



## Edge of Nowhere

*John E. Smelcer, Smelcer*

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## **Edge of Nowhere** John E. Smelcer , Smelcer

This is an astonishing tale of survival; a poignant Robinson Crusoe story, based on true events. When Seth and his dog, Tucker, are washed overboard from his father's fishing boat during a torrential storm, they are assumed drowned. But by good fortune, Seth and Tucker make it safely to one of the hundreds of islands that line the Alaskan coast. Over many months, the boy and his dog make their way, island by island, towards home, while Seth's desperate father never gives up hope. Along the way, Seth learns many hard lessons about survival, and even harder lessons about himself.

## **Edge of Nowhere Details**

Date : Published August 5th 2010 by Andersen

ISBN : 9781849391962

Author : John E. Smelcer , Smelcer

Format : Paperback 208 pages

Genre : Adventure, Survival, Young Adult, Teen, Realistic Fiction, Childrens, Middle Grade

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## From Reader Review Edge of Nowhere for online ebook

### Sandy says

He compared himself to Robinson Crusoe, a sixteen-year old teen who washed up with his dog on an island with only the provisions he had on his back. Seth was salmon catching with his father during an Alaska storm when the duo is whisked into the sea. The storm has the attention of his father and the ship's mate who doesn't realize the fate of the boy and the dog until they dock later in the day. On the island, Seth immediately sets about finding food and fresh water; he is a real survivalist for being 16. Seth knows a lot about what to do and at first they are not successful but as each sun rises, Seth's determination and skills make their lives more comfortable. For being alone on an island, there are few moments where I read about Seth being emotionally afraid and scared or his fear of being alone forever, Seth just fought through and was very confident of his current situation. He cried a few times and it made me wonder if this was actually feasible. Seth might have been running on adrenaline, Seth was upset with his father over the loss of his mother and perhaps this played into his emotional numbness, perhaps the dog gave him comfort but after considering all this, I still think the book lacked some emotional feelings for a 16-year old. It was an adventure, one filled with myths, stories and educational information as Seth tells us what he knows about the areas, feasible? Well, that is up to you to decide.

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### Dakota Ortiz says

Edge of Nowhere was a very good book. It's a book based off of true events, where a kid and his dog get swept into sea, eventually floating up to an island. I think that the theme of the book is that things are a lot harder than they seem. Throughout the book Seth (the main character) crosses island after island, learning the actual difficulties of surviving in the wild, especially after his father told him that it's harder than it looks, and Seth, just like every other teen, didn't listen.

The main idea of the book is that people claim some things are very easy, when they either have never done it before, or have and can back their claim, and some things are easier said than done. I feel like the book (which was based off of a true story) gave a very valid point when it comes to the saying "easier said than done," because it goes into full detail of surviving in the wild, especially the dangerous wilds of Alaska. The character, Seth, is an unathletic, unhealthy 16 year old who sits at home playing video games and eating junk food all of the time. He's the main character and his role is learning about the real world and how it's more difficult than how he perceived it. He's intelligent, and even though he knows how to do things in the wild, he still has trouble surviving, because it's more of the in the moment thing than the thing itself. He's caring, because a part in the book, when he first finds a pear tree, there were only a few good pears, and instead of eating them all for himself, he gives half to his dog Lucky, who appreciated it very well. "Lucky scarfs down the three pears Seth had given him, and showed more love than Seth had ever seen come out of the old dog." ←quote from the book. Seth is also scared. The book gave a very good sense of fear inside Seth, because who wouldn't fear being out in the rough wilderness of Alaska? I think Seth got it off easy though because he had his dog as his companion for the whole time.

I loved the book. Not only was it interesting, but it was also very intense, because being stuck out in the wild is as intense as it already sounds. If I were in Seth's shoes, I honestly think I could've handled it as good as him. I mean, I can't really say that because I've never been stranded out in the wild before, but I don't think it would be as bad as people makes it seem.

You get pretty tense reading it, and you want to read it more and more and more and more until eventually you finish it. I suggest this book to any person who loves to read out there because it expresses good exploration and adventure

## Brooke Smith says

Review also posted at my blog, BB Reads.

