

Chapter 14

Thursday, March 19, 1964: The dive off east beach

On Thursday morning, the day dawned clear and calm, with a light breeze out of the east. The three future adventurers fretted at their seats in the mess hall, waiting until Mr. Faltrip would come and invite them to the boat. Being that the mess hall was mere feet from the front dock, where the *Sally G.* was tied up, they needn't have worried about being left behind. Mr. Hansen, becoming more adept every day at the art of distraction, invited everyone to a dance party on Saturday evening, for Judson's thirteenth birthday. Judson had never seen his dad dance, but he knew his mom hadn't much cared for it. He wondered if adults ever danced here. He realized he needed something *other* than Beatles records to have on hand, and thought of the stereo Big Band records his grandma had sent him earlier. He asked Marla if she had any other good dance records, and she admitted to owning some Elvis and Chubby Checker. He persuaded her to bring those records, too, on Saturday. His mind was completely absorbed in thoughts of his party when Mr. Faltrip entered the mess hall and told the kids, "It's time."

Herman, Sandy Ann, and Judson trotted across the front dock toward the *Sally G.*, trying to keep up with a surprisingly spry Mr. Faltrip. Judson was rubbing a sore spot on his upper arm. "What happened, Jay-Jay?" "Oh, just ran into someone a little less clumsy than me," replied Judson. Herman uttered an almost inaudible snort. He was already very good at their self-defense moves after only a couple of days. At the face of the dock, the two local kids dove down the ladder double quick, and Judson took a bit longer, but with so much more confidence than he would have had back in August when he arrived. On deck, they all quickly introduced themselves. Judson was not surprised to find Brother Toma aboard; he was the one who had requested this expedition. The two divers were not surprised to meet the three kids either. Apparently, both Brother Toma and Mr. Faltrip had filled their heads with stories of the remarkable young people who had pushed this mystery to the forefront and had discovered a few other secrets as well.

Judson looked at the two divers with a great deal of envy. A swimming pool had made many an Arizona summer day survivable. So although he was an OK swimmer, he had no desire whatsoever to dip his toe in the Gulf of Alaska in mid-March with the water temperature just a few degrees above freezing. The tallest diver was named Salem Jackson, and Judson learned from overhearing his conversation with Owen that he had also been a boxer, a middleweight, in the mid-1950s. The papers had dubbed him "The Jackhammer" thanks to his name and his lightning fast reflexes. A talent for scuba diving as a hobby had turned into a full-time job once he met his current boss, the older and shorter Arnie Wilkins. With a stocky body, serious gaze, and crew cut, graying hair, Mr. Wilkins just screamed 'ex-military.' He had indeed been a Navy diver, and after the service had joined up with several research teams. He had most recently helped to discover and map the wreck site of the *SS Ferdinand Baxter*, a freighter that sank off Karluk in 1928.

Arnie had eventually formed his own company, assisting insurance firms with wreck investigations. This stuff was right up his alley, although he admitted he'd never attempted diving on a wreck of this vintage before.

As the crew of the *Sally G.* pulled away from the dock, Judson got a peek at some of the divers' gear. He expected, and saw, tanks, breathing apparatus of various kinds, and the wet suits, which the men were already wearing. What he didn't expect were their other tools of the trade. There was a small shovel, an object that looked like a hand rake, and an open-topped metal mesh basket about three feet square with foot-high sides and short cable loops that could be hooked to the boat's winch. Then he saw a metal bucket that they'd perforated with hundreds of holes, like a colander for noodles. There was a bright blue plastic rectangular tub that looked like it came from the boat's galley, and indeed it had. A few five-gallon buckets of the type used for paint stood clean and empty on deck. There was a large coil of yellow polypropylene line with a couple of metal weights tied at one end and a fat, round, fluorescent pink crab buoy tied to the other.

Judson would just have to wait and watch to see how the divers would use it all. Arnie went over to a metal case, opened it, and removed a strange, square-shaped camera, attaching a hand-held flash to it by means of a hose that resembled a home vacuum accessory. "A brand-new underwater camera from Nikon called a Nikonos, based on a design by the French oceanographer Jacques Cousteau," said Arnie, introducing it and removing a Leica 35mm rangefinder camera as well. Salem slung the rangefinder around his neck, and fished out a large Polaroid camera, unfolded it, and shot the three kids standing on the stern, the old cannery behind them as they headed out of the cove.

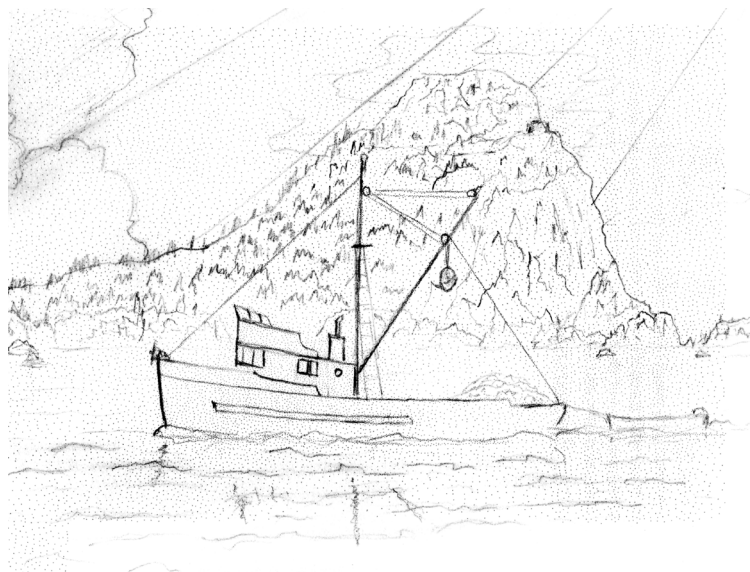
"So you are the famous Sokroshera Cove Secrets Discovery Team," Arnie said with a grin. "Who named us that?" asked Sandy Ann, and Arnie jerked his thumb in Mr. Faltrip's direction. The kids all seemed to like the title they'd received, even if it was a bit long. Judson secretly hoped their title would prove true, and something definitive one way or another would come from today's expedition. Salem handed the Polaroid photo to Judson. "I can get copies," he assured his friends, wondering what any of his acquaintances in Arizona would think of him now. But he had never had such close friends as these two, and never could imagine being in on an adventure like this either. He resisted the urge to pinch himself.

Sam Gelsen left the helm to one of his deckhands and came aft to meet his guests. He was shorter and rounder than Judson had thought from his presence on the radio, and had a friendly yet wise demeanor that reminded him of a much younger Petey Kurtashkin. "I listened to your rescue back in November," said Judson. Sam shook his head and looked at Mr. Faltrip. "Sorry you lost your boat, Owen. We went back the next day at low tide to see if we could salvage anything, but the storm and currents had pretty much shredded her." "Oh, well, at least you found my Thanksgiving turkey!" laughed Owen, getting more mileage from his old joke with this new crowd. Sam let out a laugh, but quickly got serious again, stating flatly, "I wouldn't trust Thornsens with a dinghy in a rain puddle after that nonsense!" Owen

replied, "Well, he's a great machinist, but just the same, I'm hoping I don't have to work with him again anytime soon."

