how to handle firearms? Or had the rifle been destroyed?

A startling truth must be behind all this. Maybe this man had journeyed down here for the sole purpose of spreading the news. Then, again, he might have been sent down to bargain for another rifle.

The man sat quietly and spoke in a half whisper, but to all appearances he had still more to reveal.

"Taparte, it seems, became very angry and broke the rifle

Orsokidok had taken along when he went hunting. This happened only a few days before he was killed."

"Killed? Taparte killed?"

There were some relatives of the dead man in the crowd. They jumped up and gripped their noses as a sign of great excitement.

"Taparte killed? Did Mala kill him? Or who else killed him? Tell us, why don't you tell us?"

Curiosity was rampant now. Why make it a secret any longer that they were burning to hear the news?

The newcomer, it was soon proved, had further surprises to spring.

"Yes, Taparte was killed. As a matter of fact, he was even more mutilated than the others. No, the others weren't quite so badly cut up as Taparte."

"The others?" shouts went up. "Tell us! A number of them? Killed? Tell us, tell us what happened."

"Yes, there were several of them. The great men of the North are brutal; at times, terrible even. You see, it so happened that a man desired a woman and the other man tried to defend his wife. We happened to be up north during the summer and then we came down here on a little trip."

How lucky this man was, slowly dispensing the news he brought. Never before had he received such wide-eyed attention. And now he told everything that had occurred. He did not forget a single thing. They sat up the entire night, asking questions and listening to his answers.

Joe had been ashore and heard the news. The next morning, he rushed to the ships and told the Chief what had happened up north. He told, too, about the accidental death of Iva.

The Police Inspector seemed to grow taller. Here at last was something for him to report. It was evident that up here a police post was an absolute necessity. Order must be established among these Eskimos, who had to be broken of the habit of killing each other.

It was a stroke of luck that he could return home with a report like this. He would immediately become someone in

the force; surely they would promote him! The case must be investigated immediately. A constable was hurriedly dispatched to the two whaling skippers, officially subpoenaing them to appear on board the government cutter the next morning at eleven o'clock, when they were to submit their version of the matter.

The two skippers came aboard. The Police Inspector was seated at the head of the table with the captain of the government cutter and the sergeant next to him as witnesses and the three constables standing at attention behind the chairs. The Inspector liked to indulge in ceremony, impressing everybody with the fact that he was a government official.

"Captain," he began, "I have been informed that in the spring of the present year, a woman by the name of Iva was killed. I feel that I ought to censure you for not reporting this fact to me voluntarily. I must now demand an explanation from you and I wish to point out that you will have to make your depositions under oath."

The two Captains were taken by surprise. Had things gone so far that one had to file a report now about each and every miserable Eskimo? They were not even asked to sit down. The senior skipper was so flabbergasted, he forgot to curse. He was overwhelmed, partly by anger because he was supposed to subordinate himself to this busybody here, partly because he hated the police more than anything else in this world. Almost every year when they returned home from whaling one sailor or another would run to the police and make a complaint that he had been abused. Time and again he had been fined fifteen or twenty dollars. Of course it wasn't really his money that the police took, for it was the ship's owner who had to foot the bill. But it always enraged him that a common ordinary sailor and his lawyer should be permitted to have all the say in court, while he, the Captain, couldn't even plaster a good one between their eyes.

The old skipper was a jolly, good-natured sort, but he was a sailor of the old generation who liked to take care of things himself without anyone else butting into his business. And now the police had come here with their damnable ques-

tions! Well, he supposed he'd have to explain the accident that had befallen Iva. Soon everything was "signed and sealed in the presence of witnesses" . . . and the affidavit had been recorded, both skippers affirming the truth of their depositions under oath. The Police Inspector now took it upon himself to admonish them, because he had found out that the senior Captain had carried on an affair with Iva. The old sea dog had to listen respectfully without so much as banging his fist on the table and telling the police official: "Keep your trap shut and don't poke your nose into my private affairs" . . . or something like it. Such liberty would be no more than right, coming from an old Captain who had reigned as an absolute ruler on his ships for many years.

The Inspector thoroughly enjoyed the situation. "A posse will go out during the winter and arrest the murderer, Mala, so that he may be convicted and punished in order to set an example to his people."

The Sergeant, John Make by name, was to remain behind and arrest Mala. Days passed by, crowded with long instructions and plans for sledge expeditions during the following winter. Joe was called in for advice and felt more important than ever. So they were going to catch Mala! Joe understood that Mala would be tied like a dog and that as soon as the masters of the white men heard about Mala's murders, they would order that Mala be hung like a dog. Oh, much would happen here now that the white man had come to stay! It surely had been a good idea of Joe's to throw his lot in with them.

The natives were still living in the tents along the shore. They heard about everything that took place on the ships. Many of the men were out whaling. They could not leave as long as the ships remained and some of them had heard that the Captain would take them along when he went to sea. They were to work on board for a few months until the ship had a full cargo. Then, with presents and payment for their assistance, they were to be landed somewhere. Ah, it would be wonderful and they surely would not want for anything. Unfortunately, they had never remembered that winter would

follow summer, and that their clothes were used up to a greater extent than if they had gone hunting every day. In hunting, one doesn't use up one's pants so quickly, but now their pants had hardly any seats left because they were always sitting about or working and making merry on the ships. They had completely neglected to go inland while it was still summer and time to obtain new skins for garments. All they had was their biscuits and their tea, their sugar and their tobacco which, by now, had become necessities to them. Joe alone had been promised steady employment by the police; surely he could look forward to a glorious future. He ran around now in the cast-off uniforms of his masters.

Pukertalik, these strange people were called, because they had stripes on their pants. They had told the Eskimos that they never went hunting and had come up north only to watch over the natives. How quaint these white men were! The whalers who came up here were understandable. They took lots of blubber and baleen and meat back to their country. But now people had come here who did not want to catch anything, but merely to watch over others. It was too puzzling! But the more bewildering these whites became, the greater grew their interest in them. The Eskimos had already heard rumors that the white newcomers were going to build a big house down south and many of the natives had resolved to trek down there. It was always a good idea to camp in the neighborhood of the white men.

The Inspector was writing long reports. The natives who had witnessed the murders were fetched on board and so sternly adjured to speak the truth that they were confused and dismayed and absolutely unable to tell lies. The Inspector had filled many, many pages by this time and seemed very well satisfied.

At last northern winds sprang up; far out on the horizon, open water became visible once more. Each day, the sea crept nearer to the boats. One night the Inspector was shaken out of his dreams by the scream of the steam whistle which was calling the young scientists back on board; the vessel was preparing to depart. Everybody was standing on deck, but there

was not much to be seen. The ice had started to drift into the open sea and the whaling vessels immediately weighed anchor. In the course of a few hours, the ice broke up sufficiently to get under way. It was hard work at first, because the fissures were very narrow. But the farther the vessels got from shore, the less ice they encountered, and soon they were out in the open sea with light northerly winds blowing. One sail after the other was set and the vessels seemed to dance on the surface of the sea; they were leaving behind the mountains they had gazed upon all winter long.

There was joy on board and the junior Captain was the happiest of them all; the mail he had received had only intensified his longing for home; now each quarter mile they logged brought him nearer New Bedford.

When they reached Fullerton, the vessels laid to. The police post was to be erected here and the whalers dropped anchor, putting their crews at the disposal of the authorities. The skippers did not admit that they themselves preferred to tie up here for some time until the pack-ice had drifted past and the sea was open once more. Instead they intimated very cleverly to the police how much valuable time they were losing and what extra expenses they were incurring by assisting in the building of the house. The Chief of Police admitted all that very readily and was sincerely grateful to the whalers.

THE house was being built—a big, wonderful house of wood. The Eskimos saw, with unconcealed astonishment, the tremendous rooms erected by the white men. So what one saw on the pictures was really true! Such houses actually existed! When stoves and chairs and tables were brought ashore, the Eskimos were thoroughly convinced that their country now equaled the wondrous land of the white man.

One day, while the building was still under way, a man approached the shore from inland. He had not been with the ships up north and was a roving reindeer hunter. Coming close to the sea, he had suddenly felt the longing to drink salt water, and to gaze upon an ocean free of ice. He was surprised to see

the high masts of the vessels reaching up to heaven, and the tremendous house, whose big windows were not unlike gigantic eyes.

He approached shyly and soon noticed that a good number of Eskimos were with the white men. He had seen whites before, but he was afraid of them. He approached as cautiously as a wolf stalking its prey. But when he saw how unconcerned the other Eskimos were in going in and out of the house, he felt sufficiently encouraged to approach the building.

The Eskimos crowded around the newcomer, their curiosity aroused. But this man had not much news to tell. They themselves had experienced far more exciting things during the summer and the last winter when they had stayed with the white men. Gradually all their news was exchanged and it was also mentioned that Mala was to be caught and hung.

The newcomer was overwhelmed with what he saw and heard, and the next morning lost no time in starting back to his camp. The others, too, must see this remarkable encampment with its strange big house and partake of the things the white men brought along. Presently, more and more natives arrived at the new settlement and soon a little Eskimo village grew up around the police post.

Finally the day arrived for the whaling vessels to weigh anchor once more. There was nothing left for them to do. The sea stretched out far and wide, open and free of ice. From the mountains, it had been possible to observe whales blowing in the neighborhood. It would be best to get out into the open sea before the government cutter left, as the churning of her screw was likely to scare away the whales.

"See you again, and many thanks. It was surely a pleasure to be of assistance to you."

"So long. We shall be looking for you next year. Take our mail along. . . Looks as though you'd get home before the government cutter."

Arola and a number of Eskimos had remained on board to assist in the whale hunt. Life became a matter of routine once more. They were always cruising around, always on the alert. The unchanging routine soon palled on the Eskimos. The

whales were scarce and wary. Fall was approaching again when they had finally collected sufficient cargo to justify their going home, although by no means as much as the vessel could hold. However, everybody was satisfied with the trip by this time. The Captains had made money and so had the crews, and the owners, too.

It was only necessary, now, to put the Eskimos ashore and then they would take the course for home—home to New Bedford.

There was a little island not too distant from the mainland. It was there that the Eskimos were put ashore. Arola raised his voice in protest. What should they do here?

"Take us over to the mainland so we can go hunting reindeer. We need garments for the winter. Oh, my poor relatives whom I have to provide with clothes and my poor wife who has no fur coat."

But Arola's protests availed him nothing. "Get into the boat," was the only answer he got.

The white sailors were certainly glad to get rid of those dog teams with all their dirt. It was a blessing to get away from the smelly Eskimos; they had even become thoroughly tired of the women.

Minik was completely exhausted from intercourse with so many men. When the mates aft had lost all interest in her, she had moved into the foc's'l where the crew lived. She had become quite experienced in the three years she had stayed with the white men down south, but now she had grown tired of this life. All the natives longed for the country and the food they had been used to since they were born. Day in and day out they got flour and oatmeal! They had eaten only whale meat; not for the longest time had they so much as tasted reindeer. Oh, it would be wonderful to live once more like real human beings!

But what sense was there to land them at Depot Island as the Captain had called the spot? That was not at all what they wanted, and they became very angry. But their tongues proved too unwieldy to argue with the whites. They could not offer any real resistance and soon they were standing ashore, watching the ships disappear in the offing.

Well, at least they had wealth. There was wood for their sledges and boxes which the whaling vessels had discarded; they had tobacco and knives, rifles and ammunition. Yet here they stood, these rich people, feeling woefully poor because they did not know how to obtain clothes for the winter. Strange that Arola only now regretted the voyage. He knew that he would have to buy clothes from the others. Perhaps the summer catch had been a bad one, as frequently happens; then prices for skins would be high and he would have to part with most of his possessions to obtain the necessary skins. Too bad nobody had thought of this before. But Arola, like many of the others, would forget his chagrin as soon as he laid eyes, once more, on white men.



XI

STANDING in front of the new police post at Fullerton, Sergeant Make watched the government cutter disappear in the distance. He felt relieved that the boat had left at last; he had longed for her departure. It had annoyed him that the Chief had insisted upon arranging all the details in regard to the building and the furnishing of the house. However, Make had to take his orders and was in command only now after the ship had sailed.

He was a big strapping fellow, good-natured toward his inferiors and respectful toward his superiors. He was an efficient fellow who liked to stand on his own feet and show what he could do. Here he was now, confronted with a man-size job—the arrest of a dangerous murderer.

Make was determined to succeed. Three constables had been attached to him, tall, slender men, who could fight and were not afraid of adventure. Men who did not know the meaning of fear. Make himself had picked them from a number of volunteers and was sure that he would find them entirely dependable.

As soon as the cutter departed, things around the post were changed according to Make's ideas. He looked upon the constables in a spirit of comradeship, asking them, however, to observe orders and uphold the necessary discipline. At meals, Make sat at the head of the table. He never fetched coal or water nor did he lend a hand in the preparation of the food. That was the work of the constables. But soon Joe attended to everything. He was everybody's servant and only the cooking remained for the mounties, who took turns in assuming the rôle of chef. It would be weeks hence before they could start out on their search for Mala and the prospect of so much idleness displeased them considerably. The constables played cards and listened to the phonograph; there was no other diversion for them. Make, on the other hand, read books all day long, a pastime which the others shunned. Keyed up for action, the uneventful daily routine bored them indescribably.

Presently, the constables even tired of their own company. They started to squabble among themselves and soon came to blows. Make, however, quickly restored peace. "No rough stuff around here in the house! But if you're itching for a fight, put on your boxing gloves and go to it in a fair fashion. I myself shall be the umpire." That helped considerably and very soon the constables found it possible to get along nicely without squabbling over cards or native women. As to the latter, there were many of them loitering around the post; their husbands did not interfere as long as they brought back tobacco and other good things.

Joe did not like it at all that so many Eskimos were camping in the neighborhood of the post. "What are they doing here anyhow? Aren't there enough of us? Of course, a few of them could stay on," Joe thought. That women should remain seemed entirely reasonable to him. He himself was ready to profit by them, but if there were too many natives around, it would tend to cut down on the rations. So Joe suggested to Make that some of the families be sent away and that a number of the whaleboats should set sail for the islands where walrus could be hunted; the walrus meat would serve as food for the two dog teams that Make required in patrol-

ling the neighborhood. Other Eskimos could hunt reindeer for both the meat and the skins just as long as there was no ice and the animals' skins were still worth while.

"Loan them rifles and ammunition and, in exchange, make them give you their skins. In this way, everybody will profit. They will have sufficient food for themselves and we won't need to give them rations any more."

Make considered Joe's advice and decided to accept it. The boats were equipped and went out. Make himself felt an urge to accompany the reindeer hunters. He left the post in charge of the senior constable, strapped what little baggage he needed to the backs of the dogs, and, equipped like an Eskimo, joined the hunting party.

It was freezing during the next two days, with snow falling intermittently. It was too cold to sleep in the open and they resorted to the pup tents which they had taken along in case of bad weather. Make struck up a friendship with a young man whose Eskimo name was Kringak, but whom the white men called The Nose. He was a clever, likable chap, and his wife, Siksik, was lively, and always laughing. The Nose was a real help, for he taught the Sergeant the tricks that make life on the trail a little more comfortable.

They hunted reindeer, collecting the meat and the skins, traveling from place to place like gypsies. Make enjoyed this sort of life. Every day brought new pleasures, and he was so taken up with this diversion that he did not even bother to make entries in his diary any more. Time had lost all meaning to him. Whenever they had enough meat, they hid it in spots easily accessible in winter.

Yes, it was a wonderful life! But the day came when their ammunition was exhausted and they had collected tremendous bundles of skins. As a matter of fact, these bundles had grown until they appeared to Make like so many haystacks moving across country.

His hunting fever abated, it came back sharply to Make that he was the government official in charge of the surround-

ing territory. He hastened back to the post to inquire whether they had received any news of the murderer, Mala. Arriving at the little barrack, Make looked more like a native than the official in charge. He had not washed himself for the longest time and his boots were torn to tatters. They were heavy, hobnailed affairs, but the stones up in the mountains had proved too much for them; his clothes, too, were in rags. From his appearance, it was easy to see that here was a man who loved the life of the rover.

GERBERT was the name of the constable left in charge during Make's absence and entrusted with the key to the storeroom. He had used these keys for one purpose in particular—to fetch strong drink, of which there were generous quantities. During the first few days, the three mounties had tried to quench the thirst that had grown out of Make's insistence that they adhere strictly to the rules regulating the conduct of an *R.C.M.P.* post. After the wine stock dwindled, the constables' own discretion dwindled, too. It always was just one more bottle and still another one. The Eskimos, too, had their share of the liquor, at first only the men but then the women also. It was not long before things drifted into an atmosphere of abandon and chaos.

The very day Make returned, things had reached their climax. He was aghast at the conditions at the post. Were these the men he had depended on—the men with whom he was to live for at least a year?

One of the constables was lying in Make's own bed, a half emptied bottle in his arm. His sleep was that of an unconscious man; his face was red and bloated, and when Make aroused him he burst into a drunken rage. The two other constables, and a number of Eskimos, also, were in a stupor and utterly unable to stand up straight. The house looked as if it had not been cleaned once since Make's departure. Filth met the eye everywhere; upset chairs and torn pictures added to the undisciplined effect. It looked absolutely hopeless but Make immediately started to put things in order.

He began by carrying one after the other out of the house. Although they protested and tried to resist, they were thrown out just the same. Most of them were weak from their incessant drinking and the others were fast asleep after a whole month's dissipation. At last the house was cleared of them. But what a house! And what people! Only now did Make realize that if his comrades were the kind they appeared to be, life up here would become a pretty strenuous business.

Three days later, however, order reigned again at the post. Make read them the riot act, issued strict instructions and soon everything moved smoothly once more.

The whaleboats came back loaded with walrus meat; the hunters reported that they had also established a number of depots on the islands. The frost was heavier now and soon winter would be upon them. It seemed an amusing prospect, what with the sledge rides and all the other diversions that the novice expects of arctic life. Moreover, it would be possible then to go in search of Mala.

As soon as the ice had hardened sufficiently, Arola and the others arrived from the island where the whalers had put them ashore. They pointed despairingly to their torn clothes and they were full of bitter complaints. Make came to the conclusion that it was the duty of the police to assist the natives in their plight. He therefore sent out sledges to fetch skins and sewing thread despite Joe's outspoken objections. Why should one come to the assistance of these stupid Eskimos? But Make aided them as much as possible; he felt like the father of a big family.

MAKE'S mind dwelt constantly on Mala although the murderer had not been spoken of for quite some time. Probably, he had in the meantime stirred up more trouble and it would be advisable to find and arrest him as soon as possible.

A few days after sledging had become possible, two sledges arrived from the north. One of them was Illubalik's, who, after his unseemly defiance of the much-feared Mala, had fled northward. Although he was not exactly Mala's enemy,

the latter was the reason for his flight and as soon as he was questioned about the murderer he readily came to understand that Mala was not in the good graces of these exalted white men. Just why, Illubalik could not grasp, since these white men were no relatives of the Eskimos Mala had killed, but he did not care either. It was obvious to him that the Sergeant was anxious to hear bad things about the terrible killer. And so he obliged him with the information that Mala was so fierce that it was impossible to live with him in the same camp. Wherever Mala dwelt, other lives were in danger. Illubalik learned that Mala was to be caught and brought back by sledge to the post where he would then be held as the prisoner of the white men, unable to leave or to do as he pleased.

Illubalik was given tobacco and quantities of food and told to stay right in the neighborhood. As he knew where Mala would spend the winter, he was to show the mounties the road, and later identify the killer. In return, he was to be fed at the expense of the police. What a triumph to assist in capturing the man who fancied he could rule over all! Illubalik was very happy that he had left Mala and journeyed north, but Joe was not at all elated. He disliked the idea of being relegated to the background.

Joe himself ate at the police officials' table; as soon as the white men were through, he would sit down to his meal. He would painstakingly clean every plate of all left-overs, his appetite apparently commensurate with the high office he held.

Occasionally, other Eskimos were invited for a meal. Joe did not like that; he seemed to think that such hospitality was shown at his own expense. But he was too shrewd to make his disappointment evident and would always assume the rôle of the host. "Will you try this dish? It's something you don't know. . . . Of course, we have many, many different dishes here:—as soon as we tire of one, we eat some other. Yes, any number of tasty things are prepared in this house."

ILLUBALIK and his family settled themselves at the post. Joe was dismayed that he should sit at the same table as

Illubalik's wife and their two children; he looked upon this almost as an insult. He had become accustomed to feast in lonely grandeur and was always greatly pleased when Eskimos, squatting near the door, watched their exalted brother eat at the table. Once in a while he would treat visitors to a choice tidbit, but never would the same party enjoy his hospitality twice. Thus it was a wonderful thing for an Eskimo to be treated to the honor of picking up the crumbs that fell from Joe's table. Whatever he himself left on the plate, he carried home to his wife and children. Of course, there would be less to go 'round now that the Illubaliks were to eat with him, but Joe would see to it that he himself got what was coming to him.

The first day that Sivaganguak sat at the table, she was a little backward in sampling the strange dishes she had never tasted before. But she found she liked them, and Joe, who sat at the head of the table, had misgivings about her appetite. He handed a pot of mustard to her. "Try some of this and see how you like it." Sivaganguak took a goodly portion. The mustard burned her tongue and she jumped up, crying: "Oh, it's hot . . . it burns my mouth."

"Just blow at it, and it will be all right," Joe replied. She blew and took another spoonful. . . .

The story of this incident traveled far and wide, assuming the dignity of a saga. Even the farthest encampments learned about Sivaganguak's mishap. People who had never heard of mustard, and who would never have an opportunity to taste it, laughed uproariously and thought that Sivaganguak had made a laughing stock of herself. Joe had unquestionably retained the upper hand.

MAKE pondered over the murders perpetrated by Mala. He had read the detailed report of the Chief of Police and it somehow dawned on him that, although the letter of the law might apply to white men, allowances ought to be made for Eskimos, since they had an entirely different outlook on life. But Mala was a doomed man! He was to be hung in the pres-

ence of many natives. Make rested his head in his hands, and wondered how it felt to be a murderer. Was it really true that only the very worst of men stooped to such a crime?

He thought of his little farm in the south of England, where high trees were swishing in the wind; and before him he saw the young girl he had followed with his eyes, had danced with and taken home from parties, but whom he had never told what he should have told. Fate had meant the two for each other until the other man—wealthy and well dressed—had appeared on the scene. Until then, the girl had seemed to belong to him, but now she seemed to be in a quandary. She wouldn't even look at him after awhile, for she had different interests. How he had suffered and raged! One day when he met her, he proposed to her but with the angry words of a man in despair. She shrank away from him and did not answer. She just looked up at him and shook her head and suddenly he saw that she was almost crying. But she turned about quickly and ran off. He did not follow her, but remained rooted to the spot. What agonies he had endured, night after night, watching his beloved walk off with the other man! They had strolled, arm in arm, through the woods, they had danced together, they had been always in each other's company while he had crouched behind the trees, hiding, cursing, almost crazy.

One day he had been especially desperate. Madness overwhelmed him. He took a heavy stick and when evening came he stole behind the big trees which bordered the path along the river.

He was determined to speak to them. He would demand his rights—at least a fair chance to compete with the other in winning the girl's love. The stick in his hand would be the means of threatening his rival and sending him on his way. Make remembered how he had waited, hour after hour, in vain. His rage, instead of subsiding, had grown greater and greater. He decided he would not waste time in idle talk; as soon as they appeared, he would spring out from behind the tree and crush his opponent's head with one mighty stroke. Yes, he would finish him, once for all!

But the two had not come. On that particular night, they had not left the house. Make heard of this only later, after the stranger had departed. He felt deeply ashamed, then, realizing that only accident had prevented him from becoming a murderer.

And then he had left for overseas, seeking adventure as a consolation. Now he was a policeman up in the Far North, ordered to apprehend a murderer, a poor Eskimo. The man was to be handed over to the hangman without understanding why or how he had brought all this upon himself.

Make came to the conclusion that there was something unclean about his job. It was so entirely different from his expectations. Yes, he wanted to earn money and return to his native town. But he had looked forward to coming home with clean hands, and the task that was now entrusted to him filled him with dismay.

Impatiently he brushed away the disturbing thoughts. Wasn't it his simple duty to obey the commands of his superior? Well, he'd show them that he could execute orders satisfactorily!

CHRISTMAS. Not, perhaps, the festive occasion that the white men made of it in their own country. But the constables had made all preparations for a real jolly holiday; they had baked cakes and cooked special dishes. When they sat down at the table, it seemed to Make that they were all nice, friendly boys with whom his lot had thrown him.

Each one of them had his faults, but out here in this lonely land, they had grown to appreciate one another. After all, no human being is without something to his credit. Make wanted to strengthen the spirit of friendliness, especially since it was Christmas eve. And so he made a little speech in which he told the three constables that he was ready to let bygones be bygones; their alcoholic excesses during his absence would never be mentioned again; they simply had made a bad mistake—it had been neither the place nor the time for it, nor

was he the man to permit such transgressions. But now, everything was to be forgiven and forgotten.

With the Eskimos, too, Make was very patient. Especially when Joe came with his long explanations which invariably ended up with propositions or requests. Make knew very well that Joe was both unreliable and tricky, but Joe belonged to the post and it would not do to treat him with suspicion. He was ready to admit, in all justice, that there was some reason for Joe's numerous complaints. However, Make refused to listen to Joe's detailed descriptions of his sacrifices in not going hunting with the others and so losing his proper share of meat. Joe always liked to pass himself off as a martyr who, only for the sake of the four white men, was foregoing tremendous advantages, expecting in return only a little consideration for his services.

Make had been informed that Joe had sold the old uniform, which he claimed to have lost on one of his trips. He also knew that of all the cartridges Joe received, at least half were traded in by the wily Eskimo. But Make wanted peace around the station house, and Joe was very useful; he wanted to keep him at the post because he alone among the Eskimos could speak and understand English. He himself preferred to have Kringak around but just the same Joe stayed, for he had his good points.

Time passed by, gradually daylight returned. To be sure, the change could not be noticed at first, but the knowledge of it sufficed to raise the spirits of the four white men. They had gained some experience on little trips through the adjacent territory. They were not very good dog drivers yet, but they were sport-hardened men, assuredly able to sustain the hardships of a long trail. Make decided to take along one of the constables, a man by the name of Balk, together with Illubalik and Joe and three sledges.

The equipment was systematically put into shape and the dogs well fed for weeks in advance. Make was careful to read and study everything he had on hand pertaining to expeditions in this neighborhood. He found out just how much tea and sugar to take on the trail, and how many pieces of cloth-

ing; also how to pack the things in the best way. Meanwhile, with the women sewing, the equipment was soon in shape.

THEY had to postpone the trip for some time, however, as one day a man appeared at the post, reporting that some distance away there was an encampment where the campers had either starved to death or were near death. As they had no clothes, they could not travel. The man himself had passed the igloos without noticing them, but somebody in the encampment had seen him. One of the strongest men had followed in his tracks and, while he slept during the night, had caught up with him. The half-starved man told him about the plight of the encampment. He had not enough strength left to accompany him down to the police post and, on the other hand, the sledge leader had not enough provisions to turn back and assist the starving. He had therefore left the man some food and rushed down to the police post to get help.

Steps were taken at once to relieve the distress of the encampment. Two big sledges were piled with great quantities of provisions and a few hours later Make left the post at the head of the second dog team. Joe went along with Make and Balk was with the first dog team. They followed the tracks of the Eskimo who had brought the news; his description of the starving encampment aided them in locating it.

Make went ahead. When he tired, he rested on the sledge. Joe, acting as driver, appeared to be in a disagreeable mood. "Let those Eskimos die if they don't know how to help themselves. We shouldn't give them too much of the things they need free."

Joe wondered at the strange ways of the white men who deemed it necessary to send all kinds of provisions to starving Eskimos. He had immediately inquired whether they had some fox skins for barter at the encampment. No, they hadn't caught a thing! They had just starved, on whatever they had on hand. And here he was now, driving along with two sledges full of delicacies packed in tin cans, and tea and ship-biscuits, all for poor people who had nothing to give in return. Joe was greedy.

He did not want anybody else to have anything and he worried that the provisions at the police post might be used up.

They soon found the starving man, who had been unable to return to the encampment. He was completely exhausted, but the thought of help put new life in him. They gave him warm tea, they boiled meat for him and let him taste strange dishes which filled his stomach and raised his spirits. They also had warm clothes for him. He lost no time in outfitting himself and then he accompanied the sledges in order to guide them aright.

What terrible want they found at the encampment! All the Eskimos had crowded into one igloo. The snow hut had been built some time before, and the inside walls were all covered with soot from the lamps which had gone out when the last blubber had been consumed. Their garments were in tatters; whatever they could spare in the way of clothing, had been eaten.

They had chewed skins and boots, they had eaten their dogs and the harnesses and all the hitching gear. Eight of them had already died but there were still thirteen of them alive. Two among them had somehow summoned enough strength to drag the dead bodies outside.

Make ordered Joe to build new igloos into which the stricken natives were to be moved as quickly as possible. He himself lit a kerosene lamp for the sick. The warmth revived them and they were fed, but they were not given too much at a time. Soon the hot tea took the stiffness out of their limbs. The warmth spread by the kerosene burner seemed to them like the summer sun. Presently, they began to talk and even to laugh.

When Joe finished the big house, they were to move into it. The poor Eskimos could hardly walk and had to be half carried into their new igloo. Make, for the first time in his life, saw stark hunger in its worst form, heartrending distress. And then he saw something much more horrible!

There were limbs missing from the corpses. It came to Make with a shock, that the men who had carried out the dead bodies had cut flesh out of their thighs and arms; eating

it, they had been able to keep alive. The man who had followed the sledge had taken a big chunk of meat along—flesh, perhaps, from the body of his own son! Make shuddered at this terrible evidence of cannibalism, induced not by savagery but by sheer need. He had read about such things but had thought them scarcely possible.

He called Balk over and explained to him what he had just discovered. The two men decided to bury the mutilated bodies at once so that no one would see them.

A woman died during the night whose pain had been excruciating. Greedy for food, she had eaten too much; so had some of the others. They expressed their anger in frightened whimpers.

"Why did you come here with your poisonous food? Nature took our prey away,—Nature wanted us to die. And now you are torturing us. We are dying, anyway, with our stomachs afire. Oh, how they burn!"

Joe called Make and asked him to go over and see one of the sick, a man by the name of Arola who wanted to talk with him.

"Arola?" asked Make. "Is he here? That's the man who accompanied the whalers and whom we met last summer."

"Yes, one of them is Arola," Joe answered. "But now he isn't so proud any more. You'd hardly recognize him; he is so starved. Of all the precious things that were given to him, nothing was eatable. Arola was the one who couldn't even talk, he was so feeble, when we arrived here."

Make went inside. Wails of agony had reached his ears before he entered but as soon as he stepped inside the igloo the stoic Eskimos lapsed into silence; their unwillingness to attract the attention of a stranger kept them from complaining in the presence of the white man. Arola even began to speak English, explaining to the Sergeant what had happened.

"When the whalers sent us ashore, they gave us many things. But we lacked reindeer skins for the winter and therefore went inland. Alas, the reindeer were gone already. We trekked on and on, with just enough to eat but never anything to spare. Nevertheless, we weren't afraid, because we were

going to a ford to wait for the reindeer that would cross the river on their way back from the North. But we were fooled. We waited and waited, using up all our cartridges on little birds so as to have something to eat. Soon we had to kill our dogs for meat. By this time we knew that we had offended the reindeer because we had neglected them in the summer; they had now chosen a different route. If we had only been able to get to where our stores and hunting gear were! But as it proved impossible, we made for your post. Two of us had to be left behind because they couldn't walk any longer: a few little children died too. We could not stop our women from eating their outer boots and soon we were unable to travel on. We simply had to stay here and hope that help would come."

Arola's words set Make thinking. Arola, who had been a big man in the summer, who spoke English, who had three rifles, was lying here stripped of everything, face to face with death; next to him lay Minik. Her face looked like a skull covered with nothing but skin—she who had slept with hundreds of prospectors down south, who summer after summer had been courted by the whalers!

The appalling severity of arctic life! Here, before Make's eyes, were the sad remnants of that band of happy Eskimos that had lived in abundance with the whalers.

This was the price they paid for having forsaken the customs of their forefathers by serving during the summer on the whaling vessels. Now they had no skins for their garments, no meat for the winter. Make, as a white man, felt that he should make amends for the distress brought upon these Eskimos by other white men.



XII

AT last they could start out for the North. There was one sledge for Make and Balk, and one each for Joe and Illubalik.

They took along great quantities of provisions as they expected to stay away for several months and there would probably be more of them on their trip back. And, too, they must figure on taking sufficient food along for the prisoner. Of course, they might do some trading on the trail. They were so happy to get away! The white men were in fine fettle, and, mushing alongside the sledges, they covered great distances. They were accompanied the first two days by men who carried dog feed. After these natives had left them, they would be entirely dependent upon themselves.

In the evening Joe built an igloo while the others made preparations to move in; they pushed in their bundles of skins, crawled in themselves and, sitting on their baggage, set about cooking their food. Make lit the kerosene stove and put on the kettle and Joe went to fetch snow for melting.

Fresh clean snow, Make demanded. He did not know yet that it was much more practical to take old, coarse grained snow because it contains more water and tastes better than the other.

It was hard work to slice off snow, piece by piece, from the big blocks, and put it into the kettle; it was some time before the tea was ready. The others, smoking their pipes, watched the preparations for the meal.

When the tins were opened with an axe everything was found to be frozen. But the canned goods were quickly heated up and there were biscuits, too. Later, they would have pancakes with their tea.

When the meal was over, the two white men stretched and yawned. A good long rest would be just the thing! And then they discovered that they should have shaken the skins free of snow before bringing them inside. Now, as soon as they opened one skin and brushed off the snow, it was immediately covered with new snow from the next one. Besides, snow that clung to their clothes had not been brushed off carefully enough and it had melted and now made them uncomfortably wet.

Doubts as to the joys of arctic traveling arose in Make. With deep disgust, he realized that the moist clothing would be hard and stiff in the morning and difficult to get into.

Thoroughly exhausted, he fell asleep, and in a dream saw himself traveling over tremendous fields of ice, finding the murderer at last and bringing him back to the post in irons. The cold woke him up; he lit a match and consulted his watch. The devil! It was time to take the trail again.

"Get up, get up," he shouted. "Time to start out."

The others came crawling out of their sleeping bags. There was not enough snow for their breakfast tea and one of the Eskimos was sent to fetch more.

The natives cut out the block of snow which had served as a door during the night, and fresh cold air rushed into the igloo. The two white men shuddered, only then realizing how warm it really was inside the snow hut. Even though they had felt cold during the night, the igloo now seemed to them a wonderful protection against the weather.

ON and on they traveled. After a while they saw a number of dark dots far out in the distance. The dots did not seem to move but when they came nearer they discovered they were human beings; two natives standing motionless on the ice. Finally, however, they moved and signaled to them to make a detour. Joe and Illubalik immediately turned off to the side but Make's dogs kept on straight ahead. Too late Make perceived that he should have stayed away. The two Eskimos had taken their stand near some air holes, waiting to harpoon the seals when they came up for air.

For hours, the two Eskimo hunters had stood motionless. Now all their efforts were in vain. Nevertheless, they laughed good-naturedly when Make excused himself and invited the Sergeant's party to come to their houses with them.

There were three snow huts; the women and children came rushing out to stare at the strangers. In one of the houses was a sick man and the whites were asked to come in and put their hands on his heart, thus imbuing him with part of their own vitality. The sick native, they had been told, had been robbed of his soul by one of the most dangerous Soul Stealers. Only recently, its identity had been discovered. One of the other

natives was a great Spirit Controller but the cure was very difficult. Each evening the Spirit Controller would travel through the air to the realm of the specters, searching for the soul of the sick one in order to bring it back. The stricken man gazed feverishly at the white men. He feared them, but dared not offer resistance. Make brought the sick man some oatmeal, feeding it to him with a spoon. The Eskimos agreed that was the very worst that could be done to any sick person.

During the night, Illubalik was called by the wife of the sick man who was near death. Everybody was aroused and Joe explained to Make that all the blame was put on him for interfering with the cure of the Spirit Controller. Now that the sick man was obviously beyond help, the Spirit Controller refused all responsibility. Over in the dying man's igloo there were three children, an old grandmother and the wife of the sick man. In reproachful accents, they demanded of Illubalik and Joe: "Why did you bring the white men into our encampment?"

The wife was especially bitter. She kept vigil at the side of her dying husband whose eyes had already assumed a fixed, glassy stare. Towards morning, he died.

Make felt uneasy. Neither Joe nor Illubalik would continue the journey next day. They voiced the wish to remain in camp; this meant that they would use up provisions and dog feed. The family of the deceased never stirred from the house, but Illubalik reported that the wife was demanding compensation for the loss of her husband. She wanted some sort of adequate payment and Make did not know what to do about it. It was very difficult for him to explain to the woman, through an interpreter who, moreover, sided with her, that he had not influenced the condition of the dead man one way or another. Such a statement, of course, would only mean that Make was unwilling to admit his own importance. The woman replied by presenting new demands through others; she wanted food and clothes for her children and herself because what they possessed would be laid on the grave as gifts for the deceased.

Make tried to talk to Joe and make him understand his

position, but he received very little sympathy from that quarter, although on other occasions Joe was only too glad to imitate the white men's customs. The Eskimos carried the body on a sledge to the mountains, burying it there. Make and Balk meanwhile remained behind and discussed what they might do without hurting the feelings of the Eskimos. They did not want to lose five valuable days, as the native custom demanded after a burial.

"It simply can't be done," Make concluded, and he instructed Joe to tell the people of the encampment that the Spirits of Death never cast a spell over the white men and their servants. They would resume their journey on the morrow but he would leave a letter for the bereaved woman which she must hand in at the police post. She would then receive various provisions. More than that he could not do for her.

THROUGH deep ravines and over plains, across fjords and along the shore they traveled. Day after day, on and ever onward. How dead tired they were when camp was reached after a long day on the pack-ice! With what reluctance they dragged themselves to obey Make's command: "Get up, get up, we've got to go on!" Once more, then, they pushed on through storms in which the snow blinded them and made breathing difficult.

The further they traveled, the more silent Illubalik became. He was thinking. Everything had appeared so simple when he had arrived at the police post; he had been filled with confidence by his own words. Impressed by the might of the white man, he had thought that it would not be dangerous at all to catch Mala. As a traveling companion of white men, would he not share their power and be instrumental in stripping Mala of his power? Now, however, things looked vastly different to him.

Provisions had run low. Apparently the Sergeant had not figured correctly; the two white men were not very good travelers. Time and again, Joe and Illubalik had to help them with their teams, look after the ice coating of their sledge runners, and attend to many other details. It seemed that white men

were only creatures of might when they had a ship or a big house and great stores. And yet there could be no doubt that they were spirit challengers!

One day they came upon a body in the snow; white wolves were feasting on the corpse but they fled at the approach of the sledge. The dead man's clothes were in tatters, his face was eaten away. One of the shoulders was missing entirely, most of his bones were exposed, as were his frozen bowels, and the abdomen was almost entirely hollow. A sad spectacle, this lone human being who had perished here and had not even been buried.

"Does anybody know him?" Make asked.

But who could recognize a man without a face and with almost all his clothes gone? Besides, who would dare pronounce the name of a dead man? He might have been killed by the mountain spirits!

"We shall have to bury him in the snow," Make decided, "since there are no stones around here." Balk, however, suggested that they put the body on the sledge and carry it until they came to some rocks. There, in a spot protected from wild animals, they could put him to rest.

"That's right," Make assented, trying to lift the corpse from the snow to which it had frozen fast. They had to use their snow knives to pry the body from the ground.

"Take him by his feet," said Make, but Joe retreated behind Ilubalik.

Make did not notice Joe's unwillingness to assist him, but Balk understood at once that the two Eskimos abhorred the idea of lifting a dead body. He therefore helped Make strap the corpse on the sledge. A dead man, frozen stiff and half eaten away!

"Let's drive on immediately," Make ordered quietly.

But it seemed that neither of the two Eskimos could induce their dogs to move forward. The two white men themselves had to do the driving, which was very tiring as they were not used to it. They finally stopped near a steep rock and, selecting loose stones, heaped a cairn over the corpse. The Eskimos bluntly refused to aid them.

"We would like to do as you ask," Joe explained, "but how could we touch this man? His death would follow us! For all we know, he might have been abducted by the mountain spirits."

The two white men realized that the Eskimos did not mean to be disobedient. Their customs simply proved stronger than their sense of duty. So the Sergeant and the Constable completed the task of burying the man, saying no more about it.

That night the wolves set up a great howling in the mountains. They had been robbed of legitimate prey and now they were wailing their disappointment far out into the night.

The dogs made answer with loud vicious barking. Illubalik woke up. He thought a bit, then, noticing that Joe was not sleeping either, addressed him.

"Joe," he said, "I just had a dream of my boy and my wife. They weren't quite well when we started out. I should never have left them."

Joe did not answer, but he, too, looked thoughtful.

"How much meat is left?" Illubalik wanted to know.

Joe was evasive but he knew very well that it was in Illubalik's mind to turn back.

"Can't you see for yourself? Haven't you eyes just as I have? Is there a lot of meat or only a little? Why do you ask me?"

Joe was not inclined to take counsel with an Eskimo, who, by mere chance, was now in charge of a white man's team. Even if he agreed secretly with Illubalik, how could he, depending as he did on the power of the white men, openly assent? But neither of the two could sleep; fresh thoughts disturbed them. "Mala is strong. He killed three men. He won't be afraid of us. A few more nights and we will be there. Perhaps earlier even.—Yes, Mala is a man to be feared for he has great anger in his belly."

Next morning Illubalik was ill. "I can't travel today," he said to Make. "I'm suffering from boils on my buttocks and I cannot go on."

Make saw that his calculations as to provisions had been all wrong. They were using up much more than he had an-

anticipated. One day, the dogs had fallen over the meat and gobbled up many days' rations. If now sickness and snow storms assailed them, then what?

But Make would not give up. Turn back? Never!

"Let me see your boils. Perhaps I can lance them or treat them in some way."

Illubalik refused to strip. "I'll try to go on," he said, sullenly surrendering. And so they mushed on, but made only slow progress. Illubalik was an hour behind the others when they stopped in the middle of the day, and he appeared fully two hours after they had moved into an igloo at the end of the day. Time hung heavily on the hands of the white men while they waited for him; it seemed especially long to them because the kerosene was on Illubalik's sledge. Make grew angry. This was carrying things too far. He instructed Joe to find out what was really the matter with Illubalik. Make was not at all sure that the native was actually suffering from boils.

The two Eskimos talked for a long time; finally Joe reported that Illubalik had confessed to being very skeptical about the whole trip.

"Our dog feed is low," Illubalik had said. "Even if we should turn back now, it would be difficult to reach people with all our dogs alive. And what shall we eat when our own provisions are gone? Here we are with two white men who do not know the country—and my poor woman longs for me. Somebody else may abduct her while I am away. Oh, why did I leave my poor children? I am so sick at the thought! It seems that as soon as white men leave their own camps they become powerless. Besides, our weapons are surely not better than those of Mala, and he is a terrible man. It is my advice to return."

There was a sly expression on Joe's face as he interpreted Illubalik's words for Make.

The Sergeant jumped up angrily. "Return? You can't think of leaving us now! We won't permit it! You have both promised to help me catch Mala, and we will not turn back unless I give the word. It's true enough that we white men

don't know the country as well as you do, but it's also true that we don't hesitate to carry out what we plan to do."

They did not understand much of what Joe interpreted for Illubalik, but after a while Joe reported briefly:

"Illubalik will come along."

It was plain enough that the two natives did not feel as they had at the outset of the trip. Make and Balk, however, thought it good policy to pretend they did not notice anything.

THE next morning work proceeded very slowly with the Eskimos. First they could not get hold of their dogs to hitch them to the team, then they had trouble in strapping the loads to the sledges. They seemed to have lost all ambition to go on. The two white men again pretended not to notice anything. They went back and forth, lending a hand here and there, and finally they were ready.

Balk struck out in the direction Illubalik had pointed out to him, mushing ahead of the dogs and breaking the trail for them. The others followed, with Make in the rear. The little expedition advanced very slowly. First one and then the other Eskimo delayed them. It was not very long before Make caught up with them, and presently the Eskimos were left so far behind that they could not be seen any more.

"It might be better for me to go and give Illubalik a hand with his dogs," Balk suggested.

"No, let's wait here until he comes and then give him a good piece of our minds."

The dogs rested, curled up on the snow that was drifting low before the wind. When their feet began to freeze, Make and Balk tramped up and down. Soon they had beaten a real path. Their fingers became stiff from the cold and they had to slap their hands together to keep them from freezing. They waited and waited, but nothing came into sight.

"I wonder where they are? I'm afraid there's a strong wind springing up. Perhaps we should turn back and go to meet them?"

"No," Make replied. "We'd better wait here until they

come, but in future we'll have to see to it that they are always ahead of us. And what's more, we'll have to make it absolutely clear to them that we haven't the slightest intention of abandoning the trip."

They sat down under the cover of the sledge, crouching together closely, waiting. At last Joe approached at a snail's pace. He was seated on the sledge, his whip dragging behind. He did not encourage the dogs with so much as a word and when they were not driven on energetically they scarcely pulled at their burden. Only when they saw the sledge of the police officials did they become a little lively, pulling with more ambition until they had caught up with the other dogs. Then they came to a halt, curling up in the snow.

Make got up and stepped over to Joe's sledge. The Eskimo sat there very quietly without saying a word.

"Why are you so late, Joe? And where is Illubalik? Why is it that you can no longer keep up with us as you did before?"

"Illubalik turned back. He left us because he was afraid to go any farther. We haven't even enough feed for the dogs. How can we possibly take Mala along? Where will we find him? And what are we going to eat? Let us, too, turn about. Illubalik was the wisest of us all."

Make was furious. "He turned back and you simply looked on? Why didn't you stop him?"

"How could I stop him?" was Joe's reply. "Every night he dreamt of his children. He is sick with longing for them; he thought of nothing but going home."

"But, hell, man, we need the kerosene and the dog feed he is carrying on his sledge! Let me tell you, Joe, if you want to serve white men you've got to obey orders. Why didn't you take your rifle and stop him from turning back? You certainly don't know the ways of the white men. You aren't much of a help, I must say. Unload your sledge immediately. Then take the empty sledge and hurry after Illubalik and tell him that we don't care for his company, but we want all his dog feed and our kerosene. And, what's more, as soon as we come home we shall punish him."

Joe saw that the white man was very angry. A glance at

Make convinced him that the Sergeant was unbending. It was one of those moments when the semi-savage admits the superiority of the white man, even in the wilderness of his native land.

Quietly, Joe loosened the straps of the sledge, stacking everything up on the snow. He then took his whip, turned his sledge about and lashed the dogs into action, soon vanishing beyond the horizon.

"We shall go on meanwhile," Make had told him, "and you are to follow our trail. Illubalik told us that this valley leads to the shore and that we are then to go across the ice towards the north. Follow us. Come quickly so that all hands are there when the time comes to build an igloo."

The whites took only the most essential of Joe's cargo and immediately lashed on their dogs. Both were a little anxious now but each resolved not to admit to the other that he was no longer so very sure about things.

The leader-dog had to be given the whip freely. But that finally helped and the team moved faster. They came to a spot where stones showed through the snow. They assisted each other in crossing the stretch and finally succeeded in getting the sledge over with the runners only slightly scraped. On they went, keeping warm by pushing the sledge and whipping the dogs. They intended to show Joe that, despite their long delay before, they would cover a good distance that day. They certainly did not want to cover less than their usual mileage.

"Hey!" The young bitch felt the whip. "Get on, get on, we still have miles to go."

Although it was getting colder, they did not notice it; the snow became heavier and there were head winds now. But on they must go. Ahead they saw the round-topped mountain which, they knew, must be passed on their right. They could not very well lose their bearings with a landmark like that. Moreover, the moon was shining brightly. Bending forward, they drove on in silent determination. Some time later they stopped to disentangle the traces. Each man ate some biscuits and then they drove on once more. The dogs showed signs of fatigue now. They were not used to breaking the trail; there always had been another team mushing ahead of them. Besides,

they had done more than their usual trip today and the driving snow bothered them greatly. They would rather lie down, covering their noses with their tails, and let the soft, warm snow blanket them.

"Get up, get up." Kicks and blows and a lively fight among the dogs ensued. Still more whipping to separate them, and again the trip was continued.

"The wind is getting stronger," Balk said a little later.

"Oh, it's not so bad," Make replied; he pretended to notice nothing at all.

An hour later, Balk remarked hesitatingly: "Maybe we should stop here and wait for Joe. It doesn't seem so sure that he will be able to pick up our trail in this weather."

The dogs stopped in their traces the very second they heard Balk's voice; they always made use of the slightest opportunity to take a little rest.

The sky was overcast; visibility was low. Driven by the wind, the snow drifted low, close to the ground. When the men stood erect their heads were above the drift; the dogs lowered their heads, for the snow was blinding. It was very difficult going for them. They hardly felt the whip any more because the untrained men had not mastered the trick of using the whip against the wind. But Make pushed forward; they certainly were not going to stop yet.

Suddenly Make raised his head.

"What's that?" He seemed startled. "A tail wind! Did we lose our bearings?"

It was undoubtedly a tail wind. Giving way to the pressure of the wind, they had slowly turned from their course without noticing it.

"Let's double up along our trail until we get our bearings again. Then we can wait until Joe comes," Balk proposed. Secretly, neither of them believed that Joe would catch up with them. The wind had grown into a storm and it seemed almost impossible that Joe could be successful in fighting against it.

"Stay here by the sledge," Make said. "I'll follow our trail back."

Soon Make disappeared and Balk sat down, turning his

back to the wind. The constable felt deep misgivings. Had they undertaken more than they could accomplish? At the moment he wanted nothing so much as a little sleep. He was cold and, at the same time, his clothes were damp with perspiration.

MAKE struggled against the wind. The afternoon had advanced and darkness was falling; the sledge tracks were barely discernible. Now and then they were blotted out entirely; suddenly they showed again and just as suddenly were lost once more.

The strong wind kept tearing off his fur hood and the snow stung his face like so many needles. He bent lower, his eyes half closed.

Where were the tracks now? To the right or to the left? Damn it, and now it was growing dark too!

This Joe certainly was a scoundrel. If he had really deserted them, he would be punished severely. But where the devil were the tracks? Completely wiped out! Perhaps it would have been best to remain by the sledge and let the dogs find the way back by themselves. In this way, he would encounter Joe and pitch camp.

He turned about to follow his own tracks back to Balk. But where were his tracks now? He had been gone only ten minutes; it seemed impossible that he could not find his way back to the sledge any more.

Here were some tracks and there were others. That proved he was going in the right direction and no doubt would soon find the sledge. That sly dog Joe! He'll regret staying out so long! Well, by now he must be close to the sledge, providing Balk, too, had not strayed. In a few minutes, after another hundred steps, he would see the sledge. It was hard going here! The storm was knocking the breath out of him. Well, as soon as he got back to the sledge, he'd sit down and rest a bit. Joe might have put them into this fix intentionally. What rotten luck! But Joe would pay for it, all right.

Make went on and on. Surely, he must be near the spot by now.

"Balk," he shouted. "Balk, where are you?"

What nonsense! He laughed at himself. Naturally Balk could not hear him in this storm even if he were close by. He went a little over to the right, only a few steps; then back to the same spot. Next he went a little to the left and back again. He was firmly convinced that he was near the sledge. If he searched here, he was sure to find Balk. Then he would eat biscuits and a whole jar of jam; he would open a can of milk too. The jam and the milk were so sweet they would not be frozen by the cold. And then they would build a little shelter for themselves in the cover of the sledge, spread out their skins and make tea. They would also have a good smoke, too; while waiting for Joe. Yes, that's what they were going to do and perhaps Balk had something even more appetizing than jam. "I've been on my feet for so long; I'll sit down while he prepares the tea. Yes, I'll crawl under the skins and rest until the tea is all ready. And I'm going to have that can of milk. I'll punch two little holes in it and suck out the whole can.

"Let me have that can of milk, Balk."

How foolish of him! He was not near the sledge at all! But where was he? He stood still and thought the whole thing out. "I left the sledge because of that tail wind. The wind should have been coming half sideways from the front. So I went back against the wind. To find my way back to the sledge, now, I'll have to go with the wind." And he went on and on.

Of course he had gone much too far by now. Terrible, this drifting snow! He could not hear or see anything, but he knew his bearings. The sledge was straight ahead of him; he was dead sure of that. It would be easy now for him to keep on the right track if he only watched the direction of the wind. The wind must come straight from the side so that the snow wouldn't drift into his fur hood.

He staggered on.

What was that? Here was a big boulder he had not seen before. He went around it and suddenly faced a steep ledge. The wind seemed to have died down. He stopped to catch his

breath. It was dark and the air was thick with drifting snow. The sledge was surely not here. Well, he'd try in the opposite direction.

"Hell!" he swore, finding himself suddenly in a deep hole.

"What's this? A pitfall, maybe?"

The mighty boulder served as a wind-break and the snow-drift, passing around it, had formed a cavity into which he had fallen. Funny that he had not noticed the boulder when they had passed before with the sledge. Anyway, it was a relief to rest here, protected against the terrible pressure of the wind.

"I'll rest here for a moment before I return to Balk. There's a fellow with some sense. He is sure to have the tea ready when I get back. If he'd only think of pouring a whole can of milk into the teapot! That would be marvelous. Of course Balk will think of it. Oh, that tea! So wonderfully hot!

"Thanks, will you put sugar in? And let me have some of the biscuits over there!

"What a silly idea! I'm sitting here in a hole by a big boulder and I've still got to find the sledge. But I'll rest here for five minutes first. That snowdrift surely tired me out. Besides, I'm so overheated I'd better cool off a little."

His feet were freezing. First only a little, then more and more. When he wanted to get up, he found he was half buried under the snow.

Well, he simply had to go on. Exerting a tremendous effort, he got back on his feet and staggered forward. He imagined he was back home in the police barracks at Edmonton or Banff, arguing with his comrades about horses. That was the right life for a man on the force: on the back of his mount. Much better than plodding through snowdrifts, one's bearings lost. Stupid of him to have come North! Ah, how he would enjoy getting back to the igloo and taking a good nap.

He decided that the next day they would not journey on, but just rest because by now Joe must have reached Balk and built an igloo for them. They were drinking tea and eating pemmican while they were waiting for him. He'd give Joe hell for not bringing Illubalik back with him. It was Joe's fault, probably, that Illubalik had turned back. But he'd talk to them

and everything would be all right again. These Eskimos had to be reminded that he was in charge here—he was the master—yes, what a master he was, staggering about, unable to locate his sledge.

Oh, he was thoroughly sick of this running around; he wanted to get back to the sledge and quickly, too. By now Joe and Balk were baking pancakes but surely they would save two nice big ones for him. Ah, how good they would taste! What a wonderful warmth they spread along his tongue, and what a delicious, greasy flavor they left in his mouth after he swallowed them. He was going to have some sugar on them. Being in charge here, it certainly was his right to eat more than the others, especially after running around in this wilderness while the others slept.

He reached the stretch where he had to climb uphill. This was one of the mountainsides of the valley of course. But which one? Better sit down a moment and get his breath. Oh, how wonderful to sit quietly and close one's eyes.

Utterly exhausted, he fell asleep.

BALK, dead tired, was resting by the sledge, to which the dogs were still hitched. "The Sergeant certainly takes his time finding these tracks. And if he can't find them, why in hell isn't he coming back? What's the idea of leaving me all alone here? I'm only going to wait a little longer. . . . I won't stand for it."

Fatigue threatened to overwhelm him. "Hell, this is the limit!" He stood up and heavy flakes of snow fell from his clothes. He was all snowed under. He must have fallen asleep for a while. The day had been very hard, and now that Sergeant! He hadn't shown up yet! And Balk was so hungry. Fortunately there were provisions on the sledge. He got up, took the snow beater from beneath the packing straps, brushed off his fur hood and his clothes. Then he reached a hand under the skins which covered the provision box, took a biscuit and ate it, then he had one more and still another one. After that he helped himself to a piece of pemmican and again sat down by the sledge.

Time passed. Balk's feet grew cold; he had to get up and stamp back and forth to warm them up. That son of a gun of a Sergeant! This was just like him! Always pretending to be such a good comrade, when he actually doesn't give a damn about me. It's plain enough that all his friendliness is put on. Of course he had gone back to Joe, had him build an igloo, and there they were resting now, all warmed up and eating like six little men, while here he was left to himself in the blizzard, unable even to put up a hut without help. Too bad he had never paid attention to the way the Eskimos built these igloos! "But I'm not going to stand for all this. I'm going to tell Make that I intend to file a complaint and then he'll probably be demoted. That would serve him right. I'll be damned if I'm going to starve! I'll eat as much as I can even if it's more than my ration." Translating his thoughts into deeds, Balk got busy and ate and ate.

The food stimulated him. He realized that he would have to get under a roof if he wanted to be warm once more. What a devilish mess—to be out here in the open in this weather while Make was gorging himself with pancakes and good hot tea within the warm shelter of a snow house, not giving him a thought! Again Balk fell asleep. How cold he was when he awoke! His feet hurt and the tips of his fingers burned like fire; his knees were stiff and when he finally got up, it was almost impossible for him to shake himself free of snow. What a crazy idea to come up north here, seeking adventure! Adventures were all right to dream about when you sat at home nice and snug by a hot stove. He would leave this place as fast as he could and make for home. But first, of course, he would drive the team back to the Sergeant and Joe, who by this time had probably been joined by Illubalik. The three were undoubtedly snoring soundly in a house. Or they were filling themselves with food. Well, he was not going to stand for such treatment! All the provisions they were carrying along he would have for himself.

"Hey, out of this snow here!" Kicking the animals ferociously, he finally got them on their feet. They shook themselves free of snow.

He did not know where he was bound, but he intended to get away from this spot as quickly as possible.

"Hey, you big black one! Mush on, you!"

The sledge got under way. Driven on by Balk, the dogs swerved to the left and then went straight ahead. What did he care if the sledge rode across stones, scraping off the ice coating of the runners? As long as he got away . . .

But where?

Who should know? The dogs tired. They traveled slower and ever slower and seemed of a mind to stop altogether. Balk's anger gradually subsided and he thought: "After all, the best thing for me to do is to sit down here and wait until day-break; then I can see the others and they can see me. What a crazy situation!"

Mechanically, he drove the dogs farther towards the left. The sledge moved very slowly—the dogs scarcely more than crawling. Balk decided to stop and rest a little before he continued; driving the sledge had made him warm once more and now he only wanted a little rest.

The dogs trotted ahead, seemingly filled with new life. What was that? They raised their heads and tails and then suddenly started on a run.

Why, they had reached the igloo! Weren't the Sergeant and Joe standing there?

What speed! He did not have to run alongside the sledge any more. With one jump he landed on top of the load and, holding on for dear life, went ahead at a breathless rate.

The dogs came to an abrupt halt and huddled together—all ten of them. It was too dark for Balk to make out the entrance of the igloo. But it must be there. He got off the sledge and walked over to the dogs and then he knew what they had scented. There, in the snow, lay Sergeant Make. Balk lost no time in arousing him.

"Who is it? You, Balk? Where's Joe?"

"Joe? I haven't seen him. Isn't Joe with you?"

"Not with me. I ran and ran, God knows how long. I thought you had turned about or he had caught up with you. God, I'm just about frozen!"

"Same here. We should never have traveled through this country without even knowing how to build snow huts."

"Right you are. We should have known better. Now Illubalik is gone, and Joe, too. Well, we two will do the trick without 'em."

With difficulty they loosened the packing straps and unrolled the skins. Then they turned over the sledge to serve them as cover and crawled into their sleeping bags, which were full of snow. They covered their heads with a couple of skins; they would be at least some protection against the wind although the skins were quite thin.

"Say, Balk," Make remarked with a smile, "with the two of us representing the authority of the government here, it's a good thing the people can't see what a fix we're in."

There was no answer. The next second Make, too, had fallen asleep. The dogs were already resting contentedly under a blanket of snow.



XIII

MALA'S loneliness became oppressive. It was some time now since Illubalik had fled and he had not seen any new faces. He longed for company but nobody came to visit him and he himself did not feel like going on the trail to see others. Let them come to see him. Even his recent trip down to the coast had not brought him in touch with other people.

Mala was disappointed. He had hoped to become chieftain of a large camp but one and all had fled from him. Now the only ones he ruled were his two wives and his three boys. What good, then, did it do him that his was a well-ordered household and that he could always pride himself on making a splendid catch? Fortune did not smile upon him these days. But although he longed for the society of other people, he determined that loneliness was not going to get the best of him. Was he not strong and unyielding? Well, then, he would still succeed in becoming the much feared chieftain of a big encampment.

He caught many seals and walrus and frequently took his boys along when he inspected his fox traps. When wolves roamed the neighborhood again he taught his boys a new and clever way of killing them.

He took a sharp knife and dipped it in blood. As soon as one layer of blood had dried, a second layer was applied, and on top of this, again another, and so on until finally blood, congealed in the form of a large cake, hid the blade of the knife which stood upright. The whole contrivance was then frozen to a stone and little chunks of meat were laid out, leading to the blood-covered knife. A wolf, coming to lick the blood, would cut its tongue. In the freezing weather, the beast would not notice the injury until it was too late. By then its tongue was cut in shreds and with blood dripping from its mouth the wolf would run off, leaving behind a well-marked track. Usually, when followed to its lair, the beast would be found bled to death and frozen stiff. In this way, the boys caught a number of wolves. Oh, yes, Mala knew very well how to bring up his children.

At home, Mala was silent and he ate of the delicious walrus meat and the tasty skin of the narwhal without really relishing them. He just sat around, staring blankly; even his wives did not interest him any more.

"Let's go on a hunting trip and visit somebody," Inupaujak suggested. "I would like to go and call on my relatives."

Mala did not answer.

"If somebody goes on a trip, I will be the one this time," Aba spoke up. "I don't think Inupaujak should be allowed to say who is going and where to go."

Inupaujak was only too ready to indulge in a nice lively fight, just for the sake of diversion. She knew that if she succeeded in making Mala angry enough something, at least, would happen to stir up things.

But he sat quietly, his elbows resting on his knees, his hand under his chin, and when the wives became too noisy, he simply got up and went outside.

"And I thought I had a brave man for a husband, a man

who loves his wife. He should have remained single!" Inupaujak remarked.

But not even that stirred Mala.

ONE day Mala drove far into the country to fetch some reindeer carcasses which he had cached in the summer. He was gone a few days. Each nightfall, he built igloos just big enough for a single man.

One night he thought he heard steps in the neighborhood of his snow hut. "Who is it?" he asked, but there was no reply.

Surely somebody was about, perhaps an enemy in pursuit of him. He jumped up and cut a few snow blocks out of the wall towards the side where he had heard the steps; he stuck his rifle through the hole. He then looked out but nothing stirred. The dogs had curled up in the snow and were fast asleep. He counted them; they were all there and apparently had not scented anything.

"Strange," Mala thought. He lit the lamp, mended the wall, and waited until morning; he did not sleep at all.

Another night he was aroused by the dogs giving alarm. They gave a few short barks, showing that something was astir in the neighborhood. Mala was aroused at once. What was it? Again a hole was cut into the snow wall of the igloo and, rifle in hand, he looked out. He did not intend to be surprised. The dogs stood barking, but there was nothing to be seen. Nevertheless, there could be no doubt that the dogs had really noticed something. Could it be that a mountain spirit was roaming the neighborhood, visible only to the animals? The thought that somebody was lying in wait for him somewhere worried Mala. Perhaps the children of the men he had slain were coming to wreak their vengeance upon him. Perhaps the soul of the mountain had been insulted. He must be on his guard.

Upon his return, he did not tell the women anything, but took some skin straps and wound them around his chest and head. He hummed a little chant; at first very softly, but then louder and louder. Finally he began to dance; he swayed his body back and forth, and jerked his head from side to side.

His song grew ever louder. Mala called upon his guardian spirits and in this communion with Nature learned some very important secrets. Finally he fell backward on the bench, lying there for some time in a stupor. Meanwhile his soul, traveling restlessly through the air, divined the problem besetting him and received advice.

When Mala woke, he felt weak but calm. Nobody questioned him or gave him to understand that they realized something extraordinary had happened, but they all turned it over in their minds.

"It will be best," Mala finally broke the silence, "for all of us to adopt new names. In this way, the evil spirit that is pursuing us will be misled. The spirit is looking for Mala, but the man who lives here henceforth shall be called Utang. You all shall have new names. Use one of your other names until the sun stands high above our tents and once again disappears for the winter."

He then took his furs, went outside, hitched the dogs to the sledge and drove along the coast to inspect his fox traps. He stayed overnight and slept peacefully in a little igloo.

Now the days were lighter and longer. Soon people would be coming along; some on a trip down south to see their relatives, others on their way to the coast for trading. They all had to pass Mala's camp and so would report the latest news to him. He might as well keep in reserve some choice morsels for his guests. He must have sufficient meat on hand. Although his racks were well stocked, each time Mala went out he brought more meat home. He built more and more racks so that strangers, passing by, would immediately see that here was a man who had meat in abundance.

"Let's go across the country and fetch the seven reindeer we stored near the little steep rock. They were young and fat and I am longing for reindeer meat from a cache," Mala said to Orsokidok one day.

When they arrived at the cache, they decided they would first build a snow hut and postpone chopping away the ice from

the carcasses until the morrow. As soon as the igloo was finished, they erected a little storage shelter, putting a dish inside on the ground. It was an old iron pan they always used for this purpose. Placing some tallow and some moss in it, they lit it. As soon as the fire was burning brightly, they put a pot over it and prepared their food. While Orsokidok attended to the cooking Mala looked after the dogs and built a rack on which to put the sledge. Each knew what he had to do and went about his business quietly and efficiently. Mala, noticing that the wind was growing stronger, carried meat into the house and covered the igloo with drift snow as an added protection against the weather.

As soon as the meat was cooked, the pot was carried from the little shelter into the snow hut. Then Mala closed up the wall from the inside, and lit the blubber lamp. The two shook off the snow and removed their outer furs, presently enjoying the hot food and the warmth of the lamp, while outside the storm grew fiercer.

Mala took out his pipe; it filled him with a sense of comfort. After a few puffs, he handed it over to his foster-son. Orsokidok, too, smoked for a little while. "How cozy it is. Listen to the storm," Mala said and then related the story of the giant reindeer he had once seen.

He had been far up north, hunting, when he had come across the tracks of some reindeer. He had stalked them carefully so as not to scare them. Suddenly, he had been confronted by an enormous beast, much bigger than any man would ever have thought possible. The legs of the animal were so far apart from each other that one had to walk a good stretch to get from the hind legs to the front legs. Its head was mighty and its horns reached out far enough to fill a whole ravine.

The beast had come to a halt in front of Mala and gazed at him. Mala, fearing that he would be swallowed by the monster which probably had been sent as a messenger from the reindeer's realm of souls, turned and fled; when once he looked back he noticed that the giant reindeer, too, had become frightened and was running away.

Mala never again laid eyes on that animal. There cer-

tainly were remarkable things about the reindeer. They come and they go, in fall towards the south, in spring towards the north, so that people may see them when they are lean and when they are fat. Those reindeer that roam the same neighborhood all year have sinned, and are not permitted to return to their homes; they will be hunted for all eternity.

Some of the reindeer are all white. They resemble the others but they are hatched from tremendous eggs which are also white and covered with a soft shell. They were often seen in the old days and may yet be found far in the hinterland.

Orsokidok listened attentively. Mala's words were full of wisdom. He surely knew the world, and Orsokidok was clever enough to learn all he could from his foster-father.

The storm was terrible and grew in intensity. When the two became sleepy, they pulled their skin covers over their heads and soon they were both plunged in deep dreams.

The next day, too, the blizzard raged. They cut a little hole in the wall and looked out. The snow was blowing furiously past the house, and they could not see anything. But what did it matter? They lacked nothing. "Let it storm. We can sleep some more. Tomorrow we will be well rested."

And while the storm from the north howled furiously, they slept in great comfort.

At last Mala said: "Let's get up now. It's still blowing hard but the snowdrift isn't so bad any more. Let's get out and see if there are reindeer in the neighborhood. In a snowdrift, they usually lie quietly. We can sneak up to them and kill them with our knives. In weather like this they are completely off their guard. The dogs, of course, we shall have to leave here."

They crawled out of the hut, closing up the wall again. They could not see very far but there was no need for it. They stumbled ahead, in the hope of falling over some game. Finding their way back was no problem for the two Eskimos; they never even thought of this as a difficult task. It was just a matter of instinct with them; besides it was fun to go out and get some exercise.

They stumbled on for a long while without coming across

any reindeer. Suddenly, however, they arrested their steps and stared in astonishment. A remarkable picture had flashed before their eyes at a moment when the wind abated. But as soon as the snowdrift set in again, the thing they had spied was hidden from view. Nevertheless, they knew that something was going on around them; they certainly were nearing people.

Here was a sledge half buried under the snow! Why hadn't it been unloaded? Why had not the pack been put inside an igloo? Something was assuredly wrong here! At last, thought Mala, they were going to see new people! He did not say anything, but made straight for the sledge.

But what was this? The sledge was not loaded at all! It was turned over and a team of dogs were still hitched to it. The whole load, scattered around, was buried under the snow. The dogs were alive; some of them jumped up at Mala's approach and shook off the snow.

As Mala righted the sledge, something stirred beneath the snow heap. He immediately took hold of the skins and pulled them off. Two men emerged; two tall white men, greatly exhausted and apparently suffering intensely from cold and fatigue. They looked around, bewildered. In their apparent helplessness, they reminded Mala of children. He assisted the men to their feet and brushed the snow from their clothes. Then he grinned at them in friendly fashion.

The men burst into speech but Mala did not understand them. So he had actually come across two Kravdlunaken! How had they gotten here? They never could have come to this spot unassisted, but right now there was no use trying to find out. Mala resorted to all the English words he knew, asking the strangers first whether they were alone.

"Alone," Make answered. "Alone, and cold and tired."

"No house?" Mala asked.

"No house," the two answered, informing him by signs that they did not know how to build an igloo.

Undoubtedly they had been buried under the snow for quite a time; two brave young men who, unable to combat the storm, had forgotten all caution. They had intended to wait

until the storm blew over, not realizing that, lying like this in the cold, strength ebbs rapidly.

