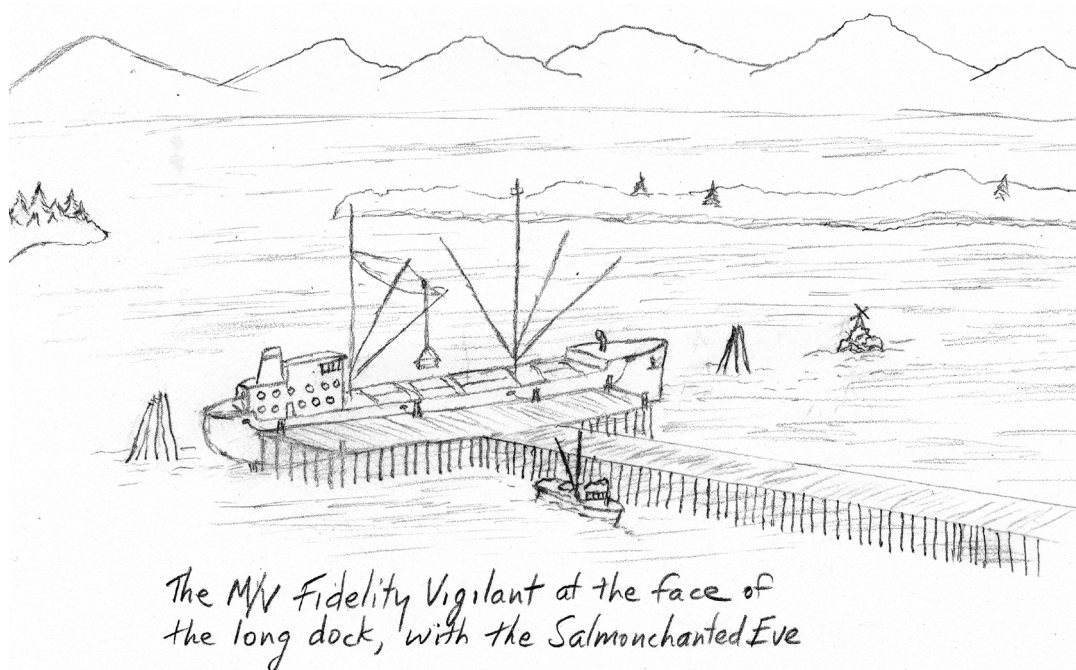


Chapter 13

March 1964: The Village and Sokroshera Island

In the first week of March, the crab season finally, officially ended. Within a day or two of that event, the big bunkhouse along the western edge of the cove was empty once more. Most of the adults in the village were now out of work again, but contented this time. Cannery work was seasonal, but at least there had been work *this* season, a king crab season, which had been a completely new venture for the village.

The dock crew and the forklift drivers had a busy couple of days, however, getting all 21,263 cases of "Morning Mountain Alaskan King Crab, Distributed by Westerbrook Seafoods" into a medium-sized freighter called the *M/V Fidelity Vigilant*. "Looks like they threw a bunch of impressive-sounding words in a hat and pulled out those two," said Judson, upon reading the name of the ship. Herman replied, "Freighters are all named like that," and named off another half-dozen examples, "But one I saw in Kodiak was called the *Gulf Sonata*. Somebody's girlfriend named *that* one, I'll bet!"



The *Fidelity Vigilant* was by far the largest ship Judson had seen in his life, having grown up in land-locked Arizona. It was only a medium-sized freighter, because the cove was a little too small for maneuvering anything longer. But to Judson, its huge black hull and towering tan-colored superstructure dwarfed every other manmade thing he'd ever seen. In late afternoon, after the boys had snuck a little closer, one of the crewmembers spied them and took them aboard for an informal tour. Judson marveled at the tall, ladder-like stairways, the watertight doors, the gleaming white and gray corridors, and the constant pulsing vibrations, as though the ship were

something alive. Then they descended into the engine room, where the lights were dimmer, the oily smell and the heat were almost overpowering, and the huge engines towered overhead, appearing taller than any building in the Cove. On the way out, the chef gave the boys freshly made cookies in the gleaming stainless steel galley. Judson was plainly in awe by the time the boys returned to the dock to stand politely in an unused corner, so as not to be in the way. The boys stayed up as long as they could, watching the bright lights and swinging booms and scurrying forklifts. But the loading of cases went on from the ship's arrival until almost dawn. By the time the boys awakened for school the next morning, the great ship was gone.

Jakob Pedersen, foreman of the cannery, was in charge of closing down the operations until needed again. He kept a few of the adults in the village on the payroll, including his brother Danny and Mr. Lindseth, to set everything in order. He also hired Sandy Ann, Herman, and Judson to clean out the bunkhouse, and on Saturday the 7th, they spent most of the day with brooms and mop buckets cleaning it top to bottom. Mrs. Lindseth was in charge of cleaning up the little kitchen, and she enlisted the kids' help there, too. One of their tasks in the bunkrooms was to throw out any clothing that the workers left behind. There were laundry facilities at one end of the mess hall, in a room with an outside door.

Judson had never visited that room, and at season's end, the workers had no wish to visit it either. They were just too tired to stand around waiting their turn with the dryers or bum each other for laundry detergent at the end of an exhausting season. So most of them had left their grungy cannery clothing in heaps on the floor and left the village, as though fleeing for their very lives. At least that's what Betty Lindseth said when she saw the large pile the kids had collected. "And yet," she added with a laugh, "as soon as operations resume, they'll all be back to make the big money!" Carting armloads of crusty clothing to the beach to be burned, Judson decided that he would never work in a cannery; he never wanted to smell so bad! He mentioned this to Sandy Ann, who declared, "I dunno... *I* might. It's good money!"

On his first return to the bunkhouse, Judson was surprised to discover that one wing of the upper floor, on the men's level, was actually a lounge area. The comfortable lounge explained why he so rarely had seen cannery workers away from the job. There were two ping pong tables, several round card tables, and three short vinyl couches of the type seen in bus stations or airline terminals, done up in dark green vinyl. Shelves of books took up almost the entire far end of the room, on either side of the old brown space heater, creating an informal lending library. All of this was Mr. Faltrip's doing, dating from his first year working with Pender Ardet to build up the cannery. Female cannery workers outnumbered men by more than two to one most years. So Mr. Faltrip converted the unused half of the men's dormitory to a lounge, so that off-duty workers would have something to do. Judson recognized Faltrip's angular block printing on several posters of instructions. He was generous, but he required an orderly bunkhouse. When Judson asked Sandy Ann why she never had shown him that room, she just said simply, "My little 'Thought Spot' is where I always go. The other room just isn't..."

conducive." Judson, noticing yet another word from Sandy Ann's memory being pressed into service, thought of her little lounge in the attic beneath the round window with its lovely view of the cove. Compared to the peaceful solitude of the attic window, the lounge seemed like some dentist's waiting room.

When they were done with their cleaning tasks, Sandy Ann led him to her original "Thought Spot" out past the oil shed, and pointed. "Look, it's just like your card said!" Sure enough, a sturdy wood railing provided a secure spot to watch the cove, built as a birthday gift from Mr. Faltrip. They quickly got used to the feeling of resting their arms on the top planks and leaning forward, a fine, relaxing pose that would once have plunged them into the bay. But March isn't August, and they quickly grew too cold to stand around like that. Judson walked her home.

One afternoon, Judson made his normal pilgrimage to the store, to check in with Laura for a quick update on the local goings-on, and to buy a snack. He usually didn't buy anything, and Laura never seemed to mind. This time he bought a package of Ludens Honey-Licorice Cough Drops. On one of his first trips to the store, he bought a box out of curiosity. Half expecting them to be wretched, they had soon become his favorite candy. It was an unexpected, memorable flavor combination. How strange that when he stuck one of the little brown lozenges in his mouth, it now tasted like Sokroshera Cove to him. How could a flavor have such a strong association with a place? Judson was sure that if he were back in Arizona and tasted one, his mind would take him back to Stepan's Beach in the morning mist, or transport him to a frozen lake on a sunny January afternoon.

But candy and mental associations was not where his mind wanted to stay at that moment. Standing at the counter with his purchase, Judson suddenly remembered Kirk "Quirky" Thorsen, and asked Laura about what had happened to him. The little trailer was still sitting on the dock, and it looked like it was going to stay there. Laura shook her head in amazement, putting down a clipboard she'd been examining. "You might not believe this," she said, and told him something she had witnessed before Kirk left town: "When the last cases were loaded on the freighter, Owen went up to Kirk and shook his hand, and thanked him for a job well done. Ol' 'Quirky' was so shocked he was nearly speechless. But Owen told him that whatever else he might have done—and he didn't mention starting arguments with nearly everyone, sinking Owen's boat, or any of that—whatever else, the season was a success because of Kirk's help. I think our Mr. Thorsen was almost ready to cry!" Here Laura giggled; Judson realized that Laura enjoyed this type of 'revenge' most of all. He fully expected her to clap with delight, as Sandy Ann would have done, but she didn't. What had she said once, 'overpower evil with good' or something like that. Apparently, Owen had also learned that lesson somewhere.