Sandy Ann, upon learning that Salem Jackson had been a boxer, proceeded to tell him the story of how "Second Round Fat Lip" had busted up a couple of drunks who had ganged up on him. Salem looked Owen up and down and said, "Looks like we never lose the fire, do we?" Owen just put his hand on Sandy Ann's shoulder and explained that he'd rather not have had to do that. "I see those men almost every day, you know. It's a pretty small town, and there's really no room for big grudges." Herman looked at Judson and said, "That's what you were trying to tell me about the self-defense stuff, wasn't it?" Judson just nodded. He and Herman could have deep conversations without adding a lot of extra words. Judson noticed that Herman was unusually serious today; his father's reputation and the validity of all his research and speculation were about to be tested. The deckhand trotted back and tapped Sam on the shoulder. They were approaching the dive site.

"There's a little bit of current here, so we'll dive based on your depth finder, and if you could pull offshore a bit and leave your skiff over us, then we'll bring you back in if we need anything hauled up." Mr. Wilkins was the no-nonsense insurance adjuster diver now, and from this point on, everyone was under his direction. Sam made a few passes with the *Sally G.* off Teplov Point and east beach, and then told the diver where he thought a sailing ship might safely anchor. The *Sally G.* idled over the most likely position. The kids stood along the stern, far from the winch and the equipment. After checking and rechecking their gear, the two divers climbed into the skiff. Salem dropped the rope with the metal weights over the side, and helped the yellow poly line play out. When they saw that some of the line was floating on the surface, Salem tied the bright pink buoy at that point, and coiled and tied the rest of the line to the buoy so it wouldn't foul any propellers.



*The Sally G,
Sokroshera Island, 1964*

Now that they had their first diving location marked, they put on their facemasks, rolled backwards off the side of the skiff and headed down. Arnie carried the Nikonos camera. Salem carried the hand tools, which he had strapped to his belt, and was holding the sieve-like bucket, which he'd strapped to his left wrist. The divers had limited their mobility with all that gear, so they hoped that with some luck, Sam's estimation would put them close to whatever might lay on the bottom. Now all anyone topside could do was to wait. Sam slowly pulled a couple hundred feet further offshore, leaving the skiff to hover more or less above the dive site. Two crewmembers from the *Sally G.* were in the skiff, in case a diver needed assistance getting aboard. Judson didn't want to know how those divers could handle nearly dark, extremely cold water. Diving in a wetsuit and facemask seemed to him the ultimate in claustrophobic conditions. Arnie had told them an interesting fact that worked in the divers' favor: wintertime diving was the best, because the water was much clearer. And March was still like mid-winter in these waters. These two seasoned professionals would find it if there was anything to be found. Judson realized he had no idea what a wooden shipwreck would look like after over a century.

After about twenty minutes, everyone on the deck saw the two divers reappear, a little off the skiff's bow. They piled aboard the skiff, removed their face gear, and signaled for the *Sally G.* to come alongside. Once the larger vessel was more or less above the dive spot, the divers crawled onto the deck, carefully placing the bucket where it wouldn't get knocked over. Arnie looked at Brother Toma and at Owen and gave a status report. "There's a wreck down there, all right! There was a lot of muck, but it was thick stuff, so it was fairly easy to clear away, if we scooped it out slowly." Arnie glanced at Sam Gelsen, "My compliments, Sam. Our buoy line landed not twenty feet from the wreck." He looked back at Brother Toma. "We found what may be human remains—sometimes skeletons survive and sometimes they don't in water like this—but the wreck is in some kind of natural hollow, and is protected from most of the current on three sides by reef. The items we found, and the human remains, were coated with a layer of mud, but they were scattered on what's left of the deck. We decided to bring these other things up to show you before we dive down for the remains, if you decide you want us to do that." Arnie pointed to Salem's dripping bucket, in which were several nondescript items. Salem asked a deckhand to fill the borrowed plastic dishwashing tub full of salt water. Then he carefully began lifting out what they'd found, placing the items in separate corners and under the water. "This preserves them longer," said Salem. "Out in the air, they'd disintegrate quickly, and in fresh water they might fall apart, too. They were in salt water, so we keep 'em in salt water until the science boys can get their hands on 'em."

"So what you got?" asked Owen casually, barely containing his excitement. Arnie acknowledged the question with a curt nod, and spoke first. "This appears to be what's left of a leather valise or shoulder bag, and it was found beside and slightly under the bones... er, the remains. Leather can last for years, depending on how it was tanned, and this appears to be old, handcrafted, thick leather, not the paper-thin stuff used for purses today." Then he looked at Brother Toma and asked, "Do

you know what this might be? I found it partly covered by the leather. It's some kind of metal box."

Brother Toma pulled a similar metal box out of his own robe, and was quiet for a long moment; Judson realized he was trying to get his emotions under control first. "These... are given to Monks, to carry relics and objects of their calling. Mine will have a special cross in it when I am formally tonsured—when I can be called Father." The impact of Brother Toma's explanation was not lost on the group; the divers had indeed found the effects of a Russian Orthodox Monk. Herman was squinting at every move the divers made, thinking so hard his head had to be hurting.

Both divers had laid their gloves beside them on the deck when they began handling the artifacts. Arnie reached into the tub and placed both hands around the metal box. "I'd like to try to open this; get the Polaroid and the Leica first, please, Salem. It might damage this a bit to open it here, but based on the nature of your quest, I think we should try—that's if you don't mind. Do you mind, Brother Toma?" The man merely shook his head and stared at the dark and indistinct object. Salem, quick and efficient, took several photos from different angles and then tapped Arnie on the shoulder to signal he was done. Arnie worked his fingers a bit and the box popped open, releasing a cloud of muddy water.

When the silt cleared away, it was easy to see that almost everything that had been inside was now gone. But Arnie lifted out an object lodged in the mud at the bottom of the box. He shook off the remaining mud, revealing a small metal cross. Brother Toma confirmed their suspicions: "This was a Monk's box; he would never have gone anywhere without it. Do you have any idea why he would have gone down with his ship? That makes no sense." Brother Toma looked pained and confused, and glanced at both Arnie and Salem in turn. Salem spoke first. "Well, the wreck is largely collapsed after all these years at the bottom. But we found a big rock on the deck, and a rock lodged between a couple of ribs on the *inside* of the hull, below what was probably a hatch. There were other rocks inside the hold, but we couldn't take much time to investigate. But they are about the maximum size a man could comfortably carry, and all are about the same size. The depression the boat rests in has no loose rocks nearby that we could see. If I had to guess, I'd say the ship was scuttled."

Arnie nodded. "That's my take on it, too. The remains were found right next to what looks like the stub of the mast, and there's a section that has broken off—maybe three or four feet long, near where we found the remains. I'll bet we could hoist it up in the basket when we bring up the remains." He looked at Salem and pointed to the bucket. "Show them what else I found near the skeleton... uh, the remains." Salem reached into the bucket after first placing it in the tub of salt water; the tub got cloudy with mud again. He reached into the bottom of the bucket, removing a few stray pieces of the leather bag, and placed a long, shaggy object in the water. Arnie held it carefully and brushed away what he could with delicate sweeps of his fingers. Finally, he held it up, cradled in both palms. Arnie

and Brother Toma occupied the space; the rest strained to listen and to see what they could.

