

Chapter 10

Friday, November 1, 1963: Sokroshera Cove

For Judson, Thursday the 31st came and went in a haze of sadness. When Betty brought them breakfast that morning, Laura looked at her, then at Mr. Hansen, and declared, "The kids and I can't thank you enough for all you've done. I know Owen needed to talk last night, and so did we all. But we'll be ok back in our own house now." Laura gave Barbara and Herman a hug in turn. So the Rezoffs moved back to their own place in the morning, and began the sad task of collecting the items they needed for Will's service. Throughout the day, the adults huddled in various combinations, speaking of sad things and trying to plan a suitable memorial for Will Rezoff. Judson was tired to his soul of the rain; it was as if even the island itself were weeping. The weather did not begin to clear up until nearly noon on Friday, and Judson was vaguely aware of a plane or two arriving and leaving shortly thereafter.

Sometime during a lunch he didn't even remember eating, he heard from Danny that the *Evangel* was at the dock. After lunch, Judson was vaguely listening to music in his room, deep in his thoughts, when Sandy Ann ran up the steps. Her words came out in a big burst. "Mrs.Rezoffwantsustoreadsomeofthe (breath) lettersatthefuneralandshewantsus (breath) topracticethemnow!" Sandy Ann was panting from running, but just that speech would have accomplished that for most people. Judson almost asked, "What letters," but he suddenly remembered Mr. Faltrip's sad collection. He looked at her with something akin to shock. Sandy Ann slowed down, if only a little. "It's gonna be hard, haw?" she frowned, "Laura wants us to read the letters in the service—I'm not sure I *can!*"

So far, Sandy Ann had been doing just fine holding up both ends of the conversation, but he finally joined in. "Maybe if we agreed to read just one each, or just part of one. I dunno, maybe you read a paragraph, then me, then you, and back and forth like that." Sandy Ann brightened. "Like a play!" she clapped her hands delightedly, her most 'little girl' habit, Judson observed yet again. He was quiet for a long moment and then said, "I'd do just about anything to help the Rezoffs. Where are they... uh, where's it gonna be?"

"In the mess hall. Do you know there's a whole pile of flowers down there now?" When they got there, Judson saw the 'whole pile' of flowers: three large sprays of multicolored blooms on little metal tripod stands. One was from the Lindseths, one from Mr. Faltrip, and one was from his father and him. When did Dad have the chance to do that? Judson saw that the flowers were coordinated, with similar designs and colors. Mrs. Lindseth at work, Judson decided. With her, class and efficiency were on display whenever needed, which in her mind seemed to be almost all the time.

Mrs. Lindseth was acting as the coordinator for the service. She was also rounding up people to bring food for the meal afterward. Since it was in the mess hall, and

there was no way around the picnic bench seating, she dispensed with any formal seating arrangement, except to place what few individual chairs they had at the kitchen end, where the flowers had been placed, and at the opposite end from the main entrance. She sent her husband home to get some spare clothesline, and then got Marla to hang up some of the dark gray army blankets between the picnic tables and the serving area off the kitchen. It was traditional to have a 'repast' meal after a funeral, as a way for all your neighbors to console you in a relaxed environment, but "There's no way I'm going to have everybody staring at heaps of food when we need to be thinking about Will."

Mrs. Rezoff had several letters picked out, three from Mr. Faltrip, and two from Pariscovia. The kids were supposed to choose which parts to read. Laura had selected letters from early in the separation, because the later ones seemed more depressed and desperate. Sandy Ann said what Judson only thought: "It's amazing how those two were thinking almost identical thoughts across all those miles! And without knowing for sure if the other one would ever even know. But I think their hearts knew." A couple of days ago, this girl would have blushed beet red at anything so mushy, Judson thought, but now she just got misty eyed. Interesting.

While they were practicing, comparing letters, and deciding which parts to read in Judson's suggested back and forth style, Mr. Smith came in, dressed in overalls and hip boots. He's got a change of clothes down on that boat, Judson realized. Behind him came Herman and Mr. Lindseth, carefully carrying a rather tall object. "The old phonograph! What a great idea," said Judson to Sandy Ann, who was saying practically the same thing. "Laura Rezoff wanted us to play the old hymn that Will found at the whaling station," Norm Smith said simply. Judson changed the subject. "Mr. Faltrip... he told the whole story last night, to us, the one I ...uh ...*suspected* that day at Will's house," he said excitedly, scrambling his grammar in the process. "I thought you'd figured it out when you ran out of the Rezoff's place that time," Mr. Smith said, his eyes twinkling. "Good for you, for not spilling the beans."

Just then, in burst young Jake. "They can't find Barbara! Come *help!*" Judson and Sandy Ann both jumped up. "We'll go look, and if we need more help, we'll come back." So Sandy Ann and Jake ran down the road toward the Rezoff home. When they got there, Mr. Hansen was talking with Herman. "And she said she wanted to think about her daddy and her grandma?" Herman nodded. "How long ago did she say that?" Herman indicated that it had been maybe two hours ago, and added, "I'm sorry... I had a lot on my mind and I wasn't paying good attention!" He added, near tears, "Barbara never wanders off! She just sits next to whatever you're doing and does her own quiet things. Why *today!*"

Mr. Hansen patted him on the arm and then quickly turned to his son. "Jud, go ask Truck Brother Danny if I can borrow his truck. Hurry, please." As Judson ran down the rutted road toward the Pedersen's place, Herman told Mr. Hansen that young Jake, Eagle, and even Mr. Selivanoff were out looking. There were people searching down by the dock, over by the picnic site at the runway, over by east beach, and even on the Unuak Channel side. Herman was about to walk along Stepan's beach just in case she went walking down there without being noticed. Mr. Hansen sent

Sandy Ann back to the superintendent's house in case Barbara left something there last night and was going back to get it. In a few moments, Danny drove up in the Ford, and hopped out, leaving it running. Judson waited in the shotgun seat.

"Know how to drive a stick? A four-wheel drive?" Mr. Hansen nodded. Danny put a hand on Mr. Hansen's shoulder and said, "Ok, have at it. I'll help Herman search wherever nobody else is looking." Herman said, "We think she was wearing her thick pink coat. It's not here at the house." Mr. Hansen climbed into the pickup and he and Judson drove down the road toward east beach. "I think I know where she is, but we may not be able to get all the way there in this thing." Judson wasn't quite sure what his dad was suggesting. "I think I know, too. But could she really be that far away?" His dad shook his head. "Dunno. Time's a' wasting."