Shelved as a young adult book, this book definitely sits more in the pre-teen age range, perhaps appropriate for 4th-8th grades. I often heard this book compared to Robinson Crusoe, with the author drawing that parallel himself in the first few chapters. In reality, I see more of a similarity to Gary Paulsen's Hatchet or Scott O'Dell's Island of the Blue Dolphins, or even Jack London's White Fang.

At its core, this book is an adventure story of survival and unexpected events in the wilderness. We follow Seth Evanoff and his dog, Tucker, as they maneuver down the Alaskan coast after they were tossed overboard of their dad's salmon boat and rescuers having discovered his hat in the water and presumed him dead. Interwoven in the survival tale is the rich history of Alaska and her native peoples. There is a fable told in parts at the beginning of each chapter, and a sub-plot is Seth's reconnection with his native roots by his rediscovery of vocabulary from the Alutiiq language as he travels. Cameos are also made by archaeological finds from World War II, remnants from the Exxon Valdez spill, and how the land is shaped by glacial movements.

It's clear that Smelcer, with his many degrees in anthropology, linguistics, and archaeology (among others), possesses a strong knowledge base on which to craft this story. What is less clear to me is whether this story contains the depth necessary for us to be emotionally invested in Seth and Tucker's survival and Seth's estranged relationship with his father. Because the novel did such a good job introducing us to the variety of history that has shaped Alaskan culture, I still enjoyed it, but at times, this book jumped from topic to topic the same way that Seth might hop from island to island in his effort to come home; erratically and without knowing exactly where it was going. Still, despite its drawbacks, this novel holds a place in a genre of adventure, especially for high elementary and middle school children. It works well as a read-aloud book for family story time and has some great enrichment and discussion topics in the back to further the topics of wilderness survival and interpersonal relationships.

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## Barbara says

Seth Evanoff is swept overboard when a wave strikes his father's commercial fishing vessel in Prince William Sound. He and his dog Tucker somehow manage to make landing on one of the small slips of land off the southern coast of Alaska. Although Seth and his father haven't seen eye to eye since his mother's death and Seth's subsequent withdrawal into the world of computer and video games, his father never stops searching for his son even after the Coast Guard calls off its search. Meanwhile, Seth remembers how his father had cast aspersions on his ability to survive for even a day in the wilderness. The author deftly and sympathetically describes Seth's struggles amid the beauty and dangers of this part of the country. One of the things that keeps him going is his memories of the Alutiiq terms and concepts his grandmother taught him before her death. Although he hadn't been particularly interested in her stories before, suddenly they are important and help him figure out how to survive in the wilderness. It's easy to see how both father and son are responsible for their estrangement, but in the end, all that matters is that the boy has become a man, and the two are reunited. When I read books such as this one, I tend to be awed at what someone such as Seth is capable of doing. His ingenuity and determination to make it home alive waver only once, but his love for Tucker keeps him going forward.

### **Mary Beth says**

I read a galley of this book and thought it was a good adventure novel. The Alaska setting was interesting (I've never been) and the mythology/folklore included added to the sense of place. My copy was under YA, but honestly, this was more children's/middle school literature. It had a very simple plot and was a quick read. I appreciated that it was a very clean read-no sex, no swearing, no violence other than that found in nature.

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### **Angela says**

I highly recommend this slim novel which both fits comfortably in the "stranded" and "lost at sea" genre AND blows it away. Compare to "The Cay" , "Hatchet" or "The Life of Pi". The voice here is authentic and rare. The context of a nearly lost Alaskan Native Peoples, their stories and language and the lyrical prose of the writing set this apart from other "coming of age" novels. The length will grab more reluctant readers and the back matter is valuable for teachers. Recommended for grades 6-9 and readers who enjoy struggles against/with nature and survival stories.

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### **Ulliri says**

it was a very nice and mellow book.

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### **Kalilah says**

Review to come...

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### **Bretton Anderson says**

I think the book is really good . It has a lot of turning points and it don't have just one climax, it has multiple ones.

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### **Mrs. Strudthoff says**

Seth's mom was killed in a car accident about a year ago. Deep down, he blames his father Jack for her death. Seth has also isolated himself from his friends, activities he used to enjoy, and life in general. He disappears from real life by escaping into the music on his iPod. His deviation from this pattern is helping out his dad on his salmon boat and spending time with his dog Tucker.