Mala inspected their baggage. He found that they had sufficient provisions and skins. But everything was covered with snow; they had crawled into their sleeping bags without even removing their boots and outer clothes. Now the snow had thawed and their garments were soaked. Mala saw immediately that quick action was necessary if these men were to be saved. They would have frozen to death if he had not stumbled across them. He did not say anything but simply took his knife and started to build an igloo. The snow in the neighborhood did not seem suitable, but after some searching, he found a spot where an igloo could be erected. Here the snow was of just the right consistency, after the top layer, formed by the drift, had been removed.

Although he launched upon his work seemingly without haste, the igloo was made with a speed the two white men had never seen before. They knew that the Eskimos had saved them from sure death and they were very grateful to them.

Mala gave a few orders to Orsokidok who busied himself with the baggage of the white men. He first beat the snow from all their skins and then rolled them up. Make and Balk tried to assist them at first but soon gave it up; they walked up and down, colder than they had ever been in their lives. Oh, with what joy they looked forward to moving into that snow hut! What deep gratitude they felt towards the men who had saved their lives!

Presently the house was finished. Mala cut an entrance and again inspected the baggage. He first fetched the kerosene stove, shaking it to find out whether there was sufficient fuel in it. Then he asked for matches, and motioned to the white men to follow him. With trembling hands, Balk gave him the matches and crawled after him into the igloo.

While Orsokidok was filling in the crevices from the outside, Mala took the kerosene burner inside and motioned to the men to take off their mittens and warm their hands over the fire. They were to rest quietly and make themselves as

comfortable as possible; everything would be taken care of meanwhile.

They sat by the fire like little children. Although there was not much warmth, they felt their strength slowly returning. Mala had gone out once more. He now pushed some rolled-up reindeer skins through the opening, came in again and opened the skins. Putting the kerosene stove right in the middle of the hut, he asked the men to draw closer. Then he went out once more and as he intended to stay away for quite some time, he walled up the entrance to the igloo as soon as Orsokidok had joined the whites inside. Orsokidok had brought in a kettle and, while the police officials looked on, the young Eskimo melted snow and boiled the water. Make and Balk felt very drowsy, but now they were filled with a feeling of security and comfort.

"It's boiling," Orsokidok shouted and Mala, reopening the igloo from the outside, pushed in a box of provisions. He himself came crawling after but only shoved half his body through the entrance, his legs were still sticking outside. In this position, it was possible for him to keep the cold outside and at the same time supervise Orsokidok. They unpacked the bread, handed it to the two men and gave them the sugar; the two put generous helpings into their cups.

Oh, how the wonderful warmth infused their limbs with new life! And never before had they tasted tea so delicious! After they had consumed half of it, Make looked around and found a can of milk which Orsokidok opened for him. He poured the entire contents of the can into the kettle and now they had rich milk tea, tasty, strengthening, and satisfying. They dipped their hard-tack in it and ate and ate. It seemed impossible that they could ever eat their fill.

Mala had withdrawn and again fitted the snow-block into the opening. They could hear him at work outside. He was improving the igloo considerably by building a passage-way leading to it. He unhitched the dogs and gave them some of the food he had found in a bag. They ate ravenously and then looked for a sheltered spot to sleep once more.

Mala placed the sledge in front of the house, threw the

harness into the passage-way, and then crawled inside himself, closing the door with a snow block. In the white men's baggage he had found a number of tallow candles which he now lit, sticking them in the snow near each of the men.

Although Mala had learned the customs of the white men during the whaling, he could not tell what the different tins of canned goods contained, since he was unable to read the labels. And so he simply chose a couple of them at random, put them into a pot and poured hot water from the tea kettle over them. Then he added more snow to the kettle and put everything back over the fire.

It was then that Make pointed to himself and said: "Make." And Balk, with the same gesture, announced "Balk." They then pointed at the two Eskimos and Mala gathered that as the white men had given their names, they now wanted to know his and Orsokidok's. Mala mentioned his new name, Utang, and that of Orsokidok, Omar,—the names they had assumed to propitiate the mountain spirits.

"Where's Joe? Have you seen Joe?" Make asked.

Utang shook his head; he did not understand the question. Nevertheless, the name Joe set him thinking. Joe had been with the white men on board the ships. Make and Balk were coming from there, but as Utang had not seen them before, they must have arrived after he had left. What did they want here now, and where was Joe? All these things had to go unanswered for Utang could not make himself sufficiently understood. Besides, this was not the time for questions; the white men were greatly exhausted and needed warmth and rest.

The sleeping bags were now turned inside out. They were frozen inside and the ice had to be beaten off the fur so that they would dry. Then they were turned once more and Utang told the men to get up. He took their skins and spread them out on the bench. Over them he placed the sleeping bags and, smiling good-naturedly, gave the white men to understand that they should now take off their outer furs and crawl into the bags.

He opened the cans which had meanwhile thawed over the fire, and poured their contents into a frying pan. It sizzled

marvelously as one of the cans had contained butter. What a delicious soup that made! And how nice and hot it was! He handed it over to the two men, together with a plate of hard-tack. They had already fallen asleep but he roused them and they were only too glad to eat more. They ate and ate without ever thinking of rations. And while Utang prepared some more food, they dropped off to sleep again. Once more they were awakened and again they ate. It was some time before they had their fill but eventually their hunger was appeased. Utang, by signs, gave them to understand that he would go for his sledge while Omar would remain there to assist them. They nodded, and he departed.

It was still quite stormy, and the snow drifted about wildly. Utang was tired; nevertheless he did his utmost to make progress and at last he reached his little igloo. He strapped meat on his sledge and hitched up the dogs. The seven reindeer he had come to fetch he now abandoned. Had he not found something more valuable on his trip?

Make and Balk were still asleep when he returned; they woke, ate again, and slept once more. Utang also rested and when he awoke, everything was quiet outside. The two mounties felt fairly well, although they were still weak and tired. They were smoking their pipes in apparent comfort and talking a great deal to each other.

As it was advisable for them to return home while the weather was favorable, Utang and Omar loaded the sledges and hitched up the dogs. On each sledge they took a passenger. Omar drove his foster-father's team, while Utang, being the better dog driver, took charge of Make's sledge; his dogs were half starved and greatly weakened. But now they were driven on by a whip in the hands of a merciless master. It was important to make quick progress, and never had the dogs made such good time as today, handicapped though they were; certainly they were not treated with the least show of consideration.

When they reached Utang's camp, they were greeted by his two wives who rushed out and cried: "Two white men!"

The boys, who had been asleep, instantly put in their appearance.

"Two white men. Father brought two white men home!"

The dull routine of their wintry days was broken at last. Adventure was theirs again! The young wife almost jumped for joy and the older one trembled with excitement. White men in their camp! What big things could happen in this world!

It was quite a wonderful house in which Utang lived with his two wives. One woman slept on each side of the bench next to a little lamp. Another lamp, a bigger one, stood close to the door. There were three adjoining huts and little annexes all around the igloo; there surely was sufficient room for everything.

Big chunks of meat were dished up,—reindeer, walrus, seal, and bear meat. Utang had everything! Dried meat and tallow melted in the stomachs of reindeer and fresh tallow too. The two strangers ate and ate.

Balk wished he had some tea after all the soup and bread and chunks of fat he had swallowed. It was then that the two officials discovered how conscientiously all their canned goods had been stored in one corner. Nothing of their property had been touched. Yes, Utang was honest to the bone! His two wives, without being asked, were already busy sewing new garments for them: a pair of boots for the one, a pair of stockings for the other, and good mittens, too. Their sleeping bags had been relined with new, beautiful fur. Really, there was no end to all the hospitality the Eskimos showed them.

Make and Balk often spoke about this. "It's hard to say how we can repay this man."

"It's only in a case like this that one finds out what the Eskimos really are like; here, where they have not yet come under the influence of the white men. They are not like Joe, who is always thinking of payment. All they care about is to do us a good turn. Let's take them along as soon as we are ready to search for Mala. Utang may know where this fellow Mala is and may assist us in arresting him. Yes, let's

take him along; he deserves it after all he has done for us."

Utang's little boys made fast friends with the white men. They were always with them and were even given paper on which to draw things. It certainly was amusing! The white men's dogs were well cared for too. Daily they were permitted to come under shelter and were given as much thawed-out meat and walrus skin as they could eat; they never stopped eating and the skins of their bellies became as tight as drums.

Everything went splendidly, but the time drew near when they must continue the journey; after all, there was no sense in waiting for Joe any more, and probably Utang could be helpful in locating Mala.

HOWEVER, Joe came back. One night, late, when everybody was ready to turn in, he arrived on a sledge with a man he had picked up while looking for Make and Balk. Joe had a very good excuse. He explained that he had returned to Illubalik and taken from him the kerosene and other things belonging to the police officials. He had left him only a few provisions and some dog feed. When he returned to the spot where he had left the white men, they were gone. The white men had taken another trail but Joe had driven on with scarcely any rest until he had met the strange man he brought with him now and who had shown him the trail. They had traveled as fast as they could and had just finished a long day's mush. Joe had been apprehensive that the white men had perished in the blizzard. Never again would he leave white men alone. He was clever enough to put all the blame on the white men because they had taken the wrong road.

Make did not feel like arguing with him. He said curtly: "It's all right now that you are here. As soon as you are rested, we shall continue the trip. There's an abundance of meat here. Utang has great stores of it, and besides, lots more is hidden away in caches. We can obtain here the provisions we need for the entire trip."

It was hard for Joe to hide his thoughts. He cast inquiring

glances at the Sergeant and at Utang, but he did not say a word. He was only too glad that Make did not question him much about his absence and he immediately proceeded to unhitch the dogs. Utang lent him a hand at it. Later on, the sledge was unloaded and the provisions carried into the house while Utang fed the dogs with huge chunks of meat. At first Joe gazed questioningly at Utang, but the latter seemed utterly undisturbed. Utang asked Joe whether he had come from the south and whether it had been stormy down there? And he asked many other things, too. Joe, in turn, appeared unconcerned. As if nothing puzzled him, he asked similar questions, and when everything was put in order the two entered the house. The women had meanwhile prepared seal meat, and a steaming bowl of it was set before them.

What a wonderful diversion was this visit to them! Now they would hear something new and would learn who the white men were and what brought them up north.

They ate and talked and laughed noisily but not much news leaked out. The newcomers were tired and apparently were not very good story tellers when white men were around. Too bad,—they would not hear the news before the morrow.

Everybody went to rest, and soon the sound of concerted snoring proved that most of them were fast asleep. Make, however, was wide awake, thinking about continuing their journey. If Joe was not too tired, they could start out in the morning.

It was then that he discovered to his surprise that Joe, who was lying next to him, was not sound asleep as he had supposed, but fully awake.

"Glad to see that you aren't tired any more. No reason, then, why we shouldn't go on early in the morning and get this man Mala," Make said decisively.

Joe was taken off his guard. Was Make perhaps talking in his sleep? "What did you say? Get this man Mala? What do you mean?"

"Well, as soon as you are rested we shall continue the trip. We are in good shape now, and, according to Illubalik's description, Mala's camp can't be very far from here. This

man Utang probably knows where he is. We should have no trouble in getting this murderer before long."

"Why, Utang is Mala. The man right here in this house is the murderer. Didn't you know that?" Joe asked in surprise.

Make raised himself and stared at the other angrily. "What in hell are you talking about? Mala is Utang? Mala, the murderer who killed three men and stole their wives? The man everybody is afraid of? Nonsense! Utang is the finest fellow I ever met. Why, he saved our lives when you deserted us. You are an impertinent fool to make such a statement."

"Utang is Mala," Joe repeated reproachfully. "If you don't believe me, why don't you ask Saitok? Everybody knows that Utang is Mala."

Make was thoroughly confused. What was he to believe? He must consult Balk.

"Balk, Balk, wake up," he shouted, arousing everybody. "Joe tells me that our host here is none other than the murderer we are out to arrest. If that isn't crazy . . . !"

Before Balk had a chance to collect his senses and answer, Make continued:

"Utang, listen to this: do you know what Joe says? He says that your name is Mala."

Utang did not understand him, but Joe quickly translated. He nodded his head, and, pointing at himself, agreed with a wide grin:

"Utang and Mala. Yes, that's me."

Mala seemed highly gratified that his fame had spread far and wide; surely the great captains must have spoken about him.

"Yes, I am Mala," he reiterated gayly. There was no reason, here, to fear spirits. Why should he not tell the white men his real name when they asked for it? Make and Balk stared at each other, aghast. This man, who frankly admitted that he was Mala, surely did not have a guilty conscience. What were they to do?

Joe was delighted; he sensed their disturbance.

At last Balk spoke up: "We must never forget that he saved our lives."

"No, we mustn't, but we must also do our duty!" Make replied. "We can't very well deny in our report that we came across him. Let's think things over until tomorrow before deciding what to do."

Soon quiet reigned in the snow hut once more but neither of the two police officials slept another wink that night.



XIV

EARLY next morning Make questioned Mala through Joe; he readily admitted everything. "So, you are the one who kills his enemies? We heard about you from people who fear you. The master of the white men has sent us to bring you before him."

Mala bent his head in modesty.

"Yes, I am the one they are all speaking about. If white men, too, have heard about my wrath, it certainly pleases me. White men will surely sympathize with me because they, too, crave power as I do. When I watched the Captains, I readily understood the joy of giving orders and spreading fear everywhere. However, I should not speak about it. After people are dead, one is not supposed to mention them any more. I am only telling you all this because you asked me."

"Ask Mala to explain to us why he killed."

Joe questioned Mala and translated his reply: "I just made up my mind but let's not talk about it any more."

"But I want you to talk about it," Make insisted.

Mala was very much surprised. What more was there to be said? "My tongue is unable to resist the wishes of the white masters but there is really nothing else to tell. The three are dead. Why are you coming all this long way? Is that really all that brings you here?"

"Tell him that it was wrong of him to kill these men.

He has broken the law of the white man and will be punished for it."

"I haven't done anything wrong," Mala protested. "I provided for the wives of the dead. The one I took myself, and the other I immediately married off to someone else. Can't you see that I needed wives? Nobody makes as big a catch as I. Nobody needs as many things sewn as I do. I use up boots and shoe soles because I am always hunting. I have to have a wife to sew for me, haven't I? I didn't do anything wrong. But please, let's not talk about it any more. I shall go now and get you a couple of nice tasty reindeer tongues."

"Tell Mala that we are not angry at him, but, according to the customs of the white man, he has done wrong. He has sinned against Nature."

Mala listened attentively. "I have sinned?" he laughed. "What would you have done if your children had nothing to wear? If there was nobody to scrape your skins? What would you have done in my place? I would have had to be only an assistant to another hunter, perhaps someone inferior to me, one who would have spoiled all my labors."

"We would have gone somewhere where there was a woman who had no husband."

Mala laughed. "Joe tells me your words; they show plainly that you think the thoughts of white men. There is no marriageable woman in this country who hasn't a husband.—And what would you have done if two men had come to your camp with the intention of killing you? Wouldn't you have killed them first and saved your own life?"

"We would not," Make stated. "We would have asked our masters for protection."

Joe translated. He himself was not sure yet which side was right, and what the result of all this would be. He painstakingly translated word for word; only after the situation became clearer, would he throw his lot with the stronger.

"For protection?" Mala repeated. "Where and to whom should I have gone? One can only defend one's self with one's own strength. But please, I'd rather not talk about it any more.

Let us enjoy being together. My reindeer tongues are close by. I'm going to get them now so that we can have a feast."

"You cannot go!" Make declared. "Understand that I am not reproaching you. You have saved our lives and I like you. But I will have to take you down to our house and there you will have to explain to our masters why you killed."

Mala was surprised. "But I explained everything to you! —Just tell your masters what I told you; put my words in strokes on paper. My family is not equipped to go on a trip and you yourself are in need of dog feed. There is certainly not enough for all of us to travel."

"Neither your wish nor mine is important here. There is a stronger will above us. I am not angry at you, but I have to take you along. Later on, our masters will decide what should be done."

Again Joe translated, and Mala answered: "I shall not resist the white men. But they must wait a little while. I must first go and bring my meat in. Then my wives must prepare my skins and sew new furs for me. I must also provide new garments for my boys. Besides, we shall need dog feed for your two teams and for my own big team. So let's first have a few nights' rest before we start and let's go after walrus. Perhaps we can get together sufficient meat and we can go on this trip, as you wish."

Inupaujak was very happy. "Oh, we are going to travel! What luck! Going down to the white men! And we shall travel with white men! Oh, I'll sew without sleeping a wink until the furs are all finished."

"Joe," Make interrupted, his face set in stern lines, "tell Mala that this will not be a pleasure trip. He is to go alone with us. Neither his wives nor his children can come along. I like Mala; he has saved our lives and has been very good to us, but I have to take him before the white master whose command it is that men shall not kill one another."

"I'm to go along alone?" Mala was greatly taken aback. "What about my two wives and my three boys? Who is going to tend my dogs? No, white man, I cannot do that. I will not desert my family."

"Mala," was Make's reply, "I must insist that you go with us alone and if you don't, there will be trouble. I have come here to take you back to my house and I will not return without you."

"But what's going to happen if I say no? And if we fight over it and I win, then what? You say that you like me, but just the same, you want to fight with me. You white men are very strange! You are people from a different country and we don't understand each other."

Translating back and forth, Joe finally explained to Mala that if Make returned without him, he would not be permitted to enter the house of the white masters; he would be sent home and all his property and his food would be taken away from him. Make had been sent up here to spread the customs of the white man and this was just the beginning. If Mala tried to flee, they would shoot him, and if he refused to come along willingly, they would shackle him in irons and carry him on the sledge. If his shackled hands should freeze in the cold—why, that simply couldn't be helped. He just had to come along; nobody could resist the will of the white man.

Mala pondered silently awhile. His wives, too, sat in bewildered silence. They were puzzled by the mysteries that these white men had brought into their home. The children did not understand what was going on, but instinctively felt that the will of their father was encountering opposition. Orsokidok surmised that Mala's strength was threatened. His enemies had found assistance from the white men and now disaster was impending.

"I will go with you," Mala at last decided, "but do not start out before tomorrow. I will send my wives to Saitok's camp where they shall await my return."

"Can Mala's family stay at your camp?" the Sergeant asked Saitok.

"Yes, they can," Mala interrupted. He did not care what Saitok had to say; he himself had all the meat and skins. "We will drive to Saitok's camp," Mala continued. "Tomorrow we start out."

Thoughtfully, Mala went outside to get everything ready.

He went for meat, and Saitok and Orsokidok immediately started to chop up dog feed, Joe assisting them.

The women unrolled skins, rolling others up again; they emptied caches and packed bags hurriedly. Never before had they gone on a trip so insufficiently prepared.

WHILE Make was writing his report for the authorities in Ottawa, Balk went outside and asked for Mala. Joe translated and Orsokidok replied:

"He has driven off with his team."

"Driven off?"

Balk rushed inside and reported to the Sergeant: "Mala's fled. He's gone. His sledge and his dogs are gone, too."

The Sergeant jumped up. "We've got to follow him. We can't return without him."

"Joe, Joe!"

Joe came.

"Hitch up the dogs."

"Where are we going?" Joe asked.

"We have to follow Mala's tracks. He mustn't escape."

"But Mala hasn't run away. He has just gone to fetch his reindeer tongues and his tallow for the trip and to look after his fox traps. Mala will be back by tonight."

They did not pursue Mala but Make was very nervous all day long.

Could he really depend on Joe? Doubts assailed him. Would it not be best, after all, if Mala did not return? Oh, how he wished they had not sent him out on this job! The very man he was sent out to arrest had saved his life. And this man did not even understand that he had done anything wrong. It was all a hopeless mess, but there was no use in avoiding the fact that he simply had to do his duty and deliver Mala at the post.

No, Mala had not fled. With loud shouts and crackings of his whip he returned toward evening, throwing a big load from the sledge. There were wonderful reindeer, two seals, nice and putrid, a whole bundle of reindeer tongues and lots of tallow.

On the way, Mala had done a little thinking. With him, bad humor never lasted long. He had given a promise and he was resolved to go with the strangers—these peculiar people who simply demanded that he should accompany them. After all, it might turn out to be an amusing diversion. Wherever white men were, one could count on things being lively. Well, he'd pay them a short visit and then return.

In the evening, everything was made ready and on the morrow they started out joyfully. As Mala's dogs were strong and well broken in, they were able to take along great stores of provisions; but most of Mala's stock had to be left behind. He closed up his house with some snow blocks; around the igloo he put a number of poles, to which small bundles of hay were tied with cord. These, swaying to and fro in the wind, would scare away foxes and other animals.

THEY travelled along the coast towards the south. As they did not get as far as Saitok's house on the first night, Mala built a huge snow hut big enough to shelter them all. It was he who was host to his keepers and it was his meat that fed their dogs. Mala, too, it was, who broke the road with his sledge, followed by Saitok and Joe; the two white men trudged in the rear.

Saitok was all puffed up with his own importance. He knew himself to be quite a man now. Had he not taken Joe to Mala's camp and was not he the one who would protect Mala's family during his stay with the white men? But whether or not the trip would turn out to be one of honor for Mala he was not at all certain.

In Saitok's camp, situated near a low peninsula, Mala erected a good-sized hut. It was sufficiently roomy for his wives and he improved it by adding a little passage-way and storage annex. In there, he piled up all the meat which would not be required for the trip. He intended to make the best of provision for his family during his absence and put everything in good order for them.

The mounties were invited to spend the night in Saitok's house, but they did not dare leave Mala out of their sight and

chose to stay with him. Mala lay with Inupaujak on the bench and fell asleep immediately. He slept the sleep of the innocent. The white men, too, slept soundly. The trip had tired them.

When the white men awoke the next morning, Mala had already made tea. He offered some to them smilingly.

"Make," he announced, "I have thought things over and I have resolved to take one of my wives along. Inupaujak shall come down south with me."

Although Joe had spent the night at Saitok's house he was already around; he could always be found where there was tea and sugar. Now, he was called upon to translate Mala's words and the Sergeant's replies. Make was sorry, but it could not be done; Mala absolutely must travel alone; it was too bad, but Inupaujak must stay behind.

"Don't you understand," pointed out Mala, "that it is hard for me to accompany you at all? Inupaujak's first husband may come here and take her back and then there will only be more fights on my return. I thought that is just what you want to prevent."

There was truth in what he said, but Make had no choice but to remain adamant. "You are to travel with us; you must leave Inupaujak behind and we start today!"

Mala did not answer; for the first time he thought seriously of resisting. Why should he be forced to obey these two men who were so dependent on him? He had found them near death in the snowstorm and now he was simply carrying out their orders like a man without any will of his own. But his spirit of revolt soon died within him. White men's instructions must be followed, and so they departed.

Day after day they mushed towards the south. In the evening, it was Mala who built the igloo; in the daytime, too, it was he who went ahead of the sledges, picking up the trail and driving the Sergeant's team. Balk traveled on Joe's sledge so that there were two men on each. They made good progress.

The friendship between the Sergeant and Mala grew rapidly. They never expressed their attachment in so many words, but it was obvious that they enjoyed each other's com-

pany. It was hard for them to make themselves understood without Joe's assistance. Make was aware that Joe never translated every word Mala said; he knew too that Mala did not like Joe. But in spite of their limitations of speech, Make and Mala gradually came to understand each other rather well.

"If you will promise not to run away, I shall let you have your freedom. I will even let you go hunting, because I trust you. You shall be like one of us, but you must stay with us until our masters permit you to return. If you try to flee, you will have to suffer for it. I shall have to suffer, too. My masters will not permit me to stay in this country any more. They will take all my food away from me and I shall starve."

"I shall do nothing that will hurt you," Mala assured the Sergeant. "You white men are very peculiar."

They passed an encampment, traveled on, and soon came to another one. Wherever Mala went, he gave orders: "We need lots of meat for our dogs—go and get it for us! And we have to have something to boil for ourselves—hurry and fetch it! Also, I need new traces for my team—bring me some!"

Mala was so used to issuing commands that he proved much more valuable to the white men than Joe who could never be depended upon but who, on account of his knowledge of the language, was indispensable.

They traveled on and on, and at last arrived at the police post. They found everything in the best of order this time; the two lonely constables had actually longed for the return of the expedition, and soon a tempting table was set. The constables immediately noticed that Mala was not brought back in irons. They also noticed that Make took a personal interest in the prisoner—but this was none of their business!

Mala entered the house with the Sergeant. He sat next to him at the table and there was nothing humble or contrite about him. He was an equal who spoke up when he felt like it. Before, he had been host; now, he was guest. Everything he possessed he had put at the disposal of Make and Balk and so he came here fully convinced that he was entitled to the same courtesy. They ate and drank with great appetite, taking their fill of many good things. They lighted their pipes

and had a nice chat. Balk told about the trip, and Illubalik's desertion. Nobody at the post had heard or seen anything of him.

"Put a cot in my room for the prisoner," the Sergeant said. He would keep a watchful eye on Mala but did not propose to take any other precautionary measures.

"Perhaps it might be advisable," one of the constables suggested, "to lock his left wrist to the bedpost. We can take the iron off during the day."

"Mala doesn't need any handcuffs. He's not going to run away. I have his promise."

The two constables laughed, highly amused, but Balk understood that it was not gratitude alone that prompted Sergeant Make to treat his prisoner as though he were a captured officer of an enemy army. He understood rather that here was one of Nature's noblemen who had proceeded according to the customs of his own people;—the laws of the white man were foreign to him, yet he would be punished for trespassing against them.

Mala went in and out of the house, like the others. He used the Sergeant's dogs. He went out to the air holes and caught seals, supplying the post with fresh meat. Mala was certainly an asset, because large quantities of meat were required to feed all the families who were now crowding around the post. They were the scum of their people who had come down here to beg for a living. Joe, employed by the police, and enjoying the position of interpreter, was a gentleman and as such went hunting only when he felt like it; he went only for the pleasure of it. If he needed something,—why, there were the police provisions piled to the rafters!

The Sergeant wrote and wrote. Reports on the arrest of Mala; reports about the trip; reports about Illubalik's desertion and everything he had witnessed. Reports about the prisoner and reports about the constables. Everything had to be put in black and white for the Commissioner in Ottawa. There the men in power would decide the fate of people they had never seen and with whose customs they were wholly unacquainted.

MAIL had to be taken south to Port Nelson, many days away, the farthestmost outpost of civilization. From there the mail pouch containing Make's reports was to be sent on. After much consideration, the Sergeant finally decided to put Arola in charge of the mail sledge because he and Minik knew Port Nelson, having lived there for several years.

Arola, who had come to the post starved and emaciated, was strong again as in the summer. The white men gave him a sledge and dogs. Whatever else he needed for a good team he got from the other natives who looked upon him with respect because he was the only one who could converse with the constables while Joe was away.

It had been wonderful to stay at the post but when Joe returned Arola was not as happy as he had been. So he was elated when he heard that he was to drive the mail sledge.

As soon as Make had finished his report, Arola and Minik appeared in front of the house, clad in their best furs for the long trip. The sledge was loaded with dog feed and canned goods and they were given all the provisions they requested. Two full bags contained sugar, butter, tea and cocoa.

It thrilled Arola and filled him with a deep sense of satisfaction to be able to show off to the others. He talked grandly to the natives who stood around admiring him and envying this big man all the wonderful things he had on his sledge. Arola kept asking for more and more; he never seemed to have enough. Finally, however, Make put a stop to his greed. Then the dogs were given the whip and, warmed by the envious glances of the natives, Arola and Minik departed for the south.

Arola had boasted of the marvelous adventures he anticipated on his trip. Perhaps he would have some sad experiences too,—but he had not thought to mention them. He knew that in the neighborhood of Port Nelson there was a band of formidable hunters who, since the beginning of time, had carried on a bloody feud with his own people. Nevertheless Arola was quite sure of himself. He knew that the police had punished those people severely. They were to be despised, for they

ate neither seal meat nor narwhal. Once they had been powerful, but now they shivered from the cold in the garments they bought from the white men. They never dressed in skins, and even in winter they preferred elegance to warmth. Besides, they spoke an incomprehensible language—these people who never came out of the woods. The whites called them Indians. The Eskimos detested them and did not want to have anything to do with them.

Arola and Minik both felt that a meeting with the people from the woods would not be so very agreeable. But why think about it? They would very likely succeed in avoiding them, and many joys awaited them at the end of their journey. So they drove into adventure with happy hearts. Arola had been told that if he proved dependable and made the trip in good time he would be entrusted with the mail sledge every year. It was a good thing to be around the white men. In the summer, when the whalers returned, Arola was going to work for them, and in the winter, he would carry the mail. His future was assured. It was a glamorous future, promising many blessings and lots to eat.

THE evening of Arola's departure, Mala entered the Sergeant's room. "They tell me down at the igloos that Arola went to bring back a man who is going to hang me. They say I will be killed, hung like a dog. Why didn't you tell me that when we were up north? I wouldn't have followed you then. I would have known how to save myself. You have always said that you are my friend. You have been good to me. But now I want the truth."

There was strong determination in Mala's face; he was utterly changed now from the Mala who was so ingratiating and always ready to help. Now the Eskimo again looked as on the day he had saved them in the snowstorm. His face was stern and serious, expressing the same determination he showed when he harpooned a walrus from the edge of the ice. Mala was resolved to bear his fate.

The Sergeant called for Joe.

"Come here, Joe, and translate what I have to say. Mala has been told that he is going to be hung. Ask him who told him that?"

Mala got angry: "You have Joe ask me that? Joe himself told it to the people. He, who talks the language of two men, is double-tongued. It is he who spread the news in all the igloos."

Questioned by the Sergeant, Joe admitted that he had repeated in the Eskimo village what he had heard from the constables. Make realized it would be impossible to keep silent any longer. He decided to be frank with Mala.

"I admit that in the country of the whites men are hung when they kill others. But there is nobody here who can say with certainty that you will really be hung. I can't tell you one way or another. I only know that the masters far down south will decide your fate and you cannot escape it. But there is one thing that I can promise you: nobody hates you. Whatever will be done to you, will be done only because it is the way white men think about law and order."

Mala stood still and glared at the Sergeant. "Harken, white man, I tell you that you have known all this from the start. You lured me here, assuring me that you are my friend, but it is your purpose to have me hung like a dog. Often have I been told that the white men are false. You, too, are false,—you, whom I liked better than all the others. I brought you into my house when you were starving and close to death. You ate of my meat and took of my dog feed. You made me leave my wives and my boys behind. I don't believe you any more, and if you want me you'll have to look for me, because soon there will be no Mala around here any more."

Before Joe finished translating the angry words, Mala was ready to rush out. But Make had understood enough of what Mala said. In a flash, his gun came out before Mala's eyes. "Stand still!" the Sergeant ordered. "Joe, tell him to stand still or I'll shoot."

Make did not need his gun. Mala knew very well that his

life was in danger. But it was not fear of death that restrained him. It was the realization that he was powerless. He stared, rooted to the spot, his whole body suddenly seeming to sag.

"You don't have to shoot," he said slowly. "But tell me, what joy will it give you to see me die?"

"Dear Mala!" This was a strange way of addressing the Eskimo, especially as Joe was to translate the words—Joe, who was disliked by all, and upon whose honesty nobody could depend.

"Dear Mala, I don't desire your death. I shall do for you whatever I can. But I am not the master. I have written to the country of the white men and told them everything. Arola has left with the letters, and until he returns we won't know what will happen. I have told you that I will not be permitted to remain in this country and that I shall have to starve if you run away from here. Wouldn't you rather stay here and help me? If you promise, I shall let you have your freedom as you have had it up to now."

"It is for your sake that I shall remain," Mala replied. "I shall wait until the ship comes although I am longing for my boys and my wives. I wonder how they are faring while I am gone. May I not go home and provide them with meat, and then return? Saitok is such a poor hunter; they might be starving."

"No, Mala, you cannot leave here. You must stay and I depend on your promise. Your family shall not starve. I'll send a sledge up there with provisions and a rifle for Orsokidok, so he can hunt for them. Later on,—we shall see."

Make understood that the killings among Eskimos were to be stopped by all means. They were to be taught Justice. Laws were to be forced upon them, and Mala was to be the first victim. Make himself would probably receive honors for his part in the affair.

The Sergeant's heart was heavy. What a damnable life. They were forcing him to be the executioner of a man superior to himself.



XV

THE Police Inspector was walking up and down in his office. He was angry. This really was too much! Day after day he received threatening letters from anonymous senders.

When he had returned last fall from Hudson Bay, after installing Sergeant Make, and had reported the triple murder, he had been accorded much praise and given the promise of promotion at the first opportunity. Nevertheless, he felt that he should have stayed up north, taken the investigation in hand himself, and brought the murderer down south. Then, surely, he would have received his promotion.

But there had not been much time to regret the chance he missed. He had hardly returned when revolt was rife. The Catholic priest had been revealed as a blackmailer and murderer and as soon as he had been sentenced to death there were plots against the members of the jury. There seemed to be good chances for promotion right here! The Inspector threw himself wholeheartedly into the controversy, uncovering the entire unholy mess and filling the prisons. But in the performance of his duty he had made many enemies for himself.

Three weeks ago, an infernal machine had exploded under the staircase of his house. It was only luck that no one had been killed. Hardly a week ago he had been shot at, and now threatening letters advising his early death were coming in increasing numbers. But they could not intimidate him! On the contrary, each letter strengthened his resolve to get hold of these cowards. What did he care about the squabble going on between Frenchmen and Englishmen, Protestants and Catholics? Couldn't the fools see that he was doing nothing but his plain duty? His superiors could not withhold his promotion much longer. He had done good work and was entitled to his reward.

Suddenly there was a cracking noise; the Inspector jumped up. A bullet, apparently fired from the window across the street. Again it had missed him, but a feeling of fear crept over him.

The police were sent out but they could not discover a trace of the would-be assassin. All that could be done about it was to write another report.

THE Superintendent paced to and fro, dignity in his bearing.

"My dear Inspector," he addressed the other, "you know very well how much I appreciate your energy. But you are only exposing yourself to unnecessary danger, and just now you are so thoroughly hated in the whole district that it would be best for you to disappear from here for some time. How would it be, for example, if you would go up north? We have already taken under advisement the possibility of dispatching you to Port Nelson, and from there by sledge to the post at Fullerton, in order to investigate the triple murder. It's pioneer work and bound to bring you recognition. By this time, Sergeant Make has probably apprehended his man. You need merely examine him and then see that the matter is taken care of, returning by boat in the summer. By that time everything will be quiet around here. To be frank, my dear Inspector, I am afraid that part of the difficulties we are encountering here just now have a decided bearing on yourself. It will really be best for you, as well as for us, if you will stay away for a while. I want you to understand me perfectly, my dear Inspector: you would be leaving here quite voluntarily. I suggest that you think matters over very seriously. It will be for your own good."

The Inspector gave this only a moment's thought. He was accustomed to making up his mind quickly, and he saw that his superior was right.

"I shall naturally accept, sir. I can leave tonight for Winnipeg from where I am sure I can reach The Pas easily. From there, I shall go on by sledge to Port Nelson. I figure that Sergeant Make's mail sledge will have arrived from the North by that time so I can return with it to Fullerton. I am sure,

sir, this is the best thing to do. I can leave here without delay, as soon as my papers and credentials are in order."

Two hours later, the Inspector was on the train for Winnipeg. Two weeks later, he was en route to The Pas. Two months later, just when the winter was drawing to an end, he reached Port Nelson by Indian sledge and snowshoe runners.

He was given the hearty welcome which was no more than usual in the arctic world. The mail from the north had not yet arrived but was expected daily. The Inspector felt entitled to a well-deserved rest after the enervating work at home and the long, arduous journey.

Idly, he observed life at the post. Indians came to trade, and occasionally an Eskimo would put in an appearance. The latter were more peaceful than the Indians and seemed to be in high favor with the police force. That, however, did not interest the Inspector very much. He was far more concerned with whether Sergeant Brown kept his office in the best of shape. Brown, an old-timer on the force, was not very well liked by his younger superiors because he did not believe in making long reports: he had a tendency, too, to be always finding mitigating circumstances for evil-doers. But just the same, Sergeant Brown achieved splendid results. Whenever he was sent out after unruly Indians, it required only a short while before the natives were obedient once more. When he was sent into a region where horse thefts were the order of the day, he somehow never succeeded in arresting the thief, but on the other hand, the thefts would stop.

Brown was a very useful official and a brave man, too. The Inspector admitted as much. However, Brown certainly loathed filing the prescribed reports, and was none too exact in performing his routine duties.

The Inspector had long discussions with Brown about the best methods of treating criminals—whether with mercy or not. All these discussions ended in old Brown agreeing with the Inspector.

"Maybe I don't know much about things," Brown would say, but the Inspector was never quite sure whether the Sergeant was in earnest.

The Inspector told Brown about the triple murder he was going to investigate, expressing his views about the Eskimos in general. The Eskimos, to his mind, were a people that had to be ruled with an iron hand. He was going to give them a good lesson in order to teach them right and wrong. Even savages knew well enough what they could do and what they couldn't! All this talk about their slower mental development was so many empty words. It only delayed matters and entailed unnecessary expense for the government. They were just like children, these Eskimos; well, brats can't be brought up properly without sound spankings. He was not going to handle any criminals with kid gloves. He had never indulged in such a weakness, and he had often enough seen serious trouble arising from treating lawbreakers too leniently.

The old Sergeant shook his head without saying a word. He could never hope to convince the Inspector.

A FEW days later, Arola and Minik drove up to the post. They passed the police barracks with more noise than necessary and stopped; then Arola stepped off the sledge with great dignity. He was a messenger, a man running important errands between two police posts. He could see how important his mission was by the way all the policemen rushed out and natives collected around him in crowds.

Arola and Minik wanted to enjoy the situation to the very utmost. They would drive the curiosity of these people to the limit! They therefore shrouded themselves in deep silence. In anticipation of all this, they had donned their best clothes before they had reached Port Nelson. There was nothing like making a good impression.

While Minik remained on the sledge, Arola, with much ceremony, approached the white men. He made it a point not to notice the natives at all. He pulled off his mittens and shook hands with all the whites; first with Brown and then with the constables whom he had met years ago. When he reached the Inspector he was asked gruffly:

"Who are you? Are you coming from Fullerton?" And no hand was stretched out in greeting.

"Yes, I am coming from Sergeant Make. I have a written message that is to go farther down south."

"Give it to me. Give me all the letters," the Inspector ordered peremptorily.

Arola went over to the sledge and loosened the straps while telling Brown something about his adventures on the trip. But he did not get very far before the Inspector interrupted him:

"I asked you to give me the letters immediately. Come on, come on. I'm getting cold."

Arola turned around slowly and, with a trace of sarcasm in his voice, remarked: "If you are cold, why don't you go into the house? You shall have the letters at once. I was out in the cold while the moon twice grew round and vanished again. But you seem to be in a great hurry."

"Why did Make pick such an insolent fellow?" the Inspector wondered aloud. "And now hand over the letters at once!"

Arola realized that the Inspector was the master around the post. He quickly dug out the mail pouch.

"You can go inside now and read. Meanwhile we will unhitch the team."

The Inspector was not quite sure whether Arola meant to be impudent. He went inside, took the letters out of the pouch, found the report and was already studying it when the others entered. While food was being prepared and the table set, they talked about Arola's trip. The mounties praised Arola's feat; they had been up here long enough to appreciate the difficulties of such a trip.

"Shall we put two additional covers on the table, Sergeant?" one of the constables asked.

Before Brown had a chance to reply, the Inspector interrupted him.

"No Eskimos are going to eat at the table here in the police barracks. I won't hear of such a thing! It would only serve to undermine their respect for us. I have just been reading Sergeant Make's report which is full of the usual sloppy sentiment. He caught the murderer all right—but he's

actually defending him! It's the old story. Some people can't see the difference between the duties of a police official and the ministrations of a priest. It's a mighty good thing that I'll be up there soon to put matters in proper shape. It seems that the murderer is some sort of an important fellow in his tribe. So much the better! By punishing him severely, we will teach all his people a good lesson. Too bad that it is necessary to let this Eskimo couple rest here before I can return with them."

"Arola has just finished a very long trip," Sergeant Brown spoke up. "His clothes are all torn, and he and his wife and all his dogs are exhausted. He must get a good rest here, otherwise he will never reach home again. He certainly must stay here for several days. The trip from here to Fullerton is no joke. You will find that out for yourself, Inspector, before you get there."

"Nonsense! Traveling is the man's business. We've got to leave here soon if we want to get to Make's post in time. By the way, I gather from this report that he hasn't even made an attempt to produce the bodies of the murdered men. It will be necessary for us to take the murderer right up to the scene of the crime for a thorough investigation. There must be discipline in the North-West Territory. It's a good thing that at last things are going to be knocked into shape up there."

"No doubt, Inspector, you will succeed with your methods, but as to Arola, he really must have a rest for at least two weeks for himself, his wife and his dogs, before he can start back."

"Nothing of the kind! He was hired to make the trip, and if it is too much hardship for his wife—why did he bring her along? If she is too exhausted, she can simply stay here and follow him whenever there is a chance."

"Inspector," Sergeant Brown explained, "you don't know how necessary a wife is for an Eskimo on a long trip. He needs her help to speed up the trip. I don't think I am exaggerating when I say that, by taking Minik along, Arola did the trip in almost half the time. He simply has to have the wife along and if you want him to leave her here, he'll refuse to return. It would be inadvisable to broach the subject."

"I don't care whether he refuses or not. He is hired—he is under a contract and he has to be ready whenever I wish to start out. As far as his dogs are concerned, he can leave the worst of them here. You can give him a couple of ours. My trip is very important, and I've got to get to Fullerton as quickly as possible."

Brown did not answer. He simply shook his head and went outside to attend to something.

"Is Arola here?" the Inspector inquired next morning. He wanted Arola to obtain furs for him so Minik could sew them while they were resting up.

But Arola was not there. He was told that Arola was visiting a couple of houses farther down and probably would not return before evening.

The Inspector flew into a rage.

"He isn't here when I want him? Wasn't he hired by Sergeant Make? Isn't he in the employ of the police? What gives that fellow the idea that he can run off without asking permission, I'd like to know? Discipline is sadly lacking here. I certainly am glad I came up."

"Inspector," Brown warned quietly, "let me repeat once more: Eskimos are no soldiers. You can get a lot out of them if you treat them right. One has to consider their little peculiarities, and don't forget that only a year ago Arola did not even know the meaning of obligations of any kind. Don't forget that you are not dealing with enlisted men, and that an Eskimo, when he gets tired of a job, simply moves on without the slightest compunction. I'm speaking from experience, Inspector. You will get the most out of these people if you cater to them a little. You must give these natives the idea that they are the ones who are running things. If you do that, you can get everything out of them."

"I'd rather you'd not lecture me, Sergeant. I don't need you to tell me how to enforce discipline. I shall be able to show you results when I see you again in summer."

Old Brown shook his head. There was no use in trying to advise the Inspector.

AROLA and Minik were very much disappointed. The visit to Port Nelson had turned out utterly different from what they expected. The men who had lived here formerly had departed; they had been prospectors and adventurers, but now the only ones left were traders and members of the police. This was not much of a holiday town any more. The young Inspector interfered with all their amusements; he had curtailed their stay and, still worse, now they must take that selfsame Inspector up north with them.

They left early one morning, the Inspector mushing ahead of the natives at a rapid pace. It was hours before Arola and Minik caught up to him with the sledge. The Inspector kept pushing ahead. It was not Arola any more who decided when and where to rest on the trail. It was the white man. And he insisted upon making a much longer trip than was the daily stint of the Eskimos. It was the white man whose "Halt!" was the word of command.

"Build the igloo here," he would order, already loosening the straps of the sledge and getting his own things out.

As soon as the snow hut was built, the Inspector would light his kerosene burner and prepare his food and tea in a little pot. He never spoke—he just cooked, while Minik and Arola, in whispers, commented on the small portions they were given. Never did the Inspector prepare big quantities of food, and, at first, they had thought that perhaps there was more to come. Each man had his own customs about such things. And so they had waited quietly, putting everything in order, tending the lamps—whiling away the time while the meat was being boiled. But then something very remarkable happened: the Inspector ate right out of the pot without leaving a morsel. He poured tea for himself, and ate biscuits—and he ate and drank while the two natives watched, their surprise growing as they saw everything disappear and not so much as a crumb left for them.

Arola did not say a word, but Minik, being a woman and impatient, asked whether they weren't going to have anything at all to eat? The Inspector did not understand her; Arola had to translate.

"She is asking about our food . . . whether we are not going to have something to eat? It seems you ate everything."

"If you want to eat," the Inspector replied, "why don't you get yourself something? You have loads of provisions, I see. I am cooking for myself only. You must prepare your own meals."

"But we are used to eating together. It's too hard to run two households in a little snow-hut," Arola answered. "If we are to wait for our food until you are ready, it will take too much time."

"Why should you wait? Start whenever you like, I won't wait for you either; you can cook your food while I cook mine."

"But you are using the kerosene stove."

"Why," the Inspector said, "you can cook over your tallow lamps, the way you are used to. The kerosene is for me, and for me only."

Arola got angry: "Do you mean to say that we two should prepare our food slowly over a tallow fire while you, who are alone, want your food prepared quickly? Didn't we work hard to build this house, and haven't we traveled all day long?"

"You heard what I said," the Inspector bellowed. "Can't you understand orders? Let your wife cook the way you are used to and then eat. I want to sleep now and I don't want to be disturbed."

He rolled himself into his bag and soon was sleeping soundly. Arola was furious. Here he had come up against something he had never experienced before. It seemed it would be very difficult to get along with this white man. The whalers, of course, easily flew into a rage but soon their good-natured ways returned. When you did as the whalers asked, they always treated you well. He had already forgotten that they had disappointed him and many others when they put them ashore at Depot Island. All he thought of now was the long trail ahead

and how hardly worthwhile the whole visit to Port Nelson had turned out.

"This is going to be a nice trip!" he exclaimed to Minik. "Here's a white man who does not want to lend us any help."

Glumly, they put snow into their pot and melted it over the tallow fire. It took long, very long, before they were ready for sleep that night.

The next morning, it was the same thing. The Inspector drank his tea, packed up his things and went ahead. But hardly was he out of sight when Minik took his kerosene burner, removed her tea kettle from the lamp and put it on the Inspector's heating apparatus, making tea before they even started to load the sledge.

The weather was good and they made quick progress, but the trip was very tedious. And the white man drove them on with never a word of encouragement. He never once permitted them a day of rest. Only when Arola reported that he had hardly any dog feed left and simply had to go hunting did the Inspector give his grudging consent. But immediately he wanted to know how long it would take Arola; while he was hunting, Minik was made to repair the Inspector's footgear. Minik dried his boots every night and kept them pliable, but the Inspector never had any thanks or so much as a smile for her.

The Inspector surely was a hard man. They understood that very well, but they also observed that he was fair and that they could rely on him. When they showed him that all their sugar was used up, he gave them some of his. He would not let them want for anything but he kept them well under his thumb. They were like dogs who received whatever was necessary, and he would only address them when it was unavoidable.

Although Arola got a good bag, there was no word of praise, not even the slightest intimation of satisfaction from the Inspector. As soon as they had enough dog feed they set out once more. Once in a while, when weathering a snow-storm, the white man pulled out books and read and read, smoking his pipe all the time. Arola and Minik were bored. They were not even permitted to converse in a loud voice in his presence lest they disturb him. Arola reached for a few of

the books. "Maybe there are pictures in them. I would like to see them."

"Hands off my books," ordered the Inspector and read on.

Never again would Arola annoy him. But every morning, as soon as the Inspector had gone ahead, Arola and Minik enjoyed biscuits and sugar and tea prepared on the Inspector's kerosene burner; then they would look at the pictures in the books and smoke. They were so clever about it that the Inspector never discovered anything. The Eskimos laughed about the white man who walked ahead so proudly and thought that people were just dogs.

Farther and farther up north they journeyed. Each time Arola mentioned the name of the place they were passing, the Inspector pulled out a piece of paper on which something was drawn. He would look at it and then admit to Arola that he was right. Yes, Arola knew his way all right, even along the low coast line, where there were no mountains and no landmarks whatever!

Eventually the Inspector grew very tired. It was not so much the long trail that did it—his body was well trained for such exertions—but the unvarying, monotonous life. There was just snow and ice and cold and no human being with whom to talk. He would never lower himself so much as to talk to the Eskimos; he never once thought of it! Fortunately these boring days of igloos and mushing and sledging would soon be replaced by comfortable living in a real house, and by the interesting investigation of a triple murder. That would be an investigation that would make his name a byword all over Canada and incidentally bring him the promotion he had been waiting for so long.

"Tonight we shall reach Fullerton and Sergeant Make," Arola said one morning. He and Minik had regained their usual good humor. They were used to the Inspector's ways by now—and after all they would soon be home, where everyone would see that they were accompanied by a white man!

"You won't have to mush ahead of us today, Inspector. We shall be there shortly." But the Inspector was a consistent man. It was he who decided whether to walk ahead or not. He

struck out in the direction Arola pointed out to him. Presently, the yellow rocks of Fullerton reared in the distance and they made straight for them. Arola and Minik did not cook on his kerosene heater that morning; they scarcely gulped down a few biscuits. They were so eager to get home, but they did not forget to put on their best furs.

Soon they caught up with the Inspector, who had already noticed sledge tracks on the ice and was following them. The dogs, too, were fired with renewed ambition: they pulled harder than ever before. All three rode on the sledge now, the dogs running faster and faster.

As soon as the people at the post saw them they rushed out. The sledge gave a final creak across the stones. The Inspector had arrived at the northernmost outpost of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

"Hello, Sergeant Make, how are things?"

"Everything's all right, Inspector. Welcome to Fullerton. I surely am glad to see you. Come inside and have a bite and warm up. You have a long trip behind you, all the way up from the South. Are you bringing any news? Mail, perhaps—or—what brings you here?"

"I have some news, but I have no mail. I left at a minute's notice, and I came up here to take charge of the murder."

"Oh, I see," said Make. "But come in first and let's have dinner. Then I shall turn the whole matter over to you."

They entered. A huge tea kettle was fetched. There was soft white bread and marmalade from jars, and a steaming bowl filled with baked beans. The Inspector could not help feeling in a festive mood, seeing all this once more after living for weeks in dreary snow huts. He sat down and the others followed his example. Arola, when asked to sit at the table, had already informed the constables that the Inspector would not eat with the natives.

"Very well," thought the Sergeant, "we are not going to fight at the very beginning." And aloud he said: "Come in and eat when we are through."

The Inspector ate with gusto. It was pleasant to be surrounded by white men once more. He talked and acted quite humanly until he suddenly inquired: "Where are you keeping your prisoner?"

"The prisoner?" stalled the Sergeant.

"Why, yes, the murderer! Where did you lock him up?"

"Lock him up? He is not even at the post just now."

The Inspector jumped up. "Not here at the post, you say? What do you mean? The prisoner isn't here? Who is along to guard him?"

"Nobody, he just went reindeer hunting with some other Eskimos. We need fresh meat and the reindeer are already moving north. He'll be away for a couple of days."

The Inspector brought his fist down on the table, his face livid with anger. He bellowed at the Sergeant:

"What the devil's ailing you, you damned fools? Of all the things in the world: to send a murderer out hunting! Are you crazy? Are you a pack of traitors here? You'll never see that murderer again, and let me tell you this, Sergeant, this is the end of your career in the force. And now that the murderer is gone, we might just as well not lose any time in trying to get hold of him once more. I'll get him all right, I can assure you! I can't blame him for running away. It's all your own fault. He simply made use of the chance you gave him."

Sergeant Make, too, had jumped up. Never before had he been called down like this. Even if it was his superior who talked to him now, he did not propose to take such language lying down. He was furious and he barked back:

"Mala did not flee. He'll come back, you'll see! He promised not to run away, and I can depend on him."

The Inspector laughed. "Depend on a murderer . . . on an Eskimo!—I don't think I have to tell you that your procedure is entirely against all the rules and regulations. You, a police officer, permit your prisoner to roam about at his own free will. Perhaps he even took dogs along?"

"Why, yes, he has all our dogs along," Make replied.

"Well, this is getting better and better! How clever of you,

my dear Sergeant, to permit a prisoner a headway of many days and even put at his disposal the only means of transportation available around here. Meanwhile, however, I shall hold you responsible for the recapture of the prisoner. I myself shall take charge of the post now. Arrange immediately for a room and bed for me. I am dead tired. Let's hope the prisoner does not fail to keep his promise to you and that he'll be back when I get up."

Sergeant Make did not answer and none of the constables uttered a word. They all liked the Sergeant and knew that he had not done anything wrong. They saw that the Inspector had no understanding of the conditions here. Without a word they went inside, put Make's own room in shape for the Inspector, and carried Make's bed into their room.

"Who's sleeping over there?" the Inspector asked, looking at the cot which had been put up for Mala. "Not the murderer? You don't tell me! Giving him the best accommodations in the post—a nice bed and blankets right next to the man in charge of the post. Throw out that bed! And if we ever get hold of him again, I shall treat him as he deserves. I'll not have him sleep in my room. Perhaps he ate at the same table with you?"

"So he did," said Make stubbornly. "And he also got most of our meat for us. Why, he saved our very lives when we were looking for him. I mentioned that already in my report, and we are indebted to him for our food and the feed of our dogs, as well as for our clothes during the time we lived in his camp. There is one thing certain: I never met a braver man than Mala, and that is not my opinion alone. I am sure each one of my three men here agrees with me."

"Well, well, you never met a man braver than Mala!—It seems to me that the police force up here in the North also assumes the duties of a judge, going so far as to exonerate a murderer. At any rate, it all sounds very nice indeed. Certainly all this will help a great deal in developing a sense of justice among the Eskimos."

"We did not judge anybody, and we didn't exonerate anybody. We have done our duty to the law and to man. But it's true enough that the laws against which Mala sinned are utterly

unknown to him; he had never even heard of them. If there is real justice in this world, not a single hair of his head will be touched."

"Why, of course," the Inspector agreed sarcastically, "even if we didn't touch one hair of his head, we could still break his neck. Your murderer friend is going to hang, I promise you that! The judge will arrive here during the summer and try the case. Mala will be sentenced and executed. That is, if he hasn't skipped now—what with giving him all possible means of transportation and even weapons! Well, the arm of the law reaches far in the British Empire. It reaches everybody, everywhere—as far as the very rim of the world. Even in a case where an officer of the law, instead of holding on to his prisoner, offers him a good chance to escape."



XVI

DURING the next two days, a nervous tension persisted between the Inspector and the others. They met at table three times a day; between meals the Inspector was busy writing reports. At each meal, he asked for Mala.

"He hasn't come back yet—your friend, the murderer, has he?"

"No, Mala isn't here yet, but he'll be back soon. He'll return as soon as he has enough meat."

The third day passed. They had eaten together in ominous silence. The Inspector called the Sergeant to his room.

"Sergeant," he said when they were alone, "you will have to admit now that I was right when I told you Mala would not come back. He has seized this chance to escape and it is all your fault. Tomorrow morning we will start in pursuit. Instruct all the Eskimos around the post to bring their dogs and sledges here. According to law, they must be ready to lend assistance to the police."

"Sir," Sergeant Make answered, "now that we are alone

and can talk freely without fear of being overheard, let me warn you that you'll find yourself up against something you don't understand. You can't rule these Eskimos by reading off a lot of laws to them. I told you that Mala will return, and I still stick to my belief in him, Inspector. I give you my word of honor that Mala will be delivered into your hands. But for his sake, and for the sake of the whole Eskimo people, I wish you would not treat him as a convicted criminal. He doesn't know he has done any wrong! I've repeatedly tried to point this out to you, but it seems I can't make you understand."

The Inspector arose. "That will be about all, Sergeant. Remember, I am in charge here."

"Very well, sir," the Sergeant said. "I know that, and shall always bear it in mind. Nevertheless, the situation . . ."

"Sergeant, tomorrow morning you will be ready to pursue the fugitive. He is to be arrested and brought down here before the ice breaks up. Otherwise, you may expect to pay dearly."

Make went out. He walked up the little hill in the hope of sighting Mala in the distance.

"SERGEANT, we've done lots of thinking these last few days," began Balk when the men went to bed that night, "and we're sure that the Inspector is all wrong. Don't you worry," he said, "the three of us are going to back you up when the whole matter comes up in Ottawa."

"Thanks, boys. I have a good case, and I know that the right is on my side. The only thing to do now is to mark time until Mala returns voluntarily. It mustn't appear in any way that he escaped and was brought in again by the Inspector."

They were still talking when a noise from outside reached their ears. The other three noticed how Make's face brightened up. There could be no doubt about it; Mala had returned! They dressed hurriedly and rushed out. Sure enough, there was Mala with a tremendous load of skinned reindeer.

The two natives who had accompanied Mala were at his heels. There was nothing of the penitent sinner about Mala—

nothing of the fugitive criminal caught after an unsuccessful flight. Mala shook hands with his jailers. He was completely at ease. The threat that he would be hung and all the other incomprehensible things that had once worried him had ceased to bother him. Here was a man returning from a successful hunt with nothing but his bag on his mind.

"It happened," Mala said to the Sergeant, "that we caught a little—just a very little meat. We had to be satisfied with whatever we could get."

"Why, you have tremendous quantities of meat there! What a lot of animals you must have killed!" Make was full of praise. He would not spoil the joy of reunion, even though his heart was heavy at Mala's inescapable fate. "Let's put the meat in the storehouse. We can attend to it in the morning. It's very late now, and you must be tired."

While they were still busy unloading the sledge, the Inspector appeared on the scene. He immediately stepped over to Make and inquired:

"Did the prisoner really return?"

"Yes! Mala returned—just as I said! He is one of the three natives over there. But let us unload first. Then he can come in and we can talk to him.—The second man over there is Joe and the third one is a fellow who lives in the neighborhood."

"That's all right, then," the Inspector said, mollified. "We can wait until they come in, but I shall stand here and watch them. Which one did you say is the murderer?"

"That one over there. The biggest of the three."

Mala looked anything but a murderer.

At this point, Joe discovered the Inspector and directed the attention of the others to him. They came running over to greet him, but as soon as they saw the expression on his face, they withdrew. There was nothing about him that invited them to shake hands. His manner was cold and distant.

Meanwhile the meat had been unloaded from all the sledges but one. The man in charge of it, a native from the nearby encampment, got ready to drive off.

"Where is that man going?"

"He has nothing to do with us. It's his own meat and we have no share in it. He merely went hunting with our two men."

"But didn't he use the provisions and ammunition of the police post?" the Inspector demanded. He suspected at once that some regulation had been ignored.

The Sergeant explained matters. "Although he made use of our equipment, he paid for it with his services. I arranged it all, as the official in charge, and shall make my report on it."

The Inspector did not say anything, but stood watching until everything was unloaded. Then he followed the others into the house. He saw with great surprise that Joe and Mala were sitting at the table while one of his constables made tea and gave them food.

"Are they eating at our table?" he asked Make.

"They are," the Sergeant replied, "and they are hungry and tired, too. After all, they must eat."

"Of course, but not the same food as ours. Eskimos shouldn't be spoiled—and least of all, a criminal! As soon as they have eaten, I want to have a talk with them. Right now, tonight—I'll put this murderer in his place. I intend to give him a good scare. It should prove a beneficial influence for the others. The more they are impressed, the better for the law."

None of the mounties uttered a word. Joe surmised that something evil threatened, but he held his tongue. Mala, suddenly inexplicably depressed, ate in silence; he was greatly disappointed that none of the white men were eating with him. It would have been so nice, now that he was home, to have a cup of tea with them. But the new master evidently did not approve of the constables sitting at the same table with him. It was probably for that reason that they were just standing around. It was a silent meal, and the air was charged with ominous foreboding.

As soon as they had eaten, Mala got up. He went over to the door and was on the point of leaving but the Inspector held him back.

"Hey, where's that man going?"

The words were translated, and an answer given: Mala found it necessary to leave the room for a moment. What had

happened? What did all these questions mean? Moreover, everyone's face seemed changed. Mala had a distinct feeling of dislike for the stranger.

"Balk, you go with him, and keep your eyes on him. Then bring him here."

The others could not help laughing: Mala, suddenly placed under guard? Mala who had gone about at liberty for months! It really was funny. Things had changed at the post.

WHEN Mala returned he found the Inspector at one end of the table with a big sheet of paper and a heavy book in front of him. The Sergeant sat next to him and the constables stood around.

Joe had regained his self-assurance. He guessed that Mala would be humiliated now; no longer would he be the great Mala. The thought pleased Joe. He realized the Inspector's authority, and at once acted accordingly. For the longest time, the Sergeant's kindness toward Mala had annoyed him. The white men and Joe were important personages around here but that must not be said of the other Eskimos. Joe, being interpreter, would soon know everything that was going on in regard to Mala; nothing would remain hidden from him, and he would understand how to exploit everything to his best advantage.

"Are you Mala, the man who was brought here by the Sergeant?"

"Yes, I am," was Mala's prompt reply.

"Do you admit that last summer you killed three men, abducted the wife of one of them and appropriated his property?"

Mala was surprised. How tactless of this man to ask such direct questions, to inquire about events which should not be discussed at all. He therefore answered: "Yes, I did those things but I'd rather have you question the four white men about it. I myself would rather not talk of it."

"Nobody's asking you what you'd like to do. If I ask you a question, you must answer me. If you refuse it will go

hard with you. If you are obstinate we will make you talk."

Joe was delighted at these brusque words and stutered in his anxious haste to translate them for Mala. Well, he thought triumphantly, this was certainly the end of the great Mala!

The hearing continued, but not exactly along the lines the Inspector desired. Mala became stubborn. He had already replied to many questions that should not have been asked at all. The more insistence he encountered on the Inspector's part, the more resolved he became not to say anything. Finally, in a tone which the Inspector could not misunderstand, he declared that he would not answer any more questions. Yes, he had killed the three men, but that was nobody's business. He had promised the Sergeant to stay around until the Master of the white men had come and until he had spoken. "And if you are the Master of the white men I shall answer you, but now it is time to sleep and I have already stayed up too long."

After this, Mala sat down quietly.

"Stand up when you are talking to me," the Inspector shouted.

Joe translated and Mala stood up.

"If you are a man who cannot understand the words I say to you while I am seated, it might really be better for me to get up," Mala said ironically. "But I told you before that I will not speak any more tonight. You will have to wait until tomorrow."

THE Inspector was furious. "What a charming fellow is this friend of yours! Very well, let's adjourn for the night. Where are you going to put him?"

Make replied that Mala could sleep on the floor of the mess. He could be given a mattress and some blankets.

"From now on, he will be handcuffed every night, and strictly guarded all day long."

"Handcuffed?" Make asked. "That's absolutely unnecessary."

The Inspector's face grew red with anger. "Do you mean

to intimate that you will not obey my orders? If you've made up your mind to disobey me, why don't you say so? There are four of you, and if you act together it's mutiny."

"Of course he'll be handcuffed if you insist upon it," Make assented. "I merely objected as a human being."

"I'm not interested in your human feelings. I gave an order as an officer of the law, and I insist upon its being executed. Put handcuffs on him. His right wrist is to be locked to his left foot. Tomorrow night you reverse that. He is to spend all his nights like that in the future."

They led Mala inside. "You are going to sleep here," Make said, pointing at the mattress on the floor, "and here are your covers. Get undressed quickly."

How strange the Sergeant was tonight. This was not the friendly tone that Mala knew so well. The Sergeant was serious and close-mouthed. Mala realized that it would be best to obey without a word, and he undressed quickly. But when he stretched out, the Sergeant put his hand under the cover, and snapped an iron band around his ankle. Then he took Mala's wrist, pulled it down, and locked it to his foot.

This new indignity left Mala speechless. He looked at the Sergeant. Mala could see from the expression in his eyes that Make, too, was suffering. It was a moment when men resort to the wordless language which needs no interpreter.

Mala could not sleep; the handcuffs were very unpleasant. He felt like a tied dog. This, he thought, was a sample of what it would be like to be hung, and then and there he decided that he would never submit to it. He pulled again and again at the shackles. His ankle ached, his wrist was bleeding. He turned around until he slipped from the mattress to the floor, but that did not lessen his agony. Here he lay, trapped like a fox. He had so often watched animals suffering, raging in their attempts to be free again. Now he understood them; now he could sympathize with the plight of a wolf whose leg is caught in a trap. And then he thought of his wives and his boys, and he resolved to return to them at the first opportunity.

The night passed slowly. At last he fell asleep, only to

awaken at the entrance of the Inspector. He was accompanied by Joe, the interpreter.

"I think you are convinced by now that you cannot escape. You will be put in irons like this every night from now on. During the day you will be permitted to work at the post under the supervision of a constable. If you try to escape, or if you are disobedient or lazy, we shall put you in irons during the day too. It's entirely up to you to choose which way we shall treat you."

"Are those the white man's words?" Mala asked Joe.

"They are." It was perfectly plain to Joe that Mala did not have to be reckoned with any more. Mala was caught like a trapped animal, and Joe was glad for had not Mala looked down upon him before this?

"Yes, that is what the white man says," Joe repeated. "And let me advise you to obey him, because he is very severe. One of the white men or I will be watching you all day long."

"So you are going to watch me," Mala said. "I am glad to learn that you are such a brave man."

Mala was clever enough not to show Joe how much he disliked the idea of his acting as a guard over him. His grudge against Joe was considerably strengthened by the fact that he never knew how exactly his words were translated.

The Inspector unlocked the handcuffs and Mala stretched. His back hurt him and his knee was stiff.

"Get up quickly," the Inspector ordered.

Joe translated. "You are to get up quickly and stay in here while we eat. Sit over there in the corner."

Even in his impotence, Mala displayed dignity. "I shall obey orders, but there will be a way out," he thought. His face was expressionless and did not betray his thoughts. He was slumped on the bench when the constables entered. Presently, Joe disappeared.

They ate silently. Mala was aware that Sergeant Make and his men were not at all happy about the newcomer.

As soon as they had eaten Joe returned and Mala was given food. Poor food, Joe noticed with satisfaction. But he saw that his own food was not as good as before; there was

no milk, or jam, and the white bread was taken off the table before Joe sat down. "What of it," he thought. "It doesn't matter. I get into the storage house so often that what I don't eat here I can eat at home with my wife." And he grinned as he went about his work.

"The prisoner is to shovel snow. Let him dig out a nice, broad walk in front of the house. The two of you can change off keeping an eye on him. He is to stay out there until midday and then, after a rest, he is to continue the work in the afternoon. In the evening he will be locked to a bench, and tonight he is to be handcuffed again."

"Very well, sir," was the answer. And the Inspector went to his room.

MALA was shoveling snow. This was no work for a man! This was work where one did not have to think but only to obey orders. Why, it was slaves' work!

In the evening they put handcuffs on him and locked him to the bench. Once, when he had forgotten all about it, Mala rose to get something. It came home to him painfully that he was chained to the leg of the bench. There was a rattling noise, and Joe turned around and smirked at him. Mala felt like a trapped wolf and Joe saw his fury mounting. There was hatred against Joe and against the white men in Mala's eyes; hatred even against the Sergeant whose life he had saved and who had lured him into this by his friendly manner. Why had he not fled before? He could not understand it. He must have been overpowered by the white man's magic!

For two days, Mala shoveled snow into heaps. When there was no more snow around the house, he was made to shovel a path to the storage house. The very reindeer he had bagged were packed away in there. Now he had to watch Joe carry the carcasses into the house, cut them up in big chunks, and take pieces on the sly. He knew very well that Joe was not permitted to do that, but Mala was not a man to tell tales. He was a prisoner but he was still Mala. Was not a trapped wolf still a wolf?—a wounded bear still a bear?

It served as fuel to Mala's resentment that there was always someone around who did nothing but watch him. He fell to pondering upon the possibilities of taking his revenge. When he saw how Joe pointed him out to strange people, telling them that here was a man soon to be hung, Mala vowed to himself: "Joe is not going to live long, once I am free again. I shall get him. How I shall enjoy slashing open his belly and tearing out his bowels. Yes, I think Joe will be the first one I shall kill!"

But Mala's face was blank, and he went on shoveling snow.

One afternoon Make stood guard over him. The Inspector had just left the house, curtly acknowledging the Sergeant's salute. The two did not exchange a word.

The Inspector started out across the ice. There was no hatred in his heart, but neither was there love. An overpowering sense of duty was all he felt, save for the satisfaction of being master and commanding others.

Make stepped over to Mala. "Come inside," he said. "You can take a rest now."

The Sergeant gave Mala a cigarette and went into the house with him. Mala had not been permitted to smoke during the day since the Inspector's arrival. He was given only a little pipe each evening. When he had asked for more, he had not even received an answer; all his requests had to go through Joe and so he preferred to do without things. But Mala enjoyed his cigarette now and softened a little. Balk brought a piece of cake for him and another constable offered him jam.

Mala thought to himself, "I do not feel so badly about being a prisoner because Make, my friend, tells me it is necessary. But I don't want to be locked in irons every night. When I trap a wolf, he is shackled only once, and then he dies. I will not stand for being handcuffed all the time."

And Make thought, looking sadly at Mala for despite the barriers of language they could read the inmost thoughts of each other: "If I could only do something. But I am not in charge here any more. I have the consolation of knowing that things were different then."

When the Inspector returned, Mala was outside once more

shoveling snow; Make stood near by, gun in hand and an alert eye on his prisoner, lest he escape.

THE Inspector had thought out everything. In two days he intended to take Mala up north. There they would find the corpses of the three murdered men, so as to have them ready for evidence when the boat arrived with the judges. Mala was to show them, at the scene of the murders, just how he had killed the men. Sergeant Make, two constables for witnesses, and Joe were to come along; they would use three sledges. A list was made of everything to be taken along. There was much weighing and packing, because everything had to be ship-shape. Sledges, baggage and dogs were apportioned. Joe's dogs and those belonging to the police were not sufficient, so Arola's dogs were requisitioned. Arola himself was glad to go along. He had already forgotten all the disagreeable experiences on the trip up with the Inspector; he was not embittered any more. Mala was to be led past many camps as a prisoner and all would witness the great killer's humiliation; it would be a wonderful experience.

The day of their departure arrived with threatening weather. Early in the morning Make told the Inspector that a blizzard seemed imminent.

"We'll start out just the same," the Inspector said. "If we are overtaken by bad weather we shall simply build igloos. We leave here right after breakfast."

As soon as they had eaten Joe was called, and Mala was relieved of the handcuffs. "Mala," the Inspector said, "we are going to travel. You are going to accompany us and show us where you buried the men you killed. You are going to explain to us how you killed them. During the day you will be permitted to mush ahead or alongside of the sledge. But if you dare to get out of sight you will be pursued and brought back to the sledge. We all have loaded guns and, if necessary, we will shoot you in the legs. Then you will be strapped to the sledge, and you know yourself what the cold will do to you in that case."

Mala did not reply. Not a muscle in his face moved. He

put on his traveling furs and waited at the door for the party to start out.

Presently Make came and said: "Take your sleeping skins, your blanket and dry boots. Put them into this bag and come along."