Arnie explained what he was viewing. "This is a hunting knife, I'll bet, and the metal is pretty badly degraded and crusted over. It seems the tip broke off. The handle appears to be some kind of bone—or probably ivory. We'll have to keep this wet until it can be preserved, or the ivory will be ruined." He placed it back in the tub and carefully washed just the handle this time. He fished around in a canvas bag he'd left on the deck, and retrieved what looked like a rather ratty-looking old toothbrush. When Judson appeared on the verge of asking, Arnie volunteered, "Yup, this is a toothbrush. I don't think this will hurt the ivory..." He left the sentence unfinished, and carefully rubbed the bristles across the handle's surface. "Look, I think we can see some carving here. My Russian's not that good—anybody better?" Nobody spoke for some moments, and from a few feet away, Sam Gelsen finally said, "We all know a few words, but nobody can spell it anymore. I could cuss you out..." His voice trailed away to the first laughter anyone had heard since the divers hit the water.

Arnie nodded with a little smile, and squinted at the knife handle, attempting to sound out the word: "Ok, here goes: *Ssss... Silly – Ban...* that's not quite right... wait, it might be clearer on the other side... *Cell... Ih... Ban... Awv.* Does that sound like anything to you?" Mr. Faltrip's voice cut through their gasps and mumbling recognition. "Son of a *bitch!* That knife belonged to Stepan Selivanov, and yes, we know that name. *Dammit!*" He waved the back of his hands upward as if trying to make something go away.

Owen sounded like he really didn't want to know this horrible detail. Judson's head was spinning; Sandy Ann laid her head on his shoulder, and unexpectedly had started to cry. Herman kicked at a loose rope, and then began staring at something, anything in the distance. Brother Toma, his voice cracking, finally said, "Owen, it wasn't your old sparring partner or anyone we know that did this; we always pray that the children find a better path than their ancestors. And redemption is at the center of the Gospel—I believe this."

Mr. Faltrip just walked over to Brother Toma, bowed his head, and leaned into the taller man's chest, almost like a frightened child. In that awkward position, Brother Toma asked the divers and Sam Gelsen if they could possibly try to retrieve the remains today. They all nodded, as Mr. Faltrip's head reappeared. He looked out at the horizon before speaking. "Will Rezoff, young man, if you can hear me, you were right all along." At these words, Herman began to sob, and he kept his back to the rest of them. Owen continued, more quietly this time, "But I'm afraid we might have found more trouble than peace."

The crew sprang into action even as the deck guests reeled in shock. The divers checked their tanks, and opted to switch to their spares. The deckhands hooked their winch to the cables attached to the four corners of the big square basket. Sam carefully brought the big crabber close to the crab buoy and the divers climbed back into the skiff. The men rolled back off the boat and submerged, and the crew

dropped the metal basket until they felt that the line was going slack, indicating it may have reached the bottom.

While they waited, Father Toma turned toward Herman, Sandy Ann, and Judson, and explained all he knew of the life story of the Monk. "As a child, he was an orphan, half Russian, half Native, who was cared for by Father Herman. We know that Father Herman sent him to Russia to get an education, and while he was there, he decided to become a Monk. He took the name Zakhar, which is Russian for Zechariah, one of the Prophets. The name means, 'One whom God remembered.' Perhaps his name will prove to be true today." With this, Brother Toma lapsed into silence.

The children were silent, too, waiting and scanning the water for any sign of the divers. The divers stayed down longer this time and Judson was starting to worry, but Herman looked at him and said, "These guys are pros, and now that they know who they are retrieving, they are going to be extra careful." Moments later, both men appeared at the surface. They asked to remain in the water until the basket was safely aboard, to be sure nothing fell out or got damaged. "It was... uh... *hard* to be sure we got everything, and some of the body is probably missing even after that. It was also about fifteen feet out to the basket. All things considered, it was pretty fancy work, guys!"

It took awhile for the basket to reach the surface, and the divers stationed themselves carefully on either side of the cable. As it was still being lifted, Brother Toma asked if he could have a blanket, and Sam ran into one of the bunks and pulled one out for him. He was about to put it around the man's shoulders, when Brother Toma explained, "Father Zakhar needs a proper burial shroud after all these years. This will have to do for now." He folded the blanket over his arm until the appropriate moment.

When the basket broke the surface, the divers were satisfied that none of the contents had gone missing on the way up. Soon, divers and basket were safely on the deck. The divers hovered over the basket, Arnie with his little toothbrush and Salem with the cameras. The skull, long separated from the rest of the remains, was resting delicately in a corner of the metal basket. Arnie carefully brushed some of the fuzzy gunk off of a section of the ribcage, and gestured to Salem, who began snapping photos with both the Polaroid and Leica cameras from various angles. They spoke quietly to each other, and both nodded. "Just a moment, Father..." Arnie said, accidentally promoting Brother Toma. "I need to show you something." Arnie pointed to a section of ribcage that he had cleaned off.

"See here, there's what looks like a gouge in the breastbone, as though someone thrust a knife and then removed it for a better aim." Sandy Ann let out a sob, and tears came to Judson's eyes, too. "And here, in this rib, is a larger gouge... this one found its mark. And this on the other side might be another...hard to tell, but all the marks are in this general area." Arnie made a circle motion above the breastbone. "Multiple knife thrusts, if these clues are any indication. Where's that knife... Here, these are the places where your Monk was stabbed." Using

Selivanov's hunting knife, he demonstrated briefly that the marks could have been caused by it, but stopped when he and the rest realized how brutal the act must have been. Salem lowered the camera he was holding and added, "It's as if maybe the Monk was tied to the mast and his attacker stabbed him from behind. You'd get more power that way. *Sheesh!* If we're right about this, then *holy shit...*" He briefly collected his thoughts before continuing, "...I'm ...sorry folks, but this is startin' to really bother me! ...anyway, this was a furious attack..." Arnie nodded. "Yes, your idea about being tied to the mast, that's a good possibility. The Monk did not or could not move as he was being attacked."

Arnie had carefully laid the section of ribcage back in the basket, and lifted over the section of mast as he was talking. "Let's look at that piece of the mast we brought up. There wouldn't be any rope left if he was tied to it, but maybe we can find the broken knife point..." Now he removed his diving knife and poked around, looking closely at the cracks and ridges of the ancient wood. In a few moments of digging around, he pulled out a small fragment of metal from between the withered fibers of the shattered, waterlogged mast. "My guess is that this is why the knife in the tub there has a tip missing. The killer cracked the blade plunging it into the mast, and eventually the rest of it fell to the deck. Definitely looks like a deed done in anger. It wouldn't be normal to leave your knife there; it was almost as if the guy wanted to... to leave behind a calling card." Arnie looked up and added, "But in all honesty, this is still mostly guesswork..." Salem, who had just focused in on the fragment of metal and the piece of the mast with his camera, just nodded his head.

"Not really," came Judson's voice, interrupting the divers and surprising himself. "A few days ago, we read a letter from this Monk stating that he feared for his life, and he even mentioned Stepan Selivanov by name. He mentioned that they'd moved the *Saint Stepan* to east beach because of the wind. And we believe it was written just moments before he was... uh, captured. He didn't get to finish the letter, and where it was found, it looked like he suddenly hid it. Right, Brother Toma?" The man nodded, unable to speak at that moment. Judson continued, "It's a miracle that you found the uh... evidence, and you could figure it out, after all these years. I wouldn't have known what all those marks meant, or how to read the knife handle either."