They were forced to drive slowly as they drove up the hill to Fort Sheplen, because the road was often winding and they needed to look for Barbara on the way. They decided to avoid the side roads unless she wasn't found by the time they got to the end of the road. As they bumped along, Judson was very glad for the day they went out with Truck Brother Jake and cut away all the fallen trees. Soon they had reached the intersection between the cliffside fort road and the steep, rocky driveway that ended by the ladder room and the gun circles high above Unuak Channel. The driveway looked icy in the waning light of the early November afternoon. "It's high enough up here that sometimes what's rain down there is freezing up here," his dad stated. "I'm gonna park here, and go up on foot." Judson asked, "Can I go around to the front side by the bunker and see if she's there?" and his dad nodded. He headed up the main road, and Mr. Hansen hiked carefully up the slick driveway.

Mr. Hansen was a little out of breath when he came out above the tree line. He ignored the spectacular view before him, and focused on the road and the hillside. A quick scan of the road ahead revealed no Barbara. He searched all the way around to the artillery circles, past the entrance to the tunnel, and turned around. He had returned to a section of the road on the western side of the summit, where it was wide enough to turn a truck around, when he happened to look down the hill. About fifty feet below the road, sitting on a rock outcropping that had a commanding view of the bay, was Barbara in her little pink coat.

Carefully, he clambered down to her. "You want to think about Grandma and Daddy, too, haw?" asked Barbara, without looking up. "Yes I do," he replied, and put his hand on her shoulder. "I can see them here," she stated. "In my... *imagination*." Mr. Hansen was secretly glad for this window into her thought processes, and that she seemed to know what was tangible and what was not. But *imagination* was likely still a bit too weak a word for what Barbara could feel there on the rock. "Well, I came up here to give you a ride home. It will be dark soon, and we can remember them together down there where it's warm."

"Ok, Mr. Hansen," she said, and straightened up to leave, "I'm cold. It was a long walk to come and see Dad and Grandma." Mr. Hansen nodded as she finally looked up at him. It was the first time he remembered her using his name, at least in

addressing him. She usually just went straight to what she was thinking. She grasped his hand without being asked, and they carefully climbed back up to the road. Judson was pacing by the truck, clearly worried about what their next move should be, now that the sun was about to set. When he saw his dad and Barbara, he waved at them, relief in his face. Barbara waved back. She was soon seated cozily between them, and Mr. Hansen apologized for having to bump into her when he shifted gears.

"You take care of me," she said, looking at Mr. Hansen. "You help me tell my stories," she said to Judson, a bit later. It was as if she were taking inventory of her life, and checking on the people that were still around her. She's going to miss her dad forever, but she knows she's not alone right now, thought Judson, remembering when his dad was in his drunken rages and he'd felt very much alone. He glanced sideways at his dad, and then patted Barbara on the back. She was a girl with a deep soul. But she'd also just walked almost three miles up the side of a mountain, in the cold. He was glad that Danny's truck had a heater that worked.

When the truck pulled up to the Rezoff home, Herman and Mrs. Rezoff were already outside the gate waiting for them, having seen their lights bouncing down the road through the meadow. It was after sunset, and the temperature had dropped dramatically since they'd left. When Mr. Hansen lifted Barbara out of the cab of the truck, Laura burst into tears, but by the time he and Barbara had walked up to them, she'd pushed them aside. "Where did you find her? How did you know where to look?" Mr. Hansen said, "She told Herman she wanted to go think about her father and grandmother, and she had said something like that to me up on the mountain, so I looked, and there she was." Mr. Hansen was almost talking like Barbara now, and Judson realized that he'd put himself in her mind a little bit in order to find her. "We drove up there, and I found her sitting on a rock about fifty feet below the road near the summit."

Herman sighed with relief. "Of course! That's the spot where Dad sat on the rock, put Barbara on his knee, and told her about Grandma. You guys are amazing." Judson shook his head and explained, "Not this time, not me. I had a hunch about where she might be *after* Dad had started up the mountain. And I still went around to the fort side. But Dad went straight to her." Laura looked into Jeffrey's eyes, took his hand, and said, "Thank you for finding my daughter." His dad nodded, and protested, "But Herman and Jud were about to figure it out, too." The Hansens left, relieved, silently pondering what had just happened on Mount Sokroshera.

Saturday, November 2, 1963: the mess hall

Saturday morning dawned with as much light as one could hope for in a place where the days would be getting shorter for another two months. Anicia Novikoff was being helped out of Danny's truck when Judson arrived, early, at the mess hall. Her long, dark gray coat was set off by a bright pink headscarf. Anicia looked at Danny and said, "Next time we use Howie's little car. Then you don't have to hold me like Raggedy Ann to get me out of there!" But she laughed, a quiet little sound

that could almost be mistaken for coughing. Anicia noticed him, and called him over, "Jay-Jay, that's your name, yeah." It wasn't quite a question.

Anicia touched him on the shoulder and introduced herself. "I'm old Anicia Novikoff. Someday some company is gonna steal that Novikoff name and use it for a *cold* medicine you think, yeah." Anicia had pronounced "company" and "medicine" with slow precision, like a teacher emphasizing the syllables (or like someone who still struggled with English words). She laughed again and withdrew her hand. Judson just smiled, a bit tongue tied at finally meeting the matriarch of the village. Anicia spoke as if she was inhaling on some of the words, not because of age, but because of a pattern of speech that harked back to the old ones, before the Russians came. "You made some trouble for my Ward, yeah." She laid a wrinkled hand on his, and it was surprisingly warm. "You spanked him when I couldn't, yeah. I know you stopped the fight—his fight inside himself. Now maybe he has chance to become good man, yeah." Judson at this point was certain that some of her words were getting lost in the inhalation. And every "yeah" was inhaled like a sharp breath. She also seemed to be conflating the fight and the fire.

Judson nodded, and said truthfully, "We all need to be better, I think." She laughed once more, partly inhaling, but soft enough that someone only feet away might not have heard her. "And now you sound like my boy Norman," she said, and laughed again. "He asked me to sing 'Memory Eternal' at the service. Might as well ask a seal to do the singing." Another fit of laughing, and Judson marveled that the last sentence came out almost like a melody, emphasizing certain words far differently than the younger generations: "*Might* as well ask a *seal* to do the *singing!*" Anicia had now punched Judson in the ribs. "But you can't say no to Norm. Not for a good man like my boy Will. Good to have Norm here even if he is not a Priest, yeah. *Gospodi pomilui* — oh my poor Will." In an instant, Anicia had shifted from a warm greeting for the new kid in town to grieving grandmother. Judson realized on some level that her frequent laughter was a cover for a lifetime of dealing with great troubles. Beneath her cheerful exterior, Anicia was again a woman in deep sorrow.