"There will be bad weather," Arola said to Mala. "We won't get very far today."

Mala was unmoved. Let the blizzard come. He was not supposed to do any thinking here.

Make once more tried to dissuade the Inspector. "It will be difficult traveling today. I'm sure we're running into a bad storm."

"I don't care," the Inspector replied. "We start out according to plan. You should have brought the bodies along as evidence in the first place. Now we have to mush up north while there is still snow."

At last they departed.

The Inspector and Joe made the vanguard; then came Mala and Make's sledge; Arola drove all alone, and in the rear came the constables. As soon as they reached the nearby promontory, the snow began to trouble the dogs greatly.

The Inspector told Joe that as the others appeared afraid to travel in such weather he depended on Joe to be a good guide. Joe's reply was to whip on his dogs; he would make progress as long as it was possible. He wanted to gain the favor of the Inspector and earn a good reward. Besides, this trip meant the final fall of the once-feared Mala. Every evening Mala was to be bound, hand and foot, and Joe would certainly see to it that all the natives they passed on the way got a good look at the prisoner. After that they would never again refer to him as the great Mala.

The storm gained in intensity. The snowfall became heavier. While the sun was high, the melting snow had formed a hard crust on the surface, but as soon as that was broken, the snowdrifts grew worse than before.

They made little progress. It was very difficult to make progress with the sledges. The men went on, straining for-

ward, but once in awhile they had to turn their backs to the storm for a breathing spell. Then they continued. What a hard-boiled fellow this Inspector was! He had made up his mind to go ahead and ahead he went! The Inspector was happy. Now he was going to prove to them that one could travel if one were determined to do so. White men as well as Eskimos required a strong hand. What a good thing that he had come up here.

Around noon, they stopped for a short respite. Their sledges drew up, one next to the other, and the Inspector ordered tea made. They unpacked the kerosene stove but it was impossible to find a sheltered spot. They took a few skins from the sledge and put up a little tent. But there was no snow on the ice to be cut into blocks and set up as a wind-break, so the tent did not stay up very long.

At last they succeeded in starting the fire and melting a little snow, but then the storm veered around, blowing directly into the improvised kitchen, extinguishing the fire and upsetting the water kettle. It was impossible to prepare tea.

"Suits me, too," said the Inspector. "Then we shall continue without tea. Get everything ready at once!"

Make and the two constables did not say a word, neither did the Eskimos. What was the use? The Inspector was not waiting for their protests anyway. Bending low, he struggled against the blizzard. A few seconds later it was hard to make out his form as he pushed ahead through the snowstorm.

"Quick, after him," Make ordered.

Without delay the sledges were strapped, the traces of the dogs disentangled, and off they drove in the wake of their energetic leader. By the time they caught up with him, snow covered the world. Snow stung their faces and crept into the folds of their garments. Snow penetrated to their necks under the fur hoods. It was bitter cold but the Inspector was not yet ready to admit defeat.

They continued for a couple of hours. It was madness to start on a long trail under such conditions. But it was the Inspector who wanted to get ahead—and he was the master.

SUDDENLY the blizzard was upon them in full force. It was not blowing any more, it was roaring. The thin layer of snow that had settled over the ice was swept up and carried off in wild whirls. The dogs could not go on; it would have been senseless to use the whip on them. The men themselves could no longer stand upright. The storm in all its howling, frenzied ferocity was loose on them now.

The sledges were stopped dead. The men huddled together, trying to support one another. If one of them stepped aside only a few paces the others would never see him again.

Make got close to the Inspector and, putting his mouth to his ear, shouted that they could not continue any longer. All they could do now was to try and hold on to one another so that no one would get lost.

The blizzard abated for a brief spell.

"Tell the natives," the Inspector instructed, "to build a snow hut."

Make pointed to the ice under foot. "It's impossible to build an igloo here."

As the snow had been swept from the ice there was no building material; all the snow that had fallen during the winter was now whirling wildly through the air.

"All right," said the Inspector, "then we'll just have to drive to some spot where there is building snow."

"But it's impossible to go on. The dogs will only lose their foothold on the hard ice. We can't go on!"

Powerful Nature was stronger than a handful of men and some miserable dogs. The men crouched for shelter behind the sledges which were grouped close together; the dogs, too, had crawled there for shelter. The Inspector himself now took refuge behind the sledges.

There they sat without a word. One hour passed and then another. They were all terribly cold. It did not seem possible that such a storm could last much longer!

"Take out some skins so we can wrap ourselves up in them," the Inspector ordered, and Arola got up to obey him. But as soon as they had unloosened the straps the strong

wind caught hold of the skins and blankets. They could not hold on to them; it was hard enough to remain on their feet. Reindeer skins and woolen blankets whirled across the ice. There was no holding on to anything any more. Pots and cups and everything flew away and were lost.

The Inspector jumped up with a curse. "There go my own things. Quick, quick, get them." They could not hear his words, they only saw him bend forward in the storm and topple over, failing in his attempt to support himself with both his hands. They all thought that now, perhaps, he would learn to respect an arctic storm. They should have taken refuge before, or better still, not have started out at all. Somewhat abashed, the Inspector crawled back. Snow had blown down his back and he felt colder than he had ever been before, but he did not say a word.

They had no choice but to wait a few hours. When evening came they were all famished, but to prepare food was impossible; it was nonsensical even to think of it! At last, however, it seemed as if the storm was settling down to a more even tempo. There were none of those terrific squalls now. They need only contend against the driving, almost suffocating wind that pushed past them with such enormous pressure.

The Inspector arose. "We must return to the post and renew our equipment. There's a tail wind, so we can get back today."

They made a speedy return trip, as the storm blew almost directly from the rear. Sometimes the sledges would slide along so fast that the dogs could scarcely keep up with them, even though the men were riding on top of the load. But when they reached the promontory and had to make a half turn in order to follow the coast line, the wind struck them sideways and it was hard to keep the dogs on the right course. They had to hold up the sledge and push hard, since the ice coating of the runners had been scraped off long ago. It was work for the dogs, too, but the animals knew that they were on their way home and they did their very best.

At last they reached the post, utterly exhausted, covered

with snow; their faces were frozen and they were so tired that they were ready to collapse.

"Make tea and get us something to eat. We are tired and hungry. And get our baggage inside quickly;—get it in any old way just as long as it's inside. We can straighten things out tomorrow. Hurry, hurry, everything inside and unhitch the dogs." The Inspector mumbled his commands and dropped on to a bench.

The others staggered inside. They were given tea and bread and marmalade, but their fatigue was even greater than their hunger. They could hardly keep their eyes open and they went to bed as quickly as possible.

When the Inspector undressed, something hard clanged to the floor. It was Mala's handcuffs which had somehow gotten between his things. He tried to summon up enough energy to go out and have the prisoner put into irons.

"Oh, hell," he thought, "I've got to have some sleep. Nobody would run away tonight anyhow!" And a moment later he slept soundly.



XVII

THERE was one man in the police barracks that night who did not sleep, and that man was Mala.

He was as tired as if he had traveled through the mountains for days or hunted walrus from the rim of the ice and himself dragged home the heavy prey. However, he had not been the hunter, but rather the object of the hunt.

When the others went to rest, he slumped down on the bench. But soon his mind wrestled with a new, startling idea. The constables were asleep, the Sergeant slept and from the Inspector's room the sound of even breathing could be heard. His enemy was asleep. This was his chance! Freedom beckoned to him and he would lose no time in regaining it. He listened for a moment, then he stood up and stretched his weary limbs.

Yes, he would seize this opportunity and flee at once. This certainly was no traveling weather for white men, but he, Mala, could go on the trail without fear. He could always accomplish things which were beyond other people. And now it was his freedom that must be gained! First he must get the dogs and hitch them to his sledge. The animals were resting in the shelter of the house, but they knew him well and permitted him to hitch them up without even a growl. Not that they were very willing, because they, too, were exhausted and famished. As soon as they were harnessed to the sledge, they lay down for some more much needed rest.

Mala reached for the whip, but then stopped and pondered. If he left without a rifle and provisions, he would surely perish unless he acquired all those things by taking them away from other natives. In this way it would be easy to follow his tracks. He concluded that it would be best to return to the house and fetch everything he might need on the trail.

A moment later Mala entered the mess and searched for a rifle. The men had taken their rifles along. Suddenly he felt strangely courageous. He softly opened the door to the Inspector's room and sneaked over to the bed where he slept. The Inspector's rifle was hanging over his bed. Mala knew that rifle very well. It was a high powered one, and he was going to take it. Ever so carefully, he lifted the rifle from the hook. Then he crept back to the mess where he put it on the table. Once more he went into the Inspector's room. Now came the hardest job of all: securing the shells which were stored away in a box under the Inspector's bed. Mala lay prone on the floor, and, extending his hand, fished for one carton after another.

Suddenly the sleeping man stirred. He turned around and sat up for a moment; he must have heard something. He reached over to the little table for a drink of water. Mala hid under the bed, scarcely breathing; he was partly covered by the blanket which hung down over the sides. He made up his mind that were he discovered he would jump up and bite through the Inspector's throat. Then the others could come

and hang him. But the Inspector, dead tired, did not notice anything. He sank back on his pillow, pulled the blanket around his shoulders, and in another minute was breathing evenly. But Mala waited a good long time before he took any more cartridges from the box.

He took many cartons of shells, many more than he had ever owned before. His arm full of cartons, he arose, tiptoed out, and placed the cartridges on the mess table. Again he sneaked into the Inspector's room and took as many cartons as he could carry. There were still some cartridges left, but Mala did not want to take unnecessary risks. He closed the door noiselessly; then he bolted the doors of the mess.

He carried the rifle and cartridges into the hall. Mala found himself a bag into which he stuffed the ammunition. Then he took everything out to the sledge and grabbed a knife and three bags full of dog feed which were in the hall. Kerosene and a portable cooking stove as well as a box with provisions, a tea kettle and a pot he also took along. At last he had everything he needed. He quickly covered the whole pile with a number of sleeping bags and skins. He had quite a load, but then he was going on a long journey.

At the last moment he took the harnesses and traces that had been thrown into the hall. One bundle he tossed on his sledge—it was always a good idea to have a spare harness—adding to it an especially long strap of sealskin. All the other straps and traces he cut to pieces so that it would take a long time to repair them.

He whipped on the dogs. This could not be done without a little noise, but the terrific snowstorm completely drowned out the commotion. After such a day as they had just experienced no one thought of anything but sleep and rest. The way was open for Mala.

As soon as he reached the ice along the shore, he stopped the dogs. They lay down at once, and the snow blew into their eyes, blinding them. Mala took a knife and went back ashore. There was still something to be done. He cut the traces of all the sledges in the settlement, thus making it impossible for

them to start in pursuit for some time. He knew there were not enough sealskin traces on hand for immediate repairs.

He even cut the whips and the knots of the underslung straps in such a way as not to be visible at first glance; they were sure to drive a good stretch before the sledge would break down.

At last he was ready! Now, off to freedom! Back to the life where he alone ruled, and where white men would never follow him.

DRIVING on the dogs was hard work. Never had a long trip been started in such a blizzard, with dogs so thoroughly exhausted. The animals seemed angry because they were forced to work again. But Mala showed them no consideration. He had picked the best of the dogs and he used his whip unmercifully. After all, it was not a mere dog or two that was at stake here, but something much more valuable: Mala himself! He drew upon the last ounce of his own energy. He mushed alongside the dogs and jumped between them whenever they showed signs of letting up.

"Mush on, mush on. No rest now. We must get a good start and no one must know what trail we took. Mush on, mush on."

The dogs seemed to understand that they must go forward. Their driver showed them no mercy. They pulled as strongly as they could, but they were not very fast all the same. Certainly not fast enough for Mala. Nevertheless, with each moment, he put more distance between himself and the white men. They surely would not venture to drive through the blizzard again and he had taken the best dogs along. Mala simply ignored the storm; the excitement of his escape warmed him. All he wanted was to go steadily forward.

As soon as they reached the Far North at the end of the trail, there would be wonderful days in the mountains, hunting reindeer and catching salmon, with the birds singing overhead. Alas, he was still down here near the shore and the trail was long. The thought of the distance he must cover made him

bring down the whip upon the dogs. He well understood their fatigue for he, too, was tired and weak with hunger. He had eaten almost nothing on their return but that did not matter now. For the time being, he could not afford to stop. He must continue, taking the trail which the white men would not expect him to take. He wanted to keep away from all people; to be left strictly alone until he had reached his wives, his boys and his property. Then they would journey far, far away, to the country of the musk-ox, and there he would stay and never return.

The dogs slowed and were whipped on again. Oh, this terrible snowstorm that impeded all progress! How it sapped their strength! The dogs forged ahead only slowly.

"Quick, quick, there will be no rest until we are far away from here."

Suddenly something on the ice attracted Mala's attention. The dogs, too, had seen it, and were hastening towards it. Could it be a man lying there; if not, what then? Mala grew anxious. The very second that the dogs reached the spot, Mala rushed for the object. It was a box lying on the ice. He immediately recognized it as one of the tin containers blown from the sledge the day before. He laughed to himself, relieved. Here was more food for him. So much the better, for it meant that he could go farther without hunting.

He grasped the tin container, and started to haul it on top of the load. It was not very heavy. What could be in it? Biscuits? If so, he could take out a few of them and eat them on the way. He pulled off his mittens, and bent back the tin cover. As he thrust his hand into the box, the sharp edge of the tin gave him a deep and ugly cut. He extracted a few biscuits, tied the box to the sledge with one of the straps he had taken along for spares, and again took to the trail toward the north.

"I have a whip, dogs. Mush on!"

When broad daylight came, the dogs seemed scarcely able to go on any more. Mala knew he must not demand too much of them, so he steered away from the ice towards the land, driving up to the shelter of a big rock. Here he would not be

noticed even if sledges passed. Indeed, Mala knew very well how to guard himself against discovery. He took one of the feed bags and distributed its contents among the dogs. They gulped down the meat ravenously, but did not have any too much of it. Mala thought of his tremendous stores of meat up north, and of all the meat left behind when they took him down to the coast, and the quantities of it that he had fed to the dogs belonging to the Sergeant and Joe. Now he had to husband his meat stores. "When you bring me home, we shall all of us eat as much as we can stuff down our throats," Mala assured the dogs. "But right now you can't have any more."

As there was no time, he did not build an igloo; he took a few reindeer skins and rolled himself into them for a little sleep. Soon he must be on his way again. Never in all his life had anything hurried him, but now he had good reason to make haste. Suddenly he realized that his hand hurt him: he pulled off the mitten. The hand was all covered with blood, but probably it would heal quickly. He crossed both arms over his chest, pulled the hood over his head, and lay down to sleep on the reindeer skins. A few times he started up, roused from his sleep. He did not propose to have his rifle and cartridges taken away from him while he slept. Nobody could surprise him; he would be awake and ready.

THE dogs were still tired when Mala disturbed them once more. He, too, had not yet recovered from his exhaustion. He took a couple of chunks of frozen meat and sucked them; they would at least serve to dull the pangs of hunger for some time. Then he drove on.

"They are awake at the post now," he thought. "They have discovered that I am gone, but there are neither traces nor straps for their sledges." And he smiled at the thought.

"It will be two days before they can start out after me, and by that time I shall be far away."

"Mush on, mush on," he urged the dogs.

They must travel fast despite fatigue and hunger and even though it meant feeling the sting of Mala's whip. They

had far to go and for many nights they could not allow themselves a good rest.

Strange, how heavy his right hand felt. It pained him when he flourished the whip. Nevertheless, he made merciless use of the lash.

There was hardly any wind. One could look far and wide across ice and land. He tired very quickly today; a feeling of heaviness in his head bothered him—probably the result of all the excitement. Although by now he had reached open country where he felt at home, the time for a good rest had not yet come.

Wager River, north of Fullerton, never freezes over. To cross there, one either had to drive far inland or far out to the sea. Mala chose the land route; he did not want to go out to the sea where he was liable to meet many people. Later, he would take a trail towards the hinterland. He drove the dogs through a valley where the going was rather hard, as the trail led uphill and his sledge-runners were badly in need of fresh ice coating.

As soon as he reached a sheltered spot he stopped, took out his snow knife, cut blocks, and built a small wind-break behind which he set up the kerosene burner. Then he put on the kettle and melted some snow. He intended to recoat the sledge-runners and then take a little rest.

By now the snowdrift had almost ceased. He took the entire load from the sledge in order to find out exactly what he had taken along. He inspected everything carefully. With a snow beater, he cleaned the skins. He found to his satisfaction that he had generous quantities of everything.

He daubed the sledge runners with a piece of skin dipped into the water as soon as it was lukewarm; the ice coating formed quickly. Now there would be smooth running over the snow. Then he took the rifle and examined it admiringly. His fingers hurt when he tried to pull the trigger, but he ignored the pain. His thoughts were concerned only with the wonderful weapon. He wondered how many cartridges he had taken along and opened the bag into which he had hastily stuffed them. He was aghast; in the darkness, he had selected the wrong car-

tridges. They did not fit his rifle! For a second he was paralyzed. What could he do? With a rifle he could not use, and without any other firearms, it would probably prove impossible to proceed far along the wintry trail. But soon Mala's indomitable spirit rallied. He simply had to forge ahead! He would not take the land route after all, but follow the coast line where he was sure to meet people.

There was so much to think over. Even though he had to economize with his fuel, a cup of tea might help to clear his thoughts. Presently the boiling hot tea filled his body with a marvelous warmth, immediately raising his hopes. He would soon obtain a rifle to fit his cartridges, or else cartridges to fit his rifle! As soon as he was ready he reloaded his sledge carefully and systematically. Now the load did not require as much space as the day before and the sledge therefore would be much easier to steer. Soon Mala was ready to depart.

It was almost a relief for him to be kept busy with the dogs. The disappointment over the rifle weighed upon him heavily, and in driving the dogs and fighting off his own exhaustion, he could at least give vent to his feelings. He knew no mercy, because fate itself was against him. He lashed the dogs cruelly.

He took his course towards the fjord and saw that he could easily cross the ice. It would be possible to steer straight across it and so reach the spot quickly where the ships had anchored last winter. There he would find people and rifles and cartridges. With a rifle he would be able to continue on the trail. He meant to possess one at all costs, whether he had to take it by brute force or obtain it by cunning. He was at war with everyone, and he felt that everyone's hand was against him.

Mala wished to mislead his pursuers, throwing them off their course as much as possible. If only his hand were not so swollen! His whole arm felt inflamed and his arm pit pained him greatly. But he tried to ignore it. Had he not cut his finger time and again? One thing was uppermost in his mind now; to get north.

If he did not lash the dogs continually they fell into a

lazy trot, and he could not permit that. He had to jump from the sledge and run alongside whipping them, but as soon as he himself tired, the dogs slowed up. Arriving in the neighborhood of the fjord, he glimpsed the ice drifting in single floes. That meant he had to go farther out in order to make a safe crossing. He decided that he would first gain the other shore before pitching camp and taking a good rest. It would be best to leave the country of his pursuers far behind.

But they were making poor progress. Slower and slower the dogs trotted while his own strength gradually ebbed. Suddenly something strange occurred. The dogs eagerly sniffed the air; they raised their heads and presently pulled with renewed vigor. Faster the sledge went and in the right direction, too. At first Mala thought that the dogs had scented reindeer and joyfully anticipated a killing, until he remembered that he could not use his rifle. The dogs were running so fast by now that Mala had to cling to the sledge with all his strength. Soon the explanation for all this was obvious when three igloos came into sight. Only when they had reached the snow houses did the dogs stop. The Eskimos rushed out to greet the new arrival.

As soon as they reached the sledge and saw who had come they were greatly embarrassed. They all knew that Mala had been seized by the white men and some of them had even heard that he was to be hung. Others had insisted that he had made friends with the white men and was now living with them. But it was agreed among them all that Mala was a big man. He drove the post's dog team, used the firearms of the constables, and sat at the table with the Sergeant. The people were doubtful whether Mala had been stripped of his power or was still a man to be feared.

In a flash, Mala made his plans. He jumped off the sledge and lost no time in making his announcement.

"The police are taking the trail and I am on my way north. I am to go ahead of them and build igloos so they can move right in at the end of each day's travel. Bring me

dog feed, and let me sleep a little. I have to leave quickly; I can't lose much time here."

Mala went into the house of one of the men who, during the summer, had been with the whalers and who he knew would obey him without a murmur.

"Some of my dogs are tired, and I'd better leave them here. Let me have three of yours until I return. I shall give you tobacco for a present later on."

"My dogs are yours. Take whatever you desire," said the man.

They boiled meat, and Mala ate voraciously.

"The dogs are to be fed well, but not too well. If they are given too much, they will not be able to get far tomorrow and I must go inland to hunt reindeer."

They exchanged gossip and Mala soon learned that they had not yet heard about the Inspector's arrival; they only knew about the Sergeant and the constables and Mala himself from the time he had become an important personage around the post.

Mala was shrewd. Nobody was going to catch him! He started to clean his rifle. He sat quietly, cleaning the weapon inside and out, and soon they talked about weapons. This gave Mala a chance to ask the others to show him their rifles. Sure enough, there was one among them that would take his cartridges.

"Well, now," Mala thought, "this is the one for me. Even though it is older than mine, it is, nevertheless, a rifle. Yes, this is the one I need to make my way home."

"Where are you going?" Mala asked the campers, "and where are you coming from?"

"We were up north near Tajarnak, catching foxes. Now we are going down to the police post to trade in our skins. We were caught in a terrible storm, but tomorrow we will be able to continue."

"Don't do that," Mala advised, "because the Sergeant is already on his way here. He will need dog feed and will be only too glad to sleep here. I left him and two of the others during the snowstorm. They went home to wait for better

weather, but in a few days they will be here. They will need help to cross the fjord and are sure to give you valuable presents for your assistance. You'd better wait here for them."

Mala's words were convincing in their wisdom. The three families decided to remain and wait the white men's coming. "My hand is sick," Mala said. "See how swollen it is, and my arm is all red."

An old, experienced man looked at the hand.

"You'd better rest this hand. Don't go out in the cold and keep very quiet. I have seen people lose the use of their arms because their soul departed from their body through a cut in the finger. You must wait until the soul returns to its abode. Otherwise that arm might get very bad and you would die of it."

But Mala could not wait.

"There's no real danger. Only it's too bad that I can't handle my rifle very well. Let me see yours," he turned to the man whose rifle was of a size for his shells. "Oh, it's easy for me to use this rifle; it's not so heavy. You can have mine until I come back."

Everybody looked up in astonishment. What a strange idea of Mala's. But he was not a man to be denied anything. And so the exchange of weapons was made.

In a little while, everybody turned in to sleep; only Mala stayed awake. His hand hurt him, his arm burned like fire and he was worried that the people here might betray his route to the police.

Oh, if only he could sleep a little so he could start out again refreshed. Once or twice he fell into a fitful slumber, but he was up before daylight. Mala was dressed before any of the others even thought of getting up. He hitched up his dogs and soon was ready for the trail. He told the people in whose house he stayed that he was merely going outside to look after his dogs.

"Mala has departed. What a strange man he is!—But let's wait here now until the white men arrive. Mala knows their wishes."

Mala went straight across the fjord and on northward.

He had decided upon a plan that would be simple to carry out, and that would mislead his pursuers. He drove along the coast, covering a good stretch that day. He drove faster than his pursuers ever could, but in the evening he could not raise his hand any more and he was unable to build himself an igloo. It was almost impossible for him to unlash the skins from the sledge and throw a little feed to the dogs. He rolled himself into his blanket for the night, but was soon up again to look at his hand. It pained him a good deal now and he felt very feverish. The hand looked blue. Resolutely he took a knife and made three cuts near the spot where the trouble seemed rooted, and where relief would probably be quickest. After the first cut, the pain was so excruciating that Mala had to sit down. It was impossible for him to cut slowly; he simply stabbed the knife into his flesh. Piercing pain, then blood spouted, mixed with pus. Rolling a reindeer skin around his arm, he tied it with a few straps as well as he could with his left hand. Then he lay down and soon fell into a heavy, feverish stupor.

He did not know how long he had slept when he suddenly woke with a start. "I've got to mush on, I've got to mush on," he mumbled. "The pursuers are behind me. I must leave immediately. I am longing for my boys—and my wives may be starving. Yes, yes, Mala is coming soon—very soon!"

He lit the kerosene stove which was certainly a blessing in his present predicament. His right arm hung limply; although it did not hurt him as much as before, he could hardly use his hand. Despite this difficulty, he succeeded in warming some water with which to renew the ice coating of the sledge runners. It seemed a terrific task. His head was so heavy, and he felt strangely ill. He was not hungry, but he drank all the water that was left and then pushed on. He took the whip into his left hand and drove and drove.

After two long days, he reached the big village of Tajarnak. There he met Illubalik who had fled from him and who, as Mala knew, had accompanied the mounties when they came for him. But there was no enmity in Mala's heart now. He was like a hunted animal. He was sick, he was depressed, but

he dared not admit his fears. He was on his way home—home to his family. He would take the route straight across the peninsula and then along the usual coast line. He repeated that several times, as it was his intention that everybody around should be well acquainted with his plans.

"Stay a few days," he was told. "You might have company then, to help you with your sore arm."

"My arm is not sore. I just cut my finger a bit. I am a little weak though because I ate too much white man's food. I am hungering for meat. Give me some dog feed and let me have some of your dogs. A few of mine are worn out. I shall give you presents for them later on. Let me exchange four of my dogs for four of yours. In payment, you can take some of my meat that I stored away."

He traded dogs, and then went inside and ate and slept. He proceeded here exactly as in the place where he had rested last. Before daylight he arose, even though he had slept only a little. A few people were already up—young folk who did not keep regular hours; some of them approached his sledge.

"Going to leave so early?" they asked. "You have not even eaten yet. Why don't you wait until the others get up?"

"Don't arouse anybody. I've got to make haste," Mala said. "I am longing for my children; I just had a dream. Give me a hand in strapping my sledge and hitching up the dogs."

Their help hastened his departure. Mala drove off, using his left hand; his right seemed hardly part of his body any more. His head was hot but he would have to ignore it for he did not want to be caught. He knew that in a few days' time his pursuers would arrive at Tajarnak and he must travel with all possible speed to make good his escape.

The newly acquired dogs pulled well. He crossed the bay and drove over the peninsula towards the next fjord. Yes, everybody must believe that this was the route Mala took!

When he reached the next hill, he stopped and looked around. He'd better not go home directly. Making a left turn he struck out across the country in the direction of the big lake, where it would be easy to hide among the hills. Only

a few more days now, and he would be safe. Then he would build an igloo and take a good long rest. He would sleep until his arm was well again before continuing his journey. He would go over far to the other side of the mountain range, staying there until summer. By that time the white men would surely have turned back and he could join his family. After that, white men would never again see Malal.

Not in vain had Mala been hunting wild beasts these many years. He well knew the cunning of the hunted fox; he knew, too, how the bear misleads the hunter; he also would escape his pursuers.

When night fell he pitched his tent, in spite of the pain in his arm. Rising the next morning was torture but he got up and munched on, obeying the persistent urge to hurry. He was still following a route where he might easily meet people. The time had not yet come to take a good rest; he must still go on.

His arm hurt and his head ached so much that he finally decided, after another two days, that he would build himself an igloo and rest up for some time. Although he tried to push forward, progress was very slow. Very well, then, let the dogs have a little rest. The animals he had taken along from the post were in wretched shape; they probably would not last much longer.

Suddenly he was aroused from his thoughts. He saw three sledges coming towards him. By now it was impossible to turn around and flee.

Then Mala made his decision. "I'm going to save myself. I shall kill them."

He reached for the rifle which was strapped to the sledge.

But why fight? It would be impossible for him to kill them all before one of them shot at him. That would mean sure death for him in his present state.

Mala and the other mushers soon met. They turned out to be three men who were returning from a reindeer hunt with only very little game.

They exchanged a few words. "I am on my way home," Mala said at last, "and I wanted to see about reindeer. But

as long as you say there are hardly any in the neighborhood, I might as well follow the coast line."

If Mala could have used both his arms, he would have built a snow hut now, inviting them to stay with him during the night. He would then have killed the three so they could not betray him.

When the three men saw that something was ailing Mala, he told them that he had a sore arm, but that it did not amount to much. He would continue along in their tracks and as soon as he reached a valley opening toward the coast he would drive down to the sea and then follow the coast line. After informing them of his plans, Mala departed.

IN the course of the evening, the sledge stopped without Mala's ever noticing it. Fever scorched him; the poison in his body warred with his naturally strong constitution. Craving peace and rest as never before, he surrendered to sleep. He did not even unhitch the dogs, but gave them a whole bag of feed so they would not chew up their harness. On the morrow, he rallied all his will power and continued the trip. Again, progress was slow; the dogs were more exhausted than ever, but by now his arm was somewhat improved. In the evening he was able to build a little snow hut. He had noticed that the better he rested during the night, the faster he traveled during the day. Oh, how he longed to sleep!

Towards morning, something scared him out of his sleep. Were enemies approaching? Spurred on by fear, he seized his rifle, but there was nothing in sight. Still he felt that something was wrong.

Suddenly he knew. The wind was coming from the east.

Of all the ill luck, this was the very worst thing that could befall him. The east wind, bringing warm weather! Quick, now! He took his things, threw them on the sledge, and a moment later he lashed his dogs furiously. And yet what good would it do? The warmth was already creeping upon them. Even on the coldest winter night a warm wind might spring up suddenly, melting everything, making the trip impossible.

He passed the next hill and the second one also. Then he saw that his dogs could not drag the sledge any further. He stopped and inspected the runners. The ice coating, worn off almost to the very wood, was as soft as the bread which white men eat. His tracks looked as if the sledge had been dragged across dirt. He was helpless; a sledge was of no use to him any more.

Mala considered the possibility of using reindeer skins on the runners, but he knew that he would be unable to make any progress that way.

He therefore abandoned the sledge. Unhitching the dogs, he strapped a burden to each of them. He himself took the rifle and the knife, and then he continued on foot.

They trekked for days and days but did not make any appreciable progress. Every evening Mala would build a little hut, starting out again on his weary way in the morning. One day two of the dogs broke down. He brought the axe down upon their necks and slaughtered them. A few of the dogs fell ravenously over their slain comrades, but the others had not yet reached that stage of starvation.

Forward, forward! The wind had shifted once more and it was colder again. But the great spring thawing might start any day now. If only by that time he had gained sufficient headway, he would be safe. But he was so tired and his arm was so weak; it did not hurt him any more, but it hung down lifelessly.

Two of his dogs had disappeared on the trail, and another dog had died during the night, Mala had to abandon his sleeping skins the next morning, retaining only a few pelts which he tied to his feet in order to save his boots. Later, still another dog succumbed.

He had not seen any wild life for days. The ground underfoot was bad, impeding progress. Nevertheless, he managed to put more and more distance between himself and the whites. One evening, his last dog but one proved utterly exhausted. He had to slaughter it, strapping the carcass to his own back. He would have to live on it as long as possible! After the last dog was done, he would take a good rest and then hide in the mountains, in a spot inaccessible to sledges.

No, they were never going to catch Mala! He had learned too much from the animals he had hunted these many years. He would become aware of his pursuers in good time and be able to hide from them. He would never let the whites catch him. He did not want to hang; he wanted to live! He longed for his home, his boys and Inupaujak.



XVIII

"MALA'S gone, where's Mala?"

Hearing these words, the Inspector jumped out of bed. He rushed into the mess without dressing. "The prisoner's gone? Where? Search everywhere. In case he fled, we must pursue him. Simply shoot him in the legs. He can't be far. He was just as tired as any of us."

Joe and Arola were called. None of them had seen Mala. There could be no doubt that he had made his escape! The Inspector noticed some cartridges on the floor next to his bed and then he discovered that his rifle was gone. That scoundrel Mala had outwitted him while he was asleep! This really was the worst trick that had ever been played on him.

Eskimos and constables were sent out; Mala could not have gone far. They were to search every possible hiding place. They looked through the storage house and they looked over on the islands among the pack-ice. They looked wherever a man could hide, the snow whirling around them. Finally, they returned, empty handed. No one had seen Mala.

The Inspector was furious. "There you see, Sergeant. This is the man in whom you put so much faith! You are the most miserable member of the force in all Canada. Your days in the service are numbered, let me tell you that! You and your constables were always so friendly with this Mala and now he's gone. It's all your fault."

Make was angry: "I told you that as long as I was in

charge here, Mala would not run away. You yourself saw how he returned from the hunt voluntarily. For months he has been going after meat for us. It was your treatment that made him rebel. Because of that he ran away. I shall naturally do everything I can to recapture him, but I'm surely not to be blamed for Mala's flight."

"Get all the sledges ready! We'll start out after him in every direction."

At that moment a constable entered and reported that part of the baggage, stored in the hall the night before, had disappeared; Mala must have taken it along. Besides, all harnesses and traces had been cut to pieces.

"Damn it, get other harnesses then! As soon as the blizzard lets up, we must be ready to start."

The Eskimos had already rushed home to their families to tell them the great news. Make had to look for the natives in their houses.

"We must have gear for the dogs. Get me skins and straps."

But they had nothing. Their traces, too, had been cut to pieces.

"Bring everything you have over to the post," the Sergeant ordered. "Then we shall try to mend what can be mended and get sufficient material for at least two teams. I wouldn't be surprised if you assisted Mala in his flight!"

Make knew very well that this was not the case, but by pretending to suspect them he might scare them into more useful assistance. They began to mend traces and straps with great eagerness. The worst damage had been done to the whips; there was no material on hand for new ones. However, they made the most of everything available, and after twenty-four hours of hard, uninterrupted work, they were able to start in pursuit.

The weather had meanwhile improved. It did not seem so impossible to travel any more. The Inspector, Make, Aroia and Joe took two sledges and only the most necessary baggage and left the post.

THEY drove across the pack-ice down to the shore. It was here that the first sledge broke down. The runners came off and there they stood, utterly helpless. The Inspector, mushing ahead as always, happened to turn around and noticed that the dogs had stopped.

"The devil! What are you waiting for? Quick, you idiots!"

There was no answer; only frantic signals. The men seemed rooted to the spot, their glances concentrated on the sledge. And then the second sledge pulled across the pack-ice and it too broke down as soon as it reached uneven ground.

Fully another twenty-four hours passed, crammed with curses and furious words. Then everything was thoroughly examined before they started out once more for the North.

"Quick, quick." The Inspector was extremely impatient by now. He guessed that victory was slipping out of his hands. Was he to come home a beaten man? Down in Ottawa only facts would count, his personal difficulties up here would not interest anybody in the government. Forward, then, forward with every ounce of strength. They must catch up with Mala! He must be brought back at all costs—dead or alive!

They rested only a little during the first night and soon arrived at the open fjord of Wager River. Their speed was moderate, for the dogs pulled poorly. They had been driven on too much at the outset. Towards evening, it proved impossible to make them go any farther. It was obvious that their only recourse was to let the animals have a good rest. An igloo was erected, and they moved in. There was not much conversation among the white men that night. Make was undoubtedly ready to do his duty but his heart was with Mala. The Sergeant had come to hate the Inspector by now.

NEXT day they got as far as the encampment on the south side of the fjord. The Eskimos came rushing out of their snow huts. Here, then, were the mounties they had been waiting for and for whom Mala had gone ahead to build igloos. The Eskimos were questioned without delay, and they told everything

they knew. The pursuers could not help expressing their surprise. Mala certainly had the cunning of a fox. But they were not stupid, either. They quickly concluded that Mala had kept on toward Tajarnak.

"He is most probably on his way to his wives," the Sergeant remarked. "We shall have to follow him up there. It is a very long trail but we might be able to make it."

"We certainly will! And at the same time we might exhume the bodies of the murdered men," the Inspector broke in, feeling reassured of his ultimate success. Come to think of it: these developments suited him well. He could report how the prisoner had fled but, thanks to his own energy, had been recaptured.

During the next few days they advanced rapidly although not at the speed they had anticipated, and surely not as fast as Mala must have traveled. The dogs were tired out, their gear was in bad condition. They had not been able to replace their harnesses when they met with the Eskimos, as the latter, having only very poor gear themselves, could not spare a thing.

A FEW more days and they reached Tajarnak.

"Did you see Mala? Did he pass here?"

"Surely we saw him!"

So Mala was a fugitive! If they had only known that, they would have overpowered him and handed him over to the police. He was not held in fear now; he had a sore arm. He could not use his right hand at all! Oh, the mounties were sure to catch Mala.

It was then that the best piece of news leaked out—a statement of Mala's which none of the Eskimos had really believed. Mala had told them he was going north along the coast to return to his family. But some reindeer hunters, who had arrived meanwhile, reported that they had met him inland. Mala, to all appearances, had not been pleased to stop and chat with them. It had seemed quite strange to them at the time, but they had attributed Mala's suspicious behavior to

the pain of his sore arm and to his impatience to get home.

The police party arranged to take the three men along to show them the road, and everything was prepared for an early start the following morning. But when they arose, the weather had changed. It was much milder now, it was thawing; they simply had to wait for a cold spell if they were to go on at all.

The Inspector was beside himself with anger. But on second thought, this delay offered some advantages. There was enough dog feed in the encampment and the dogs could rest and feed, regaining their former strength.

Not one day but four passed in waiting, and only on the morning of the fifth could they start out. By that time, all tracks were obliterated. There was not much snow left; although it was freezing again, the cold was bearable. At the encampment they had borrowed a tent which could be pitched quickly and just as quickly folded together again. It was much more practical than to build snow huts; it was sure to speed up the trip.

No doubt they would recapture Mala, now that there were so many of them. They lashed their dogs cruelly, and soon reached the spot where the three men had met Mala. They had not slept since leaving the encampment; the dogs were so exhausted that they ignored the most merciless whipping and the men were staggering from fatigue.

They pitched a tent and soon fell asleep. They slept long and profoundly. The Inspector dreamt he was on a man hunt and brought one prisoner home in handcuffs and muzzled like a dog.

Up to this point they knew the territory, but from then on each time they crossed a new valley it was necessary to take counsel in which direction to proceed. For days and days they searched the valleys, but they discovered not a single trace of Mala.

THE rivers began to flow once more and a hot sun beat down upon the travelers. One day, in a spot free from snow, they

found the first flower of the new season. They had already heard the snow sparrow. They really had to think about their return trip now. Three of their sledges had runners covered with whale skins; they could still be used, but the others would have to be abandoned. "Forward, forward," the Inspector commanded. "We shall sleep during the day when the snow is soft, and drive during the night, when the surface is frozen."

At last they saw something! Was that Mala standing over there? They seized their rifles for he might defend himself. But when they drew nearer, they found only the sledge abandoned by Mala. That which stuck up in the air was nothing but provisions and pelts he had left behind. Among them, the Inspector found some of his own property which Mala had taken along. In addition to the boxes of provisions, there was his own sleeping bag and tools and the kerosene stove.

"Well, from here on, he traveled by foot. Most likely he didn't get much farther."

On and on they went, after Mala.

It seemed logical that Mala had not stuck to the sledge trail any longer. Traveling afoot, it would have been stupid of him to trudge through the high snow.

The man hunt was continued.

They searched all over and finally they discovered a little igloo. Soon they came upon another, smaller than the first; some bones and the hides of two dogs were lying there.

"Well, well, Mala seems pretty much down and out! But let's go on."

Traveling was very difficult now. On the lakes, water had crept over the ice already. The sledges sank in so deep the dogs could hardly pull them out of the ruts. The men's foot-gear deteriorated rapidly. They hitched themselves to the sledge but the sun beat down on them and they could not pull long.

They climbed every hill, scanning the horizon with their binoculars. "Yes, there is something in front there." With renewed hope, then, they would drag themselves on and on.

But only disappointment was in store for them. A boulder that in the distance resembled a man. Again, ahead. Once more

an igloo. Here Mala had thrown a skin away and slaughtered a dog; he had probably taken the meat along.

"We shall get you soon, now, Mala."

Again, forward. They finally came to a very tiny snow hut, evidently built by an enfeebled man. It was hardly a house—just a shelter—and there were gnawed off dog bones. So, he had slaughtered another animal! As the hide was there, too, Sergeant Make could tell that his favorite dog had been slain.

"I don't think," Make said, "that he still has another dog left. This one was a wonderful animal and most probably stood up to the very last. Now Mala must be carrying everything by himself and he has nothing to eat unless he gets some game."

"He can't be far away now. Let's hurry after him."

But pursuit was impossible. They whipped their dogs, they beat them over the head with the whip-handles, they shouted and they roared, but they made no progress. It was forenoon and the snow was soft.

"Let's pitch tent, and prepare our food," the Inspector ordered. "Tomorrow we shall lay hands on our man. No doubt he is dead already."

WHILE they slept the sun burned all day long. Not a breeze stirred and the snow melted rapidly.

Birds winged overhead, joyfully greeting the approaching summer. Little flowers stuck up their heads where only a short time before snow had covered the ground. Arctic plants prepare their blossoms in fall; the very moment the sun shines and thaw sets in, the buds burst, blooming under the warm encouraging rays of the sun. A single one of these days, and winter has passed.

Joe was the first one to awake. He stuck his head out of the tent and immediately knew that the trip had come to an end. He called Make. "Sergeant," he said, "we can't go on any further. Where there was snow yesterday, there is none today."

Make crawled out of the tent. A tremendous lake spread before them—and this was the route they were to take. He took a few steps and, to his joy, discovered that his feet were sinking into soft ground. Under such conditions, it would be more difficult to travel by sledge than to walk afoot.

The Inspector rushed out of the tent.

"Inspector," Make reported, "we can't proceed any farther."

"The hell you say! We've simply got to continue!" the Inspector growled. But his eyes told him that progress would be impossible. There was no mistaking any longer that summer had arrived. Everything was tundra and water.

"If we can't use the sledges any more, we shall have to proceed afoot," the Inspector decided. "I've made up my mind to bring Mala's body home."

But he encountered desperate resistance. He himself knew very well that he was demanding the impossible. Nevertheless, he wanted the others to feel guilty over the failure of the pursuit.

"We can't go on any more; we must return at once," Joe and Arola insisted. "If we don't rush home, we'll be cut off. And if we miss the ship this summer, it will be impossible for us to return home before next winter."

Yes, they must lose no time in getting back. And so the hunt for Mala came to an end.

PART TWO



P A R T T W O

I

PROFOUND silence. The sun beat down upon the melting snow; not a breath of air stirred and no sound broke the silence. Quiet everywhere; and for Mala, a peaceful slumber that brought relief from anguish.

Suddenly there was a piercing scream, followed by another and still another. It came from far, far away. No, it was close by. At last the screams penetrated Mala's consciousness; he stirred in an effort to fight off the disturbance but his right arm was heavy and stiff and he was so exhausted that he gave himself up to sleep once more. Peace, again, for some time; how long Mala did not know. Once more there was a shrill cry, and now Mala's senses cleared. He felt even weaker than before, but at least he could distinguish between outside disturbances and his own pain. An ermine had started to gnaw at the spot between his trousers and his boots where his knee was exposed. The little animal dug its teeth in near the sinew and it was this that had aroused Mala.

The ermine struggled in his hand, biting and scratching, so that Mala finally released it. It escaped quickly and, free once more, was much the wiser because now it knew that here was no prey for its sharp little teeth. It disappeared between the stones and Mala no longer thought of it.

A lonely man, Mala plunged into deepest solitude. An Eskimo, in the midst of his own land, starved and utterly exhausted with an arm sore from blood poisoning.

He must travel on. He was Mala, the great Mala, the renowned hunter. True, the white men had not looked upon him as a chieftain. It was well that he had gotten away from them. Never again would he cross the white men's path! Now he knew them and he was through with them for all time.

His experience with the white men reminded him of how he had once attempted to kill a bear with the pointed antlers of a reindeer. He had presently found it to be a bad idea and had never again repeated his mistake. For a long time he had suffered from his wounds after this encounter. Now it was his arm that troubled him. The white man's devil had attacked his body.

But soon a feeling of contentment stole over Mala. Hadn't he three cartons of cartridges and a knife too? There was no reason for him to worry. But he must resume his journey. And so he pressed onward, farther into the waste solitude, away from the past and nearer to his people. There where his friends dwelt, adventure awaited him.

He did not hurry at first, because he was weary and there was no reason for undue haste. Man is always strongest when alone. When the day wore on and the sun grew warmer, he rested behind a rock where it was dry and where the sun fairly burned his tired limbs.

Only now did he take sufficient time to examine his right hand, which had been very painful but now appeared to be improving. The hand was still very sensitive, and two of the fingers so stiff that they were hardly of any use. But new strength seemed to flow through his arm and he was certain his condition was much better. Now for a long sleep, free from the fear of pursuit. He was surprised that he was not hungry. When he thought of this, he noticed that he was weak and dizzy. But there was nothing for him to eat and he soon dropped off to sleep.

There was a ptarmigan resting on the stone, a nice white one! The little bird sat there blinking in the sun as if indulging

In hearty laughter, but Mala knew very well that the hen, invisible because of her brown feathers, was somewhere about, hiding among the stones. The little bird wished to attract Mala's attention; he would remain stationary until Mala came quite near. Then he would fly off mockingly, leading Mala farther and farther away from the nest. Finally, at a safe distance from the nest, the ptarmigan, flying in a wide circle so that Mala lost sight of him, would return from whence he had come. This was how the ptarmigans kept dangerous intruders from their eggs, which, in due time, would hatch into new ptarmigans.

Mala had no intention of wasting cartridges on so small a bird. He did not have any too many on hand, and he would never be able to obtain a new supply. But his right arm was too weak to throw a stone and he could not aim well with his left. However, it really did not matter because he was not hungry. And on he went.

Toward evening, he felt very weak and sat down to rest. He thought of many things.

But why sit and ponder? Pondering is only for the man who fears that he did not store sufficient meat away against the winter, and Mala had always trapped enough meat. But thinking, too, is for the man whose soul is filled with longing, and for that very reason Mala wished to free himself of its burden. But it was not easy to throw off his disturbing thoughts and Mala arose and traveled on. If he had not been so weak, he would not have minded a few days of hunger. Hunger lightens the body and tightens the muscles, and the senses of a hungry man are always keen while a man with a full belly longs only for sleep.

And so Mala strode forward.

He was following the bed of a little stream which ran in the right direction and he knew that soon, in the distance, Mount Pingo would beckon to him. The mountain had been placed exactly in the middle of the country to show people how far they had traveled.

The little stream flowed into a lake. There was open water along the shore, surrounding the ice in the middle, and Mala had to wade through it. He easily spanned the ice-covered lake

that led him into a valley which, in turn, merged into another.

When he reached dry land once more, he took off his boots, turned them inside out, and put his stockings on a stone in the sun to dry. Now he longed for food. Hunger is a pleasant sensation only when one knows that it soon will be assuaged. Mala found some hares' dung and munched it eagerly. Early in the day he had eaten ptarmigan dung and a few roots but that, after all, had not been real food. Morsels of that kind were only meant for appetites already satisfied. On the morrow he must have meat even if he had to waste some cartridges on a few ptarmigan.

He was eager to reach his home to fetch Aba and Inupaujak, his two wives, and his two little sons and his foster son. By now, they would surely have a whole team of young dogs—he had been away as long as that—and with all these dogs it would be possible to travel quickly. Yes, his day of homecoming was not far away and a festive day it would be too. He foresaw how shy he would be when he first met them once more. His two little boys would embarrass him most of all.

What should he say to them when he saw them?

His eyelids grew heavy. How good it was to close one's eyes. It seemed then as if he were home once more among his friends.

THE gnats had started to come out of the water holes. One alighted right on his face and another on his head. Mala permitted them to sit and suck. The gnats were buzzing around now simply because it was summer and the time of melting snow. The first of them that stung a man should be permitted to live and to fly with his blood to other gnats and tell them how well it had been treated.

A flock of gabbling geese flew overhead. Mala forced his eyes open. "Oh, you geese traveling to the North! Mala will follow you with his sledge full of meat, and with his whole family along. Mala's cry will again spread fear!"

A snow sparrow twittered. The sun's bright rays caressed him. But Mala did not notice. He slept soundly.

Here was a man filled with peace, surrounded by complete solitude.

What was that? In a second Mala was wide awake but he could not tell immediately where the noise originated. Clump, clump. Reindeer, naturally! Reindeer close by! There, they were peeping out from behind the rocks. They had come along the same trail he had taken across the height and down into the valley. They too traveled to the North, but not all of them would reach their destination, because Mala needed food. His rifle and cartridges were lying handy on a stone. But the sore hand? Oh, it was strong enough to pull the trigger.

There was a report, and the great reindeer fell to the ground kicking its legs and tossing its head about. The animal was done for. Mala, well again, was master of his rifle once more. A second reindeer, startled into sudden flight, stood still on stiff legs, then ventured forward the least bit, to sniff the air and gaze about inquiringly. Another shot and again an animal fell to the ground while the little herd rushed up the height, with never a thought in their stupid heads. Their poor half-blinded eyes can see only moving objects, and they never even noticed Mala, sitting quietly between the rocks. They stopped and sniffed, but as they were on the off-side of Mala they could not scent him, and again he fired. The third reindeer fell, both its legs shattered. The rest of the herd moved on, panic-stricken.

Another shot brought down yet another reindeer.

By now they knew that there was danger about and wanted to find out where; they could not see a thing and, in spite of their keen sense of smell, did not scent Mala. They ran backwards and forwards, in blind fear. When they came upon their brothers in the throes of death, they turned about in nervous haste and ran in another direction, through the valley, and up and down the height, but never beyond the range of the rifle. It was a good thing that Mala was a wise hunter and knew when to control himself. He would not shoot any more but would husband his cartridges. After all, he was a man used to acting for himself and his neighbors.

Mala sat down and inspected his catch. What a pleasant

sensation! He wanted to laugh. Here he sat with his rifle and it was in his power to kill all these reindeer but he abstained voluntarily, filled with the joy of a man who knows his own strength.

Suddenly the reindeer moved to the lee of him and the light wind carried to their wide open nostrils the scent of Mala. Oh, there he was, the enemy! Away then! And Mala watched them disappear. They rushed down the height, their forelegs and hindlegs flying wildly. Their moving limbs were not unlike wide jaws that opened and closed, swallowing up stones and leaves, even the very ground beneath them. It seemed as if they were devouring the space over which they moved; soon they disappeared behind the rim of the height.

Four reindeer had fallen prey to Mala. Was he a man to be pitied? He had slept, and beasts of prey came slinking by. As he was without boots and stockings, he only sat up, reached for his rifle, and shot at the marauders. He considered himself every bit as well off as the white men who sat at tables and ladled food out of a big bowl. He did not want to think of the white men any longer! Mala was done with them and, with every fiber of his being, he desired to forget them.

Barefoot, Mala stepped over to one of the reindeer. It stared at him with that queer round gaze which bespeaks fear, the look that brings joy to a man because it makes him aware of his strength. He sunk his knife into the reindeer's neck. It was he, Mala, who decided between life and death! How wonderful to disembowel the animal. He ripped it open between the legs, tore off the hide and inserted his hand between the skin and meat. What a simple task and how wonderful to feel the warmth of the animal at his very finger tips while he pulled off the many layers of skin. All other animals must be skinned with the knife. Only the reindeer surrenders its skin willingly because its soul recognizes the might of man.

The inside of the skin was full of the larvæ of horse flies. They looked like thimbles and were delicious to the taste. Mala plucked them greedily and shoved them into his mouth. They were full of water that squirted out when he bit into them and the water was sweet and quenched his thirst more satisfactorily

than when he was lying on his belly and sipping from a stream.

Then he cut open the carcass and gnawed the meat from the breast bone while it was still warm. The tongue, too, he ate on the spot. Mala was hungry and now he could eat his fill.

His hunger checked, Mala slept again. The sleep benefited him greatly. The sun had completed almost a full turn before he arose. It was the first time that his thoughts turned to work and did not dwell on flight alone. He had to put his boots out in the sun to dry, and spread out his skins with the inside up and the rims of the hides weighted down with stones so that they were drawn tightly and would not shrink. The sun would suck them dry of moisture. Mala cut off a little of the tongue and while he chewed the meat he thought of his boys. He cracked a few bones with a stone and started to dig out the marrow with his knife. Marrow makes the lips supple and leaves a pleasant taste in the mouth. Then he collected some dry willow twigs and earth, lighting a big fire over a flat stone. On top of the stone he spread delicious slices of meat and over these he placed another flat stone.

He could hardly wait until the meat was roasted on both sides. The savory smell of the meat, mixed with the smoke, tickled his nose. The sun was warm and there was no wind to annoy him. Each time he had eaten, he put fresh slices of meat between the stones. Mala chuckled with joy, and thought how rarely people laugh when they are all alone.

When he took to the trail once more, his appetite was appeased and he felt strong. He went on and on. When rain fell, he crawled into a dry nook between the rocks, covering himself with the reindeer hides. As soon as the weather improved, he dried the hides in the sun once more, at the same time carefully spreading out his chunks of meat so that their weight would be lessened, for they were a heavy burden to carry while they were still fresh and full of moisture.

Over hills and dales he went.

With keen eyes, Mala took in his surroundings. Little animals whisked past his feet and birds sang. He ran across a nest of ptarmigan and gathered in the eggs. The chicks in

the eggs were fairly grown and filled his gullet nicely when he swallowed them. He found a hatching eider duck and ate her eggs. Mala was in need of nothing. The sun rose higher and higher and warmth steamed from the earth; there were many gnats and each water hole was filled with their larvæ.

For days and days Mala traveled across the great Melville Peninsula. The river, flowing into one lake after another, widened more and more, but that did not worry him. The ice on the lakes was still thick and he could walk across wherever he wished. Summer had really come and there were flowers, yellow and red and white; the gnats were a plague now. When Mala slept they stung him, but he paid no attention. Soon his face was all swollen, but what did it matter? His trail led through the valley and one fine day he reached the mighty river that flows through the land to the sea. He had to cross it, but thereafter he would encounter only narrow streams, which could be traversed at leisure.

Mala followed the course of the river; it roared mightily where stones and boulders impeded its progress. Water meets resistance impatiently, rushing forward and foaming furiously. Evidently there was no ford near by.

Up the river and down the river. No ford! Directly opposite, on the other bank, three reindeer stood with drooping heads. Mala walked up and down along the shore but they did not notice him. Reindeer, which refuse to be frightened, anger the hunter. Mala would have liked to shoot across the river just to punish them for their boldness. He shouted, instead, in order to save his cartridges, but his voice was swallowed up by the rushing waters. Water is strong and laughs at the will of man.

Perhaps it would be better to look farther up stream for a ford. Mala waded through one tributary and then through another. Presently the river grew less angry and finally he discovered a suitable spot. Here, he would ford the river. He opened his bundle, took out his matches, and put them under his cap. He must protect the cartridges, too, against the water. He inserted one carton between the meat which formed the core of the bundle, and the others he stuffed into his mittens,

tying them up tightly with string and hanging them around his neck. He used his rifle to feel the ground ahead of him.

Mala waded into the river. The water rushed by with terrific speed, beating against his legs, and although the flood came only half-way to his knees, it was very hard to advance straight ahead. Soon the swishing water rose over his knees and it was still more difficult to resist its power. There were stones upon which he could bear down with his rifle, but they were so slippery that he had to step quickly. Again a stone stuck out—a big one so that when he stood on it only Mala's feet were wet by foam. It was a big, wonderful stone and he rested upon it for some time.

He glanced about and saw that he would soon reach the other shore. He was very hopeful and continued the difficult crossing. Again he tested the river bed with his rifle. In this spot he could put one foot but where was he to rest the other one? It was unsafe here. He became dizzy from the water that slapped at him like so many clods of earth while its roaring thundered in his ears. The river was becoming deeper and deeper. By now the water reached up all the way to his thighs and if it had not been for the support his rifle gave him the onrushing flood would have carried him away.

Soon the water was all the way up over his trousers and he bent like a snowdrift under the pressure of the wind.

Now for the next step. There was a stone where he could plant his foot; round and smooth, it gave the impression of being very friendly. But his left foot slipped and it was impossible to continue straight ahead. The flood pressed against him sideways. He could not rest and must push ahead. Alas, the stock of his rifle found no support and he had to turn the weapon around with the barrel pointing downward. Besides, the stock of the rifle was so wide that the water had too good a hold upon it, pushing and pulling it at the same time.

Mala turned his head, trying to look around but there was the danger that he would be swept down stream. He simply had to go on. At one moment the roaring river seemed to grow calmer, but then the waters came rushing along at a great speed again, pushing and pushing at him. One more step, and another

one. Mala tested the ground with his foot, anxious to get ahead! Suddenly he went down. He had lost his balance and did not feel ground any longer! The water closed threateningly about his throat. He had only one thought: up, up, once more! His mouth was full of water and he could not catch his breath. Ah, at last his feet found solid ground. He quickly stiffened his legs, raised his head high, and sucked in the air like a seal. Two stones offered him a brief rest. There was only fear in his mind. As soon as he moved on, he was whirled down the river once more. He floated on top of the water, carried away as if by racing dogs, but at least he knew now what was going on around him. He was again at the bank of the river whence he had started out—no, he was on the opposite bank! Only a few more steps, and he would be on dry land.

He tried to wade out, but the might of the water flung him down; his head hit the ground with terrific force. A terrible rumbling followed, and an enormous pink spot, that grew larger and larger, danced before Mala's eyes. When he finally opened his eyes, he found that the flood had deposited him in a bend of the river, close to the land. Here the onrush of the water was not so bad; little rivulets licked at his hands like friendly dogs. Mala knew very well that they were only teasing him for had they not already demonstrated what easy prey he was for them? With the back of his head resting in cool water, his senses were quickly restored. He arose and waded to shore.

Mala felt like a dog who has been beaten by an angry master. He could hardly move his aching limbs, and his head was swollen from the terrible punishment it had received. He rested on the grass for a long time. Finally he rose and walked a short distance, only to rest on a stone again. His body was not yet ready to exert itself.

He noticed that the knuckles of his left hand burned and that they were red with blood. He felt no sensation whatever in his right hand, which had been sore for so long. It did not pain him any more, but his body creaked all over. He took off his footgear, carefully peeling his stockings from his boots. Suddenly he started and touched his hands to his neck. His cartridges were gone and so was the bundle with all his meat and

the big knife and the reindeer skins. All he had left was his rifle.

His momentary fright soon passed over, for he was still too weak to realize what had happened. He took off his furs, spread his outer pants in the sun and then settled down to slumber. He slept until the sun had traveled very far. When he awoke he still tried hard not to think. He turned his clothes inside out so that the hairy side could dry in the sun, then he attempted to sleep again. But his thoughts would not permit him to rest. He weighed the situation gloomily; true enough, he had gained the other side of the river, but now he had lost almost everything. He had his rifle but his knife was gone. In his pocket, of course, he still had that little folding knife, and it was a good one too. He certainly would not lose more time wading the river in search of the other knife.

His right foot pained him excruciatingly, no doubt from the bruises he had sustained when he was thrown against the boulders rising from the bed of the river. Nevertheless, he was still able to walk although each step hurt. But these pains distracted his attention from the other pains in his limbs.

When, by nightfall, he reached a spot suitable for rest, he took off his shirt and tore it into broad strips, winding them tightly around his foot. The ankle was swollen to the size of his knee but strapping gave it relief.

MALA was very hungry the next day.

Why had he not put some meat into his trouser pockets? He even thrust his hand into one of the pockets to find out whether he really had not put some meat there.

Mala's trail led across a hill; far below, a lake filled the valley. He did not want to cross the icy surface of the lake. He was afraid of the water now and preferred to travel around the lake. This detour took up much time and, hopeful again, he tried the pocket and felt for meat.

Was there not even a small chunk to chew on? His disappointment turned to anger. When the sun once more rose to

his left, he again searched his clothes for some hidden store of food. Then he roared aloud, laughing long about himself.

But there was his rifle! It still contained one cartridge—enough for one reindeer. Oh, he would get the best of things yet! He would shoot a reindeer, eat as much as he could, and then carry the rest along with him on his shoulders. That would be sufficient meat for one man to reach home. And he would kill a big reindeer, one that was fat and with lots of marrow and thick layers of tallow. Now he would rest and tomorrow he would look for the big reindeer which was to be his salvation.

But there were no reindeer the next day. Mala knew very well that he would have to tread a long weary stretch before he found the animal he wanted. He would not shoot unless he sighted a fat big buck, because the meat must last him a long time. He must have the rifle in good shape. He opened the lock. It was all wet, red with rust, but as he had no ramrod what more could he do than wipe out the barrel, dry the cartridge carefully, and put it in his pocket?

He was utterly tired; twice the sun had traveled around since he had been swamped by the river and lost nearly all his precious possessions.

Many, many hours passed, when suddenly joy descended upon him.

There, on the opposite side of the mountain, he glimpsed a herd of reindeer. Here was good food for him. Now he must approach near enough to be sure of his aim. Oh, how careful a man must be if he has no ammunition to waste!

Mala slunk forward against the wind, crawling on his belly, lying still whenever the reindeer looked around. The animals for some reason appeared ill at ease. Perhaps there was a wolf in the neighborhood. The reindeer would start to run and then they would quiet down again and graze.

Now what was that? A fox howled in the neighborhood and some of the reindeer became restless. They raised their heads, opening wide their large stupid eyes. Mala knew that they would not linger around here much longer. The fever of the chase came over him. He wanted the big one over there. It had a wonderful summer coat of thin hair which could

be made up into a fine cap, and long, pliable sinews which would serve admirably for carrier straps. The marrow that was in its bones already melted on Mala's tongue. The tallow would work like a wonderful potion in his body, and he would bring home the meat to his boys whom he had not seen for so long.

Why did they not stand still, those reindeer? Here was Mala and he needed one of them, only one of them—and how hungry he was! If they would only rest for a moment he could easily kill one of them, allowing the others to travel on unmolested.

But the reindeer would not stand still. There was a continuous unrest among them. Perhaps it was the gnats that plagued them! Mala himself felt swarms of them on his hands and neck. Perhaps the reindeer were eager to continue their journey. But now he simply had to shoot. At the report, the whole herd jumped and stared at one another. They traveled on a little way and stopped again. Then the big one, at which Mala had aimed, fell to the ground. Mala rushed over to his prey.

The other reindeer stood with stiff legs, gazing around in fright. Suddenly they perceived Mala. There he was, the enemy! In a moment they had vanished from sight, their legs clattering down the mountainside. Mala did not look after them; he was not interested in them now that he had no more cartridges. His catch was lying on the ground but when Mala approached the beast, it jumped up and, wounded but not vanquished, gazed at his enemy. Then his head bent down, he rushed straight at Mala and kicked him to the ground. When he tried to get up, the reindeer brought down one of its sharp hoofs. A second later the reindeer was gone, following the herd. Gone, leaving Mala behind alone with no more food and no more cartridges. All his hopes for a speedy return home went clattering down the mountainside with the herd.

No use to stop and think over his misfortune. And so Mala took his rifle and marched onward.

THE next day Mala was near starvation. The little roots that he found only served to aggravate his hunger, his belly was

used to being filled with real food, not with flowers that grew in the ground. He craved the meat of reindeer, and his insides needed tallow. Now all that he ever ate was grass, with not a taste of hare or reindeer.

When was it day and when was it night? He no longer noticed the turning of the sun. When rain fell it became very cold, but he did not dare rest for any length of time; his strength was ebbing rapidly now. He stumbled forward, reached a lake and, sitting down on a rock, looked across the water. Gnats swarmed in the air, and salmon snatched for them.

How could he catch a few of these salmon? He looked for them in every water hole and in all the puddles. He put a few water insects into his mouth. They did not taste at all and he laughed at himself. Here the great Mala, who had killed the mighty whale, trying to catch a few insects! In a little puddle of water, he discovered two young salmon not longer than his little finger. He caught one by using what was left of his shirt to dam off the water. He was only tantalizing his stomach by offering it such poor nourishment after so many days of starvation. Besides, the fish had no taste, but he chewed on it and gulped it down. He wanted the other little salmon too, but it was more elusive and, time and again, it escaped Mala's grasp. Mala jumped from the one side of the puddle to the other. He stepped into the puddle and the muddy water seeped into his boots. He had to wait until the mud settled so that he could see the little fish! What ridiculously small prey! Finally he gave up and drove himself forward, more exhausted than before.

After a time he arrived at a little lake which was rather deep. In the water, Mala saw full-grown salmon, floating about lazily and flipping their fins.

Here was his chance! He had no bait, and what was he to use for a hook? Where should he find a line? But he had an idea. He took out his pocket knife and, as the haft did not fit into the barrel of the rifle, he hammered it with a stone until he could insert it firmly, tying it with strips of his shirt. Now he had a spear! Mala was so filled with the excitement of the chase that he forgot everything else. He plunged the knife into the water and waited for the salmon to approach. He bit at

his nails and when, after hours of waiting, salmon came near him, he spit the little fragments of nail into the water, observing that they caught the attention of the fish. He used his weapon instantly and actually speared a good sized salmon, which he impaled against a stone. Thrusting an arm into the water, he pulled out his prey and discovered that he had caught a wonderful specimen, as long as his forearm.

Here was food at last! Mala feasted first upon the insides of the salmon and gnawed the head. The gills tasted like berries. But he did not finish eating the fish; he intended to catch many more salmon, so he would have a sufficient supply on the trail.

He kept a sharp look-out for another catch, using the tongue of the first salmon for bait, but the salmon either refused to come within his range or else he missed them. Twice he speared a salmon with the point of his knife, but in each case it got away. After all, it wasn't the same as a barbed hook. At last he ate the remainder of the salmon, leaving only a few thin bones.

Then, once more, Mala tried to spear salmon, but the blade of his knife had come loose and when he stabbed at the fish, the knife flew off and sank to the bottom of the lake.

That should not have happened. He simply could not be without a knife. He could not afford to lose it at any price. He immediately jumped into the water and was immersed to his armpits. He saw his knife glaring at him like a gleaming eye. Clutching the rocky shore, he groped with his foot in order to reclaim the precious knife. It was his last weapon.

Carefully, ever so carefully, he moved his foot back and forth but when he touched the knife, it slipped away. He shoved the knife against a slanting rock in the lake and pulled up his leg, but in a flash the knife disappeared into the depths. Instinctively he bent down to catch it and the icy water closed over his head. Fortunately he had held on to the shore with his left hand and now he came up once more.

He hid his rifle under a rock, weighing it down with two stones. Then he went on, the water dripping from his clothes, his body shivering with cold. It was not necessary for him to

pour the water out of his boots because there were enough holes in them through which the water could escape. He had but one thought in his head; to go as far as possible. Before, his thoughts had dwelt on his wives, his boys and his friends; on sledge rides, too, and on hunting the walrus. But now he just trudged ahead wearily.

Suddenly everything went black before his eyes. He stumbled and fell on his face, hitting his forehead. He lay there stunned for a long time, without being really asleep, and without being awake either. When he got up and went on, he did not know why he had not remained on the ground; it had been so wonderfully comfortable just to lie there.

Directly ahead of him, a ptarmigan was cooing. Presently he discovered the ptarmigan hen which was warning her chicks and immediately he was wide awake once more. After a long wait, he discovered two little chicks that moved about sufficiently to be noticeable. The mother was with them at once, beating her wings and fluttering so close to Mala that it seemed almost possible to catch the fowl with his bare hands. But the mother hen was always ready to escape in a direction away from her chicks. Mala found first one chick and then another. Both had just emerged from the shell and their beaks scratched his throat when he put them in his mouth and swallowed them. But, after all, they were two chunks that slid through his gullet and gave a little satisfaction to his stomach. The ptarmigan hen came back. He had a stone in each of his hands and threw them with good aim, bringing down the fowl with a broken back. A full-grown ptarmigan provides a regular meal. Mala jumped up to make sure of his prey, but the pain in his foot made his whole body shudder. The ptarmigan fluttered in an effort to get away, and Mala pursued it. Now he was close enough to catch it, and to get hold of its tail. But the ptarmigan kicked against his hands with strong legs. And there he, the great Mala, stood—the tail feathers in his hands while the ptarmigan itself had escaped.

Now Mala threw himself down, unable to stand up any longer. He was short of breath and felt very sick. No more strength was left in his bones. He knew that he was resting on

uneven ground, and a sharp stone hurt his back, but he did not think of moving. He was utterly spent and beyond caring about anything. But after a time he dragged himself wearily to a small stream, resting on each stone he passed. After he had quenched his thirst, he was hardly able to rise.

SUDDENLY a noise penetrated Mala's consciousness. He had been dully aware of it long before, but his brain refused the signal sent by his ears. Now he distinctly heard howling. He knew that the wolves had scented him and were all around him. Would they get the best of him? A quick but miserable death for a hunter!

Mala arose to go on; just a few steps closer to his goal. Each time he stumbled and fell he crawled a little farther. That, after all, gave his sore foot a brief rest and assuaged the instinct which bade him to flee from the jaws of the wolves. Whenever he found a boulder he pulled himself up and then dragged onward. In this way he continued very slowly. His sore foot did not seem to belong to him at all. It was beyond his consciousness now. The pain nagged at him as if from a great distance, but he would not heed it.

Time and again hallucinations assailed him. He imagined that there was still one shot left in his rifle and that soon he would come across reindeer. Why had he left the loaded rifle and all the ammunition behind? He wanted to turn around and fetch the weapon. Then there would be no suffering any longer; but each time he sat down, he immediately fell into a stupor and when he awoke again he had forgotten his intentions. So Mala stumbled on toward the north.

That bundle of meat that had floated away from him! Why had he not gone after it? It had happened on the shores of the great river. Yes, he would return and search for it. Oh, there were suet and marrow in the bundle and cartridges too! Why, he would fetch it all right away. Again he sat down. But why should he bother? Had he not been careful enough to put some meat in his pockets? He could save himself a lot of trouble by simply lifting his hand and putting it into his pocket.

No, there was nothing in the front pocket. But in the other! Had he really looked carefully enough? There was nothing there? Again he rested, and when he arose once more he dragged himself onwards to the north.

That night he saw the wolves; the beasts always remained in sight. When he was lying in a stupor, they would slink close up to him. He did not want to end in the belly of a wolf. And so, he frequently stood up and shouted but each time was more exhausting to him than before, and he lay down again. Flat on his belly, he crawled onward.

His knees started to pain him. They were bloody from scraping along the ground. By now Mala seemed an entirely changed man. He did not know whether he went slowly or quickly. He did not walk, he did not crawl. He just wriggled forward in order to rest his foot and knee. Forward, forward! That was all he knew. Between two nights' sleep, he got only as far as one could throw a stone. He felt as if he had changed into water, running down to the sea, feeling nothing, knowing nothing.

He was lying in a stupor when a wolf dug its teeth into him. It was a tremendous wolf with fearful jaws. The beast jumped at him but missed his throat and instinctively Mala's half dead body rolled to the side, so that the wolf's teeth bit into the shoulder. A piercing pain ran through his body.