Judson was doing a good job of speaking for all of them. Herman was choking up, and Sandy Ann didn't see the need to say anything, but was nodding vigorously as Judson spoke. Finally, she added, "What you found really fits what the letter said. Dunno what else it could mean but that!" Several heads nodded silently. Then Arnie looked straight at Judson and said, "Maybe the Good Lord doesn't always prevent these things from happening, but it seems He does find a way to bring justice. If we factor in what your letter stated, then I've never had such a clear idea of what happened at a wreck site before!"

"Me neither, boss," added Salem, shaking his head. "That Sell-a-what's his face must have been very angry to have done this. Maybe even crazy. 'Specially if he tied up the Monk, stabbed the mast and then sunk the boat." Mr. Faltrip said wearily, "No, not crazy. He was probably weak, impressionable, and wanting to do

something dramatic to please his boss Teplov, the one who prompted all this madness. Teplov wanted his own private kingdom, and somehow that Monk was in the way. Selivanov just 'took care of it' for him." He raised his fingers in quotes, and sighed. "I'm from New Jersey, and I know there are *still* people like that around."

Then Mr. Faltrip turned toward Herman and said, in a much firmer voice, "Young man, the events of today have vindicated your father. He is proud of you, son. He is proud of all of us." Herman nodded, and blinked away tears. He gave up again and cried, sobbing with his back to the group. No one thought the less of him, and they all let him be alone for a few moments. Eventually, Brother Toma placed an arm around Herman's shoulders. Herman shook for a moment, sighed deeply, took another deep breath, and rejoined the circle. "My Father was right all along, but the story is so... *sad*." Herman lapsed into silence again.

Brother Toma then checked to see if the divers were finished with the photos, asked everyone for quiet, and spread the blanket carefully over the basket containing the scattered collection of bones. He asked Sam Gelsen if everyone would join him on deck. Within moments, Sam and his two helpers joined the others, in a circle around the makeshift shroud. Brother Toma explained, "I would like to say a part of the Trisagion Memorial Prayer for the departed, the long missing and now found Father Zakhar. I say it here only to *begin* the process of laying our departed brother to rest, and only as a believer, not as a Priest. We will make sure that more is done, and that our brother is laid to rest as an honored martyr for the Faith. So I will pray now. Is that all right with everyone?" There were silent nods all around. "This is only part of it, of course, and much delayed. But it gives our brother some of what he was denied in death." At this, all bowed their heads, waiting for Brother Toma to begin. So he prayed:

O God of spirits and of all flesh, Who has trampled down Death and overthrown the Devil, and given life unto Your world, give, we beseech You, eternal rest to the soul of Your departed servant, in a place of brightness, in a place of verdure, in a place of repose, from whence all pain, sorrow, and sighing, have fled away... May our gracious and merciful Lord, who rose from the dead, Christ, our True God, through the intercessions of His Holy Mother and of all the Saints, establish the soul of His departed servant in the mansions of the righteous; give rest in the bosom of Abraham, and number his soul among the just, and have mercy upon us and save us. Eternal be Your memory. Amen.

At the end of the prayer, Brother Toma added, "Today we remember Father Zakhar, whom God has remembered." Judson marveled at the significance of the names that both Father Zakhar and Brother Toma had chosen, and how their lives seemed to bear out the meanings of their names. Judson had just enough experience since coming to the island to believe that those convergences were not mere coincidences. Meanwhile, the crew and the divers on the deck quietly began preparations to return to the dock. Arnie and Brother Toma carefully placed the

bones of the martyr in one of the clean buckets and made sure to immerse them in seawater. Then the Brother put the blanket over the bucket. "...until we can arrange for a proper service and interment..." Brother Toma was saying. Salem checked the other five-gallon buckets they'd brought to be sure that all the items were separated, and covered with clean salt water.

The three kids were slow to react to these preparations, still caught up in the moving, impromptu memorial that Brother Toma had led, and all of them deep in their own thoughts. Herman had a peaceful look on his face, as though something in his soul had been greatly comforted by what he had just witnessed. Judson looked down in surprise to find that he had been holding Sandy Ann's hand since sometime during the prayer. He casually let go; this was not the time to change any subjects, and Sandy Ann seemed to feel the same way. On the way back to the dock, Judson finally turned to Brother Toma, once his own emotions had subsided, and stated, "You did a really good job out there, Fa... er, *Brother Toma*, and I know that Father Zachar was honored by it. So was Herman's dad." Judson did not wait for Brother Toma to respond. Try as he might, Judson could not keep from crying. He stepped to the gunwale and faced the bow, grateful that he could turn his face to the wind and be alone.

Thursday, March 19, 1964: Evening

Brother Toma accompanied the divers and their discoveries back to Kodiak on Thursday evening, promising that he would return after reporting his findings to the Priest in the church there, arranging for a respectful burial for the missing Monk, and getting some of the artifacts to proper scientists, who could study them. Everyone aboard the expedition, even Sandy Ann, agreed to stay quiet about the details, but only to say that the Monk of legend, the missing Father Zakhar, had apparently been found. The village was already abuzz about the solving of the mystery of the Monk who disappeared.

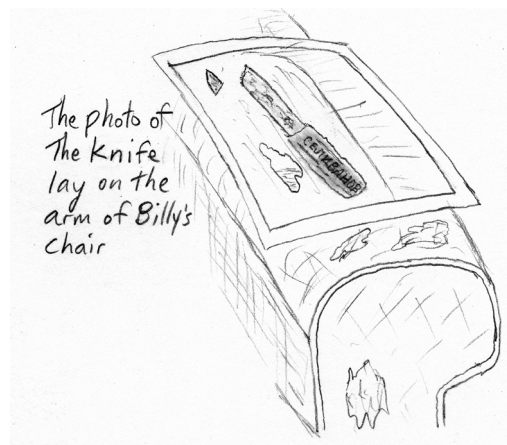
By mutual agreement, no one from the boat said anything to anyone (yet) about the knife or any details of the Monk's death. Everyone understood how volatile the news would be to the small community, and especially to the Selivanoff family. So naturally, there was a lot of speculation about why he would have gone down with the ship, and why the *Saint Stepan* had sunk. Brother Toma had a short conversation with Mr. Hansen and Mr. Faltrip by the mess hall before the *Sally G.* departed, and Judson only heard snatches of their conversation. "...should be someone not related to anyone in the village..." "...no way of knowing how Billy Jr. will react..." "...we'd best go together, then."

Thus, on Friday evening, there was a knock on the door of the Selivanoff home, and Marla jumped up from the front sitting room couch to answer it. There stood Mr. Hansen and Mr. Faltrip, asking for her father. Billy Jr. appeared in the doorway to the kitchen, shooed Marla out of the room, and sat down. He had a can of Lucky Lager in hand, by no means the first one of the day, and had on a thin t-shirt that showed way too much of his ample belly. Mr. Selivanoff was enjoying his off-season

down time. He sat down in a big armchair opposite the couch and waved at it, indicating his guests should sit down, and burped. "Yeah, what's this about?"

