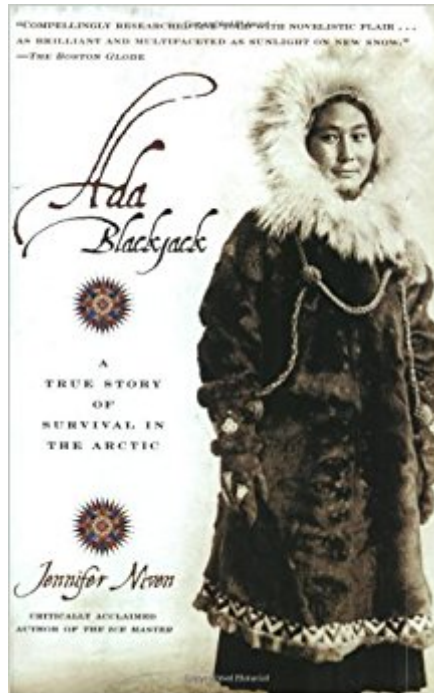




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Ada Blackjack: A True Story Of Survival In The Arctic



Synopsis

Now in paperback, the gripping and inspiring tale of a woman's survival alone in the Arctic. In 1921, four men and one woman ventured deep into the Arctic. Two years later, only one returned. When 23-year-old Inuit Ada Blackjack signed on as a seamstress for a top-secret Arctic expedition, her goal was simple: earn money and find a husband. But her terrifying experiences--both in the wild and back in civilization--comprise one of the most amazing untold adventures of the 20th century. Based on a wealth of unpublished materials, including Ada's never-before-seen diaries, bestselling author Jennifer Niven narrates this true story of an unheralded woman who became an unlikely hero.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The beauty of Niven's tale (after *The Ice Master*) reveals itself slowly, in hard-to-find bits and pieces, mirroring the piecemeal dawning of dread that blanketed the book's five protagonists one winter in 1923 on a bleak Arctic island. The explorers four young white men from the U.S. and Canada and Ada, a 23-year-old Inuit woman set out under a Canadian flag to claim a barren rock in the tundra north of the new Soviet Union for the British Empire. But with a lack of proper funding; a grandstanding, do-nothing Svengali of a leader; and an inexperienced crew, the mission was doomed from the start. Niven's hero is the slight, shy Blackjack, who, though neither as worldly wise as her companions nor as self-sufficient, learns to take care of herself and a dying member of her party after the team is trapped by ice for almost two years and the three others decide to cross the frozen ocean and make for Siberia, never to be seen again. By trapping foxes, hunting seals and

dodging polar bears, Blackjack fights for her life and for the future of her ailing son, whom she left back home in Alaska, and for whose health-care expenses she agreed to take the trip. When she returns home as the only survivor, the ignoble jockeying for her attention and money by the press, her rescuer and the disreputable mission chief (who sat out the trip) melds with the clamor of city life (in Seattle and San Francisco), leaving both the reader and Blackjack near-nostalgic for the creaking ice floes and the slow rhythms of life in the northern frozen wastelands. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Starred Review Niven's first book, *The Ice Master* (2000), was a thrilling chronicle of an Arctic exploration mission gone horribly awry. In many ways, *Ada Blackjack* is a follow-up, as several of the same characters and problems recur. Vilhjalmur Steffanson, the scientist whose carelessness was largely responsible for the ill-fated voyage of the *Karluk*, once again embarks on a haphazard mission. This time, his aim is to send a colonizing party to frozen Wrangel Island, intending to claim it for Canada. Four eager young men volunteer for the trip and try to hire Eskimos to hunt, sew, and cook for them, but only one signs up: 23-year-old Ada Blackjack. The group manages to survive on Wrangel for a year, but then an expected supply ship fails to reach them, and their situation quickly becomes dire. Three of the men set off for Siberia to get help, leaving an ailing colleague and Ada to fend for themselves. Using the diaries of the men and Ada, Niven vividly re-creates the frozen land, the struggles of the group, and Ada's ups and downs after her return. This exhilarating account is essential reading for adventure-story fans. Kristine Huntley Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

The author shares every detail she has learned about Ada Blackjack's life -- and the lives of everyone connected to Ada. In other words, the book goes way beyond Ada's story. Sometimes this was interesting and added to our understanding or appreciation of her world and her incredible adventure (1921 - 1923), but some of it was really overkill. Don't think of this as Ada's biography, though that is in there as much as the author could piece it together. There are some strange errors (author referring to the Soviets in the early 1800s - what's with that??) and too much repetition. A stronger editor would have been nice. Note: there are lots of great photos, embedded in the text of the paper version but stuck at the back of the Kindle version. Don't miss them.

