



# North to the Night: A Spiritual Odyssey in the Arctic

By Alvah Simon

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In June 1994 Alvah Simon and his wife, Diana, set off in their 36-foot sailboat to explore the hauntingly beautiful world of icebergs, tundra, and fjords lying high above the Arctic Circle. Four months later, unexpected events would trap Simon alone on his boat, frozen in ice 100 miles from the nearest settlement, with the long polar night stretching into darkness for months to come.

With his world circumscribed by screaming blizzards and marauding polar bears and his only companion a kitten named Halifax, Simon withstands months of crushing loneliness, sudden blindness, and private demons. Trapped in a boat buried beneath the drifting snow, he struggles through the perpetual darkness toward a spiritual awakening and an understanding of the forces that conspired to bring him there. He emerges five months later a transformed man.

Simon's powerful, triumphant story combines the suspense of **Into Thin Air** with a crystalline, lyrical prose to explore the hypnotic draw of one of earth's deepest and most dangerous wildernesses.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Following his "Arctic dreams" that began with a photograph of the haggard crew of the ill-fated ship *Endurance*, Alvah Simon and his wife, Diana, set sail to winter in the high north. "We call them explorers, but I knew that look in their eyes," Simon writes of the early Arctic adventurers. "They were seekers, and that is a different thing." With self-discovery as a deeper agenda, the couple ventures into Tay Bay of remote Bylot Island; it is their ultima Thule--"the Last Unknown." Their small boat is willingly frozen in the ice. When Diana is airlifted out of the Arctic to tend to an emergency back home, Simon is unexpectedly left in solitude. His journey turns inward as he confronts the "uncomfortable awakening of my spiritual self." In the waning daylight, then total darkness, Simon's days are punctuated by depression and mania, a crackled voice over the radio, Inuit visitors, and hard-earned lessons as he is driven by the forces of the Arctic winter and by "the total loss of the sun." In this elegant, well-paced book, the Arctic darkness becomes a psychological landscape perforated with light and revelation, and Simon's thrilling tale is as captivating as his language. There is a welcome intimacy here as we share the same icy hull, listening close to this searching man. Simon courageously tells us about his darkest moments, dreams, and nightmares, and when the sun emerges, new eyes greet land and relationships. Simon has discovered his ultima Thule. --Byron Ricks

#### From Publishers Weekly

In the summer of 1992, Simon and his wife, both experienced adventurers, set off in a 36-foot sailboat, the *Roger Henry*, toward northern Canada to spend a year above the Arctic Circle. In his survival memoir, Simon recounts the physical and psychological demands of the Arctic with an almost sheepish bravado; his capacity to discuss the beauty of the landscape, the culture of the Inuit and the protean nature of glacial ice is matched only by a reckless drive to make his journey more "authentic" by taking unnecessary, and often life-endangering, risks. This juxtaposition makes for gripping reading, particularly when Simon is left alone to face the sunless, sub-zero winter months of "lifesucking cold" after his wife is called away to be with her dying father. Yet the author's account is often frustratingly lacking in introspection. Running low on fuel as the cold and darkness press in on him, Simon, in harrowing solitude from November to March, might have paused to offer some self-reflection on the mixed motives of the contemporary survivalist-adventurer?a dilemma discussed in much greater depth in John Krakauer's *Into the Wild*, for example. Instead, Simon delivers the tropes we have come to expect from this genre (humility in the face of nature, an unfocused critique of "civilization," the romanticization of native cultures), none of which are made more convincing in light of his daredevil behavior and steel-sided ship. Some readers may be troubled by the absence of a reason for this adventure, other than to flirt with death. Editor, Jon Eaton; rights, McGraw-Hill. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

#### From Library Journal

With no winter daylight and temperatures as low as 60 degrees below zero, Bylot Island in Canada's Northwest Territories, across Baffin Bay from northern Greenland, seems an unlikely place to spend the winter, especially alone in a small boat frozen in the ice. Simon, a wandering American with many nautical miles behind him, and his wife, Diana, a well-traveled New Zealander, planned to share the experience. But when her father's illness called Diana home, Simon stayed on alone with only a cat and occasional curious wildlife for companionship. Reading about so much darkness and ice and the hardship and introspection brought about by them sounds grueling, but Simon can write. When not sharing his inner reflections, he provides interesting observations about the Inuits of the region. The experience, combined with Simon's fine narrative, makes this book a good choice for larger public library travel collections. ?Harold M. Otness,

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Carissa Ware:**

This North to the Night: A Spiritual Odyssey in the Arctic book is absolutely not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you receive by reading this book will be information inside this e-book incredible fresh, you will get information which is getting deeper you read a lot of information you will get. This kind of North to the Night: A Spiritual Odyssey in the Arctic without we realize teach the one who reading it become critical in contemplating and analyzing. Don't possibly be worry North to the Night: A Spiritual Odyssey in the Arctic can bring if you are and not make your case space or bookshelves' turn into full because you can have it in the lovely laptop even mobile phone. This North to the Night: A Spiritual Odyssey in the Arctic having very good arrangement in word and also layout, so you will not feel uninterested in reading.

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