Laura went on, "By the way, I know Mr. Faltrip got a letter from his insurance company about the *Penny Earned*, but he never told me what was in it. He also never said whether he asked Kirk to help pay for the boat—I kind of doubt it." Here, Laura paused and, shook her head again. "I know that Owen used to be a boxer and all, but I think he's really a very kind man, a very *forgiving* man. Why else would he keep hiring Billy Jr. or Marty or Kirk?" Here she suddenly looked teary-

eyed, "And look what he did for Will and me without ever telling us why, sometimes without our even knowing, and for *years!*" Judson nodded, and only said how much he'd come to admire Mr. Faltrip. Laura's palm came down softly on the counter to emphasize her words. "Well, you are certainly right to do *that!*"

Judson remembered something he'd heard Mr. Lindseth and Danny Pedersen talking about when he'd made one of those casual visits to the front dock. Mr. Lindseth had remarked that one of the "South End" canneries changed hands, and held forth for awhile about how awful the old owners had been. Judson paraphrased their conversation for Laura as well as he could. "Mr. Lindseth says that most of the cannery owners are like slave masters. It's hard if you are running one of their boats, and even worse if you're a Native or a... uh, Filipino cannery worker. Sounds like most bosses didn't care about safety, didn't care what happened to their workers. Danny was talking about some of 'em not wanting to even report accidents or tell the families when someone dies... that kind of stuff. Mr. Faltrip, well, I can't imagine *him* acting like that." Judson's face registered this as a question.

Laura raised her hands in a gesture of helplessness and said, "Well, all of that's true for a lot of places. Mr. Kurtashkin, Gail, Marty, all of them have worked for canneries that operated like that. But Owen Faltrip has been different since he got here. He inherited that whole 'I owe my soul to the company store' system, but I know he hates it. If he was just thinking about himself, he..." Laura paused, as if counting, "...he would have sold those two empty seiners out there, and he sure wouldn't have kept the store open when the cannery closed down." She looked away. Her voice became quiet. "I think it's all because of Will's mom. He loved her, and came to care about her people, too." Judson nodded, "She must have been a *spectacular* person." Laura nodded. "If my Will is any indication, then yes." She raised her hand slightly as if thinking of something else.

Laura paused, debating with herself. Judson waited with a quizzical look on his face. He'd seen this internal debate before, and knew she'd probably just go ahead and tell him. She shrugged, sighed, and said, "Jay-Jay, you know a lot about all of us now; I thought you'd like to know this little story." She cleared her throat. "A few months ago, right after Will died, Anicia walked down here on her own so she could do some shopping. I made her get a ride home with Howie, but that's not what... I uh... I sort of asked her what she was doing for money, and she told me she couldn't make it if it weren't for the cannery pension she gets. Well, Mr. Faltrip has been sending her a little money every month since she got too old for the mess hall job. I know for a fact that... that there *is* no 'cannery retirement plan.' I guess Lindseth has been in on this, because Anicia says he delivers her envelope every month. Amazing he never blabbed... Faltrip must 'a made him promise not to."

Judson laughed out loud in spite of himself. They all knew Howie. Or maybe not. Perhaps Mr. Lindseth, seeing the kindness and generosity of Owen's actions, decided not to spoil it. Laura continued, "If a check came in the mail, then *I* would have figured it out. I always wondered why Owen always does his own bookkeeping; all I ever do is keep track of the store's till. Anyway, so he's been

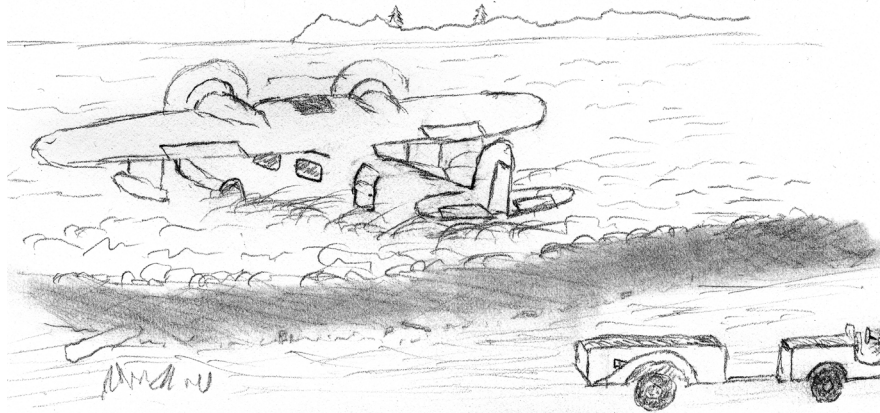
taking care of Anicia as though she was his own mother. Lord knows I didn't tell her anything that day; it's better if she *never* finds out. But it's just another way that Owen looks out for people he cares about!" Judson whistled softly and shook his head, repeating a sentiment he'd expressed earlier. "Like I said, that Pariscovia woman must really have been something, to change an old boxer like that!" Laura batted away a tear and nodded, but could not look at Judson. She coughed and turned abruptly back to her inventory lists. Judson left. Mr. Faltrip had kept the promise to look after Pariscovia's family, all right!

One evening, Mr. Hansen had struggled through constructing a sort of lasagna, that both of them had eaten without commentary, but with liberal, half-apologetic applications of pepper. The Hansen men had learned to be polite about the shortcomings of their bachelorhood. Over supper, Judson surprised his dad. "Who do you think is the prettiest woman in the village? I know we talked about the kids my age, but I'm curious." "Mirror, mirror on the wall..." "No, Dad, I'm *serious*. Who is the most attractive woman in the village?"

His dad stroked his chin and said, "Well at my age that makes two different questions. But I am more attracted by someone's overall outlook on life, and conduct—you know, words, actions, dealings with others. For sunny disposition, Carla is impressive, and to borrow your own words, she's a doll. For cheerful organizational genius, it's Betty. For sheer cuteness, I'd have to choose old Dottie Kurt!" Judson laughed out loud; his dad had nailed it, especially on that last one. His dad, thoughtful for a moment, continued his appraisals. "I think Alice is amazing for the way she loves those twins, and she really does do a pretty good job of handling Marla. You realize that all of Marla's good qualities seem to come from her. And you might have noticed how Alexander seems entirely normal, with a positive outlook. That's from Alice too, most certainly. You know," his dad continued, this time scratching his head, his signal for trying to find the right words, "the Truck Brothers have both found ladies who needed good, decent men to believe in them, and both Anya and Gail are prettier somehow, more attractive in that *conduct* thing, than when we first met them. Well, Gail is happier, and Anya is definitely a better person now. Don't you think?"

Judson almost brought up how different Jakob was now than when they first met him, but decided not to take the bait. His dad's attempt at turning the question back on him failed miserably. Judson's voice was chiding. "Dad, you *forgot* one!" His dad shook his head, backed into a corner at last by his perceptive son. "What's the point of all this, son? I feel like we're gossiping or rating people or something, and it makes me uncomfortable." Judson just looked at him, waiting. His father sighed. "Ok, Laura is different. Her way with people is *compelling*, for lack of a better word. Both you and I were paying real good attention when she was giving Quirky 'what for' that day—you remember how we both kept hovering around to see what she'd do? I found how she handled that man downright spectacular. She pounded him down, but *sweetly*. It was almost frightening. I find her easy to talk to just like you do, and she's definitely a person I'm not likely to forget. Ever." Judson just said, "Good!" deciding for the moment to ignore the fact that his father had not directly addressed his question. And yet he had. Good.

On Thursday, March 12th, Mr. Lindseth invited Judson to go down to meet the afternoon Kodiak Airways flight because it "might be interesting," so he hitched a little ride from the store to the beach in the Lindseth jeep. Sandy Ann had shotgun, and Judson crawled onto the bare metal that passed for a back seat. They crossed the creek and headed for the beach. The white and red Grumman Goose roared out of the water and turned around, brakes squealing and engines blasting av-gas fumes. Judson was beginning to like that smell.



*A Grumman Amphibian leaving Stepan's Beach
(with Howie's Jeep)*

In moments, the pilot cut power and opened the side hatch. Billy Selivanoff, Jr. and Marty Pankoff had gone to town for fortifications after the last payday of the season, and helped the pilot unload their precious cargo: several cases of whiskey and a case of four jugs of Italian Swiss Colony port that Judson remembered so well from his terrifying visit to Anya's house. The men looked somehow uncomfortable, as though they had just been caught doing something naughty, and engaged in meaningless small talk to try to cover it. This time, Mr. Lindseth did not offer to transport their freight. Suddenly, the reason for their discomfort emerged, pausing a second to decide that the best way to get down the little ladder to the beach was to back out of the plane. Soon, standing there on the beach was a Russian Orthodox Priest in long, flowing black robes. Mr. Lindseth grabbed a couple of suitcases, introduced himself, booted Sandy Ann out, and pointed to the shotgun seat on the jeep.

