



*"Ice! Ice!" the half-mad seaman was shouting*

## Sole Survivor

*Mystery still hid the fate of Sven Johansen and his Arctic explorers,  
a mystery whose key was known only to a dog*

**By JOHN STANFORD**

*Author of "Mute Evidence," etc.*

*Novelette—Complete*

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE LOST EXPLORERS.

**T**HE Sole Survivor! A name to conjure with, and the big gray Eskimo dog bore it proudly. It gave him certain privileges that none of the other Northland dogs enjoyed.

When their masters—Alaskan mining men, Territorial officials and explorers—brought the dogs "outside," they were usually parked out in boarding stables. Not so, the Sole Survivor. He shared the comforts of

Seattle's well-known Arctic Club with the men. And at the present moment, he appeared to be enjoying them.

His short-coupled, solid body was stretched out on the most expensive rug in the club's lounge. It was his favorite spot. Just under the big moose head, and beside one of the deep, comfortable chairs.

A gray-haired man came out of the library with a book under his arm. He seated himself in the big chair. With a look that might be interpreted as one of disgust, the dog got up and moved



a few feet away. He chose a spot from which he could see the big front door without having to look around a pair of legs.

Some one came in. The dog's pointed muzzle lifted from between his paws. He surveyed the new arrival across a corner of the entrance lobby with expectancy in his Mongol-slanted hazel eyes. Then his nose dropped back. It twitched a little as a whiff of salt-laden breeze swept across the floor.

Outside, the wind whipped off of Puget Sound and whistled through the narrow cañons of Seattle's hillside streets. Like a voice from afar, it called to the Eskimo dog. Again his nose twitched.

There was life out there where that wind was born. Sea gulls circled and shrieked above the green waters that whipped themselves to white froth on rocky shores. Wild animals skulked the beaches in search of food. The tall fir and spruce sang under the strum of

the same wind that full-bellied the sails of ships with towering masts reaching high into the leaden heavens.

The dog knew that some of those ships would be heading north with bones in their teeth. Heading for Alaska. Heading for his home. His feet itched for the feel of the trail. His ears were hungry for the scream of saw-steel sled runners on the sandy, midwinter snow. A harness, though it marked him as a beast of burden, would now be a badge of freedom.

**A**BRUPTLY the brass latch of the door clicked. The Eskimo dog's small ears wedged up into points. His bushy, plume-like tail curled more tightly over his broad back. His full-muscled legs tensed, and his strong nails dug deep into the rich nap of the rug. His compact body was drawn up in preparation for a spring.

A large man stepped into the lobby, accompanied by a shouting gust of wintry wind. His modish double-breasted

overcoat failed to hide the athletic solidity of him. His body tapered down from the great width of his shoulders, across muscle-padded ribs, encircling his deep chest, to the lean flanks and narrow hips so symbolic of the man who never lets himself get out of condition.

His eyes were blue, and the focal point of many tiny wrinkles that one knew were gathered from long periods of facing wind and sun. They looked out frankly, from a face whose healthy tan was in perfect keeping with its ruggedness.

Deep crescents flanked his generous mouth. They marked the creases of a ready smile. His jaw was angular and might be called determined, stern, or even hard—depending upon the mood of its owner at the moment. Beneath the rakish brim of his soft felt hat a sprinkling of gray was woven into the black above the temples.

The door latch had not yet snapped shut behind this man before the dog leaped. A book fell to the floor, and the gray-haired man jumped from his chair with a cry of warning.

With open jaws displaying flashing fangs and a slaverless tongue, the dog swept through the archway into the entrance lobby. A deep rumble came from his throat. Then the wide jaws closed over the new arrival's hand.

The gray-haired man gasped. He didn't know that the grip of those vicious-looking jaws was so gentle it wouldn't have broken a baby's skin.

The dog shook the hand in his mouth. Shook it playfully, from side to side, and then let loose. He paid no attention to the gray-haired man. His reaction had been a natural one. The Eskimo dog had seen many men gasp when they first saw him greet his master that way.

"Well, well, Sole Survivor! Been a long day, eh? Glad to see me?"

The big man handed his gloves and overcoat to the waiting bell man, and twisted the pointed ears playfully.

"Has Sole Survivor been behaving himself, Jimmy?" he asked.

"Well, pretty good, Mr. Farwell. I took him out for a walk at noon, as usual." The bell man bowed his thanks and pocketed the half dollar. "Had a little excitement after we got back, but it didn't last long. The steward's cat got up out of the basement again, sir."

"So-o-o?" Farwell's eyebrows formed black arcs across his forehead. "Well, what was it this time, Jimmy?"

"One of the Satsuma vases by the library portières, sir."

Farwell reached down and gave another friendly tug at the pointed ears.

"I suppose that 'll be another couple of ciphers added to my monthly bill, eh?" he smiled. "We'd have been better off, old-timer, if you'd killed that damned cat the first time."

THE dog led the way over to the big chair. It was empty now, and he stood beside it. The light spots above his eyes dropped a little, and his ears flattened as the gray-haired man came up and recovered his book. Then, after the two men had shaken hands and another chair had been drawn up, he stretched his gray length at the feet of his master.

"I swallowed my heart, Farwell, when that dog leaped at you." The older man lit a long cigar.

His master laughed. "He does look vicious when he jumps, doesn't he? Kind of took my breath away the first time he pulled it on me, but I soon found that it was a trick of his. I've often wondered, professor, who taught it to him."

"I heard you call him Sole Survivor. What's the significance?" The professor leaned back comfortably.

"He's all that ever got back from Johansen's last expedition."

The gray-haired man hurriedly drew back his legs as the dog's head snapped up.

"See!" continued Farwell. "He always shows interest whenever Johansen's name is mentioned."

"You mean Sven Johansen? Looking for land in the Polar Sea, wasn't he? Needed for an inter-continental airplane base or something like that, wasn't it?"

"Right," said Farwell. "American government financed him. Good man, too. Know him? No? Well, you missed something. Sven was the salt of the earth."