Anicia looked away, and abruptly changed the subject. She turned and pointed. "Look back there, look at the mountain. See, sunshine first at the top, then later sunshine here." Judson noticed the dome of Mount Sokroshera shining in the morning sun, shadows below it. "This island, the old name *Unuaq Ingriq* — that means the 'morning mountain' in *Sugpiak* — the old language. Old boss Ardet, he liked my mountain story and he used that name on his salmon cans, but in English. You think that is pretty name, yeah?" Judson leaned close, Anicia's voice barely rising above the background noises. He couldn't tell for sure, but guessed that with Anicia's soft-spoken diction, she was probably not leaving out words. Judson did think "Morning Mountain" was a beautiful name, even as he doubted his tongue could pronounce the words in Anicia's language.

Now Anicia indicated that she wished to go inside. Danny and the others stood at a respectful distance, giving Judson the chance to show honor to the oldest woman in the village. She began talking, this time with a little less of her trademark inflections, as though concentrating on clarity. "You know, I never was sure who my

Pariscovia was in love with, and I am *nosy*." She carefully emphasized the last word, flashing a self-deprecating smile in Judson's direction. In the process, she managed to make the last word sound almost as if it had three or four syllables instead of two. "She was so good at sneaking out and not being *seen*, my Pariscovia, like a spy, yeah." Judson expected a laugh, but Anicia was suddenly silent. She stopped walking and turned toward Judson again, and he could tell that she was especially serious now. "Sounds like my Owen did everything he could to come back to her, yeah. And he kept watch over my boy Will and my girl Laura. He treated me like his mom when I worked for him, yeah. Now we *know* why!" As she emphasized the word *know*, she nodded, and uttered a low "Mmmmm," seemingly amazed at this sudden revelation of a very old secret. "Mr. Faltrip, he's a good man, too, looks like," she concluded. Anicia had just given her approval to that long ago love. Judson guided Anicia carefully through the doorway, and as it had been outside, no one interrupted his time with her.

Judson didn't ask how the Owen and Pariscovia story had gotten out of their circle, past Anya, and into Anicia's soul in just a little over a day. Then he remembered that Mr. Smith was in town, and would have gone to see Will's grandmother as soon as he could. So he said, "Yes, I think Mr. Faltrip looks like a good man, the more I know about him. He's always helping people... secretly." Judson felt his word order and volume changing in the presence of this treasure of a woman, but also felt he'd said more words than she would have. Anicia patted his hand again. By this time, they were well inside the mess hall. Betty Lindseth stepped over to help her take her seat on one of the few straight-backed chairs, at the front.

But Anicia had not yet dismissed Judson. She patted the chair beside her without glancing up; he took the hint and quickly sat down. In spite of the fact that Anicia seemed to make Judson's mind race at every turn of phrase, he was enjoying this woman immensely. He caught in her eyes and choice of words a playful, even joyful spirit that years of crushing disappointment and sorrow, even this latest one, had not erased. Anicia turned, a bit stiffly, to look more directly at him. Judson thought he'd never seen so many wrinkles, but also that he'd never seen such kind looking eyes, except maybe on Laura Rezoff and of course his late mother. Anicia broke his reverie with another of her half-inhaled laughs. "I see you like a girl here, yeah. I see you walking with her more than with anybody else... You are deep friends with her I think. My Serafina... she's a good one. Maybe someday you take her for your bride." Ok, *now* she was acting like a tormenting old person! He could feel that he was getting red. "Maybe Mr. Jeffrey will find someone nice over here, too." An inhaled laugh followed this pronouncement.

Just then, Mr. Smith came over, excused himself, and greeted Anicia Novikoff. Judson beat a hasty and rather red-faced retreat, and Norm couldn't help smiling at the knots Anicia had just tied him into. Teasing everyone mercilessly was one of her most endearing characteristics, once you saw the guileless twinkle in those wise old eyes. So how did she know about the fight when she had been in the far room rocking the baby? What had Herman said? Something like, "Walls have windows, and people have tongues." I have just met tongue number one, he thought, and stepped outside to clear his head in the fresh air.

Naturally, as his luck had been going, the first person he ran into outside was Sandy Ann. He could barely talk, and she finally got out of him that he had been talking to Anicia Novikoff. "Ohhhh," Sandy Ann exhaled slowly, obviously reacting from some experience, "She *teases!*" Judson just nodded, and was damned if he was gonna tell her what he had just been teased about! He changed the subject. "Sandy Ann, I keep hearing you, your mom, other people say something like 'wuss-putty' whenever you are really upset. Anicia just said it I think. What is that?" Sandy Ann's face was sober. "That's the Church words, uh, *Gospodi pomilui* (Господи помилуй), and it means 'Lord have mercy on me,' Mom says. But people my age just say '*Wóspodee,*' 'cause we really don't know Russian. That's about the only church words I know." Judson slowly nodded, not surprised that such a phrase had survived for generations in a village with no church.

Just then, Mrs. Lindseth came out, rounding up everyone who would take part in the ceremony. She took them behind the curtain of blankets to get a glass of water and a couple of cookies before the service began. "Can't have my good helpers fainting from starvation at a time like this," she said, and gave her daughter a big hug. She looked like she was about to muss up Judson's hair, but she deferred her attack; after all, he had just combed it, and who knew when the next time might be? Outside, Truck Brother Danny drove down to pick up Pyotr and Dorofei Kurtashkin. "Windy" and Carla Bazaroff arrived with their kids, Judson realized, because suddenly Mrs. Lindseth had to shoo little Jimmy and Maria away gently, afraid that they might hang on the blankets and pull them down. Judson had to admit that might have been fun. Carla took her kids to a corner to keep them occupied. She had wisely brought a bag of soft toys for them to play with.

At last, the service began. Rev. Norman L. Smith of Ouzinkie demonstrated why Laura had chosen him. He was warm, hopeful, and confident as he prayed, read scriptures, and sang a couple of old hymns that Laura chose. Mr. Smith had brought little blue paperback hymnbooks, and most of the packed house sang along as if they knew the songs. Norm had a fine baritone voice with a wide range, and sang effortlessly, with great expression. Then he began a simple eulogy: the story of Wilfred Zakhar Rezoff, a man partly named for a Monk who had disappeared. Father Zakhar had gone missing over one hundred years before, and many had gone to search for him. Anicia was nodding at the old stories. Likewise, Norm said, Will had gone searching when his mother and brother died. He had found a career as a mechanic, he had found a wife who was a treasure, and he had found faith again in a small church in Oregon near where he and Laura met at college. It was in that small church that he and Laura had been married.

But Will was not done searching and finding. They sought a family, but seemingly could not have children. So they found a family in young Herman and Barbara, and loved those kids as their own. "They tell me a *pagook* is someone who searches for things and keeps whatever is good. Now I need to learn the word for someone who is found by something good, something he *wasn't* searching for," Mr. Smith said. "Will once was lost, but now he has been found by something *very good.*" Norman said those last two words softly, almost in awe. This was something he firmly,

deeply believed about his friend Will. Standing in the back, Mr. Lindseth had just begun to cry for the first time in decades. He wasn't alone in that.