As Mr. Lindseth put the suitcases in the old Ford trailer, he introduced the children to the new visitor. This was Father Toma from San Francisco. He would be staying with the Hansens, Judson's dad already knew about it, and would be doing some important research in the village. Father Toma had hazel eyes and a reddish brown beard even bigger than Jake Pedersen's, and he had a calm and non-threatening manner, even after undoubtedly being bounced around on the flight and the landing. Judson remembered being a bit dizzy after his. Mr. Lindseth appeared to have told the kids all he knew, so they reluctantly decided to wait to ask anything else.

At the superintendent's house, Mr. Hansen met them when he heard the jeep outside. But more introductions did not add to what the kids had already heard. Judson heard the man mention his last name as he shook his dad's hand, but didn't quite catch it. Father Toma was conducted to the office, where the foldout bed was already prepared, and told Jeffrey Hansen that it would do just fine. Judson helped carry the suitcases, and noticed that one was a bit heavier than mere clothes would be. He decided to ask someone else his questions, instead of being rude to their guest. Father Toma went to the office, which was now to be his room, at Mr. Hansen's insistence, to get settled in. The kids pounded down the stairs and peppered their dads with questions.

No, Father Toma was not in town to conduct any weddings, yes, uncle Jakob would probably have a lot of questions for him, Father Toma was here to talk to some of the elders about some village history, no, they had no idea how long he would be staying, and would they please be quiet now. The kids then asked, quite logically, if it would be ok to ask the Priest their questions, and both dads said the most infuriating word a kid could hear at a time like this: "Later!" One fact that emerged was of great interest to Judson: since they now had a special guest, various families in the village would be bringing meals by for the three of them, and "Betty has taken care of all of that." After only a few months in Sokroshera Cove, Judson already knew from multiple experiences that they were in for the best food of their stay in the superintendent's house. He remembered their uncommented lasagna and wagered his dad remembered, too. He wasn't sure, but he thought he heard his dad utter a sigh of relief at this news.

When the Hansen men and their guest sat down for supper that evening, they were taken off guard (but shouldn't have been) when Father Toma stood and asked if he could say a prayer for the meal. In response, Judson and Jeffrey stood without even looking at each other first. He crossed himself, and Judson noticed before closing his eyes that his hands moved from his right shoulder to left. Judson wasn't sure, but he thought he remembered his Spanish-speaking Catholic friends always crossed themselves left to right. He made the sign as well, hoping that Father Toma wouldn't mind if he was a little slow.

That evening, over a splendid tuna casserole made by Dottie Kurtashkin, they learned that Toma was not yet a Priest, and until he had been "tonsured," it would be fine to address him as "*Brother* Toma." He explained, "I am using the title 'Brother' for convenience, to indicate to others that I will someday be a Priest. Also, I have been assigned by my Bishop to a special task, which brings me here. So 'Brother Toma' is not an official title, but you might be comfortable using it, because..." he gave a small laugh and a smile, "...we adults seem to prefer titles, especially for anyone who takes on a great task. My Bishop suggested that I wear this black robe, which I wore in my classes at the seminary. It's similar to the one I will wear when I am tonsured, to show that I am on this search under his authority, and I am representing him and the Church. I think it's also another way of helping me to decide if I really want the path of service and submission. I am to see in practice what a life of service to God looks like, and feels like. And in the process, I hope that I can serve all of you in some way as well. You might have noticed that I

do not yet wear the cross around my neck." Brother Toma gave an amused smile, and concluded, "I'm still officially Thomas McCraith," he said, and smiled again. "I guess you could call me an apprentice." Judson thought he was already an excellent teacher, explaining things so clearly to a couple of lapsed Lutheran boys like the Hansens.

Judson admired "Brother Toma's" open honesty, and his ability to explain complicated things in simple ways. Their guest briefly explained a little more of his story over the tuna casserole. The man named Thomas McCraith was a recent convert to Christianity through the ministry of Father John, the Bishop of the Joy of All Who Sorrow Cathedral in San Francisco. "Toma" was the Russian form of Thomas, one of the Apostles, and he hoped to adopt that name when formally tonsured. As he learned more about his Faith, Thomas McCraith was drawn to that name once he learned that the original Thomas had been a seeker of truth, and even a doubter, before becoming a great ambassador for Christ. The Apostle Thomas had a ministry, which may have reached as far as India in the first century. The Irish-sounding "McCraith" was indeed a good old Irish name, meaning "son of grace," a fact that Toma had not appreciated at all until his conversion. In his old life, Thomas McCraith had been on an endless road trip, just he and his old motorcycle, on a quest to find some answers. In his years after college, he had become a disillusioned and cynical drifter, in and out of innumerable places, and likewise in and out of trouble, so many times that he had lost count.

Thomas McCraith had pulled into San Francisco one evening, half-drunk and bone weary. Lost in the labyrinth of city streets, he had parked in front of an oddly beautiful structure that turned out to be a church. Intrigued by the church's unusual name, he had sought a place to stay for the night. One night stretched into weeks, the weeks into months. About a year ago, Thomas McCraith indeed found "the joy of all who sorrow," and had converted to Christianity. He was baptized, and this past year had taken the first steps toward the Orthodox Priesthood. Recently, his Bishop decided to send him on this quest, partly because it could help to solve a great mystery, but also as part of Thomas McCraith's spiritual journey. Father John had patiently explained that no one should enter the Priesthood without testing himself and seeking verification of God's call. And this task in Alaska might serve that purpose. Thomas McCraith had readily agreed to go. As he explained these things to the Hansens, "Brother Toma" had the air of a man who was very happy to be part of a quest much larger than himself, after wandering aimlessly and pointlessly for so long. Judson couldn't pinpoint exactly why he knew this when he later tried to explain it to Herman, but in hearing the man's story, he noticed that this "Brother Toma" acted as though he fully *expected* to find the answers he sought, and here, of all places.

Judson was only a little surprised that his dad chose to tell their guest about their journey to the village, including the emotional wreckage they'd been living in before they came here. Judson decided that this was his dad's story to tell, but he nodded occasionally, and smiled when his dad looked somewhat nervously at him during the telling of some of the painful details. Mr. Hansen apparently shared Judson's appraisal of Brother Toma as a good and trustworthy man. Their guest evidently

recognized himself in a lot of Mr. Hansen's story, based on his few comments. When Mr. Hansen had finished, Brother Toma nodded and smiled slightly. At the end of the meal, Brother Toma stood again and prayed, and although a little startled by the custom, the Hansens rose to their feet and listened with closed eyes. The supper dishes were cleared away, and Brother Toma resumed his story as he washed the dishes, Jeffrey dried, and young Judson put things away.

It was at some point during the cleanup that Brother Toma's tale suddenly became very interesting for Judson. He'd heard already that Brother Toma was here with his Bishop's blessing, but his ears perked up when he heard the details of Brother Toma's quest. "Father John has been trying for years to get Father Herman of Alaska to be officially recognized as a saint—some people call it being 'canonized'—and in the process has obtained copies of letters and papers concerning Father Herman, for the purpose of demonstrating the works of God that were done through him. And some of those papers speak of a mysterious Father Zakhar, a Monk who disappeared while en route to this very island in 1839 to carry on some part of Father Herman's mission. Have you heard anything here in the village about this Monk?"

At this, Jeffrey looked at his son, who answered rather haltingly, "Yes, Brother Toma. I have—I mean I know who has—maybe—a lot of information about that." Brother Toma looked relieved, and asked to meet with anyone who might have any details. Judson mentioned Laura, and Will's box of papers and notebook, and he brought up Anicia Novikoff, who seemed to know the most about village history. Brother Toma was intrigued by the fact that Anicia was connected to the last living Blessed Reader on the island. Then Judson suddenly remembered: "I helped Mr. Faltrip sort out some old papers in the cannery, and some of them were in Russian. We should look at those." Mr. Hansen suggested that Judson ask Mr. Faltrip tomorrow if they could borrow them.