"You knew him well, didn't you?"

"Saved my life up in Baffin Land once. And I was right here in this club with him when he outfitted. I was supposed to go with him, but I took down with the flu and missed out. That was just three years ago, and eighteen months later this fellow here swam a two-mile shore lead and dropped exhausted at my feet."

"Shore lead?"

"The open water between the beach and the main ice pack."

"Where was that, Farwell?"

**H**OPEFULLY the brown eyes of the dog followed every movement as his master fished out a black pipe and loaded it. Then he dropped his nose back between his paws. He had rather expected a romp among the million strange smells of the water front this evening, but it looked as though the same old story was to be told again. With a sigh, he flattened out to a more comfortable position and

prepared to wait. Might be a chance to get out after dinner. He cocked one ear to catch every soft-spoken word of his master.

"Well, after the expedition had been out almost a year their wireless went silent. We all figured that the ship had been crushed. Couldn't very well have figured anything else. They had two sets of sending apparatus. The last we had heard was from 76 North, 163 West. Johansen had frozen the White Seal in and planned on taking advantage of the drift, like Nansen did."

Farwell stopped to light his pipe. After a couple of puffs he continued.

"By that time I was over my flu, and was chosen to head an expedition with a two-fold purpose: to search for the members of the other party, and to try and locate that Arctic land that the government is so anxious to have. We know it's out there somewhere. Migratory birds go out in May and come back with fledglings in September."

"Well, if they know there's land there, I should think they could find it," was the professor's opinion.

Farwell let his lids drop half over his eyes as he leaned toward the gray-haired man.

"Were you ever on that pack off the north coast of Alaska, Benson? Have you ever been on an ice field? No? Well, I didn't think so."

He knocked the ashes from his pipe into the cuspidor.

"As I was saying, I headed the relief expedition, and had reached Franklin Point, southwest of Barrow. The ice was moving down into Bering Strait and there wasn't a chance to move. One day I was out on the beach, walking off some of my impatience at the delay, when I saw something swimming in the open water between the shore and the ice.

"I thought at first it was a seal. Then I saw those pointed ears. Man! What a sight he was when he hit the sand!"

The big dog raised his head. His master always scratched his nose when he got to that point in the story.

"He was nothing but skin and bones. I wrapped my parka around him and held him on my lap till the chill left. He licked my face once, and then went to sleep like a baby. He was as near dead as anything I've even seen. Poor devil! I cut the tubular canvas collar off his neck. It had already been slit with a knife, but there were a few crumbs of pemmican in the bottom, where it had been sewed together."

"I don't get you, Farwell," said the professor. "You say there was pemmican in the collar?"

"Had been. Nothing but crumbs left. Sven was the one who taught me that trick, using every inch of space to the best advantage, doing away with all extra weight. If he killed a dog for food, he didn't throw away a curled hair or sawdust-stuffed collar—he ate everything. Sole Survivor had eaten off his harness, but he hadn't been able to get his teeth into— Yes, Jimmy?" Farwell broke off as the bell man came up deferentially.

"**P**ARDON me, Mr. Farwell, have you missed anything from your room?"

"I haven't been up since I came in, Jimmy. Why?"

"Mr. Cathcart, the Biological Survey man, just reported a walrus tooth pipe and some Eskimo *labrets* stolen from his desk, and he has the room next to yours. Must be a prowler in the house."

"I'll take a good look when I go up, Jimmy. Thanks." He dismissed the

bell man with a wave of his empty pipe.

"What burned me up," said Farwell, returning to his story, "was that the dog had been evidently working recently, and I couldn't get through the ice to make a search for the party he had been with."

"Perhaps he had been away from his master for a long time. You had no way of knowing positively that he had been with them a short time before, had you?"

The big dog rubbed the soft hand with a cold nose, as the professor timorously reached down to pat him.

"Sure I knew! He had toenails pulled off all four feet. Dogs don't lose toenails unless they are pulling heavy loads on glare ice." Farwell refilled his pipe.

"Two weeks later the ice cracked up under the influence of a new moon and a spring tide, and we got away."

Farwell's face muscles tightened. He made fists out of his hands. He gazed at the picture of his ship hanging on the lounge wall as though he was looking off into illimitable distance.

"We crushed at 74:30," he said, in a tight voice. "I got back with nine of my twelve men, three months after leaving the coast." He heaved a deep sigh. "As you know, professor, I'm getting another expedition together. I'll have just one purpose this time, exploration."

"There's no doubt about there being some land up there. Our government hasn't given up hope of finding it. There's great need of an airport at a very important point on a new air highway to Europe. You can imagine what possession of such a landing field would mean to this country in the future. I'm determined to locate it."

"I guess it's no use to look for Sven



Johansen or any of his party; and yet I can't help feeling that he may be still alive. If any man could survive in the North, Sven could. We should have heard from him long before this, though. I guess that's just a peculiar idea of mine."

"Afraid so," assented the older man. "Another victory for the North, I would say. Some airmen lost, too, weren't there? Searching parties."

"Five men. Three planes. Well, the world should know by this time that the Polar wastes are not a picnic ground." He reached down and tugged gently at the dog's ears. "What a ghost this poor fellow was when he swam ashore that day! A ghost that held the secret of Johansen's fate. What a story he could tell, if he could only talk!"

The big dog ran his warm tongue over the back of his master's hand. That was the hand that had picked him up from the bleak beach, had patted him, and nursed him back to health. In one brutal, brain-bruising moment those terrible days passed before his eyes.

---

## CHAPTER II.

### AN ARCTIC TRAGEDY.

**T**HE black swirl of the blizzard. The thunderous crashing of the ice. The buckling of the heavy wooden deck. He had been one of the first dogs that Sven had cut loose and thrown over the rail, to the closely packed ice.

Then came more dogs over the side. Sleds. Harness. Crates, boxes, bundles. The men cursed and bellowed as they worked like fiends getting supplies off the cracking ship. Sven's voice snapped through the screaming wind like the

bark of a seal—sharp, brittle. Men sprang to obey his orders.