Suddenly Mala's brain worked again. He grasped a stone with his left hand, bigger than seemed possible for an exhausted man to lift. There was strength in him as never before when he flung the stone down on the wolf's back, causing the beast to turn away, howling. Again and again, he brought the stone down upon the wolf's spine, breaking it and paralyzing the beast's hind quarters—a thing never heard of before! Mala, a killer of wolves with bare hands!

There the two lay looking at each other. The wolf was only at arm's length from Mala but apparently helpless. Mala knew that for the moment he was not in danger and he fell asleep without so much as thinking of fear. He did not sleep long—perhaps only a moment. When he awoke, he realized that he must kill his foe. With two stones in his lap, he pushed

himself closer to the beast. The wolf crawled away, but Mala went after him. He threw one stone from which the wolf turned aside. He threw another without success. Again and again he hurled stones at the beast. No longer did he feel tired, for he was determined to kill the wolf. Mala knew that if he did not finish it, it would finish him.

Suddenly two other wolves approached to aid in the battle between these two. Mala did not pay any attention to them, but when the wounded wolf turned his head to howl out his predicament to his fellow beasts, Mala flung a stone against its head with such power that the wolf sank down once more, stunned. That would spell death for the wolf, and life for Mala. He jumped up like a strong young man, took the big stone between his hands and, lifting it high above his head, brought it down upon the skull of the wolf. There was a sound like the rattling of pieces of metal. Again and once again Mala brought down the stone. The other wolves apparently considered Mala a wild beast of unbelievable fury and ferocity. Mala never saw them disappear, but suddenly he was alone with his prey. The wolf was dead and a frenzy came over Mala.

Why, this wolf had dared to take advantage of Mala's weakness! Everyone was against Mala! There was no one to help. The white men had deceived him and the animals had not given him a chance to catch them. The wolves were even now waiting until he was so exhausted that he would be no danger to them any longer.

Mala's frenzy did not abate. The madness was in him that overtakes those who have shed much blood. He smashed the skull of the dead beast with a stone. When he was through, the head of the wolf was only a bloody, slimy mess. He stood over it, his face covered with dirt, his hair shaggy and matted.

Once again Mala was satisfied. He was the great hunter and here was his prey.

"The event came to pass that one killed a wolf," said Mala quietly. He opened the jaws of the beast and dug his teeth into its tongue, the only spot that would furnish him with food, since he had no knife to skin the body of his prey.

After pulling out the tongue, Mala ate his way into the

jaws of the wolf; it looked as if the wolf were yawning over him and in this position, Mala fell unconscious.



II

THERE was life and commotion in the encampment. Old Kuki was dismayed to see that the young men were thinking of nothing but the hunt, dogs and women; none among them showed any interest in the wisdom of his forebears and the experiences of his elders. Only when fear visited them, when Nature released her forces to the detriment of man, when danger lurked—then they would come and listen gratefully to the wise words of an old man. But as soon as days of joy returned once more, they forgot all the good advice.

Anaqaq was different. He went into seclusion in the great solitude of the mountains, all alone, eager to become a great *angakok*, a controller of spirits. Fasting for days, hunger seemed to turn into a spirit, taking possession of him from the inside and sucking his strength, make him very thin. Thus Anaqaq became a seer.

Once he met two little men who said to him: "Do not be afraid. We want to help you. Take your harpoon and your knife and put them down here. But do not tell anybody about it."

Anaqaq did not confide in anybody and only reported to Kuki that he had discovered new things, but that he did not wish to speak about them. Kuki gathered from this that Anaqaq had had his first encounter with the spirits and he was eager to test Anaqaq's new abilities.

Thereupon of an evening, he intoned long chants, calling forth the spirits, and later he asked Anaqaq whether he had seen any of them. But Anaqaq had seen nothing and Kuki was disappointed yet gratified to note that Anaqaq had not yet become the great spirit controller that Kuki himself was.

But Anaqaq did not give up. He whittled a little knife

and harpoon from twigs, returned to the mountains, and put them on the stone for the two little men. Later they would come to fetch them and fashion them into much larger weapons. The power of the little men was boundless. Then Anaaq went into retirement once more, resting on a rock amidst the waters of a river, staring into the onrushing flood until he became dizzy and fancied he saw the faces of the mountain spirits in the water. But as soon as he called out to them they disappeared, and the land, which had vanished from his consciousness, emerged once more before his eyes, as quiet and silent as ever.

Anaaq went on long trips, steeping himself in solitude and fasting. One day when he was far away from the encampment he sat and gazed at a little white stone. He had stared so long at it that the ground around appeared to rise while he himself seemed to be approaching a state where he could glimpse secret things. And then he was shaken from his trance by shouts and laughter.

"Are you waiting for a catch?" Ujarak asked Anaaq. It was he who approached with Natark, turning Anaaq's wondrous solitude into talk and laughter that was as disturbing as the crunching of pack-ice.

But Anaaq was not going to tell. "The event has come to pass that one waits here," he replied. All he wanted was to be left alone with his little white stone.

Later on gossiping women came waddling along; they led noisy children by the hand and heavy burdens were strapped to their backs. All were so happy, so full of talk and laughter! Each time one of their dogs came trotting back slowly, to lie down with tongue hanging out, they would all laugh because it seemed so funny to them. As they were all healthy, active people, they could not understand that here was a man who endeavored to probe the depths of Nature and to fathom her secrets.

Ujarak had lots of meat. He was handy with his rifle and people who had just traded with the whites had supplied him with cartridges. There were many herds of reindeer in the neighborhood and the animals were fat too. Although they had already stored away great stocks of meat in caches, the dogs

were nevertheless burdened with the vitals and hind quarters of many animals. It gave the dogs an amusing appearance and prevented them from straying too far.

Anaqaq found it impossible to be alone with his little white stone any longer. The newcomers threw down their bundles, laughed and gossiped, asked him for news and then began to boil meat. There was lots of heather in the neighborhood. It crackled and burned lustily as huge pieces of meat and tallow were put into the pot already filled with clear water. One woman, Pauti by name, had her youngest strapped to her back and one could hear the baby whimpering softly. Her two other children ran up to the little live bundle and caressed it.

"Little brother wants to come out! Oh, he is so sweet! Let us see him."

Pauti bent down and shook herself back and forth until the little bundle slipped from her shoulders and down her back, so she could catch it with her hands, and there she sat now, her newly born in her arms. The baby boy was just a little pinkish nothing. His eyes were all but pinched together by his fat cheeks. Pauti was now cleaning the body of the little boy with her tongue while the two bigger children were permitted to lick each of the baby's hands, and presently everybody could see how rosy and sweet he was. Finally the little one was pulled out of the fur hood into which he had been wrapped and he lay there kicking his arms and legs. The light was too strong for him, for he had been all day long in darkness behind his mother's warm back, and he started to cry. Immediately, his mother put him under her fur against her breast, nursing him where it was warm and nice, while the young father looked on with pride.

Life is so filled with joy when one has a son with whom all is well.

"We have traveled far. We shall sleep here," Ujarak decided. He was the chieftain of the little band, and as such he had a pipe which he now brought out. The head of it was made from soapstone, but the stem was only a stick which had been cut open lengthwise, scraped hollow, and then tied together. Yes, Ujarak was the man who possessed tobacco!

The others watched with great expectation when he produced a piece of tobacco from his pocket, and cut off a bit. Then he picked up some dried grass and blended it with some wood dust scraped from a stick; finally he pulled a little bunch of reindeer hair from his pocket, cut it into tiny pieces, and mixed everything with the tobacco.

The others just looked on. Yes, Ujarak was a man who smoked; everybody knew that and it did not need any further mentioning.

Ujarak took three, four puffs and then gave the pipe to Pauti. She coughed a little, at first, when she inhaled the strong warmth of the pipe and then she handed it on to her friend, Siksik, who was just lighting a fire under the pot. After Siksik had smoked, her husband Natark was permitted to take a few puffs, and then Ujarak himself smoked again, once more letting the pipe go around. Of course strangers had to wait awhile before they were permitted to partake of the rare treat.

They were noisy, these people, because they were happy, and they laughed over almost anything.

"My little boy is so sweet. His body is still so small," sang Pauti, swaying to and fro to put her baby to sleep.

The men threw their tents on the ground. There was no reason to erect them here, because the spot was protected against the wind and therefore warm. They unrolled some of their hides, preparing a bed for the children. Soon the women had taken out their sewing needles, busying themselves with mending footgear and whatever else that had become torn on the trail.

There was not much to talk about because they had all been together for some time and nothing new had happened. Ujarak and Natark had gone on the trail, hoping that they would get down far enough south to find people who could tell them whether there were ships and white men along the coast. They had nothing to trade as they were just young people starting out in life; besides, Ujarak had to provide for three children. They hoped to find work down at

the ships and perhaps the white men would take a liking to their women. And if the white men were amiable the Eskimos would be able to obtain many precious things.

"Let's go slowly. We are people on a long trail. Perhaps we'd better rest here for a few days."

The children came running.

"Oh, come, see! There are marmots—many of them, just out of their holes! Let's catch them. They are so small, and they have young ones, too! Can't we have a few of them to play with?"

Sure enough, right near by there was a whole colony of marmots. Of course one had to wait quietly for some time before a head would poke out of one of the holes. But it was fun to catch them and the women liked to eat marmot.

"Let the little newborn have a diaper made of marmot skin. It is much easier to keep clean and weighs hardly anything."

So they made snares from reindeer sinews while the children gathered stones, preparing to throw them at the marmots whenever they showed themselves.

Presently a boy started to cry, growing impatient. His mother tried to console him by promising him that his father would set traps. Meanwhile they must all come and eat.

Four grown-ups and three children! They created a terrific racket, disturbing Anaaq who desired nothing so much as to be left alone to think. But gradually the gaiety of the newcomers enticed him and soon he started to eat and drink and laugh with them. His conscience troubled him because he had come out here with the intention of becoming an angakok. But Ujarak and Natark were such gay company. They had their women boil more meat and then told stories of old times and new. Anaaq felt somewhat apart from them and moved off to eat his piece of meat alone and in silence.

It seemed as if something was pulling him away from the others and all their noise. After all, this was the neighborhood where the little men might appear—up here on the hill or down in the valley.

UNLESS he was hunting, Anaqag had trained himself not to look about. He always felt as if a finger pointed the way for him. Especially today he had no interest in what was going on around him. He noticed two wolves slinking about as wolves do when there is no prey in the neighborhood, but he paid scant attention to them. An inaudible voice was calling him, a spirit whom he could not see but who was beckoning him to follow.

And then he understood why when he beheld a strange object in front of him. At first, Anaqag took it for an odd stone, but as he approached closer, he saw he was mistaken. Apparently now he had really become a spirit controller like old Kuki or Isivalidak and all the others! There, directly in front of him, was something which on one end was a man, and on the other a wolf. He could not see the head of either, but he saw that the necks had grown together. He hurried forward and remembering the incantations which are so necessary to propitiate the spirits he broke into a soft chant. This would be his protection against the powers of evil.

Yes, there were heads, too! There was a man with his head buried between the jaws of a wolf! Surely never before had anything so strange come to pass. It must be some mountain spirit, ashamed of showing itself in its true form, which had assumed another.

Anaqag waited quietly for a while, then walked several times slowly around the grotesque being. Finally he began to pull on the hind legs of the wolf, hoping in this way to drag the man along. But the man remained still. He was asleep—or perhaps this was a dead man he had found here, one whose corpse had the power to kill animals that tried to feast upon it. He had heard of similar happenings! Presently, however, Anaqag discovered that only the wolf was dead while the man was merely asleep. Although he looked emaciated, there was an expression around his mouth that induced fear. Anaqag therefore remained very quiet. One should never awaken a sleeper, because his soul may be dwelling in the far land and if the sleeper is awakened before his soul returns

terrible calamity may befall him. Anaqaq did not dare touch the wolf again.

While he was standing there, pondering, Mala opened his eyes and despite his terrible weakness his brain was clear now and he immediately noticed that there was somebody near. Mala's first thought was that the white men who were pursuing him had caught up with him to kill him. However, without moving his head, he soon discovered that it was only Anaqaq, a pitiable hunter whom he knew, but it was not necessary for him to speak as long as he had not been questioned.

At last he had come to his people! Mala was elated over the fact that he had reached his goal. Then consciousness left him again. When he awoke later, Anaqaq was still sitting by his side, chanting softly. Mala turned around but remained lying on the ground, pretending to be only an ordinary man who had not experienced anything worthwhile and who had nothing to tell.

"Are you on the trail?" he asked.

"It has come to pass that one walked a little way—just took a little walk," Anaqaq answered. Then he said:

"Are you coming to visit our encampment?"

"It is hard to say, but here I am," Mala replied. "I lost my dogs and my small rifle and whatever little outfit I had. And so I traveled very slowly and finally lacked food and became very tired."

"Those to whom I belong have their camp right in the neighborhood. Come with me. They are people who will be glad to see a new face."

Anaqaq was very happy that he could invite a stranger.

Mala did not relish the idea of walking again. His limbs were stiff and he was so weak that his body was a tremendous burden to him.

He told Anaqaq: "I am returning from the ship and have not eaten for a long time. I am near starvation now. Bring me something to eat and bring it soon. Meanwhile let me sleep. And lend me your knife so I can cut out the heart of this wolf which I killed with my bare hands."

Anaqaq opened his eyes wide and asked questions, but

as Mala did not answer he handed him a little knife that he pulled out of his boots. It was only the remnant of a knife which had twice been broken off and which could do no more than rip a little skin. Nevertheless, Mala took it, sat up, and cut his way to the heart of the wolf. At first there were black spots before his eyes, followed by yellow blotches, and his head thumped terribly. He knew that he was near a collapse, but he managed to ward off unconsciousness and cut loose the beast's heart with the small blade. The heart tasted bitter and scratched his throat when he swallowed it and as soon as it reached his stomach, he wanted to vomit. Mala became so sick and feeble that he forgot all his dignity and lay down.

"Hey, you there, call the others. Let me have a fire so I can have warm water to drink. Bring me soup or something to eat. I have no strength left."

Anaqaq pondered for a moment in silence, then he returned quickly to the encampment. On the way, he thought over his find. He had told the others that something was calling to him, and here he had actually found a man. The spirit of the stranger had communicated with his own spirit. Now Anaqaq felt that he had achieved importance and would be spoken about when tales were told in Igdlulik and Pilung. Even far over in the east they would tell of Anaqaq and how he had found his way into the solitude all alone where he had discovered a man and saved him.

Ujarak and all the others listened with gaping mouths to Anaqaq's story. Who was the stranger? Where was his wife and where were his dogs? Why was he without weapons? He surely was no one to be feared.

"Let's go quickly and see him," the women suggested. "We all want to come along. At last something is happening. There will be news now! A man who has strange stories to tell about the ships!"

They all jumped up and packed their things, strapping burdens on the dogs while Anaqaq sat near by on a stone and brooded. He did not answer their countless questions because he was the great angagok now and must preserve his dignity.

Besides, he had now become the leader of a band on their way to a remarkable encounter.

Mala heard them coming from the distance. He had vomited because he had forced down almost the whole heart of the wolf. Now hunger gnawed at him again; he would do justice to the food the campers would bring along.

They came straight through the valley.

Oh, how wonderful to see people once more! Two little children were trudging ahead with their mother, followed by two men and many dogs with burdens strapped to their backs. Soon he would see his own little boys, Upik and Puala, who had surely grown much since he had left them. Puala, perhaps, was a good hunter by now. And he would have Inupaujak again and live happily with her.

Mala's exhaustion left him. Before him rose a vision of life and renewed strength and a feeling of joyousness surged through him.

Oh, it was difficult, very difficult, to maintain a composed expression when the strangers arrived. Mala remained sitting because he did not want to look up at the people after he had discovered that Ujarak and Natark were among them. The last time he had seen Ujarak, he had forced him out of his own tent and taken from him his wife, little Inupaujak, and it was Inupaujak to whom he was on his way now. Mala's thoughts wavered and moved in circles, but he saw that Ujarak had for a wife Pauti whom he himself had made a widow. If he had been able to think clearly, this fact would have told him much. Now, to cover up his embarrassment, Mala busied himself with his torn boots.

The people came up and grouped themselves around him. As they were young, they were very curious, and because they lacked self-control they immediately started to speak about everything they saw.

"Have you been on the trail?—Did you almost starve to death?—Where are your weapons?—Haven't you any dogs?—Where do you come from?" Thus they plied him with questions and Mala saw that they did not recognize him.

"I lost all my things on the trail," he answered. "If you

have meat, give it to me. I had to kill a wolf with my bare hands to get something to eat. I am very feeble, as you can see."

Mala had used up his last shred of strength. He broke down, weakness overwhelming him. A strange sound came from his breast, like the sob of a child. But it was the stifled cry of a mature man who has ruled so long that he has almost forgotten how to cry.

This was the language without words that they all understood. Ujarak took delicious tallow, chewed it and put it into Mala's mouth. Mala swallowed it eagerly. It burned his throat but he forced it down. And then they gave him water. His stomach ached insufferably, and the others saw him double up with pain. He was lying on his side and the pain cut deep furrows into his cheeks and forehead. He closed his eyes. It is always hard to drive hunger out of a body. Hunger comes slowly and remains quietly with a man because hunger is sure of its mastery. It is like a spirit that can be exorcised with food, but once hunger has taken hold of a body and decides to be victor, it gnaws its way out from inside, especially when food is offered to the stomach. Everybody knows this and therefore hunger must be treated carefully, the only way to kill it being a little food at a time.

They warmed water and put meat into a pot. Mala fell asleep and when he awoke they took marrow bones and fed him and gave him soup. Everybody was happy that they could help him.

"Here is a strange man! Has he any children?" the little ones asked. Children are so simple, they speak out everything that comes into their minds. They asked questions to which their elders themselves would have liked to know the answers, but they dealt with things one speaks of rarely.

Anaqaq left the others and communed with his river spirit and the little dwarf spirits, and although nobody answered, he knew that the strange man would survive and that he had been the tool for his rescue. Endowed with new power, he had found the stranger.

Mala was placed on soft reindeer skins and the women

mended his clothes which had been bleached by many a sun and torn by the wind and long use. Mala's face was thin and his voice was hollow. His hair was shaggy and matted. He did not tell them anything about his long trail. They were very curious but Mala was careful with what little he said because they might kill him if they knew who he was. They could overpower him while he was still feeble. Besides, if they turned him over to the white men they would receive a reward. However, once he regained his strength, mere boys, youngsters like Ujarak and Natark, would be no match for him. For the time being, he wanted only to rest and gather new strength. Later he could think and act.

Although his foot still ached, he could use it now. He pulled off his boot and looked at it; it was still swollen and there was a big wound in it. He exposed it to the warm sun and the pains subsided. But it was necessary to keep the limb quiet.

"On account of this foot, I could not cross the river to fetch my dogs and all my things," was all Mala told them of his experiences. His listeners were amazed to hear that he had come so far from the river without being able to walk properly and without food. But there was one thing they could not doubt and that was the slain wolf: Mala told them that he was a spirit controller who had withdrawn into the great solitude. He had then been taken sick, whereupon his guardian-spirit had called Anaqag who had come to his assistance. He had procured aid by remarkable means because of his supernatural powers.

MALA slept throughout many turns of the sun, remaining at the same spot and slowly regaining his strength. It was easier for him to think now and he decided not to hurry. First he wanted to be well again.

Mala's rescuers had to stay with him because he was still helpless. Soon the meat they had brought along was all eaten and Ujarak and Natark returned to the camp for more.

While the men were gone, Mala was alone with the

women. He could talk with them and learn how his two wives had fared during his absence. Aba had been taken by a man named Itusarsuk whom he knew well, and Saitok, that wretch Saitok, who once had come with the mounties to fetch him, had robbed him of Inupaujak. His boys eked out a living any way they could and his foster-son, Orsokidok, assisted the hunters in the encampment. As the women did not know who he was they told him about the much-feared Mala who had been seized by the white men. If they had known that it was Mala who was with them, one of them would surely have run to the encampment with the news that the avenger was approaching. How amazed they would be to learn that Mala was right near the encampment!

"And who are you?" asked Pauti, "and where do you come from?"

Nobody had asked that before, although everybody wanted to know. It is always women who manifest the curiosity inherent in man.

"Why, who am I?" Mala replied. "Everybody can mention my name. I am just a common man, a poor man on a long trail."

From this the woman knew that he was a man of standing. An ordinary man would have given his name without hesitation because only he himself and nobody else would tell of his importance.

"I am Kripik, just Kripik," Mala said, cleverly selecting a name that was unknown to this neighborhood. He had looked into a puddle before and convinced himself that his face was unrecognizable.

The men returned with loads of meat and wonderful thin summer skins and Mala was lavish in his praise of their skill as hunters. They could tell from this that he was used to making a good bag himself and was a man to whose words one listened carefully.

"It has been decided to return to the encampment from whence we came," Ujarak said one day.

"It almost looks as if I have to go now because Ujarak wills it so. It was different once," Mala thought, but his face

was serene, and his eyes did not betray anything. He was just Kripik here.

"My leg will be all right," he agreed. In spite of his helpless state and although he spoke but rarely, Mala had succeeded in gaining respect. Besides, he had mended the carrier straps of the dogs like a man who knows his work.

The daily trips were short on account of Kripik, who pretended to be still feeble and greatly hampered by his injured limb. But men are like dogs. It takes long to starve them to the point of death, but new strength is put quickly into their bodies as soon as meat is pushed through the mouth. Then the strength of the animals they have eaten becomes theirs and their feet stride lightly across the land.

"We shall soon arrive in the mountain which falls off sharply towards the east," Natark said.

Mala could have told him how often he had hunted in that neighborhood, long before Natark had caught his first seal. But now he was Kripik and he kept silent.

"Our trail will soon lead around a lake and there will be wonderful soft grass to walk upon," Ujarak told Mala.

How stupid these people were! There on the shores of the lake Mala had often camped. He had lived there as a young man after his first marriage. But these people never stopped to think; they believed that they had lived a full life, never suspecting they had just seen the light of the world. Mala held them in contempt for not recognizing a man simply because he was emaciated. But he trudged silently along with them and when they came into the neighborhood of the encampment he complained of pains in his leg.

"I shall remain here," he said. "My foot is too sore to go any farther today. And in my present state, I would feel ashamed to meet all your great people. You go ahead and I will follow slowly. But lend me one of your knives and let me have a few sinews and that stick of wood there, so I can fashion bow and arrows for myself while I wait for my foot to heal. Then I shall follow you to your encampment and there I will stay with you until we can go together to the big river

and I can fetch all my precious things. These I wish to give you in exchange for what you did for me."

The others were somewhat disappointed. How wonderful it would have been to return with a newcomer found in the mountains! But the way Kripik spoke, nobody dared to argue with him.

Ujarak gave him a folding knife and some meat.

When they left him, he was whittling himself a bow from reindeer antlers.



III

UJARAK and his band were loath to leave Kripik behind, but they sympathized with him on account of his foot and understood his reluctance to appear at the encampment helpless and empty-handed. They guessed that he was a man who had owned many things. He had told them of the customs of strange people and of hunting whole herds of reindeer, pursuing the animals with kayaks when they swam across a lake. Ujarak's men had never experienced anything like that. Kripik's tale of how reindeer were caught in the water was like tasting a new dish. They spoke of all these things and of what Kripik had said about going to fetch his property. Perhaps he would join them later and become a member of their tribe! A man who had left places he knew well, was always somewhat awe-inspiring.

"If the kamiks I mended for him should not fit him now, what will his wife think?" Pauti worried. And Siksik added: "I am afraid that his people will laugh about the garment I sewed for him from left-over pieces of fur."

They had all tried very hard to win the favor of Kripik. That he was so lean and hardly ever spoke was proof that he had been through harrowing experiences. Such a man always fascinates women.

The whole encampment rushed up to the rescuing party

as they approached. Even old Kuki came stumbling along, and Saitok with his two wives, dressed rather shabbily, were also among them. Then there was Utang, and three other hunters who had joined the summer camp. They were all happy now that the others had returned for there would be news, especially as Ujarak and Natark had taken their wives along. They could be relied upon for interesting gossip and as all of them liked to talk, they would soon hear many things.

And there were great events to report—news of real import. They had actually come across a man, alive, but without weapons or food; a man who had killed a wolf bare-handed! They all told about this, perhaps adding a bit to the story. Anaqaq made the most of his opportunity and impressed them by recounting how his spirit had drawn him onward toward the living man, the soul scenting him from afar. He even hinted that Kripik would be dead now if a Spirit Controller like himself had not discovered him. Death had started to attack Kripik and Anaqaq had been forced to resort to strong incantations in order to snatch him away from the dark powers.

"How did he look?—Were his clothes torn to shreds?—Who could he be?—Shall we fetch him immediately?—His name is Kripik, he says?"

Thus they plied questions, men and women together. Nobody had ever heard the name Kripik. Could it be that his was a new name which the stranger had given himself just to mislead them? Perhaps Kripik was really a terrible enemy whose nearness spelled danger!

"Kripik is not dangerous at all," Ujarak insisted. He loved to assume the part of the chieftain—one who never showed fear of anything. "He was rubbing his foot when we left him and I shall fetch him within a few days if he does not come into camp by himself."

"Who can it be?" they asked time and again.

"Perhaps it is my father who comes back," a little boy said to Ujarak, a bedraggled little orphan, his clothes in tatters. He asserted eagerly: "My father is sure to return to us some day."

Silence fell. All thought of the great, the much-feared Mala. Where could Mala be? There were rumors of his humiliation at the hands of the white men. It had even been told that the whites had shot him. Others had said that they had strung him up like a dog, but nobody could really believe such gossip because Mala, as often as he had gotten himself into dangerous situations, had always managed to escape. Of Mala one could always expect surprises! Perhaps Mala would really return victorious after all? Nevertheless, they scorned the boy's idea that the man who called himself Kripik and whom they had found in such a deplorable state could really be the great Mala.

"Ha, he thinks Kripik could be our father! As if our father would ever come home like that!" Puala, the bigger of the two brothers, said, trying hard to speak with assurance but gazing intently at the faces around him to catch a sign of doubt.

Orsokidok spoke up boldly. "Oh, I long to see Mala again. If only it were Mala!"

Nobody replied, since only children had spoken. What they said was like the wind that passed. It never reached the ears of mature and stalwart men because there were no strong thoughts in these childish minds to arouse fear. And so now their words were ignored. The men asked if there were reindeer in the neighborhood and whether they had run across many marmots, for they were carrying their skins in big bundles. But before long the conversation again drifted to the stranger.

"Do you think it could possibly be Mala?" Ujarak asked Natark when he was alone with him.

"Oh, no! Kripik is lean and entirely different than Mala. There was something, perhaps something about him that reminded one of Mala, but Mala has been gone only one year and during that time no man can change so that he cannot be recognized any longer. Besides, Kripik is a quiet, peaceful man."

But they did not hurry to meet Kripik. In any case, if a guest approaches, it is proper to wait for him in one's tent; any other procedure would be impolite. Perhaps Kripik was really dangerous; why should one go looking for him in the

mountains? He might be a mountain spirit, even, who had assumed the shape of man merely to mislead them, only to attack them later with greater strength, if nothing was done to fight him off. No, let the man be.

Ujarak needed his knife but he preferred to be without it another few days rather than go and look for Kripik. Besides, later on, Kripik's gratitude would be all the greater, the longer he let him have the knife.

BUT Mala never even thought of being grateful to them. Although he was once again in his own country, the people were his enemies. He had become again the old, much-feared Mala, —a man in whose hands rested the fate of others. It had been long since he had smiled happily, but now his lips parted in a wide grin. It was wonderful to be strong once more and to despise those who feared his wrath. He would make weapons of vengeance for himself; once again they would dread the mighty Mala.

While he sat and pondered, clouds came up from the northeast and the sky darkened, but he went on whittling his reindeer antlers into a strong bow for himself, one that required great strength to draw. He laughed over the weakness that still clung to him because he knew that soon he would be strong again. His bow must be one that nobody else could draw. He looked at his hands, still emaciated, the veins bulging. His bones had already put on more flesh. He felt his thighs and found that the big wound was still deep and that his knees were shaky. It started to rain. Oh, he was so cold and uncomfortable. Why had he not kept Ujarak's tent? Those stupid people who had given him meat and sewed new clothes for him would surely have given him a tent too. Now he was sitting here soaking wet, while Saitok, that weakling Saitok, lay with Inupaujak whom he, Mala, had won in a fight and who had been his joy and pride. Inupaujak was young, and passionate; she was wonderful—and now she had to prepare skins for Saitok! But Saitok would pay with his life.

Inupaujak! Inupaujak! Mala longed for her so that emo-

tion overcame him and he was almost ready to weep. Something drew Mala to the encampment. There his sons lived in danger. Had not their father been a murderer and was it not possible that some man among them would take vengeance by, slaying his children? Raindrops coursed down his cheeks, water penetrated the seams of his clothes and chills shook his body. He missed the warmth that laughs at cold and disregards even icy water. Mala longed to be the chief of a camp once again. He did not know yet of which camp, but he intended to move away from this encampment as it was too near the white men. Had he not found himself that they could come as far as the encampment and return alive to their ships—even if it had been only with his help? He would go away, far away, where not even rumors of his existence would ever reach those he despised.

And when he left once again, he wanted them to remember him with fear and terror. He recalled all the tales his mother had told him when he was still a boy, dwelling within the shelter of his father's house. Especially he remembered about Kagssagsuk, the orphan, who suddenly became so strong that he killed everybody who had scorned him in his misery. No doubt Mala's boys had suffered from the disdain of the people, and for this he would take vengeance. But he must not expose himself and appear among them in an incautious manner or take a chance of being set upon by more of them than he could handle at one time. He would lie in wait for them, doing away with each one of them. In the meantime, he would get rifles and other weapons into his possession and also the outfit which he needed for the long trail. And after he had wreaked his vengeance he would travel to unknown lands, trudging for many, many days over tremendous plains and sky-high mountains where a man could be himself because he was alone.

Mala arose and went on. To sit here in the rain was useless, so he took the meat on his back and went along the trail which the others had taken. He was careful not to leave any tracks and made for a spot where he had a good view and could guard himself against a surprise attack. But after that, Fate had to take its course.

A BAND of six or seven men left to look for Kripik after they had waited and waited and the stranger had not come to camp. Anaq, however, remained behind.

"One has drawn a stranger to our neighborhood. One has found his tracks. But I am only a feeble man. You who are so brave, carrying arms and going as a whole band, you shall not be humiliated by the presence of a wretch like myself. I shall go and catch salmon," Anaq said, and busied himself with his fishing spear.

The band made better headway than usual on the trail. They all were very anxious to see the stranger about whom Ujarak and Natark had told them so much and who seemed so little desirous of company that he stayed a full day's trip away from the camp. Perhaps he had done so only because he enjoyed coming into a new camp so much that postponing the time served to enhance his joy.

They were very talkative. Who could the stranger be? What would he be doing when they found him?

Suddenly silence fell upon the little band. Right here at this resting place they had left Kripik behind. Although they were standing on a hillock now, they could not discover any trace of him. Natark and Ujarak used their arms to signal to the stranger, but there was no sign of him. Perhaps he had wandered off a little way. Perhaps he was down at the lake fishing, or there might be reindeer in the neighborhood and he had gone hunting! The condition of his resting place clearly showed that Kripik would return soon. Oh, how embarrassing if on the trip from the camp they had passed him without meeting him! He might come to the tents, and be received only by women and children. It might be left entirely to accident who would be the first man there to say: "Please, this is all yours. My wife will sew for you and you may sleep on my bench."

They were surely at the right spot, but search as they would, there was no trace of Kripik. Where was he? They walked about, talking loudly and trying to disguise their disappointment, but this was impossible. Even if they did not admit to each other in so many words that they had failed in their mission, their manner betrayed their mood.

"It was here he made a fire. The embers are still here—and there we rested. Kripik slept under this rock," Ujarak, as chieftain, explained to the others.

It could easily be seen that the stranger had spent several nights there. Apparently he had stayed as long as it rained, and then had departed. His meat had lain on the stone; it had left spots and flies were feasting on them now. It was almost uncanny that he had left no trace at all. Nobody knew who said it first, but soon it was generally expressed that the stranger was probably a mountain spirit who was only leading them astray. Perhaps he was one of those people that dwell inland; a terrible man who had drawn them here by magic and who was now about to rob them of their wives! There was something very strange about the whole thing. Why had they listened to two young men who were ignorant of the wiles of evil people?

Here they were now, not knowing what to do. If they turned about immediately and had nothing to report, the women would laugh at them and old Kuki would question them in such a way that one could almost hear a chuckle with his every utterance. All the hunters of the encampment had gone to look for one sick man. They had taken along their rifles and their big knives and put on new boots just so the stranger could see what kind of men they were—and then there was no stranger to be found!

As Natark and Ujarak had not asked anybody to come along, the others could not very well blame them; sheer curiosity had enticed the others away from the encampment. After all, it seemed best to return now for the weather was getting worse and there was no chance to make a good bag. Besides it would not be well to meet a stranger who might know magic, on the hunt. After all, nobody could tell whether he had not changed himself into one of those beasts that bring the hunter bad luck and lead him astray. Perhaps it was not even a good idea to shoot at an animal in this immediate neighborhood.

They got ready to return to the encampment and they were speaking as boldly now as if they had been on a long

trail and had traveled so far that they had altogether forgotten how to tell the truth. Utang started to laugh and ventured to say that by now the stranger had probably reached the tents and was surprised to find so many had gone out to look for him while he himself had found the way to the encampment.

The others agreed with him. They did not taunt each other any longer, but tried to appear very natural. They proceeded towards the encampment, deciding that once they reached there, they would be safe and then they would take counsel.

Orsokidok, however, who had gone along with them to make himself generally useful and who had neither new clothes nor weapons, did not want to return with the band. He did not believe that Kripik had gone to the tents by himself. He alone would look for the stranger. He hoped that Kripik, if he was not actually Mala, would be very much like his foster-father and would adopt him as a member of his household so that he would not be everybody's assistant in camp any longer. Orsokidok thought that all this was very much like what he had experienced the year before, when he had come to Mala's aid and saved his life, thus earning the gratitude of his foster-father. But now Orsokidok was more mature and therefore better equipped to do things. The year had given him much experience and had taught him, too, that people could be cruel.

Inupaujak and Aba's behavior towards him was almost that of strangers. Once in a great while they would sew something for him on the sly, not wishing their husbands or the other men to notice.

Orsokidok had no property of his own, although he was almost a man by now. And there was no possibility for him to get ahead in the encampment because he never had more than he absolutely needed. When he wanted to go hunting he had to ask others to lend him weapons, and when the owners themselves used the weapons he had to stay at home. Orsokidok could not stand this state of affairs any longer.

Here, now, was a chance for him, and Orsokidok decided to try his luck, especially as he had a feeling that Kripik really was his returning foster-father. If that were the case, then

Mala, like great spirit controllers, had known how to disguise himself and thus would insure victory. Good luck had always been with Mala.

"May I borrow your rifle?" Orsokidok asked Ujarak. "There might be reindeer in the neighborhood and one desires to go across the mountains into the great plains. There one might find game. As the wind is towards me, the reindeer won't be able to scent me."

"Borrow my rifle?" Uparak said and laughed a little. "Ha, here is one who wants to borrow my rifle."

Pretending to be utterly unmoved, he turned to the others. After all, it was only a boy who had asked him.

"Yes, there are many reindeer. Of that I am certain," Orsokidok insisted. "I shall be very careful and make sure of my aim when I see them. I shall hide the meat and give you the skins. I have nothing that I can hunt with and a man who has enough meat at home can easily do without his rifle for a few days."

Ujarak did not answer, but Utang gave Orsokidok his rifle and he gave him three cartridges too. A man who does not have to worry about meat for the winter can afford to lend his rifle.

"Here, you may have mine. I shall wait at home until you return."

Immediately Utang regretted his impulse. If the stranger came into the encampment now, he would be without a weapon and perhaps there would not even be a chance to tell the newcomer that he was a mighty man who could afford to lend his weapons. The stranger might easily think that they had only one rifle between them, and perhaps it was even dangerous not to have a weapon with which one could shoot from a distance. But as he had given his promise, Utang tried hard to hide his uneasiness with lots of talk.

"Yes, here, take my rifle! Oh, I feel such pity for those poor ones who must go and look for help from others, and often I have thought that you should have better clothes, Orsokidok. Go and get yourself good furs and my wife will sew them for you so that you don't have to clothe yourself in

hides caught by other hunters. I hope you will be grown up soon and able to shift for yourself."

Everybody should see that Utang was a good-hearted fellow.

Orsokidok made no reply. But after a moment, he asked:

"Is there any one of you who can give me some food? Perhaps I will not stay away for a long time but I have not eaten a bite since we left camp, and I am hungry."

Every man opened his bundle and took out some meat. "Please eat of my meat. I always take along too much. As if one could not find something to eat wherever one goes!"

ORSOKIDOK went on and on. Once in a while he had to close his eyes and shut off his thoughts so they would not run away with him. He was sure, by now, that he was going to find Kripik and he hoped that Kripik would really be Mala. The thought that Mala had been crushed by the white men never came into his head. Had he not seen what miserable wretches those whites were? They came to lead Mala away to punish him, and they would all have perished if Mala and he had not discovered them in a snowstorm. The whites had been utterly exhausted and unable to find the trail, and although they had dogs and matches and lots of food, they had lain down to sleep, unable to withstand the hardships of Nature. Mala could easily deal with such men. Mala was strong. Mala was clever. Mala had been Orsokidok's joy and happiness in life.

Orsokidok remembered clearly how, a few years ago, when his uncle had died, he had been forced to wait for his food until the dogs had been fed. Everybody else had eaten his fill and very often they gorged themselves without so much as leaving him a morsel. He had run around in the cast-off clothes of grown-ups, which never fitted him. Once, when he was very cold, a soft-hearted woman gave him a pair of trousers—women's trousers with stripes on the sides—so that all the other children mocked him.

But when Mala came, it was different. In Mala's house he had always been well-clothed and given his fill to eat, Mala

had always taken him on the hunt and Orsokidok had never felt as if he were receiving something that he did not deserve.

It was Mala of whom he dreamed when he slept and it was Mala about whom he spoke to the boys when nobody listened; and sometimes he even spoke about Mala to Inupaujak and Aba. They had confessed to him that when they had lived with Mala had been the happiest time of their lives because Mala had shown them that he was a real master. Such, then, were women. Orsokidok wanted to grow up and be a man who thought and made decisions for others. He reflected on everything Mala had ever said to him—and suddenly he stood face to face with Mala.

Orsokidok jumped back and stood still, with not one thought in his head. Here was a man, a stranger, but it was Mala even if he did not look like him and wore different clothes. A lean and ominous looking man.

"Don't you know me?"

Orsokidok did not hear Mala's words. He was afraid that this was only a spirit because he had not seen his foster-father approach, discovering him when he stood directly in front of him. Perhaps he belonged now to those who could emerge suddenly from the ground.

"Orsokidok! It is I, Mala. I have returned to take possession of my property. I have wished so much to meet you—and now here you are! Are you alone? Where are your trail companions?"

"Yes, I am alone here. And I am overjoyed! Are you going to stay with us again? Oh, there are many who will be glad at your homecoming . . . and there are others who will fear your wrath. But at last you have come back and I need worry no longer."

"Yes, I am back at last. I have been away for a long time."

They sat down together. For the first time in many, many days, Mala talked with a peaceful mind. Here was one who deserved his confidence, and so he spoke about everything. His happiness was so strong that he used many words that later he wished he had never spoken, but now he did not care. He

was home once more and here was his foster-son and he had a rifle with him. Soon he would see Inupaujak and his boys. It seemed to Mala that he stood in front of a tent which contained nothing but happy days. He felt that if he had been a woman or a little child, tears would have flooded his soul; he explained to Orsokidok that the others had not recognized him because they had met him after a period of terrible starvation and that he had given his name as Kripik.

"I, too, would not have recognized you if I had not wished so strongly that it might be you. You are almost unrecognizable with your hollow cheeks. Even your gait has changed and your eyes are not the same color any more."

"I have thought so much that my eyes show it. Before, I laughed at hunger, but now I know what it is. It is not hunger alone that is so bad, it is loving life that makes starvation terrible. But now tell me about my boys, and about Inupaujak and Aba."

"Your boys are longing for your homecoming and they are grown quite tall, but they, as well as I, need weapons for practice. Saitok is a great man now. He is living in the encampment with three wives and talks much in a loud voice. After you left, Saitok took it upon himself to give orders to your wives and boys. Inupaujak resisted him more than Aba, insisting that she is your wife, but one day he told her that you were dead. That was after Itusarsuk had returned from Igdlulik. They had told him that you would never return and thereupon Saitok announced that he would take Inupaujak for his second wife and so she moved into his tent. What resistance could a poor woman offer to such a man? Then Saitok sold Aba to Itusarsuk who moved into your igloo. Saitok did not dare to have more than three women and some are saying right now that Inupaujak may be taken away from him as Saitok is not a very strong man."

"It seems," Mala said, "that it has come to pass that one has sold my wives. But it shall not take very long before Saitok will rue his deeds. Perhaps Saitok may die and Itusarsuk, too. That depends entirely upon what they have to say and how quickly they can flee when I meet them again. How-

ever, I want you to talk to Inupajak. When she hears that I am here she will come to me but nobody else is to know yet that I have returned. I shall wait here in the mountains until I am stronger. Then they shall feel that Mala is still powerful."

They went together towards the north, Orsokidok telling his foster-father about everything. Mala knew everybody in the encampment and that they were only average men who lacked sufficient strength to be among the best at the hunt. Nobody would ever look upon them with admiration.

They soon ran across a small herd of reindeer. Mala took Orsokidok's rifle. He had three cartridges, and the three animals he brought down were fat and would supply them with food for a long time. He retained only one of the skins; the two others Orsokidok was to take along and deliver to Utang and tell him where he had stored away the meat of the animals. Later he was to come and fetch it but now he must take the rifle back to Utang. After all, the weapon was of no use to Mala without cartridges! Very soon he would obtain lots of ammunition from people who had just such a rifle as he had left behind on the rock. Afterwards he would start on a long trail from which there would be no return.

WHEN Orsokidok returned to the encampment in a few days, it was with the firm step of a man. He was an enemy, planning to fight the entire camp. He was like a flash of lightning, breaking out of a cloud; no one can tell where it will strike. He calmly suffered the reproaches of the others for not having brought any reindeer tongues along and for shooting only two animals with three cartridges.

"I suppose you hid the meat under small stones so the foxes can eat it," Ujarak jeered.

"One really cannot tell, but we will see as soon as I go for the meat," was Orsokidok's reply.

Inupajak was in her tent, very dissatisfied because Saitok was unable to clothe her in beautiful furs. She never had time to be in the company of other young women, because she was always busy mending clothes which had been patched time

and again. And she also had to keep the boot soles in good order, sewing them together from small pieces of hide. There were neither scissors nor many knives in Saitok's house. Saitok had exchanged most of the pots she had brought along for some fishing line. Nevertheless, Saitok thought he had to have two wives and, of the two, Inupaujak was the one he watched most closely. Nobody envied Saitok old Sigvagak, who had been a widow for many years before Saitok took her. Saitok never made long excursions because he was afraid that he might find Inupaujak gone upon his return, and as he stayed home most of the time they had to skimp with food and furs. Inupaujak was growing more dissatisfied all the time, and when Saitok entered the tent, she said:

"Oh, if I only had a couple of nice furs for a pair of high boots!"

He did not listen. He busied himself with tying a harpoon point to a wooden shaft and paid no heed to the words of a woman.

"How happy those wives must be who do not have to be ashamed of their husbands and who always have clothes that are the envy of others."

Saitok was well aware of Inupaujak's bad humor. He knew her very well by now, after all the quarrels he had had with her, but he pretended not to notice anything.

"Where are the furs which I am supposed to sew? Where is the meat that we are to eat? When will we have the house full of guests who shout for boiled meat and sing songs while the one pot is empty and the new meat hasn't boiled yet?"

Saitok stared at her with half-closed eyes, but he did not say a word.

It was then that Orsokidok entered the tent, and immediately Saitok's tongue became busy.

"Were you outside?" he asked.

"It happened that one went on the trail," Orsokidok answered, "and herewith I have returned."

As nobody answered, Orsokidok continued: "It happened that two small reindeer crossed my path but I had no more cartridges. Their fur was almost all white—just right for nice

clothes. But then I rushed home quickly because I found the lake full of many fat salmon and whole droves of marmots along the shores. One wants to go and catch them as soon as one has eaten."

"Oh, that sounds tempting," Inupaujak cried. "Let's go and catch salmon and lay traps for marmot. I shall be so glad if I don't have to mend last year's old rags any longer."

Orsokidok surmised that a fight was brewing. A wife who admits openly that she does not get new furs every year compromises her husband. But Saitok still kept silent.

"And it won't take very long before I will have to sew with bone needles," Inupaujak continued sneeringly.

"That is only because you break off your needle so often," Saitok answered, who was now getting tired of being teased.

"I have just one little needle now. When I was living on the ships, I did not even pick up the needles that fell to the floor. And where are all the needles I had last winter? You sold them to get some wood! And where is my scissors and my little mirror? Oh, by now I have really forgotten that I have a face at all,—and I am one of those who like to look into a mirror. I shall have to go and look into a puddle to find out whether I still have hair on my head."

There was a trembling around Saitok's lips but he kept on working quietly and Orsokidok's face was utterly blank. Sigvagak, however, dispirited by many years of hard work, listened with interest. This young woman had taken all the joy out of her heart since Saitok had made her his favorite wife. Inupaujak's nagging brought a welcome change into the tent, breaking the monotony. Now Inupaujak suggested:

"Let's cook some food. I am hungry."

"Very well," Saitok agreed. "If you want to eat, why don't you fetch fire from outside?"

"Fetch fire from outside?" the little wife sneered. "Fetch fire from outside? I want to eat something that is cooked over fire lit with matches. I have been in places where they even had kindling wood in big boxes—great big cases full! But to buy that, one needs fox skins! You are only good to sit around at home and wait until the foxes come to you by themselves. Oh,

let's travel! Let's go where there are brave men who can give their wives what they desire."

This was too much for Saitok. There was Orsokidok, taking in every word. And all that took place in the tent would soon be retold all over camp. Saitok grabbed a stick and weighed it in his hand. "I am just wondering whether to tie this stick to my tent or to leave it where it is. It is a good stick with which to beat up dogs . . . or others who speak too boldly."

If Inupaujak had stopped now, it would have seemed as if she were cowed and therefore she went on. Her derision grew ever more biting and finally Saitok's tongue was loosened. He became furious, and nasty words flew back and forth. They made scornful remarks, uttered with cutting contempt. At last he seized her by the hair and dragged her down from the bench on which she was sitting. With a loud scream, she grabbed one of his legs and bit him in the knee where the skin was bare. The pain forced a protest from his lips. He reached for the stick and beat her over the back and the thighs but she kept on biting until her mouth was full of blood. Then she let go and jumped up, facing him boldly. He hit her in the face and she fell on the back of her head; both rolled out of the tent. By now, naturally, the whole encampment had assembled around Saitok's tent to hear what was going on. But when the two came rolling out, the neighbors scrambled away, hiding behind tents and bundles of skins whence they could watch the proceedings unseen. Soon the fight came to an end. With a terrible yell, Inupaujak broke away from her husband, then stopped and shouted that she was going into the mountains; if he wanted her back, he should come and fetch her.

Saitok naturally had to appear unmoved and only laughed. "Do you really think that I would go to the trouble of bringing you back unless I wanted you?" he demanded.

Despite all the insults Inupaujak heaped upon him, she drew no further reply from his lips. Proudly, he sat on a stone in front of his tent and busied himself once more with his harpoon. He was a man who had settled a domestic fight with a strong hand and had preserved the dignity of his home. But

the wound over the knee, where the imprint of Inupaujak's teeth showed clearly, hurt him excruciatingly. He was afraid, too, of what might still be in store for him. It was not at all impossible that somebody would take it upon himself to defend the young and pretty Inupaujak, challenging him to battle. And although she gave him trouble, Saitok certainly did not want to lose Inupaujak.

FIRST Inupaujak ran a little stretch, then she walked more slowly and when she finally reached the river she stopped for a little while, sitting down on a stone to wait until Saitok should come to fetch her and make up with her. Now that she had expressed herself freely in no uncertain terms, there was peace once more in her heart. Orsokidok had watched the entire scene and after Inupaujak left he went down to the river, apparently for some water. His attention seemed to be attracted by something swimming in the river and thus he gradually approached Inupaujak who was waiting for her husband.

"Inupaujak," Orsokidok whispered, "listen to what I have to tell you: The stranger Ujarak met in the mountains is none other than Mala."

She looked at him in astonishment. "Mala here? Did you speak to him? Why did he not come into the camp then?"

"Mala fought with the white men and finally left them. He is now waiting for a chance to take vengeance for the wrong that was done him, but I can't tell you any more now," Orsokidok answered.

He was a man of importance; a mystic, full of secret knowledge.

"Go to your tent, Inupaujak, and wait until everybody sleeps. Then pack up your tools, your needles and thread and your pot and all the things which Mala left behind and which Saitok used; don't forget his knife and his file. Then we will both go into the mountains and meet Mala. He will do all the thinking for us and tell us what must be done next."

Inupaujak was all excited. Here was adventure and excitement. Oh, nothing could be more wonderful than to be a

woman over whom strong men fought. But immediately suspicion assailed her. "You only want me to go along with you. You are only telling me that to make me leave the camp. Mala isn't there at all. Why, here is a young fellow who thinks he is a man already and can rob someone of his wife without thinking how hard it is to provide all that a wife needs. Do you really think I would run off with a mere boy?" This was something Orsokidok had not expected. But it implanted a thought in his mind. Just a tiny germ of an idea that would grow and grow. But now, he reassured her and told her more about Mala and his terrible time of starvation.

"Did you not hear that the starved Kripik killed a wolf barehanded? Who do you think could do that except Mala?"

This convinced Inupaujak and filled her with joy. Again she would be the cause of bloody fights; she would be the reward for which men risked their lives! Yes, she would go to Mala,—to the man everybody talked about; to the master who spread fear wherever he went.



IV

WHEN Inupaujak entered Saitok's tent, she did not say a word but she brought a glint of triumph to his eyes. All had retired and he was lying on the other bench in the arms of Sigvagak who was also still awake. He interpreted Inupaujak's return as a sign of submission; he turned his back to her, now, without uttering a sound, drawing his sleeping furs more closely about himself and Sigvagak.

"Oh, you two wretched beings, just sleep on! Here is a woman who does not even think of sleep. The sooner you fall asleep, the sooner I can leave you," Inupaujak thought.

As Saitok was not watching, she took her sewing needles and her thread to her bench. She also took the little scissors, hardly longer than the nail of her finger by now because they had been broken off time and again. Next, she picked up the

big knife and other things, and finally crawled under her skins.

She wrapped herself into her cover, but did not sleep. She just waited for her chance—and that chance soon came. She added both of Saitok's knives to her bundle and then sneaked outside the tent without being heard by anyone. A few of the children who were not sleepy played outside. One of them was Upik and she thought of taking him along, but gave up the idea. She would enjoy the meeting with Mala alone; besides it would not be wise to take the boy along for then it would be found out that only the members of Mala's house had left. Her own absence would be explained by her fight with Saitok and perhaps they might even think that Orsokidok had something to do with it. When she thought of that, Inupaujak laughed. Now she was going to join a strong man; the strongest she had ever met! A man of whom all were afraid and over whom she alone had influence. She climbed the mountainside quickly. Orsokidok had told her which trail to take and as soon as she had passed the river, she saw him sitting on a stone. That he now considered himself a leader and a thinker for others was clearly revealed by the expression on his face. He arose and came to meet her.

"Did you take something along which might be useful to Mala?" he asked.

"As if I would leave without it," she answered. "I hope you yourself have taken things that will be useful to Mala! Where is your bundle?"

Orsokidok did not answer because, after all, Inupaujak was only a woman and he certainly did not intend to be deferential to her.

"We must walk quickly. I shall carry your things and show you the trail. They might follow us when they awaken. Did the children see which trail you took?"

"I don't think that anybody will try to stop you from going away. But men still fight over me and it has happened before that they rushed after me when I came into their thoughts and became the object of their desires." It served her purpose to subdue Orsokidok a little because when she returned to Mala and was his wife again, as before, she did not

want Orsokidok to be too familiar with her. She wanted to be able to send him for water or to fetch meat from the caches whenever she wished.

The two walked fast. Orsokidok cleverly led her along in a direction quite different from their starting point.

He told her:

"The summer is kind and does not leave any tracks as the winter does. When days are dark, the world is not wise. But as soon as the sun rises it spreads light and warmth, and all tracks in the snow disappear because with light and warmth comes wisdom." He felt it necessary to make knowing remarks, to be a man who gives explanations to stupid women who think of nothing but clothes and food.

So they journeyed on and on while the sun rose. The day was warm and calm and each time they sat down to rest gnats swarmed around them. Each had his own thoughts and both longed to meet Mala.

"Have we still far to go?" Inupaujak asked when the warmth of the day started to tire her.

"Not so far any more," Orsokidok answered. "But perhaps you want to sleep here. Let's close our eyes and wait until it gets cooler."

They leveled the ground for a resting place. Inupaujak was wet with perspiration from the trip and pushed her fur aside to catch the lice crawling along her back and in her armpits. Lice are very disagreeable when one perspires, for then their bites sting. It is not like the winter when lice are cute little insects that make one forget the cold and sleeplessness.

How invigorating it was to sit naked in the sunshine and to amuse oneself by rubbing the dirt off one's belly until it was all clean. Suddenly she thought of the ship where she had bathed her whole body. The white men certainly had queer customs and it was amusing to recall one's experiences with them. But now she had to put on the fur again because the gnats had smelt her body and were rushing over to suck her blood. She closed her eyes and slept. Neither noticed that the birds were watching them and that a fox whose fur was still gray and of no value passed by with its young. There was a

dreamless sleep because the strong scent of the heather and grass had made their eyes heavy.

The sun was standing on the opposite side of the hill when Orsokidok finally woke up. The sky was clear and the water in the little stream rushed by, tossing up foam where it washed against the shores. Orsokidok sat up and listened to the twitter of innumerable snow sparrows. It was fun to hear a single one of the sparrows twittering feebly from time to time. But not far away, there was another bird whose voice sounded differently, and still another was on the other side, and one in front and one in back. You thought there was just a single bird that twittered but there were many of them. And farther behind, there were other snow sparrows and in the distance still more. It seemed as if all the snow sparrows in the world were singing in chorus. It was like the water that never stops rushing by because one drop always pushes the other.

Inupaujak awoke with a smile, jumped up and asked whether there was anything to eat. Orsokidok did not answer but busied himself in tying his boot laces.

"It doesn't matter," Inupaujak said. "As soon as you lead me to Mala, we shall have enough to eat and I shall give you as much as you want, too."

Oh, so Inupaujak already thought she was Mala's wife once more and she simply could not imagine that there should not be abundance wherever Mala was. Orsokidok smiled but he did not say anything. They went on up the mountain and down into the dale, crossing many hills. They encountered a number of hares, warming themselves in the sun. When two flocks of young geese crossed their path, Orsokidok explained: "Young geese are amusing because they are afraid of water, even if it is only a small lake. They always remain on land and they run faster than any man who pursues them. One can run after them and it looks as if they are only playing, but suddenly they disappear. It is almost as if the earth had swallowed them. Geese are the wisest of all birds. They run around to find a stone of the same color and they pretend that they are stones too so one cannot detect them. Even dogs miss them because geese do not smell like other animals."

Inupaujak did not answer. She was again tired and her legs pained her; at home she just sat around in Saitok's tent. It had been different when she had accompanied Mala on long trips and suffered all the hardships of the trail with him. But forward they went in spite of their sore feet, their longing for Mala whipping them on.

SUDDENLY Inupaujak looked up and, on the ridge of the mountain, discovered a man coming toward them.

Was that Mala? His face was utterly changed. She remembered how he had looked last winter. It seemed as if his face had aged and the lines become sharper, but he smiled at her and by his smile she recognized him. Suddenly all the joy of reunion left her heart. Perhaps she had done too much in coming to meet him. He did not look as powerful as she had thought and she noticed too that his clothes were very worn. He was lean and he walked like a tired man. It was hard for Mala to disguise his joy. He could not take his eyes off Inupaujak, and emotion threatened to overcome him. But he kept himself well in hand and with a blank expression on his face, he merely asked:

"Oh, are you coming to meet me?"

Inupaujak did not answer, but Orsokidok explained that he had come and brought Inupaujak along in case Mala needed some things mended. Mala turned around and went ahead of them, up the hill whence he had come, and for some time nobody spoke. They soon reached a spot where they found a hut without a roof. The structure was between two boulders with a windbreak built from stones. There was grass on the ground and a few reindeer hides. This, then, was Mala's abode. One could see that a fire had been burning on the hearth, and meat had been roasted on flat stones. Inupaujak suffered keen disappointment. It would have been much wiser to stay with Saitok or to wait until a rich man took her away from him. But now she was here and she could tell by Mala's face that he would not let her go before he was ready to come along with her. She put her bundle down, rested on the stone, and busied her-

self with her boots. They were all greatly embarrassed and did not know what to say.

Inupaujak did not want to start the conversation and therefore she took off her boots and stockings and began to rip them apart. But immediately she remembered that it would look as if she were intruding if she dried her stockings here. It might also look as though she were asking for lodging and had already made up her mind to stay for good. Therefore, she only took a little grass and spread it between the boots and stockings after she had thrown the old pad away. It was then that Mala broke the silence. "At last I see you once more, Inupaujak! Oh, I have been away so long but now I must gather my family around me before I travel further."

"Have you a tent?" Inupaujak asked. "And why did you not come to camp with the other people?"

"We shall not live with them. We shall live in a new country and I shall build a tent later," Mala said with decision. He was as of old again and Inupaujak understood that she was once more the wife of a strong man. Mala was still a man who did not fear danger.

"Did you come all alone?" she asked Mala respectfully.

"Yes, one just went on and on. My dogs died and I lost all my belongings in a great river. I haven't even a rifle but I shall soon obtain one for myself at the encampment. And I shall take back all my property."

Now Inupaujak knew what Fate promised. There would be strife in the camp because Mala was a man who needed many things. He must have dogs and weapons. Oh, yes, exciting times were in store for them all. It was indeed wonderful to be Mala's wife!

"Did you bring a pot and matches along? Very well, then, let's boil water and meat," Mala decided.

Inupaujak did not answer. She took her pot and fetched water from the little lake. Mala built a hearth and Orsokidok went to collect fuel, heather and little dry sticks. Soon the meat was boiled and they began to eat.

"Here is your knife," Inupaujak said, and gave him the knife which Saitok had used so long.

"This is a woman who remembers," Mala said. "She kept my knives for me."

Then they ate on and nothing was said any more.

"In whose tent did you live?" asked Mala later on, after Orsokidok had gone to catch salmon in the lake.

"Saitok took me. I first lived with Aba in the snow-house which you built for us. But then I had to move into Saitok's tent. He hadn't much meat, but nevertheless I always had a little food for the boys. Your sons are going around in poor clothes because I could not procure any skins for them. Aba still lives in your tent together with Itusarsuk. Do you want to take her back into your house?"

Mala had not thought of Aba and did not desire to take her back, but he noted the expectation in Inupaujak's voice. She would not have to do the rough work if he took Aba for a second wife. Mala did not want to appear a weakling. If he wanted to retain her respect, he had to prove himself a strong man. "We shall get Aba," he said, and the issue was decided. "And my sons shall no longer wear skins whose hairs were worn off by strangers. If there is anything to be said about my plans, I shall say it myself to the others when I am ready. Let Orsokidok try his hand catching salmon. I fashioned a salmon spear that is just waiting for him. But now, we two shall rest and tomorrow we can think some more."

Thus they retired, these two who had been separated so long. Now they were reunited once more and they rejoiced.

"It will be best for you to return to camp and tell Aba that I am here. She is to come and bring my property along. After that, I shall go down and fetch my rifle. Everything I left behind, I want back. I shall trade my belongings for as many cartridges as I can get because I will need them in my fight. But nobody must know yet that I am near by. They did not recognize me when I was feeble; now they shall not see me before I am strong once more. Even my boys must not be told

anything about their father." This was what Mala had resolved during the night and what he now told Orsokidok as his foster-son made ready for the trail.

"If they should ask for Inupaujak, what shall I answer? And those who went out to look for Kripik might surmise that I met you, although they still believe that you are a stranger."

"Yes, what shall we do?" Mala wondered. "If I only knew what they are thinking, I would know what to do. If they believe that Mala is in the neighborhood, nobody will dare to do you any harm. But first let's go and catch some marmot. Let's lie in wait for them and kill them with stones, so we can have a delicious meal before you start back."

They rested on a couple of big stones. Near by were the holes out of which the marmots emerged into the light, squatting on their haunches. They threw one stone after another at them and killed many of the animals. It was an entertaining pastime, especially as they were so sure of their aim.

Towards the afternoon, Inupaujak became weary and discouraged and felt once more that she was now only the wife of a poor man. Here they threw stones after animals, not for amusement, but because they needed food, and out in the world there were so many rifles with which one could shoot all the animals one needed. No, Mala was no longer so great and so powerful if he had to do his hunting in this way.

Finally they stopped and took their catch home with them. They skinned the animals and the sweet meat was so fat that it melted on their tongues. Joy and satisfaction returned once more into Inupaujak's heart and she smiled.

"Orsokidok has returned," the children shouted when he approached the camp. The tidings flew from tent to tent and men and women came out to hear the news.

But Orsokidok did not go as far as the tents. He remained near the river to see whether there were salmon and so the neighbors became aware that he had nothing to tell. When the men stepped up to him and asked where he had been, he only

answered: "Do animals one wishes to kill go into one's tent by themselves?"

Saitok was not satisfied with this answer, and although the others stood near by he began to complain about his loss of Inupaujak and said: "You haven't been out hunting! With what should you kill your prey? But my wife has left me and you surely know where she is."

"If your wife has left you, she most probably was taken by a stronger man; if you suspected me of robbing you of her, why didn't you follow my tracks?"

Orsokidok surely could afford to be bold because many were listening to his words. Without really knowing why, they all harbored a certain respect for the boy. His insolence gave the impression that there might be strange things behind his words and his behavior.

But Saitok was a man without shame and dignity. He had already brought public disdain upon himself because his wife had left him. Now he even screamed in a most unbecoming manner and acted as if he wanted to attack the young man.

"Inupaujak left with you! You two must have traveled together and I shall take you to task for that."

"It seems to me as if you talked very loudly to each other and used strong words," Orsokidok replied, "and this most probably is the reason that your wife went into the mountains. Go and look for her there if you are so worried about her. I do not know where she is." And without giving Saitok another glance, Orsokidok went past the men into Itusarsuk's tent which stood a little aside from the others. Orsokidok lived there most of the time.

Orsokidok was a real man now. He knew that others were angry with him. But the big plans which Mala had confided to him could not be overthrown by a man like Saitok, and for this reason Saitok's threats did not impress Orsokidok. Orsokidok hugely enjoyed the attention of the camp. Each time he appeared people were silent, and from this he gathered that they looked upon him as a link in the chain of events they were anticipating. He was even asked to eat with the men. Women

craned their necks after him and the children shrieked: "Look! There goes Orsokidok."

BUT not before two days had passed did Orsokidok find a chance to talk to Aba alone in the tent and to whisper to her: "Walk up the hill a little way as if you were picking heather. There are words in me which wish to come to you and to which you should listen."

"It is not my custom to heed the words of boys. It must be a mature man with whom I go to pick heather. Do you think you are grown up enough to lure a woman into the mountains?" Aba laughed and looked at him sneeringly, but Orsokidok did not give in.

"Aba, I have a message for you from Mala. It is he who remained behind in the mountains. Inupaujak is already with him and he wants you to come and trim his lamps and tan his many hides."

As Aba was taken unawares and did not know what to answer, Orsokidok continued: "You shall go with me tonight. Take all your belongings so you can stay with him in the mountains. And try, also, to take some of Mala's things along which Itusarsuk has used. Later on Mala himself will come down here to take back once more all those things left behind last winter when he went on the trail with the white men."

Aba's thoughts were very slow; just as slow as she was stout of body. The ways of the cunning were unknown to her and quick words always disturbed her peace of mind. Right in front of the tent there were people eager for news, as always, and so Aba did not even take time to think things over, but shouted right away: "Hey! You, outside! Come in and listen to my words! Orsokidok is trying to lure me into running away with him. He says Mala has come back; he is the stranger, as we already guessed. Inupaujak is with Mala and now he wants me back. Come here and listen to Orsokidok, all of you. He is a thief, too. He wants me to take Itusarsuk's things to Mala who dares not show himself in the encampment."

Aba's words stirred up a storm which awakened everybody.

There was quick talk and loud ejaculations from tent to tent. Everybody rushed to Itusarsuk's tent and Aba went on shouting her news. She was the center of attention. Children listened to her words, and older men plied her with questions—men who otherwise would never deign to talk to a mere woman. Even old Kuki came waddling along and sat down on the bench. There was hardly any more room in the tent and everybody jabbered to everybody else about Orsokidok who took women back to a man who was afraid to call himself by his real name. They all wanted to hear more of what Orsokidok had to say.

"Now I shall kill Orsokidok," Saitok raved. "He shall die because my wrath is great."

He pushed his way through the others and took hold of Orsokidok who thought his last hour had come, now that a shameless woman had betrayed his plans. Nevertheless, he tried to defend himself: "Are you calling my name in anger because I am helping my foster-father? Have you forgotten all the fear that you always felt for Mala? He is a great spirit controller who disguised his name and his face so well that you did not recognize him when you met him out there. If one of you tries to stop me from going to Mala, he himself will come and take vengeance and turn all your wives into widows. You all know very well that Mala knows no fear!"

They were strong words, coming from Orsokidok, prompted by his fear. His reminder that they all had known Mala only too well made them hesitant. But Saitok thought of the desirable Inupaujak who was a gratification to him in his declining years. He did not want to lose her, because without her life would be meaningless. He jumped at Orsokidok and grabbed him by the shoulder. If he had only had an axe or a knife in his hand, Orsokidok would have been doomed.

"Your bold words do not excuse you. I shall make Mala give up my wife. He was weak when Anaqqaq found him and everything he has now he received from us—or else stole from us. Do you really think that you, a mere boy, can scare a whole camp?"

There was murder in his eye. Orsokidok saw this and he realized his danger. He tore himself from Saitok's grasp and

in doing so fell between the children at the entrance of the tent. He picked himself up quickly and rushed away. He ran as never before, because he was running for his life. He never looked around, nor did he hear the shots that whizzed past him through the air to the right and left. There were five shots altogether but he did not pause to count them. He remembered that the reindeer's salvation depends on its fleetness, and that the animal's undoing usually results from standing still and trying to discover the source of danger. Thoughts such as these lent additional speed to Orsokidok's feet. Soon he had laid sufficient distance between himself and his pursuers; even their shots could not reach him any more. But he kept on running and only when he had crossed the great ridge and reached the valley on the other side of it did he rest and look around. There was not one pursuer to be seen, but the fear of the fugitive lingered with him and he hastened onward.

The next day he reached the spot where Inupaujak and Mala lay together. Worry was so plainly mirrored in Orsokidok's face and he was so exhausted from running that Mala could not help laughing when he first gazed upon his foster-son. But when even Inupaujak laughed, Orsokidok's fear disappeared and suddenly he understood that there was nothing to be afraid of any more. Mala would take everything in hand.

"Are they your enemies, too?" Mala asked. "And did you have to flee for your life before their wrath that you come to me in such a condition?"

"I went to see Aba and told her about you, but being a woman she shouted aloud and told everybody what she knew—that it was you whom Anaqaq found and that she did not want to come out to you. Saitok tried to kill me but I ran away. Everybody in camp is against us and I fear there are too many of them. We have not sufficient weapons to start a fight with them."

"No fight is hopeless as long as both parties expect victory," Mala said. "As soon as you have rested, we shall go down to the camp to fetch Aba and my boys and my belongings—and I shall utter words which each one of them shall hear."



V

EARLY the next morning, they set out upon their journey, carrying along the little meat which Mala had dried so that they could eat it at any time. They all pondered upon coming events and were full of expectation. Inupaujak asked question after question. "What shall we do?—Shall we take this trail?—What shall we say to them?"

But for a long time she did not receive any answer. Women always like to talk prematurely, when something is in the offing. But Inupaujak was so anxious about the outcome of the enterprise and felt so strongly that she belonged to Mala once again that it was impossible for her to withhold her thoughts and she kept on asking questions.

"Time will show what we shall do," Mala said finally. "Very often plans prove useless when the moment comes to act. Let's hide our thoughts that there may be great power in our souls. Then we may prove our worth."

Inupaujak saw the wisdom of Mala's words and the rest of the trail was followed in silence with Mala, as the leader, always a little stretch ahead of the others.

The silence became oppressive to Orsokidok and he therefore rejoiced when Mala finally arrested his steps and waited for them to catch up. He asked Orsokidok if it would be possible to cross the valley without being seen so that no one might prepare against their coming. Orsokidok stood for a long time and pondered. At last he replied, using many superfluous words because it was rather strange for him to be called upon for advice by Mala who, until now, had never taken counsel with him. When he had explained which trail to take, the trip was continued in silence. They trudged on until Inupaujak became tired. Her feet hurt and the silence weighed upon her like a heavy burden; but she was ready to put up with it for great events loomed in the near future. At last Mala said:

"We will stop here now and rest so that we may arrive at the camp at a time best suited to our purpose. But we had better not light a fire because the smoke may betray us. Fortunately we have some dried meat. Tomorrow we shall have better food when visiting people who have pots."

In spite of her fatigue, Mala's words disappointed Inupajak greatly because if everything was to be decided by talk alone, then it would be just like finding a shell in the sea only to discover that it is empty. But she did not say anything for she was the wife of Mala—and Mala demanded mute obedience.

They did not sleep much during the night because all three were busy with their thoughts. But none of them wanted the others to know that he was disturbed and not at all sure that their expectations would be fulfilled.

"The time has come to hit the trail once more. Let us eat and then we can start. You two will be told later what to do, as soon as I see who is in the encampment."

Mala had issued his order and presently they were on the trail once more.

