

The floating sheets of Arctic ice were slowly freezing together , threatening to crush the small sailing ship . Instead , he had spent the last six years at sea , working as a common sailor , enduring cold , hunger , thirst , sleeplessness , and often brutal discipline , just to prepare his body and mind for this long and dangerous voyage But now , with the ice threatening his ship and the lives of his crew , it was doubtful whether or not any of them would ever see their homes and families in England again ! Robert Walton , its young English captain , stood on deck , wondering if he were wrong risking the lives of his brave crew for his own ambitions – to explore oceans ships had never sailed on and land men had never walked on . " Walton was amazed that anyone so near death should ask such a question of anyone interested in saving his life . But he decided to humor the man by explaining , " We're exploring the seas near the North Pole . " " Wrap him in blankets and lay him gently near the stove , " ordered Walton . He dreamed of the benefits this discovery would have for all mankind if he were to discover a sea route near the North Pole from Europe to Asia . Walton had been born into wealth and could have chosen to spend his life in ease and luxury . " Walton told his men , " and this man is nothing at all like that gigantic creature that sped past us . " For two days , the man didn't speak . The wild expression in his eyes and the frequent gnashing of his teeth made Walton fear that the man ' s suffering had driven him mad . Yet there were moments , when someone was kind or helpful to him , that his eyes shone with kindness and gratitude . " The man ' s face immediately turned gloomy as he replied , " I'm looking for someone in a sledge very much like mine . " It's a sledge , sir , " said a sailor , " much like the one we saw yesterday . " The man nodded and whispered , " North is good . " And he let the sailors come down to carry him up to the ship . Once the man was on deck , the ship's doctor reported , " His legs are nearly frozen , sir , and his body is so thin that his bones are coming through his clothing . " " Calm yourself , my friend , " cautioned Walton . " You " ve been very ill , and you mustn't have this kind of excitement . At about two o'clock in the afternoon , the thick , heavy fog that had surrounded the ship all morning began to lift . As it did , a strange sight appeared on the ice . " " Here is our captain , " called one of the sailors to the man below . " " We saw him , " Walton explained , " only the day before we picked you up . " " You're right , " said the stranger with a sigh . " " Good Lord , man ! " " Thank you , sir , " answered the man in a weak voice , " but first I need to know where your ship is headed . " At that news , the stranger ' s eyes opened wide , and . he raised himself off the pillow