The thunderous moaning of the tortured ice almost drowned the cracking of the pressure-ridden ironbark sides of the White Seal. Eleven shadowy shapes toiled like demons, panting, with the condensed vapor of their breath swirling about their heads in wraith-like veils, they ran to the rails, heaved their burdens to the ice and then disappeared again into the depths of the stricken boat.

Crouched in the snow, with the shrieking wind driving pin-points of frost through his thick coat, the dog watched it all. Tip, the sluggard, lay beside him in a black, furry ball and whimpered. Some of the fifteen other dogs were whining, too. He reached over and nipped Tip, just to show his disgust.

Still the men toiled. Some of the things they were bringing out of the hold were now dripping with water. Four or five men were wrestling with a big steel drum. That would be the fuel for the primus stoves.

Then the crashing of the ice rose to a deafening, crunching grind. The White Seal's deck buckled up like the roof of a tent. The heavy drum rolled. It crashed through the rail. A piercing scream split the icy air. He saw a man, with mittens frozen to the steel barrel, pulled over. The drum fell to the ice. The man under it lay still.

Sven seemed to be everywhere at once. He was doing the work of two men. He, alone, was without his heavy fur parka, and his thick chest was heaving beneath the double row of pearl buttons on the front of his blue-flannel shirt. Festoons of frost clung to his heavy eyebrows, and beads of ice glittered in his blond mustache.

He jumped to the ice with delicate instruments cradled in his arms, deposited them, and then ran back up the snow steps that had been built against the ship's side. Then, in another minute, he would be setting off four or five prisms of guncotton in an effort to relieve the pressure against the boat. Once he stopped long enough to yank a muttering man from his knees and plant his big fist in the fear-filled face.

"Do your praying after we get the stuff off!" he bellowed above the shouting of the wind.

The men had just started relaying the supplies back to safer storage when the final convulsion of the ice seemed to rock the world. The howl of the polar tempest was erased in the crashing, grinding crush of the frozen sea. Great slabs of green and white ice piled one upon the other.

Together with the other dogs, he ran back over the heaving pack. Men, too, ran—cursing, falling in the blackness as the ship's lights went out, and then getting up to scramble on; to get away from the terrifying cataclysm.

Then, suddenly, the rumbling of the ice ceased. The scream of the wind was the only noise to shatter the night, but it didn't whistle through the rigging of the ship any more. There was no ship. Where she had lain in the grip of the frozen sea a pressure ridge had been born. It stood fifty feet high, and was jagged, like a chain of mountains. Parts of it had fallen back, to cover some of the supplies.

**H**E slept that night on Sven's sleeping bag, while the men toiled. With the coming of daylight the wind died down. He saw that there were only six men, besides Sven. The last crush had come suddenly.

The men gathered into a knot around the primus stove on which their breakfast was cooking. Sven sat down on the sleeping bag beside him, and stroked his head as he outlined his plans to the remainder of the White Seal's crew.

That day was spent in getting things into shape for the long mush toward land. Grub was taken from the wooden cases and stowed in canvas bags. Syrup was poured out into the snow, and the empty cans filled with fuel from the big steel drum.

A hole was dug into the green ice, and the body of the man who had been crushed was placed in it. Sven made a cross of box boards and froze it upright at one end of the grave. His lips moved silently as he worked. Murphy, the cook, touched his forehead and both sides of his chest with the tip of his right mitt, and then everybody helped divide the load into two equal piles.

The next morning the two sleds were loaded, each outfit a unit complete in itself. He took his rightful place as leader before the other eight dogs on the first sled, and though the load was heavy, he managed to keep his nose close to the heels of Sven's *mukluks*.

He was soft, as were his teammates, from long idleness, and the sharp needles of ice rasped the balls of his feet. Sven rested them often, though, and gave them time to pull the balled snow out from between their toes with their teeth.

The first day they had fairly decent going, and then they came to the broken ice. Slabs ten feet thick and larger than the floor of the trading post at Point Barrow stood at all imaginable angles. Small, sharp points stuck up and caught the cross pieces under the sled. Sometimes the load

would stop so suddenly that he would be thrown back on his haunches, and for hours afterward his shoulders would ache from the bruising. Then again, a bent would tear out with a splintering snap, and there would be a rest while the sled was repaired.

Day after day they fought the rough ice. At times the night camps were so close together that he could have easily trotted back to the previous one in half an hour. He lost all his excess weight, but his muscles hardened and his feet toughened up. The load was getting lighter, but this was more than offset by the decreased rations they received.

Tip, especially, was lying down on the job. He was working on the haw side of the first swing behind him, and twenty times a day Sole Survivor had to turn and show his teeth, or else take a sharp nip, in order to get him to work. Funston, the big red-head on the handle bars of the sled, swung his long whip with increasing frequency, but never once did the cruel lash bite into the lead dog's flanks. Even a blind man could have seen that he was doing his best.

ONE day they ran into a series of ragged, broken pressure ridges.

It was a terrible, heart-breaking day, with the men pulling with them on ropes fastened to the sides of the sleds. Three times the loads were unlashd and the fuel, bedding, stoves, tent and grub passed from hand to hand over the cliffs of ice. That night when they camped, a rifle shot would have carried back to the scene of their morning's start.

The men were grumbling among themselves. Funston needlessly kicked him in the ribs while unhooking the team. Surly looks and harsh words passed back and forth as the tent was

pitched. One of the men took Tip out behind an ice hummock.

He heard the sound of a shot echo across the frozen wastes, and from his place in the snow beside the sled he watched. When the man came back he threw each of the dogs a piece of red meat. The big dog's portion fell right before his nose, but he didn't eat that night, and he saw the frozen flesh loaded on the sled the next morning.

There were more of those terrible days ahead, and the grumbling among the men increased. The night after Tip had gone, Bako was taken. He heard Sven tell the man to use a knife and save ammunition. He again refused to eat, and Sven gave him some of the pemmican from Bako's collar. The following night Suggen, of the lame foot, was led behind the shoulder of an ice ridge.