Mr. Hansen pulled a Polaroid photo out of his shirt pocket, stared at it for a few seconds, and said, "Mr. Selivanoff, we wanted to tell you what the divers found off east beach yesterday. Please understand that besides the people on the boat who were there, you are the first person to hear this information." If he was concerned, or even interested, he gave no indication, swigging his beer while Mr. Hansen was speaking. Not hearing any response to this, Mr. Hansen continued. "They found the remains of the *Saint Stepan*, they found the missing Monk's remains, and under the body, they also found this."

Mr. Hansen turned the Polaroid photo around and handed it to Billy Jr. The photo showed the knife handle and enough of the etching in the ivory to give him a good idea of the drift of the conversation. He looked at the photo for a long minute, slapped it on the arm of the chair, burped, and said, "If great granddaddy Stepan had anything to do with that old Monk's death, then the bastard probably deserved it. We been tryin' to get folks to leave us the hell alone out here for years. And now look! The white American teacher guy brings the white boxer along to protect him!" Billy Jr. swore, a deep, heartfelt string of semi-connected phrases in two languages involving his visitors' parentage and various body parts.



Mr. Faltrip spoke this time, in slow, even phrases that would have indicated to anyone with a functioning brain cell that he was struggling to keep his composure. "We didn't want you to think that anyone was *blaming* you for what happened to the Monk, Father Zakhar. We want to move on now, and just decide *together* what's best for Sokroshera Cove." Billy Jr. tried unsuccessfully to lower his beer can to the floor, and placed it on a small end table beside him instead. "What's best for... *hell*, you could always leave," said Billy Jr. and laughed. "Still can't get over how this pantywaist white boy has to bring the rich bastard around to protect him. Get the hell out, both of you!"

Owen looked at Jeffrey, who walked over and retrieved the Polaroid photo from the arm of the chair. Then they both stepped calmly toward the door. As they closed it, the men heard Mr. Selivanoff's beer can hit the door and another string of bilingual

curses begin. Then a higher voice rang out from somewhere in the house; the men paused briefly on the steps, unable not to listen in. "For God's sakes, William! The men were just trying to tell you that they didn't blame you or any of our family for all that ancient history, and you're acting like you *really are* guilty! What's the *matter* with you?" Alice's voice was followed by the sound of breaking glass. "Oh, *great*, William, now you've broken my Mom's old vase. That made everything *all* better!" Owen and Jeffrey couldn't delay departing any longer, and stepped out onto the old roadbed.

When they were finally out of earshot, Jeffrey asked, "Do you think he might try something? Is he that stupid?" Owen replied, "That's two separate questions, Jeffrey, unfortunately. And I'm afraid the answer is probably yes to both. His whole identity has been built around his family's badass reputation, and he won't give that up easily." "Just the same," Mr. Hansen declared, "I'm going to try to speak to Alice alone—I want her to know that Marla and everyone else are more than welcome at Judson's party."

Owen looked at Mr. Hansen in amazement. "You're a pretty ballsy guy in your own way, Jeffrey. I almost didn't think we'd get that photo back, and you just grabbed it like nothin' was amiss. I'm afraid both you and I are gonna have to try to be a cushion between that... uh... man and the rest of the village. Once the facts get out—and bless her, I don't know how long young Miss Serafina can keep quiet—I think a few people will want a piece of our friend Billy Jr. But he still has considerable power—and one or two allies who could make some trouble for us." Jeffrey made no response, but Owen knew he was thinking of their options as he was. Neither man could think of any better course of action than what they had just done. Now it had apparently blown up in their faces. Their only consolation was that they'd given Billy Jr. every chance to defuse the situation. The man had decided to escalate it instead.

As the two men passed the backside of the store, heading toward their apartments in the same long superintendent's duplex, Mr. Faltrip held up his hand and the two paused. "I saw a light on in the old net building, above where I park the fire truck." "I'll bet I can explain," said Jeffrey. "Herman asked for Jud to teach him some self-defense moves, and since neither one of us can picture Herman picking on someone, I said yes. I think they use that top room as their little gym. They've been at it every afternoon for a few days now." Mr. Faltrip nodded while scrunching up his lower lip; he approved. Finally, he said, "Good kids, those two. They get along like brothers, you know," and looked at Mr. Hansen for a long moment, with an expression that the teacher couldn't quite decipher. This time it was Jeffrey's turn to nod without speaking.

Friday, March 20, 1964: The mess hall schoolroom

On Friday morning, Alice Selivanoff brought all four of her kids personally to school (she usually let Marla do the honors) as though they might find trouble on the way. Marla followed, with Ward beside her. Alice stepped out to leave as Mr. Hansen greeted her, but he put his hand on her arm and asked her to wait for a moment.

Judson just heard his father say, "...so important that you come... we really want you there... Judson would be disappointed..." But Marla, stomping past, obviously upset, and Ward, sporting a glare not seen in his eyes for months, diverted Judson's attention. Not taking it well, I see. Judson went up to Marla and asked for a word. He called Herman, Ward, and Sandy Ann over as well; Rinny followed, dying of curiosity. Sometimes that girl still enjoys *waaay* too much controversy, thought Judson, before banishing that thought. He realized that now was not the time to step on anybody's toes.

The elder students had all collected at the end of one of the long tables, and Judson began. "I am having a great party tomorrow night, and I really want all of you to be there. None of us did *anything* in the 1830s, and I don't give a damn about any of it if it makes you feel unwelcome." He added, rather awkwardly, "Marla." Sandy Ann said her piece by running up and giving Marla a rather unbalanced hug, and Ward stepped forward to stabilize the two. Rinny said, "I think I'm living in a Soap Opera town now!" Little Jake had snuck into the circle. "It's like our town had famous pirates, haw?" "You're walking the plank, you little nosy bilge rat, and I'm gonna..." Herman and Judson's spontaneous dive between her and her brother barely subdued Sandy Ann.

"Aw, he's probably right," said Herman, turning to Marla. "Anyway, Marla, if you don't show up... with Ward, of course, I'll just have to come drag you over to the party." "So will I," said Rinny, flashing Herman a little smile. Poor man doesn't stand a chance, thought Judson as his friend developed an instant case of sunburn. Marla finally said something, as though a switch had just been thrown in her brain. "I am starting to realize that I'm not my parents, and I'll be *damned* if anything is going to keep me from your party. It will be the coolest party ever!" She went on to tell Judson that she and Ward would be bringing her records over that afternoon. In spite of all the bad publicity, she had regained a lot of her Beatles bounce. Judson took a moment to pound Ward on the back. "D' ya dance, old man?" He shook his head, his sullen expression replaced by a look of genuine terror. "You're gonna have to dance, you know," said Judson, and glanced at the suddenly ecstatic Marla. Ooh, this will be fun, thought Judson.

After all of the students struggled through their lessons that afternoon, Mr. Hansen finally dismissed them to go home. The older kids, who knew what the divers had found and really understood what it meant, seemed to be trying desperately to focus on anything else. It was a godsend that Judson just happened to have a birthday and a good phonograph to provide some diversion. Before he left, Judson heard his father call after him, "Be sure to drop by the store before you head home, Jud." Interesting... something's definitely going on, and I hope it's something good this time, he thought as he skipped the few paces from the mess hall to the store.