NATURE appeared to frown upon coming events, for heavy clouds gathered in the southeast and rose in the sky with terrific speed, like a tremendous wall of snow that grows ever higher, finally covering the entire land like a dome. As soon as the dark clouds hid the sun, everything turned gray and the birds stopped twittering. The last thing they heard was the humming of a hornet that rushed to her hive. Orsokidok's thoughts dwelt upon the hornets: "They are so wise. They stay out longer than the birds, but they never come home too late and they always bring home their entire catch. Then they sit inside and wait until the sun shines once more and the blossoms open so that they can visit again the yellow and white, the red and the blue flowers. Oh, those flowers which are just so many colored specks in the thoughts of a man who gazes across the country! They were only created for man to look upon but the hornets know how to use them for a happy hunting ground. It is that which makes the hornet wise."

The hornet had disappeared, safely tucked away somewhere, but the three went on, undaunted by the threatening clouds. The wind grew stronger and stronger, digging deep furrows into the sand along the brook. Heavy dust drifted across the ground where there was no grass and walking against the storm proved very difficult. Mala was far ahead and one could tell from his face that his thoughts were dark and crowded with unspoken words. The other two did not dare to talk but shot understanding glances at each other once in a while; they realized that it was best for them to keep silent. Soon the rain began to fall in torrents. Rain whipped their faces and drenched their clothes. Their boots were wet and presently they were soaked from head to toe, but still they marched on. Mala led them without ever looking back and they followed as best they could.

Orsokidok did not notice the rain. He only trudged onward, convinced that Mala was a great spirit controller who ruled nature. Obviously, while the two others slept, Mala had called upon his guardian spirits to let fall a cover of rain over the land, just as he had done the day when he went to kill Semik and his brother, and had reached their tents all unseen. Doubtless they would reach the camp again without being detected. Mala's power was great and the last remnant of fear that had clung to Orsokidok since his people had pursued him now vanished. It was he who now threatened the others! It was he who came back for vengeance!

Inupaujak, however, minded the rain greatly, cowering like a wet dog, but she followed Mala because she was his wife and she never doubted his victory. She was not afraid. Mala had dispelled her anxiety and, thinking of the great events about to occur, she pressed forward, her eyes on Mala.

At last they reached the tents. Heavy rain was still falling but nobody saw them coming: nobody suspected that there were people outside. They went up to Itusarsuk's tent. Mala tore aside the flap and entered so quietly that one might have thought that he had merely been down to the river for some

water or to see whether one of his dogs had chewed up the traces.

Itusarsuk could not stammer a word. His mouth fell open and his arms hung limp because he knew immediately what it meant to see Mala in his tent. Aba, however, could not keep silent but, as a woman will do, started to jabber in a loud voice. Orsokidok came into the tent and Inupaujak, too, but not a word was uttered by anybody except Aba and nobody listened to what she said.

Mala sat down on the bench, pushing away a pot that was in his way. "One is here on a visit," and his face clearly showed that it was not in his mind to leave soon again. But Aba kept on jabbering: "Oh, Mala, Mala! Did you really come for me? Woe is me, there will be a fight in the camp. Oh, those happy women that are not pursued by so many men! Now that will happen which I always expected when my fears kept me awake nights. Will there never be any peace in this camp?"

Her words, lacking sense, were bound to lead to a fight. However, nobody was ready to admit that the loose talk of a woman could induce men to act. And louder than before, Aba went on shouting: "Oh, if only others would come to help because Mala has arrived and as always, he comes to kill."

Mala remained sitting quietly, looking at Itusarsuk who did not know what to do or say. At last Mala spoke: "One did not come to kill. One is just a man returning from a long trail. I see that you have pitched my tent for me. You were also good enough to support my wife while I was away and I am thankful to you, as I was on the trail much longer than I ever expected to be."

There was quiet for some time. Finally, Itusarsuk replied: "I mended this tent with two of my own skins and those over there are new hides from my spring catch." He was so shaken with fear that he did not know how absurd were his words.

"Really, did you mend the tent with two new skins? I never heard of a man before who was able to obtain two whole

skins in one spring! This man one visits must be a great hunter," Mala sneered.

"Oh, now they are starting in! What an unlucky woman I am!" Aba cried and thought it was too bad it was raining and storming so hard that the people in the other tents could not bear her and rush to her assistance. She shouted again and again:

"Mala has come for me. There will be a fight! Oh, women are so unlucky! They are always the reason for a fight without ever wanting to be."

Again it was quiet. Nobody had listened to the whining of the woman. Itusarsuk still sat by, speechless; his thoughts had ceased and he made no move. Inupaujak and Orsokidok watched the developments with great interest and admired Mala tremendously for the self-assurance with which he acted. Mala despised that stupid frightened man and hardly felt any anger. But he wanted his wife back and his belongings. He reached for the axe which lay near the entrance and, raising it, started towards Itusarsuk.

"You took my wife while I was gone; you made yourself the master of the tent which I left to my wives; my little children had to beg for food out of the very pot I left behind when I went on the trail. You may well believe Aba when she says that I am here to kill you. The words you have just spoken will be the very last ever to come out of your mouth."

Itusarsuk was paralyzed with fear. He was like a seal surprised on a floe of ice. He remained seated, staring ahead, unable even to think of flight because his legs were stiff and could neither carry him out of the tent nor speed him away from the encampment.

Itusarsuk closed his eyes so he need not see the keen edge of his own axe when it should hit him in the neck, and when it actually did strike, he just fell over on his face and did not move any more. Nevertheless, Mala gave him another blow right in the middle of his skull. It sounded as if he had stepped on a bag of frozen eggs. With one last sigh, Itusarsuk's arms fell down to his sides, and his legs stretched out. Itusarsuk was no more.

Blood trickled from the two wounds made by the axe. It collected in a little stream, crossed the ground of the tent and finally disappeared in a crevice.

Mala had killed men before and by now murder did not excite him so much any more. He just sat down, put the axe away and started to dry his face, still wet from the rain. Then he asked Aba for her bone scraper to press the water out of his fur. Anybody could see from this that here was a man without fear, one who never even thought twice about whether he had killed a man or a seal.

"You had better boil meat," Mala said a little later. Fear had paralyzed Aba's tongue, and even Inupaujak had forgotten all her joy for a moment. She found that she herself had been somewhat in the background because it was Aba over whom the fight had been fought. She was merely a young wife who was not as valuable as the older and more experienced woman.

"Boil meat," Mala repeated. "Are you women without ears or has there been nothing to cook while I was away?"

He noticed that Itusarsuk's rifle was standing right next to the bench. He took it now and placed it next to him. Then he opened a box containing cartridges which stood near by. He first loaded the rifle and then put a supply of cartridges into his pocket.

"There is meat that is almost done. I was just boiling it when you came into the tent. But oh, how terrible! Who could eat after Mala has arrived?"

"I did not invite women to eat with me. But let the men come to visit since I have boiled meat in my tent. Inupaujak, I want you to sit in your old place and let the others have the bench on the side, if that is the custom of the camp."

After all, Mala was in his own tent now and he liked order. Soon Inupaujak was sitting on a bench, her legs crossed, her boots hanging up to dry.

PRESENTLY the pot was boiling and little air bubbles rose to the top of a fat meat soup. Mala stepped in front of the tent. Was he a man to be obsessed with fear? Should he not

invite his camp fellows to visit him? He made a few steps and shouted so loud that it was heard in all the tents:

"Boiled meat! There is boiled meat here! Come quick and visit me. You must all come and eat boiled meat in my tent!"

Heads popped out of tents, took note of Mala, and disappeared once more. More looked out and finally, in spite of the rain, heads protruded from every tent and all could see that the man who stood there was not Itusarsuk. They immediately noticed that his voice was different and presently they recognized Mala, who stood there for some time and then quietly turned around and entered the tent once more. Inupaujak looked out through a crack in the tent. How they hurried from tent to tent, huddling together in the rain and storm, then rushing over to Ujarak's tent, only to run back and forth again. But nobody came to call on Mala. After some time had passed, Mala told Aba to take the meat out of the pot and put it on the board in front of him. Then he took more meat, cut it into pieces and put it in the pot because he wanted a very big meal. Suddenly frenzy overcame him. He had killed and he wanted to take the flesh of the dead one and put it into the pot and have his visitors gnaw the bones of their fellow hunter. He saw blood before his eyes and he turned around quickly and took hold of the corpse, pulling up the fur so that the belly was bare. Mala stood there, his knife poised. What a tale that would be! That unheard-of deed of a man who came to take vengeance and boiled his enemy as if he were game he had killed!

But soon his frenzy subsided. Mala dropped the knife and pushed it aside, pulling the fur down over the dead man's body; he had tasted enough of victory. It would command sufficient respect for him if he were host to the others, while his enemy lay unburied alongside the bench.

"It seems nobody is coming," Mala said and went outside to invite his neighbors once more. "Boiled meat here! There is boiled meat here! I want you all to come and eat with me!" He could very well see them standing between the tents, ignoring the rain, but he pretended that he did not notice them. He went back into the tent and this time his words had induced his camp fellows to follow him. Kuki came, Natark came,

Saitok came, and all the others. The last to come was Ujarak. He, too, was among those to visit the old enemy.

Mala was sitting on the bench, Itusarsuk's big knife in his hand, and he spoke as if there was joy in his heart, now that he saw his camp neighbors once more. "At last one has come home. At last one can see one's neighbors in his tent. At last one is lucky enough to provide a little boiled meat so that you all can eat with me. But it is too bad that my wives have prepared it so poorly. I wish I could offer you such food as you are used to eating."

As they could all see that there was a dead man lying on the ground, Mala's words struck them like the speech of a maniac. Terror took hold of the visitors but not one among them dared to express their fears.

Aba handed over a big chunk of meat and Mala took it in his hands, looked at it critically and then, apparently satisfied, shoved as big a piece in his mouth as he could, cutting off the rest close to his lips. Then he passed the meat on to Kuki, who also took a mouthful, cut the rest off, and handed it to his neighbor. So the meat went from hand to hand and each one took a bite. After Mala had chewed and swallowed his portion, he signaled to Aba and she brought over a fresh piece. One mouthful for himself, and then the chunk was handed around once more.

He received a third piece from Aba who had first licked it clean of blood and slime so that the men should not smear themselves. Each man again took a bite and handed on the chunk as before. Presently Mala felt the desire for something nice and fat and he reached for a piece of blubber, lying close by on a bench. He bit into it, cut off a big piece and gave what was left to Kuki who handed it on to the others. They all ate mechanically. Here they were, the astonished guests of a man whom they all feared—the murderer of one of their neighbors to whom they had talked only a short while ago. Now they were sitting quietly eating, because Mala was Mala: a master of men, who forced people into obedience, a man whose will power surpassed anything ever seen before.

Mala searched the faces of the men who sat around him.

Saitok, who had bragged of fighting Mala as soon as he showed up, and Natark whom he had fooled so successfully with his disguise, and Ujarak whose wife he had once taken. . . . All these men who had not recognized him when he had been deprived of everything, and all the others in the camp, now had to come and eat his food, not daring to speak of the corpse still lying on the ground and pushed only a little aside.

The blubber made Mala thirsty; he decided to demonstrate his fearlessness. He went over to the vessel made of walrus hide which, filled with water, was standing on one of the side benches. A few dirty hairs were floating on top of the water and Mala blew them away. Then, his back turned to the others, he bent his head far down and gulped the water. He was sure that nobody would dare to attack him from behind, despite the fact that they were all sitting around with their knives in their hands. And they actually did not dare to act, when Mala showed so plainly how little he feared them.

The meal was over when no boiled meat remained, and the women started to cook for themselves. The men belched heartily and were somewhat embarrassed because now they would have to talk. It was Mala who broke the silence: "At last one has returned. I remained away longer than I expected, but now I am home once more." Anaaq, the angakok, who had no reason to fear anybody as he was a poor man, owning nothing that could arouse the envy of the others, spoke up first: "One met you in the mountains but one did not know you. Perhaps you disguised yourself."

Mala immediately took advantage of the suggestion: "It is not impossible that I borrowed a strange face for myself," he said. And for some time he sat in silence, full of mystery, so that these people should know that here was a great spirit controller who could change his face.

"We have been told," Kuki stuttered, "by people coming from the south in sledges that the white men were desirous of your death and that they wanted to hang you with a string around your neck."

"If the white men were desirous of hanging me, why did they not hang me then?" Mala replied. "I had to fight with

the white men, but I always win in a fight and I want to say here that it is not my wish to talk about the white men any more. These are memories which are buried for me and I do not desire to uncover them."

There was a long silence but finally one of the young men asked: "Did you kill a man when you came? It seems there is a dead man lying here in the tent."

"There was somebody in my way and he was killed," Mala said. "And you, who are asking, I wish you would take that dead man out of here if you want him buried. I have not come here to fight with other men, but while I was away you have borrowed many things. These shall be returned to me. Have your women put them in front of my tent and bring me meat so I shall have food until I myself can get some. If I don't get enough, I will simply have to take it from your stores. And now that I have spoken, you may go."

Mala took the antler of a reindeer and began to fashion it into a tool with his knife. The others mumbled unintelligibly. They bent down and lifted Itusarsuk's body from the ground and carried it over to the tent opening. The women started to cry. A dead man had been in the tent while they had eaten! And now the corpse was not carried through the back of the tent, as in the case of a decent burial, but was taken out through the front where the dead could return to the tent as a ghost! But this dead man was despised so much that he was looked upon as a dog of whom no danger is feared after it is dead.

Just as they drew the flap of the tent aside to remove the dead body, two boys came rushing in, colliding with the men who were carrying out the corpse. They were Puala and Upik, who had been sleeping and who only now had heard that their father was in the tent, giving a feast for the camp neighbors as was his wont formerly. Over there was their father who had been away so long now that the joy of seeing him once more was almost painful.

Mala looked upon his boys and gladness filled his heart.

Here were his two children of whom he had thought when death had been close to him, the boys to whom he had fled when the white men wanted to kill him. They had greatly changed during the past months. Puala had grown tall and there was something strange in Upik's face. And oh, how torn their garments were; their eyes gave evidence of things they had experienced and thoughts over which they had pondered. Yes, they had cried through many nights because nobody cared for them. Theirs had been the lot of waifs, made so much harder for them because their father had been a mighty man. Mala felt that it was difficult to talk to his children while strangers were listening. Besides, he himself had become a stranger so that the boys were afraid of him.

"Oh, there you are! Come into the tent," was all he said.

That was too much for the boys. They were not adults yet who knew how to hide their thoughts and so they arrested their steps, all taken aback. Puala looked up at his father shyly, and Upik began to cry.

When Mala saw their fear, he felt sorry for them. They looked so neglected and appeared to be still wearing furs which he had brought home himself once. He stooped down, put his hand around Upik's neck, and rubbed his nose against his, sniffing at him. Then he did the same with the bigger Puala. Once more Mala felt that he was home, and that his boys, his wives and Orsokidok were with him. He forgot his wrath, his vengeance, and the man he had killed. Once again, he was home in his own tent.

Mala's caresses awakened his children as if from a bad dream and they remembered only for a moment all the teasing and gossip that had been their lot while their father was away. Why had people told them that the white men would hang their father or shoot him? And why had they spoken of Mala as a dead man? The boys could not understand. They only knew that their father was braver and stronger than anyone else. As in former times when camp neighbors had been invited to partake of boiled meat, the feast was prepared in their father's tent. And often they had seen how skins their father had brought from the hunt were sewed up for garments in

other tents. Now their father had returned and there was no meaning to the bad dream any longer.

Upik squeezed himself between his father's knees, and Mala looked for a tasty chunk of meat with tallow, first sucking out the juice so that it would not run over the boy's little fingers. Yes, that had always been the way when their father was home. Then Upik always got the best morsels; they did not have to look on when others ate or wait until the pot was emptied before anybody thought that they might want something to eat.

When Upik had eaten enough, he opened the flap of the tent. As the rain had stopped meanwhile he rushed out and called to the other children who quickly gathered around him: "My father has come home and we are eating boiled meat and Aba and Inupaujak are again with us, and I am getting new boots now and my father is going to make a cap for me and I am going to go with him to hunt reindeer."

All the joy in the world echoed in his words. His imagination stirred into action, he began to tell the other children how his father had been down to the white men to trade. They had given him lots of things which he had hidden away, far up in the mountains. His father was going to give him a knife that could be folded and put into his pocket and he would have a pipe to smoke too, and a shirt that could be washed in water, and many, many candles from hardened tallow which would shine in the igloo like so many stars during the winter.

The other children listened to Upik with wide open eyes.

Far below, near a big boulder at the river, men were carrying stones, building a cairn for Itusarsuk whose body was not quite cold yet.



VI

MALA got everything in readiness for the trail. He had told his wives that they would travel inland, but where to he did not

know himself. Soon everybody in camp knew that Mala would go on the trail in five days, and they understood that he was honoring the memory of Itusarsuk by remaining in camp until the soul of the dead had wandered off. All stayed at home and the meat in camp was used, meanwhile, as common property; as Mala had no meat himself, he ate from the stores of the others. The rest was good for him; his strength grew like the grass that shoots out of the ground as soon as the snow disappears. He slept much, and while he was awake he ate still more strength into his body.

There were two rifles in the camp such as the one he had left on the rock near the lake. The one rifle belonged to Kuki who had almost no cartridges left. "The few you still have you shall give to me," Mala decided, "because you yourself are not going on the hunt any more. It makes an old man too tired to drag his legs across the mountains. With your cartridges, I shall bag all the game for you that you will need in the winter. Then you can rest or spend your time fishing until I come back."

"What was meant for my rifle is not for me any longer," was Kuki's only reply. "Of course it would have been so much nicer if it would come with a bang out of the mouth of my own rifle, but perhaps in this way I shall get more meat. You are welcome to my cartridges."

Kuki was old and wise; he saw that he must give up the cartridges which were his greatest wealth.

The other rifle belonged to Saitok. He stayed in his tent and thought of Inupaujak whom he had lost and of Mala whom he feared. But he had not complied with Mala's demand to return his belongings. Inupaujak told Mala that Saitok had three cartons of cartridges of exactly the same kind, and that Saitok had many other things which Mala had left behind and which he now wanted to take along on the trail.

Mala pondered for a long time what he should do about Saitok. He wanted his belongings back and it was necessary that he should have more cartridges. And he naturally needed dogs too, because Itusarsuk's were small and feeble, having been undernourished since they were puppies. Itusarsuk had

been a miserable breeder and Mala now required strong dogs for the trip. It was here that Saitok could help him, and if he proved unwilling, then there would be a fight and he would have to kill Saitok, even at the risk of bringing new strife into camp. However, he would try to settle everything peaceably. As soon as he had come to this conclusion, he called Inupaujak and said to her:

"Go to Saitok's tent and ask for your property, demanding my knife and my axe; yes, even both the knives which we left behind. Look over everything he has and demand whatever is yours."

"I am afraid of Saitok," Inupaujak answered. "Saitok is a vicious man. How can I, a mere woman, go to a man and frighten him, demanding things which he treasures?"

"It was said that you should go," Mala ordered. "But perhaps you are not the wife of a man who is able to protect you and perhaps Saitok will only laugh if that man comes and makes demands. Well, time will show."

So Inupaujak went.

MALA sang a little song so that Aba and Orsokidok might later report to everybody how serene he had been and how he had amused himself while his wife had gone into the tent of an enemy.

Presently the flap of the tent opened and Inupaujak entered. It would have appeared as if Mala were anxious to learn how she had accomplished her mission if he asked her about it immediately, so he busied himself with the hitching gear he was mending for the trip.

"My knife is dull," he said, after a short time had elapsed. "Did you bring the whetstone along when you fetched our things from Saitok's house?"

Inupaujak had taken off her boots and, with her legs crossed, was sitting on the bench. She had been unable to comply with the order that had been given her. In a subdued voice, she now answered: "One was afraid when standing in front of his tent and my legs would not carry me inside."

Mala could say nothing because at this moment two women came visiting. There were always guests in Mala's tent now because here something was sure to happen. The conversation between the women immediately became very lively. There was an uninterrupted exchange of questions and replies, but Mala was not interested.

"Mere talk, woman's gossip," he thought. He stood up, and, throwing a hitching strap on the ground, said: "Oh, it is a miserable man you see before you, a man who has no time to do any work, because he has to run errands for his little wife and fetch things which she forgot."

Inupaujak looked angry and grunted something. Mala strode out of the tent, utterly unmoved. Immediately the visiting women were informed: "Mala is going to Saitok's tent for his belongings."

The women did not lose any time; rushing out of the tent and back to their own, they spread the news right and left. Even before Mala had reached Saitok's tent, a group of people stood ready with open eyes and ears to find out what would happen next. Their faces reflected their fear. Oh, that terrible Mala, the man who knew no bounds!

"One comes for a visit," Mala announced, as he entered Saitok's tent.

Saitok had a foreboding of his death. Although his rifle was at his side, he reached for his axe and grasped it firmly.

"Oh, one is just a poor, wretched man now," Mala began. "One has traveled far and long and returns without supplies. Meanwhile, one's wives have permitted one's property to lie around. Now I have come to fetch the things which my little wife left in your tent. Where is the knife and where are her needles? I myself left a harpoon here and two knives and an axe! Oh, there you have it right in your hand. Let me have it."

He stretched out his hands. Saitok jumped up and raised the axe to bring it down on Mala's head. Mala knew his intention, but showed no fear lest Saitok's strength increase.

"Yes, it is a good axe," he said quietly. "I bought it last year down at the ships with my fox skins. And where are all

the other things I left behind? I really must thank you for taking such good care of them."

Mala's scorn was so biting that Saitok weakened. Full of fright, he slowly lowered the axe and admitted that he had used the things Mala had left behind.

"That does not matter. Most probably you were forced to use them in order to support my wife and procure meat and skins for her. The four dogs, too, which I left with you, needed a great deal of food, but now I shall take them with me."

"Your dogs are dead," Saitok said.

"Dogs breed easily," Mala answered. "Let's not worry about the loss."

He reached for the axe and tried to snatch it away from Saitok, but Saitok held on to the valuable weapon with both hands.

"Ah, here is such a strong man that my strength falters," Mala said, giving such a strong pull that the axe fairly flew out of Saitok's hands. Immediately he struck him in the chest so that Saitok fell on his back on the bench, rolling on top of his wife who started to shout: "Oh, the terrible Mala; now he is killing my husband. He is going to kill us all. Why did they let him live when he was too weak to offer resistance? Why should Mala be permitted to rule? There was peace before he came."

Mala did not heed her words. He only picked up the things he wanted to take along; the rifle, the cartons of cartridges, two knives and another axe. Saitok, of course, could not look on quietly and jumped at him. "Better stay where you are," Mala warned, "or you will arouse my wrath. I have killed a man before this because he was too bold. I am just thinking of it and might do it again. If you so much as stir, you will see that I have not forgotten how to use my axe."

"Just leave me alone," Saitok replied meekly and crawled back to the bench. "I am not resisting you. Why do you want to take my life?"

Mala laughed, for he did not know what to say now. He took his belongings, carrying the rifle in his right hand and everything else under his left arm, and turned to leave the tent.

He was a man who left his enemy's tent as a victor. He pulled so hard at the flap that he tore it from top to bottom, making it impossible to close the tent.

After Mala had walked a short distance, he came upon his little boy who was sitting on the ground playing with the other children. Mala smiled down upon them. "Are you playing?" he asked.

"Perhaps I am," the boy answered, having already learned to be very careful in his speech.

"Go on playing," Mala advised. "Play just as long as you have nothing to worry about."

Next he addressed the little puppies, who sprung about him. Here was a man who apparently had not experienced anything extraordinary and who merely paused to play with a few puppies in order to pass the time. When he entered the tent, his wives gazed at him in fear and trembling. They saw all the precious things in his hands and wondered whether he had killed another man. Oh, it was terrible to live with such a master!

But Mala did not tell the women anything. He simply threw everything on the ground, saying: "Get ready for the trip. Life is too tedious for me in this camp. Summer is approaching and it is necessary that we leave immediately so as to reach the place where we shall live during the winter."

"Oh, now we are going to travel," the wives exclaimed. "At last, we are going to leave."

They began to pack their things and roll up the skins. Orsokidok was sent for Saitok's four best dogs and Mala gave orders as to what was to be taken along on the trail. He divided his belongings into different burdens and mended the hitching gear. Itusarsuk had not left the big bundles of skins, suitable for straps, that Mala himself usually kept. However, if one has missed hunting seal in the spring, one simply has to be satisfied with straps made from reindeer skin even though they are greatly inferior.

As soon as the carrying gear was in good order, Mala started to take off the tent skin. He cut it into two pieces and strapped them to the backs of the two biggest of Saitok's dogs.

When Orsokidok had picked out the four best dogs he had not experienced any resistance, but when he took them away, Saitok's wife had cried: "The terrible Mala! The terrible Mala!"

Then a pack was arranged for Mala and one for Orsokidok. The wives packed their own bundles and were to carry in their hands cups and kettles and such things as would be needed at almost any time on the trail and which must not hit against stones.

Even Puala was to carry something. He was given a little lamp wrapped up in a bag so that the soot should not smudge him, and around the bag other things were tied. Strapped to the bundle were two salmon spears which protruded far on either side so that it looked like quite a nice pack. Puala proudly paraded it before his playmates to show them that he was going on the trail. Little Upik, too, wanted to carry his share.

"One also desires a bundle," the little boy insisted, and so Mala let him have just one skin, a winter skin, which took up much space when it was rolled because it had very long hair. They let him carry his little coat and some mittens on a strap around his neck so that one could see at once that Upik was traveling from place to place. In his hand, he carried a bag and he immediately went outside the tent to show that he, too, was a traveler. His playmates had grouped themselves around him and looked upon him with awe.

"One has resolved to go somewhere else," Upik declared. "We are going to travel to the white men. We will eat sugar and carry knives in our pockets and we shall have shirts of thin skins without hairs. All the nice things which they keep on ships will be given to me."

Upik read envy and surprise in the faces of his playmates and he rejoiced and did not mind his heavy burden.

THE men in the encampment stood aside and looked on in dismay. Now Mala was leaving with tent and rifle, with dogs and two wives, and he had not caught anything while in camp

but had taken property and killed a man. Why was it that Mala was always the victor?

Their speech was muffled and their words did not betray what they really thought. Nobody, of course, dared to utter an angry word but, on the other hand, nobody instructed his wife to boil meat so as to provide a feast for the travelers before their departure. Nor were words spoken to them that they would long remember.

Mala did not pay any attention. Let the people stand around and whisper; let them speak in muffled voices and even plan evil; as long as there was fear in their hearts, there was no need to worry. Besides, he who goes on the trail thinks of peace only, and what is said by those left behind is just like water that rushes toward a river. It simply goes by, after wetting the stones upon which one stands. What the men in the camp said was of no interest to Mala, and now he concentrated calmly on distributing the burdens to the different dogs.

It was then that Aba approached and it was apparent that she had important words for him. While she had tied her bundle, many thoughts had come to her. She longed for a child and there was a little baby girl in camp which could be bought. From time to time she had spoken to Ibak, the mother of the child, who asked only a frying pan and a tin can in exchange for her baby—things that Aba could easily spare but which Ibak needed badly.

The little baby girl, born when Ujarak returned to tell of the arrival of the stranger in the mountains, was really superfluous in Ujarak's family. The child was only permitted to live because in the winter Ujarak expected to meet a woman to whom he had often been married. This woman had a little son to whom no wife was promised as yet. Ujarak wished to give her the baby girl as a present but Ibak preferred to get rid of the baby immediately. It was therefore only necessary for Aba to obtain Mala's permission to take the baby along and the time had now come to speak of it.

"Oh, if we only had a little child to take on the trip! The fruits of my own child-bearing yield me little satisfaction.

My children are living far in the north and probably I shall never see them again, now that we are to travel to new places. If I could only take Ibak's little girl along!"

Mala realized that he was looked upon as a man to render a decision. Now he gave his permission and said: "Women who cannot give birth to children themselves must look for children wherever they can get them. A child will relieve the boredom of our trip."

And again he busied himself with the dogs. After all, he was a man who never lost much time over women's affairs. Aba seized her frying pan and a tin can and rushed over to the tent where Ibak lived.

INUPAUJAK was very dissatisfied that Aba had left her to do all the work and she complained of it loudly: "Oh, there is one who does not want to do her share. She leaves it all to me. I must get everything ready for the trip, and later she will just trudge along when all the work is done. Yes, just run around and visit all the houses and eat tallow so that the words of parting are friendly. Memorable, too, because of the grease left on your mouth. I shall meanwhile attend to everything!"

This was just the talk of a woman and Mala did not answer.

Two lamp bowls had been forgotten, a goodly number of strapping boards for tanning the hides and some skin scrapers, all things that could not be left behind. Inupaujak had to strap them on top of her bundle.

"Of course," she said angrily, "Let me carry everything. Oh, I am so happy if I can carry burdens for other people!"

Orsokidok took pity on Inupaujak and was ready to take the two long boards which were heavy for they were soaked with blubber, but Inupaujak would not permit anybody to touch her bundle. "Leave it alone," she said. "I shall carry my own things. You just look out for yours."

At this moment Aba returned and gaily imparted her news: "Oh, I have the little one. She is so lovely. Her face is all red and her mother has just nursed her for the last time.

The child will be so happy with me! She is already sleeping in the hood on my back. When strange children come to a woman it often happens that the poor little souls are afraid of the foster-mother at first. They cry for many days, but this sweet little one was just meant to come along. Her mother gave me a piece of skin of an unborn calf to make into a coat for the baby, and two strips of wonderful white skin which I shall fashion into a cap as soon as we rest and I get a chance to do some sewing. I only hope I have not forgotten how to sew for a little child. Oh, I hope I shall be a good foster-mother to her because babies soon find that out although they don't really understand."

"Just talk, talk!" Inupaujak said. "Oh, I am so glad to hear, at last, a few words in this house." Angrily she turned her back to show Aba that she was not at all interested in the baby.

By now Mala was almost ready for the trail. The dogs were tied and the burdens strapped to their backs. There was only a little puppy still to be caught. Orsokidok ran after it, but it was shy and escaped him. All the men in the camp looked on and laughed at Orsokidok but nobody gave him a hand, and finally he broke out: "If dogs could only think, they would be glad to be caught to go along on the trail. It is wonderful to be a dog of the great Mala for there is always meat where he is. Want is a word that only his poor visitors know."

These were sneering words, spoken boastfully, and although they were apparently addressed to the puppy, the men could not help hearing. Mature men could not very well permit a young boy to praise his master in their presence. The best thing to do would be to grab him by his arm and show him his place, as he deserved. But here Mala intervened. He apparently did not notice the others and did not look into their eyes. He surmised that a fight was brewing and he was afraid that they would work up enough courage to resist him and shoot at him when he left because he took two women and great riches along. He knew that there was only one thing to do now—to subdue them with scorn and disdain. Therefore, he called to Orsokidok to let the puppy go. "New dogs are born all the

time. Leave the puppy here in the encampment as a present for the neighbors who might have use for it."

Orsokidok stopped running after the puppy and went over to the other dogs. Presently everything was in readiness. The dogs did not know Mala well enough to go along voluntarily and therefore had to be pulled at first. Mala went ahead with four dogs, followed by Orsokidok with two more. Then came the two wives with one dog apiece. The children marched at the head of the procession.

"The event has come to pass that one travels to other places," Mala said in passing the group of men.

"Is that so?" they replied. "Are you going on the trail?"

"Yes, one leaves," Mala answered and walked on without turning around because that would cause his thoughts to dwell on that which he was leaving now and which he desired to forget. They had already left the camp behind when a woman came out of a tent to wish them a good trip: "Inupaujak! Inupaujak! Bring tobacco along when you come back from the white men," the woman shouted.

Inupaujak felt gratified that she was looked upon as a woman to be respected. There flashed before her a picture of white men whom she hoped to see soon. They would pay homage to her because of the passion she could arouse in them. She would make them give her many presents. It was wonderful to be the envied wife of a great man. She turned around, now, to the woman who she knew was the second wife of Saitok, living in permanent want and humiliation, and answered her: "Yes, we are leaving, and I shall make you a present of lots of tobacco when I see you again. Be happy, meanwhile."

The others had gone ahead and Inupaujak followed them. They were embarked, at last, upon their long journey.



VII

THE first stretch of their trail led up hill. The burdens were heavy and progress was slow. But Mala did not feel it at all.

Traveling slowly, he had time to think of his regained riches and his joy. Now he had obtained what he desired: his boys and his wives. Here he was with many fine things and his family was following him. Behind, he had left people who hated and feared him. Far to the south were his enemies, the white men. But now he would strike out over unknown trails and find new lands that nobody had seen yet.

Before he had been with the white men, Mala had never believed that a man could be robbed of his freedom. He had often been thirsty when hunting of a hot summer day and forced to go without water. Then his limbs had tired and his throat had pained and his whole body had felt as if bound with straps that all but suffocated him, preventing him from thinking of anything other than his parched mouth. When he reached the first stream, he lay down and drank his fill and all at once the straps disappeared. His limbs became pliant and strong again and immediately he forgot that he had ever been thirsty. Such, too, was freedom! He had to delve deeply into his thoughts to remember all the agony he had suffered at the hands of the white men. They had even prevented him from walking, tying his very hands, upon which he gazed now; those hands had been shackled with iron chains. The white men's threat of death had given him much to think of and their treatment had provoked his wrath.

He had been like a fox caught in a trap, or like a man struggling for breath when the foot of his enemy presses into his ribs unmercifully. But never again, for the rest of his days, did Mala wish to dwell on those experiences; never again, as long as he lived, did he want to remember that time of humiliation. Only today, when joy rose in his heart, did he permit these thoughts because now he possessed all he desired and he alone knew where the trail would lead them.

Suddenly he understood why he need not fear his own people any more. His power over them was not born of the fact that he was richer than they; rather, his source of superior strength came from the weight of his experiences. Whosoever knew only such ordinary things as driving dogs or hunting animals or raping women was feeble and of a light mind. But the

thoughts of a prisoner are strong because he has had time to ponder and much to think about and, after all, such a man's thoughts are deeper and his resolutions more unbending than those of others.

Little Upik, who had been running ahead, now came to Mala who took him by the hand. Soon they paused to rest and Aba took the little baby out of the hood suspended on her back. She chewed a little tallow and raw meat to a soft pulp and then she let the little one suck at her lips.

"Oh, the little one knows only the milk from her own mother's breast—but tallow and meat will give her strength and soon she will be big enough to tramp all over the plains with us." And Aba felt as much joy over the baby as if she herself had borne it.

The others ate only a little dried meat and drank some water and nobody spoke much. Away down in the valley, the tents in the encampment looked like tiny specks. After they took to the trail once more, Upik complained that his carrying strap hurt him. It cut into his forehead and he preferred to take some of the bundles that the others were carrying, but he was not permitted to do so. "I don't want to carry the skin," he whined. "I want to carry a salmon spear that sticks out on both sides like the one Puala has."

Mala only laughed and added the skin to his own load. They walked in silence because their burdens forced them to bend low and it was difficult to talk. It was a hard task too to lead the dogs by the leash, but this was necessary for when the animals had rested they had scented the tents, and there was a possibility that now they might run away from their new master if they were allowed to run loose. Suddenly Upik started to cry again. "I do not want to carry any burden. It is heavy and it hurts my back." He was still so small that he referred to his neck as his back.

Mala took everything off and added it to his own pack. "Now you are relieved and you can run on the side and lead one of the dogs. Even grown men lead dogs when they are on the trail." That promised to be more amusing and Upik was satisfied with his new duty.

Soon thereafter one of the burdens slipped from one of the dogs and dragged behind; next, Orsokidok's bundle became disarranged. A strap had come loose and he had to stop and rearrange his pack. If it was not one thing it was another that interfered with their progress. Nevertheless they crossed the ridge and now they were out of sight of the tents. They pitched camp near a little stream which would provide them with water.

After a few days had passed, things settled into a routine. It had become a common sight to see one hill rise and merge into another. They traveled so slowly that they became thoroughly familiar with the ground and knew all its peculiarities before they actually got there. This provided scant reason for talk and life became a dull affair. They ate when they were hungry and slept when they were tired and every evening Mala took his rifle, left the others, and brought back game—sometimes a hare and now and then a reindeer. When they reached a lake, Orsokidok and Inupaujak took the salmon spears and occasionally caught a little fish. But they caught very little because Inupaujak was always tired and sleepy and catching fish bored her.

Aba busied herself with the baby girl who whimpered constantly. Nevertheless, it delighted her to feel the tiny creature nestle against her body when she rested at night. And how she kicked when strapped to her foster-mother's back while they were trekking! Aba loved the little one and rejoiced in the knowledge that she alone took care of her.

One day Mala told Aba that he had come upon a reindeer cow and calf right in the neighborhood and had wounded them. Aba took the baby immediately and went with him. Here was a chance for the child to have fresh milk. The reindeer was lying on the ground, its forelegs broken: the little calf, already slaughtered, was near by. Mala held the mother animal to the ground but Aba's baby would not suck at its udder. Perhaps she had grown so much that she had forgotten how, and so Aba sucked the milk from the udder, and squirted it into the child's mouth. It swallowed every drop. Now Aba was certain that the child would be fleet of foot and of a shy disposition because she had been nursed on reindeer milk.

By morning, the reindeer cow was almost dead and there was very little milk in her udder.

"The cow is withholding her milk because we have killed her calf," Aba said. "Let's put an end to her so that nothing bad gets into her milk."

Mala dug his knife into the throat of the animal while Aba sucked at its udder, squirting the milk into the baby's mouth. After she had had all there was, she began to cry.

"There, my little one, be quiet," Aba crooned. "Reindeer milk will lend fleetness to your feet and make you shy of nature. That is well, for men like to pursue women and prefer those who are easily scared. Be quiet, little one. Soon we shall have lots of food from the white men. Better food than the milk which my breasts lack."

Mala did not listen because he was busy skinning the reindeer. The skin would be used for garments later; the meat he would give to the dogs for they were very hungry. The dogs were a source of worry to Mala. They were puny and weak. To breed good dogs, it would be necessary, first, to have new litters, raising the puppies on lots of meat so that they should grow into strong dogs. To add to Mala's annoyance, two of Saitok's best dogs had freed themselves from their traces during the night and returned to the encampment. They had not yet learned to be loyal to their new master. Now six dogs were left, only two of them females, and they were all small and skinny. It would take some time before he could raise good teams. Since the two dogs had run away each one of the party had to carry more than before. Upik was given his skin again and they encouraged him with many words, praising him for his strength and bravery. They progressed slowly, hindered by the inferior dogs.

One day they rested by a large lake. There were reindeer in the neighborhood, and many little circles on the surface of the lake proved that there were salmon too. Mala therefore decided to camp here for a few days. The tent skin was sewed together with long stitches, and heaps of stones piled up in a wide circle so that the tent poles could be set up and strapped together where they met at the top. Then skins were spread over and

at last there was a semblance of home life. They all rejoiced for, up to now, they had had to content themselves with spreading out two pieces of tent skins and crawling under whenever they wished to sleep.

"Rub wood against wood and start a flame," Mala ordered. "We shall have a fire here, so that our food will be tasty and we can have a big meal." Mala still had some matches but it seemed best to keep them for a time when it might be hard to make a fire. Moreover, the women need not know about the matches because it would only serve to make them dissatisfied.

Aba soon kindled a flame, using some moss and heather for tinder. A mighty fire burned by the time Mala came with a big fat reindeer—his first bag here. Soon each one had eaten his fill. They were in high spirits because it was wonderful to have a real tent again. Aba, however, was worried about the little one. Her limbs hung limply and she kept up an incessant whimpering.

"I hope my baby girl did not take sick because an enemy robbed her of her soul. There is surely something the matter with her. Oh, I hope she will live until we reach the ships of the white men! Then we will get good things to eat and will not have to worry that they will not last."

Her comments drew no reply and before long everybody slept.

During the next few days, Aba stayed inside the tent and held the baby in her lap. When the little one cried, she gave her chewed meat and tallow. While she sat like this, the sun traveled a goodly distance. When Aba became sleepy, she would sing a little song about enjoying a child when it was still small and unable to run away. "When you grow up, a man will drag you into his tent: I shall be old but my thoughts will follow you. Now let it be my joy to see your plump little body while you are still small."

Inupaujak and Orsokidok caught many salmon here. They were boiled and tasted delicious. Puala, too, had been given a spear which his father had fashioned from pointed reindeer antlers. Although the spear was not as good as those of the others, Puala nevertheless caught a few salmon which they ate.

And Mala shot many reindeer. The dogs were well fed and all the tallow from the bones was melted in a pot. While it was still fluid, it was poured into reindeer skin bags where it congealed and formed round balls. It would be fine food for the children when winter came. A good deal of the meat was dried. Large juicy pieces with layers of tallow covering the bones were spread out on the rocks. The next day the red meat had turned brown and, the day after, black, so that the tallow looked like tears running down one's cheeks.

At last they traveled on, now that the dogs had gathered new strength. The largest dog carried the tent while the others were entrusted with loads of dried meat. Once again they had sufficient provisions and made good progress. Mala went ahead and surveyed the land. When he had trudged along here before, starved and exhausted, he had never so much as glanced at his surroundings.

ONE day Mala came to a sudden halt. "We shall pitch our tent here because a thought has come to me."

He did not say any more. The tent was set up and Aba went inside and busied herself with the baby. The air was cool, but the sun was still hot enough to warm their bodies. As the gnats had disappeared, the others remained outside and boiled meat. After they had eaten, Mala arose and started to walk away.

"Where are you going?" Inupaujak shouted after him. "You haven't taken your rifle, so you are not going hunting. Will we remain here long enough for me to sew new soles on the boys' boots while the weather is warm? They need new footgear." The clever Inupaujak realized that it would please Mala if she treated his boys well. It always made him tender.

"One is not going hunting," Mala replied. "But perhaps one is going for some property one has left in this neighborhood." The others could hardly breathe from excitement. Now it must be that they had reached the very spot about which Mala hardly ever spoke, planning, no doubt, to surprise them. Soon they would feast on the delicacies of the white men, and

perhaps tonight already they would fill their mouths and nostrils with smoke. Oh, how wonderful to travel with Mala and belong to his household! It seemed almost unbelievable, now, to think they had lived through that terrible time when the others had claimed that Mala was dead and some wretched men in the camp had possessed themselves of Mala's wives and his property.

Mala had gone a long time already when Inupaujak jumped up, exclaiming: "Let's run after him. Let's go along and carry his things for him. We must fetch everything Mala brought from the white men."

"We are going to come with you. We want to see some of the things we have been longing for so much," they all called after Mala and jumped up, each one thinking of what he would like most. Sugar for their drinks, and biscuits to crunch between their teeth. Puala was going to start smoking and Orsokidok hoped for a new rifle. The women wanted everything. They did not wish for one thing or another, but desired everything that differed from what they already had.

After they had tramped a short distance, they got out of breath and checked their stride, aware that a long stretch was still ahead of them. Directly before them they saw Mala walking along the lake towards the valley. This, then, was his goal! Mala had noticed that they were following him, but he did not turn around to acknowledge their presence or signal them to turn back. His thoughts dwelt strictly on that which he resolved to fetch now. Finally they caught up with him and although they kept a little behind, they were near enough to see and hear everything.

Mala directed his steps towards a little boulder near the lake. What was hidden there? A couple of stones had been piled on top of the boulder! Yes, there were a few stones and beneath they saw a piece of wood. No, it was more than just a piece of wood. It was a rifle! Now they could clearly make it out, and knew that Mala had put it there.

Surely Mala was a man who had precious things lying around all over the world. A man like Mala would choose nothing less than a costly rifle to mark a spot, although anybody

else would use an ordinary stone. Soon they would reach the spot where he had stored away the boxes full of the white man's things of which they had dreamed. Mala made straight for the rifle. His foot indifferently pushed aside two stones lying on top of it. He looked to see whether rust had eaten its way into the barrel. Then he stepped to the edge of the lake and gazed into the water. Next he threw himself on his belly, shading his eyes with his hand. Here he had lost his knife but he could not detect a trace of it. He jumped up and glanced at his traveling companions. They were standing only a few steps away, watching him intently. Mala suddenly felt very small. "Did you leave the tent and the dogs?" he asked. "Why did you leave?"

"Oh, we just wanted to see all your wonderful things! We longed to help you carry them to the tent since you did not want us to camp near your hidden treasures."

What should Mala answer? But, after all, the talk of women was not so important that it should be necessary for a man to object to it. He just examined his rifle and started to rub it a little against his sleeve. "I only came for this old rifle that I left here. Go back to the tent now. Did my ears hear something before about your sewing boots for the boys?"

Mala himself accompanied them back to the camp. There was surprise and disappointment.

"But, father," Puala cried, "don't I get some tobacco? I would so much like to start smoking."

A boy who addresses his father deserves a reply. "There is no tobacco. Why should you smoke?"

"No tobacco?" Aba exclaimed. "Is there no meat of the kind that the white men eat for my little baby? What is all this? Why are you fooling us?"

Now Mala became angry, for anger easily conceals worry and embarrassment. "Oh, you babbling women! Of what do you chatter? Who promised you white man's meat? Isn't reindeer food sufficient for your fat bellies?"

"Oh, what's all this talk for?" Inupaujak interrupted. "There isn't any reason for words. Let's have the precious things you hid around here so that we may know that we are the wives of a big huntsman. Do you really think we liked to

leave our people and live out here, making fire with two sticks? I want matches to play with; once, for one whole night, I lit matches because I had nothing else to do, and I want to do that again. You should give me all I desire because I followed you up here and left a husband for a second time for you."

"A woman who chatters never utters any sense," Mala remarked. "Quick, back to the tent. Follow me!"

He strode forward but the others remained for a little while. The women had not altogether given up hope. The boys had dreamed of biscuits, and had waited so long to taste something sweet in their mouths. But all this seemed in vain now, and even Orsokidok received nothing. They had only such miserable things as everyone could provide for himself.

"It will be best to return to the tent," Aba said presently after she had recovered from her disappointment.

The others followed her. Aba thought of her little baby. She had wished so hard for some oatmeal or milk in a tin can for the little one, but she came to the conclusion that Mala could not very well have brought all those things so far. She was angry with herself because she had been so gullible. Even Orsokidok, a boy without any rights, a walf who owned no worldly goods, felt that he had been shabbily treated. He stepped up to Mala and, in a voice vibrant with disappointment, asked: "Did you only fetch your rifle and leave all your other property behind?"

Mala stopped short and, swinging around furiously, shook Orsokidok by the shoulders. "Now you come and ply me with questions as if you were a grown-up man who speaks without being asked. I should not answer you at all when you ask after my belongings! I do not know why I'm even bothering about you. I hid a rifle down here and now I picked it up in passing. If it is your fault that my own children and my wives long for such worthless things, I shall teach you to have different thoughts. All of you go home now and don't anger me further. Sew footgear for my boys because we shall start out soon again."

But Inupaujak hated to see all her dreams of riches vanish. She jumped up and in a loud voice, as if Mala were some

distance away, she shouted: "Have you nothing here on this lake besides this rifle—not even cartridges for it? Is this the reason that you stole Kuki's ammunition? Oh, it would be much better if I returned again to a husband who has a real home and friends. It was said that the white men were going to string you up by the neck. Perhaps that is true, and you just ran away from them like a dog escaping from his master."

Mala lunged forward, grabbed her by the hair, and flung her to the ground. There she remained moaning, while he kicked her and struck her with his fists. "So you believe that they were going to hang me and that I fled! You really do? Now you shall see who is stronger than anybody else in this country. If I go on the trail, it is simply because I want to go. The fear I aroused in camp, everybody else shall feel. Not another word from you and remember this: It was your loose talk that made me angry and when I am angry I can do terrible things. Where we are going now, we shall remain forever. It seems you have lived too long with people who take counsel with women. Go back to the tent! The dogs may have broken in meanwhile and eaten our meat. We have a long trail ahead of us ere we reach our winter home."

After this there was silence and they went ahead without a word. When they reached the tent, they found that the dogs actually had gotten inside and attacked the meat, but as they were not very hungry any more, they had eaten only a small amount. However, they had licked the blubber from the lamps and the fire had gone out. The dogs were quickly chased outside; now that they knew Mala, they did not run away and did not need to be tied.

Again a fire was built and all was quiet while they ate meat. Only the baby seemed dissatisfied, whimpering without actually crying. Although she was skinny, her belly was bloated to the size of a big ball. Aba stroked the belly of the baby, intoning chants, and Orsokidok brought a charm—a goose leg. Young geese grow quickly, and even when very young are already able to run around and look for their own food. They also sewed an ermine skin to the baby's fur because the ermine is very resourceful under all circumstances and is always cute,

even when hungry. The only thing Aba still needed was the beak of a raven to make the child as frugal and hardy as the great black bird which is content with meager food and always happy.

Upik ate his meat with a little knife which had been sharpened so often that the blade was very small by now. "Father," he asked, "aren't we going to meet the white men who will give me a new knife and all the good things we want to eat?"

"No, we shall never see the white men, and you must not talk about them either. Do not long for them but think of other things because the white men are our enemies. We can live without their things just as our forebears did. You thoughtless children aggravate me with your questions. I bid you keep silent."

Never before had Mala shown anger to his boys. They had always felt proud to have such a father, but since he had returned from the long trail he was utterly changed. He had wrought great deeds in camp, as before, but nevertheless he was not the same man he had been in the days gone by. He actually became annoyed with his boys and Upik now started to cry.

"Your crying jars on my ears," Mala admonished him. "You must stop at once!" And Upik did not dare to cry any more.

Puala, too, felt very badly, but he swallowed his tears and told Orsokidok that, near the little lake, he had seen hares. The hares had slept in the sun and it would be easy to get within their range. But this was not the time for Orsokidok to ask Mala for his rifle and soon they all buried their disappointment and sorrow and anger under snoring and puffing.

During the night, Aba was startled from her sleep by a strange foreboding. She looked at the little girl, pressed against her body, and saw that the child was dead. Her face was all blue and her ugly emaciated body, with the bloated belly, was a horrible sight. Aba had slept, pressed against the dead body.

Mala had been sleeping in front of the tent, for his anger had still been hot and the weather was calm. Only women and children need sleep inside.

"Oh, you terrible one outside," Aba wailed. "Come and see what has happened! The lovely little girl has left us. Oh, now we are without the child who has given us so much joy!"

Immediately, Mala came into the tent and the others, too, were wide awake. The little body was limp and pitiful. Aba wept uncontrollably. Her sorrow was so great that she sobbed out her grief aloud to the others.

"A-ja-ja-ja! Alas, I am a wretched woman with my own children away from me. I, who bought this little girl for a frying pan and a tin can. How was I know then that the child did not want to be with me? A-ja-ja-ja. Nobody is happy to be near me. No new child will spring from my womb. A-ja-ja-ja. I thought that a little girl would play around me. But the man whom I fear and whom I must obey did not lead me to the white men with all their precious things. And so the little girl's soul moved far away where there is good food and where each day is not full of fear and trembling. A-ja-ja-ja, I must cry!"

It sounded just as if a dog were howling. They all mourned the little one and Mala did not even get angry because sad people often utter wicked words without wanting to hurt anybody. Both boys cried, and big tears trickled down Inupaujak's cheeks. The entire little family suffered. But soon practical thoughts entered their minds. Aba took the fine skins that were to be made into a fur garment for the beloved little one, and wrapped them around the baby's thin body. Easy to see it had not tasted mother's milk for a long time!

"Yes," Mala said. "Probably children should not be sold but would best stay with their parents. It seems to me I have noticed that children who remain with their mothers do not die as quickly as those who are given away."

When the body was wrapped up into a little bundle the women sewed it together. Then they opened the tent in the back and pushed out the little corpse. Immediately they pulled down the skin, being careful to peg it to the ground so that Death could not find its way into the tent. When the little one returned as a ghost she would run against the tent skin and be unable to come inside.

Mala wanted to carry the dead child but Aba went along, eager to bear the burden herself.

"I have carried the little one while she was willing to live. Now that she is dead, I want to take her just once more. Please let me do it."

After the child was buried, Mala stood for a little while and looked at the grave and then he said to Orsokidok: "A little grave between the stones is not very visible. If strangers pass here, they will never discover that a budding human being lies here who took along the joy of her new family. But such is the lot of man. If one wants people to remember one and Nature to mourn one's death, one must live long and achieve many deeds."

Orsokidok understood the wisdom of Mala's words, and gazed at his foster-father in profound admiration. Presently, they started for the tent and although, in summer, no tracks are left on the ground which could lead Death to the camp, they nevertheless made a wide detour, crossing a river twice, so that Death would not find their footprints. When they came home, they saw that the dogs scented Death in the distance because their attention was attracted towards the little grave. And Aba thought once, when she woke up, that she had heard Death scraping at the tent skin. She was so sad that she almost wished that Death had taken her along.

"It is for us to eat each new day," Mala said, "so that we may have strength to live."

But Mala was a little troubled nevertheless. Who could know whether the death of the child was not the beginning of much misfortune? It would therefore be best to remain on the spot for five days to honor the memory of the dead child. Every day he went to the grave with Aba and there they left the mittens which they had worn when they wrapped up the body. They uttered many words, known to them from their forebears. Soon they would wander out into the world and they would be without the tools of the white man, living only with the help of their own knowledge. And so it would be wise to propitiate nature and fulfill all the demands which the wisdom of their forebears dictated.

It was quite cold at night now. The sun sank behind the rim of the mountains and in the morning the little puddles were covered over with fresh ice. One day they ran across a big flock of geese. They could not fly yet because they had shed their summer feathers before there had been time to grow a winter covering. There were geese all over and they fled to a little lake and stood gabbling along the shore: when the dogs barked, they retreated far into the water.

Mala resolved to catch geese. Together with Orsokidok, he built a long stone fence towards the head of the lake, requiring two days' work. Meanwhile, the boys were almost as useful as the men, for they saw to it that the geese did not leave the water and escape. In this the dogs helped them. A few times the geese succeeded in breaking through towards the foot of the lake and eating a little grass there. They also tried to hide between the stones and escape, but the boys and the dogs soon chased them back into the water.

At last, when Mala and Orsokidok had finished the stone barrier, the real work began. Mala told the boys of the many reindeer which he had chased into deep ravines before this; here were only geese, of course, but they were very good for the winter. Mala also explained that where big flocks of these geese are seen, the sea is not far off. They themselves would live near the coast during the winter and feast on tasty tender fat. It was obvious now that winter was approaching, because there was a little ice along the shore and the water was cold when they waded in after the geese.

Suddenly it seemed as if the geese were trying to fool them. Probably their leader had warned them for they scrambled on land, and, gabbling loudly, rushed wildly about, hoping to escape these terrible people. The stupid geese did not know that it would be their undoing to follow the stone wall built by Mala and Orsokidok. They rushed right against the high rocks Mala had planted, only to find another row of stones on the other side and when they finally decided to turn around, there the people stood chasing them back into the enclosure.

What a joyous hunt! The grown-ups simply grabbed the geese and broke their necks, while the boys beat them over the

head with sticks. The geese fell, gabbling, fluttering their wings wildly. Over a wide area, one could see nothing but geese, some dead, some alive and rushing hither and thither frantically. Soon the boys' arms grew tired from hitting the geese and they left it to their elders to catch the birds and break their necks. Finally, things became somewhat difficult because the geese that were still alive rushed back and forth, stepping over their dead comrades. But then one could amuse one's self by throwing stones after them, and there were not many of the geese whose wings were strong enough to carry them over the stone wall. Most of these were caught by the dogs.

Here a tremendous store of meat had fallen at Mala's feet. They seized some of the young geese and tore off the skin, laying bare a thick layer of fat which they gnawed off with greedy precision. It tasted so much like eider duck in the spring that they almost thought warm weather was upon them once more. They boiled some of the geese and were overjoyed to feast upon something other than reindeer. Oh, it was marvelous to gnaw the bones, to break them open and suck out the marrow. The soup smelt strongly of geese dung and tasted delicious. They looked at the huge heaps of dead fowl and knew they would feast long upon this tasty food.

They remained at the spot for a few days, erecting a cairn under which they stored the geese. It was cold, now, and the meat froze quickly. The boys assisted in carrying stones to the hole and Mala explained to them that catching birds should not be looked upon as work for women only. A man need not be ashamed of such labor provided he caught the birds in big flocks.

"Do you think women could ever build the barrier with which we caught all these geese? Women never learn how to build stone walls. They have no experience and don't even know that geese are caught in this manner. Moreover, women haven't sufficient strength to carry the stones for such walls. So you see, men are required to do this kind of work." Thus Mala taught his children wisdom and instructed them in the ways of men, training the boys to be of help to him. They were now two little men who had stopped playing and to whom

everything could be explained so that they would one day become good hunters.

Each one of the dogs carried six geese when they continued on the trail. Mala struck out in the direction where the sun disappeared at night and where the mountains grew taller and taller. Daily, he expected a glimpse of the sea. He had never been in this neighborhood before, but he had heard from old people that beyond the ridge of the land where he used to live, there was another sea and it was there that he had decided to spend the winter.

Suddenly, there was the open sea.

They halted and gazed upon it in silence. There was the great blue sea, touching the very sky in the dim distance. Big uneven lumps of ice floated in the water, glaringly white objects amidst all the blue. The sun was setting and the glare made them blink their eyes.

"Father, have we arrived at the sea we have been looking for? Are there trading ships here and is this where they kill the great whales? Oh, how I long to chew the skin of whale!"

Mala did not answer.

Aba had traveled far and seen much so that she did not demand any explanation for the picture before her eyes. Although Inupaujak was still young, she immediately observed that the lay of the land differed from any she had seen before. "Oh, you who led us up here! Which way is that the sun is setting over the distant hills? How can the sun enter his house by dropping behind the waves? I always knew it for a fact that the sun hides in the mountains at night."

"We are now in the rear of the country—back of all those places where other people dwell. The land where we live has two sides. It is here where we will stay for the winter," Mala answered.

"What, all alone—with such few things as we own? But perhaps we are near a place where the ships come and go. Oh, surely you have brought us to a place where it is good to live," Inupaujak continued.

"One does not ask whether it is good or bad. We have

arrived where we want to be, and now we are going down to the shore to find a place to live. There we shall settle."

Mala went on; his family meanwhile lapsed into silence, oppressed by the insecurity of Fate.

"Let's put our things here. There is a stone for the tent skin. We shall remain here for some time."

Once unloaded, the dogs stretched and sniffed. Soon the tent was erected and the women unpacked. It was the first time since they had left their people that everything was put in its place. Each of them was given a place to store their most precious possessions, their mirrors and their scissors. The sewing needles were stuck through a piece of cloth and hung up. Mala brought in two big flat stones, one for each wife, and set them up with the support of little stones.

"This is going to be my storeroom," Aba said, and arranged a little hollow under her bench in such a way that she could put things without everybody seeing them.

Inupaujak, too, put her things in order. She had a mirror, bigger than the tiny one that was Aba's joy, and she unpacked other valuables which afforded her delight not only when she looked at them, but even when she remembered that they belonged to her.

When Mala returned from an excursion into the neighborhood, he was glad to see that his wives were making things comfortable and cozy. After all, there were many people who lived in only one tent.

However, Inupaujak soon became dissatisfied. Days passed by without any change. They never saw anybody and at night she always slept alone on her bench. "Mala, don't you hear me? Wake up! I don't want you to sleep when bad thoughts prevent me from sleeping! Mala, I will not stay here! I long to talk to other people. You sleep with Aba every night! I want to go away from here. If you don't want to come along, why not let me travel back to the other tents with Orsokidok?"

Mala was wide awake immediately. His eyes made out Inupaujak, sitting upright on her bench. As it was still not very dark at night, he could see the outline of her body against the tent wall.

"Do I hear a woman talking, or am I only dreaming that something like this could ever happen?"

There was no reason for Inupaujak to change her tone. Oh, she was tired of being all alone. Only now did she understand that life would not be as before along the shore, when they had met ships and white men, and when there was laughter and gaiety. She very well knew that she was more beautiful than the other women, but there was nobody here to pay any attention to her. Mala was fleeing, and for this reason he had chosen this lonesome spot for a home. Inupaujak had walked up and down the shore without finding any trace of other people. This, then, was a spot where there were no other human beings and everything indicated that they would travel on to a place still more bare and desolate. To make matters worse, Mala was sleeping over there with that fat Aba. Both puffed like walruses in the water. What was she doing here, with all her beauty and her gift of arousing passion in men?

"Inupaujak, are you mad, or are you uttering bold words without knowing that you are making me angry?"

"I don't care," she shrieked so that everybody woke up. "I want to go back to the others. People should live with people and not run into the mountains which have never witnessed their like before. Only mountain spirits dwell here. I clearly heard them whistle after me. The dogs howl every night because the spirits approach our tent. I am going away. I am not going to stay with you. Please, Orsokidok, come with me! Let's both go over the hills and back over the trail to the place whence we came. Perhaps we can feast upon all the rich stores which we were told we would find!"

There was a scream when Mala threw his boot in her face, and there were blows on her bare body. None of the others in the tent said a word. Finally, just the soft whimpering of Inupaujak was audible.

"Let's try to sleep," Mala said. "We haven't slept long yet and it won't be light for some time. In the morning, Orsokidok and I shall go along the shore to see whether we can't catch some sea food. One longs for blubber. Our teeth are tired of chewing nothing but the meat of reindeer."



VIII

THE wind was blowing hard through all the cracks of the little tent. It was a good thing that Mala had caught seals whose hides could be cut into strips and used to pull the tent skin tight, weighting the strips down with heavy stones. Everyone sat inside, supporting the tent with all their strength so it should not be blown over. The lamps had been extinguished by the storm; it was impossible to have any fire inside.

"Oh, it is really going to be terrible," the women shouted each time there was an especially strong gust of wind.

Mala, however, was interested only in the fact that the wind was coming from the northwest. It seemed that in this neighborhood storms from the sea were greatly to be feared. It had been a mistake to set up his tent facing the sun, as was usually done in other parts of the country.

"But look, father," Puala shouted, "now it is starting to snow; the soft white flakes have won out over the summer. Soon everything will be covered, and no grass will be seen, only snow marked by the tracks of animals."

"One would like to live in a snow house now," Orsokidok suggested. "Soon we shall be able to move into a new, clean igloo."

It really looked as if, in a very short time, there would be sufficient snow to build a hut. The snow came floating down out of heavy clouds, accompanied by a storm that blotted out everything, and penetrated into the tent through every crack. The snow settled in little drifts on the benches inside, covering the lamps and turning brown when drenched with blubber. Mala and his household held on to the tent, leaning against the poles so that they should not crash down over their heads. They were cold and hungry and the change from summer to winter was, as always, very uncomfortable. Man is very de-

pendent on Nature and now a battle raged between the summer and the snow.

"Bring me my mittens, the ones to tie around my waist. I shall go outside with my snow knife to build a house."

Even Puala demanded his little mittens and wanted to go outside, for the flakes were not coming down so fast any more. The boy was anxious to convince himself that they were living in an entirely different country.

Mala tramped towards the mountain, came back again, went down to the lake and finally returned to the tent. He called out to the others that the weather was apparently taking a turn for the better and that it would be best to scrape off the bench skins so that they would not get wet in case the snow thawed.

"How is it outside?" his wives asked him. "Oh, we long so much to move into an igloo!"

"One doubts whether this is possible and cannot, therefore, speak of it," Mala stated.

They watched him as he pulled the ramrod out of his rifle, took the big snow knife, and went down towards the lake. Shortly thereafter Orsokidok came into the tent. "He is fashioning a big house. The great Mala has begun to build his winter home. It is over by the mountainside near the fresh water lake. We will live there over the winter."

The women sprang up, joy written on their faces. "Oh, Mala is building us a house so we shall have protection from the cold and the wind. Summer is tiresome, but winter brings gladness."

Mala had found a spot where there was a snowdrift behind a rock and he had figured out how big a house he could build with the little snow that he found there. He cut one block of snow after the other.

"It will be a poor sort of house, hardly fit for people to live in, but somehow I like to put the blocks together," he confided to Aba when she stepped up to him and inquired what he was doing. "But why did you leave the tent? Isn't there work enough for you to do? How about beating the snow off the skins?"

"One is only taking a little walk. One practices how to walk in the snow," Aba replied. She took a board and began to throw snow over Mala's wall. Then she took the little knife and started to fill in the cracks.

"Oh, how happy we will be to live in a house," the others shouted when they came over and saw Mala and Aba at work. But Mala bade them be silent. "Fate may pursue us if we speak of this snow and believe it will really serve for a house."

As a matter of fact, it was only soft snow that they had to work with, and it would not stick together, for the layer over the stones was too thin to be useful for good building material. But Mala continued to build the little house and it was a wonderful spectacle for people who had lived all through the summer in a tent. The children came running with skins, and they were all ready to move into their new abode. It was then that Mala became angry.

"Look at those bad boys bringing skins out of the tent. Where are you going? That only shows that you are children when you believe that this is the time to go on the trail when it may snow soon."

Mala fashioned the last few blocks, trimming them and putting them into place with great care, but a few corners fell off because the snow was too soft. "Oh, if one only knew how to build a house," he deplored, substituting new blocks.

When the house was completed, there was no snow left, proving that Mala had figured very exactly. Nobody was to touch the top part of the igloo as the snow was much too soft. Very gingerly, he filled in the cracks, but there were still holes in the roof as the snow was not strong enough to bear Mala's weight and he could not reach every part of the roof without crawling on top of the hut.

Moving into the house, even though it was small, provided a real holiday. Mala pulled off the tent skin and carried it on his back over to the igloo. He handed it to Aba who spread it out where the bench was going to be—just one span above the ground because there had been so little snow for building. Then they all ran back into the tent and carried their belongings to the new dwelling. Soon only the bare tent poles and the dogs

were left. Later Orsokidok called for the dogs and fed them near the new house.

THE sea was ready to freeze over for the first time. There had been thin ice over the little fjords and now Mala discovered that seals were already resting near the air holes. This meant they could start ice hunting. It was time to train Orsokidok to be a good hunter who could be of real help and so Mala cut the largest tent pole into two pieces and made harpoons from them; but the weapons had only wooden points as he had no bone. Until they killed a walrus, it would be impossible to obtain bones strong enough for this purpose.

Day after day they crawled out across the thin ice to the seals. The ice was not yet sufficiently covered with snow to absorb all the salty dampness and Mala and Orsokidok became thoroughly wet. But the seals in this neighborhood were not shy at all. They were not used to dealing with human beings and so the hunters returned daily with a good catch. Each time Mala caught three seals, Orsokidok killed one, but he was ambitious and soon he was really a provider of game. At the same time, he started to eye the women to see whether they admired his prowess when they saw what he had caught. One day after the meat had been distributed he had even dared to present Inupaujak with a tasty lower jaw and a delicious morsel of tongue. "Let me give you a nice piece," he said, and then ate on as if his conduct had not been extraordinary.

But Inupaujak did not intend to stand for such nonsense. "Look at the boy who has at last caught something! He makes so bold as to hand out meat to me. Please, Mala, build a house for me where I can live with grown-up men who are used to bringing home meat without bragging about it. Not with youngsters, who dare to annoy women just because they happen to catch a seal! Did Orsokidok really make a catch? Why, then, do we not celebrate the occasion? Why do we not pour water into the mouths of the seals to propitiate their spirits because they were caught by a mere boy? At last here is something that

makes me laugh—a boy who dares to offer a tasty morsel to a grown woman!”

She took the lower jaw and the tongue and threw it out through the igloo entrance where the dogs lay in readiness for the left-overs. The delicacies were swallowed up by them immediately. Orsokidok did not say a word, but bent over the meat he was eating, appearing very anxious that no blood or juice should soil his trousers.

PUALA, too, soon came along on the seal hunt and one day there was the joyous cry: “Puala has caught something! At last he has made his first catch!”

When Mala shouted the news, everybody rushed out of the house to meet the three hunters. The two older hunters had each killed one animal but they had left their game behind on the shore so that Puala alone should come home with his catch which he dragged on a shoulder strap behind him. It was not easy for him to pretend that it was a daily occurrence to return home with a seal. Puala smiled, his face flushed with joy. The women ran to him and promised to make new mittens and new boots for him. They knew that they would be well provided for in their new camp, for now there was one more hunter to bring home meat.

“Let’s have a festive meal,” Mala said. “Soon Upik, too, will be a great hunter and then we shall see who will catch the meat. I shall be old, before long, and then I shall enjoy eating the boiled meat my sons provide.”

Little Upik was dumb with admiration and envy when Mala explained to him that fresh water must be poured into the mouth of the seal because it had been a first catch. In honor of the dead animal, too, the blubber was thrown to the dogs and not used for fuel in the lamp. Each member of the household received a piece of skin to chew. One front flipper of the seal was to be sewed to Puala’s coat so that he could wear it for a long time and honor the spirit of the seal.

“You may break open the seal, Puala. Perhaps you will be

so good as to divide the meat. Yes, let us all have part of the prize obtained with your harpoon."

"I do not know how to disembowel a seal. How shall I go about it? You will laugh at me!" Puala said, standing with his legs spread across his catch, pulling out the entrails. "Oh, there's only a worthless liver inside and some wilted guts!" He cut up the liver and each one received a piece of the warm bloody mass and some blubber to eat with it; soon everyone's mouth and cheeks were red.

"Never before did I taste a liver as delicious as this one," Mala praised. "The first catch that a son brings home gives people more pleasure than their own game. This is so, although it is a sign that one is getting old and the path of life is declining, soon to end in utter feebleness."

They ate the entrails and choice parts of the ribs, and strips of blubber were put into pots to boil. The dogs were fed, too, while Mala told everybody how Puala had stood over the air hole just as if he had been used to catching for many winters; he had speared the animal right in the neck which was the best spot to penetrate with the point of a harpoon.

"And that brought us this seal," Aba said. "Now let's joyfully anticipate the next one!"

THE biggest part of the winter had passed and it had become time to continue their trip to strange lands. One day Mala ventured so far out on the ice which covered the sea that he could see the land on the other side. Apparently high mountains were over there and he would make them his goal. When he came home he did not tell anybody about his discovery but only ordered them to get ready for the trail. Presently they started out across the sea.

"Oh, these wretched dogs do not pull hard enough," Aba complained. She was so fat by now from the soft life in camp that she was not used to the hardships of travel any more. "How happy is the lot of those who may sit on a sledge while they travel from place to place."

Mala did not answer. He thought that the slow progress

could not be blamed on the dogs alone, because the sledge, too, was in a poor condition, the runners consisting only of two reindeer skins which, sewed together and dipped into water, had been frozen hard. Beneath the runners was frozen peat, pasted on with urine, and the cross bars were fashioned from reindeer and salmon meat, cut into strips. As he did not have wood, Mala had to be satisfied with a makeshift sledge made of frozen meat and skins. The sledge was inferior, but the dogs, too, lacked sufficient strength. The one bitch had just thrown a litter and was lying in a sack on the sledge. Every time they stopped, her puppies were given to her so she could suckle and warm them. There were five young dogs which would furnish a team for Orsokidok.