"But like all of us, Will lost his way for a while," said Mr. Smith. Then Norm shared how he met Will in a bar when the man was drunk enough to try to throw himself away. He had told Will that someone had been watching over him for years, someone *besides* Jesus. "I told Will that someday that person will reveal him or herself, but in the meantime, there was a wife, two kids, and a grandmother that loved him very much, and were waiting for him here. And what he wasn't looking for found him. I don't think he found the other person that had been watching him, but I know he came back to his faith in Jesus." Norm then took the New Testament he'd given Will from the table beside him. He looked as if he were about to cry himself, but when he finally spoke, his voice was as strong and steady as ever. "This is a Bible I gave Will last summer. The two passages I am reading now were underlined by Will in the last few weeks," Norm explained.

Norm began to read, and his voice was more alive and energetic than when he was simply talking for himself. Here was a man who truly loved to read this Book. "Now that, by obeying the truth, you have made your souls clean enough for a genuine love of others, see that you do love one another, fervently and from the heart. For you are sons of God now; the vibrantly alive, permanent Word of the Living God has given you His own indestructible heredity." Norm shared that after this, Will had written an exclamation mark, and the words, "A new start." Norm turned to another page. This time, his voice reflected genuine awe and amazement at the words he was reading. "Have you realized it? *Here and now* we are God's children. We don't know what we shall become in the future. We only know that, if reality were to break through, we should reflect his likeness, for we should see him as he really is."

Norm closed the book and said, "For our friend Will, reality *has* broken through. He knows what I can so far only hope for. Today we say goodbye, but we live in the hope that we will see each other again. I am looking forward to seeing Will someday. And when I do, I will look around and say, 'Will, you old *pagook*, look what *you've* found!'" There was rather soggy laughter in the mess hall at that point.

Then Norm explained that Mr. Faltrip was not with them today because he didn't want any of the attention on Will's day to fall on him. There was a confused murmur in the room at this. But, he explained, Will Rezoff would perhaps not have become the man we knew and loved without the care and provision of Owen Faltrip. Marty Pankoff, sitting next to a woman Judson did not recognize, shook his head and snorted; even in this setting, it was obvious that Mr. Faltrip had a few detractors in the village.

Mr. Smith then told, as briefly as he could, the love story of the Army boxer and the village girl, the letters and the fruitless search for each other, the death of both the love of his life and the son he never met, and then the secret promise to watch over young Will, Pariscovia's boy, from afar. "I would say Mr. Faltrip fulfilled his promise, and in the process, has perhaps kept Sokroshera Cove alive for all of *you*,

too." At this, Billy Selivanoff, Jr. looked as if he was going to be sick. Then Norm told the story of Army Unit Supply Officer Owen Faltrip, the fire engine, a lovely widow named Pariscovia Rezoff, the mountain, and the total eclipse of 1943. "This is one of the great love stories it seems to me, and it happened right here in your village! And this is part of what made Will Rezoff who he was. That spot on the mountain was Will's favorite place. And Owen has granted the family permission to bury our Will Rezoff up on the mountain near the spot where Pariscovia once told Owen, 'You made the sky black so I could see the light in your heart.'"

Judson was shocked with sudden understanding. *No wonder* old Faltrip loved that fire truck so much! Laura, though still in tears, was shaking her head in amazement, as was old Anicia. None of them had ever heard all the pieces of that story before. Mr. Smith must have asked Owen yesterday to fill in the details for him. And it was no wonder that Owen wasn't there to hear it! Just listening to the story second hand was heart wrenching enough. How much harder it would have been to sit through for the man who had lived it, and now had lost the sole surviving son of his beloved. Judson, out of curiosity, glanced around the room again. Marty had a puzzled frown on his face, as though unwilling to let go of his previous image of Owen. But the younger woman with the long hair sitting beside him was dabbing her eyes with a handkerchief. Old "Petey" and "Dottie," the Kurtashkins, were holding hands. Mr. Hansen looked like he would soon run out of tissues.

Norm turned toward Sandy Ann and Judson. "These two young people have agreed to read a little bit of Pariscovia and Owen's letters to each other. Even though they never received these letters from each other, they seemed to have read each other's hearts. And this story was always a huge part of Will's life, a piece that he knew was missing, a piece that you and I can fill in today. When Pariscovia died, she talked about the day when the sky turned black. She also kept saying how much she wanted her man to meet her boys. Well, Owen managed to make some of that come true."

Judson could never quite remember how things went after that, except that he sometimes heard his voice and sometimes Sandy Ann's but he remembered looking out at a sea of wet faces, and hearing the scratchy strains of "Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me" from 1912 float across the mess hall. He was dimly aware of Norm Smith praying, and of various nearby sniffles. He finally came back to calmness and clarity when Anicia stood up to total silence, and began singing "Memory Eternal."

The strains of the ancient song of hope and farewell gave Judson an eerie sensation that he was peering into the soul of Old Russia. Four or five other voices joined her within moments, from various corners of the room. He saw Pyotr and Dorofei Kurtashkin singing along from near where he was sitting. Judson noticed a sweet soprano voice from near the back, and nearly fell over from shock. Anya was singing with a look on her face that was almost angelic. Judson felt chills, as if he were about to witness the great host of Heaven's Saints, come down to sing Will homeward. The very soul of the village was singing today. He and most everyone

else in the room felt that they would never forget this moment for the rest of their lives.

Judson was still deep in thought about that and all the rest, so much so that he was practically in a fog. Finally, Mrs. Lindseth led him to a bench at a table, pushed a plate of food his way, and commanded him to eat, along with a few kind words about how well he and Serafina had done. Finally more or less alert, he looked up to find that he was seated next to Marty Pankoff and the unknown woman. Marty remarked rather neutrally that it was a "nice service," and the woman rejoined, "Nice? That's all you can say, that it was just *nice*? Martin, you are so *cold* sometimes. That story tore my heart out!" Marty ignored her and turned toward Judson. "I'm sorry—you're Jay-Jay, right? Well you need to meet my sister Gail. She's been living at the South End for many years..." "I broke free!" interjected Gail, "...and now she's living with me. Gonna work at the cannery when it starts up in a week or so!" finished Marty. Judson had managed a "Glad to meet you," when Danny sat down on the other side of the long table. "Well if it isn't Gail! As I live and breathe! Didn't know you were still around—I mean I didn't know you were headed our way!"

Danny the debonair was just a bit flabbergasted at this new village resident, and as the two got reacquainted, Judson discreetly sized up what kind of woman would be capable of perturbing the previously imperturbable Danny. She had long dark brown hair that reached to her mid-back, and her eyes were dark brown, deep and expressive. She occasionally flashed a slightly toothy grin, and her nose was also slightly too big for her face. What am I, a face critic, thought Judson, turning away so she wouldn't think he was staring at her. Looking down at his food, Judson concluded that the whole was greater than the sum of its parts in this case. Perhaps seeing her through Danny's eyes, he grasped that she was someone whose beauty and personality would probably grow on you, like a girl next door that you don't notice until it's too late.