It was something good this time. Laura Rezoff pulled a package out from behind the counter: Grandma's return address and the unmistakable twelve-by-twelve shape of a record box. Wonder what she sent me this time? But Laura wasn't finished. She had an enigmatic look on her face, which Judson had actually seen before when Laura was trying not to laugh, cry, or get angry. "Mr. Faltrip says you'd find out as

soon as you got home, so he wanted you to have this.” She handed Judson a roll of nickels, and could no longer suppress a giggle. Judson still didn’t get it, didn’t say much, and headed home with his package and the heavy nickels to try to sort it all out. When he walked in the front door, he found the bookshelf, where Sandy Ann had once placed the holy picture, had been replaced with... Mr. Faltrip’s old jukebox! Now he understood why the Truck Brothers had been seen during recess driving the Power Wagon slowly down the dirt road past the store with a mysterious, tarp-covered lump in the back. The nickels would give everyone a lot of good tunes tomorrow night!

His attention returned to his grandma’s box. In a flash, he had slit the tape and opened the folds, revealing four records. *Swingin’ High*, Francis Bay’s tribute to Count Basie, and *Latin Beat*, his take on Perez Prado, in stereo. Judson knew by now not to be put off by the discount sticker. This would be good Swing and good stereo. But he had almost too much of the stuff, thanks to Bertram’s Drug and Discount. He decided to try a cut off *Latin Beat* called “Mambo Jambo,” and it almost shocked him that the knockoff Belgian band could play Latin with such energy. The next disc was *Gold Vault of Hits* by the Four Seasons, in mono... well, that might be ok, but most of their songs gave him a headache. Then the last one put young Judson into shock: where in the world, how could Grandma know about *them*? In his hands, he held *Introducing...The Beatles* on Vee Jay records, in stereo. “I bought this at Albert’s Hi Fi and TV when the salesman told me you’d probably like it. He said it’s hard to find in stereo,” said a note taped to the shrink-wrap, in Grandma’s handwriting.

He was still digesting the mental picture of his grandmother walking out of the store with that record when Ward walked in, followed by Marla. She had an “O. Kraft and Sons” shopping bag, which she nearly dropped when she read the title of the album in Judson’s outstretched hands. The twins probably had to cover their ears and say “Hurts, Marla!” again from ‘way cross town, because Marla let out a bloodcurdling scream, and it took a few moments for her to settle back down. Judson and Ward just looked at each other and shrugged. Judson believed that Marla was possibly the most avid Beatles enthusiast in the entire State of Alaska!

When she finally did settle, she had tears in her eyes. “I knew this the day we were here after... after the fire. Jay-Jay, you have made this town special for all of us. You even went out of the way to make me feel better after the... Monk... after you found the Monk. Thank you!” With that, she rushed Judson and gave him a bear hug. He waved Ward in to join them; no need to complicate things. Ward gave Judson a hearty pound on the back. When Marla disengaged, she was back in Beatles mode. She looked at Judson, eyes shining, ready to start jumping again. “Could we... listen?”

Saturday Morning, March 21, 1964: Sokroshera Island

At about nine in the morning on Saturday, Judson and Jeffrey were roused from their rather leisurely breakfast cleanup duties by the sound of the big Dodge Power Wagon roaring up the driveway. On the porch, they saw that Jakob Pedersen was

towing a trailer with a portable generator on it. He hopped out and sprinted up the steps. "I thought today would be a good day to grind open the door to the cistern. So... I borrowed the little light plant and the grinder from Mr. Faltrip. Your dad said you were very interested, and oh, by the way, happy birthday!" Strange gifts I've been getting: rolls of nickels, a chance to grind open a door—what next, a ride in a balloon? My very own kangaroo? Judson smiled, thanked Jakob and then both Hansens piled in.

At the other side of the bridge, down where the road branched off toward east beach and the fort, the truck stopped for Herman, Sandy Ann, and Danny. Soon they were winding their way up the road to the cliff face fortress. Sharing the ride in the bed of the truck was Jake's chainsaw. A large, long, red object with a handle at one end and a thick gray wheel at right angles to its body was undoubtedly the grinder the elder Jake was referring to. "Milwaukee" was embossed on the side of its metal body. Danny pointed out the chainsaw and laughed, "We had that little windstorm a couple of weeks ago, and you never know when one of those trees will decide it's time to cross the road!"

They found no trees in the way, and made it all the way up to the cliff face. There, the Truck Brothers unhooked the power plant, and it took all three adults to wheel it down the hall into position outside the inner foyer that led to the cistern door. "This looks close enough... it's gonna be loud enough in here anyway once I get the grinder going," said Jakob, handing each person a pair of cotton balls. "This might help." As she was putting hers in her ears, Sandy Ann let out a little off-key whistle of "Happy Birthday to You." Judson poked her in the ribs and said thanks.

The Onan diesel powered generator started with a roar, and besides being amplified by the concrete walls, it soon filled the outer hallway with a haze of diesel smoke. They could have found more extension cords and put the big generator outside, but Jakob was worried about how much current that grinder would draw, and got as close as he could. The generator fumes reminded Judson of being stuck in traffic behind a city bus in Phoenix, and he noticed that they even smelled the same.

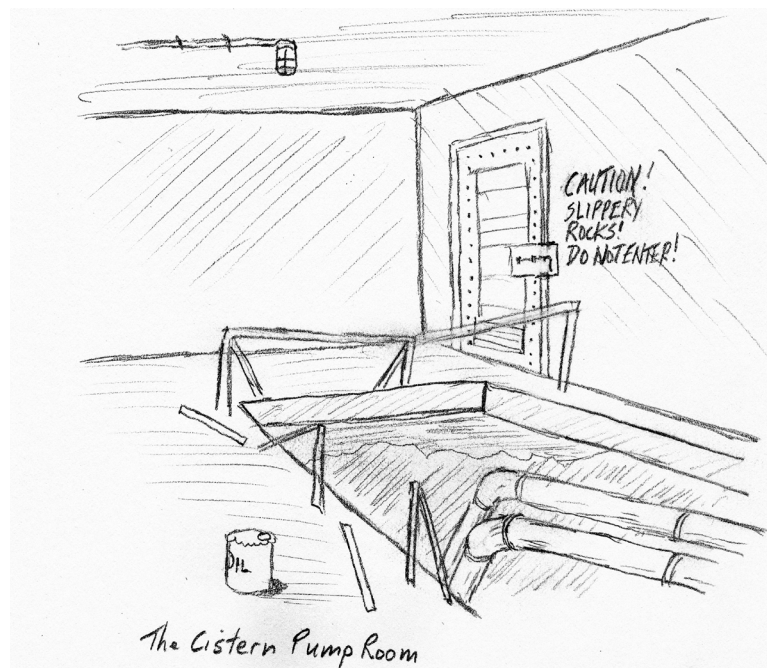
Jakob Pedersen hurried to his task, and the cords he had brought reached the welded door with plenty to spare. He hooked up two tripods with big searchlights on them, and switched on the lights. There was an incredible glare, but the lights also made the shadows darker somehow. The kids, cotton and all, soon tired of standing in the smoky, deafening hallway, but it was exciting to watch the grinder remove the welds one by one, accompanied by an amazing shower of sparks. All three kids took turns holding flashlights for the three men whenever their own shadow obscured their work. The men each took turns using the heavy, cumbersome grinder; the vibration was brutal on the hands for any length of time.