And so it went. The sluggards, the weaklings, and the cripples were being taken first.

That was something that made the dog think, as he lay there in the snow. It might be a good idea to loaf a little during the morning hauls. Not much; just take it a little easier so that he would be the strongest at night.

He saw that the bags of grub, which were taken into the tent each night, were getting light. Perhaps that would account for the hollowness of the men's cheeks, but he knew that it was the fear of death that filled the eyes of some of them with that wild look.

Once, when the flap of the tent was thrown back, he saw Sven handing out the rations of pemmican. Tea and pemmican was all that the bags contained now. In his left hand Sven held a piece of string that had run through the eye in the center of a dog harness singletree. From each end of the foot-long stick an aluminium cup was sus-



pended, and in one of them two rifle cartridges had been placed. Sven put enough pemmican in the other cup to make a balance, and then handed each man that amount for his meal.

Some of the men grumbled as they wolfed the meager portions. In disgust, Sven threw the stick in the snow. He sat down without serving himself.

"You're a bunch of rats, the lot of ye!" cried Murphy. "Here he does more work than any two of us, and he won't eat on account of your childish squawkin'. Here, Mr. Johansen, take part o' mine."

He held out a small dab of his pemmican, and as Sven slowly shook his head, he jerked it back. The man who had prayed on the deck had made a grab for it.

"Oh, no, ye don't, me hearty!" spluttered Murphy, crowding the pounded meat, fruit and grain into his mouth. "You've had your share, the same as the rest of us."

The man sneered. "Maybe if we took food off the sled during the day, like you three, we wouldn't be hungry either."

Biggers, the scientist, nodded an agreement with the accuser, and the third man of the second sled said:

"We know what's been going on."

### CHAPTER III.

#### RAGE.

**S**VEN was on his feet like a flash. So was Funston. A deep bellow issued from Murphy's chewing jaws. In another second the night air was full of curses and the sound of hard fists pounding into muscled flesh. The tent came down, and they crawled out from under it fighting like two strange teams of malemutes.

It was a terrible thing, that fight out there in the middle of the frozen Arctic. Frenzied with hunger, fatigue and the haunting shadow of death, they fought like beasts. For a second, when his master was down, the dog had tugged at his chain, but it had been frozen fast to the ice with a cup of water when he had been unhitched.

He watched Sven regain his feet. He saw the wide shoulders working back and forth. Heard the curses of the men mix eerily with the excited howling of his teammates.

Overhead, the northern lights swept in streamers of brilliant colors. Green chased red to the very horizon, and then turned back to lose itself in a sweeping veil of orange at the zenith. Long tongues of ethereal flame shot vagrantly across the heavens, and then drew back into jumbled masses of tortured rainbow. The dogs howled. He even added his voice to the clamor once or twice. Then, all at once, the fight was over.

Sven was the only one on his feet. His breath was whistling through clenched teeth and forming a white fog around his shaggy head. His long, thick body weaved on heavy legs that were sprung at the knees. At his feet lay Biggers—his face a red blob. His two companions of the second sled lay near him, and Funston crawled through the snow on his hands and knees, shaking his red head like an angry walrus bull. Murphy was a crumpled, groaning heap on the fallen tent.

**A** CANDLE burned through till daylight in the tent that night, and the next morning they were on their way again. On, on! Always in the same direction, with the sun directly in front of his nose at noon.

Then came the day when Lahkoo was taken behind a hummock by Funston, but when the red-head returned he carried all of his quivering burden into the tent. The smell of the cooking meat made hunger that much more keen. So keen that the dog who survived howled his protest.

Funston came out with the whip and lashed it about indiscriminately. One of the dogs jumped at him, and in the mêlée that followed the whip was left outside.

Later the dog managed to reach out and pull this whip to him. Six feet of the lash made a fairly satisfying meal. The next morning Funston gathered up the remains of the whip and prepared to give him a beating, but Sven stopped him. He laughed, and said something about "poetic justice." Then he said that this would be the last day for the two sleds. There were eight dogs left. To-morrow they would hook them all to one load.

Shortly after they started that day, they saw the "water sky" ahead. A dark streak was reflected in the mist that hung between heaven and ice. The dogs were driven hard. Open water might mean a seal, a walrus, or a nar-whal.

They arrived at the water lead late, but the sun was staying up longer now. Sven took a rifle and scouted along the open lane that ran directly across their path. He returned later, empty-handed.

The lead was about as wide as the distance an Eskimo could shoot an arrow, and full of broken ice that whispered as a slow current kept it in motion. Only a few large cakes drifted by, and they were too far from the edge.

About noon the next day Murphy jumped to an ice pan, with a rope tied

around his waist. It was anchored, but not large enough to support the whole party, so another was captured in the same manner.

The second cake was somewhat smaller, and Biggers insisted that his outfit would use the larger of the two. This was in spite of the fact that his sled was smaller, and the combined weight of himself and his companions much less than that of Sven, Funston, and Murphy.

His master simply shrugged his shoulders and led him out onto the smaller cake. Then he shoved it out into the lead. Biggers did the same with the other pan.

For hours they drifted along, unable in any way to control the course of their raft. A slight wind came out of the north, and gradually they neared the other edge of the lead. At last their improvised ferry bumped the solid ice, and he pulled the sled to safety. Just then he heard a chorus of terrified shrieks. He snapped around in his harness.

A hundred feet out in the brash-filled streak of water the other ice cake bobbed in two pieces, neither one large enough to hold the sled and dogs. Slowly the two pieces drifted apart, and then one of them split. One man was plunged into the freezing brine. Another, kneeling with his hands clasped before his face, was unaware of the slow tilting of his insecure float. He, too, slipped below the surface.

The dog saw the sled drag the dogs under, and only Biggers remained. He clung desperately to the crumbling cake, and then the brash closed over his head and the shattered ice pan bobbed on in the tug of the current.

"God rest their souls," said Murphy reverently.

"The so-and-so's asked for it," said

Funston, and the quiet air was filled with his obscene curses.

