

THE RED VALHALLA

By Arthur James Hayes

Illustrated by J. C. Shepherd



OONAGIAK, from much contemplation of the winter heavens, was moved to make an image of Koonagoyiak, the Frost Devil. It was a labor attended with vast difficulty.

There was first to be procured the ivory tusk of a walrus, young, that it might carve well, and white, so that the great Frost Devil's shoe button eyes would shine resplendent against his graven face.

For days Oonagiak made the round of the igloos in search of ivory. Waipau, the hunter from Cape Alexander, had the best, a twisted narwhale milk tusk, white as the snow that swirled in from Kinzie Bay.

But Waipau would not sell. He was under the necessity of purchasing a new wife in the spring, when the garments sewed by the recently deceased had become frayed and worn. Oonagiak envied Waipau, but where white men have not set the precedent the Eskimo is not much of a thief. And then, too, Waipau, the mighty, had a Hudson Bay musket, made in England in 1790, as was attested by the inscription. It threw slugs of lead, rock or orca teeth an enormous distance. Waipau creased his flat face in oily grins and explained that beside a bride to sew one's seal pelts into garments Oonagiak's proffer of two dogs and a blunt knife was as nothing.

From wrinkled old Tookalak, mother of the intrepid young Nagwik, who was dragged under the ice floes of Potter Sound the preceding spring, Oonagiak made a purchase. It was a heavy shaft of ivory that had made its way from far Siberia, passing from hand to hand in the incessant bartering of the men of the frost horizon.

Some Ikiluyt hunter from the distant Bering had chopped it out of an ice mound where lay buried a long-haired mammoth. Eastward it trended, until Nagwik, ranger afield, had purchased it. He wanted it because Carney, the factor at Lapierre, had desired an ivory gunstock to be fitted to his gold inlaid rifle. Nagwik wanted the rifle and shotgun offered in exchange. He had begun the preliminary carving from measurements denoted by knots in a moosehide thong, also acquired in trade.

Then one misty March afternoon Wakanah, the timid, had rushed across the glaring ice floe wailing. The women took it up. There is no mistaking that wail. It signifies that one of the tribal hunters returns no more. Tookalak, the old and wrinkled and toothless, did not know of the factor's offer.



SHE sold the mammoth tusk to Oonagiak for blubber, pelts and soapstone lamps. Oonagiak isolated himself in the igloo constructed for the purpose and set about his labor. With the jellied blood of a musk ox he traced the outline of Koonagoyiak, the Frost Devil, who pushes the sun under the snows and sets the northern lights to flaming in famine time.

Oonagiak didn't revere the Frost Devil. But he thought that the demon of cold might be susceptible to flattery. If he was, he might keep the floes moving on Kinzie Bay and make the hunting good. Alone in his igloo, lit with blubber burning smokily from the wisps of dried moss in the soapstone bowl, he worked on the aged ivory. The old men of the tribe whispered that he was undergoing the black fast, and that when his particular manitou had whispered he would emerge a medicine man. The young girls of the tribe knocked against the walls of his igloo and ran away with mocking laughter. The children stole quietly by, lest the shadowy devils that Oonagiak supplicated might rush out and eat them as blubber.

Of the young girls of the tribe one at

A TALE of the Viking El Dorado, interwoven with the love of two women and the deeds of men mad with jealousy and the lust for gold.

least wasn't disposed to laughter. She was Aganyik, the plumpest and prettiest lass of the Kinzie Bay village. Before Nagwik had gone under the ice he had made her father presents. No other having hunted so well, it followed that no rival could make as many presents as Nagwik. But with the mightiest hunter gone, hope had sprung anew into the hearts of the tribe's lotharios.



THE race had narrowed to Oonagiak and Teeshwinah. To Aganyik the rumor that Oonagiak was becoming a medicine man was unpleasant. Medicine men are bound to no celibacy, but many of them scorn women as weakening the blood and making one ill fit to associate with the devils and manitous that are the true medicine man's chief advisors. If Oonagiak became a woman hater there remained only Teeshwinah. And in childhood a polar bear cub had scratched Teeshwinah. His flat face was crossed with ridges, heavy scars that the Eskimo custom of rubbing wounds with blubber oil and wood ashes had made heavier and darker. Aganyik didn't like Teeshwinah. But his purchasing power would decide the issue.

Even now he was hunting. And if perchance he had come upon walrus ivory for spear and whip handles—it was unthinkable! The idea brought a dejected droop to the corners of the girl's lips and erased the smile that usually hovered over her round face. Into Oonagiak's igloo she crept, disregarding the oldest tradition of her tribe—namely, that when men and devils conferred, in the self-ordaining ceremonies of the medicine man, no woman is to intrude. Devils hate women.

Oonagiak was astonished when his musk ox pelt curtain wavered and undulated and revealed Aganyik's head. She peered at him with her little eyes, bright with curiosity. Then she smiled

are a fool. Soon Teeshwinah comes back to buy me!"

She spoke with downcast eyes, glancing up at him coyly.

"Is that the way you wish it?" she queried. "That I should make the eider-down garments and keep the igloo lamp burning and seal meat bubbling for Teeshwinah?"

Oonagiak pondered. With the ivory image of Koonagoyiak, with the shoe button eyes, he had a gift of priceless value. It would command from Aganyik's father all that he possessed. And his daughter was chief among his possessions. Yet half its merit lay in the surprise. To tell Aganyik was to at least avert a premature sale of her to Teeshwinah, for walrus blubber and tusks.