Jakob was the one grinding on the welds when suddenly, finally, he shut off the grinder, raised his hand, and said, "Everybody here? Time to open 'er up!" He grabbed a can of WD-40 and liberally sprayed the hinges opposite the welds. Judson already knew that the little blue and yellow spray cans were used just about everywhere machinery was in use in Sokroshera Cove, and Herman remarked that

his dad Will had called the can his "right hand man." Jake and Danny hefted the handle of the blast door, and it turned. With a little "elbow grease," they got the door to budge, with a pronounced squeak of metallic protest. A couple more hefts and it was open enough to step through.

"Me first," said Danny, more out of safety concerns than curiosity. "It's ok," said a hollow voice, "Come on in, but stay in this corner." They all crowded into a room about the size of the guard shack somewhere in the hill above them. A large platform featuring two rusting electric water pumps was nearby to the right, and directly in front of the pumps, with metal pipes still emerging from it, was a large open square in the concrete floor. A rickety-looking railing made of leftover two-by-fours surrounded the open hole. It showed the location of the hole, but it wouldn't have kept anyone from falling in. Herman pointed that out, and Judson shuddered.

They all shone their flashlights down the hole at once. "Look at how clear the water is," marveled Sandy Ann, glad that something, finally, was not about machinery, metal, or noise. The cistern was about ten or twelve feet across, and nearly as deep at its deepest point, with crystal-clear water revealing the intake pipes slowly rusting near the bottom. Danny swung his flashlight up to the wall on the other side of the concrete opening, revealing yet another blast door, welded shut as the first one had been. There on the wall was another warning in what Judson immediately recognized as Mr. Faltrip's angular block printing: "Caution! Slippery Rocks! Do Not Enter!" "Wonder if he wrote that when he was pissed at hurting his shoulder in there?" asked Herman, not quite disguising the disappointment in his voice. Jakob looked at his brother, who nodded and left the pump room. Soon quiet returned to the concrete hallways in the hillside as Danny shut down the Onan generator. He rejoined them as they exited the bunker and headed for the truck.



"Well, my young friends, we'll have to leave this as is for now," said Jake Pedersen. The prospect of delay left all three groaning, but Jakob *had* said "for now." He continued, "I doubt if we'll need this... I'm just gonna leave this generator and the grinder up here until maybe next Saturday, when we'll have another play date!" Sandy Ann clapped her hands and Herman shook Jakob's hand, thanking him. Danny and the elder Jake could both figure out how anxious the kids were to go in further, but the kids had no doubt that Jakob would be true to his word as soon as he could. "Ok, Uncle Jake, but I am *not* good at waiting," said Sandy Ann. Jeffrey Hansen also thanked Jakob and Danny for making this possible, and sounding only a tiny bit more mature than the kids, said, "Well, it is a bit disappointing to have one more layer in this mystery. And we were on such a roll, too!"

"Yeah, but at least we've got a party to go to tonight!" said Danny. "Mind if Gail and I come and chaperone?" Mr. Hansen just let out a snort. "To chaperone, or to *be* chaperoned, eh?" Herman had a sudden grin on his face, which evaporated once he saw Judson had noticed. The presence of Gail practically guaranteed that Rinny would be coming to the party. "I'll bet you're no more into dancing than ol' Ward is," laughed Judson, and Herman's look of distress provided the answer.

Saturday evening, March 21: the party

When Judson and his dad returned to the superintendent's house, they saw the Lindseth's jeep parked up the driveway. Curious, they climbed the steps, and didn't see Sandy Ann elbowing Herman behind them. As Judson stepped inside, there was a sudden shout, and little Jake and Barbara led the call of "Surprise!" From somewhere, someone had found crepe paper rolls in cannery blue and gold, and had made those pretty, braided streamers, which stretched from corner to corner in the living room of the superintendent's house. A large piece of butcher paper from the roll used on the school's "blackboard" easel had been stuck to the wall opposite the door with thumbtacks. In large black letters it said, "Happy Birthday, Your Teenagerness!" Judson guessed correctly that it was Betty Lindseth's work. But he nearly cried when he saw the top and bottom of the poster: seagulls flying over the cove, all carefully colored in. Barbara.

Judson thanked Barbara first, who gave him a little hug, and then he looked around for Mrs. Lindseth. She emerged at about this time with Gail, who said with a laugh, "My 'let's get married' perok just got put in the oven," referencing Judson's pretend proposal to her after he ate her perok at the Thanksgiving Day potluck. Then she gave Judson a little wink, and he saw again an older and wiser Rinny. Speaking of which: Rinny emerged from the kellydoor with another three sections of braided crepe paper streamers. She smiled shyly, and proceeded to hang them over the doors to the bedrooms and the restroom, using one of the kitchen chairs. "I'm tired of folding these things."

Rinny looked at Herman, waiting for his appraisal of her decorations. She looked around from her perch on the chair, and remarked casually, "At least they look really nice when they're up here." Herman stood by her chair, looked up at her and

said, "Yes, and so do you!" Herman and Rinny both got a little pink around the edges. Enough with the blushing, thought Judson. "Great, you look *up* to her now!" Judson joked, attempting to change the subject, and finally stepped out onto the long porch for a breath of fresh air. Herman is actually developing some moves, he thought. He was relieved when he felt Sandy Ann at his elbow. "Now you know why I came along to the cistern today," she explained. "Well, first, I'm part of the 'Sokroshera Cove Secrets Discovery Team,' but also, if I'd stayed behind, you would have gotten suspicious. I was part of the *plan*!" Judson would have missed her, to be sure. He wondered how many people were in on the planning and negotiations for this little surprise. And all this time they could have been home watching television—that's if they were in a far less interesting place, maybe, acknowledged Judson.

He decided to talk about what had driven him out onto the porch. "Sandy Ann, uh... have you noticed that Herman and Rinny are getting... *close*? He is doing a lot *better* than I thought he would." Sandy Ann nodded, and added, "And Rinny seems to like him, instead 'a bein' just an ol' flirt. Of course," at this she paused, looked at Judson with a strange fire in her eyes, "...uh, of course, I'm pretty sure they haven't had a Sleeping Beauty moment like we have!" At this, she turned fiery red as if on cue and Judson promptly gave her a sideways hug, partly to hide his own burning face. "We teenagers gotta behave ourselves, now!" he said, using his teacher voice. She giggled, and they both looked away.

Within a few minutes, Betty announced that dinner was served. The two Jakes and Danny arrived followed by Howie Lindseth, and soon after, Mr. Faltrip and Laura Rezoff trudged up the steps. Everyone found a place to sit somehow, by collecting Blazo boxes from the kellydoor and bringing every kitchen chair into the living room. The room lapsed almost into silence as the lot of them enjoyed the fabulous *perok*. As the plates began to empty, Gail endured another blazing barrage of compliments, but Danny just gave her a big kiss. Rinny stuck an elbow in Herman's ribs at this, but he just frowned and looked down at his plate, not ready for that yet. Judson could see her brain working, filing away another way to tease Herman. Not ready for that yet either, whatever it might turn out to be!