Apparently, it had once been too late for ol' Danny here. From the conversation, he learned that after she and Danny had graduated from high school, and gone their separate ways, she had fallen for a handsome rogue who had left her pregnant and disillusioned. She had placed her daughter Kateryn, whom everyone called "Rinny," at the Mission after two years of trying to take care of her by herself. An aunt in Homer up on the Kenai Peninsula had her now, just in a temporary arrangement, and Gail hoped to earn enough at the cannery to bring her to Sokroshera Cove. "I hear that the school here is pretty good now," Gail said, then suddenly realized that the young man beside her was the schoolteacher's son, and quickly added, "Well, that's what my sister says, from how the teacher's helping the twins."

Judson just smiled and made a concerted effort to seem preoccupied with his plate of food. From snatches of the rest of the conversation, he learned that Gail had been for many years in another abusive relationship, and the news of the Pacific Endeavor Seafoods' crab canning venture had given her the excuse to uproot herself and get a new start. Her old boyfriend would never have tolerated having "Rinny" around. Gail expressed surprise that she'd shared so much with Danny;

maybe she was also noticing someone who had 'got away' years ago. And both Danny and Gail were "So surprised" to find each other living here.

As an attempt to lighten the mood, Danny rather nervously repeated the old village joke, "It's not at the edge of the world, but I swear you can see it from here!" Gail disagreed, and looked around remarking that the village was already a very lively place, in spite of the sad occasion. Danny had a funny look on his face when, after Marty and Gail left, Judson commented on how sweet it was, this chance meeting of "old friends."

Late into the night, Judson tossed and turned, wired up by the stressful and emotional events of the day. He thought of Will Rezoff, and was puzzled that an apparent tragedy was still able to bring out so much good in so many people. The secrets that were shared seemed to be a blessing rather than a scandal, softening some if not all of the hardest hearts. And what impact one or two lives can make on the world, even from a little place like this, marveled Judson. He found himself wondering about Father Zakhar, the Monk, the one Will was partly named after, and what had really happened to him. And he finally dozed off long after midnight.

15th of April, Julian calendar, 1839: A barabara on Unuaq Ingriq (Morning Mountain) Island, and aboard the *Saint Stepan*, anchored off east beach. A brisk wind out of the west. Late afternoon.



Father Zachar's "Barabara"
on Unuak Ingrik, 1839

Stepan approached the wooden door of the half-buried hut called a barabara where Father Zakhar was lodged, in the Old Village, situated on the northwestern end of the long lake. He kicked rather than knocked, and the door burst open so forcefully that splinters of wood slid across the dirt floor. The act was a symbol of the man he

had become in service to Evgeni Teplov. The Monk's small oil lamp almost blew out as a gust of wind whipped around the cabin. A downdraft from the tiny stove filled the barabara's single room with noxious fumes, and the pages of the open book on the small table fanned as though a ghost were searching its pages.

"Mr. Selivanov, there's no need for anything so dramatic. You that you're always welcome here. May I help you?" The young Monk spoke calmly, with light brown eyes that, though calm, seemed to see into the depths of his visitor's soul. "I'm confessing that your precious treasure is now safe with Evgeni, Priest. You and I are going for a walk and a little boat ride." "Presently I'm a Monk. I hope to also be a Priest one day."

The Monk casually placed a letter he had been writing under a fold of sealskin and placed the lamp on it. Then he closed his book; he had been reading about the saint being celebrated today: Savva of Goth, who in the Year of Our Lord 371 had been brutally tortured and killed for daring to celebrate *Pascha* (Easter). On his way to being drowned in the river Musaeus, Savva had prayed for those who were about to kill him, warned them not to turn away from God, and praised his Savior. Those who followed in his footsteps gave him the title "Athlete of Christ" for his bravery and boldness in the face of death. Father Zakhar had wondered if this day would be his opportunity to stand strong, as Savva had once done. And then the door had burst open.

Stepan pulled out a long hunting knife and looked at it. The ivory inlay of the handle, made from a whale's tooth, had Селиванов (Selivanov) carved intricately in its smooth surfaces in Cyrillic print, etched with the skill of an artisan. He thought of how his family and his name would soon rise in prominence with the fortunes of Teplov. Collecting himself, he pointed the blade at Father Zakhar's chest. "That will not be necessary," said the Monk, evenly. He turned and placed a small metal box in a leather knapsack, then put the strap over one arm. "But surely you understand what our so-called treasure was brought here to do?"

"Shut up, holy man. None of your hocus pocus. You remind me of my mom, mumbling and chanting and listening to the Priests for hours on end. She really fell under the spell." Father Zachar replied evenly, "I have a sense that I don't have too many sermons left. I saw the look in your master Teplov's eyes when I rowed ashore after the *Saint Stepan* made anchor." The Monk seemed to change the subject.

"My mother was *Alutiiq*; so is yours. We who follow in the footsteps of *Apa Herman* want to train Native men so they may serve their villages with proper knowledge of our Faith and the liturgies and sacraments of the Church. He also wanted Priests who would serve his beloved *Alutiiq* people through the love of Christ, and not for some other motive. So many of the Natives still barely speak Russian, and our liturgy is hard for them to understand.

"When I shared my vision with the Abbot of our order, he set about to take up an offering. The treasure you speak of consists of Holy Ikons and blest implements,

necessary to start an appropriate place of worship here, where the adults can learn more of our faith, and children can be raised in the Church. I even hope to begin to translate the Gospel into the local language, as Father Veniaminov has done. This is not an *earthly* treasure, Mr. Selivanov, and I can't understand why you and Mr. Teplov seem threatened by what I was sent to do. All of this shipment was given through the hard-earned toil of our faithful Russian brethren." Stepan laughed at this; he remembered the avarice in the eyes of the American whalers upon viewing Teplov's gilded Ikon, and their shocked gratitude when he had abruptly given it to them. More where that came from, thought Selivanov, except this time *nothing* will be free.

The Monk seemed not to have heard the laughter, for he continued, "This cause must not be allowed to fail, for some even of our own faith are opposed to training the Natives or translating the Scriptures, and are determined to divert this shipment for some Russian community. And others know nothing of the true treasure that is found in the Gospel. We must honor this holy cause, and the cause of Christ among your own people, because this is what God has called us to do. We wish only to love the people of this land, and bring them to Christ and His Church, as *Apa* Herman also spent his life working to bring to pass, not many miles from here."

