



A Man's Woman (German Edition)

Frank Norris

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At four o'clock in the morning everybody in the tent was still asleep, exhausted by the terrible march of the previous day. The hummocky ice and pressure-ridges that Bennett had foreseen had at last been met with, and, though camp had been broken at six o'clock and though men and dogs had hauled and tugged and wrestled with the heavy sledges until five o'clock in the afternoon, only a mile and a half had been covered. But though the progress was slow, it was yet progress. It was not the harrowing, heart-breaking immobility of those long months aboard the Freja. Every yard to the southward, though won at the expense of a battle with the ice, brought them nearer to Wrangel Island and ultimate safety. Then, too, at supper-time the unexpected had happened. Bennett, moved no doubt by their weakened condition, had dealt out extra rations to each man: one and two-thirds ounces of butter and six and two-thirds ounces of aleuronate bread—a veritable luxury after the unvarying diet of pemmican, lime juice, and dried potatoes of the past fortnight. The men had got into their sleeping-bags early, and until four o'clock in the morning had slept profoundly, inert, stupefied, almost without movement. But a few minutes after four o'clock Bennett awoke. He was usually up about half an hour before the Others. On the day before he had been able to get a meridian altitude of the sun, and was anxious to complete his calculations as to the expedition's position on the chart that he had begun in the evening. He pushed back the flap of the sleeping-bag and rose to his full height, passing his hands over his face, rubbing the sleep from his eyes. He was an enormous man, standing six feet two inches in his reindeer footnips and having the look more of a prize-fighter than of a scientist. Even making allowances for its coating of dirt and its harsh, black stubble of half a week's growth, the face was not pleasant. Bennett was an ugly man. His lower jaw was huge almost to deformity, like that of the bulldog, the chin salient, the mouth close-gripped, with great lips, indomitable, brutal. The forehead was contracted and small, the forehead of men of single ideas, and the eyes, too, were small and twinkling, one of them marred by a sharply defined cast. But as Bennett was fumbling in the tin box that was lashed upon the number four sledge, looking for his notebook wherein he had begun his calculations for latitude, he was surprised to find a copy of the record he had left in the instrument box under the cairn at Cape Kammeni at the beginning of this southerly march. He had supposed that this copy had been mislaid, and was not a little relieved to come across it now. He read it through hastily, his mind reviewing again the incidents of the last few months. Certain extracts of this record ran as follows

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