

Arctic Survival . .

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sues. He is tireless. He is solidly built and he is strong. He can be a formidable opponent if an occasion arose. He is stern at times but he has a great sense of humor.

Kakairnok stood for a moment in front of the chanters and looked skyward. He then began to put on his clean white gloves, his feet keeping time with the light beating of the drums, one and then the other. When the gloves were on, he began the gestures of his dance casually. There was no smile on his face. He was serious.

Fine Clothes

He gestured thus for the length of his father's whaling song. His gloves looked very white against the black velveteen parka jacket trimmed with a beautiful wolf ruff around the hood.

The hood was off his head at the moment. The bottom of his parka was trimmed with wolverine. The hem and wrists were decorated with fine designs. He wore black trousers and on his feet were a new pair of ankle-length mukluks decorated up with fine designs.

The first round of the chant ended. The second round began with a booming roll of the drums. The chant rose in volume. Kakairnok's right foot thumped hard on the ground precisely at the same moment of the first heavy drum-beat. A pause, and then a steady beat — beat — beat.

The whaling captain issued forth a triumphant cry as he gestured vigorously and dramatically. Then I realized suddenly that there was something more to the dance — much more! Tears blurred my eyes as I watched.

The Dance of Mystery

Kakairnok was dancing to the memory of his departed parents. There was a great sadness in the dance in spite of its vigor. I could see it fleetingly on his face and eyes.

The whale he had caught was his first one as captain of his own crew. His parents had departed before they could witness the great occasion. He seemed to say through his dance:

"Behold, behold! My beloved mother — my beloved father. I, Kakairnok, your son — I have caught a whale — a great one! I am thankful — thankful . . .

"Tigara, your village — our village will eat!"

Kakairnok would have performed the same way without anyone to witness his dance.

Grief

When it ended abruptly, he slumped noticeably. He walked slowly, directly toward me. He paused a moment. I thought he was about to say something, but he didn't. Instead, he smiled faintly and sat down to my right close to me. For a moment he looked out over the fog-laden celebration grounds.

He leaned over, his elbows on his knees. His head bowed and his hand came up to meet it.

He wept silently. I wept with him — my brother, Kakairnok.