Aboard the salmon boat one night, Seth and Tucker are thrown overboard in a violent storm. Luckily, they

don't drown and are able to ride out the storm on a very tiny island. All Seth has to eat is a couple of candy bars and has no fresh water. After waiting on the island for two days, Seth begins to understand that no one is going to save them so Tucker and he are going to have to save themselves.

Set in Alaska, this novel is definitely for fans of Gary Paulsen's Hatchet

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### **Lisa Kearns says**

John Smelcer's "Edge of Nowhere" is a vivid, exciting story of surviving and maturing under extreme conditions. It reminded me a Julie of the Wolves, Hatchet, My Side of the Mountain and Island of the Blue Dolphins - all books about a young boy surviving alone in the wilderness.

Seth is a 16 year old boy who prefers his ipod and video games to anything else. His dog, Tucker, is his best friend as he isolates himself from his friends and tries to deal with the grief of losing his mother in an accident. One stormy night he is swept overboard from his father's fishing boat, and finds himself on a small island with nothing but a couple of Slim Jims and his dog.

Seth and Tucker spend the next four months slowly making their way back home by swimming between the many islands off the coast of Alaska, and learning to depend on their wits to find food and shelter. Seth's father is distraught over losing him, but never gives up hope that he will be found alive.

This is one of those wonderful pre-teen books that will stick in your head for a long time. It's well written, believable (it's actually based on a true story), and portrays the minefield of tween and teen emotions in a realistic way.

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### **Jenaya says**

It was a strong story. But I got a little bored. I love the message behind it though.

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### **Ms. Heres says**

Seth and his dog are swept off his father's boat in the middle of a storm and has to survive in the wilderness hoping he will be found quickly. When the days drag on into weeks he fears they may never be found.

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### **Pages For Thoughts says**

This book is a combination between Hatchet and The Odyssey, but much easier. Seth's survival was easier in the sense that what he needed to live was right in front of him, and there was not any violence or a direct threat. T I was looking for the extra suspense, the action and the intensiveness coming from surviving. I just wanted more. The concept is there, the plot is there, the journey is there, but the extra step is not. I really just needed more emotion, stress, desperation, and obstacles. There is so much room to expand. I held such high hopes for this book, but sadly they did not live up to the book's potential. Read more of my review at <http://pagesforthoughts.blogspot.com/...>

## Kimberly Lorenz-copeland says

“Alaska, a place where nearly all emergencies are a matter of life or death, where time is always in control of survival, and where, someday, it may be you that needs help.”

- John Smelcer, *Edge of Nowhere*

Smelcer’s latest YA novel, *Edge of Nowhere*, is a riveting, picturesque, trial to triumph tale. Set amongst a backdrop of cloud-enshrouded mountains, tumultuous sea and breathtaking forestry, Smelcer encapsulates the Alaskan territory with the sheer authenticity only a Native could deliver.

The characters are well-drawn and accessible, and it is obvious, early on, that the *Edge of Nowhere*’s main character, 16 year old, Seth Evanoff, is the quintessential, Huck Finn-ish hero. He is your son, your brother, your student, your friend. He is the guy you root for against all odds. And the odds are most certainly stacked against him.

After being swept from the deck of his father’s boat, one night, by a gigantic wave, both boy and dog begin their grueling battle for survival. From the choppy, frigid waters, to the rugged, sweltering island terrain, to their run-ins with bears, whales, and even a cave of human remains, Evanoff stays strong for himself, as well as his dog, Tucker, and resolves to do whatever necessary to survive, including succumbing to an unsavory diet of raw salmon, mussels and sea slugs.

Smelcer’s interweaving of Native Alaskan terminology, legend, anecdotal folklore, as well as local history, throughout, makes not only for an engaging, but also, a highly informative read.

By way of remarkably poetic storytelling, Smelcer draws a flawless parallel between the unrelenting strength of nature and the indefatigable determination of the human spirit. *The Edge of Nowhere*, which was adapted from a true story, is yet another gripping literary triumph for Smelcer, which transcends both gender and generations, and is far more than worthy of all the praise it is positive to garner.

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