

The forgotten tragedy of Wrangel Island

Ada

MICHAËL OLBRECHTS

In September 1921, 'explorer' Vilhjalmur Stefansson sends four ambitious young men to Siberia's Wrangel Island to claim it for the British Crown. The young Inupiat woman Ada Blackjack goes with them to cook and sew, intending to earn enough to pay for the treatment of her young son for tuberculosis. There is no sign, however, of the other experienced Inuit Stefansson was to provide, so none of the party knows much about hunting or how to survive in the harsh Arctic conditions. In the end, Ada and her cat are the only members of the group to be rescued alive after two years on Wrangel Island.

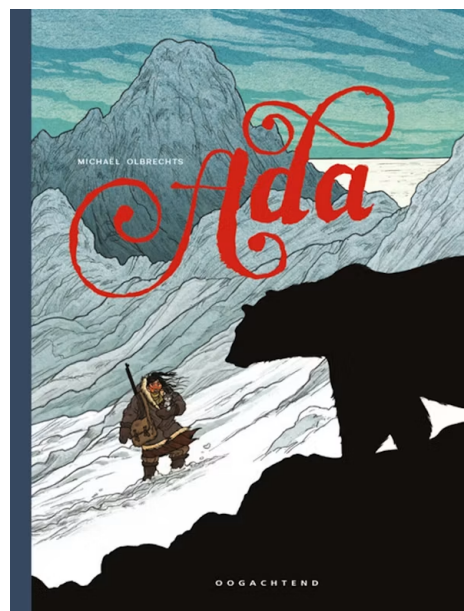
Olbrechts is a consummate master of both storytelling and drawing.

ENOLA

Once again, Michaël Olbrechts turns historical facts into an impressive adventure story. The dramatic Arctic landscape allows him to pull out all the stops in drawing the scenery, but the characters and their motivations are the driving force of the story. The narcissistic Stefansson and the young men eager to see their names in the history books are in stark contrast to Ada, who only wants to survive and return to her son. Despite the dark, realistic atmosphere, the drawings feel warm. In 'Ada' Olbrechts transforms a forgotten tragedy into a compelling, vividly realised and highly accessible graphic novel.

Olbrechts builds his story expertly, evokes awe for inhospitable nature and chooses the perspective of the most powerless person amid the insanity: a desperate mother.

KNACK



AUTHOR



Michaël Olbrechts (b. 1987) is a comic artist and freelance illustrator who won the Silvester Debut Award for his first book. His stories centre on the frequently awkward dynamic between people. His figures are cute in some ways, yet Olbrechts always manages to capture their expressions with great precision. Both his characters and his narratives are quintessentially human. Photo © Bart van der Moeren

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