Mr. Hansen added, "It doesn't take long for word to get around in a place like this. Tomorrow after dinner, I will arrange for some of these people to come here and meet you, and share what they know. Apparently there are some old papers in the archives of various families, too, plus the papers Judson and Serafina found in the cannery office." Brother Toma looked at them with an expression of calm acceptance that Judson couldn't quite fathom, as though he was certain to find the truth here. "It seems that I came to the right place, Mr. Hansen, and young Mr. Hansen," he said with a sudden smile, before shaking Jeffrey and Judson's hands and saying goodnight. The men gave him "first dibs" on the restroom for the duration of his stay, and although he said that wouldn't be necessary, he ended up thanking them and following that arrangement. Judson had a very hard time sleeping that night, and hoped that his tossing and turning did not awaken their guest. He carefully moved his bed a few inches from the wall, just in case.

March 13, 1964: The village and the superintendent's house

The next day, Judson found it difficult to concentrate in school, and at morning recess, told Sandy Ann what he'd discovered about the visitor's purpose. They both

became excited about solving another mystery, perhaps the island's greatest secret. They didn't even notice when his dad gave up on the older kids' lessons and gave them extra library time until noon. Mr. Hansen also told Mrs. Lindseth, who was cleaning the mess hall kitchen, that her daughter and his son had some errands to run for Brother Toma and would need a little snack to take with them instead of coming home to eat. Jeffrey knew if he didn't let them go now, they were just likely to play hooky for the first time ever—they were that wrapped up in their latest mystery.

As soon as the class broke for lunch, Judson and Sandy Ann bolted to the store to see Laura Rezoff and Mr. Faltrip. They were happy to see that both were there. As slowly as possible, Sandy Ann told Laura about the meeting that night after supper, and asked if Laura could bring the box of papers that Will had collected along with her when she came. To be honest, it took Sandy Ann two and a half tries to get all of that out coherently and at a comprehensible speed. At one point, Judson laid a hand on her shoulder and said, "Breathe, girl!" causing a good deal of laughter from the rather perplexed Laura and Owen. Judson then asked Mr. Faltrip if he could borrow the old Russian files from the brown filing cabinet they had sorted last summer.

Owen said, "Well, I heard this fellow was coming, and could'a bet money you'd get involved somehow! I said I would cooperate in any way I could." He stuck his chin in his hand for a moment. "Tell you what, I'll get Howie and Danny to cart the whole darn thing up to Mr. Hansen's office, just to keep it all together, and the good Brother can make use of whatever he needs until he leaves." Judson wanted to hug the man, but he just saluted, as he had after the fight, and said, "Sir, yes sir!" Once again, the adults were nearly speechless with laughter as the kids sped out the side door on the next phase of their errand. "Those are two remarkable kids I think," said Mr. Faltrip. "And somehow even more remarkable when they work together," added Laura.

Sandy Ann and Judson's next stop was Anicia Novikoff's house, and Judson no longer gave a thought to the fact that it was also Anya's house. They knocked on the old red door, and Anya greeted them, wearing a blue jumper and white blouse and completely appropriate attire. He had reflexively checked: Judson couldn't help noticing the bra straps under the blouse this time. He wondered if she'd made the dress. She looks more and more like her sister-in-law Lil' Carla, thought Judson, and decided it was mostly in the calm, cheerful, *peaceful* facial expressions Anya had been sporting of late. There were no jugs of port wine to trip over this time, and Judson detected no diaper smell either. They told Anya of their purpose in coming as they walked to the table to wait for Anicia. Anya had just left through the bedroom door off the kitchen to get Anicia when Jakob Pedersen walked in behind them.

When they told him what Brother Toma was searching for, he asked if he and Anya could tag along, and Judson couldn't see why not. It would be interesting to hear what Jakob Pedersen and Brother Toma might say to each other, if nothing else. "I wonder if Anya will be disappointed when she finds out that Brother Toma can't

perform any *ceremonies*," said Sandy Ann, emphasizing that last word, a bit of her roguish ways still in evidence. She managed to say this just as Anya returned, and got her to change colors a bit. But Jakob just laughed and said, "When the time is right, Serafina!" and gave Anya a big kiss. Now it was Sandy Ann's turn to blush; Jakob knew how to push his niece's buttons. However, they suddenly abandoned all foolishness as Anicia walked slowly to the table and sat down.

She beckoned to Jake Pedersen and asked him to get something for her from the top shelf of her closet. As he left, she looked at Sandy Ann and Judson and said, "And this is Sokroshera Cove's most famous couple. My Serafina and... Jay-Jay, yeah." Nearly speechless, Judson had just enough presence of mind to identify Anya and the elder Jake in that capacity, but Anicia waved that off, noting the scarlet-faced Sandy Ann with a long glance and a little smile. "No, I mean the ones who solve all of the mysteries. You *uncovered* my Pariscovia's secret, and I never even *could* do that." The last sentence once again came out in Anicia's almost melodic cadence, her pitch rising and falling in the ancient way of placing emphasis that no young person in the village could seem to master.

Sandy Ann let out an involuntary "Oh... *that!*" in response to the fact that Anicia wasn't actually teasing them right now—but the clever old woman had managed to kill two rhetorical birds with one stone, thought Judson, still reasonably suspicious of Anicia's formidable power to embarrass. "And Jakob tells me you figured out about him and my Anya, and their Ward before anybody told you." Somewhere in the back of his mind, he noticed again how Anicia was inhaling some of the words, as she had when he met her at the memorial service. She continued after one of her signature quiet laughs. "My Jakob says all he did was sing you a *song* and then you looked like you had solved a *crime* or something, yeah." Judson nodded, acknowledging her facts, and soaking in yet another melodious sentence, noting Anicia's use of Jake Pedersen's full first name, and realizing that since his announcements at the starrng party, everyone in the village had begun calling him Jakob. It was a small sign of the excitement many felt at the prospect of a Blessed Reader for the village. Anicia, the daughter-in-law of the last living Blessed Reader, was at last helping to prepare his successor as best she could. But Judson's thoughts about Anicia were by no means entirely philosophical. Judson glanced again at Anicia, feeling both affection and wariness. When you can avoid getting teased, what a precious gift this woman is to this village, he marveled. Anya finally appeared to be aware of all that Anicia represented, and now seemed to be hanging on her great aunt's every word.

The elder Jake returned, and if he'd heard any of their conversation, he didn't let on. He was carrying a wooden box about the size of a medium picture frame, but about three inches deep. It was made of a dark wood that seemed to be carved. He stood beside her, holding it carefully. "Here," Anicia said to Jakob, gesturing as though she were handing it to him, "Take it when you go to talk to the Priest tonight. I can explain what I know then, yeah." To Anicia, Brother Toma was already fully imbued with the full faith and credit of her beloved Russian Orthodox Church, and Judson realized just how long she had hungered for such a person to take an interest in Sokroshera Cove. How proud she must be of "her" Jakob

Pedersen, Judson thought. The kids got back to class a good half an hour after lunch was over, and Judson couldn't remember anything that happened the rest of that school day.

At dinnertime, Brother Toma stood with the Hansens, made the sign of the cross, and prayed:

"O Christ our God,
Bless the food and drink of Your servants,
For You are Holy always;
Now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen."

Dinner that evening was a corned beef *perok* made by Lil' Carla, and Judson, noting that none of the ingredients would have required a freezer or a refrigerator, marveled at Mrs. Bazaroff's ingenuity with her little oil stove. And Sandy Ann's 'Vomit Face' opinion of non-salmon *perok* notwithstanding, the corned beef version was pretty good, and Carla's competence with her spice rack was obvious. He managed two helpings before remembering he shouldn't be drowsy for this evening's meeting. At the end of the meal, Brother Toma stood again to pray, and Judson barely remembered to stand in time not to be a distraction. This time the words were,

"We thank Thee, O Christ our God,
That Thou hast satisfied us with Thine earthly gifts;
Deprive us not of Thy heavenly Kingdom,
But as Thou camest among Thy disciples, O Saviour,
And gavest them peace, come to us and save us. Amen."

The words "Come to us and save us..." echoed in his mind. Judson suddenly thought of the ancient battle being waged on this very island, and said "Amen" quietly, with sudden conviction. There had been little small talk at the table this evening, for everyone was focused on the quickly announced meeting that was about to take place. The dishes were washed and cleared in record time, and Judson and his dad collected chairs from around the apartment, moved the table out from the wall, and even got some Blazo boxes from the kellydoor in anticipation of a lot of interested participants in tonight's proceedings. They managed to squeeze ten seats at the long table. Brother Toma returned to his room instead of helping with the chairs, and Judson, passing by the half-open door, heard his voice quietly saying, "...Thou hast said, 'Without me you can do nothing.' In faith, I embrace Thy words, O Lord, and bow before Thy goodness. Help me to complete the work I am about to begin for Thine own glory..." Judson reflexively closed his eyes and nodded, and quietly stepped away, amazed and somehow inspired by the man's intense focus on his mission.

