Arctic Dreams and Nightmares



Ousland and Horn at the North Pole

Word Focus

float = to rest on top of water

tent = portable shelter

grab = to take suddenly

waterproof = does not allow water to get in

GPS = global positioning system

Arctic Expedition

In the darkness of the Arctic night, a helicopter landed on the north coast of Russia. Boerge Ousland and Mike Horn were beginning one of the most amazing expeditions in history. It was January 22, and they planned to walk 600 miles (965 kilometers) to the North Pole—in winter.

There is no land at the North Pole, only water and ice that **floats** and moves. It's always a dangerous place, but winter is the worst time of the year. The sun doesn't come up for three months, and the temperature can be –40°F (–40°C). But Boerge grew up in Norway, and he loved skiing and climbing mountains. Mike Horn was a champion athlete from South Africa. They were ready for the challenge.

The two explorers wanted to set out right away, but the ice was moving too fast. They were waiting in their **tent** when Boerge heard a strange noise. "Mike, is that you?" Boerge asked. Suddenly, the tent ripped open. It was a polar bear! While they were looking for their guns, the bear **grabbed** some of their food. They didn't sleep very well that night.

The next day, they set out on skis and pulled their equipment behind them. When they came to open water, they had to swim. They put on **waterproof** suits over their clothes and got into the icy water five or six times a day. When they weren't in the water, they were skiing. It wasn't light enough to see, so they used headlamps.

Every day, they skied and swam north. And while they were sleeping, the ice carried them south. But they kept on for ten hours every day, covering 15 miles (24 kilometers) each day. They were making progress and getting close to the Pole when Mike became very ill. Blood was coming from his nose and ears. They had a cell phone, but Mike didn't want to give up and call for help. He took medicine, and he slowly got stronger. And every day, the sky got a little bit lighter.

On March 23, Boerge checked his **GPS.** The North Pole was 1000 yards (914 meters) away. "I've been there before," Boerge told Mike. "You've never been. You go first." "No," Mike said. "We'll do it together." And together, the two explorers walked to the Pole and took this amazing photo.

Reading

A What do you know about the Arctic? Circle the answers. Then read the article to check.

1. In the winter in the Arctic, it's dark _____ hours every day.

   a. 12 **b.** 20 **c.** 24

2. The North Pole is on _____.

   a. land **b.** water **c.** ice

3. In the Arctic, you can see _____.

   a. polar bears

   b. penguins

   c. polar bears and penguins

1. What was Boerge and Mike's idea?
2. What happened to their food?
3. How did Boerge and Mike travel?
4. How far did they go every day?
5. What happened when they were close to the Pole?
6. When did they get to the Pole?