The seal catch along the coast had been so successful that the meat holes near the little lake had not even been touched. Besides, a good deal of seal meat had been left behind when they took to the trail once more. With a poor dog team and a makeshift sledge, it was only possible to take a little meat along. So as soon as they reached a crevice in the ice, they stopped and investigated whether there were any seals around. One day, Puala again killed a seal and that was now referred to as a daily occurrence and as if one already were used to eating meat of his catch. This served to encourage the boy and he was always anxious to hunt with the men. Upik, on the other hand, remained with the women and took care of the puppies, playing with them. Orsokidok frequently looked after the young dogs. He longed for a team of his own and it filled him with joy to watch them grow. Once he possessed a dog team, he would feel himself more of a man.

"How your voice breaks," Aba teased him one day when she talked with Orsokidok about the young dogs. Her mocking was distasteful to him. "Have things come to such a pass that women are permitted to talk?" Orsokidok asked. He could be bold that day because he had just brought home two seals, while Mala had caught only one.

When they continued their journey again, they were unable to take all their seals along. "Whatever we must leave behind now, we shall fetch later. The trail we are taking leads across

pack ice where there is no catch, and we shall need a good supply of meat," Mala said. First they drove the sledge with their belongings a stretch, then they unloaded it and returned for the seals. When they reached the pack-ice, traveling became still more difficult.

"The runners are bending," Mala observed. "We must support them." But the peat broke off, although a heavy layer had been applied to the sledge. They must soften it, but this was not an easy matter on the trail. They took a vessel and they all urinated into it and then they soaked a piece of bear skin with the lukewarm fluid and applied it to the runners. Thereafter, the sledge once more glided easily and smoothly across the snow but, not daring to depend too much on the strength of the vehicle, they always carried their burden in two loads.

"In this way, we can only make very short daily trips," Aba commented. "But this is a good thing for a stout woman and I am glad of it. Of course Mala will always have stout wives because there is never want in his house." Aba was very clever, expressing pleasantries from time to time. Altogether, she was a remarkable woman. Often she was moody and somewhat sour, inclined to rant about the younger folk. Often, too, she cried about the little baby that had died, and longed for her own daughter whom she most probably would never see again as it appeared that they were traveling away from people, never to have any intercourse with them again.

"Do you think that Mala is desirous of pleasing us?" Inupaujak spoke up. "No man who wants to be good to his wives makes them leave a place where life is amusing. I am so anxious for tea and tobacco, and all we get to eat here is just seal meat and soup."

Women's talk, Mala thought, and concentrated his attention upon more serious matters. He thoughtfully examined the horizon where flocks of heavy clouds came rushing towards them across the sky.

"Oh, I am so warm," Upik said. "I almost feel like taking off my fur."

Mala had already looked around for suitable snow and as soon as he found some, he built a small igloo from heavy blocks.

When the snow hut was finished, he did not even take time to fill in the cracks but rushed back to fetch the rest of their belongings. And then, as he had expected, warm weather swooped down upon them. When they awoke in the morning, the house had half tumbled down. It was so low that they could not even sit upright on the bench. When they went outside, they saw that the sledge had dissolved and only pieces of hide hung down from the small blocks on which the sledge had been propped the night before. The cross bars had already been chewed up by the dogs.

"Father, why has winter deserted us?" Upik asked. "With the sun shining only during the day, it should not be so warm. Why is everything thawing?"

"There is a spirit that blows warmth across the waters even in winter time," Mala said, "but you must not speak of it, because then things will become even worse."

"My skins are all wet," Inupaujak complained. "I wanted to scrape these hides and prepare them, but that is impossible now. They are as wet as if they had fallen into the river."

"We will need your unscraped skins as soon as it is cold once more," Mala answered. "We must freeze them into a sledge or we shall have to use ice floes to keep going on the trail. But we are traveling to a country where there is lots of driftwood and where we shall find all we need."

"But who wants to use driftwood?" Inupaujak ranted. "No, I want wood cut by the white men. I do not want to travel with a sledge all full of knot holes and made of driftwood thrown up by the sea."

"I really wonder why children are ever given in marriage?" Aba remarked. "Here is a young one without sense who is permitted to talk. I remember very well, when I was a little girl my father had a sledge made from the straight wood of the white man. But the sledge soon broke to pieces and he was sorry enough that he had burned up his old strong sledge, for it took him a very long time to find suitable driftwood for a new one."

The snow had commenced to fall in big flakes which melted

quickly. Their garments were soon soaked, for there was no protection against the thawing weather.

"Why didn't we take Miuk along, who knows how to make the weather?" Inupaujak asked. Mala did not bother to answer this childish question, but explained his own point of view. "It almost seems to me as if certain people are trying to bind us to their country by invoking the power they have over Nature. There is a spirit controller somewhere in this neighborhood who tries to put obstacles in our way, hoping to force us back with his strong thoughts. It is he who makes the warm wind blow over us. But we shall soon learn who wishes to harm us."

Mala went outside, away from the others, into the solitude to commune with his guardian spirits. He enjoined them to send better weather so that they might continue their trip.

"Ha-ja-ja—I slide, I slide!

"Hajaja—Where is the place?

"From across the water, the little Fear-Inspiring one came to me.

"Yes, the little Fear-Inspiring one came."

Mala sat chanting for a long time, shaking up the thoughts in his head by making vehement motions with his body. Soon, everything went red before his eyes, and he felt that the ice was floating away while he was gliding through the air. He became as pale as a ghost. Now he was ready to return to places he knew and take vengeance by unloosening his powers over Nature against the *angakok* who was his enemy and whom he would now kill. But Mala guessed that the real reason for the bad weather was the fact that he had incurred the wrath of the spirits because he had permitted his wives to eat out of the common pot. Then, too, he had brought in through the same door the meat of beasts of the sea and of beasts of the land. He had seen the white men do this, without their house crashing down over them or Nature taking vengeance. But perhaps this was not permissible for his people.

"Ha-ja-ja," he sang again and again. However, Mala was not entirely oblivious of this world. He scented something in the neighborhood. Perhaps a guardian spirit might be approaching him while he swayed his torso back and forth, chanting

words across the ice. But Mala realized that there was danger close by and, interrupting his chant, he looked sideways. There stood a mighty bear, gazing at him without even hiding behind walls of pack-ice.

Suddenly, the thought struck Mala that this might be the Big Bear Spirit approaching. He knew that that particular spirit was in the habit of chewing up angakoks only to spit them out again. But no, this was just a common bear. It would be good prey, furnishing them with food for their trip to the far coast. Many thoughts raced through Mala's brain while the bear drew slowly nearer. Mala was a strange figure to the animal, and from the way it looked at Mala he knew that it was a beast that could be killed by any hunter's harpoon. Quickly he slid down the wall of pack-ice on which he had been sitting and, stepping backwards, retreated towards his tent which was rather far away. When the bear started to follow him, all thoughts of spirits were suddenly forgotten and Mala turned about and ran, calling for his dogs and shouting for Orsokidok. He had no weapons with him and was greatly hindered by the straps he had wound around himself before, so that his body should not burst when the power of the spirit came over him. Mala saw with alarm that the deep snow prevented him from going fast enough to escape the bear.

"Orsokidok, let the dogs loose! Orsokidok!" he shouted, as he felt the breath of the bear just behind him.

"The dogs! The dogs!"

Mala sank to the ground. He had received a terrific blow between the shoulders and now the claws of a mighty paw dug into his back.

"One notices a scratching from five nails," he thought and became aware that he was lying under his enemy. "Here, then, I shall be defeated!" The bear's heavy paw was on his back and now its teeth sank into Mala's flesh. Although the pain was overpowering, Mala did not lose consciousness. He heard the dogs howling and knew that his only chance of salvation was near. It was his leader dog who rushed for the hind quarters of the bear, attacking the beast in the same spot that the bear had attacked Mala. Angrily, the bear turned; four other dogs clung

to his belly at once and one jumped on his back. This gave Mala a chance to roll out of reach of the bear. Renewed fighting, howls and growls intermingled. The bear's growl was so deep and mighty, that it sounded as if something were bursting inside it. The dogs jumped back and forth, churning the snow into a whirlwind. Suddenly there was a crunching noise. The bear had gotten hold of one of the dogs and his tremendous jaws closed over the poor animal's back. One more blood-curdling howl and the dog was dead—its spine unable to resist that cruel jaw. In the course of the battle, the bear fell once more on top of Mala who was still lying in his blood, unable to arise. The shaggy wet fur of the beast wiped his face. Instantly the dogs attacked the bear ferociously, paying no attention to Mala who, by now, did not know any longer what was taking place. Everything was in a haze, but presently he heard a rumbling noise followed by shouting. Then he felt that the weight had been removed from him and he was free once more. With tremendous exertion, Mala concentrated for a moment and only then he saw Orsokidok standing before him. Mala was saved, for his foster-son had dug a spear into the ribs of the bear, wounding the animal mortally.

The bear was in a frenzy of pain; the point of the harpoon hurt much more than the bite of the dogs. It plunged deep into the bear, and now blood spurted out of its nose. Mad with fury, the bear forgot everything else and its paw struck furiously against the harpoon which protruded from its side. Now the harpoon broke, but the excruciating pain remained. The tremendous animal let loose an agonized growl and threw itself on its side to crush with its weight the thing that was hurting it. But the beast only pushed the point of the harpoon still deeper into the wound, causing more pain than before. Now it was near death and could not move any longer.

"Oh, there you are, Mala! I heard your shouts and came rushing over here with the dogs. But get up now, because the women must not see that you are wounded."

But Mala could not move, and as soon as the women arrived, they shouted, as women are prone to do: "You are bleeding! How shall we ever bring you back to the house? Why

did you go out without weapons? We are overjoyed that Orsokidok saved your life and killed the bear!"

Orsokidok, then, had saved his life? But, of course! The bear was still sitting there, spouting blood. It could neither lie nor rise and it hit feebly at the harpoon that penetrated its side. Mala first rolled on his belly and then, with great exertion, stood up. The wounds in his back pained, and blood was running into his trousers and his boots. But as Inupaujak had herself seen how Orsokidok had saved his life, it would be best if he took a hand himself now to show that he was an able hunter when it came to killing big game.

At this moment, the boys came running, Puala bringing a harpoon along—just a small seal harpoon. Nevertheless, Mala took it and despite his terrible pain, he advanced towards the bear. The dogs were all sitting around; they had ceased their attacks just as if they knew that they were no longer necessary. The great white monster had been vanquished. But now as Mala approached, the dogs rushed eagerly for the bear once more; they made for its hind legs, biting and shaking the beast. Aiming at the eye of the bear, Mala threw the spear, with great power. The point penetrated deeply into the head of the beast; the animal could not fight off death any longer. With a deep groan, it collapsed lifeless at their feet.

"Was it you who thrust the first harpoon into the bear?" Mala asked Orsokidok. "Soon you will be a great bear killer. The power behind your blow was quite good, but you should have aimed at a spot farther back."

"I could not do that as you were lying under the bear and you would have been killed if I had lost time. I realized your terrible predicament and saw that the most important thing was to chase the bear. If I had not killed the beast, you would be dead by now."

To listen to such words was indeed hard for Mala. It almost sounded as if he had been protected by a younger man, but as he was weak from his wounds and had to lie down, he could not think of a sarcastic reply. He was in an ugly mood because his pain was great and here was his foster-son who

spoke words of scorn as a strong man might utter them, while Mala himself was weak and miserable.

"How shall we get you home?" Aba wondered. "The blood is still gushing forth from your wound. You are all pale from the loss of so much blood! We have no sledge to haul you to the house. Let me try to carry you. We must quickly sew your wound together. Oh, how that will hurt you!"

Mala was lying prostrate, eating snow—he was terribly thirsty because of all the blood that was rushing out of his body. But Orsokidok acted like a man who must think for them all. He did not reply with a single word to what Aba said but, taking the knife which Inupaujak had brought along, he walked up and down and probed the snow to see whether it would furnish suitable building material. As soon as he had convinced himself that here was sufficient snow for building, he started to cut blocks, setting them up in a circle as the base for an igloo. Nobody raised any objections. They even encouraged him, trying to show their gratitude because he was so helpful.

"Bring your things over here and then we will carry Mala into the new house. His wounds are deep and it will be a long time before they are healed."

Of course Orsokidok overdid things a little because he had become a man so suddenly. He told the children how he had heard the growling of the bear and how he could have dug his spear much deeper into the animal if it had not been for Mala lying beneath the beast. When the house was ready, he stepped over to Mala, looking at him gravely and poking his finger into the wound so that Mala felt as if he had been bitten again.

"It will be best for Aba to sew the wound together with thread," the young foster-son declared and then went over to the house to fill the cracks from the outside. Mala's blood was on his fingers and it dripped all over the igloo as he worked on it.

Aba had already gone to fetch some things for her husband, otherwise she would have replied to Orsokidok's arrogance. Inupaujak just sat there and cried: "What shall we do if Mala dies? How shall we ever get back to where other people live?"

Aba returned and proved very efficient. She put Mala on a hide, saying that it was not good for him to be cold because then not only the wound might get worse, but also the frost would be dangerous. With careful, sure hands, she loosened Mala's trousers and after she had cleansed the skin with a piece of soft fur, she saw that the flesh of one entire cheek of the buttocks had been severed. The bear's jaws had been so huge that they had closed over one whole thigh. Aba now used a needle and pulled threads through the wound. Every stitch hurt Mala but he did not utter a sound because he knew that this had to be done if he was to get well again. Inupaujak was still crying, and the boys stood by, gaping at their father's terrible wounds. He looked to them almost like some game he himself had bagged.

"To be sure, the skins we have in the house are bad. Everything is wet, too. This thawing weather has spoiled our whole winter outfit. But let's get a roof above our heads. Come, we shall pull you inside on the skin so that you need not walk. Otherwise your wound might start to bleed again," Aba advised. Then she plucked some reindeer hairs from a skin and put them on the wound so that they might absorb the blood and form a crust. Mala permitted her to do exactly as she pleased, completely ignoring his pains. He only asked for water and drank as much of the thawing snow as they would give him. Soon his mind was clear once more and he realized that it was he who should do the thinking around here and that it would be best to give a few orders so that the others should remember that he knew more than they. "Have Orsokidok come in. I must talk with him."

The boys fetched their big foster-brother.

"It will be best if you do not cut up the bear skin but keep it in one piece so that I can use it for a sledge as soon as we procure wood," Mala said. "Tie the dogs in front of the tent and give them the entrails of the bear but not the guts. I cannot help you as I was wounded on the hunt."

Then Mala closed his eyes and Orsokidok could only say "yes," and do as he was told.

For a few days, Mala tossed about restlessly, and his head was hot. But presently his wounds started to itch and they knew that they were healing. They put snow on the wounds covered with congealed blood and reindeer hair, and this kept Mala wonderfully cool. Aba chanted words to chase away pain—magic words she had learned from her elders. Mala's appetite returned and he feasted on boiled bear guts. The boys were given the tongue but they insisted that their father should eat half of it and it tasted good to him. Soon he would be all well again. It turned cold once more and everything that had been wet, during the thaw, froze stiff now. Orsokidok had brought all their things from the old house to the new and came to report to Mala what he had done:

"I put the bear skin on top of a snow heap so that the dogs cannot get it, I also brought the broken off harpoon along. The weapon made a great hole in the skin and one rib of the bear was broken."

Nobody answered and Orsokidok continued to tell about the bear who had turned his head and growled at him as soon as he had felt the spear. He had hissed so that it had almost scared him and the bear's growling had surely been louder than the howling of the dogs. Gradually, Orsokidok became so intoxicated with his own words that he forgot all discretion. He described the fear that gripped him when he noticed Mala beneath the colossal beast.

It seemed to Mala that the boy was talking too much. Despite his weakness, Mala raised himself on his elbow to see whether there were any visitors in the room. "It seems I am hearing bear stories told by someone with much experience."

This silenced Orsokidok, and Mala next asked his foster-son how many bears he had killed in his life.

"This is the only one. Never before have I thrust my harpoon into a bear," Orsokidok answered.

"Then I think you had better not tell bear stories until you have more experiences of this kind. When you once have the scars of a bear's paws on your body, then you can tell stories about bear hunts, but you should not affront the ears of a

mature man by talking as you did. It really hurts my head to hear a boy bragging of his prowess."



IX

MANY days passed before Mala was well enough to go on the trail once more. They ate the two seals they had caught; the bear meat, too, was almost entirely used up and there was hardly any blubber left. But this was an advantage because the sledge they were to use could not carry a heavy load. The sledge was only a bear skin which, the hairy side turned down, was dragged across the snow. It slid easily enough on a smooth surface, but when they came to pack-ice they had to lift up and pull the makeshift sledge because they only had five dogs left besides the puppies which Inupaujak and Aba were still carrying on their backs.

As soon as they sighted new land, traveling seemed much easier to the women. Their thoughts rushed ahead and they spoke about meeting people. They hoped that they would run across white men, and if, by that time, they made a catch, they could trade with them. It would be amusing to hear and see something new.

The boys, however, thought differently. They confided to Orsokidok that they might meet terrible people in the new land. They remembered all the stories that had been told them about far away countries, populated by strange beings.

"Now we are going where nobody has ever been before. It would be much better if there were more of us and if we had a couple of good dogs so that we could make quicker headway in case danger lurks in our path."

Mala let the others talk. Walking still tired him greatly and he thought how remarkable it was that in hardship and sickness strength always leaves a man only to be regained later. He was very happy, however, that the land where nobody

had ever been before was not so far any more. There he would live in peace the sort of life he wished to live.

He erected a windbreak and rested on a block of snow near an air hole, waiting for seals. He sat there a long time and again fell to pondering, but at last a seal approached a hole. The animal came nearer and nearer and when it was right beneath the opening, Mala hurled his harpoon, hitting something solid, and immediately the seal pulled off the point of the harpoon, dragging the line along. But Mala held on to his end firmly. The seal's pull was not very strong for the thrust from Mala's harpoon had wounded it mortally. Surely, there was more joy in life than just to sit and ponder! Perhaps it was due to his many experiences that recently he had started to think of things which were to come. In the olden days, he would only have waited for a seal to show itself at an air hole. Then he did not have to worry because he had always had sufficient meat and the strength to obtain what he wanted, without making plans in advance.

FINALLY they reached land.

"It will be best if you remain on the ice, but I shall go and look about to see whether this land promises friendship."

Mala approached the shore, but before he put his foot on land, he threw his mittens to the ground, and as soon as he reached the soil, he sank to his hands and knees, crawling over the land in order to manifest his humility to the spirits that lived in the mountains and who were doubtless watching his arrival. He crawled some distance and scarcely noticed the cold on his bare hands because all his thoughts were concentrated on the new land. Finally he called to the others to follow him, leaving dogs and sledge behind.

"And give testimony to your joy of discovery by crawling, so that everything will be well with us and no harm will befall us whilst we dwell here."

All of them crawled a stretch inland and Mala was so happy in the thought that he had crossed the sea, a feat which none of his people had achieved before, that he sat down on

a rock and chanted a song to invoke help for strangers. They all joined in the chorus, and nobody thought of tobacco or of white men. This new land was to them like water to one who has been thirsty. Nobody had ever put his foot here and nobody could predict what surprises were in store behind the next headland. Mala intended to remain here for some time as the ice was closely covered with air holes. Besides, during the last few days, they had been so eager to reach land that they had hardly stopped to catch any seal.

Mala and Orsokidok built a house while Puala took the little bow and arrow his father had made for him, but with which he had never shot anything yet, and pursued a hare. The animal jumped about, unafraid of the boy, retreating slowly, not unlike a dog, only when Puala drew nearer. The boy hid in a pit and soon the hare came within range. When only two steps away from him, Puala drew the bow, and the arrow hit the hare so hard that the point protruded on the other side as the animal fell to the ground.

"Oh, I think there is a hunter somewhere around here. Perhaps we are now in a country where boys catch meat, or perhaps this is the spot where nobody ever misses his aim," Puala thought.

Now Puala could not remain silent any longer, and he ran to the others who had just finished the igloo, shouting from afar, "One has killed a hare! I was the first one to catch meat in the new land."

They all rushed towards him and were happy because now they knew that the country was bidding them welcome. Mala was greatly moved and rubbed noses with his eldest son. Both felt embarrassed because they had shown their feelings. "It will be best to tie up the dogs," Mala mumbled, and, busying himself with the team, turned quickly away.

Puala put his hare with the other meat. He was now one who helped to support the family. They lived in a tremendous house Mala had just finished; apparently he expected to stay here a long time. The women chattered and laughed when they moved in, but the big house was somewhat empty because they lacked hides. They could not even use the bear skin over the

benches as Mala needed it for the hunt. The lamps, too, were too small to give much light and warmth because there was little blubber left.

"Let's boil Puala's hare," Inupaujak suggested. But first Mala chewed snow until it was melted and then spit into the mouth of the hare, mumbling words which nobody could hear to propitiate the spirits. Now that they were in a land where probably no white men ever came, they would have to depend entirely on whatever the land gave them. For this reason, nothing must be done to incur the wrath of the spirits. And so now Mala ordered: "Do not boil the hare. We shall eat it as it is. Just skin it and let's taste its meat." The hare was skinned and Puala divided the meat. He himself took the head and the neck. Upik was given the tongue and each of the grown-ups received one of the feet. All agreed that it tasted exactly as one might expect a big hunter's catch to taste. Then Mala took the vitals and whatever was left and went into the mountains. He did not return until the others were ready to sleep.

"It will be best if Orsokidok stays home today," Mala said the next morning, and went across the ice to an air hole in search of seal. It was he who looked out for the support and safety of them all, and therefore he had to see to it that the women were not left without protection. This land was new to them and they did not know what dangers might be hidden in its wastes.

Mala had a dog on a leash. The dog sniffed around and finally located an air hole. Mala made the dog lie down, some distance away, and sat down to wait for the seal. It was a long time before the seal came swimming toward its death.

He caught a fine seal whose meat would last for days. On the way home, he spied the tracks of reindeer. "Good! So, reindeer, too, are roving here," Mala thought. But he would not be tempted into eating reindeer meat before the sun had disappeared once more. No, he would not insult any of the animals' guardian spirits by mixing meat of the sea and meat

of the land in the same pot, or by bringing it into the house before a new turn of the sun.

The children played outside. It had been impressed upon them that they should stay near the house, but they strayed far enough to discover a little lake higher up. They saw some lemmings and two ravens and they spoke to the black birds and received an answer from them. They asked: "Are there reindeer here? Tell us whether there are reindeer around here?" "Caw! Caw!" the ravens answered, and that meant: "Yes." Here, too, then, these wise birds understood the language of men.

Next evening Inupaujak complained that she had no more matches. She had used her last one. "We must find people who will give us lots of those things that make fire easily," she said. "I do not want to rub sticks back and forth each time I light a lamp."

Mala did not deign to reply, but again fell to pondering on the necessity of obtaining certain things to replace those they had used so far. The one knife, broken off, could be used only for scraping and the big knife and meat knife were not enough for all of them, with Puala growing up and Orsokidok frequently coming home with a catch. Living in such utter solitude was certainly different from his expectations. His forebears, who had made their own tools and weapons, must have led a harder life than one would have supposed possible. He well understood, now, why people traded with the white men, even though their goods were so costly.

"Let's walk along the shore," Mala suggested to Orsokidok, one morning. "I see land in the distance. We must investigate."

They did not say much to the women. "Get everything ready for me," was all Mala said, when asking for his mittens. "It is not impossible that one goes hunting."

When they left, Mala took a tin can along so they knew that he would stay away for several nights. They drove along the coast and, once in awhile, crossed the ice. Shortly before they reached the headland, they went ashore and found a pass

through a ravine filled with snow, over which their skins glided easily.

"I shall go along the coast," Mala stated, as soon as they had crossed the cape. "You remain with the dogs." He wandered out to the point, to study the land. He found an enormous piece of wood. It was round and broken off on both ends, but it was tremendous and much more than one man could ever hope to lift. So they had come to a country where wood drifted to the coast! It would be best to move here where he could fashion the wood into tools and weapons right on the spot. Mala took Orsokidok along to show him his find.

"There will be wood for many spear shafts so that we can kill bear. Killing a bear always means that at least one shaft breaks. But here is wood for many shafts, with still enough left to build sledges for us both."

"If only it were cut the right way," Orsokidok said. "It will be very hard to cut it with the poor saw we have and our stone axe."

"Young men usually receive their tools from older men, and therefore they do not know how to make tools. But first we shall bring the women and children here. You go and fetch our things while I build a house. There will be lots of work around here, building the sledges and using up the great piece of wood which one has found here."

The women started out with the children as soon as they could pack their things. Here, too, Orsokidok proved himself rather bold. He had not gone into the house and told them about Mala's find; instead, the young man had cut a hole into the wall of the igloo and called to those inside: "Hand out your skins and let me put them on the sledge. One is moving over to the headlands and wants to arrive there before it is dark."

The women were very angry and scolded him. "Look at the boy who knows no politeness! But perhaps it is amusing to go to a new place. So let's hurry and move on."

It was dark when they met Mala. They saw that he had built a house with two little side wings. And he was busy building another house which could be reached through the wall of the big one. Here was a place, then, where they would

remain long, because space was prepared for more than they needed right now.

"You are a real spirit controller—much greater than we ever imagined—because now you found the wood that we needed so badly. No longer need we fear that the new country will be stronger than we and refuse to feed us," Aba said.

Inupaujak had her own ideas. "Oh, what work to fashion this tremendous piece of wood! It is thicker than three men. If wood drifts ashore here from the sea, perhaps along other parts of the coast there will be wood that is smooth and has four corners, so that it can be used for sledges without so much work. Why should we stop here where we found the first piece and work hard over it? Perhaps only a little distance away there are more suitable pieces for sledges and tent poles."

Mala had often noticed that Inupaujak could think like a man; frequently her thoughts were even keener than his. But he had made up his mind to use this piece of wood. Besides, he had already given voice to his thoughts and therefore he could not agree with her now and accept her advice.

"I saw the tracks of foxes around here. It will be best to set up traps. Their skins will keep you warm next winter."

"I, too, want to catch foxes," Upik piped up. "I know very well how it is done and I will put up a trap right here next to the house."

That was something for all of them to laugh over. The little one did not know yet that one had to look for foxes far away from a house. But while they were still laughing, they learned better. A white fox was sitting directly opposite, watching them like a dog, waiting to be fed. This puzzled Mala and he concluded at once that this animal must be unusual. He walked back and forth a few steps, but the animal did not move. Mala bent down, where there was a spot free of snow, and picking up a stone, threw it at the fox. The animal jumped aside so as not to be hit, but sat down again and continued to look upon the actions of these people with interest.

Puala tried to shoot the fox with an arrow. He did not hit it, but the animal slunk away. So the fox was no spirit after all! But its boldness proved that they had come to a land

where there were no people since the animals showed no fear. There would be good catch here, then, and that was all Mala desired.

Sbouting lustily, Orsokidok arrived at that moment with their things.

"Oh, you wretched dogs! Do you not know my whip yet? Quick, to the house with you! There is wood there for a big sledge which you will pull as soon as it is built."

SPRING was upon them, because the seals were already lying near the air holes sunning themselves. Orsokidok always came home with a good bag. He had grown considerably and was now a big strapping fellow. When they undressed at night in the igloo, it was plain to see that Orsokidok's muscles had become hard and that his body was as developed as that of a mature man. Mala's foster-son was a great help to him. One day, while on the hunt, Mala confided to him that hard times were in store for them because he had no more cartridges than he had fingers on one hand. They must therefore become proficient in the use of the bow and arrow and in hurling harpoons.

Orsokidok suggested: "Would it not be best, then, to keep the rifle and the last cartridges in case a dangerous situation arises?"

"No," Mala replied, "I have told you before about my battle with the white men. I do not wish to use their weapons any longer. I only used their tools to get away from them. I am going to keep my rifle until I have nothing to load it with any more, and then I shall hammer it into a chisel and we shall live as our forebears did before they ever knew there were ships."

"Shall we never meet other people again?" Orsokidok asked. "The women are anxious to talk to strangers and I think the songs we sing should be heard by people who live in other countries."

"Your only thoughts are of women," Mala said. "Young men are that way, once they grow up. But just look over there at that dog! He's chewing up the hitching gear and has almost

bitten it through. Run over there and make him stop. I do not think we will catch anything today, but I shall go out to the headland and you can follow with the dogs."

A few days later, Orsokidok and Puala went on the trail alone. They drove through the big valley and soon discovered unknown stretches. Mala, meanwhile, staying behind with his two wives and Upik, caught seals on the ice. He now preferred to be home evenings. With his axe, he would cleave deep furrows into the big piece of wood that was to be made into a sledge. Inupaujak came up to him and looked on while he worked. Often her able little hands ripped the wood with a knife. She cut many shavings and the furrow she was working on deepened more and more, but one day the work palled on her. She was young, and tired of things easily. Now she walked along the stream with Upik, happy that spring would soon be with them. She sat down and sang of the ice that would float away, so that the sea would rise up right to the shore—the sea upon which ships would sail—ships with tobacco and biscuits. She also thought of something else in connection with the ships but, after all, she could not mention that in the presence of a little boy.

"Father, Inupaujak told me that in the summer ships will come here and we shall trade with them and we shall have our mouths stuffed with sugar every day! When will the ice melt? I am longing to taste biscuits and sugar!"

"Do not listen to Inupaujak's words because she is only joking. Nobody knows this country and no ship has ever been here. You must never think of ships." He was an angry father, scolding his son, and Upik was ready to cry.

Inupaujak flew into a fury. "Oh, you only wanted to get us away from the ships! Then you did not tell us what was in your mind. You seem to forget everything we others desire so much. I must see a ship, and soon! Then I shall ask the captain to take me where many other ships anchor every year. And on the ship I shall live with the captain and do as I please—not as you want me to do."

"You'd better stop talking," Mala threatened. "I came out here because I desire peace. Don't you know yet that I am

always victor in a fight? I have never shown fear. And now shut your mouth!" It was time to go to sleep and they started to undress. But Inupaujak refused to keep silent. "You cannot understand that those who have seen ships once always long to see them again. I am just a stupid woman, but I have lived with the white men and therefore the command of no man can ever make me forget the ships. No, go away from me! I do not want you to sleep with me tonight. Crawl over to Aba who always longs for you so much. Don't you hear me? Go away! If you are so anxious for solitude, and peace from the white men, why do you want to live with a woman who has been coveted by the white men? Yes, they fought over me as soon as they saw me! It is sweet for a woman to know that she is desirable."

Mala kept silent. Nevertheless, he raised the skin which covered Inupaujak, despite her protests and pressed close to her. A wordless conflict ensued. Aba was lying on the other side of the bench, her back turned to them. She listened with open eyes and acute senses, and her thoughts were bitter. Always it had been the younger woman Mala had preferred, despite her sharp tongue. But who scraped the blubber off seal skins all day long? And who went out to the far distant fox traps while Inupaujak sat talking to Mala? How often she had seen them pick lice from each other lovingly, and eat them! Mala never caressed her that way. And here she was now, lying all alone and forgotten while Mala desired Inupaujak.

That night, Orsokidok and Puala rested in a small snow hut farther inland. They had taken seal meat along and had been successful in bringing down a few ptarmigan with their arrows. They ate the birds raw with some blubber as they never had enough patience to make a fire and cook when they were out on the hunt. Orsokidok was the leader and he told Puala about his experiences and adventures. It was amusing to play the rôle of instructor. Up to now, it had always been Orsokidok's lot to be the pupil.

"I shall see whether the reindeer are already on the move," Orsokidok said one morning, giving himself the air of an able hunter. "You go over to that hill and perhaps you

can glimpse the sea from there. Each of us shall take a dog. But perhaps you are afraid and would rather stay with me?"

No, Puala would rather act for himself, and soon they parted, each one going his own way.

Puala was leading the dog on the leash; his bow and arrow were slung over his shoulder. In his hand, he carried a stick with a bone point, so as to be ready to defend himself. It was the first time that he was alone in an unknown country and at first his feeling of pride banished all fear. But soon it seemed strange to him that Orsokidok was not along, because it was certainly dangerous for a man to go hunting all alone in a region he did not know.

There was a ptarmigan over there! He tied his dog to a stone and drew the bow. But he missed his aim, and the ptarmigan scarcely moved; it just turned aside a little and cackled, as if it were laughing at him. He drew another arrow, but this broke when it hit the stone on which the ptarmigan rested. Only now he remembered that Mala had told him that arrows break easily. The arrow's strength is meant for the body of the game alone and therefore one should shoot off an arrow only when certain that it would not be damaged. The third shot went right through the ptarmigan, which fluttered its wings and fell from the stone. It lay on its side, moving its feet as if eager to run, but soon it was dead.

Puala intended to keep his ptarmigan until Orsokidok's return in the evening so that he would not be without any catch at all. He collected his arrows, untied his dog and went on—a hunter with his bag, anxious to see whether there was not more game in the neighborhood. He went on and on, first discovering the tracks of a hare in the snow and later, those of a wolf. While he was still standing, examining the tracks, a distant howl struck his ear. The dog pricked up its ears, turning its head in the direction whence the howling came. It sounded as if there were a whole pack of wolves. If the howling had come from the other direction, Puala would have supposed that it was the dogs at his father's house, but now the boy became a little frightened because Orsokidok was not there. Fortunately the wolves seemed far away and soon he

did not hear them any more. After all, it seemed best to branch off, returning to the igloo in a circle. But first he would go to the top of the mountain, for a glimpse of the sea. Yes, there it was and, far to the north, he saw two little islands. Now he had some news to report when he came home and he could be the guide for his father. Upik and the women would look up to him with admiration.

The sun was sinking now and it would be best to return home. He turned around, came down the hill, and started inland. Suddenly his dog became restless. The animal surely had discovered something, because it pulled wildly on the leash. Puala became afraid once more. If he had only gone with Orsokidok! What would he do, all alone? Obviously there was nothing else to do but follow the dog. Of course he would be on the lookout for danger. Puala took a firmer hold on his little harpoon with the bone point, and strode on.

The dog became more and more excited, pulling forward eagerly. Suddenly, Puala discovered the footprints of people in the snow—a surprising discovery, never expected in this country. Somebody had passed this way and it could not have been Orsokidok. Puala stood rooted to the spot, unable even to flee. Then, he followed the dog farther and farther, filled with anxiety and tension. The footprints were exceedingly small! Perhaps they had come into a country of dwarfs . . . those strong little ones to whom foxes appeared like bears and eider ducks like walrus! He was afraid of dwarfs, but what was he to do? He followed the direction of the tracks with his eyes, and his fears increased when he saw that the footprints stopped at a big stone. There were no tracks any farther. This, then, must be the spot where those dwellers of the underworld went into their homes. Puala remembered the stories of hunters who had looked into the houses of the strong little ones and had seen extraordinary things. But he did not dare to do that; he would rather turn around, but unfortunately his dog began to howl. Undoubtedly the dwarfs would hear the howling and then it would be impossible for him to retreat.

Then and there, the most surprising thing happened. On the other side of the stone, a head appeared. A tiny creature

gazed at him and when Puala did not move, the stranger became bolder and emerged entirely from behind the rock. It was a little girl, smaller than he, and she wore odd garments, partly like those of a man. Puala immediately concluded that this girl must belong to people who did not know how to dress. But there was no reason for fear any longer. He approached the stone, and now they were only six or seven paces apart. Neither of them had spoken as yet.

"Do not do me any evil," Puala finally said as he came closer. "I come in peace and I'm all alone with my dog."

"I do not want to do anybody any harm, but I am hungry and I was just going to meet you. I have seen you for quite some time, but your funny clothes made me afraid of you."

"You need not be afraid; I am not dangerous," Puala reassured her, feeling like a mighty man. "And if you are hungry, just come over here and eat." He took the ptarmigan which he had so much wanted to show to Orsokidok and handed it to her.

The little girl did not say a word but she took it eagerly. She tore the skin off the breast of the bird, and she ate it, then she removed more of the skin and gnawed the bones. Finally she broke open the ptarmigan and dug with her fingers for the heart and the guts. Then she pulled out the long entrails and, lifting her hand high, slowly lowered them into her mouth.

Puala noticed that she relished their bitter taste and he watched her in surprise for it seemed remarkable that she should eat without once uttering a word. She stopped only after she had swallowed the whole bird—and after all, that was rather a good deal for a little girl. When she was all through, she sat down and began to cry. But soon she dried her eyes with her fingers so that her cheeks were all smeared with the blood of the ptarmigan. Then she looked up at Puala and asked him whether he lived in the neighborhood.

"One has a hut nearby, but my real house is farther up the coast. And where is your home, and where are your people?"

"I ran away from home because of a man," the girl said. "It has grown dark three times since I am all alone. I tried to

find my way back to my people but I lost the way. I ran around so long and cried so much until I saw you coming."

"You can come along to my house," Puala said. "My companion, too, will be home tonight."

The girl was so weary that she was unable to walk fast, and now that her hunger had been appeased her head became heavy and she wanted to sleep. But Puala kept on walking and she had to follow him. He wondered whether there were only little people living on the other side of the mountain. They were surely not dangerous if they were no bigger than this girl. Apparently they could not obtain meat by simply pointing at it with their fingers, as the sagas had it. But he did not question her while they were walking and every once in a while he shouted at his dog so that the girl should know he was the master around here.

"What a small house!" the girl exclaimed when they arrived at the hut. Puala did not deign to reply. He gave her a piece of seal meat but she refused to eat it, explaining that where she came from, they were already eating reindeer meat.

Presently she complained that her feet were cold because she had been sitting quietly. When she took off her boots, Puala saw that her feet were wet and almost frozen. He did not know whether it would be proper to offer her his second pair of boots and therefore he only gave her his sleeping cover, saying: "Warm yourself with these skins. I hear my companion coming now, and I shall go outside to receive him."

"Is he dangerous? I am so afraid!" the girl whispered. She was still terrified from her recent experiences.

"Oh, he is just like I am," Puala said, and believing this to be sufficient reassurance, he went outside to meet Orsokidok.

THE dogs had already announced Orsokidok's coming but he himself could not be seen yet. Soon, however, he reached the rim of the ridge and now Puala started out to meet him. Orsokidok was loaded down with ptarmigan and the dog was carrying two hares. As a mere boy was here to meet him, Orso-

kidok would not express any joy about his big catch. He approached quietly and apparently had no extraordinary experiences to relate.

"So you got here first," he said to Puala. "I am a little late because I did so much exploring."

"Did you discover anything worth while?" Puala asked. He hoped that Orsokidok would have much to tell because he was sure that his triumph would be the greater one. Besides, Orsokidok would feel so much smaller, afterwards, if he were to brag about his adventures.

"One saw many things that will be very helpful," Orsokidok replied, just to make Puala curious.

"Two big hares?" said Puala, inspecting the game which the dog carried. "That will be sufficient meat for all of us."

"No, the dogs are not going to get any. They were fed the day before yesterday and they can wait until we get home tomorrow."

"Oh, I was not thinking of the dogs. I just meant all the people here in the house," Puala remarked.

"What are you talking about? Did somebody come after us?" Orsokidok inquired.

"Oh, no—but on my way home I came upon a poor girl," Puala stated. "But let me tie your dog with mine."

"What are you saying? Where is she? I am very anxious to hear the news. Why don't you tell me?" Orsokidok exclaimed.

"One just goes to tie up a dog. Look inside in case you are really curious."

Orsokidok forgot all his dignity, to Puala's great joy.

THE little girl once more ate her fill and then began to tell about her adventures: There were two families who for some reason had traveled far away from their own country, and later the little one herself had decided to leave her own people, too. Puala noticed that she was not telling everything she had told him earlier. He was very proud of the fact that he shared a

secret with her. The three forgot their weariness and talked and asked questions all through the night. The little girl behaved rather queerly. Very often the boys felt like laughing over the way she spoke, using strange words that were entirely new to their ears and which they did not understand at all. Sometimes they all laughed together and finally the girl started to ask them questions.

"At first I thought I had met people who are small, like our boys," she told them, looking at Puala. "But now I see that one of you is taller. Perhaps you are just like other people and it is not dangerous to be with you."

Puala felt hurt because she looked down upon him on account of his youth. But he joined in the laughter and made bold enough to ask her name.

"Yes, what might my name be? What could it be? I do not know my own name. I never heard my name. I am just a little girl who hasn't even a name."

A delightful sensation of warmth, novel and exhilarating, stole over the boys as they sat near the girl. She was appealing and knew how to string words together. Orsokidok put his hand on her head and started to scratch her head. But she was afraid and moved over to Puala.

"Leave me alone. Do not touch me!" and she started to cry. "Apparently I have come upon terrible men and it will be best for me if I leave quickly."

"Lie down here and sleep next to me," Puala invited. "My cover is wide enough for two and tomorrow we shall go back to where we live. Then you shall see my father and his two wives and there you may remain."

The night was almost over and they had very little sleep before they took to the trail the next day. Hunger lent speed to the dogs. The little girl was so tired she could hardly keep her eyes open. Orsokidok made a place for her on the bear skin which the dogs dragged. There she sat and looked upon the two drivers smilingly.

Mala was at home when they drove up; sighting the sledge in the distance, he shouted that the young hunters were coming home now. "Let's boil some meat as is the custom

when receiving men. They surely must be hungry because they could scarcely have found much meat on the trip."

And again he fell to whittling at his big piece of wood so that the shavings flew all over.

"Hey, you inside the house! Come out here. Big people are coming into our camp!"

They could tell from Mala's words and the way in which he spoke that he had seen strange things and all three rushed out just in time to see Mala reach for his rifle and his harpoon. Then they all stood still, staring at the approaching sledge.

Why, there were three people! No doubt it was Orsokidok and Puala who were running behind the dogs, but there was a third person on the sledge. New events had taken place, perhaps foreboding danger to them all; it would be best to be prepared.

"Look! Look!" Aba shouted. "It is a woman. Orsokidok has found himself a wife!"

The little girl had meanwhile jumped from the sledge and was running beside Puala.

"At last," Inupaujak said, "we are meeting new people. What joy to have come to a country where things happen!"

"But how small she is! Perhaps we are in the country of those who are never bigger than our children, even when they are old."

The sledge drew up before the house, but the little girl remained standing at some distance. She was embarrassed and afraid when she saw the two women, in queer garments, approaching her. Oh, if only she had never run away from her own people! It would have been so much better to stay with the man who had pursued her, because these were apparently people who ate human beings and had sent out the two young boys to catch her. Undoubtedly they were man-eaters! She was positive of this when she looked at the boots of the women. They were different from any footgear she had ever seen before. Probably it would be best to run away, but before she could make up her mind, the women were standing in front of her. They took her by the hand and there was nothing for her to

do but follow them into the igloo. The younger of the two women would not even let her go inside the snow hut.

"What sort of creature is that?" Mala asked.

"Just a young girl one found," Puala answered. "One interrupted one's hunt to bring her back to camp. She ran away from home and I felt sorry for her in her plight."

"Men should assist one another, but this will bring on a fight when her camp neighbors come to fetch her and we refuse to give her back," Mala said while helping them to unharness the dogs.

To protect the skin sledge against the dogs, it was pulled into the front house which had been built by Mala to connect all the other buildings. It was big enough to unload the sledge inside and from there all the ptarmigan and hare were flung into the living quarters. One after another the animals were thrown in there, and the strange little girl could see that much meat was being brought into the houses.

"One would like to taste boiled meat," Mala shouted when they had finished unloading and everything had been put in place. Beating the snow from their furs, they finally came in to where the stranger, very much embarrassed, was still sitting on the bench. She answered timidly the many questions with which the women plagued her.

Finally she had to own up to her name. It was Airuna and she was an orphan. She had run away from her camp neighbors because her foster-father pursued her. He was a man of uncontrollable passion, always preying upon women, whether they were mature or very young. Aba and Inupaujak plied her with countless questions until Mala entered. Then, feeling ashamed, the women at last desisted.

Mala cut off the meat and it was boiled. But the little girl was not permitted to eat until it had been explained to her that she was now in a house where the meat of sea animals was part of the daily fare. Her own people lived on reindeer meat, but Mala told her that they had come from a far country and that her guardian spirit would not feel insulted if she ate what she found here. Shortly thereafter they undressed to go to sleep, and then they saw that Airuna's breasts were still as

flat as those of a child and they asked her whether she had not grown into womanhood.

"No, I am still a little girl. But I am ashamed to talk about it, and I wish you would not question me further."

"Oh, I thought," Puala said, "that we had come to a country where all the people are very small."

"And I thought," Airuna countered, "that I had met people where the hunters were just like our boys." And they all laughed and became friends.

The next day was full of new experiences for Airuna. Here they had knives made of iron! She had seen only one in her life, and that belonged to people far down south. He that happened to own it at the time was soon killed so that the precious tool might be enjoyed by others. Therefore it was dangerous to possess such riches and only the very boldest cared to have them. And the women here had needles so fine that one could hardly hold them in one's fingers. Yes, these women must surely be happy for they could fashion clothes with scarcely any trouble.

"It must be that you are the white people of whom one has heard, for you have all kinds of tools," Airuna ventured. "I have heard many strange things about them, but I would surely never have believed that a single man could own so many riches."

Then they all laughed again and Mala said they were just like her own people, only from a different country, and they had come here now because they were desirous of dwelling in a new land.

Next morning, when Airuna came out of the igloo, she saw that Mala was working on his wood with an iron axe. He had already chopped away a tremendous amount. This was something different from the little grooves which her people drilled when they wanted to cut wood.

Yes, there was lots to see here and there was plenty of food. Soon she was playing with Upik and Puala on the ice and one would never have thought there here was a child who had run away from home and who had once been afraid of the people living in this big snow house.



X

MALA'S thoughts were occupied with many things. It was desirable that his sledge should be finished before the ice melted, and that would surely happen ere the moon changed twice. After all, he was a stranger in this country and did not know how long the winter would last. Another problem to plague him had to do with the dogs; there were only five. Of course, the dogs had been fed well and were in good condition, but they never would grow any bigger. He thought of his old team with longing; never had there been another like it. The five puppies promised to grow into strong dogs, but it would be long before they could haul a load. In a few days, a second one of the bitches would throw a litter but that only meant that, for some time, the dog would be of little use to them unless they killed the puppies, which they did not dare to do.

Although he knew he ought to finish his sledge without delay, Mala decided to investigate the two islands which Puala had seen from the mountains. And so, only a few days after Airuna's arrival, Mala and Orsokidok started out on the long trip. They were well armed, Mala explaining to his foster-son that they were on their way to a place where it would be necessary for them to be cautious, as well as courageous. They had only four dogs along as it had been necessary to leave the bitch behind. So the two men had to walk alongside the sledge, battling a strong wind. Every evening they built a little igloo, and frequently they made a fire, sometimes boiling their food. But most of the time, whenever they caught a seal, they just took the warm liver and steaming entrails and ate them with fresh blubber, saving themselves the trouble of making a fire.

THE days began to lengthen. It was not dark in the evening any more and soon the light would hurt their eyes unless they

smearing the bridge of their noses and their eyelids with soot. They covered long stretches daily and soon they arrived near the two islands which Puala had discovered. Up to now, they had not seen any human tracks or experienced anything unusual. But one day when running behind the sledge, as always without speaking a word for the longest time, Mala suddenly shouted: "Look, over there! Somebody is coming to meet us!"

What the two first saw was a tremendous bear rushing at them with great speed; to all appearances, the animal was fleeing from something and as soon as it discovered them, it turned sideways and made for the sea.

The dogs had caught sight of the beast and immediately ran after it. They simply had to follow. The sledging was good and the dogs pulled hard, dragging the two men along. Mala had to cut the traces with his knife so that the sledge was left behind while the dogs rushed on like arrows shot from a bow. Orsokidok finally managed to pant: "Oh, Mala! Turn around! There is a sledge coming after us. A sledge in pursuit of the beast!"

Mala, looking around, saw two strangers running ahead of the sledge, but at the very same moment Mala's own dogs caught up with the bear. One of them dug its teeth into the hind quarters of the animal. With surprising agility, the bear turned around, clawing at the dog but missing it. Another dog made for the bear's neck, in this way detracting its attention from the first dog. Their growls and howls mingled. Meanwhile Mala thought quickly: were those who approached enemies or camp neighbors from whom one might expect assistance? The other men, too, had seen Mala and Orsokidok, and were apparently doubtful of their intentions. They unleashed their dogs but remained with their sledges.

When Mala saw that, he advanced towards the bear. He would show the strangers that he was a man without fear! He approached a few steps nearer the bear, then took his rifle and aimed. The great beast was trying furiously to shake the dogs off, and succeeded in throwing one of them to the ground. Turning slightly, the bear exposed itself and at that

very second Mala's shot rang out. Yes, that hurt the bear more than the sharp teeth of all the dogs. It did not pay any attention to them any more, apparently forgetting everything around it. Flinging back its head, it let loose a terrible growl and then sank to the ground like an empty skin. The bear was dead.

Mala stood still. The two men with the sledge had discovered him just as he brought the bear down with a single shot. They would instantly fear him! That which had happened surpassed all Mala's expectations. Here was something to instill respect in the newcomers.

Mala decided to go over to the strangers. "Put your weapons down as I do," he told Orsokidok. Their mittens, too, they put aside. Then they went over to the others, their arms raised high. "Move away from your sledge," Mala shouted to the two strangers. "Leave your sledge. Don't you hear me? Stand on the ice over there."

Finally they understood Mala. Apparently they had not caught the meaning of his words immediately, but now they put their weapons down, took off their mittens, stretched their hands high and walked away from the sledges. Then they all stood quietly for some time and nobody said a word.

"I am just an ordinary man," Mala declared.

"We, too, are just ordinary men."

"I have no evil intentions. I am peaceful," Mala continued.

"We do not want to fight either; we are just strangers who happened to come to this country."

They approached a little, then stood still again, and gazed at each other. Then one of the strangers advanced and, putting his hands on Mala's shoulders, rubbed noses with him. Immediately the other stranger followed suit and Orsokidok, too, was greeted in the same fashion. Then the strangers whispered to each other so that Mala and Orsokidok scarcely understood what they said.

"Did you kill the bear?" the tall one asked. "We ran across it this morning on the other side of the island, and have chased it ever since."

"Yes, it so happened that one killed a bear," Mala said.

"But let's pull our dogs off the prey so that they do not tear the hide."

"We are afraid to go over to the bear. How was it killed? We did not see you throw anything and the distance was very great," the tall one remarked. "Are you one of those who kill their prey by just pointing at it?"

Mala knew what they meant. It was good that Airuna had come to them. By talking with her, he now understood the stranger's question; otherwise he would never have known what was in his mind. "One shot with this rifle," Mala explained. "Bears can be killed in many ways."

He stepped over to the bear, which was surrounded by the dogs; they were lapping up the blood that gushed from the wound. Soon the dogs were tied to their sledge and everything was ready for disemboweling the prey.

"It seems it would be best to take off the skin," said Mala and took out his knife. The two strangers had already brought out theirs—small tools, made of pitiful pieces of bones with flint points. They too started to cut, but it was obvious that it would not be possible for them to strip the bear of its skin before dark. Mala watched them for a while. Then he took his knife and made one long cut from the lower jaw of the bear along the belly down to the tail. Next, he slit the skin along the legs, while the two strangers watched in dumb admiration.

"Look! Look at the white man," one whispered to the other. "So what one has heard is really true that they can kill from a great distance and cut things up much faster than one could chew them with one's teeth?"

When they had said that Orsokidok, too, pulled out his knife. He had taken his small meat knife along as Mala had ordered, expecting the trip to be dangerous.

"Yes, let us skin the bear right now," Mala remarked to Orsokidok, and they quickly cut the hide off the carcass and began to divide it. Mala broke open the belly, took out the entrails and throwing them to the strangers' dogs, he said: "Dogs should be fed with warm meat."

The dogs fought over the delicious food. Mala's own dogs received only a few morsels. Soon the meat was divided and

the cut-up pieces were lying all over the ice. Mala had also used his axe and severed the ribs from the backbone. Again the two strangers looked on in speechless surprise. Certainly their fears were well grounded! Undoubtedly this man they had met here was a supernatural being with his helper; perhaps a mountain spirit who could kill without weapons.

"Here is your meat!" Mala said, dragging one hind quarter over to them. He grandly presented them with more than their share while he and Orsokidok retained only a little meat, despite the fact that it was he who had killed the bear.

"If you want some of the skin, just say so."

"We do not understand you," said the tall one.

Only after it had been explained to them a number of times, that the bear's skin was theirs for the asking, did they tell Mala that there was a lack of hides in their camp, and so Mala cut the skin into halves—an easy task for his knife. The two strangers looked on with fear written all over their faces.

What queer creatures! Their furs were too short in front and so long in back that they almost reached to the snow; their boots were badly sewn with long stitches. When they turned their backs, Mala seized the opportunity to study them but each time they looked at him, Mala suppressed his curiosity, unwilling that they should be aware of it. The two strangers now fetched their sledge and Mala saw that it was made of wood. Even the cross bars were wooden, but altogether it was a very clumsy sledge, made with bad tools and strapped in a ridiculous fashion. The strangers had only a few belongings, just a couple of reindeer skins on which they sat and some weapons, but their harpoons and even their spears had wooden shafts. They were people who surely had plenty of wood.

Mala put the meat on his skin sledge and hitched up his dogs. During the entire encounter, Mala and Orsokidok noticed that the others were afraid of a surprise attack and were continually on guard. Therefore Mala and Orsokidok made it a point not to show any fear and kept their backs turned to the others.

"One is on a trip down south to look after one's wretched women," Mala announced.

"Are you living there?" the others asked.

"It seems probable that my camp is in the direction in which we are traveling," Mala stated. He did not tell them any more.

"We should like to see your faces again," ventured the tall stranger. Mala had heard the other call him Papik.

"We welcome your company," Mala said. "Why do you not visit us with your sledge?"

After this, they drove off with their meat. Mala walked beside Orsokidok, alongside the sledge, and they did not turn around to look after the strangers. Mala applied the whip to speed up his dogs. It was far to their igloo and the four dogs, tired from dragging the skin sledge, trotted slower and slower all the time because Mala altogether forgot to urge them forward. His thoughts dwelt on the remarkable encounter with the two strangers. When they were almost home, they saw that the strangers had followed them.

"Aa-h-aa-h!" Mala stopped his dogs and turned around to see whether the strangers' presence spelled danger. The men wore broad grins on their faces and said smilingly that Mala's behavior had made them so curious that they would like to find out more about him before they returned home.

"Then we shall be able to tell our people that we have met white men—your ship is probably somewhere along the coast—and when we get back to our houses we can report that we have spoken to the white men who travel in great wooden shells."

Mala viewed them in silence, but it was then that Orsokidok started to speak, although he was young and had not much experience. "This man is the great Mala who is feared by all people."

"I am just a common, ordinary man," Mala said, "and this youth here is named Orsokidok. He is merely an assistant who accompanies me on my trips."

The strangers were not embarrassed at all and immediately told their names. Papik himself stated that he was rather a good seal hunter. The other man's name was Nulok and he told them, in his absurd manner of speech, that he had shot many reindeer and killed musk-ox all through the winter.

"Oh, it seems that one has met brave men and here I am, only a poor hunter with my helper," Mala deplored. It struck him that these two liked to brag about their prowess.

"This is my house. Let's boil meat and eat together." The strangers understood this immediately and gladly agreed. They went over to the house and before they could enter Mala flung out eight seals which had been kept inside so that the ravens and foxes should not feed on them.

"Oh, look, look! Isn't that surprising!" Papik exclaimed, when one seal after the other was flung out of the igloo. "It appears that many seals were killed here!"

"Did you two kill all these by yourselves?" Nulok asked.

Mala did not answer. It was apparent that he need not fear these people even if they should try to quarrel with him. But Orsokidok felt like boasting a bit, as young men will, and he replied: "Of course! But yesterday we were lazy and had bad luck. Therefore we were satisfied to catch what we simply could not help catching."

"Oh, what people! What great men!" Papik marveled. The strangers entered the house and became greatly interested in everything they saw. Mala meanwhile made a fire and lit the lamp and over it he hung a tin kettle while the strangers praised everything.

"Oh, how thin is your pot! It must be possible to boil things very quickly!"

"I never saw such precious things before," Papik said and examined the pot, poking his finger into the water to feel whether it was getting warm.

When this pastime became too hot for his fingers, he sat down and waited until Mala announced that the meat was boiled. Mala placed it on a board, pulled out his knife and cut off a chunk as was his custom. Then, he handed the meat on to Papik who had no knife and had to tear his meat off like a dog. Nulok, too, had to resort to his teeth. That did not look very nice and so Mala said to Orsokidok when the chunk came to him: "Be sure to use your knife."

Orsokidok did as he was told and handed the meat back to Mala. The chunk went around a couple of times. They all

ate as long as there was food. Then Mala stuck the guts of the bear, white with delicious fat, into the pot. It was soon boiled and they ate another big meal so that they had to belch often and sit very quietly for a long time without thinking. The eyes of the strangers kept roving about and, time and again, they whispered to each other. They touched everything Mala had and looked at all his things. They took his knife and inspected it. That was too much for Mala. He reached for the knife and said sternly: "This is my property and one wishes to keep what one possesses."

The others only laughed. They were people without shame, but they understood very well now that Mala was not one with whom to trifle. Some time later, Papik said they would drive off a little distance and sleep by themselves. So they all went outside and it was then that they noticed that the strangers' dogs had eaten holes into two seals, chewing up both carcasses. Not even that could embarrass Papik. He simply laughed and said that it had surely been an easy catch for the dogs. It was only rarely that they obtained as much food as they wanted.

Mala grew angry and told them: "No doubt you would be glad to have some more meat! The seals over there are yours, if you want them. Orsokidok and I are leaving here and if you wish, you can stay in a house that was built by a stranger and feed your dogs on the seals caught by a stranger until they are all eaten up. As long as they last, you will not have to go out to catch others."

But the strangers took Mala's comments laughingly and said they would like to see Mala's wives and find out how he lived. "You must have wives of your own, I'm sure, and treat them much the same as we men treat ours."

Mala did not answer this, because by now he was convinced that these two were very simple-minded creatures. He just said: "If you are curious, follow us."

He had meanwhile found out that the strangers' camp consisted only of their two families including their children. Their real home was many, many days away. It was located at such a great distance that they had spent one winter in one place, and the next year in some other, while on the trail.

"We shall visit you," was the last that Orsokidok and Mala heard before driving away from these two, who were so sorely lacking in modesty.

When Mala returned, his women were standing in front of the house where they could look up and down the coast. They came running along the ice to ask for news. "Did you meet any new people? How did you talk to them? Did they look fearsome? Oh, let's hear about the mighty men you must have encountered!"

"It is not impossible," Mala said, "that we met people. But why do you not look after that puppy? He will run into the house."

Here were two hunters who, dragging a few seals behind them, returned from a bear hunt. They would not answer the women before they felt like it. The women followed them, plying them with questions and Airuna and Puala ran alongside as eager for news as the others.

"I see you killed a bear as usual," Aba said to loosen the men's tongues. "It must have been a great beast. It may be that now we shall have a curtain for the tent which will not blow away."

"The bear was divided into four parts," Mala said. It would be concluded from this remark that they had met two strangers, and so it was just as well to tell them about Papik and Nulok.

"They were people who spoke a strange language, and we expect them to visit us. Their clothes were cut in a strange way, and although their dogs were big they were not very quick when they struggled with the bear. But they had a long sledge made of wood. They were two hunters who had left their families behind."

Now Airuna spoke up. It was Papik from whom she had run away. She had been a foster-daughter in his house, bought by his old mother down south, and although the mother was along she had been unable to protect the child against her son. They had neither knives nor iron tools and never took along pots on their hunting trips.

During the following days, Mala would not go any farther

from the place than the headlands; he kept to the north side or stayed near the sea so that the strangers could not surprise them. Before long he saw, in the far distance, a tremendous burden dragged along the coast. Many people seemed to be alongside and their progress appeared laborious. They did not reach the camp that day, but Mala and Orsokidok bagged much prey so that on the next day, when the strangers arrived, twenty seals lay in a row in front of Mala's house. It certainly would do no harm if the strangers saw at once that here was a man who always had sufficient meat!

"Oh, here we are! It was a long trail but we came just the same as our women are eager to see your faces."

"What joy!" Mala shouted down from the meat rack which he had built from mighty blocks of snow, but he kept on busying himself with the meat. The women and Upik stood in front of the house, but the little Airuna and Puala had hidden inside, for the girl had told them that Papik's mother would demand her back and then their hours of idle play would be over.

Mala did not invite the strangers to step into the house. Aba and Inupaujak remained outside, but after they had scrutinized the newcomers thoroughly they went inside to find out their names from Airuna and to talk about what they had seen. There were three men, two women, an old woman, and the children. They were a noisy, queer crowd and made a poor impression, displaying bad manners when they arrived at the new place.

"Where is the best place to build a house?" Nulok asked. Mala pointed out a spot some distance away from his own house, but near enough so that they could shout to each other. He watched them as they used snow knives made from reindeer antlers. They built two houses from small blocks, much smaller blocks than Mala himself ever used.

The two men, who shared one of the women between them, assisted each other in building the house, while the women worked outside with snow shovels. These were made from reindeer antlers covered with the skin of seals. Then the walls were smoothed off and filled in with loose snow. By the time they

had finally finished, Mala had already gone into his house and given orders to do the strangers honor by preparing a meal for them.

"Boiled meat! Boiled meat! Come and eat my boiled meat! Everybody shall come and eat!" he shouted, entering his house with Orsokidok and sitting down on the bench.

The strangers came immediately and Mala was greatly surprised because not only the men came running but also the women, who apparently thought they were invited, too, since Mala had issued a general invitation. Soon they were all talking and laughing and they were even speaking to Mala's wives without first being spoken to. But Mala explained to Aba and Inupaujak that the customs of strange people were frequently unusual and that no insult was meant, and therefore they should not be angry that the newcomers had brought their women along.

The meat in Aba's pot was boiled first, and she put the bear ham on the boards, handing it to Mala who took the first bite and was about to hand it to Papik. But Papik had turned, meanwhile, in such a way that it would have been contrary to the rotation of the sun if he were to receive the meat first. What queer people, who were not even afraid to insult the stars and sun! Surely they must be very ignorant! Mala handed the meat around in his usual manner so that Papik was the last to receive it. But he did not say a word. He just laughed and awaited his turn.

When Nulok had torn off his portion, as he had done when they had met him the first time after the bear hunt, and was ready to hand it to Asarpana, whose wife he shared, Mala handed him his big knife and let it go around so that each one could cut the meat neatly, close to his mouth.

The strange children wanted to eat with them, but Mala thought that sufficient allowance had been made in permitting the women to join them, and so he decreed: "Let each one of the children have his own piece because they shall not share our joint meal and bring shame upon us."

Aba took a few small pieces out of the pot, cut them up

and divided them among the children. "Here, run out and play and eat outside," she said. And the children obeyed.

Since the strange women ate with them Mala decided that his wives, too, should partake of the meal, and that they should all eat together. So when Aba's pot was finished, Inupaujak dipped into hers and Aba put new meat into her pot for the evening, and saw to it that the lamp burned with a bigger flame.

"Oh, how good the meat tastes!" Nulok exclaimed.

"Of course, if one has such a knife to sever it with, one never gets enough," Papik observed and cut off still bigger portions for himself.

Orsokidok took out his knife and the women brought out their big knives which they also handed on so that four pieces of meat were continuously going around. They ate some blubber with it and enjoyed the food so much that they all belched heartily. They stuffed themselves more and more. Finally Aba handed a bowl of soup around. Each one took a swallow and it reminded them of liquid fat and left an agreeable taste in the mouth. This was a feast whose like had never been seen before!

Soon it proved impossible to boil the meat quickly enough and always have another pot in readiness, but that simply could not be helped. There was a pause while each of the women boiled new meat. Mala, therefore, pulled the skin of an eider duck from beneath the bench, cleaned his mouth and fingers on it, and handed it around. Then it became clear that only the members of his own household knew the custom of wiping the slime and blood off. The newcomers sat there with greasy hands and laughed about the others who liked to be clean.

"I see that Airuna lives in your house," Papik declared. "She is my foster-daughter and I would like her back."

Mala knew very well that a fight might be brewing behind these words and therefore he explained quietly: "Puala met the girl in the mountains and brought her home with him. She needed help. There is always room in my house for visitors and naturally for her too."

"That is well," Papik said, "because we thought her already dead."

More meat was put before them and the conversation was interrupted. They ate for a long, long time and after their hunger had been appeased, they continued to eat only because they liked to shove something into their mouths and because it was so pleasing to cut meat with iron knives.

In the evening, Airuna remained in Mala's house, but later Papik's boys came running over and shouted that Airuna should come with them.

"Airuna is asleep and has no boots. But tomorrow she will come over to you. This is a house where everybody has already retired. Please do not disturb us until we are awake."

He could hear the boys running off but Mala got up and put his boots on to be ready for defense, in case Papik should come to take vengeance for the insult. But nobody came. All was quiet in camp and soon everybody slept.

AKUDLET had two men to wait upon her. They both were Papik's companions and poor hunters only. They lacked pride and frequently made themselves look ridiculous, for while Akudlet squatted comfortably on the bench, Asarpana and Nulok went out to fetch ice for her to melt, trimmed the lamps, and themselves dried their own footgear or beat off the snow from their furs.

During these days, Mala went hunting only in the neighborhood of his house and the others accompanied him. It soon became plain that even Papik, who was the leader of the others, was none too clever. He could not even catch as much as Orsokidok.

"One desires to trade one's wife with you," Papik said one day to Orsokidok. "Go tonight to my house and I shall sleep under your skin with your wife as is customary among men."

"I have no wife," Orsokidok confessed. "Both women belong to Mala." He felt ashamed because he had no wife, although he had laughed with the other members of Mala's household about the two who had only one wife between them. But Papik was neither modest nor did he know shame. He went to Mala and suggested that they trade wives for one night.

"As you have two wives and Nulok and Asarpana have only one woman between them, we all can enjoy ourselves with women tonight and our new friendship will be sealed according to the customs of men."

"I am not desirous of trading wives," Mala retorted. He still resented the experiences he had had with the white men, disliking the idea of having either of his wives sleep with other men. He expected Papik to be insulted on account of his refusal. But that could not be helped now. He had to state his opinion, although he did not wish to make enemies in the new country. But Papik just laughed. Mala concluded that he did not have enough sense to get angry.

Soon the hunt was over for the day. Mala had caught five seals and Orsokidok two, but of the newcomers only Arsarpana had caught something, and the others went home with empty bags.

"Take one seal over to Papik and one to Nulok," Mala said, and Orsokidok dragged the unskinned beasts over to the other house.

"I am bringing your share in the catch," he shouted.

"Oh, thanks, and do not forget to tell your great hunting companion that we thank him," they replied.

And peace continued to reign in the camp.

"THE weather is beautiful and calm. Let's go on the hunt," Mala cried aloud next morning. But nobody showed up. He went over to the houses and called: "Hey you inside! Leave your wives. The weather is good. There will be plenty to catch on the ice."

"Why should we go on the hunt? We received so much meat yesterday that we have enough. Let's just boil meat and eat."

"Oh, these surely must be people who were greatly feared in their native land. Yes, they must have left on account of a fight," Mala thought.

Mala, Orsokidok and the dogs immediately started out across the ice. The day was fair and the seals were lying next to

the air holes, drying their fur in the warm sun. Mala and Orsokidok went different ways, ordering the dogs to remain on the ice quietly. The seals raised their heads, now and then, on the look-out for danger. But the two hunters were very cunning. They lay flat on the ice so that they themselves resembled seals. Once in a while they would raise their heads, as if looking around, and move their legs in imitation of seals when they move their flippers. After a time they crawled a little nearer their prey. Hunting in this fashion was so amusing that one never tired of it. Time and again, Mala succeeded in getting right up to an air hole before he was discovered by the seal. Then the seal tried to bite him, but Mala hit it over the head so that it was stunned and easily killed.

Orsokidok, too, was a good hunter, but he was not so adept as Mala. He had to use his harpoon and make sure of thrusting it deep into the body of the seal before the animal disappeared under the surface of the water. Then Orsokidok would stand near the air hole, watching how the seal pulled on the line. It was easy to hold the line; he just had to wait until lack of air forced the seals to the hole once more. Then, the game was his in a moment.

That day they returned with six seals. Papik and his whole crowd stood along the shore to receive them and to marvel at the catch. "Oh, we can get along on very little in this place! Just give each one of us a seal and we will have enough to eat tomorrow, as we had today."

"Here is a seal for each of you," Mala said and he himself picked out the three biggest ones. They took them and left, laughing and joking, proclaiming their own shame with the words: "Oh, we big hunters just have to go down to the shore and we get everything we need."

Mala began to skin the seals, and what they did not eat that day was placed in a stone cache. Every day he collected more and more meat. Apparently the strangers never thought that winter and hunger would soon be upon them. They simply made merry, overjoyed that their camp neighbors supplied them with meat.

"Yes, people are queer, and each one has his own ideas,"

Orsokidok said one day when they went home, after having stored meat in a stone depot.



XI

WHEN warmer weather set in and it was no longer possible to drive on frozen peat runners, Papik suggested that they go for their own sledge which had runners made of reindeer antlers. They had left it behind in the old camp. At the same time, they could fetch the kayaks and go to the great lake he had discovered. There, during the summer, they would surely bag many reindeer.

"Oh, we are tired of eating fat blubber all the time. We long for the tasty stomachs of reindeer and for tallow so that our stool will be white and smell nice."

Mala had succeeded in splitting the big piece of wood and he had also cut some smaller pieces which could very well be used for kayaks. He was therefore satisfied to accompany the others to the reindeer lake, taking along his wood so that he could build a kayak during the summer.

It grew warmer and warmer inside the igloo. The children slept outside on the sledge most of the time and only came inside to undress or when lice plagued them too much.

The day for departure had already been set, but Akudlet spoiled their plans by giving birth to a dead child. Of course she had to do penance. As long as they stayed in this camp, she must remain inside the house; when she was finally permitted to go out once more, she had to cover her head. Papik's old mother was sure that the child had been born dead because, since they had met the new people, they had neglected all the taboos. Perhaps the child was afraid of iron and did not want to be born where there was so much of it around.

The others usually ate outside. They built a fire in front of the tent and the blubber-fuel spread a savory odor, the soot forming a thick black layer under the pot. The evening

before they were to leave, they sat together and ate out of the same pot while the children ran around and played. Puala joined the men and spoke to them as if he were grown up, listening to what they had to say about the long trip. Suddenly Mala said: "One feels like giving presents." He then took out of his box three nails which were the full length of his hand and gave one apiece to his camp neighbors. Papik laughed and shouted that he was now a white man for he owned iron. He would be dangerous, in future, because now he possessed a terrible weapon. Long after Mala had gone to rest he could still hear them talking. They hammered the nails with stones, marveling over this iron that could be flattened out without breaking and that was not rigid when one tried to bend it.