At around six thirty—Judson hadn't remembered giving a time—Jakob Pedersen arrived driving Mr. Lindseth's jeep, with Anicia Novikoff in the front seat. The jeep was the easiest of the four vehicles in the village for Anicia to climb in and out of. Judson assured himself that Jakob had driven it like a limo driver pulling up to the

Shrine Auditorium on Oscar night. As Jake and Anya helped Anicia up the stairs, Judson realized with a flash of recognition that she was wearing her bright pink housecoat. Same coat, different day, thought Judson, and was happy to see it in this context instead of the previous one, when a drunk Anya had used it to torment him.

Once Anicia was seated, at the far end of the table, facing the whole kitchen and the living room beyond, Jakob brought up the carved brown wooden box and placed it on the table within Anicia's reach. "You forgot somebody today, my Judson," said Anicia, as Petey and Dottie Kurtashkin walked in. "They know the old language, too. We used to learn it in the schools before they switched to American language, yeah." They took their seats to Anicia's left, with their backs to the kitchen wall, greeted Judson warmly as if to tell him there were no hard feelings, and spoke a few sentences with Anicia in a language he couldn't understand. Brother Toma took his seat to Anicia's right, also within reach of the wooden box. Beside him was a banker's style leather valise, which was open to reveal slots seemingly full of papers. He pulled out a notebook and opened it.

Just then, Laura and her two children walked in, Herman carrying a wooden box similar to Anicia's, and Barbara calmly pulling back the hood of her pink parka. Laura instructed Barbara to sit in one of the living room chairs and listen. Judson looked around for Sandy Ann and didn't see her, or any of the Lindseths. Of course, they'd be welcome, but besides Sandy Ann, they weren't quite as involved as some of the others. Moments later, Howie Lindseth arrived, with his daughter in tow, a triumphant look on her face. She had won some sort of battle recently, Judson could tell.

Judson, Mr. Hansen, and Mr. Lindseth took the last seats at the table, and Judson noticed that Jake Pedersen and Anya were sitting beside Brother Toma. Herman, picking up a Blazo box, settled quietly behind Judson's right shoulder. Judson heard a small scraping noise and turned around to see Sandy Ann perched on a Blazo box behind him on his left, but still within sight of Anicia and their visitor. She already was wrinkling her nose in anticipation. Sandy Ann was not the only excited person at the table. The village had lived under the shadow of an unsolvable mystery for more than a century, and now that was possibly about to change.

Brother Toma began by thanking them, and telling the room full of people that he would start with what had brought him to Sokroshera Cove in the first place, and then they would see what was in the boxes the others had brought. He also had the folder of old letters that Judson and Sandy Ann had collected, and turned to thank the kids and especially Mr. Faltrip for providing him with the whole filing cabinet. Judson looked over his right shoulder past Herman and spied Mr. Faltrip sitting quietly next to Barbara, who seemed to be enjoying her visit with her 'grandpa.' In his own way, he's been fighting this battle and suffering because of this mystery since he arrived, thought Judson, remembering his struggles with some of the villagers, going back generations.

Brother Toma pulled out a manila envelope, undid the metal clasp, and pulled out several sheets of paper. "These are copies of documents in the possession of my Bishop, Father John, of the Joy of All Who Sorrow Cathedral in San Francisco. He is one of the leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church who is trying to recognize Father Herman of Alaska as a Saint." Brother Toma was not speaking in church language tonight, in deference to his mixed audience. "You all seem to know about the rumor of a Monk who was coming to this island to continue Father Herman's work, and that he mysteriously disappeared. After I read the things I've collected here, I became convinced that Father Zakhar the Monk disappeared *after* he had arrived here. This one is a letter from one of the crewmembers of his ship, the *Saint Stepan*, who was left at a place called The Narrows to see relatives. He says the ship was headed toward this island when he was dropped off. That's the only evidence we have that the ship with the Monk ever arrived."

Anicia Novikoff shook her head, and said softly, "I don't think so, Father." He didn't correct her; he saw her respect for his office, even if it might still be in his future. "My Will Rezoff, he found some papers. My husband's brother, they were both sons of the last Blessed Reader we have here. His brother had an old house just this side of the creek, and after he died it fell down. It was where we build Pyotr's house now. My boy Will helped tear the old one down, yeah. I think he *pagook* that box from the attic. He showed it to me one time, and he wanted to come back and show me more, but then he died. It has a letter from the Monk, I think, to Blessed Reader Novikov long time ago." Anicia, trying to get her ideas out clearly and in order, was temporarily losing her usual finesse with English, and Judson realized that this woman had grown up speaking something else entirely. Brother Toma slid the box from Laura to within reach of Anicia, who opened it, squinted, and took out a worn and wrinkled paper. She carefully passed it to Petey and Dottie, who fished in her purse and procured a pair of reading glasses. Cutest couple ever, thought Judson, before refocusing.

Pyotr and Dorotea Kurtashkin, now a million miles from being just cute old "Petey and Dottie Kurt," looked at the fragile document for a long minute and then began to read, helping each other out with various phrases. Petey began, "This is from the Monk Father Zakhar to Arkady Novikov, the Blessed Reader for the village. He says he thinks Teplov and his men plan to take the Church's treasure, and they are acting like they want to kill him. He writes their whole name like..." They searched for the right word, and Dottie looked at Petey and continued, "...a formal *accusation* like to a judge, or to God. See here?" She turned the paper back toward her husband so that Petey could read, pointing to two lines near the top. He read, "Evgeni Alexandreyevich Teplov and Stepan Timofeyevich Selivanov have done me great harm; may God have mercy on their souls." Petey was quiet for a minute, skimming the words. "He says the crew moved the *Saint Stepan* to a moorage off east beach because of the wind, but he was sure that Teplov and his men had already harmed his crew and taken the cargo. He says he was about to go and check on the boat, then the letter stops."

Petey then pointed to a corner of the worn page and said, "This part is written in Arkady's hand I think. It says the letter was found wrapped in sealskin under a

lamp in the old Novikov family barabara out at the Old Village at the west end of the lake, where the Monk was staying." Mr. Kurtashkin looked up at Anicia and Brother Toma, and interpreted the meaning, his voice exhibiting that songlike quality that Anicia's also had. "He wanted somebody to know what he was thinking, then. Looks like maybe he was *murdered* or something. That's all they ever found of the Monk or the ship I think."

Herman, sitting behind Judson, suddenly interrupted the general hubbub of voices. "No, that's maybe not true, not if it was east beach. Mom, can I go home and get Dad's box from the shed, the one he showed Norm Smith?" Laura nodded, and Herman grabbed his coat and flashlight and walked briskly out the door. Barbara got up and closed the door after him.

Mr. Hansen broke in, "That accusation in the letter is based on a quote from Saint Paul, I believe, from one of his letters to the churches he started." Brother Toma nodded. "I think you're right, Mr. Hansen, but it is clear the Monk was being very serious, and that as you said," he nodded toward Petey, "he really wanted someone to know. He felt he was here to do a task for God, and that some people on the island were intent on stopping the work, and maybe even stopping the Monk himself." Then almost as an afterthought, he added, "Are there still any relatives of Teplov or Selivanov here now?"

There was an uncomfortable silence, broken by Mr. Faltrip in the living room. "Brother Toma, I'm the only one from the village without a genetic connection of some kind to each other, so I'll tell you. The Selivanoff family still lives here. What they may or may not be guilty of is between them and God. But yes, they still live here, and incidentally, you'll notice they are not here tonight, if you catch my drift."

Brother Toma nodded, and what he said surprised them all. "I wanted to know about any surviving family members because I wanted to assure them that I did not come here to condemn anyone. Moreover, things done by our ancestors do not have to become things that we do as well. I want to be careful not to declare innocent people guilty, for only God is Judge." Laura was nodding vigorously, but Judson made a mental note that it might become uncomfortable to be a resident of that old yellow house sometime very soon. He felt sorry for Marla, and the other kids, and poor, patient Alice, too. But unfortunately, Billy Jr. had already established his own role in this drama long ago.

Now Anicia looked in her own wooden box, and pulled out several other old letters, which she spread out in front of her. "These do not have as many facts as Will's letter, but they are copies of letters Arkady sent to the Church in Kodiak and to the Russian authorities in Sitka, asking for help in searching for the missing Monk. They aren't really copies, but just a... *diary* of the letters he sent trying to find Father Zakhar. So the other letter..." she pointed to the one still in front of Petey and Dottie, "...it tells us a lot more."

Brother Toma went back to his pile of copies and pulled out a couple more. "These are also copies of the letters sent by the Priest in Kodiak and one sent by Dunya

(Mrs. Stepan Selivanov) asking for information about the *Saint Stepan* and about Teplov's ship, *The Rebellious*. Looks like they both went down within a short time of each other, because both were here and then they weren't. One letter states that a kid thought he saw *The Rebellious* weigh anchor and head toward the Strait, but no one knows for sure." Mr. Lindseth said, "I was talking to one of the old timers, way back before I met Betty. He said that the body of one of the Native men working as porters for Teplov was found shot and floating in the water under the cliffs near the kelp beds out on the north end, at Cape Unuak. 'Course nobody knows if that's true, and nobody knows for sure where the rebels went. Everybody agrees that no sign of the *Saint Stepan* has ever been found."