Sven tugged at one end of his mustache, but said nothing. Hard lines cut across the shiny frost scars that had burned deep into his cheeks the night the White Seal was crushed.

**L**ESS than an hour later they hit some more bad ice. In and out among the hummocks, over sloping slabs that dropped off sheer at their upper ends, and across wind-packed drifts that were like ground glass, he led his three mates. Now Johnny, the wheel dog, was lagging.

It was tough going, and it was one of those late afternoons when the sun is obscured by a white mist of frost crystals in the air. One of those times when the light is white and hollow, and everything looks level because there is no shadow.

Murphy and Funston fell often, but it was because the ice looked smooth, not because of weakness, for Sven was continually stumbling, too. And then, just before they went into camp, Murphy cried out in pain where he had fallen. Sven placed him on the load, and that night he tore a length of top slat from the sled and put two pieces of it along the man's leg; binding it with strips torn from an empty pemmican sack.

For the next few days Murphy rode on the sled, and the extra load was telling against the big dog's shoulder. Especially since Johnny had fallen under Funston's knife. The men were less thoughtful now. They didn't even hunt for an ice hummock, but did their butchering right before his eyes, and the other two dogs'.

One night he looked through the open flap of the tent while Sven worked over the groaning Murphy. The man's leg

was black to the hip, and almost as large around as his body. He begged Sven and Funston to go on and leave him, but Sven only laughed and tried to cheer him up. Murphy begged for a gun, and after he went to sleep Sven took the guns and knives into his own sleeping bag with him.

Later that night the dog was awakened by some one coming out through the tent flap. He uncurled his tail from around his nose and watched. It was Murphy, crawling along on his belly. Two sled-lengths from the tent he stopped and looked back. He mumbled something under his breath about being a handicap, and then he turned and dragged himself off toward the pale moon on the eastern horizon.

**E**ARLY in the morning, Sven and Funston took him with them on the end of his chain. They needn't have. The mark in the snow was as plain as if some one had dragged a seal by a hind flipper. And at the end of the new-made trail lay Murphy, flat on his face with his arms outflung; forming a perfect cross in the snow. Without a word the two men started covering the brittle form of their comrade with chunks of ice broken from a near-by pressure ridge, and when the work was finished he saw his master's lips moving silently again, as they had back there at the scene of the wreck when he had put on the dead man's parka and then placed him in the hole in the green ice.

Funston, the hard, silent red-head, chewed on his lower lip, and a silent day was spent forging on across the ice desert. On through the dead world they toiled, with not even the sign of an old bear track to hearten them. And late that night they came upon land.

It was a corpse of an island, that

rocky scar on the polar sea. It rose like a gray bruise on the white ice field; its flat top less than fifty feet above the pack. A loose dog could have run around it in half a day, yet to Sven it must have looked like a new continent. He shouted and threw his fur cap into the air.

"Funston!" he cried. "I have proved that I was right. Some day there will be an airplane field and a dirigible station on this island. Think of it, man! Think of it! We have discovered probably the last land ever to be found on this old globe. Think of it!"

"And the secret of its location dies with us, Johansen. We can't make the mainland on two ounces of food a day. The jig's up."

Funston spoke the last three words with a finality that invited no argument, and he saw Sven shrug his shoulders, as he turned to unhook the dogs.

A few minutes later Minnie lay quivering on the snow, while Funston caught the warm blood gushing from her throat in a cup, which he dumped three times into the big aluminium pot.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### ALONE.

FOR two days they stayed at the island, while Sven waited to look at the sun through the instrument that he had guarded so carefully. At last the mist drifted away and he watched his master make many figures on a piece of paper.

While Sven was doing all this, Funston was sitting on a point of rock, looking off into space. Sven probably hadn't seen it, but there were strange lines on Funston's face. They were lines of torture that were etched by the

twistings of a mind gone wrong. Funston was breaking.

Funston was not the first man to break, that voyage. There had been the Eskimo who had gone *piblokto* at Flaxman Island, and had tried to kill the trader there. Then there had been the sailor off an icebound whale ship who had stripped himself naked and raced out across the pack.

Funston didn't crack, though, till Sven had put the lead dog and Jerry into harness and made ready to continue on across the white wastes. Then Funston broke, suddenly, like a match between angry fingers. He clung to a jagged point of rock, and resisted all efforts of Sven to pull him to his feet.

"I'm going to stay here!" he shrieked. "It's land! My land! I won't have to fight the ice any more." He scrambled to his feet, and pushed Sven away from him. He swung an arm around the monotonous horizon. "Ice! Ice! There's nothing but ice and this farm of mine in the world! I am going to stay!"

He stuck his two thick arms up into the air, threw back his big head, and laughed.

It was a hideous sound, that laugh. It came in hysterical gusts from his drooling lips. It was blood-curdling in its timbre, and inhuman in its mirthlessness. It stopped suddenly on the peak of an uncanny screech. Funston looked at Sven with eyes that blazed with a weird light coming from far deep in shadowed sockets. He wiped a long, shiny slaver from his chin with a hand like an eagle's claw.

Funston had broken. Funston, the bull of the expedition! Funston, the man who in trials of strength always gained a laughing victory over the other members of the crew. Funston the willing. The never complaining.

The hard. The silent. The man who always took things as they came. That man had broken!

He fell at Sven's feet, driveling. He mouthed strange words, and mumbled feebly of orchards and alfalfa fields. He mentioned names that belong only to horses, and he cried. Cried hard, like a child. Deep down inside of him. His brute brain had been unequal to the strain of facing death day after day.

Lying there in his harness, with Jerry whimpering at his flank, the lead dog looked at his master standing over the wreck that had been Funston, and wondered if Sven, too, was going to break. The colorless lips were twitching dangerously, and the frost scars stood out brown against the marble whiteness of his face.

But he was to learn more about Sven in the days that followed.

**H**IS master did not sleep that night, nor the next. The sled had been unloaded and the camp repitched. Strange sounds came from inside the tent, while he and Jerry lay in the lee of a big gray boulder.