"I shall tie my iron to a shaft and it shall serve me for a spear," Nulok said. But the others decided to insert theirs into pieces of reindeer antlers and use them as knives so that it would be easier to skin their prey and cut up the meat.

Upik had remained outside and watched them. Later he came to report to his father that Papik had said that what Mala had given them was only a small part of his great riches. If they could only obtain all of Mala's possessions, life would be so much easier for them. Mala also had fine wives—two of them—but he was a strong man and therefore to be feared.

"Just let them say what they please," Mala answered. "As long as they are afraid, I do not care what they think."

THE next day they left to fetch the kayaks. They hitched the dogs to the sledge, but progress was not fast because only Mala's dogs were used to pulling a sledge at a running gait. Now and then, they would stop to kill seals. It was always Mala and Orsokidok who hunted the sleeping animals. The others simply waited and came running to meet them after the seals had been killed. But nevertheless they proved amusing traveling companions.

When they discovered that the kayaks had been eaten up by the foxes, Papik and his crowd simply laughed as though it were a great joke. Then they drove over to the big lake in the

valley where they had spent the last summer. Here was a ford over which the reindeer passed on their annual trip to the north—just the spot to kill lots of them. Mala immediately saw that this was a good place to live. It was not far from the lake to the sea, and he made up his mind to move over here with his wives. Here he would spend the summer and, in the winter, he would live near the coast. It was still a little cold in the evening and Mala built a house to protect them all against the snow-storm which threatened.

"Just let the snow blow about our ears. We have enough meat on our sledge. Let's pass the time by eating." It sounded as if the others were the hosts, inviting Mala and Orsokidok to share their meals. Mala, who had brought a lamp along, made a fire and boiled meat. While they were waiting for it, Papik made inquiries about Mala's country and his experiences there.

"As you are all alone and without companions, perhaps you left your people for the same reason we left ours—because you feared them!"

"No, it is because I wanted to see new countries that I went on the trail," Mala said.

Orsokidok did not utter a word because it was Mala who decided what should be said.

"But what fear drove you away?" Mala asked the others.

"Oh, we came from a place called Netsilik, where many people are living and big men, too. But we hadn't many relatives and were afraid for our safety, living among so many others."

"There is another place called Akudniak and one can experience remarkable things there," Papik said.

There was a pause in the conversation because the meat was cooked and they all ate. The storm was getting worse, but it was comfortable to sit peacefully inside, and when the meal was ended and everybody had belched heartily, Nulok said: "In Akudniak lived the great Papik whom you see here."

Papik immediately started to speak: "Yes, it is right what Nulok says and perhaps he will tell you something about my deeds so that you can hear for yourselves whether I am a man of your class."

Nulok liked the rôle of storyteller only too well and he began at once: "Papik's mother lived in Akudniak and her two sons lived with her. The older of them was a very strong man but other people feared and despised him because he was an evil fellow and because he forced his mother to sleep with him which made her very angry. One day, Papik said to her: 'I think I could easily do away with my brother.' But, Papik, is it not true that your mother replied that it would not be right for you to kill your brother?"

"Yes," Papik answered. "What you say is true. Thus spoke my mother, but my father wanted my bad brother killed."

Nulok was afraid that Papik might go on telling the whole story himself and so he quickly continued: "One day, Papik and his cousins were together on the trail, when the cousin said: 'Let's see who is the stronger of us!' And he sprang at Papik and tried to hold on to his leg and throw him down, but Papik jumped back."

"That is so," Papik interrupted Nulok again. "We stood for some time, face to face, but then I ran at my cousin, getting hold of his leg. I threw him down twice, proving that I was the stronger of the two. But now let Nulok tell what happened next."

Nulok gladly took up the story once more: "Papik's brother was a strange, irritable man but he was a good hunter and he usually came home with many seals. Once in a while he would catch an old bull seal near an air hole and would say to it: 'Why are you coming to me? I do not wish to look upon your face. It reminds me too much of my own when I am angry!' Then he would pull the harpoon hook out of the old seal and throw it back into the water."

"One day, Papik and his cousin were on the trail when they saw Papik's wicked brother approach. When he was close to them, they grabbed him by the leg and threw him down. Then Papik took a knife and cut his brother open so that all his guts fell out and he died. After that, they covered his body with stones."

"Yes, and then people began to fear me," Papik broke in,

"and one day someone shouted to me: 'Your brother is calling from his grave.'

"Then I became a little frightened and I said: 'I shall go and see.' This I did and when I came to the cairn I took some of the stones away and put my arm into the grave to feel if my brother was still alive. But he was rigid and cold.

"Next spring we had visitors and they wanted to play ball with us. One of them stood opposite me and I noticed that he looked at me with fear. I said: 'What are you staring at me for?' He did not answer and I asked once more and when again he did not reply, I became very angry. I walked over, seized his leg and shouted: 'I have caught a stranger!' I wanted to smash his shoulder with a great stone, but my cousin rushed up and said: 'Your brother was a bad man, but it is not right for you to kill other people,' and therefore I let the man go.

"But the following summer we were on a reindeer hunt with a great many others, and one day we surrounded a big buck. We all shot our arrows at it until the animal dropped dead. I immediately said at once to my cousin: 'I hit him first,' but my cousin thought he had been ahead of me. I repeated to him that it was my arrow that had killed the buck. After we had argued for some time, another man spoke up, insisting that he had killed the reindeer. This aroused my wrath. I took the reindeer by the hind legs and flung it against a stone and nobody said anything any more. But I could read enmity in their eyes and I realized that I had made a mistake when I killed my brother, because I had no other relative except Asarpana, who is sitting among us."

"Now you have heard what terrible people we are," Nulok boasted, "and perhaps you are a little afraid to live in the same camp with us."

"Yes," Papik said, "you certainly would not have resisted my wish when I asked you to trade women if you had known that we are so dangerous."

Mala did not answer but he became very thoughtful. He had heard many times before that the Netsiliks were great braggarts and he knew only too well that they had taken him along here to frighten him, planning to rob him of his belong-

ings later. "Let's try to sleep," he said only. "Perhaps the weather will be better when we wake up."

They lay awake for a long time, listening to the snow-storm. Orsokidok began to tell about Mala; that he had been with the white men on their wooden ships, and had been the leader of one of the boats that killed big whales; all had to take orders from him and whenever he wanted something, he simply pointed at it.

But Mala became angry and told Orsokidok to hold his tongue. "Let others tell about their deeds. If they do not know what we have done, we probably did nothing worth knowing."

ON the way back they stopped time and again, and Mala and Orsokidok killed many seals. When they passed the two little islands, they went ashore to find out whether there were any eider ducks. They wanted to take along the eggs for the women, but they did not find any.

When they returned they learned that Puala had brought home meat. He had killed four seals of which the women had eaten the livers, but the animals themselves were still lying there unskinned, to be shown to the travelers upon their return.

Mala was glad that he was at home once more. On the trip, he had tired of the many words of the Netsiliks who spoke so queerly and bragged so much. Besides, there was more order in his own house than in the others and he felt highly gratified that his two wives were in the habit of washing their faces, only leaving the dirt on their bodies where nobody could see it. This washing habit had been acquired during the time they had spent on the ships and they had kept it up ever after.

"Let's eat together," Papik shouted, "because we went on the trail together and luck favored us."

Mala felt like laughing when he remembered that the three had not bagged even one animal, but all he said was: "I thank you for your invitation. It will be amusing to eat from the bag of strangers."

But he instructed Orsokidok not to lend their knife to the

Netsiliks any more. "Let them eat according to their custom. Why should we insult their laws?"

It was Papik's old mother who boiled the meat that day and she brought it first to her son, as though he were the giver of meat. He laughed and spoke loudly and, holding the meat in one hand, he stretched out the other towards Mala to receive his knife as usual. But Mala turned his head and Papik had to bite off a piece and then hand the chunk on to Asarpana. After him came Nulok. When it finally reached Mala, he trimmed off with his knife the piece the others had torn with their teeth, then handed the rest to Orsokidok.

"Oh, we have knives too," Nulok said and went to fetch the tool he had fashioned from the nail. During the remainder of the meal, he used it to cut off the meat.

A few days later, Orsokidok took a loose nail out of the bottom of Mala's box. The nail was a little bent but he straightened it out and went to Papik. Handing him the nail, he said: "One has made up one's mind to take a trip far back into the country. Let me have your sledge. I also would like to take a woman along and wish your wife to accompany me."

Papik looked at the nail, took it, and said: "Well, it seems that you like our wives. And yet we men are not good enough for your womenfolk." And with that he went into his house.

Orsokidok put the sledge in shape and told Mala that he was going to see whether the reindeer were already on their way north.

"Yes, let's go and follow the reindeer," Puala said to his foster-brother, "I long to go hunting reindeer and gaze at the sea that disappears behind the mountains."

"It is not impossible," Orsokidok said quietly, "that one has found another companion."

The boy did not say another word, but Inupaujak understood what was on Orsokidok's mind and knew that it would furnish gossip later.

Orsokidok took many skins along when he left and he let

Papik's wife sit on the sledge, although the trail led uphill. Mala was still working over his wood. The one sledge was almost finished and he was fashioning a number of big tent poles now; his wives dried many seal skins so that they could have a big summer house, much better than last year.

When Orsokidok returned after a few days, he had not caught anything. "Perhaps you were too busy," Papik grinned. Orsokidok was angry because everybody laughed about Papik's remark but he did not answer.

At last they could move north, towards the big lake, to set up their tent there.

"It is a little dangerous to leave so much meat behind," Mala said. "There are far too many prowlers in this neighborhood."

"You are right," Aba agreed. "Akudlet tried to keep one of my sewing needles which she borrowed from me. She told me that she had lost it between her skins but I got my needle back because Puala surprised her while she was sewing boots with it for her man."

"Perhaps she belongs to those people," Mala remarked, "who are not afraid to take possession of things without paying for them or asking permission."

"Oh," said Inupaujak, "they are only that way because they have never seen a ship, or been in touch with people who traded with white men."

Mala did not answer. But he reflected that the customs of the white men made for better order, even though their way of thinking was often very hateful.

At the appearance of the first reindeer Mala decided to discontinue eating the meat of seals, but first the women must clean the pots. He saw them talking to each other in front of the tent.

"Hey, you women, who have no sense and are so insolent. Go down to the sea and wash your pots clean. Do not insult fresh water by cleaning the pots of sea animals in the lake."

"You are stupid," Inupaujak answered back. "Why should

we always be forced into doing something of whose reason we are not sure at all? When I lived with the cook on the ship we always washed reindeer meat in salt water and even salmon, caught in fresh water, were rinsed in water from the sea."

"Take your pots and go and clean them in salt water. Do not come back before they are clean," Mala ordered and continued to work on the frame for the kayak. His craft was to be bigger and better than those of the others; here, too, he would show his superiority. The women went down to the sea and cleaned their cooking vessels, scraping them with sand.

Yes, spring had come at last and ducks flapped down into the open water near the shore. All day long, geese and other fowl traveled northward, crossing over their heads and gabbling noisily all the while. Suddenly the woman espied a man coming towards them at great speed. It was Papik, who had been on the trail and, returning, had discovered that the two women were all alone. The knowledge aroused his passion and the women started to run away.

"Which one is it to be? Which one?" Papik shouted, and rushed after them. Aba had taken all the pots except one which Inupaujak carried in her hand. It was easy to see that Inupaujak was the one whom Papik pursued. He soon caught up with her.

"Let me alone. Speak to my husband if you want me," Inupaujak protested. But she giggled and it was plain to see that she was not really angry.

"Let your husband defend you if he can! Just see how small you are. I can carry you on my shoulders. Let stout Aba run off; it is you I want. I'll take you to a spot where I have my dogs all ready. Yes, you shall go along with me. Do not kick and do not tear my hair. You only have the strength of a reindeer calf! Aba will tell your terrible husband how you screamed when I carried you off."

Soon Inupaujak stopped resisting her captor. After all, very few women were carried by men in this fashion. It was wonderful to be so high in the air above his shoulders. And so, with no trouble at all, the gloating Papik carried Inupaujak to

the little camp where he kept his skins. They smelled strongly of his Netsilik dirt.

THE sun made several turns before Inupaujak came home again. The others were asleep when she arrived. She shoved the tent flap aside and entered with hanging head. Mala raised himself on his elbow and looked at her. "Ah! A woman comes here! A woman who is the wife of some other man. Perhaps she just wants to rest here before she continues her travels."

Now Inupaujak started to cry. "It is best to sleep at this time," Mala said, rolling over on his side and turning his back to her.

Inupaujak undressed and crawled under the cover. Why was Mala not angry and why had he spoken so calmly to her? He should have beaten her and shown her, in that way, how he had missed her. Now he even pretended to be asleep.

"How can a weak woman, without a protector, resist a man who attacks her?" she finally asked after a long ominous silence. But nobody answered. "If he had not taken me along, he would have taken Aba. How is a wretched woman to resist the strength of a man?"

It was then that Aba spoke up: "You could have come home earlier. In all that time, you surely could have run away from him. But most probably you enjoyed being with a man who is dirty and lives on the meat that others bag for him."

"Be still, you old bitch! You surely do not have to fear the desires of other men. It isn't everywhere that the old and fat are preferred. Down at the ships, I suppose, there were many sailors who were eager to give you things for your stout body?"

"It seems that one must leave here," said Mala. "Apparently one has come to rest where the birds are nesting and where there is such noise that one cannot hear a word. Or maybe these are women jabbering, in order to drive sleep from the tent." Immediately the two women fell silent, and in the morning when they awoke, Mala was already outside.

Papik arrived home with a pot—a tin can—which origi-

nally came from the ships and which had once been filled with meat. Otherwise nothing of any importance happened in camp for some time, aside from the fact that Mala covered his kayak with sealskins. A great many skins had to be stretched upon the frame and Aba said to Inupaujak: "I shall sew them while you hold them tight."

"You sew at the other end," Inupaujak said, "and Orsokidok can pull the skins tight for me. You are so clever, Aba, that you need only a stick to draw the skins tight."

She and Orsokidok were working on the stem of the kayak but they were none too industrious. Orsokidok measured her hand against his, pointing out that her fingers were much smaller. He gave her two rings which he had fashioned from a piece of wire, hammered flat and then bent together.

"What luck that Akudlet, after bearing a dead child, is now well once more and need not do penance any longer. There is a wonderful woman for you to stay with when her two brave men are out on the hunt." But Orsokidok was a man now and the loose tongue of a woman could not bother him. He did not answer and just then Mala stepped over to them and watched their work. The skins were so light and clear that one could see the frame through them.

"There are young reindeer in the mountains," Nulok reported. "It will be best to leave soon in order to catch them on their way north. They will wade the fjord in the big lake near by."

Mala decided to take his rifle so that he would be sure to bring meat home. The young bucks, preceding the big herd, were always extremely wary and it was very hard to get close enough to use a bow and arrow.

Orsokidok and Puala followed Mala into the mountains. They went far and eventually killed a few animals. The women needed thread, so they took along the sinews from the backs of the beasts but left the whole carcasses behind with the exception of the tongues. When they finally returned to the camp a wandering herd of reindeer had meanwhile reached the lake, now free of ice, and had started to swim across.

From the camp, Mala could see that the three Netsiliks

were out in the water in their kayaks, thrusting their spears at the reindeer, and he rushed home. He, too, wanted to have his share in the catch. He therefore went for his kayak which was lying only a little way from the tent.

Inupaujak called to him. "Oh, Mala! Are you there? Why didn't you stay home? Now you will surely whip me and be full of fury because the men came and stayed with me. But Aba will tell you that the three forced themselves upon me, even though their own wives and Papik's old mother tried to protect me. But I was not able to run away as there were too many of them. You will be terribly angry and there is reason for it, but is it my fault that men pursue me against my will?" She sobbed as she spoke.

A wild anger arose in Mala. There Inupaujak stood and told him of her shame. Up to now, he had not taken vengeance on Papik for his insult. Had he not stated very clearly to the Netsilik that he did not desire to trade women? Now he hit Inupaujak in the face so that she fell to the ground and cried aloud.

"Let me have my knife," Mala shouted to Orsokidok. "Here, take my bow and arrow."

Without another word, Mala took his kayak, carried it down to the water, and paddled away. It was as if a bird were gliding across the lake, so fast did his paddle move up and down, causing the foam to rise in front of his little craft.

The Netsiliks were too engrossed in the chase to see him coming. He pushed his kayak between the two others which were lying together so that they were thrust aside in opposite directions. But his speed was so great that he could not stop and sailed past them. At that moment, a young reindeer buck made for him; a fully grown animal for which the others had lain in wait. They had intended to kill it by rushing at it from both sides and then spearing it.

Mala raced on, making directly for the reindeer buck, then he pulled in his paddle and fastened it under the cross strap. Next, with both hands, he got hold of the antlers of the reindeer buck, forcing its head under water so that the animal could not breathe any longer.

"Just look at Mala! Drowning a reindeer buck with his bare hands!" Papik was aghast at such a display of strength and dexterity.

"He is going to upset the kayak and then he'll drown himself before we reach him."

But Mala did not drown. The reindeer kicked and struggled so that the kayak was tossed about wildly, but Mala maintained his balance by supporting himself on the antlers of the animal, at the same time keeping its head well under water. It was a battle in which the strength of his arms almost gave out, for the reindeer wanted to live and this desire lent it the power which every living thing possesses at such a time. At last it stopped struggling, and Mala felt the neck go limp. Soon it was dead and its body floated up to the surface. Now Mala let go of the antlers, reached for his trouser strap, and pulling it through the nostrils of the buck, he calmly paddled home, followed by the others.

"What did you do? How can a reindeer be caught with the bare hands?"

"Oh, I simply forgot my harpoon," Mala replied. "And this is only an inland lake where one need not be afraid to go out without weapons."

He could plainly see how awed the others were by now; they kept at a respectful distance while Mala paddled to the shore with his reindeer. His women had meanwhile fled into the tent, expecting Mala's fury to result in terrible things.

"Come out here," Mala called, "and give me a hand with this reindeer which died without a wound."

The women came outside and helped him drag the reindeer ashore. "It will be best to divide it with the other tents," Mala said. "As they are our friends, they shall have their share of the catch, and let it be Inupaujak who brings them their meat."

THERE WAS growing hatred in the hearts of the Netsiliks on account of the new defeats they had suffered. Mala's prowess

aroused their wrath constantly. One day, when a big reindeer swam across the lake and they pursued it in their kayaks but could not catch up with it, Mala came rushing out with his rifle, killing the animal from a great distance. This was too much for the Netsilik; such things simply could not go on any longer. By now they were convinced that Mala was a spirit controller and as such not a desirable camp companion.

Papik, therefore, took the women along into the mountains and confided his plans to them: "I have decided that there are too many living in our camp."

"Yes, and I want some sewing needles which will not leave big holes in your boots," his wife assented happily.

"Just remember how they killed people, one after another, at Ivigsak," Papik remarked.

Then his wife became frightened and objected: "Oh, this one who is talked about here is surely a big man and a weak woman could never hold him down."

"Women who believe themselves weak and without a strong will never have any power," Papik answered.

But his mother talked very insistently to Akudlet: "With the help of a woman, a murder would be possible in camp, and after that we could have all the needles we want. And those gleaming things, too, in which one can see one's self and which one can hang up over the side bench."

"Oh, if I only had scissors to shear the hairs off the thick reindeer skins so as to make stockings," sighed Akudlet. "After all, it is not impossible that this may really come to pass."

Not another word was said, but Inupaujak was surprised to notice that during the next days Akudlet came to borrow her scissors very often.

The reindeer hunt proved excellent that year. The skins were just right for undergarments, and soon Mala had much meat stored away under heavy cairns in the mountains. He was always out on the hunt and daily bagged game with bow and arrow. He had used up all his cartridges by now, but there was no need to tell this to anybody. Most of the time Puala went with him and the boy, too, made good catches. Orsokidok, on

the other hand, preferred some other companion on the hunt and frequently he chose one of the wives of the Netsilik. She would carry the reindeer meat for him and dry his skins. He always caught something wherever he went. This summer he had become a mature man and a very able hunter. But whenever he wanted one of the women to stay with him, he had to pay amply for it with things belonging to Mala. Mala would not trade wives with the Netsiliks. His women were his and only his. He remembered being told that in their own country the white men never traded women, and he had made this custom his own now, without realizing that he was imitating his hated enemies.

One day as Orsokidok slept with his borrowed woman outside the camp, he was suddenly awakened by gales of loud laughter. He beheld Papik and two other men feasting upon the meat which Orsokidok had spread out to dry. He joined in their laughter while Akudlet busied herself rekindling the fire of the night before. Orsokidok fetched water in his pot, which he always carried along, and they all enjoyed a splendid meal. While they were still eating, a few reindeer came along. They turned away, but they had come close enough to show that they were fat animals with thick layers of tallow on their backs. Orsokidok jumped up in pursuit. His first arrow missed its aim and the reindeer fled. But Orsokidok was young and his night's adventure lent speed to his feet now. And so he rushed after the reindeer, thinking of the great Kunuk who, according to the sagas, could overtake reindeer on the run.

The sun stood on the opposite side of the sky by the time he finally brought down his prey and then he discovered that he had forgotten his knife at the place where he had spent the night. Laboriously he ripped the reindeer's hide with a sharp stone which he found near by; he took the tongue and the thick layer of tallow from the back and returned whence he had come, thinking he would find the woman and two men. But they had gone and had taken along his pot and his knife, leaving only the skins. He picked up the bundle and walked towards camp slowly; for he was very tired.

"One comes for one's property," he said to Akudlet as he stepped into her tent.

"What property are you talking about?" It was Asarpana who spoke now.

"I speak of my pot and my knife which you carried home for me. Now, one wants them back."

"Here is your pot," Akudlet said. "But your knife we left lying on top of the skins. We only took the pot along because we had some boiled meat."

Orsokidok went over to Mala's tent.

"One is returning without a knife," he stated as he entered.

"Without a knife? Did you lose it?" Mala asked.

Then Orsokidok reported what happened and, next day, they both started out to look for the knife. Although they searched carefully, they could not find it.

"My knife is gone," Orsokidok complained, after they returned and were sitting around the fire with the Netsiliks waiting for the meat to boil.

"Perhaps you lost it while you were rushing after the reindeer," Papik suggested.

"I am not so sure we ever saw it after you left," Nulok added. It was obvious that they did not want to give it back.

Mala returned to his own tent. Shortly afterwards, one of Papik's little boys said to Upik: "My father, too, has a knife with which to cut meat."

"One knows it," Mala answered when Upik told him. "But he shall not keep it any longer than one will let him."

A few days later, Mala passed the tent of the others. He had shouted to them that reindeer were in the neighborhood but nobody had answered. Akudlet was the first to come outside.

"Oh, didn't you see the men leave? They went down to the river and took the two other women along."

Mala stood and thought for a moment. "Strange that they did not ask one to go with them," he finally remarked.

"I am alone in the house, in case you would like to stay

with me. There is nobody else in the tent and I shall send the children down to the lake to play," Akudlet invited him.

"One is going hunting," Mala declined. He did not care to tarry here, talking with this woman.

"Mala," she cried when he turned away. "Mala, listen to what I have to tell you."

Mala turned around.

"Mala, come inside with me! Let's be man and woman together—all alone in a tent." She threw her arms around him in such a way that she held his elbows tight—pressing her face against his.

Mala tried to shake her off. "You crazy Netsilik woman," he shouted. "Do you think that I want to smell your dirt? First learn to keep yourself clean. And see to it that your bench is free from bones and the dirt of children before you invite a man to sleep with you. . . ."

His words suddenly ceased. He felt a stab in his side, and then paralyzing pain. He staggered and finally fell to the floor.

"We've got him now! Let's overpower him while he is down. Now your knife was returned to you, but you will not be able to use it," Papik shouted in triumph.

Mala stretched out his hand, caught Papik by the knee and threw him down on his back, at the same time kicking Akudlet so powerfully that she crashed against the bench and fell in a heap. But now the others threw themselves on Mala, and Nulok stuck a nail into his arm so viciously that when he pulled it out, Mala's flesh clung to it.

"So you want to kill me," Mala bellowed, "because I gave you as much meat as you could eat and because I made you presents of iron and always helped you. For all this, you intend to kill me?"

"Yes, you shall die and no longer plague us. We are tired of your overbearing behavior. This is our land. You are a stranger and do not belong here."

"Mala! Mala!" Orsokidok shouted from the distance. "I am coming with your rifle to slay your enemies!"

At that the Netsiliks jumped up, and stood still, like rein-

deer taken by surprise. So Orsokidok had heard them and even now was rushing to Mala's assistance.

"Shall I kill them all at once, or begin with someone in particular?" Orsokidok cried when he appeared with the rifle.

Everybody in camp had come out of the tents.

"Why do you hesitate, Orsokidok? Just shoot every one of those bad men," Inupaujak screamed. "Let those who wanted to steal me die now as they deserve."

Meanwhile, Mala had gotten to his feet once more and he commanded: "Let me have the rifle, Orsokidok! You Netsiliks are not even quick when you want to commit a murder. If you had the intention of killing me, you should have practiced first on reindeer or other prey. Give me my knife back, and you who attacked me with the nail knife, you shall return that nail to me, too. Otherwise you will be killed before you can turn around."

They threw the knives to the ground.

"Pick them up," he told Orsokidok, "and they shall be outside in the sun for three days because the hands of evil men touched them. You Netsiliks go to your tents."

The Netsiliks immediately did as he ordered.

"Our plans did not work," Papik admitted when they felt secure once more. Soon one could hear Nulok and Asarpana punishing their common wife. Akudlet shouted so loud that her voice carried all the way over to Mala's tent.

The wounds Mala had received were not serious and his loss of blood did not weaken him. A few days later he went out again, and the first time he met the others, he asked them to go to the mountain height with him because it looked as if reindeer, now roaming on the opposite shore of the lake, were ready to come over towards the tents.

He was alone on the hunt with his three enemies and he killed six reindeer while the others killed only one.

"Let them have two animals," he said to the members of his household when he returned. "They are camp neighbors of whom one need have no fear and one must help them as long as one lives with them."



XII

THE winters and summers came and went. Mala's store of weapons and tools made by the white men became more and more depleted. He had sharpened his knives so often that, by now, they were very narrow and thin, but he had found stones which could be used for cutting. It was worse for the women, who had no needles. Their needles had become fewer as the years went by and, finally, they had been ground down so far that when they were pushed through the skin they were too short to be seized on the other side; it was impossible to use them any longer. Now the women drilled holes into fore-teeth of the hare which had been ground thin, and, by using heavy sinews for thread, the needle holes were filled so well that no water penetrated into the garments.

"Let's go visiting," Puala said one day at the beginning of winter, when good weather had returned after a heavy snow-storm. "The moon is rising now and it will be amusing to travel and to listen to the talk of other people."

"Oh, yes, let's travel!" Inupaujak joined in. "It is a long time since we heard about Akudlet's little girl and I shall bring her a hood which I have sewn for her."

"Let Puala go visiting. Most probably the Netsilik have lots of food for their dogs."

But Puala did not mind Mala's scorn. He got everything ready for the trail. For some time now he had had his own team and kept his own meat in his own caches. Very often, when the others returned from the hunt, he would remain longer to stalk more game. He was a clever hunter and Mala's equal now.

"Aren't you coming along?" Puala asked Orsokidok. "Let's get eggs from Papik. I long to taste eggs once more. Next year, we shall live near the cider-duck island so that we can collect a good store for the days of darkness."

Orsokidok preferred to stay home and so Puala left alone.

After he had gone, Inupaujak said she had noticed that he had taken a number of beautiful reindeer skins along and also a woman's knife which he had fashioned out of a piece of old saw.

Mala did not answer. These days, he talked less than ever before and never joined the others when they wanted to be gay. But he was restless, too, and ever ready to travel to other climes. And so they had wandered on and on during the five years that had passed since they had lived on the great lake. In the beginning, the Netsiliks had followed them from place to place. They had come to know Mala's strength and they had become more peaceful and friendly, following him like well-trained dogs, eating from his bag and using his skins. At last Mala could not stand them any longer and he forbade them to follow him. Since then they had been alone, but now and then the Netsiliks would come visiting, leaving with precious gifts of meat and skins which they had received from Mala.

Inupaujak's words set Mala thinking. Puala had left to visit Papik but Mala did not want to think about it and therefore he said to Orsokidok: "Let's go for a catch across the ice."

They went out on the ice and soon they picked up the tracks of a bear. Pursuing the animal, they noticed that they were on thin ice. The bear fled farther out, finally leaping, with a tremendous jump, on top of an ice pack. It was very hard to get at the animal now as it was impossible for the dogs to chase him down from his vantage point. Mala crawled after him over a narrow ridge and when he finally reached the bear the great white beast growled threateningly and prepared to attack him. Mala could do only one of two things: let himself fall from the ridge, or kill the bear immediately. It was difficult for him to use his harpoon here as there was not much elbow room. Nevertheless he hurled the spear deep into the bear's throat, killing the beast. But the next moment he lost his balance and fell from the ridge.

"Why do you do things like that?" Orsokidok reproached Mala, when he regained consciousness. "We could have killed the bear from here with our arrows. Why don't you ever think

of what might happen when you start out to do a thing?"

Mala was in excruciating pain. His arm was broken and he could not move it. Countless thoughts rushed through his brain. And here stood Orsokidok, uttering angry words and issuing orders while he was weak. Orsokidok surely had forgotten that he had been an orphan on whom Mala had taken pity!

"Help me up and get me home on the sledge," Mala commanded.

"I shall carry you home as soon as I have skinned the bear," Orsokidok answered.

Mala saw the logic of this, but pain made him impatient.

On the way back they trudged over pack-ice, and although his arm hurt terribly, Mala did not complain. During the whole trip, he only said: "My feet are freezing." And Orsokidok answered: "We will be home soon," running beside the sledge so that they could make better progress. But he did not take any skins out to cover the feet of his foster-father.

"Oh, Mala has been injured," Aba whined. "Come, let me see your arm." She put a wet sealskin around the arm and as soon as it dried it became stiff, holding together the broken bone. When Mala's pains increased, he knew it was because his bones were knitting and he would soon be well once more.

A few days later, there was a barking of dogs and loud shouts outside. Presently Papik poked his face inside and said: "Here is one coming to visit you. I longed to see your faces once again. It was well that you advised us not to live in the same place with you because now it is so much more enjoyable to come and visit you and eat delicious morsels out of your pot!"

The head disappeared from the tent flap, as Papik had to help his camp neighbors to build igloos. As before, he was still without shame. Obviously he belonged to those who do not mind imposing on other people's hospitality. Nevertheless, Mala decided to treat his visitors as best he could, and so he called Orsokidok and instructed him:

"Drive out to the headland and fetch some of our fetid

livers. One longs to eat this delicacy and besides, I want to provide a feast for our guests."

"It is very windy and cold," Orsokidok answered. "Let's keep the livers until the strangers have gone."

Mala was too weak to object to Orsokidok's boldness. He did not say another word and Orsokidok went outside.

"I was just ready to speak a few words," Aba remarked.

"Why?" asked Mala. "Are women supposed to speak to men?"

"Oh, get as angry as you usually do," Aba replied. "Let's hear again all the nasty things you can say."

But Mala did not answer and there was silence. Both women were sewing, but they pricked up their ears when they heard Puala laughing in happy banter with Airuna.

Soon the girl came into the house, but Puala remained outside, watching the men build the huts. Airuna rested on the bench and started to talk to the women. Mala immediately smelt her perspiration, which was so different from that of the women of his house. It was a horrible odor which he could not stand and which made it impossible for him to live with the Netsiliks. He thought of the white men who were in the habit of washing their whole bodies if there was too much dirt on the inside of their shirts. Even at that time, it had been hard for him to smell his own tribesmen. He had come to realize that it was agreeable to be clean. Now, he shoved these thoughts away because he hated to remember the white men who had done him so much evil. Except for them, he would still be in the land of the Aiviliks. His tribesmen would have listened to his words, and he would have grown old among his own mountains.

"How I wish I had some sinews for sewing," Airuna said. "We hardly kill any reindeer and all our sinews are used up. For the longest time, we wanted to pay you a visit, but we had no hitching gear for our dogs and we could only make it when Puala came with some skins."

"Oh, one merely sent a couple of hides," Mala said. "Just a few worthless hides." But to himself he thought that Puala

had given the Netsiliks part of his catch without telling his father about it.

Then Papik came inside again and started to talk. "I think I shall go on a long trail," he said. "My old mother is getting very weak now and she wants to spend her last winter with her people."

"Is it the custom in your camp for women to decide on trips?" Mala asked, staring blankly ahead. They sat silent for some time and then Papik mentioned that he, too, longed to see his sister with whom he had played when they were little children.

"In spring, we used to catch salmon in a little lake. The fish were close to the shore and we caught them with our hands. We liked to feel their little tails tickle our tongues when we swallowed them. I feel it in my bones that I want to go on a trip."

"If you want to travel, do not let anyone stop you," Mala said. "But think of those you have killed! Aren't you afraid of the vengeance their relatives may wreak on you?"

"Are you here in our country for that same reason?" Papik inquired. "We have often wondered whether you came here because you committed murders. But a time is sure to come when longing proves stronger than fear, and perhaps those who used to be my enemies might be dead by now. Moreover, a man who has been away from home a long while commands respect. But perhaps you will come along so we can all stay together and live in one camp. Your catch is sure to bring you the respect of people and they will always be glad to come and sit around your meat pots."

"The smell of your tribesmen offends my nostrils," Mala answered, "and if I choose to travel, it is for me to decide where it shall be."

Papik only laughed and went out, but soon he returned with the other men. The new houses were finished and Airuna had gone home to the other women. The men sat around Mala and told of their adventures and asked questions while they waited for boiled meat. Apparently all was peaceful, but just the same Mala had hidden his small keen knife under the

skin cover of his bench when they came in; he still could use only one arm, and when the boiled meat was handed around he had to eat it in the style of the Netsiliks by biting it off and tearing it like a dog.

Puala was still outside and did not want to come in yet. The way he walked up and down the shore indicated that his thoughts were heavy. Presently one of Papik's little boys came out to play and Puala called him.

"Come here. There is something I wish to tell you."

The boy came and Puala accompanied him to Papik's house. "Go inside and tell Airuna that I want to see her." And the boy went inside.

"Tell Puala that I am not his wife. He can come in if he is so eager to talk to a woman."

"Go in once more," Puala told the boy, "and tell her that I desire her to become my wife and therefore she had better obey."

"Oh, ho," Airuna laughed, because other women were present who heard every word. "Tell the boy to stand outside and freeze or else to run and play with his little boy sledge. But if he is a grown-up man and really wants to speak to a woman, let him come in and bring me some meat."

When Puala heard this, he grew angry, but he went over to his father's meat rack. He picked out blubber and the skin of a narwhal, also some delicious matak which the Netsiliks regarded as a fable, since they never lived on the shore of the sea during the summer and never caught sea animals from a kayak. Puala put everything on his shoulders and dragged it over to Papik's house. He threw the meat down in front of Airuna and he felt that this was the most miserable moment of his entire life, because he desired her so much and, at the same time, was forced to humiliate himself before her.

But Airuna was so pretty that any man would have admired her. Her little nose all but disappeared between her well-rounded cheeks, which were so thick that they blotted out all other features of her face if one looked at her from the side. When Airuna laughed, her forehead and her cheeks seemed to meet and her eyes crinkled into slits.

"Oh!" she said, "is this a hunter coming with meat? Come, let's eat. We have delicious things in the house now."

She took an axe made of flint and chopped big slivers off the frozen blubber and threw them over to the other women.

"Airuna," Puala said, "I wish to talk with you."

"Oh, you stupid boy, who wants to talk when it is time to eat," she answered. "Keep still and do not disturb me at my meal."

Puala suddenly realized that a man is weak compared with a woman, even if he has much more strength and even if he has proven his prowess to her by offering her the beautiful mane of a male bear after killing the beast with his own hands. Airuna had dressed up her fur with that bushel of precious hair which Puala had given her for a present.

He stood around and the women talked and laughed as if he were not there at all; finally Airuna said: "Now go for some finely pounded blubber which we need for our lamps." And Puala, like a dog that has been whipped, obeyed and went out without saying another word.

"What do you need lamp blubber for?" Inupaujak asked Puala. "If you go visiting in other houses and give blubber for a present to women, let them pound the blubber themselves."

Puala did not answer. He just took the pail and went outside with it. He heard Inupaujak and Aba laugh at him behind his back and when he brought the pail to Airuna's igloo the other women laughed at him too. Airuna was behaving rather boldly that evening. It was she who talked the loudest, although she was the youngest, and she laughed so much that she almost fell off the bench.

"Oh, are you bringing us blubber for our lamps? We have a whole pail full of it, but it is nice to have some more so we won't need to pound any tomorrow." And Airuna took his pail made of hides, adding its contents to their own blubber store.

"Airuna," Puala stammered. It was then that Akudlet started to laugh.

"Look at that funny boy! He stands there and wants to

talk to a woman. He is so embarrassed he cannot even speak a word."

"I wonder," Airuna remarked, "what makes him that way. If his bowels are troubling him, I don't see how I can help. He'd better go outside."

Now Puala's anger rose higher and he flew at Airuna. "Airuna," he ordered, "I wish you to follow me."

"Listen to the fool," she teased him.

Then he grabbed her, suddenly feeling great strength in him. He lifted her up and put his arms around her body to carry her through the opening of the igloo. But the opening was small and he soon realized that carrying off a woman is easier in summer when all the man has to do is to throw her out through the tent flap. Now Airuna simply spread her legs and fought him off, biting his hand.

"Leave me alone! I will not go with you," she cried and bit him again. Behind her three mature women made remarks, and the old grandmother compared this rape with others she had witnessed in her day.

Puala heard them talking about a man who had not succeeded in throwing his woman through the doorway and this made him so ridiculous that he absolutely had to leave camp. Never before had his will been as strong as now. He pressed Airuna's legs together, lifted her once more and carried her to the opening.

Suddenly there was a noise in front of the igloo and voices called: "Away, dogs! Let us enter!"

It was Papik and the two other men who at last were returning from their meal with Mala. Puala had to stand aside, pulling Airuna with him. Papik's mouth fell open when he saw what was going on in his house and when his mother gestured to him he broke into hearty laughter. "Come in, quick, there is something to laugh about! Yes, it was a good idea to come to visit here because now we shall have some real fun. Just see how Puala fights with a woman!"

Nulok and Asarpana came in and presently the house was so crowded with people that Puala was embarrassed. He stood still, feeling very bewildered and unhappy. "I desire to

take Airuna with me," he said, "as it is possible that there is room for two on my sledge."

But Papik only laughed louder than before. "Here seems to be somebody looking for a wife. After all, I have something which the great Mala's sons desire. Oh, I must laugh because at last I have real reason for it."

There was boisterous laughter as Puala bent down and quietly crawled out of the house.

"Hey, you!" Papik shouted after him. "Puala, come back. Puala, you forgot to take along what you came for."

Puala turned around and poked his head through the entrance. "Oh, yes, it is true," he said. "I forgot my blubber pail. There was no fuel in your house, as often happens."

When he departed, Airuna called after him. "Apparently," she jeered, "you did not want me hard enough! This is only a reason for me to feel pleased."

Puala angrily called back that there would be a time when she would not speak so loud when he was around, and with that he left, carrying his empty blubber pail home.

The others in Mala's house were just ready to go to rest, but when Puala entered the igloo, he said: "One would like to eat salmon and I shall go out to our salmon store right now. May I take your big harpoon along in case something should cross my path?"

"It is time to sleep," Mala answered, "and you have returned today from a long trip. Your dogs are surely tired."

"I do not need sleep for myself, and for my dogs I have a whip."

With that Puala hitched up his team and took his things.

"Are you coming along?" he shouted to Upik. "I'm going for some salmon, and we are sure to find the tracks of winter reindeer."

Apparently he only said that because he saw Upik getting ready to sleep. And Upik answered, as he expected him to answer, that he did not want to go along with his older brother. "But bring salmon for us and I shall help to eat them!"

And so Puala departed.

PUALA was glad to be alone so that he could think over his unlucky attempt to win Airuna. He dreamed about her constantly.

There was a fine moon and the Northern Lights flamed along the sky. They could make tremendous jumps up there, those children who ran back and forth across the sky. It seemed remarkable that all still-born children were thus placed up in the skies. Each time they moved about, there was a gleaming light all around.

Suddenly Puala realized that he had been standing still for some time. He had admired the Northern Lights so long that his feet were beginning to freeze and only now did he become aware that the dogs were not pulling any longer. All the eternal ball players in the sky were now rushing towards one corner, clustering there. But soon afterwards the ball players apparently retired for the night, for the gleaming mist faded, revealing the moon in all its bright splendor.

"Go on! Go on!" he shouted to the dogs and got them going once more. As soon as he had warmed up a little, he jumped on the sledge. Again his thoughts turned to Airuna, who had jeered at him, and now he decided that it was just as well he had not gotten her outside the house. He was angry with her and he thought it lucky for her that she was a woman; otherwise, he would have used the whip on her. Only wives may be beaten. Besides, he would have felt reluctant to strike Airuna and make her cry. Now he remembered how wonderful it had been when he fought with her—feeling her body near his—so lithe and yet so strong.

The dogs lagged again on the trail. They wanted to rest, and if there had not been a whip behind them they would surely have curled up and slept. But Puala cracked his whip at them so that they howled and continued at a fast pace.

Puala looked up at the moon which still shone in the sky. It seemed so strange, so different from everything else. Each night the woman in the moon lit her torch. Her brother, the Sun, pursued her, and the sister fled in shame. Tonight, Puala pitied the young man who was always running after the woman, never to attain her.

Oh, it was simply terrible with the dogs. Time and again, they refused to go on. Puala left off thinking of his recent experience with Airuna and of what takes place in the sky. He concentrated on fetching some salmon, as he had promised to do when he left the house. He did not want to return home without bringing along a catch, otherwise his father would be sure to laugh at him.

Suddenly the dogs pulled with surprising strength. They were no longer tired, and rushed ahead as if a bear were in the neighborhood. It was hard for Puala to hold on to the sledge, and as they tore over the ground big pieces came off the peat runners. But it was impossible to stop the team. Snow was flung into his face by the legs of the speeding dogs and that cooled his senses deliciously.

A wolverine had attacked the salmon cache and had been scented by the dogs. The tracks led straight to the cache. Shortly before they got there, Puala unharnessed the dogs. Howling terribly, they rushed for the wolverine. The animal grew afraid and dashed across the lake, but the dogs soon caught up and surrounded it, keeping it right on the spot until Puala arrived with his spears. "Go on, dogs! Get it! My good dogs! At it, at it!"

The wolverine is also called the glutton, for this animal is inordinately voracious. It is the meanest animal alive. All that is mean is embodied in this beast. Foxes and wolves can be kept away from meat holes by covering them with big stones. Caches can be protected against bears by covering the stones with gravel. But there is nothing one can do against a wolverine. There is no one who can put big enough blocks over a cache so that the glutton cannot push them away. The animal makes itself so thin that it can squeeze through narrow cracks; it presses with all its strength against the stone and pushes the boulder away with its back. A wolverine can even curl itself around a stone, as if ready to bite into its own tail, and roll a stone away in this manner. Everybody hates the glutton. Mala's father had told him, once, how he had caught a wolverine in a trap, pried his jaws apart with straps and after cutting off his tongue and gouging out his eyes, had

let the beast run off again. Another time when Mala caught a glutton, he put his sledge on top of its head, cut a hole in its belly and pulled out its guts. Then when he let the glutton free, it pulled its own insides out of its belly and thus it was punished for all the evils it had ever committed.

Oh, if Puala could only catch this wolverine here, he would torture it to death. It surely was the same glutton that, during the winter, had eaten up all the foxes that Puala had caught. Sometimes this mean beast, on finding foxes in the traps, gorged itself upon them. But now Puala was going to have revenge! The glutton rushed from one side to the other, sniffing at the dogs. The dogs were frightened because they know that a wolverine will never let go, once it has taken hold of something.

Puala tried to hit the animal with the shaft of the harpoon, but he, too, was afraid that the wolverine might attack him. His father told him that, given a chance, the glutton would bite right through to the bone. Puala was going to catch it and slowly torture it to death.

Suddenly, the moon shining in its eyes, the little monster glared at Puala and he remembered Airuna. Why torture a beast which, after all, was only going out for food like himself? His impulse was to let it go free, but that would have made him ridiculous. So he thrust his spear into the beast, nailing it to the ground. How the animal growled! Puala pushed the spear deeper into its body, and now it could hardly move. Puala pulled the spear out quickly and before the wolverine could raise itself on its legs, he dealt it the death blow by thrusting the weapon into its throat.

"PUALA is coming with fish," Papik shouted. It was a big burden that Puala brought when he came home next day. He had neither eaten nor slept but it was wonderful to be so exhausted.

All came running out and the Netsiliks said they were longing for fish. These looked deliciously fat and were much

finer than the ones they had caught in the lake where they had lived during the summer.

"Let's try some of the tasty salmon! We are tired of meat," Papik said.

Puala took some salmon from his load and gave them to him, while Upik carried the remainder into Mala's house. Orsokidok was assisting Puala in unharnessing the dogs when suddenly Airuna appeared. Puala turned his back to her, busying himself with a dog which refused to be unharnessed.

"Did you go for salmon?" Airuna asked and he could tell, from her voice, that she was smiling. "Oh, let's eat some raw."

He did not answer but took one of the fish from Upik and let it fall in the snow.

"What luck for me! You dropped one," she exclaimed. Puala bent down and crawled into his father's igloo.

When the fish was boiled, the camp neighbors came running to pay them a visit. But Puala was sound asleep by that time.

"Puala, we are eating fish," Aba called. But he only grunted and put his head under the cover and went on sleeping.

"Oh, what a wonderful taste!" It was Papik who praised the delicious food. "Let me have a piece of blubber so I can eat my fish with fat and then I will be able to swallow more before my belly fills up."

After he had eaten his blubber, Papik remarked: "Yes, you have a great help in the three young members of your household, Mala. It is possible that one of them could live with me. I have only little boys who are no help yet."

"Has it ever happened before," Mala asked, "that men of the Aiviliks moved into the houses of the Netsiliks?"

"Not that I know of, but if a man gets used to our women, he will also get used to the customs of our house."

"Nobody in my house has expressed the desire to leave me," Mala said, and it was clear that he did not wish to talk about this any more, for he continued: "Tomorrow we shall drive along the coast to look after my fox traps. I do not think there will be a storm during the next few days." With this, Mala left the house.

When he returned, Inupaujak came rushing to meet him and started to tell him the news:

"It seems that people in the other houses have bagged game. Airuna surely will be proud, for she has furs now, trimmed with the skin of a wolverine."

"Did they catch a wolverine?" Mala asked. "They hardly ever go far enough to catch something out of the ordinary."

"It was Puala who brought the glutton home. Probably he never thought that people in his own house would like to have the fur," said Inupaujak.

Mala did not answer. He merely lifted his eyebrows a little.

"We are going back now," Papik said after some time. "It appears that Mala's meat is not given to us with the same gladness any more as when we first arrived."

Nobody contradicted him. Aba even said that outwearing a welcome often leads to evil thoughts. So the Netsiliks departed. "One saw you give Papik two seals," Mala said to his older son. "Why don't you let him catch his own seals through the air holes?"

"Oh," Puala answered, "have we so little meat? Are you afraid that we haven't enough to eat? Then it would be better if I and my dogs did not impose upon you. We had better leave your place."

"I understand. You want to follow Airuna! Listen to the young man who longs for the company of a woman!" Mala teased, to Puala's annoyance.

"It seems that we are not meeting many people here in this big country where you desire to live."

"Listen to me," Mala said seriously. "The Netsiliks are an evil bunch. Do you not remember how they tried to kill us and how often they proved themselves thieves? Can you not understand that the only reason they are not ashamed of the way they live is because they do not know any better? When I was on board the ship, I once saw the Captain drive one of them away because he was so dirty. Their clothes are in tatters for many days before they are mended."

"Why did you leave the white men if you want to live according to their customs?"

Now Orsokidok came to the assistance of his foster-brother: "You who are old, think of nobody but yourself. We are three young fellows and what future have you to offer us?"

Mala did not answer. He did not want to quarrel with the boys. He lay down on the bench and began to think and when the others were long asleep he was still wondering over the power of the white men. He had left them far behind but he remembered their ways and customs. He was like a dog trained for a certain place in the team. If such a dog is given another place it always runs for its accustomed spot even if a whip is used to keep it away.

Mala gravely reflected that he had to thank the two ship Captains for having taught him how to rule men by letting them feel his own superiority.

"HERE is one coming to say good-bye," Papik said, when he drove up to Mala's igloo during the light season. "My old mother is weak and we all long to see different faces. Since you have decided not to trade women, we will leave."

Nobody answered, but Mala cut some meat for boiling and put it into the pot. They all sat down quietly and waited until it would be ready.

"Did you catch anything recently?" Orsokidok asked. He wanted to talk about the hunt, because he had just landed a walrus and, outside on the ice, there were such big heaps of meat that even the dogs were permitted to gnaw when they felt like it.

"Oh, no," Papik answered. "We made no catch and we have no meat left. It seems to me that the seals around here are ashamed to be caught by us because we have left our tribesmen. And so we are now going home."

"I hope the seals in your country will not be insulted because you have stayed away so many winters," Mala remarked. "It seems rather dangerous to change one's place of living."

He was a man who could permit himself a jest for his caches were filled and each spring, when he went hunting inland, he left much meat behind which he never came to fetch.

"Just go out on the ice for some meat before you go home. Take as much as your dogs can pull," Orsokidok said. He was a man now, dealing with other men, and his stores of meat permitted him to smile a little at poor hunters.

Puala was downcast because the Netsiliks were leaving the country. He could hardly breathe when he thought that Airuna would not be here any longer. To be sure, he had not even talked to her since the day he had tried to carry her off.

"Papik," he said, when next day they went to a cache to take out some frozen seals. "Papik, one desires that the girl who is with you should remain here."

But now Papik proved his cunning. He wanted to leave but he preferred to take Puala along so that the boy might catch all they needed on the trail. Two summers would pass before they reached their tribesmen, and when they arrived they could simply kill Puala or else make him go hunting for all of them.

"Airuna is going on the trip to the country where she was born and whosoever wants to come along may have her."

They did not talk any more. They took big stones and hammered the seals to loosen them from the ground to which they had frozen fast. But when they stood again in front of Mala's house Puala said: "One has decided to go on a visit."

Mala listened, but said not a word because he saw that Puala was in earnest and spoke like a man who thought for himself.

THERE was a snowstorm on their way to Papik's igloo and Papik suggested that they build a hut and stay there until the next day. But Puala laughed at him because he was afraid of a little snow and they continued the trip. Finally they reached home; it was wonderful to come into a warm room even though Puala's nose immediately smelt the dirt of the Netsiliks. There was Airuna, her cheeks as round as ever and

her little eyes, as before, almost disappearing when she laughed.

Puala was more eager than ever to possess her despite the fact that her garments were torn to tatters, her face dirty from the crust of old soup, her hair matted and full of reindeer hair and eider-duck down. She had the power to inflame Puala. His prowess as a hunter would find a worthwhile object, for he would clothe her with beautiful new skins and give her a comb made from walrus teeth to beautify her hair. He resolved that Airuna should soon look so well that Inupaujak, compared to her, would seem a poorly dressed old hag.

"We are bringing meat, delicious meat," Papik said, and threw the seal to the floor.

"They are really not at all ashamed here," Puala thought. "They even brag about the meat they receive as a present while the giver is still around."

Papik took a stone axe and chopped off meat. He handed it out as long as they could eat.

"Let's sleep now. I'm tired!" It was the old mother who suggested rest, after Papik had told them everything that had happened at Mala's since they had received the last news from them.

Puala went outside, saying that he was going to attend to his dogs, but he visited Asarpana and Nulok. It was hard to find them because the Netsiliks never burn lamps in their houses. It was not very cosy in their igloos either, especially as it seemed that the two men had been fighting with their common wife. Now she screamed at them at the top of her voice.

"Oh, at last a real hunter is coming here. One who, in spite of his youth, brings home all the meat and skins one could ever desire. I have two poor hunters for husbands—and it's lucky I haven't any more, if they are of the kind that would rather eat from other people's stores than catch meat for themselves. But now I am going to share with Puala the fox which I caught yesterday in my own trap while my men were snoring on the bench."

This bolstered up Puala's pride although it embarrassed him a little.

After a while he worked up enough courage to go back through the driving snowstorm to Papik's house. Here he took off his outer furs, beating the snow off them and rolling them together. Never before had he felt so uneasy as at this moment. It was just as if, when summer was ending, he stood on new thin ice, not knowing where to place his foot at the next step. But finally he crawled into the igloo where everybody had gone to rest already.

Papik raised his head and grinned. "Oh, here is somebody who wants to move in with us," he said.

Puala turned his back on him. "I just went out to look after the dogs."

Then he took off his fur and sat on the bench next to where Airuna lay. She rolled the skin tighter around herself, moving over to the edge and when Puala tried to lift the cover and crawl under, she held on with all her might.

"I thought you were going to rest," Papik said just to tease him.

Now Puala was resolved to carry out his intentions. He lifted the skin cover and forced his way under it. Airuna shivered when she felt his cold body near her own warm one. She tried to push him away but he grabbed her and held her tight, so that she could not kick him any longer. At last her resistance subsided.

Contrary to his usual habit, Puala did not awaken early in the morning but appeared late in the day, after all the others in the house were up and about.



XIII

"THERE'S a sledge coming with people," Mala said quietly. He had gone to the entrance of the house and poked his head out.

"Oh, let's go outside, let's look!" Inupaujak cried, pulling on her boots and rushing to the entrance.

Aba remained sitting scraping skins. Skins had to be scraped every day, and when the Netsilikis came to visit she hardly ever saw them. As usual, Mala would give them presents before they left. Aba had scraped many a skin which strange women sewed into boots.

Mala immediately recognized Puala's dogs and he also saw that there were two people on the sledge, one of them apparently a woman.

"Look! Look! Puala is coming with Airuna," Inupaujak shouted. "Now we will have a daughter-in-law in the house. Let's go inside as if we had not seen them coming." She went into the house quickly and told Aba that Puala had married and was moving in with his wife.

"Yes, people marry," Aba said. "The men go hunting and the women scrape skins, and in the end they both die." And quietly she went on scraping with the sharp stone.

Mala pretended to be busy building a little house for the bitch and her puppies. He did not even turn around, and as Orsokidok and Upik were out hunting the couple came into the house without being welcomed. Once inside, nobody betrayed any surprise over their presence.

After awhile, Mala poked his head in and said to his son, as if he had never been away: "I shall have to take that white bitch over to the new place. Will you come and help me carry the puppies so the others won't eat them while their mother is not around?"

They carried over the puppies and then Puala unharnessed his team. Mala watched him as he put his sledge on the snow rack. Only now he saw that Puala had grown big and strong. Mala's son was a man.

But he did not want to show pride or surprise and so he simply remarked: "One has noticed bear tracks leading out from the land. It seems the bear made straight for the sea. It surely woke up too early in the season and has now left its hiding place."

Puala said that he, too, had seen the tracks: "It was only a lean bear. Its tracks were close together and its toes

turned inward. Why do bears lie down to sleep in fall before they are fat enough to last through the winter?"

"Animals have ideas, too, and their ideas are just as often wrong as those of men," Mala answered. "I am longing for bear meat. It is a very long time since we have feasted on the guts of the Great White One."

"We shall have bear meat presently," Puala assured his father. "But where are Orsokidok and Upik?"

"They have gone north for some driftwood which we dragged ashore during the summer. They will be back in a few days." And father and son went into the house.

AIRUNA was still so embarrassed that she had not even taken off her outer fur, but Mala did not even look at her.

"Give me another pair of boots," he said. And Aba as well as Inupaujak quickly made for their side benches.

"Here's a pair of boots," Inupaujak offered. "They are dry and I sewed new soles to the stockings."

Mala did not answer; he took them and started to unlace the boots he was wearing.

"These boots are just right for the house," Aba said. "See how soft I have made them."

"Of course! Of course!" Inupaujak broke in. "Give my boots back. Let that clever needle woman over there provide you with footgear. I am glad I still have a knife so I can cut all those miserable garments to pieces which I was bold enough to sew for you."

Aba had meanwhile jumped down from her bench and handed her boots over to Mala.

"As always," Mala said; he smiled at Puala, and Puala smiled at him. Two married men who know what trouble wives can be—and like it.

"Yes, just give my boots back," Inupaujak continued. "Oh, how bold a woman I must be to hand boots to a man who has such a clever wife."

By now Mala had pulled off his boots and started to put on Inupaujak's.

"Of course you could not wear mine," Aba said. "Where did I ever learn to sew good boots? I suppose soon you will start out on the trail with Inupaujak. Then you need not look at me any more and can be all alone with the only woman that really pleases you."

Mala handed her his wet footgear that he had just taken off. "Hang them up to dry," he ordered.

Now Aba flew into a rage: "How should I be able to dry your boots when I have never learned how to make them to please you? Why don't you have the other woman do it since she is the one you prefer?"

Then she took the wet boots Mala handed to her and threw them on the bench so hard that they fell clattering to the floor.

"Just let me have them," Inupaujak said. "If a woman does not want to work, there is no use trying to make her."

"Work!" Aba sneered. "When did one ever see Inupaujak work? Oh, how this house would look if she had to do everything around here!"

"Of course, everybody knows it is you who works so hard," agreed Inupaujak. "You surely show the strain of it! That's the reason you are so lean; you never have enough time to eat."

Everybody laughed, for Aba was so fat that recently she had not been able to put on Mala's fur when she wanted to go out in a snowstorm to fetch some blubber. Even Mala joined in the general merriment. He was used to having both women try their best to please him, in order to win his favor. "Let's boil meat," he suggested. "Food seems to be the only thing that will close the mouths of women."

Meat was boiled and they ate. Airuna remained on the bench near Puala. It was not so easy to fit into a household where there were already two other women, and the girl was still greatly embarrassed. Puala would have liked to arrange one of the side benches for himself and to have his own lamp. But that meant telling Mala that he and Airuna would like to move into his house. Therefore, during the first night, Puala and Airuna slept on the floor, but the next morning Puala

complained that he had felt a draught in his neck all night long because he was lying so close to the entrance.

"Perhaps we ought to sleep on one of the side benches," he suggested. "We could easily build a little house for the skins and the other things that are kept on that bench now. Anyway, it will be much better to put them out in the cold than to have them lie around inside and get all wet from the melting snow."

"Yes, we will build a house," Mala agreed. "For the longest time, I have thought that we should have a store house." By now Mala had seven houses, all connected with the big front house.

Towards evening the new place was finished.

"Help me carry out the things," Puala said to Airuna. After the two had worked hard together to set everything straight, and Airuna felt that she had been of some assistance, she was no longer so embarrassed. Now she considered herself a member of the family.

Towards evening she lay down on the side bench and nobody said a word. It seemed as if Airuna had always been in the house with them.

WHEN Orsokidok and Upik arrived, Airuna was sitting on the bench, sewing. Puala had just left to look after the fox traps and when he returned he sat next to her. He was a married man now and this fact was so much taken for granted that nobody ever teased them or embarrassed them by watching their doings. Puala asked the brothers whether they had seen any wolf tracks on the trail because there had been some in the neighborhood of the houses.

"Here's a comb to comb your hair," Puala told his wife.

She took it and put it under her pillow. A few days later her hair showed that it had been combed. She also started to clean her face with a piece of skin and some fat, so that her red cheeks became visible and, free of dirt, shone as never before.

Aba gave her skins for a fur and when Inupaujak saw that, she opened up her own bundle and picked out a few nice

black strips with which she had intended to trim her trousers. But now she gave them to Airuna and said: "Why should I dress up? We are not going visiting. How happy must those people be who see so many new faces each year and hear all the news. Long before they drive down to the ships to trade, the women sew festive garments."

"One thinks of driving south towards the headland before the seals come onto the ice," Mala said shortly thereafter. "We have so many reindeer skins that now I should like to hunt musk-ox; their hair is soft and pleasant to sleep on."

"Oh, I love traveling," Inupaujak cried joyfully. "Then we can go across the mountains and see places I have never seen before."

"Perhaps one also wishes to travel south," Puala said. "There is a woman around here who would like to see her relatives." He had just returned with Airuna from a hunting trip of eight days.

Mala's eyes widened. "What? You would like to go and live with the Netsiliks? Isn't there enough odor right here? Or perhaps we haven't enough to eat?"

Puala did not want to reply while the others listened. But the next day, when Mala was feeding his dogs, he stepped over to his father and told him that Papik had not yet left, but was still somewhere in the neighborhood. Puala had made up his mind to travel with the Netsiliks in order to become acquainted with Airuna's family. He wished to remain with them for a whole year; it would be a long time before he saw his own people again.

"So you are really going to leave us," Mala said, "to visit people who are hostile to us?"

"One merely desires to accompany one's wife," Puala answered. And then Mala knew that he was in earnest.

"I only hope you remember that Papik and the others tried to kill me. If it had been in their power, they would have killed us all and taken our belongings. I only refrained from taking vengeance and wiping out the whole band because they are like dogs who cannot offer resistance worthy of men."

"Papik suggested that I go along if I care to see new people. Now I have decided to join them."

Puala turned around and went over to his sledge.

"So you are going to leave your father and learn to talk that strange language! I have already noticed that you are using queer words, picked up from your little wife."

Mala started out for a long trip through the mountains and when he came back, Inupaujak rushed up to him, saying: "Airuna has taken a reindeer skin from your cache."

"Where we go there will be plenty of reindeer skins. Let her have the one she took." Mala could not get angry because his heaps of skins were a little smaller.

"Yes, but she packed up the skin and tied it with straps. Perhaps she thinks of going over to the Netsiliks to give the skin for a present to their dirty women, now that she has learned to keep herself clean."

"Let's travel farther inland," Mala said. "It will be best if you and I remain by ourselves for some time so that we will not be angered if others leave here with our things. Later, we may travel to the south and hunt musk-ox."

THE next morning two men were loading their sledges. Puala first put an under layer of meat without bones on the sledge, and on top of this he strapped bundles of skins from the house, tying them securely. Mala took whatever he needed for his trip and laid it down next to his sledge. Then he started to put the peat runners into good order.

"One is departing with Papik to his country to stay for several summers," Puala said. "When I return, I shall look for you in this neighborhood."

"It is possible," Mala answered, "that I might still be around here, but I do not believe that you will ever come back."

"Why shouldn't I come back?" Puala asked. "One just wants to see new faces."

"Why do you want to see those who are all smeared with dirt and talk a ridiculous language?" Mala asked.

"Oh, I would just like to see new countries as you yourself

did. I remember when I was still a small boy you left us to travel to new countries, just because you felt like it."

Mala made no reply. He remembered that he had not always gone on the trail joyfully. He was annoyed, now, that there should be only his own family to share his tremendous catch with him. The Netsilikis had been just like beggars; at first they had quarreled with him, but after he had shown them his strength, they had behaved like dogs, accepting presents without ever giving anything in return. In a way, Mala had enjoyed the rôle of benefactor.

"You will have to hunt for all of them and even feed their dogs," Mala warned his son.

"One has a harpoon which has a habit of finding its mark. Besides, nothing is lost if there isn't too much meat left to rot in the holes. It might just as well be eaten. But I would like one of your knives. I could very well use the little folding one to cut up my prey."

"So, you think I shall give you my knife? The knives are to be used only where I live," said Mala, and then he added: "Because of a knife there was once a fight with Papik who wanted to kill me. After I got my knife back, I decided that they are to remain in my house forever." Neither said a word and they went inside to eat.

"Yes, now you can eat meat that is cut with a knife," Mala remarked. His anger was so great that he actually enjoyed teasing his son. "Soon you will have to get used to tearing your meat with your teeth like a dog."

Puala was angry, but he did not answer. In a way he was glad that his father spoke so bitterly. That would make it so much easier to leave those with whom he had lived all his life. It was no longer necessary for him to gaze at his little wife so that he should not waver in his purpose.

"One herewith leaves on a hunting trip," Mala stated presently, and, taking his big snow knife, he went outside. There was not another word spoken. Inupaujak got up silently to follow him. After Mala had left the house, she was overcome with emotion at the prospect of being separated from her stepson who had lived with her so many years. "If you meet many

people, find out everything you can about them and tell us when you return," she begged.

Puala did not answer and Inupaujak went out to Mala. Soon the two departed. But when the others went outside, a little later, they discovered that Mala had tied two of his best dogs to Puala's sledge. Puala had to swallow hard to keep back his tears when he thought that this was a farewell present from his father.

"Are you leaving now?" Orsokidok asked. "Oh, not many are going to stay behind in this great country. There will soon be scarcely enough hunters left to catch all the game that is around here."

"Yes, we are leaving," Puala said. "One desires to see new lands. The time has come to eat meat on strange soil."

Aba stepped out of the house. "If you are going to stay long, it would be best to give you a present to remember me by," she said. And she gave him a pair of soles, which she had chewed until they were soft, and a small piece of tallow just to show her affection.

"Aua—ai," Puala shouted, cracking his whip and shaking the sledge free from the ice. The dogs started slowly but soon their speed increased. Puala struck out across the pack-ice away from the shore, but came to a halt because Upik came running up.

Many thoughts were rushing through Upik's head. His brother was going to leave them. Puala was a married man now, starting out on the trail all by himself.

"When do you think we shall see your face again?" Upik asked.

Puala did not answer. He felt such a heaviness that he would have preferred to lie down. It was as if storms beat against his body as they sometimes did against the snow hut. But then he glanced at Airuna who was entirely unmoved and he said calmly: "Just lift the hind leg of that little black bitch over the traces. She's all tangled up." And then he cracked his whip once more. "Aua—ai. Go on, you lazy dogs! Go on!"

Puala tried to stifle his feelings by cracking his whip, and soon he had gone so far that he could not even hear Upik, who

shouted after him: "Good luck on the trail! I wish it were I myself seeking adventure."

AFTER they had driven for some time without speaking to each other Airuna tapped Puala on the shoulder and he turned around and smiled at her. There she sat, his little wife, and as long as she was along he had all that he could desire.

"Here," she said. Then his smile froze. Out of her sleeve she pulled a long object: the precious knife his father had refused to give him! The meat knife—Mala's most valuable possession. Only to be sharpened on a very fine stone so that it should not be ground down too quickly. Mala took delight in the keen steel that could cut through everything and, with fond pride, he used to test the blade with the tips of his fingers. Now the woman Puala had chosen for his wife was sitting there, handing him that very knife. What would his father do when he came home and discovered that the knife had disappeared together with his own son?

"The knife!" he shouted. "Where did you get the knife?"

"When Aba went outside, I simply hid it in my sleeve. Now when we come to Papik with this knife, we shall be the first people in our camp—especially as you are able to catch much more than all the others. And you, who will provide all the meat, shall have the knife. As we are young and will travel far, I think it would be too bad if we hadn't something to make others jealous."

"Oh, you are a real Netsilik woman," Puala cried. "It is your people's habit to take things against the will of the owner and without paying for them."

"Did you not decide to become one of us?" Airuna taunted. "Otherwise you should not have chosen me! Just put me down here on the ice and go home with your knife and live always like a boy, asking your father for every bite before putting it into your mouth. Yes, let me jump off the sledge. We are not so far from Papik now that I could not go there by myself. There men desired me and were eager to come to me

every night, even if there aren't many of them. Yes, and when we depart for our country, I shall have a nice tale to tell about the man who took me in marriage and then remained behind because of one of his father's knives."

Puala saw that it was too late now. If he brought the knife back, Airuna could not remain in Mala's house, and if he let her go, he would long for her ever after. Yes, he had better continue the trip. Perhaps, far out in the world, he would meet a ship belonging to white men and he would trade with them. Then he would bring back such precious things to his father that Mala would laugh about the knife.

"Aua—ai," he shouted to his dogs and hit them hard with the whip.

Soon afterwards when crossing some rough stretches on the ice, Airuna caught at his arm in order not to slip. He said to her angrily, "Leave me alone! Do not hold on to me," and he shoved her with his elbow.

"Oh, what an angry man! How nice to travel with you when you are like that," she said, offended. Puala did not answer.

They continued the trip in silence. He did not say a word to the wife who had made his departure so much more painful for him. He felt as if hairs were growing in his throat, making it difficult for him to breathe. He gave vent to his anger by whipping the dogs unmercifully.

"Are you still angry?" Airuna asked after a long time had passed and they had not spoken a word to each other. He knew that it was weak of him and that he should have said just the opposite, but he replied: "I am not angry at all."

"Yes, you are, and I know you are. I can see that you are angry. Here we are starting out on our trip with all that wrath in you. Let's rather throw that knife away, since it seems to interfere with your good humor. Give me the knife and I shall throw it away so that neither you nor your brave father need worry about it any longer. I and my people have lived for many years without such a knife. But perhaps your people will need it. They are such wonderful hunters, bringing so

much meat home; it will take up too much of their time to cut open their game."

"We shall stop here," Puala said a little later. "I want to stay here and think." And he took his snow stick and probed the snow to see whether it would be all right to build an igloo there.

While he was building the snow hut, he could not help admiring Airuna who was filling in the cracks from the outside and throwing snow over the entire hut. She was so handy and industrious! It was a wonderful little house where they spent their first night of the trip. During the night, he awoke and listened to Airuna's even breathing. Oh, it was good, after all, that she had taken the knife along. Now he would not have to use clumsy stone knives. He realized that his father would think of him in wrath only, so that it would be unsafe to meet him before many years had passed. This helped to subdue his homesickness and to still his longing for his family. But when he thought of his father and of those he had left behind, he felt ashamed and afraid.

The two slept long and when they awoke they did not feel like getting up. "You do not have to get ready for the trail," he said. Now that he was a married man, he could give orders. "I must mend the sledge first."

Then he went outside and fetched meat: "Get busy with the cooking."

They had a little pot along, a tin can which had been given to Airuna for a present when they moved on their bench. It was big enough to hold four pieces of meat and now it was placed over the fire which Puala had made with two sticks.

"Maybe my father will follow us," he thought while he inspected the runners of his sledge. "Yes, probably he will come after me and it will be best if he stops me from leaving, because we took the knife. Then I can force Airuna to go along and she will have to stay with me."

But Mala did not pursue his son. His sledge never appeared on the far horizon, and after a few days of lovemaking and feasting the young couple traveled towards the south to meet Papik.



XIV

"ORSOKIDOK," said Aba, the next day, "bring me the big knife. I must cut up some meat for cooking, and then you can have it back."