While Mr. Lindseth was speaking, Herman walked in the door, carrying a square box and balancing his yellow flashlight. As he caught his breath, he put down the box, shut off the flashlight, pulled off his coat, and said, "I don't think we can say that anymore. This is something my Dad found out on east beach after a storm." He removed the section of mast and tackle that Will Rezoff had shown Norm Smith last summer, and placed it carefully in front of Brother Toma, within touching distance of both Jakob Pedersen, and across from him, Petey Kurtashkin. Jakob stood up and leaned over it.

After a few moments, Jakob spoke. "This is clearly Russian, because the metal is straight out of a blacksmith shop. Even through the rust you can see how it was probably hammered out here, and here." He pointed to various spots on what remained of the rusty pulley and the bracket and bolt still attached to the shaggy piece of mast. Petey Kurtashkin agreed. "This is Russian. By the time the Americans came, most everything was machine made, and the shape was different, too. This is older."

Brother Toma looked around at the group and asked, "How hard would it be to hire a couple of divers to take a look off of that east beach?" Mr. Faltrip, who was now standing in the archway to the kitchen, said, "I know a couple of good divers. I hired them when we lost a couple of 'kickers' into the drink after that big storm last April. But we'll need a big boat with a good winch, a tender, or a big crabber. I think it's out of the question to ask..." Laura suddenly cut him off. "Let's hire the *Sally G.* out of Ouzinkie—it's big enough. After all, they have experience, finding Quirky on Cat Island!" Mr. Faltrip smiled, relieved not to have brought the current generation of Selivanoffs into the conversation, although there wasn't a soul in the room who didn't know what his next words would have been. "Thanks, Laura," said Mr. Faltrip, "Could you get Sam Gelsen on the horn tomorrow morning? I think we could get the divers and the boat together by Tuesday, what do you think?"

With this, he looked at Brother Toma, who nodded, and said, "I have a budget from my Bishop..." Owen raised his hand, "Don't even think about it, Brother Toma. I'm as curious as anyone else here about what's been hanging over our heads for generations, and I'll contribute that expense to your quest." It wasn't Mr. Faltrip's way to interrupt clergy, and he rarely interrupted anyone else either. Except when they took a swing at him, thought Judson and suppressed a smile. This topic must be of real interest to Owen. Then Judson remembered: Pariscovia had been a

Novikoff before she married Mr. Rezoff, and squarely on one side of this battle, from before he ever met her. This was as personal to Owen as if it were happening to his own wife.

Brother Toma was not one to waste a good meeting, and with all the translation ability and knowledge of island history at his disposal around the table, he decided to forge ahead with another mystery. "Judson and Sandy Ann here sorted out these papers from the cannery's collection. Can we see what they are about?" There were general nods all around. The previous discussion had only taken a little over an hour, and they were all still raring to go, even Anicia. Brother Toma took out three sheets of paper from the folder with Sandy Ann's careful printing on it, and laid one in front of Anicia, another in front of Petey, and another in front of Dottie. They looked and squinted and suddenly all three said some equivalent of "I'll be damned!" and started to talk.

Brother Toma diplomatically started with Anicia. She actually pounded the table when she started speaking. "I had forgotten about this. My father-in-law always claimed it was true, but now we know for sure." She turned to the page before her and began to read, translating slowly: "all the dirt—no, all the *land* from the valley between the two hills and the north beach, north of the creek, I give to the Orthodox Church for the... lifting... the *raising* of a sanctuary and a holy... a *sanctified* burial ground for the village." Considering that Anicia was translating technical terms into a language she learned only in school, this was pretty impressive.

Anicia glanced over a sheet attached to the letter with a paper clip for a couple of moments. Then she pointed to the bottom of the original page. She was getting a little agitated now, her wrinkled face approaching the pink of her housecoat. "This is signed by my father-in-law, Tichon Novikoff. All these years Billy and Billy Jr. go around saying that hill is theirs, and here we got proof that *no!* Then there's a letter in English here, and it says the same thing, except an official of the Territory of Alaska signs it, and says it's a 'legal, recorded deed of transfer.' I'll be *damned!*" She said something else that only the Kurtashkins understood, and they both grunted and nodded. Her translation was delivered almost as quickly as a Sandy Ann speech when she was agitated, and again, there was almost no sign she had breathed while delivering it. She took a deep breath now, and looked up apologetically at Brother Toma, who said, "If I were in your position, I'm sure that's the *least* I would say!" It was followed by a hearty laugh. Toma had not always been a saintly Brother, by his own admission.

Brother Toma pointed to Dottie's letter and indicated it was her turn. She was equally livid. "This is a report from the superintendent of Marmot Bay Fisheries, that's the name of the old herring plant here y'know, back in 1919, explaining that all the materials that had been donated by the cannery and collected by the village, to build a new church, they all mysteriously disappeared. Lots of boot marks went down to the beach on the far side of the bunkhouse—that's the closest beach to the church hill y'know—and a fisherman—I *won't* say his name—had a seiner that was very low in the water all of a sudden! I guess the thing to say is..."

Before sweet Dottie could ruin her reputation forever, Petey interrupted her. "Save it for after my story, *dyebushka* (dee-EBB-oosh-kuh, Russian for 'little girl')." He patted her hand and she took a deep breath, nodding. "My letter is in Russian, as a way to keep some of the facts secret, because it's attached to one in English that says something way different. I remember now; if we wanted our American teachers not to know what we were writing, we wrote it in Russian. If we used good penmanship and made up a good story like, maybe, we are taking notes on the lesson for our grandma to learn from, the teachers would usually leave us alone. That's what somebody did here, but this time trying to fool the younger generation that only knows English." Mr. Hansen was riveted, as though he were suddenly observing a Smithsonian Institution scholar.

Petey, comfortably in the role of village professor, continued. "After the war, we tried real hard to get a church and a Priest here. We were raising our kids without knowing our ways, and we didn't much like it. No communion, no confession, no feast days, nothing." Brother Toma was speaking quietly to himself at this, and Jakob Pedersen was nodding with a fierce intensity. They were both acutely interested in reversing this trend. Petey continued, sadly, "I was working at a cannery down in Uganik then, and I wasn't here for this story. We had a lovely church mostly finished—it looked kind of like the one that used to be on Woody Island. Then one night there was a fire, it was during a big wind all right, but this letter from the cannery watchman for Marmot Bay Fisheries blames it all on the wind. Never met a wind that could light a match, or carry a five gallon can of gas, either. The letter in Russian says that the morning after the fire, the village elders found a empty gas can under what was left of the foundation. Whoever set it didn't even bother removing the evidence."

Petey turned toward the archway where Owen stood. "Oh, and Mr. Faltrip, the watchman says that even if he had the use of a fire truck, he wouldn't have been able to reach that hill from the last hydrant." Mr. Owen Faltrip was livid. "Oh, *like hell* he couldn't! I could have made it work in under five minutes! There's a good hydrant just up the beach from the bunkhouse, and another on the runway end of the superintendent's house. Both buildings had plenty of fire hose back then, too. Either one would 'a worked just fine!" Owen paused for the tiniest second, his voice now a little more under control "That was just before Pender Ardet bought the place, so I bet I know who wrote that letter in English! We *know* who the cannery watchman was."

Petey nodded, and then turned to his wife, and asked, "Are you ready to swear now, dear?" "No thanks, honey. I'm all better now." And Dottie looked up at him through her reading glasses and smiled like an angel. Laura burst out laughing, so hard she almost fell out of her chair, and everyone else had a good roar over it too. Except Brother Toma and Owen Faltrip, who looked at each other and just shook their heads. This whole multigenerational battle seemed profoundly sad to them, Judson realized when he noticed them.

Judson waited until the laughter died down, and then broke into the adult conversation. "When Sandy Ann and I sorted them, we didn't see any signatures on the Russian letters. Does anyone know where they came from? Who wrote them I mean..." There was a collective shaking of heads. They might have their suspicions, but they aren't ready to share them, Judson realized. Someone (or several people) had gone to an awful lot of trouble to let the truth be known about the fate of those two churches, someone who wanted only the right people ever to find out. And now they had. Anicia changed the subject: "We will leave these papers with our Priest for now, yeah." The authoritative woman had spoken, and the old ones at the table replaced the papers in their boxes and slid them over to Brother Toma, who nodded slightly. Anicia had declared that their legacy was in safe hands, and there would be no discussion.