"I talk to no devils," he said, "except Koonagoyiak, the great Frost Devil. One need not be a medicine man to do that. Instead, I make for your father this, that he may have seal meat in his old age."

From beneath the pelt of the white bear he triumphantly resurrected the likeness of the Frost Devil.

Lopsided and snaggle toothed and grotesque, the image might have been that of any devil in the category of disreputable spirits. But into the sharp brows had been inserted the black shoe buttons. The open mouth was stained red with jellied walrus blood, and the feet and hands were blackened with wood ashes. Around its neck was a necklace of rawhide, interwoven with pink shells and flat blue colored stones. Eighteen inches high it stood, with arms nine inches and legs three inches in length. Oonagiak had hacked right lustily with the butcher knife and cracked chisel the whaler's cook had given him.



ADAMIRATION flamed in the girl's little eyes, and good humor restored the smile to the flat, brown visage. She poked a tentative finger at it and tasted

Oonagiak had made it. He repaired stormily to the girl's father.

"Ivory is cheap," he said. "Old women can hunt it, if they like. That is why Oonagiak made his Frost Devil of the white bone. But if you sell Aganyik for that, then the sun has blinded your eyes and the arctic hare has nibbled your brains. I will make you a better offer!"

He unbuckled his belt, with the bronze buckle. "See that?" he said. "For it I have given much ivory. Yet it is small. It is scarce, for it is red. Nevertheless I shall bring to you in four moons a Frost Devil twice as big as Oonagiak's, made of red metal. I shall make his eyes green with the flashing fire I know of in the distant country. And when I come back with the red Koonagoyiak even the children will laugh at Oonagiak's ivory devil."

When one's hand has withered so it cannot grasp the harpoon, a fat daughter becomes an asset to bargain dearly. Aganyik's father pondered. After all, what was an ivory god when one could have a red devil of the metal that the whalers asked about for the same price?

Aganyik didn't like Teeshwinah, and said so. But women's likes and dislikes are trifling things, to be bent to conformity with the whistling of the walrus hide whip. He silenced the girl's petulant remonstrances.



GO!" he said. "I shall wait four moons and a day to see if you talk with the tongue of a liar. Then, if you speak the truth, shall go to you Aganyik, with my own ivory handled whip, that she may be made to cease lamenting and like your scarred face. If you come back with a great Frost Devil, with the flashing fire eyes, you have done well. If you fail, the old women shall mock you from the igloos and the papooses pelt you with icicles."

Teeshwinah harnessed his dogs, rubbed more wet snow on the frozen mud runners of his sleigh, packed it well with blubber, and set forth. Oonagiak watched his departure, sneering, and saying in a loud voice that the white foxes would gnaw his bones before two moons were passed. Teeshwinah smiled, crinkling the black ridges across his face. "My red Frost Devil," he said, "will eat yours, and the great Koonagoyiak will laugh to think that the little image of white bone was meant to buy Aganyik!"

Four moons passed and Teeshwinah had not returned.

"He is dead," said Aganyik. "He spoke with the tongue of a fool. There is not so much red metal. The Wolverines chew his heart and the wind whistles through his ribs. Where Teeshwinah has gone is night and stars."

Oonagiak exulted. Teeshwinah's mother set up the death chant, and it rose through the frost stillness of the arctic night, increasing in volume as one igloo after another took it up. Far out on the trail, with the frost ghosts swirling about him, Teeshwinah heard.

"They wail for me," he said to his dogs. "They wail for my bones, bleaching in the North." He laughed and sent his whip cracking over the huskies' heads. "Mush!" he said. "I go to buy a wife!"

Far out on the ice the other huskies desisted them and set up a mad yapping. The wailing ceased. The men of the tribe rushed out of the igloos, peering toward the creaking, groaning floes of Kinzie Bay. They set up a shouting and raised the chant of the returning hunter. Teeshwinah had arrived.

His face was thin and the skin stuck to his cheek bones and clung to the hollows of the jaws until the outlines of the teeth were faintly visible. He staggered as he walked, and his dogs were skeletons in fur. But on the sleigh was some-

BEGINNING NEXT WEEK

"Militants in Marriage"

By Emily Calvin Blake

Author of "Suzanna Stirs the Fire," "Story of a Modern Marriage," Etc.

placatingly, the creases of fat almost closing her eyes.

"What do you make medicine for?" she asked.

The young sculptor frowned.

"Away!" he commanded. "Leave, or the old women will wonder at your wails, like the musk calf in a blizzard!" He reached for his whip.

Aganyik was not intimidated.

"The whip is not for a woman's face," she chided. "It is for her back. And mine you cannot reach. Instead, we will talk. Teeshwinah hunts the walrus in the bay. The old men say you are a medicine man. The young girls say you

the jellied blood from the snaggle toothed mouth.

"It is well," she said. "With that shall come good luck to my father, and Aganyik to you. The sting of your whip will be better than the looks of Teeshwinah's withered face! I go."

Teeshwinah, triumphant bearer of walrus tusks and blubber, returned to face the awful fact that the bartering value of walrus ivory for beautiful fat damsels had been altered by a new taste for the sculptured likenesses of frost devils. So said the old father of Aganyik. So said the fathers of the other girls in the tribe. It was bad medicine.