While I enjoyed the book overall, I found it was a little disappointing that most of the story was about Ada's 'survival' after she was rescued from Wrangel Island. I enjoyed the Arctic adventure a lot

more than reading so much about the effects it had on the rest of her life. While the experiences she had on Wrangel Island impacted nearly every part of her life after her rescue, I feel that I would have liked to have had the book focus a lot more on the time spent on the island with a much smaller portion dedicated to her life after the fact. She was an extraordinary woman and I admire her courage and willingness to overcome adversity. It is incredible to think that anyone could survive the conditions she had to endure. I read the Ice Master first, but I think Niven did a better job in writing this book. It's much easier to follow. Now to find another adventure book! Suggestions?

I found this book quite odd. Ada is a complicated character and though I was curious about her story of survival and found it admirable, the long after story was not so interesting. Didn't love the writing style but have read so much since that I've forgotten why. Just don't have a warm place in my heart for this one though I generally am strongly held by survival stories.

A friend recommended this book to me and I can't thank him enough. What an amazing true story of a woman's survival under the harshest of Arctic conditions. Very deftly written and thoroughly engaging. One thing I wasn't expecting was to have a couple of major villains in the story. I can't recommend this book highly enough. It makes a good companion piece to "In the Kingdom of Ice," which I enjoyed earlier this year.

Wonderful story of courage and a mother's love. So glad this story has been told. Ada deserved so much more for herself and boys. So sad for all the heartache

I think I have read every survival story and this one is a classic. The character development is wonderful as Ada and the four men that accompanied her were so real and true to life. While I did think the amount of time the author devoted to after Ada's return seemed a bit much, I get it. The adventure lasted but two years, but the controversies lasted her lifetime. Ada was described as a real person, and not a fictional hero. A must read.

Ada Blackjack A True Story of Survival in the Arctic, by Jennifer Niven, 394 pp. plus end-notes. This book is a history of the bravery and courage four young men and one woman, a native Alaskan, who endured two years on Wrangell Island in the Arctic above Siberia when the ship that was to arrive and return them to their homes could not push through the iced-over sea. It is also, unfortunately, the history of the treachery and lies of those whose aim was to gain money and fame

through the misfortunes of these young explorers, namely Vihjalmur Stefansson, the disorganized "organizer" (who stayed safely home) and of Noice who commanded the rescue ship and who defaced and destroyed parts of the diary of the one of the explorers. Of the many Eskimos signed up to go with them, Ada was the only one to show up when the ship left Alaska. She went only because she needed the money to care for her son Bennett who had tuberculosis, and because she was one to keep her word. Her job was to sew warm clothing from the skins of the animals they would use for food. The four men perished. Three in an effort to walk on the ice to Siberia, one from scurvy. Ada took care of the sick man doing all the chores when he was too sick to leave his bed. She had to learn to shoot, to hunt and to trap. Plus chop wood, cook, melt snow for water, repair the shelters, deal with polar bears. All the tasks that were done formerly by four men. It was a fascinating story of time spent in the Arctic; and also a warning about humans whose desire for honor and wealth cause them to treat unfairly those whom they use to achieve their goals.

When reading the description of this book I expected it to be full of adventure, excitement, tragedy, and survival. Instead I read about Stef, a selfish man who has no issue with using someone's tragic story, even someone dead, for personal gain. And about Noice, who basically is the same. They lie, cheat, and steal at the expense of the people that looked up to them. I wanted to read about the story of Ada and surviving the Arctic, which there didn't seem to be too much of in this book.

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