Brother Toma began again, "Oh, one more thing before we all go home to bed—besides a very sincere thank you for all of you who have stood with the saints and the angels all these years—does anyone know anything about a cave on the mountain? Some of the old letters talk about treasure hunters scouring the island for a secret cave. I think the Russian word for cave, *peeshéra*, is part of an old name for the island or the mountain's name, right, Mrs. Novikoff?" Anicia nodded, and Herman and Judson both said "The Cistern!" at almost the same time. Judson added, "Could we... I mean, could *somebody* go in and take a good look?" Herman was nodding; this is something his father had also wanted to do.

Mr. Faltrip held his hand up. "We welded the door shut up there because it's so damn dangerous. There's a lot of slippery rocks, and then there's the big pool we called the cistern. We never got around to building a proper railing either. I went to the edge of the cave with a flashlight back when we were dropping the pipe into the pool, and all *I* found were those damn slippery rocks. I almost broke my shoulder in that damn cave. If there's anything up in there, it's invisible." Someone as agile and coordinated as a former boxer would be unlikely to lose his balance. To fall unceremoniously in a cave must have seriously upset him, Judson noted, to remember it so forcefully after all these years. Mr. Hansen broke in, "All the same, Jakob, would it be possible to bring a portable generator and a grinder up the hill and grind off the welds, just so we'd know it's not part of the Brother's mystery?"

Sandy Ann was looking at Judson and quietly clapping her hands. Jake Pedersen looked at Mr. Faltrip, who shrugged, spread his hands in resignation, looked at Judson and then at Herman and just said, "Now look what you've done, boys!" So Jakob promised Brother Toma that they would try to get into the door this coming Saturday or the one after, realizing that any other scenario would result in at least three students skipping school. "Yes, Herman and Jay-Jay and Sandy Ann, you can come too!" With that, the meeting broke up, accompanied by an enormous hubbub of shocked and speculative conversations. It had been a convulsive meeting, seeming to bare the very soul of Sokroshera Cove.

A lot of folks went home uncomfortable that evening, shocked by the scope of the struggle that had gone on for generations. But the presence of Brother Toma had given many a real sense of hope, and now it seemed that the final mysteries would

actually be solved. I'd hate to be a Selivanoff tonight, thought Judson, and beat that idea down. He saw Marla and the twins and little Alexander and their patient mother and prayed as best he could that the sins of the fathers would not descend on the innocent.

Brother Toma and Jakob Pedersen huddled after the meeting, as Judson expected, with Anya looking on appreciatively. Brother Toma had his hand on Jake's shoulder, and they were nodding a lot. Judson couldn't hear their conversation, because he turned toward the front door to say good-bye. Probably couldn't understand what they were saying anyway, since the Orthodox people seem to have a huge vocabulary of 'Church words' that I'm not familiar with, Judson reasoned.

As Laura was leaving, Judson pulled her aside and talked quietly, so no one nearby could hear. "I noticed you didn't bring any of Will's notebooks with you." She nodded. "He was amazingly close in his ideas, and every time he'd get dr— I mean, and every time he'd share his ideas people would just call him crazy. But he had a hunch about the Monk's ship, and he had a stronger theory about the cistern cave than Mr. Faltrip has, I'll just say that. We'll see..." Laura's voice trailed away and she sighed. She put her hand on his shoulder before continuing, "Jay-Jay, *thank* you for honoring his memory tonight. If anything is ever found, it will be because you kids started the search again. I think all of this happened tonight because they trusted you kids first! I know Owen sent up those files just because of you." She smiled and removed her hand from his shoulder. "Remember you and Sandy Ann working in the office? All of it was found because of your hard work!"

Laura abruptly gave Judson a quick hug, followed by a slightly longer one to Jeffrey. "I love your boy, Jeffrey — you did good!" His dad couldn't think of a thing to say, which rather surprised Judson, but he had a big closed-lip grin on his face as Laura was speaking. They just looked at each other for a long moment before Laura turned for the door. As Laura departed, Jeffrey's eyes were glued on her, and he still hadn't said a word.

Monday, March 16, 1964: The school and the store

After talking with Mr. Faltrip awhile, Brother Toma caught the morning mail plane back to Kodiak. Judson and his fellow detectives were able to concentrate on their studies that Monday morning, but just barely. He wanted to try to explain things to Marla, to lessen her pain at the reputation her family was getting, but by some secular miracle, she was completely preoccupied. Marla had discovered the Beatles. She had a reliable source in Seattle, who sent her all the Beatles singles she could get her hands on. Marla kept going on and on about how cute they were, and how there had never been any music like this before, and that the heavens were about to open revealing John, Paul, George, and Ringo as the superheroes that would somehow save the youth of the universe. At least that's what Judson heard between the lines of Marla's nonstop biographical notes.

Unlike many of her teenybopper compatriots across the known world, her favorite was Ringo, "Because you can't have the Beatles without a *beat!*" Judson noted to

himself, a bit slyly, that her own sweet Ward “beat” Ringo in the looks department, and he was safe within her fantasy. Then he also realized with a shock that her Ward would never be able to play guitar with his scarred hands, but he might manage holding drumsticks. Interesting how Marla could act like a little Laura Rezoff when she chose to, knowing that Ward wouldn’t feel too intimidated by her taste in heroes.

At one point, Marla came over to Judson, had him stand up, and rearranged his hair, pulling it forward and around his ears. “Should I get a broom and pretend to play?” Judson laughed. She gave up and put his hair back in what was probably better form than when he’d walked in that morning. Judson slid over and elbowed Ward good-naturedly. “You’re in *no* danger, *mi amigo*.” Ward turned and looked across the other table at a pink and staring Sandy Ann, and said, “You’re in no danger either, Serafina!” Pink turned to bright red in an instant.

Judson decided to invite Marla over to listen to her records on his stereo, which was easily the best sounding system in the village for these records, given that the jukebox played only the old 78s. She had hopped up and down and screamed rather loudly, and then invited Ward. Judson smiled and said that would be fine. Sandy Ann was boring a hole in him with her eyes, and he nodded at her. Herman just shrugged. He was going to let Beatlemania pass him by, thank you very much. Then Rinny asked to come, and Judson knew immediately that Herman would be attending, just as sure as he “saw her standing there.”

The twins, sitting at the next table, were still reacting to Marla’s scream, and had their hands on their ears. “Hurts, Marla!” Her little brother Alexander just mouthed the village expression for ‘boy, are you in trouble now,’ a sustained “Ummmm!” If letting out a little scream is all he understood of being in trouble, then all the better, bless him, thought Judson. Mr. Hansen finally cut in, announcing the history lesson. His dad was likely as relieved as he was that Marla seemed not to have been sucked into the history cesspool they had opened at that meeting.

At recess, the kids went outside, even though it was heavy mist and gray clouds. If they stayed indoors every time it rained, none of them would ever have played outdoors in their lives, thought Judson on days like this. He and Sandy Ann stepped outside just in time to witness the utter dissolution of the “Holy Terrors.” Jake and Eagle were on the teeter-totter, April, Barbara and the twins circling like vultures for their turn. Jake was reciting some deadly poetry, “Jaaa – kub and An – Yah, sitting in a tree, K – I – S – S – I...”

At this point Eagle’s end of the teeter-totter had just hit the ground, and he abruptly rolled off the board, leaving Jake to land hard and roll backwards into a sizeable puddle. “Hey!” Jake was saying, but Eagle was on him in a flash, fiercely pounding young Jake’s face. Judson, Herman, and Sandy Ann pounced on the pair as quickly as they could. Judson pulled Eagle up and out by the armpits, writhing like an angry Dungeness crab (and aren’t they all?) while Herman had him by both wriggling feet. When he saw that Judson had things well in hand, he let go. Sandy Ann was sitting mostly in the puddle, cradling her brother. She was scowling in

Eagle's general direction. Jake Lindseth had buried himself in Sandy Ann's arms and was sobbing. Jake was right; Eagle could take him after all. Meanwhile, Eagle was loudly calling Jake all the *Alutiiq* words for private body parts, and struggling unsuccessfully to break free of Judson's grip. Unbidden, Barbara had gone to get Mr. Hansen. "William and Jake are mad. They are hitting," she had calmly announced, and then led him, coatless, out into the mist and the mess.

Within seconds of Mr. Hansen's arrival, Eagle had stopped struggling, and Jake had turtled his head out from under his sister's jacket. Both had their eyeballs glued on the teacher. "Ward, please take your brother in and sit him at your table. Serafina, please take your brother to your table, and make sure he can't see Eagle. Herman and Rinny, could you please go get both Jakob Pedersen and Anya Bazaroff and bring them here, please?" His redundant 'please' told Judson that his father was trying hard to keep the lid on his explosive class, and that he was very upset. Mr. Hansen always had trouble talking in the face of extreme emotions.