"It is not here. What should I do with it? I am busy building our meat rack."

"Orsokidok," she shouted again. "The knife is not in here. Why did you take it?"

Upik had slept until now. All night through he had been very unhappy because his brother had left. He awoke now and asked with fear in his voice: "The big knife is gone? Just look if it is not behind the lamp."

Aba looked. "No," she said, "it is not there. Puala must have taken it with him! I heard him ask Mala for it, but Mala refused. Yes, he has surely taken our big knife along."

Orsokidok came into the house. "What is that? Did I hear you say that Puala took the knife?"

"So it seems, for both he and the knife are gone. I suppose he decided to take it along to make the Netsiliks jealous," Aba said:

All day long, the three thought about it.

"What shall we do without the knife?" Upik finally spoke up.

"We shall find a stone somewhere around here that can be used for cutting," Orsokidok answered.

"One has heard about the Netsiliks before," Aba remarked. "They are people who take whatever they like without paying for it, or without fighting for it. On the ship the sailors chased them away in anger. Oh, how I remember those ships! It is long since I have heard strangers speak and now my soul is filled with memories. Yes, there on the ships they despised the Netsiliks for their ways. The men on the ships were wise, like Mala. The sailors were very careful with everything they possessed,

and always collected lots of blubber because they wanted to come home with tremendous stores."

The two young people did not want to hear about the ships any more. They had listened to these tales so often, and they knew that Mala preferred that they forget them.

"Mala hates to talk about the white men," explained Aba, "because their thoughts are in his mind, and he does not want their words in his mouth. But here we are, without a knife which the people on the ship might have flung in the sea just because they had tired of it. Ah, the white men who were always so eager for women and blubber!"

"Upik," Orsokidok said, "come, let's go after Puala and his wife. Perhaps he will return then, and we won't be so lonesome."

"Why do you want to bring them back?" Aba asked. "A man who wants to travel is just like water. As soon as the dam is removed, it runs away, and as long as it is kept back, it is quiet and murky. Only when it's in motion does it foam and show life."

Orsokidok's and Upik's thoughts were cloudy. They wondered what Mala would say when he returned.

"WHAT! You say he took my knife? My precious weapon! Alas, my son has become a Netsilik! Soon his tongue will speak their language, just as his head is already full of their thoughts."

Inupaujak went inside to hear Aba's report on the calamity that had befallen their household. Mala stood there a long time and thought of his boy whom he had brought up to be a good hunter. Now he had gone, thinking only of himself and his own future.

"It is just the same as when one was young," Mala finally admitted, his voice tinged with sadness. "Then, one wanted to take everything one saw. . . . Oh, well, give me a hand here in unharnessing the dogs and feeding them."

But Upik had to do everything alone, because Mala only

stood and stared in stunned silence in the direction in which Puala had departed.

The next day, when the sun had turned so far sideways as not to shine into his eyes, Mala went to the top of the mountain, sat upon a stone, and searched the horizon for the son who had left him. Then, for the first time, it occurred to Mala that one day old age would be upon him. But he shrugged at the thought, for was he not living in a wild country where the animals were so unafraid that hunters need not be very courageous and clever to trap them? Besides, his sons were grown now and could get along without him. When he finally left the mountain, he was convinced that Puala would not return to stay with his father and be his joy.

"Let me have your small knife," Inupaujak said in the evening. She wanted to chop liver for them. "Why is it that we have only fresh liver in the house?" she continued. "Let's have some putrid liver. There should be some in the house."

"Putrid liver is only kept near our spring camp. Can't you remember any more? Have you forgotten where we lived before?"

"Yes, but I'd like a change. Let's go and get some of that liver. Airuna has left, and when I sit sewing here I hear nothing but Aba's words. I know all of them already! Let's go visiting and see other places. Better still, let's go back to our own people! By now they have surely forgotten that there was any enmity between us and they will be glad when we tell them of the countries we have seen on our travels."

They all looked at Mala because never before had their great desire been expressed so boldly in his hearing. But Mala did not answer.

"Mala," Inupaujak went on, "did you not hear what I said? Why do you not listen when I talk? We want to go back. Your sons are grown up and we might be able to catch up with Puala and take him along. Then there will be many more of us and the white men will be eager for our fox skins and ready to pay much for them. They shall give me everything I point at when I stay with them nights."

"Silence, woman!" Mala commanded. "One has come here

because one wishes to dwell here. I told you long ago that the white men are my enemies. They aroused my wrath and I cannot forget it as long as I live."

"Yes, but I want to go back to them," Inupaujak insisted. "And you others who are just sitting there, why do you not tell Mala that you, too, wish to travel? I want to see other people! I want to talk with them! Why did you take me away for a second time from the man to whom I was married? Look, here we are two women whose husbands you killed. I won't stay with you any longer. I have been your wife for many years and now I want other men. Aba and I know very well that you refused to trade wives with the Netsiliks. But perhaps it's really your intention to travel and find other men for us?"

"Over there," Mala said coldly, "sits a woman who has no ears and did not hear that I commanded her to be silent."

"I shall not be silent!" Inupaujak screamed defiantly. "Since Puala went away I have thought more about traveling than before. I pity you, Mala, and want to be with you—but not for always! Once a woman must speak of what's in her mind. Puala traveled because his wife desired it and they are only wed a short time."

"I see I shall have to go outside," remarked Mala. "I must go where there is peace." But even after he had left the house, he still heard the ranting voice of Inupaujak.

"Why are women like that?" Mala asked himself. "Inupaujak and I have just made a trip through the country and we enjoyed the strenuous traveling during the day and the lovemaking at night. But now she shouts and complains so much that it will be necessary for me to beat her. Perhaps it is only because the others have left and there are not so many now to whom she can talk."

When he came inside again, everything was quiet. But presently Inupaujak started to nag. "So, there you are, Mala! Did you come to tell us to get everything ready for the trip?"

"Be quiet," Mala ordered.

"I shall not! I shall go across the sea to other people. Come, Orsokidok, lie over here with me. You may stay with

me because Mala is nothing better than a piece of skin that only moves when one picks it up."

Inupaujak's bold speech set Orsokidok thinking. What Inupaujak said was true enough. Puala had left because he was Mala's son and very much like his father. Orsokidok had often noticed that Puala utterly disregarded the authority of the older man. He was just like Mala, giving orders, and always acting as if he were the master. It was for that reason that Orsokidok had always given in to Puala and obeyed his orders. Now it seemed that Mala was aging. When they went to a cache for meat, recently, it had been necessary for Mala to leave a few pieces behind which Orsokidok had fetched later on his sledge. But Inupaujak was still young; Orsokidok, who longed for a woman, scarcely slept that night, because his thoughts of her were so disturbing.

Time passed and the sun rose higher. The flocks of birds were traveling northward. They were geese and never thought that in the land to which they traveled there was still freezing weather. They had grown fat where they had lived before, and now they longed for the North.

Mala was more silent than ever before. He had discovered that since Puala had departed, Inupaujak and Orsokidok were as man and wife. But Orsokidok was his helper and it was against Mala's dignity to chase the boy out of his house; he was an orphan and never had owned anything other than what Mala had given him.

It was very quiet in the house now. When they returned from the hunt, they brought the prey indoors and skinned it, never uttering a word. If Mala gave an order it was executed, and if he asked a question he received an answer. But when they busied themselves with their tools in the evening not a word was spoken, and it seemed that they all had forgotten how to laugh.

Mala longed for Puala and resolved to commune with his guardian spirits, who had assisted him before this when he was in trouble. Now he was in no actual danger, but only desired to have a wish fulfilled. He put all his longing and disappointment into the chant and his voice rang out through the igloo:

"Where to, where to in this world? If the much feared Amo would only come to me! Let him who is without teeth be my companion. I know that I glide; I feel that I glide. He, of the eyes, is coming to me. Here in this place I seek enlightenment. Let me ride through the air; let me glide under the snow! Where to in this world?"

At last he tired of chanting. His spirits had left him, or else they were busy elsewhere. He began again, putting new strength into his words, and at last he felt that he was in touch with the obscure powers. He grew hot and cold and beheld Puala in his thoughts. But no matter what frenzy he put into his chant, it did not help. The others sat by quietly, the women filled with fear and the young men aghast, for they had never yet felt the grip of the spirit on their own souls. Suddenly Mala shrieked aloud and fell back upon the bench. There he remained, gasping for breath.

Aba turned around cautiously. She saw that Mala was covered with perspiration and foaming at the mouth. His nostrils and the pupils of his eyes were distended. Perhaps his soul was now roving through the world! It was best to leave him alone. So they all sat quietly without stirring; once in a while they looked over at him. They saw that gradually his distorted features relaxed. At last he fell asleep, breathing peacefully. He was utterly exhausted and slept from sheer fatigue.

Aba covered him carefully with skins and pulled off his boots. Then she pushed his legs under the cover, spreading extra skins over his feet. Mala awoke with a start, and jumped up wildly. He grabbed Orsokidok by the throat. "Oh, you wretch! You are just a lemming whom I brought up, and I am supposed to be jealous of you! Get out, you dog, if you value your life! You, my own foster-son, dares to take my wife from me!"

Orsokidok was paralyzed with fright. Mala's accusation was only too true. Oh, Mala was wise! He knew everything and now he had discovered that Inupaujak was deceiving him. How had he found out? It had been Inupaujak's own idea, and they had agreed that Mala should not know about it.

Mala clutched his throat so tightly that Orsokidok could not utter a word. He could not even get his breath, but he had to show himself courageous. If he must die, he would rather be slain by a great hunter than killed like a fox, choking for breath in a trap. Yes, he must free himself of Mala's grasp immediately. He caught hold of Mala with both hands, and shoved one knee into his abdomen. It had to be done quickly; there was no time to think of anything but resistance and soon he saw that Mala must let go of him.

"Oh, you wretch!" Mala cried. "I could kill you!" Mala had not realized that he was not the stronger any longer.

Now Orsokidok rolled off the bench; Mala was lying half on the ground and Orsokidok struck him once more. The great Mala was lying on top of all their blubber, and it was Orsokidok who had thrown him there. Yes, Orsokidok had overpowered the strongest man that he had ever known.

A terrible calamity had befallen Mala. He was lying here, thrown by his foster-son—by Orsokidok, the "lean one," who had been given that name on account of his skinniness. Mala could find nothing to say and he got to his feet silently. He wore neither boots nor a jacket; now he remembered that he himself had taken off his fur when he had started to invoke the spirits.

"I am dizzy," he said quietly, and at that moment he himself and all the others knew that he was not the strongest any longer and that Orsokidok was the power in the house.

Mala lay down on the bench. He would have gone outside if he had been fully clothed. All he wanted was to lie down, for he had lost all his strength.

"Come and lie with me. Come, I have a warm cover for you. Here, drink the water. It will quiet you." Aba handed him a vessel made of hide. Mala plucked out most of the reindeer hairs that floated on top of the water and then drank eagerly.

"Give me more," he said. After his thirst was quenched, he lay down beside his fat old wife. He could not understand what had happened. His thoughts had left him. He only noticed the sour smell of Aba's sweat. But it was cosy here and he snuggled up to her and soon fell asleep. The three young people

were each lying on a bench and it was a long time before they fell asleep.

"Just listen, there are dogs in the front house," Upik cried. He was up in a second, pulling on his high boots and trousers and his furs. He rushed outside and a moment later he shouted: "Oh, Orsokidok, all the dogs are in the front house eating our meat. Get up quickly and help me chase them out. I shall keep them off the blubber meanwhile."

Orsokidok hurried outside without delay. Both chased the same dog, and bumped their heads together so hard that they were badly bruised. It happened in the dark room where they were storing their skins. "Oh, it's you!" they both shouted, and laughed. "So it was you—I thought it was a dog!" While they were still rubbing their heads, the dog they had been chasing escaped.

"Oh, how my head hurts!" Upik exclaimed when they came inside. "Tell me, Orsokidok, does your head, too, feel as if it were all broken to pieces?"

Orsokidok fastened a snow block in the entrance before he came inside. Then he laughed long and Upik forgot his pain and laughed with him until everybody was wide awake and there was no more sleep that night.

Mala's head was still heavy from the frenzy of the day before, but he got up and whittled on a reindeer antler which was to be used as a harpoon point.

Orsokidok came rushing home. He had been away the bigger part of the day and told how he had seen bears mating but had not had sufficient weapons to go after them. Now he came to fetch a lamp and then he would follow their tracks.

"If there are bears, I myself would like to kill them," Mala said. "I shall go along with you. Come, let's sit together on the sledge. I long to chew bear meat and to suck the marrow in their bones."

"Oh, if you want to go hunting bear, I will stay behind," Orsokidok answered. "My dogs are so tired that they cannot keep up with yours and I must first mend my sledge as all

the peat cover under the runners has come off. Aba, have you warm water so I can soak the peat and paste it to the runners?"

"You will surely regret it if you don't come with me," Mala said, "in pursuit of those bears."

"Why should I be put out? I have already killed a few bears this season. You will bring the game home and that shall be my punishment because I forgot to take my spears along and could not kill them."

The young people laughed and Mala and Upik got ready. They took their weapons and started out. Orsokidok heard them tell the dogs about the bears in order to make them more eager to run their best.

"Yes," said Orsokidok. "You will soon pick up their tracks. Then we shall have the meat of the Great White One tomorrow. Perhaps you will even be back before we retire."

MALA and his son were on a bear hunt. The snow crunched under the runners and the dogs flung their hind legs high and their jaws were wide open. They were filled with the fever of the chase, and soon Mala forgot all his worries and disappointments and shouted to his team encouragingly.

"Oh, you fleet ones! You shall have warm meat to eat. Onward! Show that you are the fastest dogs that ever pulled a sledge. Yes, there are the tracks. Now you yourself can see what is in store for you. Oh, my fleet dogs. There is the bear! Run so fast that sagas shall tell about you."

The bears put up a stiff fight but they were doomed to die, and soon Mala cut them open with the knife. It was too late to return, especially as father and son were very tired. The dogs were fed the warm entrails of the beasts; even meat was given to them. They gnawed the bones while Mala and Upik stored away the best parts of the bear. Even after Mala and Upik were inside their igloo they could still hear the dogs gnawing at the bones. Two happy men and a team of contented dogs slept in camp that night.

"Upik, do you hear the wind springing up? Put your

things on and pile snow against the house. Quick, Upik! This is only a hut made of loose snow. Perhaps I'd better help you. Oh, it is too late already! Watch out now!"

The wind had torn a big hole in the side of the snow hut, which was widening all the time the men dressed. The little hut was awl with snow.

"My fur is full of snow and it's trickling down my back," Upik complained.

"And my mittens are buried under the snow," said Mala.

In a way, it was rather nice to be overtaken like this by a northern storm. It always springs up quickly and as a rule is not taken seriously because it comes so frequently and usually is of short duration. The two men seemed like an inexperienced pair of travelers in these climes, for they had not taken the necessary precautions. The bear hunt and the cutting up of the animals had made them so tired that they had thought only of sleep. Now they had to pay for it by building an entirely new hut, right next to the first one. This time they piled more snow over it than was really necessary.

They laughed and teased each other about their mishap.

"We are like two Netsilikis, shown up in their stupidity. Let's put the sledge on top of the house before we go inside," Upik said.

They put the sledge on the roof so it would be out of the reach of the dogs. Then they crawled inside again, beating the snow off their furs.

"Now let's sleep some more," Mala said, after he had quenched his thirst with snow and eaten some frozen bear heart. They had not taken along any implements for a fire and therefore could not cook the meat. They crawled under cover again and, snoring heartily, forgot all about the snow-storm.

This time the snowstorm from the north lasted long, so that each time they awoke they decided to go to sleep again. They both longed for boiled meat but craved drinking water even more. They crawled repeatedly out of the little igloo to see what the weather was like. They knew that it would be impossible to return through the storm.

"We might have been able to find our way down to the shore before," Mala said after he had been out to inspect the weather for the fourth time. "We could have gone with the wind then, but now the snowdrift is so heavy that it would be impossible for our dogs to break through it."

And again they slept, until at last their heads were heavy from too much sleep and Upik went outside to look after the dogs.

Immediately he called to Mala: "Come and see. Look what the dogs did to our sledge! It was blown off the house and they have eaten all the traces. How shall we get home now? How can we travel?"

"What! The sledge is chewed up?" Mala exclaimed. "Well, we have behaved on this whole trip like young people without any sense." But he laughed and Upik laughed with him while the storm still blew fiercely.

Some time later the weather improved, and the snowdrift diminished. Father and son had eaten and were now trying to assemble the little pieces the dogs had left of the traces. There was just enough for two cross bars to keep the sledge together, and over it they tied the hides of the bears, so that they could put the meat on top. As they themselves could not ride on the sledge, their progress was very slow, but finally they reached the coast.

"It is a good thing," Mala said, "that we got so far. Now we'll have the sun behind us until we get home. How they will laugh at us when they see us approach with our wonderful sledge and the little meat that is left over! We went out after two bears and by now we have most of them in our bellies!"

The snowdrift had increased once more, the wind whipped the thick flakes into their faces, but nevertheless driving was faster now and soon they reached camp.

"Where are our dogs?" Upik asked, when they arrived. Mala, too, had made the same observation and now he said: "Orsokidok's sledge is also gone. Most likely he went hunting and the weather detained him, just as with us."

They shouted inside the house that they had returned. But nobody answered and nobody came outside. Mala grew angry

and did not even stop to unharness the dogs. He kicked aside the snow block that served as the door, and crawled inside. There he found Aba, crying, but Orsokidok was not around, and Inupaujak, too, was gone.

"Aba," Mala asked, "why are you crying? Where are the others?"

But Aba went on crying and shaking her head.

Mala grabbed her by the arm and Aba threw herself over on her side.

"They left us," she sobbed. "Mala, the two of them ran away."

Mala was aghast. He sat up on the bench, his thoughts at a complete standstill. "What did you say?" he asked at last. "Aba, speak without crying! You mentioned the other two before. What has happened? Where are they?"

Upik had come into the house and now stood next to his father. They were both covered with snow. They had come inside out of the storm without even beating the snow off their clothes. But who could think about that at such a moment?

The others had left them! Mala felt as if his bow had broken and he could not shoot any more arrows from its string.

"They left?" he asked, almost in a whisper. "Where did they go?"

"Oh," Aba replied, "Inupaujak and Orsokidok have departed for the old country. The night you and Upik went after the bears, Orsokidok wanted to follow you, but Inupaujak asked him to stay. She spoke many words to Orsokidok, such words as you heard from her before you left. She was full of strange thoughts and her words were those of a raving woman. And the next morning they left, for their thoughts were stronger than their fear of you. But Orsokidok did not want to be a thief. There is the small knife you made from a nail. He took only the stone knife, but Inupaujak took her knife and her scissors because they were her property. When they were leaving I tried to stop them, but Orsokidok struck me and said that he would die if he did not go now. He told me you must not pursue them because they would never return to your house and his eyes would shed tears if ever he were

forced to fight his foster-father. Those were the words he spoke and then they departed. Oh, Mala, I cried because we are all alone now! I reminded him of the long trail and warned him he would not find his way. But he pointed out that he had been grown up when we came out here. Tell me, Mala, do you really think I can still go on the trail and see once more the country I left?" Aba wanted to know and gazed at her man pleadingly.

"So people went on the trail!" Mala said. "We may not be as many as before, but it will be so much easier now to provide the necessary meat. Let's first beat the snow off our garments and then eat some boiled meat."

"There is no fire in the house," Aba answered. "I could think only of this new misfortune and it made me cry. But now I shall make fire and boil meat."

"Go and get the bear meat that we have brought along," Mala told her. "It will be good for us to eat the meat of wise animals. Then we shall sit down and think."

Upik was like one paralyzed. Three people, all alone in this vast country!

"Had we not better return to our home land?" he asked his father. "Believe me, the people there have missed you and will be only too glad if you return now. You need not fight with them ever again, and they surely will respect you for your long journey. As for the white men, they must have left meanwhile, as they always used to do. Yes, let's start out quickly," he cried, the very thought of it exciting him. "Let's not lose any time, but cross the ice while it's still safe. We have dogs enough and we can even overtake the others. Then we can stand on the shore and greet Orsokidok and Inupaujak when they arrive, so that they will be filled with shame, and once more we can all live together."

Mala did not say a word, although his lips moved. When he tired of this silence he arose and went outside.

"Look, he is going off with the dogs," Aba exclaimed. "Probably he wants to pursue them. Oh, I'm afraid terrible things will happen, and there are surely not enough of us to kill others. And I long so for Orsokidok! It was so good to

have him around. When he departed, he was angry, but maybe he has changed his mind now and will be glad if Mala catches up with them and brings them back. Look, there he drives away. He took his knife and his weapons along. Are we two to remain behind all alone? Fewer and fewer people are left in this country!"

Mala had forgotten to take provisions along. He drove off at terrific speed, although the snowstorm had not died down yet, and presently he disappeared from sight. He recalled how he himself had fled once from the white men under shelter of a blizzard. Now he would show these runaways that he could withstand worse weather than they themselves. But of what use was the speed of his dogs? What was his fury compared to Nature's? Under the pressure of the storm, a tremendous crevasse had opened in the ice, too wide to be crossed safely. Moreover, the crevasse had formed that same day and had not yet frozen over. This proved that Orsokidok had not been delayed by it on his trip down to the sea for he must have passed here before the chasm opened.

"There is no use trying to get across here. I'll have to try somewhere else," Mala thought. He journeyed along the edge of the ice towards the south. Seals were popping out of the water, glad to be able to breathe easily once more. They squinted at the light and disappeared quickly when they saw the sledge rushing by. Whenever the dogs showed signs of slowing up, Mala cracked the whip over their heads. There was no mercy in him when he thought of his lovely little wife. He could not live without her! Although she was stubborn and excitable, she was the only one who could amuse him and give him joy.

He thought of all the trips they had taken together. They always had found much delight in their hunting trips. No, he certainly did not intend to give up Inupaujak!

"Hui!" He cruelly whipped the one dog that tried to slow up a bit. The animal howled and pulled forward with renewed vigor.

Undoubtedly bad luck was pursuing Mala. The crevasse along which he drove ran right up to the mainland, joining the

coast at a spot where steep hills, impossible to traverse, sloped straight down to the sea. He saw that the fugitives had not taken this trail. They had undoubtedly crossed over to the land where they had spent a whole winter some years ago—the big country where Mala was born and had lived through so many experiences!

Would he ever return to his homeland as a man to command respect because of all the long trips he had taken? Surely he would still be admired by the tribesmen of his old country, but he would absolutely have to bring his two wives back with him! He laughed at the thought that Orsokidok had made off with the more desirable of the two women. Yes, Mala must keep both his wives and Orsokidok must remain his helper until Mala himself decided upon a wife for him. Had he not always been a member of Mala's household? So, then, he must remain!

It became increasingly difficult to keep the dogs running; to all appearances, the exhausted animals were almost unable to go on. Mala turned back along the big crevasse, to see whether there was a place narrow enough to cross. He drove on and on, farther and farther away. Finally it was impossible to urge the dogs on any longer. Mala stopped and the dogs immediately threw themselves down and curled up; a second later, they were fast asleep. Although they were hungry, they preferred rest to food.

Mala climbed to the top of an iceberg near by. He saw that the crevasse reached far out, as far as he could see. Perhaps it ran all the way over to the old country which was hidden from sight. Suddenly it became clear to him that Nature herself had aided the young couple in making their escape. Perhaps Orsokidok had become adept in commanding the powers of Nature and, when crossing here, had used strong incantations so that the ice burst and the water, free of its shackles, flooded the chasm.

Mala felt very small now. In days gone by, he had often compared youth's strength with the growing feebleness of old age. But then it had been he who was the strong one. Now it was different. His limbs were tired and his head was heavy.

He climbed down from the iceberg, built a little snow hut for himself, and resolved to give up the pursuit.

MALA returned to his two companions. Days came and went, one like the other, and life was much more monotonous than before for now there was only one woman in the place.

"Do not go too far away," Aba would admonish Mala every morning. "And leave a dog in the house so I have some company. Now that you are always out on the hunt, I almost forget how to talk. Since there are only the three of us and we have just one team, there is always enough meat right near by."

The men stayed close to the camp and caught seals. As soon as they had killed one animal, they would hitch up a dog and let him run home with their catch. Then Aba tied up the dog and felt that at least she had a hand in the daily routine.

"If only one had children to give one some trouble," Aba sighed, longing for her own daughter of whom she had not heard for many, many years, and who in her thoughts was still a little girl. Once in a while she would accompany the men on the hunt. Then, while the men watched air holes, she would drive the sledge in a wide circle, chasing the timid seals towards where Mala and Upik were lying in wait for them. Still she had too much time on her hands. They had more meat than they could use and in many places along the coast they still had stores that were now rotting in the caches. Bagging meat seemed unnecessary work. Mala knew very well that now, with good traveling weather, the other two desired to cross the ice, longing to return to their people and have more adventures.

One day when he could not stand it any longer, he cried out: "I know very well what you want! Why do you two not say what you think, as long as you are against me? You want me to return home! Well, I'm not afraid to meet the people back home,—those little people who just live and chatter until they die. But now only you two are with me and therefore you may know:—yes I found out that the white men were

stronger than I, and for that I hated them. I alone must be the one who thinks for those who live around me. I understood better how to bring home a good bag than the masters of the ships, but just the same, I could not hold my own with them. It was as if the white men were standing on a high mountain, casting their shadows over me. I learned how to catch the great whale and to use their rifles, but I could never find real joy in all that. I tested their inventions and knew how to use them better than even the white men themselves. But just the same, I had to do what they told me. And the white men have meanwhile taught my own people, and any one of them may now be a better hunter than I, if only he has a better rifle. I ask you, how could I put up with that?"

"You may be right," Upik said, "but we, too, can buy better rifles. Only fox skins are needed to obtain all the rifles of the white men. If we have enough skins we can get everything we want from them."

But Mala shook his head. "It is as if the white men buy our very souls when they pay us for our foxes. Often I have longed to be with the white men, but when I remember that they are my masters, my longing dies."

"But, father," Upik protested, "don't you ever want to return to the white men?"

"No," Mala replied. "I shall stay here! But what you say shows that your thoughts dwell on returning to the homeland. I shall give you dogs and you may take along everything you want. Perhaps even Aba will go with you and I shall stay here alone,—yes, I shall always remain here."

"Mala, do you really think that I would ever leave you?" Aba spoke up. "Upik is young but I am a woman who has grown old, and the only things I know are cooking and loving. Why should I leave you? It may be that Puala is coming back. Perhaps they have a son and yours will be the proud joy of a grandfather. Upik, too, can get himself a wife and bring other people up here. There is plenty of room in this great country, and there is meat in abundance."

"Why do you talk that way?" Upik asked. "Don't let us

forget how to laugh in this house. Then it would be hard for a man to long for his home when he is out on the hunt."

"Let's go towards the north," Mala said. "There are wide stretches in this country which we have not yet seen. Let's travel on and see how big a country this really is. Why is it that people are satisfied to live in a country they scarcely know? When I was small, my grandfather told me a saga of four people who desired to see the entire world.

"They drank together for the last time, out of a stream, and then traveled, each in a different direction. Both men took their wives along and traveled all through the summer. Only when winter came and it was dark did they live in a house. Otherwise, their life was just one long trip and they visited many camps. They brought children into the world and grew old, but they still went on traveling. When they came to a place where people had children of the same age as their own, their children would marry and ask their parents to remain with them in the same camp. But the parents traveled on because, in their youth, they had vowed that they would see everything created in this world.

"Finally they grew so old that their grandchildren, themselves by that time grown and able to hunt, had to lead them. But the old folks still insisted upon traveling. They could not die, they said, as long as there was something they had not seen.

"At last the great day came when they again met the comrades of their youth. They, too, had grown old and stumbled on, a stick in one hand, and leaning with the other arm upon a youngster. And when they met, of the cups they had taken along after that parting drink, only the handles were left. They had been so long on the trail that they had used up the cups, dipping them in all the streams they had passed. But now they could die peacefully because they had seen the whole world and had wandered along the shores of all the seas.

"And this is the story of the people who wanted to see everything that is in the world—we are all like that," Mala added. "Each one of us is eager for adventure."

"I knew this saga," Aba said, "but I had quite forgotten

it. I have no little children to whom I can hand down the words of my parents. We are just three in this camp."



XV

MONTHS of light and months of darkness came and went in unending procession.

One summer, Mala decided to remain on the coast and go hunting with his kayak. He had spent the last year in the country, hunting for reindeer and musk-ox, and in the course of his travels he had discovered that this country also reached up to a mountain range, spreading far out on the other side.

"It seems all the countries of this earth are alike," Mala said. "There where we were born, the country had two sides, also, and when I was in Baffin Land, I noticed the same thing. Over in Piling, we followed a valley all through the country. Now that I think of it, all the countries I ever heard about have two sides. This seems to be their nature."

They lived now along a stretch of the coast that turned from the sun. Much driftwood floated ashore here, but they could not make use of it all. Still they had many wonderful implements, for Upik, just like his father, was very dexterous, and when they sat in front of the tent in the evening the two men loved to work on their tools. But they did not talk much to each other.

"Oh, tell me something," Aba would beg. "My tongue is almost ready to rot in my mouth."

Once in a while, Mala would try to tell them what he knew about life, hoping that Upik and Aba might learn by his many experiences. He would whittle on a shaft for a harpoon and say: "Seals are wise animals. One can tell by them the change of seasons. When it is summer, they sink to the ground as soon as they are killed. But when winter comes they float on top of the sea after they are dead to show the people that they have much blubber now, and are good to eat."

"Yes, seals are wise," Aba repeated. She was playing with a puppy and had forgotten that she had coaxed Mala to tell them something.

"It is good to live here," Upik said, "because the north wind keeps away the gnats. Why, I wonder, are there gnats?"

"Gnats are the lice of the air," Mala informed his son. "Everything that lives has its lice."

He watched Upik, who had risen and was going up the mountainside, to look out over the sea. He was taller now than Mala himself and was a very able huntsman. But Upik was unhappy. He longed for people—longed, too, for a wife.

Aba talked to the puppy as if to a child. She lifted it up and even held it to her old withered breasts as grandmothers will do with their grandchildren. They say they are doing it so that the little one will not cry, but the truth is that they like to play mother and to think that they are still young and fertile. Mala was filled with pity for the wife who was so loyal to him and who never complained. He threw his arms around her and rested her head in his lap.

"Oh, look at the stupid man! Let me go," Aba said, but she did not move. Mala fondled her head and picked off one louse after another. Aba listened and smiled as he cracked the vermin between his teeth. She closed her eyes and murmured: "Oh, he eats my lice. They will drift through his guts and be red when they come out. At last, Mala eats my lice."

After a while, she got up and said: "Let me pick your lice too." So she took his head in her lap and cracked the lice with the stubs of her front teeth, worn down from many years of chewing skins for boots.

"A SHIP! A ship!" Upik shouted. "Look! Come and see! There's a ship." He came rushing down the mountainside, scarcely seeing where he went. He fell twice, but he ran on as soon as he had picked himself up, and when he reached the tent he was so excited that he could not even talk.

"Oh, at last I have seen a ship! Now the white men are

coming to our shore!" He danced and jumped around like a little child that has not yet learned to control himself.

"Look, it is out there! Oh, how wonderful that something is going to happen here! We shall now see everything we have ever heard about. At last the white men are coming to us with their fine things."

Mala was like a reindeer surprised by a sudden attack. His limbs became rigid, and many thoughts darted through his mind. Here were white men with rifles and knives. They would laugh about the stone knives which he had ground with untiring toil throughout long winter nights.

Aba and Upik had already gone to the top of the hill, while Mala still sat there, stunned. Finally he rose and followed the others. He could hear them shout with joy and now they even started to dance.

"Look at the old woman, so fat and heavy. She still can jump and thinks she is a child still."

But something tightened inside of Mala, and shivers ran along his spine. After all these years, there was a ship again! He wondered whether there were whites on board who knew him: whether the Captain for whom he had worked was there.

And then he himself beheld the ship. Oh, yes, that surely was a ship. He could not turn his eyes away.

"Yes," he said, "that is a ship, sure enough, but it is not one of those seen before. All the ships one knows had other rigging. But of course the great white men build different kinds of ships."

Now they saw smoke rising from the ship and although it had sails, too, it seemed scarcely to move; it was so far out that it was only a speck on the horizon.

"What shall we do?" Upik asked. "Let's wave to them and shout."

"Oh," Aba said, "they will never hear our voices, but let's signal to them with fox skins. Then they will come quickly because of their greed."

"At last I shall smoke tobacco," Upik cried. "I cannot even remember all the other things that Orsokidok spoke of so often."

Mala did not say anything; he was very thoughtful. Yes, the white men would be here soon. Once again he would see those whom he had hated for so many years. Oh, he knew them and their superiority. They looked upon people like himself only as something they could use.

Suddenly, around his wrists and his ankles he could feel again the shackles with which the white men had tortured him because he had killed a few men in his own camp. The whites had acted as if they were relatives of the murdered ones for whom they must take vengeance, and so they had bound him with iron chains. How well he remembered everything! It had been at that time that he learned the ways of the white men. Perhaps those on the ship over there were the same white men! Mala never wanted to board one of their ships again. Let those poor hunters who could not obtain meat for themselves eat their food!

"Oh, forget the ship," Mala said to the other two. "Leave the white people alone. Come, let's load our sledges and drive farther into the country. I am eager to hunt musk-ox and taste their tallow." Now his voice was perfectly quiet. Once again he was the great Mala who gave orders and expected them to be obeyed.

But Upik jumped up and his face was utterly changed. He shouted so loud that it was almost a roar. "I will not leave here, now that white men are coming at last. Do you really want us to use dull stone knives all our lives? No, now that a ship is really coming to give us all the things we need so badly, we shall remain here!"

Mala saw that his son had completely changed, and he understood. It was the magic of the white men, able to span such a great distance that it could even charm people right on this shore. Upik even laughed and he had not laughed for a very long time.

Mala gazed into the eyes of his son and felt that he had lost all his former strength.

"Come along with me to hunt musk-ox," he said.

"No, you will never get me away from this ship until I tire of it myself. We shall stay here and trade with them so

that we shall have much to remember after they have left us."

"Mala, listen to me," Aba spoke up. "Let's stay here with the ship. Is it really your intention to go and hunt musk-ox when you can eat biscuits out of big cases? We have meat enough for the winter and blubber in abundance. Let's remain with the ship! Oh, Mala, you must let me stay here. I have longed for a little joy for so many years! Remember how alone we are, just we three. Can't you do anything better than disappoint those who have helped you all your life long? I want to stay with the ship. I do not want to go into the mountains now and hunt musk-ox."

Mala stepped forward towards her threateningly.

"No," she said, "you shall not beat me any more! I have heard that the white men forbid whipping women. And you should not use force on me because, after all these years, there is some joy coming to me. Surely others will arrive to trade with the ship and for what have we so many fox skins stacked up? Besides, how can we resist the wishes of the white men? You know very well that they want fox skins for their women-folk."

"Why don't you go and hunt musk-ox?" Upik suggested, stepping in front of Aba. "Go inland, if you want to be alone. Surely it will be wonderful for you to be rid of us two. It seems that you prefer to have fewer and fewer people around! Probably your nature craves solitude."

Mala felt a buzzing sensation in his head. But he did not think of using violence. "You go to the ship and stay there as long as you like. We are people who think differently now. You have not had my experiences—things I remember when I am sad. Just stay and I shall leave by myself. Perhaps we will meet again some day. Then I shall have meat for you and lots of tallow and many warm hides."

But Upik and Aba had no time for parting speeches. They climbed higher up to get a better view of the ship. Then they rushed down to the shore to fetch fox skins from the tent.

"Oh, it seems they think they can start trading even before the ship has arrived," Mala muttered. "They surely are anxious!"

Meanwhile he had loaded four dogs with skins and meat. Then he hung his implements around his neck and took his knife in his hand. It was the last one he had left from the time when he had still been powerful in his old country. The knife had been ground very thin now, but he was used to it. Without turning around, Mala led his dogs through the wide valleys in search of musk-ox.

THERE was the ship riding the waves. It came closer and closer. It was almost unbearable to have to stand here unable to pull it nearer to the shore. Their eyes rested joyfully on the wooden hulk. And Aba, here, was the only woman around! It was too bad that she had no one but Upik to speak to and to bare her thoughts.

It was then that Upik turned around, looking up the valley where he could still see Mala with his bundles around his neck, his traveling gear sticking out on both sides as he carried his salmon spears and his harpoons crosswise. How remarkable that a man could be so strong-willed as to leave, while a ship drew nearer and nearer to the coast.

"Look, Upik!" Aba cried. "There goes your father on the hunt."

"Oh, let him go inland. When the white men come, we will talk to them and experience everything we have always desired."

Aba thought that the ship looked smaller now than before when they had been up on the hill, but Mala seemed just as big as ever, and commanded even more respect than before. "Upik," she said, "look after your father. He surely is not happy now."

"No, but I am," Upik answered. "Oh, at last a ship is coming here! I am sure the white men wish to trade with us. Why didn't I catch more foxes last winter? Now I shall get a rifle and I also want a big knife and an axe made of iron, and matches, and wood for a sledge. I shall get everything I still remember from my childhood in exchange for my foxes."

"But we must also buy things for Mala," Aba reminded

him. "Don't forget that these are his foxes, too, and as he isn't around, we must act for him."

Upik thought it over for a little while. "Yes, father shall have something, too." He strode up and down, head bent. "He shall have something,—but what do you think he would like? No, why should we trade for him when he isn't here? He left us, didn't he? I shall take all the things that I can get, but father may use them when we go hunting. Too bad that I do not understand how to trade with the white men. I think one must feel ashamed to show the masters of the ships how greedy one is and how much one wants for one's skins. It is a good thing you are around, so we can act together."

"At last," Aba exclaimed, "I shall again have sewing needles made of fine iron, and two scissors. And oh, I long to see my face in a piece of glass! How poor Mala will stare when we meet him again, we will have all those precious things, and he will have only his stone axe. Upik, you know what Mala needs. You must trade his foxes for what will be useful to him. Oh, why didn't Mala stay with us?"

"I shall trade for myself and shall see that I get as much as I can. Later on, I shall give father something after I have tired of it." And Upik climbed a little higher to look at the ship again.

"I think the ship should go much faster," he complained when he reached the tent, in front of which Aba was sitting.

"Oh, yes, the big ship," Aba mumbled, "but my man has left me! How can a woman approach a ship when her man is not with her?"

"Oh, the fool, to run away just now when it would be worth while to live in this place! We have dwelt here so long when nothing happened."

"You should not call your father a fool," Aba reproached, eager to argue with the boy simply to pass the time. "Look how your boots are laced and the seam on your sole is open! I sew my fingers sore to keep you in footgear which you carelessly tear on the rocks. Mala never wears out his footgear as quickly as you. He is very careful of his things. Besides, it is much harder to sew for you than for him."

"Then it will be best if I get you sewing needles of iron so you won't have to work so hard any more," Upik said. "If you don't enjoy seeing white men and getting wood and eating their food and beholding new faces in camp, why do you stay here? Why don't you go with Mala, then?"

"That's what I am going to do," Aba replied in a determined voice. "I shall leave here. I shall follow Mala and go with him to hunt musk-ox."

"Oh, here is a crazy woman!" Upik shouted. "Are you really going to leave?"

"Yes, I shall leave," she said. Upik jumped up and, catching hold of her, tried to keep her back. "You are not going, you stupid woman! Did Mala make you mad, too? You will be sorry if you do not stay and wait for the ship."

"Let me go!" Aba cried. "You had better use your strength for something else. How can a weak woman resist the wishes of her husband? He said that one should go, and therefore one shall go."

"Oh, you two are old," Upik sneered. "Leaving me all alone to trade with the white people! Why don't you hurry, so that the trading will not annoy you. It might make you sad to find needles and knives in your tent. Go on, go away! Why don't you hurry?"

"I am hurrying," Aba cried. "I'll show you how I can hurry! I am hurrying after my man as a wife should do."

"Mad people!" Upik shouted after her. Then he rushed out of the tent, and went up the hill once more, looking for the ship which now seemed to be a little nearer than before. His mind was full of unrest, and down below he saw Aba going through the valley to catch up with Mala. It was too stupid of her. To all appearances she was serious. What an idea to leave now when there was a chance of having one's wishes come true!

"Aba, do you hear me? Aba, come back," he shouted down the mountainside. "Can't you see the white men coming over there with precious things? Aba, do not leave me in wrath! I never have traded before and I do not understand anything

about it. I shall buy everything for you and whatever we get for Mala's foxes shall be his."

Aba did not answer, because she was too far away, but she turned around once and shook her head. She continued her march across the plain in the direction where Mala had disappeared. Her stout legs went as fast as she could make them go. She grew short of breath, but she hurried on, bent upon catching up with her man. What a sorry figure she would be, if she neither caught up with her husband nor went down to the ship. There was only one of two things left for her to do now and she had chosen Mala. And so she must find him but what trail had he taken?

She ascended the hill she had seen him climb before. It had not been so long ago and if she only hurried now, she would soon reach him. She stumbled on, almost running, and when once she bent down for a mouthful of water from a stream, she heard a howl. That must be one of Mala's dogs! Now she knew in what direction to go, and she hurried on. She did not have to go far, for soon she saw Mala sitting on a stone boulder as if waiting for her. Her face flushed with joy at the prospect of being united with him again. Yes, together they would go hunting musk-ox, as if they were once more young and happy, and the ship would be forgotten. They could always meet Upik later and listen to his tales.

Mala saw her approach. Oh, loyal Aba! She was not going to leave him, after all! That made him very happy for heavy thoughts crowded into his head when there was nobody around with whom to talk. When she came up to him now, he was resolved to speak friendly words to her. But it is not easy to say what one wishes on the spur of the moment. Aba, too, did not dare to give expression to her real thoughts. As she drew nearer, she stopped running. She walked slowly but her heart was beating fast and she was gasping for breath when she finally reached him.

"Are you taking a walk?" Mala asked.

"Yes, I decided to go across the mountains," Aba answered.

"You are as red in the face as if you had been running," Mala continued.

"One carried a somewhat heavy load," Aba replied, "and when a woman has lived all summer along the shore, she is not used to much walking any more." Mala lifted his brows a little and looked at her. The two smiled at each other, but immediately became sensible again.

"If you are tired, we can rest here," Mala suggested. "There is shelter enough for both of us to sleep between the stones."

"Is it a woman's place to say whether one should rest?" Aba asked. "Oh, I have heard something very queer just now! A woman is to say whether one should go on, or rest here! Yes, one lives through strange experiences."

Mala leveled the ground, spread out some skins, and soon the two went to rest, covering their heads with skins so as not to be annoyed by the gnats. When it had become quite dark, Aba found it easier to speak.

"Oh, Mala!" she murmured, "now we are all alone."

"Did you leave Upik?" he asked. "Did he remain to wait for the ship? Why did you desert him?"

"Oh, Mala!" came her reply. "Aren't you my man?" There was a pause. "I had to follow you after you ate my lice," she added. "It is so long ago since you caressed me."

The world grew small around these two. They thought no more of the ship nor of their own hardships. There was nothing in the entire world but themselves.

UPIK was too restless to remain near the tent. Again he climbed the hill, ran hither and yon and back to the shore to put his kayak into the water. But the wind was coming inshore and the waves were too high to venture out. And again he went up the hill and was surprised to find that the ship had not come in yet.

"I am too impatient," he told himself. "I am like a child when I see a ship; therefore time seems long to me."

What would he say to the white people? He did not know

what they would say to him. And what would he say about his fox skins and how should he ask for the things he desired so much? Suddenly, he noticed that he was hungry. "Yes, I will eat some meat," he thought, "but hereafter, I shall have food from the ship."

He went into the tent, got some boiled meat which was lying next to the lamp, and started to eat. He realized only now how hungry he was, and he ate several chunks. But was this the thing to do now? Here he sat, apparently without a care, while the ship was making straight for his camp. He must go outside and shout to them so that they would know there was a man on shore, ready to trade with them.

What! The ship had not come any nearer? Oh, then he could go on eating. And again he went into the tent. At last it was impossible for him to keep still any longer. By now, the ship surely must be close enough so that they would be able to hear his words. How long would it take to cover that last stretch?

He immediately saw that the ship had turned. Evidently it could turn just as easily as a kayak. He decided to go up the hill, whence he could see everything better, and try to find out how many white men were on board. What a strange idea, that many men should walk up and down a ship, as if on an island! He forced himself not to turn around and look after the ship until he had reached the top. But then, when he turned, he told himself that his eyes must be deceiving him. Surely the ship was coming towards the shore! Anything else was simply impossible!

Oh, the ship was only trying to fool him, pretending to be farther away now than before. That was impossible! He must have a rifle to use on the bear hunt, and he wanted a knife with a wide blade and a saw to cut wood. But why did it take so long for them to come in to the coast? He already had his fox skins down at the shore. He had everything in readiness to trade with them.

A short time passed. Why did the ship seem to be growing smaller and smaller? Of course that was nonsense! But a feeling of terror took hold of him, paralyzing his thoughts. Finally

he ran down to the shore and put his kayak into the water. The tiny craft filled with water when he stepped into it and the breakers closed over his head, drenching him.

Upik started to shout. "Hey, you big white men! Come over here. One has taken one's fox skins out of hide bags so that you can see them. Oh, come quickly over here where I am standing. I can't wait any longer. I'm so eager to trade with you!"

But his words were thrown back by the wind, which had grown stronger. His fur fluttered in the onrushing storm.

"Oh, you white men! Don't you hear me? Here's a man, all alone, who longs for your coming."

There was no sign on the ship that they had seen or heard him. It sailed towards the north, growing smaller and smaller all the time. Now it seemed to be turning sideways a little. Yes, surely it did turn sideways! Probably, they were going to the fjord, cutting into the shore, in order to find a landing place. Of course they would do that so it would be easier for people to come over to the ship in kayaks. Stupid of him not to have thought of that before! He had just stood there, overjoyed at the sight of a ship. Well, it would be best now to put the fox skins into the bag once more. Then he would climb the hill and wait for the ship to come in at the fjord. He took the dogs Mala had left, and tied the fox skins to their backs. Then, he himself took a big bundle, and started out along the coast.

Upik did not want to lose any time. He ran almost the whole stretch because he had to take a roundabout route to avoid the steep hill, and it would take time to get to the fjord even after he had reached the other side of the mountain range. But he made up his mind that he would not sleep on the trail. It was quite comprehensible that the ship, with all those precious things on board, had come near the shore just to show people that it was there, so that anybody who had skins could go to the fjord. There it would anchor in calm waters, sheltered against the wind.

He was now climbing uphill and for a long time the sea vanished from his sight. He crossed ravines where traveling was difficult. Time and again, he had to rearrange the bundles,

for in passing between the boulders the dogs would disarrange their load. But when he reached the fjord, there was no ship in sight. He rushed up the mountain only to discover that the sea was empty and gray, with a cloudy sky overhead. Icebergs drifted by and there was some pack-ice near the coast, but there was no ship. Upik was trembling all over when he sat down.

Then there was a long anxious trip back to the tent. But there, too, the sea was all empty and around him was nothing but a great waste. The ship had gone and his father had left in wrath. All the precious things he had thought of heaping up along the shore to surprise Aba and Mala had vanished beyond the horizon. Once more Upik was a little boy and, stretching out on his bench, he cried and sobbed until he fell asleep.

After he had slept a long time, he jumped up. Perhaps the ship was there, after all! He must go and see. When he climbed the mountain, he grew calmer and reasoned with himself. But he felt as if the sea were grinning at him because it had fooled him, carrying a ship so near, only to take it away once more.

"At last we have killed musk-ox," Mala said. He, as well as Aba, got busy and disemboweled the game, feasting upon the hearts. The dogs, too, received meat and Mala put out big chunks to dry in the sun; they sucked the milk from the cows that had calves.

They had killed five animals, and Mala's weapons were almost all broken because musk-oxen are just like bears. They do not like weapons in their body; they roll around and break them off.

The skins were soon dry, so that they could be used to sleep on. The marvelous odor of musk-ox made them drowsy. The meat of musk-ox is so tasty that one cannot eat anything else as long as there is some left in the pot. They cooked over a fire of burning heather, which kept the gnats away. The soot blackened their faces; but that only amused them and they laughed at each other and were very happy. At that moment, there was nothing in all the world that worried these two.

MALA saw Upik coming from afar. He and Aba had slept through many nights and were ready to go home now because it had been necessary for Mala to tie the shaft of his spear together so often that it would scarcely serve any longer. If, on their trip back to the tent, they should run across big herds of musk-ox, they could not dare to hunt them for they did not have sufficient weapons. Musk-oxen will not leave a wounded comrade and therefore Mala never attacked a herd of more than three. But now they could not even hunt as many as that because Mala's weapons were in bad condition.

Neither wanted to admit that they would have to return to the tent for new weapons. They had enjoyed their hunting trip so much.

But here was Upik. Never before had they been so wide awake as now, at his coming. He was all alone and nothing that he carried showed that he had traded with the white men. Bow and arrow were on his back, and his face showed none of its former joy.

"Did you find our tracks?" Mala asked.

"Yes, I found the places where you killed game and I fed my dogs with your meat. I also ran across some musk-oxen yesterday. By that time I knew where you were and came because my boots need mending," Upik answered.

"I see," said Mala. "We should have returned before but we were too lazy. We thought of going back to the tent now to put new shafts on the weapons which the musk-oxen broke."

So nothing had happened, thought Aba. No ship had come! Perhaps Upik, like herself, had left to follow Mala, and by now perhaps the coast was crowded with white men. Surely, that must be it! Perhaps the white men had already come into their tent, found their many fox skins and taken them, replacing them with precious things before they left. Mala might find them thus upon his return. Oh, how terrible to be a woman, unable to ask questions without incurring the master's wrath. Not only would she receive no answer, but she would hurt the feelings of the others by her impatience.

"Are you tired? Do you want to sleep?" Mala asked. "How far have you come today?"

"Oh, I slept right in the neighborhood. I did not think you were as near as this," Upik answered. "I do not know how far I went today. But now I think we should go after the musk-oxen I came across around here. The wind is favorable, and our dogs will easily find them. Luckily they did not see me when I passed, and I have enough weapons for the two of us. We can come back here for the skins and the meat after the first snow, when we can use our sledges."

"Here's the boiled meat of musk-ox," Aba offered, "and tallow too—and here are some marrow bones."

"Of course," said Upik, "when Mala bags prey, there is good food. Oh, I have longed so much for the meat of musk-ox and I would have come much sooner if I had not been so lazy."

He first ate of the meat and then took a stone and opened the marrow bones. Shortly afterwards the three went to the spot where Upik had seen musk-ox the day before. It was easier to talk when on the trail.

Mala asked: "Did you meet the ship?"

Aba pricked up her ears. Now, at last, she would hear the news!

"The ship turned around and sailed off," Upik answered. "There was no trading with the white men."

Mala's world threatened to collapse about him. He had hoped that Upik would secure weapons for him, so that, henceforth, hunting would be mere play. "Then we shall just keep our old weapons," he said slowly.

They walked on for a long time in silence.

"Did it make you sad to see the ship sail away?" Mala said at last.

Upik did not answer at first, although many words rushed to his lips. Then he started to tell them how he had gone down to the fjord because he had thought that the ship would anchor there, and how he had taken all the fox skins along. But the ship had not come in and they had not heard him shouting nor had they seen him waving to them. "And I was as disappointed as any man could be."

Neither Mala nor Aba spoke. The woman did not dare to open her mouth and Mala, apparently, found nothing to say.

Suitable words were lacking, but now Upik was very eager to speak and he continued: "I want to go on a long trail when winter comes. Then we shall trek together along the shore, staying over the summer at the place we first came to in the new land. And the year after that, we shall return to our old country. Now it is I who will do the thinking as it was I who remained on the coast to trade in our foxes so that we might obtain all we need."

"We do not need anything beyond what we have already. Aren't we always catching more than we need? Haven't we big meat holes all along the coast? You spoke of the spot where we came ashore after crossing the ice, many years ago. I'll take you there and show you meat holes that were never touched," Mala answered.

"But I want to live among people," Upik cried. "I want a wife. You are married, but you don't seem to know how often I get up when I can't sleep any longer. I do not want to see just two people all the time! I'm all alone without any chance to marry. Do you hear what I say? These words that my tongue utters are not spoken in anger but are thoughts which have ripened in me for a long time. Yes, I shall travel! But I shall not run away like Puala and Orsokidok. I have always been a good and obedient son and therefore you must be a good father and show me the trail back to the places whence we came."

Upik fell silent, and awaited a reply. But they trudged on for a long time without another word. Finally Upik could not withhold his impatience any longer and he said: "One has spoken and he is a young man who really should wait until he is asked. But the time had come to reveal my thoughts."

"One heard your words," Mala told him. "But look! There are musk-oxen and we must hunt them now. The dogs have already scented them. Let's first kill them. Later we shall give thought to our future deeds."

THE dogs rushed ahead and when the musk-oxen saw them coming, they huddled together. There were twelve animals in all, now crowded together in such a way that their horns

were twined in each and every direction, making it impossible for the dogs to come close enough to attack them from behind.

Long before Mala and Upik reached the spot, the dogs had already opened the attack on the oxen. The bellowing and howling was deafening. The old bulls charged ahead, flinging stones and gravel high in the air. The dogs were jumping about, making it impossible for the oxen to hit any of them. Finally one of the bulls succeeded in separating one of the dogs from the pack. The dog rushed away and the bull sped after it. Thrusting its horns into the dog, the bull lifted the poor beast up and then flung it to the ground. The dog came crashing down and, its spine broken, it remained lying on the spot, whining with pain and unable to move. The bull galloped back and resumed his place in the herd, ready to aid the others in defending themselves.

Time and again the bulls started to charge, but the dogs surrounded them. Now they saw Mala and Upik. Aba kept in the background but the two men were in the thick of the battle. Mala had taken half of Upik's arrows, and soon they were lodged in the flanks of the musk-oxen. The wounded animals rolled on the ground, pushing the arrows still deeper into their bodies. Although the shafts of some of the arrows broke, many of the oxen were fatally wounded or dead.

Hunting musk-ox is not difficult, but one must be extremely careful when a bull charges upon his attacker. As there were no more arrows left and four animals were still alive, Upik used his spear. He was excited by the talk with his father and he craved action to quiet his thoughts. And so now he acted as the master of the chase. Yes, Upik was the leader. It was he who ordered Mala to come closer when the bull made ready to charge and then bade him jump aside quickly so Upik could thrust his spear between the animal's ribs.

Mala did not think of raising objections now. He just took a big stone, lifted it high over his head and rushed towards the bull, hurling the stone against its forehead when the beast charged him.

When the bull opened the attack, everything went faster

than one could think. Gravel and dirt were thrust aside like so much water and when Mala hurled his stone against the bull's head, it stopped the beast for only a second. Upik came running up; he thrust his spear into the side of the bull, and the beast roared terribly. It sprang high and tried to turn around. Upik, fearing for the shaft of his spear, wanted to pull it back so that he could use it for another attack.

"Let's try once more," he shouted to Mala. "This is the way to kill him and save our weapons."

Upik did not notice that he was lifted high in the air. Even Mala had not seen it, but Aba, standing a little sideways, screamed. Another bull had approached Upik from behind, and when Upik tried to pull back his spear, the other beast gored him, throwing him into the air as a child throws a ball.

Mala saw Upik's ghastly face as he sailed through the air. When he came down, it seemed as if the horn of the musk-ox were slipping into water, so easily did it plunge into Upik's belly. Upik groaned and caught at the head of the musk-ox.

Mala rushed up and attacked the one bull which was standing still; gaining hold of the spear, he pulled it out of the beast's body. Meanwhile the other musk-ox, planting its sharp hoofs on Upik's thighs, withdrew its horns. And then Mala saw the beast drag forth the bowels from his own son's belly.

"Help him!" Aba shouted. "Quick! Quick!"

Mala did not hear a word. Fright and pain had overtaken him. Upik, his wonderful son, lying there maimed! Half-crazed, he thrust his spear into the body of the bull that had murdered his son. The beast retreated, mortally wounded, but it had already mangled the intestines of the young hunter.

"Upik, my son! Do you hear me?" Mala cried, and knelt down beside him.

But Upik did not answer. He only opened his eyes and blinked. Aba had come nearer now and took Upik's hand, but when she let it go, it fell limply. Hardly five paces away, the wounded musk-oxen were lying, snorting with pain, but there was no one to care about them. Here was a human being, the only young man among the three lonely people living by them-

selves in a vast and strange country! Mala's son, Upik, was lying here.

Mala did not call loudly to his son any more. He whispered brokenly: "Upik, you must not leave us . . . we must go to the old country together! Upik, don't you hear me? Oh, the bowels are torn out of your body. Let me help you! Let me heal you!"

Aba and Mala beheld Upik's blood gush forth from beneath his fur.

"Oh, now there is no young man with us," Aba whimpered.

"Be silent now," Mala ordered.

Bending over the head of his son, he pulled out a few hairs, but the young man never stirred. Upik was dead. Mala tore out whole handfuls of hair, but there lay Upik motionless, and his silence seemed all the greater because of the snorting that came from the wounded oxen near by. If they had attacked Mala and Aba now, neither would have thought of defense or of killing the surviving bulls.

The wounded dog began to whine again and Aba saw that it was Upik's leader dog; the poor beast was doomed to its master's fate.

Mala threw Upik's body over his shoulders and carried him from the battleground to the little height where the musk-oxen had made their first stand. Upik's legs dragged behind limply.

"Lift up his legs," Mala said, and Aba took hold of Upik's feet. They carried him to a big rock near by. Nobody had told them where to take the body, but this was just the right spot. They put Upik down and sat next to him.

It was long before Aba could cry.

"Oh, Upik has left us! Now his wish to go on a long trail has been fulfilled. There is no Upik with us any more. We are two people all alone in this great land."

Aba's sorrow found relief in tears.

Mala sat there. He felt as if he could never sleep again. A fly settled upon one of Upik's eyes and that started Mala

thinking once more. He did not say anything but he got up and gathered big stones for his son's grave.

Aba never stirred, but continued to moan and cry. Mala alone built the cairn and when it was all ready and had only to be covered, Mala remarked that it would be best to spread their skins over Upik's resting place.

"Yes," Aba said. "But should we not return to our camp for grave-skins and funeral presents for Upik as is the custom?"

"We shall not go back," Mala decided. "When I go away from here, I shall never return, for my eyes do not wish to see this place ever again. But I shall leave enough gifts for Upik."

The musk-oxen were writhing in agony on the blood-drenched battleground. Mala and Aba could hear them, for the wind carried the sounds of their death struggle to them. Mala and Aba placed skins over Upik's face and closed the grave.

Then Mala went for his spears. He threw one glance at the musk-ox which had gored his son. The beast had expired only now, and Mala reflected that the blood still on the animal's horns had run through the veins of his son. He pulled the spear out of the ox. There were still two oxen battling with the dogs and other animals were in the throes of death. Upik's bow lay on the ground. Mala picked it up with Upik's knife and his mittens.

"Upik had four dogs along. The others I brought," he told Aba. Then he fetched Upik's dogs, while Aba sat and cried quietly. She was speechless with sorrow.

Mala killed one dog after another until only the four were left which he had brought along. The dead dogs were laid out around Upik's grave and finally he picked up his knife, that wonderful blade for which the others had wanted to kill him. It was the knife Orsokidok had not dared to take along when he ran off with Inupaujak. Now Mala took the precious weapon and hid it in a crack of the cairn—a present for his dead son. There he put Upik's mittens and his bow and all his other belongings.

Then Mala called his four dogs. Mala chased the dogs over to Aba. "It will be best if you help me to get the dogs away from here," he said, "as one is returning to camp."

He drove the dogs ahead of him and stopped them, time and again, when they attempted to return to the musk-oxen. "Oh, you stupid animals that do not want to return to camp."

Finally the dogs obeyed and permitted themselves to be chased back to the spot where Mala and Aba had slept before. The couple did not utter a single word.



XVI

THEY did not reach their tent for many days, for the dogs were carrying big loads of meat and Mala himself was burdened down with many skins. The weapons were left to Aba. They spoke of everyday occurrences only, and busied themselves with the dogs to an unusual degree. After they had been in camp for a few days, Mala said that he could see that fall would soon be upon them. "Let's move to the great fjord and stay there over winter." Near the fjord, Mala had a sledge, and as long as he had to fetch it, they might just as well go together.

"I have resolved to make our tent skins smaller," Mala said. "One is lazy and does not want to carry heavy loads on the trail. Man never likes to exert himself more than is necessary."

They cut off big pieces of the tent skin, telling each other that they were doing this only because it was stupid to carry unnecessary weight. But what they really thought was that there were now only two of them and all they needed was a tent big enough for them to sit under. They carried all their belongings over the steep mountain, down to the shore, and one day when the weather was favorable Mala paddled up to the coast in his kayak. When he had rounded the mountain, he found Aba waiting for him with the dogs. She followed him along the shore to the headland where Mala made a landing.

"One could sleep here," Mala said, "and tomorrow paddle

down to the fjord if there were not a woman along who must have the comforts of a tent."

"Oh, how stupid!" Aba protested. "Don't you know that it is much easier for a woman to sleep than for a man?"

So they stayed there overnight and, in the morning, Mala paddled back to the tent to fetch more of their belongings. Aba always followed him along the shore and each time he came to a headland around which he had to paddle Aba would cross it and wait on the other side until he arrived.

"Look, there is a seal," she called out to him softly. Mala paddled over and harpooned the animal. The seal was so small that he put it on top of the kayak.

WHEN winter came they started out for the south. They went along the coast and neither mentioned that they would never come back. They found caches they had filled with meat years ago. Now they dug it out, camping near these spots to eat from their stores. Finally even their dogs were fed so well that they would eat no more and whenever they went on big stores of meat were left behind. Mala learned that the dogs ate much less if they were fed daily and not left hungry for many days. He and Aba spoke to each other very rarely and only when necessary. But one day Aba asked: "What shall we do? We have only four dogs and no bitch. After these dogs die, where shall we get a new team?"

"We are on a trip," Mala stated. "But perhaps you did not hear somebody say, one day, that it would be best to return to the old country. . . . Here, tighten my mittens around the wrists. Too much cold air blows into them."

"Oh, you poor man," Aba cried, "with a wife who cannot even sew mittens for you!"

A little later they reached the spot where they had camped last spring. Here was a cache with skins, and in it they found two furs belonging to Upik. Aba watched Mala, one day, as he compared the length of the fur sleeve with his arm. But when she went over to him, he quickly put it away in its place.

"I thought that I left skins here," Mala said, "but it seems I am wrong."

In the night Aba got up, went over to the cache, removed the stones, and took out the furs, but she heard Mala calling and put them back quickly. Next morning, they resumed their journey.

DURING the months of darkness, they stayed at a spot where they had left tremendous stores of meat two years before.

"I long for fresh meat," Aba said, after they had lived there for some time. "People are queer. Often they relish putrid food, but now that we have this age-cured meat I am tired of it."

"Yes, women are never satisfied," Mala replied. But presently he came with a fresh seal which they boiled and the soup tasted good to them.

"You should have been along with me," Mala said. "It took me a long time to get the seal out of the air hole." He told her this because he always liked to have her around, and so, the following day, Aba accompanied him on the hunt. While he watched an air hole, she drove around in circles so that she could always see him and chase the seals in his direction.

THE first day after the sun had turned, they both thought of continuing their trip.

"There is a great restlessness in me," Mala said. "If I were alone, I would start out very soon."

"Oh, you foolish one! Don't you know it is easy for a woman to withstand the cold as long as she has a great hunter for a husband who can keep her nice and fat?"

A few days later, they started out. Every evening Mala would build an igloo, and when they reached a spot where they had stored meat they proceeded to take it out. Aba soon discovered that Mala would never take anything from Upik's caches and, one day, when they had almost nothing to eat, they went hungry rather than use the dead son's stores. There was

no possibility of catching anything, but neither of them mentioned the fact that Upik had left meat right in the neighborhood. As far as their actions were concerned, they might not have known of its existence.

As soon as the weather improved they caught game again and continued the trip. One day, without offering any explanations, Mala steered the dogs toward the mainland. They walked as usual beside the sledge, Mala on the right, and Aba on the left. They had become used to covering great distances and walking never tired them now.

"You sit on the sledge," Mala had suggested at the beginning of the trip. But now Aba would not sit on the sledge any more. "Do not expect me to sit all the time," Aba told him. "Don't you know that my feet freeze if I don't use them?" They had not yet set foot on the coast, although during these days they always traveled within sight of land. They had taken very little meat along.

"One shall see whether one can catch a bear," Mala said. "It would be nice to taste fat bear meat once more."

A few days later, the mountains again seemed very low and distant and the next evening, they could not see land on either side. It was here that they killed a bear.

"At last one feasts upon bear guts," Mala said. But he himself noticed that his words had no real meaning any more. He and Aba knew each other so well that there was really very little use in talking. A roaring storm awoke them during the night. "It is well that we killed a bear," Mala remarked. "Now we'll have meat in case it snows very long. One goes to fetch everything inside."

The evening before they had eaten the guts and the heart of the bear while they were still warm, but tonight Aba made a fire. She lit the lamp and Mala brought in tremendous chunks of meat.

The storm lasted a long while. They slept much of the time and finally Mala decided to go outside to feed the dogs. He cut a snow block out of the wall and crawled out, only to poke his head back into the igloo without delay.

"Aba!" he cried. "The ice has burst. Oh, we slept and

never thought of the world around us. There is lots of water very near by. Perhaps we must now take a roundabout route."

Then Mala came inside and told Aba how, in his younger days, he had once slept in an igloo when the ice opened up right under him. They had hardly left the igloo when half of it drifted away and they lost their lamp, never to regain it. "If we had been on the other side of the crevasse," Mala related, "we would have drifted in our sleep just where we wanted to go."

After some time the storm abated. Mala immediately went outside, took his harpoon, and went down to the edge of the ice to look for seals in the open water. He caught a small one, and when they lay down that night their faces were all covered with its blood.

It was cold. A frosty mist hung over the water and one morning there was new ice across the crevasse.

"In two days we can start out again," Mala said, and scraped off the snow which had settled on his sledge.

The next day the ice was strong enough to carry a man. "It is well that we killed a bear," Mala said. "We must leave the tent behind, but part of the skins can be used to good advantage."

He cut off pieces big enough to cover his soles. He used these on the ice, catching game in a new way by sliding after the seals. But this method can only be employed when there is no snow on the freshly formed ice, which happens very rarely. Mala made a good bag by this method, catching many seals.

"Now we can travel on," he said after they had slept once more. It was still dark and very cold at night, and they wasted no time in getting ahead while the sun shone. They crossed a crevasse which was so wide at one place that they could not see the other side. Although it was easy to travel across the new ice, their sledge was so heavily laden that it slowed up progress considerably. Pulling it was a hard task for the dogs because the runners always stuck to the wet ice which was covered with sea salt.

"We ought to stop soon," Mala said, "but let's try to continue again, later, because we need fresh water for the dogs and

snow to build a house." Aba did not say anything and they went ahead.

"It will be best to sleep and wait until tomorrow," Mala remarked later. "There are no stars in the sky and we do not know in what direction to go."

So they came to a halt. The dogs were not unharnessed, but Mala threw them a couple of seals and soon the animals fell asleep on top of their food. Mala and Aba slept on the sledge. They were both cold because they were used to a warm igloo at night. Nevertheless, they fell asleep quickly. Suddenly they were awakened by the dogs. It was a good thing that they were still in harness because they had scented a bear or some other animal, and now that they were rested they could pull the sledge with Mala and Aba riding on it. Mala got his bear spear ready while they sped through the dark night, but they could not see any bear.

"Where are we traveling?" Aba asked.

"We are pursuing a bear. You can tell from the way the dogs behave," Mala answered. "If it were only light now, we could see our way."

Meanwhile the dogs rushed ahead and presently the ice showed fissures and became thinner. "Be careful," Mala warned. "Do not jump off here because the ice won't carry you."

He shouted to his dogs and whipped them in order to force them to turn to the right, away from the dangerous spot. But it was too late. They had struck an especially soft spot and the sledge sunk gradually and water gushed upward. The ice, here, was broken all around and they were sinking deeper each moment.

"Just stay on top of the sledge and when it goes down, stand up and hold on to me," Mala instructed Aba. He pulled wildly at the dogs' traces in an effort to get them back on firm ice. After much exertion, he at last got the team on top of a floe where they could all stand, and which seemed safe.

"Aua-i," he urged the dogs, but they could not drag the sledge out of the water.

"It is too bad," Mala said, "that we took the seals off, as frozen meat floats along easily."

Again he shouted at the dogs, even prodding them with the harpoon, but to no avail. Suddenly, Mala was seized with fear, for he remembered that the dogs' traces were tied to the sledge in such a fashion that the knots would hold only as long as the traces were frozen and dry. But now the knots would soon thaw in the water. And that was exactly what happened. When the dogs pulled at the sledge the harness broke, and as soon as the dogs realized that they were free they rushed across the ice, leaving Mala and Aba behind.

"The water! The water!" Aba shouted, holding on to Mala's shoulder.

"We must try to get out of here," Mala said quietly, and, using his spear as if it were a kayak paddle, he soon reached a spot where the ice was a little firmer. They made very slow progress and they were both extremely cold. Each time they reached the edge of the ice, and tried to climb on top of it, the ice would break. At last Mala found a big floe, firm enough to support them.

"Quick! Throw yourself on your belly and crawl up. Then you can pull me up with the spear," Mala advised.

He helped Aba to get on the big floe and now she pulled with all her might.

"Careful," Mala shouted, "I'm sinking!"

Mala felt the sledge disappear beneath him. He sank deeper and deeper into the water. "Pull me up!" he called to Aba, and she tugged at him with all her strength. But the next moment the ice on which she was lying broke, and she herself fell into the water, losing the spear.

"Mala!" Aba shouted. "Where are you?"

She was resting both arms on the ice so that her shoulders were still above water.

"Mala, where are you?"

But Mala had vanished under the ice. The current had swept him away and now Aba felt herself being pulled in the same direction.

Suddenly she heard the dogs howl and saw them rush across the ice towards the very spot where she was struggling in the water.

"Mala!" she cried, as if he were near by. "Our dogs are coming! Now we will get out. Oh, where are you? My legs are so cold. You must come and warm me!"

The dogs were close by.

"Here! Over here!" she called to them. But the dogs did not dare go so close to the edge of the ice. Aba stretched out her hand to reach for them. In that moment, the current carried her off. She, too, disappeared beneath the ice.

The four dogs sat long upon the ice and howled out their grief to the world.

AND here ends the story of the great Mala who once dwelt among the white men and thereafter could never forget them.

THE END

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