Then Sven came out and tore down the cairn that had been erected at the highest point on the island. He rebuilt it, over the still form of Funston. The next day he cut four feet from the front of the sled. It took three hours of continuous bending back and forth to break the saw-steel runners off at the place where he had cut through the wood.

With the small sled, they started out over the ice desert again. Four days later they camped beside old tracks of a polar bear. Sven went off with his rifle, but returned empty-handed after a couple of hours.

In the morning poor Jerry, a whining bundle of skin and bones, couldn't

stand on his feet, and there was a short delay. When he and Sven started out again, Jerry's carcass was on top of the load.

It was almost a week after this that they hit some bad going, and he was so weak that he could hardly keep the sled moving on good trail, let alone drag it up through the glassy, snow-blasted slabs that tore the nails from his feet.

Jerry had been nothing but a memory for four days, when Sven had ripped open his collar one night as he had lain with his head on his master's lap. And then the last of that pemmican had gone. He was grateful for the small portion Sven had given him.

They were two days getting through the jumble of broken ice, and the night they camped, with a level expanse once more before them, Sven cut him a piece from his skin parka. The dog chewed the hide, while his master singed the hair from another piece and boiled it in the pot.

On into the south they continued, and when the parka was gone Sven cut the tops from his *mukluks*. After that there were three days with nothing to eat. Another water sky showed up ahead of them, and they tried to hurry. But Sven kept falling to his knees. Once he fell his full length and lay still. The dog licked his master's face and prodded him with a cold nose. With an effort Sven raised himself and staggered on.

When they reached the open water he could barely drag the sled. His flanks were quivering from exhaustion and his feet were leaving crimson dots to mark the trail. He dropped to the ice a few feet from where Sven lay. How long he lay there he did not know, but the next thing he remembered was Sven unslipping the toggle that fas-



tened him to the short length of walrus hide towline.

His master didn't even take off his harness, but pulled his head over onto his lap. He petted the dog and talked to him a long time. Then Sven drew out his big knife, and the dog felt the point of it against his throat, under the collar.

"A fine reward for faithful service, eh, old pal?"

Sven's voice was a choked whisper. There was a moment of silence, and then, with a full-lunged curse of refusal, the knife was drawn away and thrown to the ice.

He reached up and grabbed Sven's hand in his mouth and shook it—a trick he had learned during those long months on the ship. The action put strength into his master, and soon the sleeping bag was spread and Sven slept.

His harness had been left on, but he didn't mind that. He curled up at Sven's feet, and the lapping of water against the edge of the ice was like the song of the beach at home.

During the night a breeze came up. It awakened him, and as he lifted his nose he caught a faint scent of fox.

**I**NSTANTLY he jumped to his feet. He knew that there was nothing on the Arctic ice that a fox could kill. The scent of them could mean only one thing: polar bear. They would be following the shaggy white fellow, waiting to pick up what he might leave of a seal after his appetite had been appeased.

He struck off with his nose into the wind, and soon he came upon their tracks. As he had surmised, the foxes were following the trail of a bear. He trotted along after them on legs that wobbled weakly. Then he saw them,

just as dawn was breaking. A half dozen of them were fighting over something black that they had pulled and hauled near the edge of the lead.

He bared his teeth and charged them, and like white ghosts of animals they slunk away, with occasional angry barks. At a distance they stood and watched him as he gorged himself on the sweet blubber and juicy meat of the seal that some meandering bear had killed. Over half of the sleek animal had been eaten, but there was still a considerable portion.

He lay down beside it, holding it with his paws and tearing at it with the delicious scent of blood in his nostrils. Every once in a while he looked around to be sure there was no danger—the smell of the bear was still strong.

Then he was sick from crowding his starved stomach and he wished he might have some grass to chew, but there wasn't any grass, and he paid for his gluttony with spasms of pain that seemed to tear his body to pieces.

Then, when the family of foxes had gone off in search of another bear trail, he trotted back to where Sven was camped.

He followed the edge of the lead, which was miles wide, and even before he realized that the breeze which had brought him the scent of the fox had also broken up the edge of the ice, he saw the tiny dark spot that was Sven bobbing on a pan far out in the open water. He stretched out and rested his muzzle on his paws, never taking his eyes off the dark spot.

Wind and current carried it farther and farther away. It became smaller and smaller. It passed completely out of sight long before he returned to the remains of the seal. And there he stayed for four days, filling his body

with new strength. Strength, though, that ran out swiftly through his legs when he started out along the lead with the intention of getting around it and continuing in the direction he and Sven had been traveling.

At last he came to where it was narrow, and a wedged floe offered him a bridge to the other side. By that time he had eaten his leather traces, and gnawing hunger was again his constant companion.

On, on, he held his course, till one morning he stood on the edge of the ice and looked across to the long, low line of the land against the sky.

The chilling water cramped every one of the few stringy muscles that still clung to his bony frame. It numbed his heart till every beat was a painful protest. It burned his sore feet like hot seal oil.

He drove himself through the last hundred feet of that icy brine by the sheer will to live, and there was the dim figure of a man on the beach to give him courage.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE PROWLER.

**A** BELL jangled in the office of the club lounge and broke his reverie. He rose on his front legs and nosed the knee of the man with the pipe.

"You are right, Farwell," the other man was saying. "If he could talk, he'd certainly have a story to tell."

A uniformed man who had just run down the stairs was hurrying back toward them.

"What is it, Jimmy?" Farwell asked.

"It was a prowler, all right. He's somewhere on your floor."

The bell man started up the steps, and Farwell jumped to his feet.

"Come on, Sole Survivor. You might come in handy in a case like this."

The two men and the dog hit the third floor landing together.

Against a frosted fire escape window at the very end of the hall was the outline of a man sitting on a bench. He was turning something over in his hands, slowly, thoughtfully.

As the dog lunged down the corridor with serrated lips drawn back from flashing fangs and a deep rumble in his throat, the man half rose from his seat and turned to face them.

