



Susie glasses the tundra for caribou in a midsummer snowstorm.

over a pot of boiling coffee. As usual, she was the first one to crawl from under her blanket, reach out for the pot of boiling water left outside our tent the night before, crack the ice in it and pump the Primus stove.

"Ker no it bin?" (How are you?) said Edith as she emerged from her caribou skin and brushed its loose shedding hair from her blouse. "Look how white I am. I'm old before my time!"

"We're all old before our time," gurgled Bella merrily as she sat up and blew long, white hairs from her nose and mouth. "Ooh, I'm cold, Edith, I'll give you \$25 for your blanket and no extra for the caribou hairs."

Always the Eskimos joke and laugh. But when Susie laughed it was so joyous and uproarious that you wanted to laugh, too, even when you had no notion what had caused it.

Susie decided to leave camp where it was that day and go hunting in the direction of a caribou she had spotted through her binoculars the night before. The dogs kept up an enthusiastic anticipatory howling as soon as unstaked and I felt their vociferous

presence would send a flying every caribou within hearing distance.

Bella and Edith roped the empty packsacks on the dogs to support the hoped-for meat back to camp. Susie, with binoculars and sealskin-encased rifle slung by ropes around her neck, looked as though she was cutting off her breath supply.

Edith had slung over her rifle a piece of canvas to hold dried meat and a pot of tea. Bella also packed a round canvas sack.

Off we went with the dogs trotting in the lead. "Granny didn't pack food for the dogs," Bella told me, "in case they messed up the plane and, besides, they don't work as hard if they eat too much."

Nevertheless, I was glad that the men at Johnson Point had fed them the leftover sirloin steaks from the night before.

Before every rise we would stop for Susie to lie flat on the tundra and sweep to the horizon with her binoculars. Every little while we also would have to stop to retie the packsacks that kept slipping around the dogs' bellies and tripping them up.

We spotted no caribou but in this seemingly empty land I thrilled to the sight of a fox and to the call of loons

on a lake.

After three hours we stopped to make tea. Susie dug a depression in the ground, Bella arranged roots she'd been collecting along the way and Edith, the only one who smoked, offered cigarette paper when the caribou fat wouldn't burn.

On other days when we carried camp with us on the dogs' packs, Susie would tear off a piece of canvas and dip it in the stove oil to make the fire.

Water in this land of lakes and streams and melting snow was the one commodity that was always handy. Our lunch, like every meal, was dried caribou or seal, the former edible but the latter too tough for my teeth or enjoyment.

Susie and Edith would tear off strips with their hands but Bella would grab hers with her teeth and slice off pieces with her ulu. She laughed merrily when I feared for her nose and teased me further by slicing the meat closer to her face.

By early afternoon we had walked a wide circle of many miles crossing hills, fording streams and edging lakes, still without seeing caribou despite coming across tracks and lots of dung, a few pieces of which Susie said were "really fresh." The dogs fought crazily over