Stepan had moved his quarry out of the barabara and was pushing him down the long trail along the lake, heading toward the east beach, on the other side of the small island. In spite of the Monk's obvious effort to make his words easy to understand, Stepan wasn't really listening. In fact, he was making a conscious effort to ignore everything being said to him. It was as though the Monk were speaking only to the angels. Stepan was glad that the wind was burying most of the Monk's words. It wasn't as if the Monk's treasure was necessary for Teplov's cause; it was truer that *removing* it was necessary for the cause. Time to stop the Church's hocus-pocus once and for all. And Evgeni had already demonstrated a lucrative use for all that Church stuff.

Father Zakhar finally fell silent as they neared the far end of the lake and descended to the rocky beach below. He had once been one of the orphans from these islands, raised under the care of *Apa* Herman, and had been sent to Russia for his schooling. When he decided to become a Monk, he asked for the name Zakhar, because it means "One whom God remembered" in Hebrew. He had thought the name fit him somehow, for as one of Father Herman's Native orphans, he had been remembered and cared for, even though he had no family. And now he was in the family of the Church. And so "...remember me now," he prayed as they approached the bidarka pulled carefully up on the stones of the shoreline.

The *Saint Stepan* was mostly out of the wind as it lay at anchor off the east beach. The low hills that rose up to meet the round mountain that was the island's most identifiable feature were doing a good job of sheltering the small bay from most of the gusts. The Monk realized that the ship's position also meant that it was now completely out of sight of the village, and that no one else was likely to be out on such a blustery afternoon. But he knew that he could never be out of his Father's

sight. So Father Zachar's prayers were now for the soul of Stepan and for the success of the Godly mission that his captor was attempting to thwart.

With great effort, Stepan Selivanov managed to tie the bidarka to the side of the ship, send the Monk up the rope ladder ahead of him, and clamber up the side himself, all while keeping his hunting knife in his hand. It wouldn't have been necessary; the Monk's weapons were of a different sort, beyond his captor's ability to comprehend. And Father Zakhar had one more arrow in his quiver. "This boat, the *Saint Stepan*, is named for the first Christian to die for his faith, the protomartyr Saint Stepan. Saint Paul took part in his martyrdom, but later took up the cause of Christ. You also are named Stepan. Will you take up the cause of Christ, or will you die for the faith you claim now, the faith of cruelty and greed, the faith of that devil Teplov?" The Monk's voice was sorrowful. It was as though Stepan, not this Monk, was the one in danger. Stepan growled.

In the back of his mind, something in the hardened mind of Stepan had a fleeting thought that this Monk was the strongest man he had ever met. He, who had spent his whole life trying to prove to one person or another that he couldn't be beat, was in some strange way being badly beaten here. But the warped soul of Stepan, the loyal servant of Teplov, was having none of it. So he ignored the Monk's words of grace and compassion. He stood by a pile of five or six large rocks that were stacked near the mainmast and next to the hatch cover to the hold, which was lying open. Meanwhile, Father Zakhar continued with his silent prayers.

Stepan looked at the Monk and answered the unasked question. "I told the native workers who helped me load them this morning that these rocks would help to improve her ballast. They knew this ship was working for their 'Holy Church,' and were only too happy to do something for their god. Poor bastards, they couldn't know they were serving good old Teplov! Two of his crew from *The Rebellious* came aboard last night and helped me cut almost all the way through some ribs in the hold. That's *after* we killed the two sailors that were left to watch the ship. They're stashed aft somewhere." Stepan snorted and pointed toward the stern with his long hunting knife. "When I dump these rocks, I should have just enough time to lash you to the mast like a proper martyr before she sinks. She's already leaking pretty badly." True enough, not all the sloshing the Monk heard was coming from the sides of the ship.

"Why are you telling me this? Are you trying to talk yourself out of it?" Father Zakhar stared intently at Stepan, who turned away and peered over the gunwale at his bidarka still tied securely to the ship. "Naw. I just wanted you to be able to explain to your god how you got to heaven so early. Bet he'll be mad at you for not being able to fulfill your precious dream!" Father Zachar gazed at Stepan, as though willing his captor's soul to reconsider. Then he simply said, "I am content to do God's will no matter the cost. May God have mercy on the souls of any who try to thwart His will!" The Monk's tone was of sorrow, not threat, nor anger. "That's enough, holy man. I'm gonna interrupt your prayers and send you to your god now. I bet he'll spank you harder now for not following all his rules." Stepan spat, nodded to himself, circled behind the Monk, and began.

"Just... like... butchering... a... seal," he said as the knife strokes sent Father Zakhar to his eternal reward. His last act before hurtling the rocks against the fragile, weakened ribs and planks below was to plunge his knife angrily, and as hard as he could into the mast, just above the head of this Monk whose soul had already departed. Stepan growled under his breath, his thoughts dark. I'll teach you to preach at me! Let this knife tell the cosmos just who has done this to you. Stepan thrust fist into palm in satisfaction. Yet in the back of his mind, a troubling thought arose and was quickly kicked aside: the Monk had not begged, or cried, or even made much of a sound once his knife came down. Strange. Stepan shook his head and trotted to the rope ladder on the side of the already sinking *Saint Stepan*.

"A shame to waste such a good ship, but we can't have it showing up somewhere without its crew—people would ask questions," Stepan muttered to himself, his rage slowly subsiding. "And now I'll have to go and get a new knife, and carve another ivory handle!" Still, the servant of Teplov felt a surge of satisfaction at how neatly he had wiped away all evidence of the Monk, his ship, his crew, and of course, his cargo. Stepan paddled back toward east beach, and then stood on the rocky shore, watching with a perverse sense of accomplishment as the ship slid out of sight.

Sunday, November 3, 1963: Sokroshera Cove

The day after the memorial service for Will Rezoff, Judson hurried down to the dock as early as he could to try to catch the *Evangel* before she left. But Norm had headed back to Ouzinkie at first light, in order to be back at Ouzinkie Chapel for Sunday services. Sometime after Will had passed away, someone had safely completed the wiring for the new crane, and Judson was surprised to find it in operation. He wondered if Mr. Faltrip himself, unwilling to risk anyone else's safety, had seen to it personally. He peered over the face of the front dock at a barge loaded with strange looking equipment and crab pots, its tugboat tied up patiently on the outside. It looked like Mr. Faltrip, the Truck Brothers, Windy Bazaroff, and Mr. Lindseth were moving heavy pallets of equipment from the dock to the retort building. Mr. Lindseth was running the new dock crane, and rarely had to be told to adjust his aim. Judson realized that the folks here had many hidden talents, ready to burst forth with the opportunities that the revamped cannery would offer them.

A husky man with a golden blond crew cut was giving orders from the barge. A small crowd of kids and adults gathered at the far end of the front dock, well out of the way, to watch the unloading. The unknown fellow with the blond hair turned out to be Kirk Thorsen; they heard Mr. Lindseth call to him. Mr. Thorsen was from Westerbrook Seafoods, here to assist in the startup of the king crab canning operations. He would begin supervising the installation of new machinery and the replacement of the old. With a small but experienced crew from the village, Mr. Thorsen thought he might have the cannery ready in a few days.