Snow-white hair streamed out from beneath a seaman's winter cap, and above a silver beard two wide blue eyes looked out with the vacancy of empty windows. He was tall, gaunt and bony, and his short blue pea jacket hung loosely on his spare frame. He opened his mouth, as though to cry out, but only a hollow gurgling sound came through the thick beard as the dog grabbed his hand. He crumpled to the carpet, and in one clenched, outflung hand was the stem of a walrus tooth pipe.

Farwell reached him first. "Open the door to my room," he ordered, gathering the man into his arms. "Get Doc Burns," he supplemented as Jimmy sprang to obey. He carried the man in and placed him gently on the bed.

Within a couple of minutes the doctor, clad in a bathrobe and with one side of his face covered with lather, came in with a little black bag. He unloosed the patient's clothing and made a hasty examination. He called for a glass of water, dropped something in it out of a bottle from the black bag, and forced it down the man's throat.

The doctor shook the man's head slowly, and then rolled the eyelids back on an applicator stick. He reached into the bag and brought out a head band to which was attached a small electric globe set in a reflector. He snapped this around his forehead, jammed the connection plug into a handy socket, and trained the light into the man's eyes.

Farwell stood at the foot of the bed filling his pipe while the doctor, looking like a sleep-walking miner, studied his patient. At last the medical man straightened up, snapped the band off his head, and wiped the drying lather from his face on the bedspread.

"THIS poor fellow has been out of his mind," he said, pulling a cigarette from his bath robe pocket. "Not insane, understand, but—Well, we call it sensory amnesia. You know. No ideas of time, place or meaning."

"You mean—he doesn't know who or where he is?" ventured Farwell, rubbing the bowl of his pipe against his nose.

"That's the idea," nodded the doctor, studying the face of the man on the bed. "Jimmy, here, said he was a prowler, but I've got ten bucks that says this old boy is no thief. Look at those hands. Thieves don't have chapped hands covered with callouses."

"Those brown splotches on his cheek bones look like frost to me," said Farwell. "Wonder who he is?"

The doctor started through the man's clothes with the expertness of a police sergeant searching a prisoner. The door clicked shut as Jimmy started back to his duties.

The inside of the man's coat pocket gave up a folded sheet of paper. The doctor held it to the light.

8 A—9

"Well," he said, "his name's Lars Larson, and he's got over a year's wages coming from the Arctic Commercial Company. This is an order on them for the money. Who'n hell are they, anyway? You ought to know."

Farwell was looking at the white-bearded face.

"I was certain those were frost scars," he said, half to himself. And then to the doctor: "The Arctic Commercial? Why, they're sealers and whalers. Do some trading with the natives, too." Then his fingers snapped. "By George, Doc, they had a ship in this afternoon! I'll bet he was one of the crew."

A low moan came from the pillow, and the gaunt figure on the bed stirred, restlessly.

"Look! He's coming around."

The doctor snapped into action, digging into his bag.

"You may have a chance of seeing a man reborn in a minute, Farwell. This fellow has had some kind of a shock, and that often restores an amnesia victim to his real self. Wonder what the shock was?" He dissolved a tablet in some water.

"The dog."

"The dog? What do you mean?"

"The dog jumped at him, and he crumpled like a punctured balloon," said Farwell.

The man on the bed rubbed his hands over his face, and when he took them away his eyes were open. They darted around the room. A scowl etched deep lines in his forehead.

"Bring that dog in here," ordered the doctor. He was the professional man now, and every word and action had snap and assurance about it.

Farwell opened the door, and spoke to the dog stretched on the corridor carpet beside it. The big Eskimo dog

stepped into the room with his head high. He lunged across the intervening space and closed his jaws gently over a hand that lay limply on the edge of the bed.

The man turned, and the long white hair fell away from the side of his head.

Farwell suddenly leaned far over the foot of the bed. His knuckles were white where his hands gripped the rail, and the blood drained slowly from his face. His pipe trembled between his strong teeth. The doctor saw the action and asked:

"What is it?"

"By George! That ear—the left one." Farwell's voice was tense. "The top of it's gone. Doc! That's Sven! That's Johansen! He lost that while I was with him."

At the mention of the names, the man on the bed raised up. With one hand he patted the dog's head. He rubbed the other over baffled eyes. Farwell ran around and sat on the edge of the bed, and when the man dropped his hand he was looking straight into his eyes.

"Ace!" he cried. "Ace Farwell!" He threw his arms around the large man's neck. His gaunt frame trembled as though with the palsy. "What—what—Oh, my God! Is this a dream?"

His voice was barely audible. The doctor blew his nose violently while the two men embraced each other.

"Where am I? How did I get here?" Johansen asked.

"You're in the Arctic Club in Seattle, Sven. Next door to your old room." Farwell's pipe stem rattled against his teeth.

"But how did I get here?"

Farwell grabbed the piece of paper from the table beside the bed.

"Do you know you've been going under the name of Lars Larson? Does this paper mean anything to you?"

Johansen caught his lower lip between his teeth. He shook his head.

"Not a thing," he said.

"Here," chipped in the doctor. "Let me ask him a few questions, Farwell."

He sat down on the other side of the bed and took one of the big calloused hands in both of his.

"Now stop and think, Johansen," he said, softly. "What is the last thing that you can remember?"

There was a moment of tense silence, while Sven's brows knitted. "Floating on an ice pan, and eating a piece of walrus hide towline that I cut from the sled," he offered in a whisper.

"Is that the very last thing?"

Again the knitted brows. And again the whispered answer.

"No. I have a hazy recollection of some men coming in an *umiak*."

"What's an *umiak*?" The doctor turned to Farwell.

"An Eskimo skin boat. Sometimes used by the whalers."

"That's what happened, then. They picked him up, took him to their ship and gave him a name. After his harrowing experiences the sight of the men in the boat threw a kink into his brain. Everything from that moment up to now is a blank to him. The dog jumping at him took the kink out."

"I'd never have recognized him except for that ear," said Farwell. "That snow-white hair and beard are too old-looking for your middle-aged face, Sven," he grinned. "But how in the world did you happen to get up here to the club?"