Judson noticed that his dad had chosen two older students who were among the least involved to go fetch the adults. But it sure would be cute to watch those two on their errand, thought Judson. With the entire class back at their regular seats, with the exception of the two malcontents, an almost deadly calm descended on the mess hall. Mr. Hansen cut the funereal silence with, "Marla, we need to talk about something else, so now's a good time to ask: Uh, what's your favorite Beatles song?" Marla was happy to assist. This'll take awhile, thought Judson. He also saw why his dad had chosen her to stay behind. Remembering the incident with the movie, Judson realized that his father was becoming very good at creatively throwing in the towel when required.

Sometime in the middle of Marla's lecture about why "I Want to Hold Your Hand" was the greatest song ever to play on the radio, Herman and Rinny returned with Anya and the elder Jake. Herman had also brought Laura; good call if you want things to calm down, thought Judson. Mr. Hansen declared another recess, and asked all the older kids to stay inside. He asked Laura if she would be so kind as to take the younger ones outside. She was always so kind; out they all went, with Laura's cheerful voice leading the way.

Mr. Hansen looked at the students, the 'terrors,' and the adult visitors, and dispensed with any preliminaries. "When couples who already have children decide to get married, it affects everyone around them. It takes a little adjustment and understanding. And the way people act when they are young..." He turned and looked briefly at the elder Jake and Anya, who were holding hands but seriously listening, "...is different than the way people act when they are grown up, and working on putting a family together." He turned to young Jake; the two boys had moved so that they could now see each other, but neither one of them seemed to want to. Jake was staring at Mr. Hansen through puffy eyes and his very own fat lip.

When Mr. Hansen spoke, his voice was calm and direct. "Jake, your teasing Eagle didn't really fit what's happening now with your uncle and Anya, did it?" "No," he

said, and turned sobbing into his sister's coat once again. "And Eagle, your mom is trying to do something very good now, isn't she? She's made some big changes in her life recently, right?" Eagle nodded, and turned to look at his mom, who just smiled at him. "I think Mr. Pedersen will be nice to your mom, don't you?" Eagle nodded. Then he blurted out, "I was tired of all that *sh*—that *stuff* going on at my house—those men coming over—all dirty and nasty. The way Mr. Pedersen acts with my Mom is so nice and so... *clean*, and Jake just made it sound all nasty again. I... got mad." Anya suddenly saw what damage she had been doing to her children, and looked like she was about to cry.

Jakob Pedersen went over and put his arm around Eagle. "You're a good man, and I appreciate your standing up for your mom. But can you see that young Jake..." he turned to look at his puffy nephew, "...he was just being a 'holy terror' and wasn't trying to be mean. Most of the stuff he says is before he engages his brain, but I've never known him to be mean on purpose. Except maybe when he's around firecrackers and cats. Can you see that?" Eagle began to laugh at the story of the Selivanoff's old gray cat, but then descended into tears himself, and actually hugged the elder Jake. "Awww... tissue time!" said Rinny, but received an iron-melting frown from Mr. Hansen, and a firm shake of the head from Herman. She seemed most subdued by Herman's reaction; no one else butted in. Little Jake's face emerged from the folds of his sister's coat, and he spoke to Mr. Hansen in a soft croak, "You gonna paddle us now, like ol' Mrs. Moron—uh, Mrs. Marrone did?" Mr. Hansen's voice was soft, and most of those in the room probably could not hear him. "That won't be necessary." Judson tried to imagine his father reacting this way back at his old school in Arizona, and couldn't. He stood still, mentally shuddering at the thought of what his rage-filled father might have done back then.

Anya called Ward and Eagle over to her. "You boys have both tried to defend me, and even when I was too drunk to know how I was affecting you. I didn't want to know what I was doing to myself, and now—I can't believe how awful I was. Thank you, my sons. I hope to really be worth defending someday." With this, she bowed her head and wept silently; her boys hugged her with a good son-to-mom hug, something they hadn't been able to do for years, if ever. "You were always worth it, Mom. You just didn't know!" said a voice out of the huddle. Ward's. Another, softer voice near Judson said, "Can I please say 'tissue time' now? 'Cause I really need one!"

Herman reached into his shirt pocket and pulled out a folded tissue, and assured Rinny it was unused. She laughed a little through sobs as Herman gave it to her. Judson looked over at Marla. Yup—tissue time over there, too. "Listen, families, I really need to bring the little ones back in, just in case they're driving Laura crazy out there. Thank you for working on this. We're just too small a school to keep anything hanging over our heads!" Judson wondered how his dad would handle the Selivanoff scandals, and when that wave would crest.

After school that day, Judson felt very drained, and headed straight home. But before he reached the airstrip road, he heard pounding feet behind him and was surprised to see Herman and young Jake. "Listen, Jay-Jay, Jake and I... were

wondering, uh, if you could teach us those moves you used on Ward. You know, the self-defense stuff?" Judson stopped dead in his tracks, certain of his course of action. But it took a minute for him to formulate exactly what he wanted to say, and even so, it came out a little scrambled. "When I got here, I didn't know anybody, and I thought I was just protecting myself. I don't like what it did to me. I was supposed to control my anger, and I almost went way too far. And what I did ended up causing way more problems than it solved. I mean, look around!" He swept his arm to include the village as he had seen some of the elders do when telling old stories.

He was referring to the fire and all the problems that resulted from it, but then added, "Is there anybody to fight with around here that isn't a relative, a friend, or a friend of a relative? Any time there's a fight around here, it involves whole families!" Good lord, he thought to himself, I sound like an episode of the Beverly Hillbillies. "Herman, you told me once why nobody ever gets shot here, in a town full of guns. It's like that. If anybody shot you, every friend and cousin on the island would be on that guy's doorstep in a heartbeat with enough... uh, *firepower* for a second Gettysburg. So no, I won't teach you until nobody really needs it." Judson exhaled, surprised at the passion he had suddenly found in his voice. "I guess I really mean that," said Judson, softer now, and mostly to himself. Herman pounded him on the back. "You said pretty much what I told Jake you'd say. Do you know that you think almost *exactly* like my Mom sometimes?"

Judson told him he thought that was a nice compliment, and was going to say more, when up pounded Sandy Ann, who was swift as a deer when she wanted to be. They waited until she'd retrieved a bit of her breath, and she began. "Mr. Faltrip says the *Sally G.* will be here Thursday morning at ten. They're gonna dive off east beach!" Then she practically sang out, with as much breath as she had back, "And Jay-Jay, Mr. Hansen says you, Herman, and I can go, but we have to write up a report for him or he won't let us out of school!"

Judson had to laugh at this; it wasn't really an assignment at all, but his way of getting a first-hand report on the adventure. Jake didn't seem to mind not being included. He just said that by Thursday he'd be ready again to invite Eagle over to play after school. Herman and Judson patted him on the back. "Prob'ly be on restriction for something else by then anyway!" said Jake.

Tuesday, March 17, 1964, and frequently, right after school

Sandy Ann had to go home right after school and help her mom with something, so Judson chose this as a good time to talk to Herman. "Listen, Herman, I talked to my Dad about the self-defense thing, and he said that part of the reason I took the class was to defend myself. But the rest was to teach me balance, coordination, confidence, and self-control. He said most people fight because they don't have that last one." Herman looked at him without saying anything, waiting for Judson to get to his point. "So... Dad says you and I could mess around with some simple self-defense moves since he doubts you and I will be trying to beat each other up any time soon."

Herman had a sly smile on his face, "I guess it'll work until you have to play a lifesaver game again with Rinny!" Judson laughed out loud, because Herman was teasing himself as much as Judson, by admitting he actually liked her. Judson stood up straight, and adopted a formal tone: "Ok, then, for our *two ladies'* honor, we shall train." He bowed deeply at the waist in Herman's direction. "Where would be a suitable place?" "How about the net loft? Nobody would look in on us up in that top floor with the big hole," Herman postulated. Judson realized that most of the kids knew about that place, and had done the little diving game that he and Sandy Ann had done the day Mr. Faltrip caught them. But the place was not usually on the list of activity sites, all the same, and would be plenty secluded. So almost every afternoon, Judson and Herman snuck away, usually getting in by pretending to go for a stroll down on the dock, which took them right past the net building.

Judson did his best to teach what he had learned back at his old school. Herman was more naturally coordinated than Judson was, and usually faster. Soon they had perfected three or four good moves, but Judson was careful not to practice the one that had done in poor Ward. If they were ever seen, he was sure that would bother him. Judson had already told Herman that he would rather not make a problem for anybody with any of this. And walking back through the cannery and past the store, Herman had remarked, "I think all I'd have to do to defeat you is to distract you somehow." "Fat chance, rookie!" said Judson, and they pounded each other on the back.