One of the last things unloaded from the barge had been a small travel trailer. It was of the kind that a regular pickup could tow, so Danny used his Ford to position it at the far end of the mess hall, between it and the net building. The trailer stuck out a bit past the mess hall, and a hose from the end of the mess hall connected the trailer to the water system. Apparently, Kirk Thorsen would be staying in Sokroshera Cove for the crab-canning season. Kirk Thorsen, besides being Mr. Westerbrook's representative in this shared venture, was a first class machinist, who was not only supervising the setup of the new equipment, but would also be there to help maintain it. Since the loss of Will Rezoff, the cannery was now sorely lacking in that department.

The last of the equipment was finally unloaded, and the kids watched as the tugboat maneuvered the barge out away from the dock and hooked up a long towrope. Truck Brother Jake used his venerable yellow boom truck to transport all of the crab pots to a field just past the damaged schoolhouse. About mid-afternoon, Judson and Sandy Ann walked back toward the village, and overheard Mr. Faltrip asking Danny to fly to Homer to inspect and purchase a replacement part that they needed before operations could begin. Danny was taking the morning Kodiak Airways flight to town tomorrow.

Mr. Faltrip, well aware of the mood of the village after the service for Will, invited everyone down to the mess hall that evening, reasoning that he'd never be forgiven if a fine Disney movie, in color no less, was sent back to Seattle without being shown at least once. So anyone who wasn't busy unloading or setting up cannery equipment showed up at the mess hall and watched *Darby O'Gill and the Little People*. Judson noticed that the Rezoff children and Laura skipped the movie. Judson was surprised that Mr. Faltrip would go ahead with the film at this moment, but when he asked his dad about it, Mr. Hansen just said that everyone would be grieving for some time, and it was ok to change the subject for a moment.

The movie itself was Disney typical, with flashes of humor mixed with sadness and even terror. Happy though he was that this movie didn't feature Hayley Mills, Judson was a bit annoyed by what surely must be Disney's most sultry and seductive 'leading lady' ever. Yeah, *annoyed*, that's what I am, he assured himself. He laughed at the Sean Connery character's attempts at singing, but the banshee portion was actually pretty scary. When the death coach came for Darby's daughter, he found himself almost in tears as he was reminded of poor Will Rezoff. In the end, he decided it was good to have another way to grieve.

The Week of November 4, 1963: The Cannery in Operation

The very first 'crabber' to test out the new crane and bucket system and put the newly minted King Crab cannery into operation was the *Freddie J.*, a new metal-hulled boat designed specifically for crabbing, sent to Sokroshera Cove for this trial run by Lloyd Westerbrook. Kirk Thorsen ran around like a chicken with his head cut off for a while, and Foreman Jakob was equally busy, bringing in last-minute recruits for holes in the line, making sure they had slickers, gloves, and those paper

folding hats that still said Sokroshera Cove Salmon on one side and Pacific Endeavor Seafoods on the other. But within a few hours, a forklift delivered the very first case full of canned crab to Mr. Faltrip's office door. He stood with one foot on it, bear hunter style, while somebody snapped a picture. It was a good day for Sokroshera Cove.

The cannery developed its own routine, beginning operations around seven, and closing down the line and cleaning up around four or five. A half-hour break for lunch was deemed sufficient, because those not within easy walking distance of home could bring a sack lunch. It looked like everyone from the village walked home, to get a change of scenery and a break from the noise and odors of an operational seafood cannery. The only occasions when the majority brought a sack lunch was when it was raining heavily. Then they clustered around the tall sliding door that faced the dock and watched the cove. Thanks to a big metal table dragged over for the purpose, they drank coffee and ate sandwiches until foreman Jake hollered for return to stations. It was fun for the students to watch the cannery work from the windows of the mess hall, right across the front dock.

Betty provided those living in the old bunkhouse with a sack lunch every working day. The lunches of cold sandwiches and cookies and a can of soda were necessary, because the mess hall served as the school for part of the day. Betty made hot breakfasts for the workers in the kitchen in the bunkhouse, right below Sandy Ann's round "Thought Spot" window. This also took the pressure off the mess hall turned school. But since school let out at three and the cannery let out at four or later, Mrs. Lindseth managed to open the mess hall at five thirty for dinner, and the bunkhouse crew had their needs met. The workers were careful not to disturb the school things that lined the rooms, apparently understanding what a hardship the students and teacher were facing after the fire. It was certainly difficult for students to study late in the school day when Betty had the ovens in operation and the smell of meatloaf, tuna casserole, roasted chicken, or lasagna filled the room!

Kirk Thorsen soon made his presence known. He was indeed a capable machinist, and the recently installed equipment hummed along as expected. However, his dealings with people soon hit obvious and repeated snags. Mr. Hansen was one of the first to notice. After school one day, and before heading back to the superintendent's house, he stood, one foot on the square timber railing at the edge of the front dock, and watched the boats coming and going. Kirk came and stood next to him. Without any real preliminaries, Kirk asked, "I need to know something, Mr. Hansen. Are you *saved*?" There being a bit of noise from the unloading operations, Jeffrey Hansen said, "Am I sane? Well, I'd like to think so, although today Eagle and young Jake might have their doubts." "No, Mr. Hansen, I asked if you are *saved*. You know, *born again*?" Jeffrey, having seen many things in life that had either bolstered or challenged his convictions, had chosen the path of faith, and told Kirk so. "Oh, good, because it takes a special kind of person to try to teach these little brown urchins anything. I look up to you for trying." Mr. Hansen politely protested, "It's not such a challenge, Kirk. Some of these kids are as bright as any I've ever met, and all of them have shown me that they can learn."

"So where did you teach before?" asked Kirk, deep in his own agenda, and unable to read the signs of irritation that would have sent Judson into Shut Up mode by now. "I taught"—Jeffrey seemed to realize where this was heading—"Junior High on the Hopi Indian Nation in Arizona." "Well, that explains it then. Of course *these* kids wouldn't be any different from *them*." Kirk had just made a profound intellectual point, at least in his own eyes. "Well, I must be going... I've got lessons to plan." Jeffrey kept his voice as even as he could.

Kirk continued his unbidden speech: "Isn't it hard to teach the *illegitimate* kids? I mean, you have to talk to the parents don't you? Lots of, well, *bastards* running around here, so I've heard. And most of 'em mixed race, too. Don't know why you'd bother. You know what the Good Book says, that we should abstain from fornication..." Mr. Hansen had finally reached his limit. He almost said, "Which of these kids is responsible for the circumstances of his *own* conception?" But knowing that he'd have to face Kirk almost daily for an unknown number of weeks, he merely said something he firmly believed, which he hoped might clear up the issue. "I feel God has called me to be here, and I will teach anyone who needs to learn. Maybe we can talk later." With that, Mr. Hansen left the dock with a frown on his face, his blood pressure off the charts.