"I don't know," smiled Johansen.

The doctor offered his explanation. "Quite common," he said. "Happens often in cases of this kind. Prompted

by unconscious familiarity with some place or object. Without volition, his feet led him up here, probably as soon as they hit the water front with which he was acquainted." The doctor smashed out his cigarette in a tray.

"I suppose that's the reason he walked into the room he used to have and took those Eskimo souvenirs," ventured Farwell.

"That's it, exactly. Unconscious familiarity again. His mind has been groping, seeking to recall the past." The doctor rose from the bed. "Well, nothing else I can do right now. Fill him up with good food, Farwell, and keep him warm. His nerves will be under considerable tension for a few days until he gets himself adjusted." He shook Johansen's hand, offered him some bantering advice, and left with his little black bag.

**F**ARWELL placed his hand over one of his pal's. "By George, Sven! It's great to see you come back from the grave like this. You don't know it, of course, but I'm just ready to start on another expedition up there. Got the government back of me. They're bound to find that land."

A wan smile wrinkled the brown scars on Sven's cheeks.

"I found the land," he said, simply.

"You found it? Oh, but I'm glad! Glad you get the honor you so well deserve." He reached up and shook the wide shoulders.

"Yes, I remember," replied Johansen. "The notes were lost, but I remember well. When I woke up I was drifting on an ice pan. The dog was gone, but the sled was with me. Later the floe broke up and the sled went under, and my notes with it, but I remember—it's at 72:10 North, 163:40

West." His eyes were focused into the distances beyond the room.

"I can imagine, Sven. Tell me later. Right now you have to rest."

He got up and pulled the shade down on the window. He paced the length of the room two or three times.

"You just lie back and rest, Sven. I'm going down and give the news to the world, but I won't let the newspaper men bother you till you give the word. I'll bring back a great big steak with all the trimmings. We'll have dinner alone, here in the room." He knocked the noggin from his pipe and stepped over to the door. He snapped his fingers.

"Come on, Sole Survivor," he said. "It's about time for you to take on some fuel, too."

The big Eskimo dog was sitting on his haunches midway between the two men. At Farwell's words his plume-like tail stopped wagging for a moment. He looked from one to the other with his soft, intelligent eyes. Then, very slowly, he walked over to the bed and rested his chin over the edge, close beside the white head on the pillow.

For a long minute Farwell stood perfectly still. Then he stepped over and grasped one of his pal's toil-twisted hands.

"I'm sorry, Sven. I—I forgot. He isn't mine any more."

"You called him Sole Survivor—"

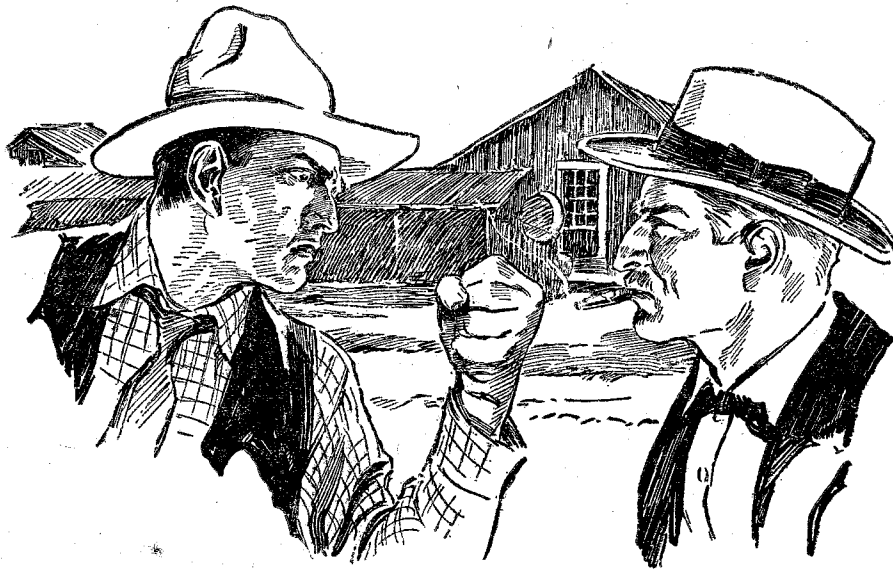
"But, Sven, we all thought—"

"I know, but he's got a real name. I called him Ace, after you."

The big gray dog pricked up his ears. He put his front paws on the edge of the bed and nudged the clasped hands with his cold nose. A reverent, church-like silence filled the room. Outside, a wintry wind whistled around the corners of the Arctic Club.

**THE END.**





*Jemcy shook his fist under his squint-eyed neighbor's nose*

## Hay Wired

*Jemcy Wade was fighting to save his ranch from a crooked neighbor when his dog dug up a fortune—and a problem*

**By JOHN BRIGGS**

**I**F ever a man needed ten thousand dollars in cash, it was Jemcy Wade. And if ever a man was tempted to slip said ten thousand in his pocket and thereafter become tongue-tied, it was also that same Jemcy Wade. Concealed by a thicket of tobacco brush into which he had furtively stepped, Jemcy was holding the ten amazing yellowbacks in his trembling hands, counting them and examining them incredulously.

When a man stares at such impressive figures on a piece of Uncle Sam's paper, it usually does something to the moral precepts he has learned at his mother's knee—especially if he be a struggling homesteader with a sick wife and debts which the court has or-

dered him to pay. It was a cruel hunk of irony to have picked up this staggering wealth and yet have to round up grub on crippled credit.

Unfortunately for his peace of mind he knew who had lost the roll. The money belonged to his wealthy neighbor and enemy, Ira Yocum. The mockery of it was only heightened by the fact that his neighbor had been employing underhanded tactics to ruin him. During the preceding night Ira Yocum's cattle had broken in and had trampled down at least a hundred dollars worth of Jemcy's standing barley. Said barley crop represented Jemcy's only prospect for making the financial grade. He could not collect damages, because his rickety barbed wire fence