At dinner that evening, Mr. Hansen let off steam. After warning Judson not to get too deep into any conversation with Kirk Thorsen, he asked, "Where do people like Kirk come from? *Thorsen* is Swedish for 'son of a thorn,' I think. In that case, he seems to be living up to his name, because he was a thorn in my side today! Why doesn't he see how wonderful these folks are?" Judson just listened. Mr. Hansen never did little monologues like this unless something was especially upsetting.

Judson also realized that since moving to the village, he as Jeffrey's son had taken on the role of sounding board. And it wasn't always easy to take. This conversation with Kirk Thorsen had cut to the very heart of why they were here, and Mr. Hansen had to continue. "We could have caught the first plane to Arizona after the school fire," said Mr. Hansen, "Why *didn't* we?" Judson knew the answer, and knew his father did, too. He turned toward his father saying simply, "You said before we left Arizona that we might find what we were meant to do. I think we did, or at least *you* did. And it's been a helluva ride for me, too!" Mr. Hansen laughed, the worry gone from his face.

"Don't let old Quirky Thorsen hear you talking like that!" Judson smiled at the thought of his father joining the kids' naming game. A quirk, being a strange habit, certainly seemed to fit Mr. Thorsen's behavior, such as always knowing just how sinful *everyone else* is. Judson and Sandy Ann picked up on the new first name and called him Quirky Thorsen (but never to his face) from then on. So did most of the village. But never to his face. Maybe somebody should have.

The Week of November 4, 1963: School in the mess hall, cannery in full swing outside

School resumed bright and early at 8:00 A.M. on Monday, and all the students, including Herman and Barbara, were happy for the return to a regular routine. With effort, they found their way back to the rhythm of academics. But there were several noticeable changes. One was that the cannery was in full operation by the second day of classes, and there was a great increase in noise and activity outside their windows and across the front dock. Mr. Hansen and Marla hung the heavy dark blankets over the windows facing the front dock, as a partial deterrent to the distraction.

Another change was that the kitchen, behind double doors beyond their "classroom" was now in frequent use, and the smells of coffee and various baked goods filled the air. By Mr. Faltrip's order, the students were allowed to participate in "mug up," after the cannery workers ate their snack and had returned to work. Since the mess hall was now off limits, Mr. Faltrip had converted a side room off the store into a makeshift break room. Mr. Lindseth threw some planks across some five-gallon cans to make places to sit down. It was less pleasant, and farther to walk for a break, but none of the workers begrudged the students their classroom. Mrs. Lindseth had a neat little cart with the coffee urn on it and trays of baked goodies for the workers, and the kids knew that the return of the cart meant a snack for them as well.

On Wednesday that week, Judson came early with his father to help set up the classroom, and found a box labeled "University of Nebraska Extension Division" and addressed attention Mr. Hansen sitting on a side table. The students had just settled into their lessons when Ward Bazaroff arrived, accompanied by Jakob Pedersen. They and Mr. Hansen had a quick conversation and soon Ward was seated in a back corner of the room, far from the now blushing and painfully curious Miss Marla.

Mr. Hansen opened the box, took out several large textbooks, selected one, scanned the paperwork included in the box, and gave Ward a few quick instructions before returning to his regular lessons with the other students. It became a regular occurrence for Ward to bring a sheet of paper for Mr. Hansen to check, then return to his seat and seal it into an envelope addressed to the University of Nebraska and leave it with Mr. Hansen to mail. Writing assignments must mean that his hands are healed enough to grasp pencils, turn pages, and write legibly, Judson guessed. Good.

After Ward had been with the class for a couple of days, he joined them outside for recess one morning. He stepped over to Judson, smiled shyly, and thanked Judson by name for saving his life. "My Dad asked me to talk to you," Ward explained. "Your da—oh, yes, well... you're welcome. I didn't really think about it at the time," Judson responded, flustered into saying several things at once.

Ward offered his hand, and Judson took it, unsure of what would come of that. Ward's hand felt thick and leathery, but his grip was strong, if just a bit claw-like. Judson felt free to ask him what he was able to do. "I been practicing tying up ropes and climbing ladders and holding tools with my Dad," Ward volunteered. "I'll never be back the way I was, but I can work, and I'm getting faster and surer of myself. It's a little like wearing stiff gloves." In answer to Judson's unasked question, he added, "It doesn't hurt much anymore, but until I build up my strength, it'll be easy for me to get blisters or crack the skin." He looked at the palms of his hands and shook his head. "The doctor says a few more seconds in the flames would have ruined my hands for good, but you put out the fire just in time." At this he sounded a bit choked up, and Judson told him sincerely that he was glad to have him back safe and sound.

When both boys looked around, they saw that almost the whole student body were gathered close by, listening to every word. Judson was surprised that all his animosity had melted away somehow at the sight of this humbled and healing young man. He observed that "Dad" Jakob must have had a major hand in making this happen.

On Friday, however, came the biggest surprise of all. Danny came back from his trip to the mainland, and he wasn't alone. A slim girl with long brown hair got out of the plane with him, and Gail Pankoff rushed down to meet her and give her a big hug. The girl gave her a shy hug in return, and they walked off talking. But not before Gail had shot Danny an appreciative smile. Kateryn, the young lady known as "Rinny," was home with her mother. "Killed two birds with one stone," said Danny as casually as he could. "After I got the parts we needed, I called on Rinny's relatives and discovered that they were almost ready to let her go to the Mission. The aunt had lost her job, and they were struggling. I asked if she could come home to her mother, since everybody's got a job down here now, and they said yes."

"You did all of this for... Miss... For that Gail lady?" asked Sandy Ann incredulously, and then slugged her uncle with a grin. "Aw, c'mon, sis... it was just a nice thing to do," said Jake the "Holy Terror," adding crossly, "D'ya hafta tease everybody all the time?" He was still smarting from getting his heart stomped on by a certain Amy Marie, was in no mood for love games, and didn't feel like watching his favorite uncle get teased, either. In Danny's defense, thought Judson, procuring Rinny was the imaginatively thoughtful kind of stuff Danny always did, recalling the remarkable logistics involved in arranging the kids' last trip to Kodiak.

Rinny turned out to be a seventh grader, meaning that from now on, Judson would have company with all his assignments. When Judson mentioned this to Sandy Ann, she frowned and clammed up. She didn't say anything for the rest of the afternoon, frowning and averting Judson's concerned gaze. At least he was sure that he had not been the cause of Sandy Ann's storm clouds. They definitely wouldn't be finding anything interesting to do that afternoon, so he headed home to answer some chapter questions for History.