After dinner, Judson and Herman moved his stereo out onto the end table opposite the front door, under the poster Mrs. Lindseth had made. He reached into a pocket in the lid of the turntable and pulled out the note from Will Rezoff. He showed it to Herman, who just nodded and then read it a couple more times before handing it back. "He is very missed," said Judson. Herman nodded again but looked away, and Judson knew to move on. He selected some records from his stash to use later at the dance. He played one of his dad's favorites from the Connie Francis LP to test out the system in the room. "My Heart Has a Mind of Its Own" filled the room quite nicely. Judson was surprised to hear Laura's sweet alto voice joining in from the kitchen.

Judson was reluctant to start the dance without Marla, and was afraid she wasn't coming after all. And Mr. Faltrip had apparently gone back to his apartment. Judson was a little disappointed at that, too. Had he stayed for dinner? Judson had been

distracted, and he wasn't sure. Then they all heard the pounding of feet on the outside steps, and in walked Anya, Alice, April, Eagle, Ward and Marla. "I left the twins and Alexander at home, so I gotta get back," said Alice, and gave her daughter a little hug. Judson looked up and saw Mr. Faltrip standing by his elbow. "I came over when I heard Connie," he said. So how much of their goings-on can he hear through those walls, wondered Judson, but he just asked, "When did you leave, sir? I was afraid you were gonna miss my party!" By way of an answer, Mr. Faltrip fished around in his pocket and said, "I've got a nickel, and I know you do, too. Let's get this show on the road!" Mr. Faltrip walked over to the jukebox, flipped the switch, popped in a nickel, and said automatically in his 'disc jockey' voice, "This is 'Let's Dance,' by Benny Goodman." As the music pumped out into the room, Judson heard a thumping sound not quite in synch, and looked behind him to see Eagle, April and little Jake hopping around more or less together, and more or less 'to' the music. That's elementary school dancing, all right, thought Judson.

Marla bent over and said something over the music. Judson didn't quite hear, but he guessed. He went to the bedroom and retrieved her shopping bag. She pulled out a stack of 45s, and selected two or three to start. He went to his stereo, slipped an adapter over the turntable's spindle, and put on "I Want to Hold Your Hand." And the crowd went wild. Well, not exactly. Marla had dragged Ward out to the middle of the room, and was trying to get him to dance, without much luck. Judson, just for grins, grabbed Sandy Ann and did an only slightly more organized version of April and little Jake's moves. The song ended before anyone figured out what to do.

Judson had an idea: he switched to "long play" speed and put on his new Beatles record, choosing "Twist and Shout." This was a lot more successful, because Marla seemed to know how to do the Twist, and he had been required to learn it because of a deranged P.E. teacher last year. So he and Marla did a respectable job of cutting a rug until several other couples joined them. He looked up to see little Jake and big sis Sandy Ann doing an imitative approximation, and Rinny had finally managed to grab Herman, but only as the song ended. Herman looked enormously relieved. Marla was fumbling through her bag of records. "Where is it? Darn, I left 'She Loves You' on my record player at home. Guess we'll be ok without it."

Judson noticed his dad leaning over and asking something in Laura's ear, and she looked surprised and then nodded vigorously, a big smile on her face. Mr. Hansen seemed pleased; he borrowed a nickel from Judson's pile and put it in the jukebox. "Take the 'A' Train" by Duke Ellington filled the room. Jeffrey took Laura by the hand and within moments, the two were a blur in the middle of the living room. If there had been any side conversations, they went away real quick. Herman, eyeing his mom, said, "My Dad didn't really like to dance." "Well, my Mom didn't like to dance either," replied Judson. They looked at each other with an expression that said, "Who knew?" Jeffrey and Laura were a wonder to behold. Barbara, standing between and below the boys, just stood mesmerized by the whole spectacle.

When the song ended, quick as a flash, Owen had plugged a nickel into the machine and fired up "Sleepy Lagoon," with an intent look on his face. Sandy Ann,

halfway across the room where she and little Jake had ended up, caught Judson's attention and pointed insistently at Laura and Jeffrey, a look of wonder in her eyes. Both she and Judson finally realized what these songs were *for*. Thanks to Mr. Faltrip, they'd heard these tunes many times, but now they truly experienced them as if for the first time, as Laura and Jeffrey danced. At every cue in the music, the couple glided and swooped and spun. Judson remembered his dad's skating moves on the lake and was less surprised at him this time. Mr. Faltrip was not watching the dancers. He was looking at the cluster of kids on the far side of the room, watching the watchers. Owen stared at the mesmerized Judson, Herman, and Barbara with enigmatic intensity, as though something in his brain were about to explode.

At the end of the song, Jeffrey ended the dance by giving Laura a fine dip, and froze there for a second. There was a loud round of applause. Rinny, at Herman's other side, still had her jaw open. Little Barbara emerged from between Judson and Herman, walked calmly up to Jeffrey and Laura, and ordered, "*Gorka*, Mr. Hansen. *Gorka*, Mommy." Laura smiled, her face slightly flushed. Jeffrey Hansen just froze, puzzled at young Barbara's enigmatic command. "Allow me to demonstrate, Mr. Hansen. This is what we mean by *gorka*!" Danny grabbed Gail, who giggled but complied, and planted a big kiss on her, to the accompaniment of "*Oooh*!" from old and young alike. Apparently "*Oooh*!" implied surprise and approval, but "*Ummm*!" still meant shock and disapproval. So everyone approves? Interesting. But good!

Barbara still had her eyes glued on Mr. Hansen, her face almost a frown. Do your job big guy, she seemed to be saying. "How about another dip, Laura?" With that, he dipped her and kissed her as smoothly as any movie heartthrob. Barbara was clapping. "But why are they doing *that* now? They aren't getting ma...", said little Jake, until Sandy Ann's hand clamped over his mouth and her other index finger went to her lips. He managed to comply. There was appreciative applause, and Laura managed a little curtsy. Jeffrey took a split-second cue from her and bowed. Barbara walked across to Judson and said, "Your daddy likes my Mommy." Judson and Herman did another nearly wordless dialog. "Ok by me," said Herman. "Uh... Likewise," said Judson, unable to muster any further words.

Mr. Faltrip walked over to Judson and said firmly, "Put on one of those Beatles songs, ok?" Judson selected the flip side of Marla's Capitol Records single "I Want to Hold Your Hand," a song he actually liked better, called "I Saw Her Standing There." Seems like half the folks in the room could suddenly relate to the words stating, "Now I'll never dance with another!" Judson looked out on the floor and saw Jakob Pedersen and Anya doing a respectable job keeping time to that one. He edged over to Marla, and asked her to change the next song, and she nodded, a big grin on her face. Moments later, she and Ward were attempting some form of synchronous something as Ward tried desperately not to step on anyone, least of all Marla.

Judson made a beeline to the kitchen. Mr. Faltrip had corralled Laura and Jeffrey, and Judson just had to listen in. Over the general din he heard clearly, "...don't make the mistake I did. If this is *at all* the way you feel, don't let *her* go! Don't let

him go!" Owen's voice was surprisingly forceful, and his face reminded Judson of the day he had explained his secret role in Will Rezoff's life. Laura made some kind of objection, which Judson could not hear. Owen shook his head, and then looked intently from one to the other. "Don't give a damn about that! Believe me, your husband..." (to Laura) "...and your wife..." (to Jeffrey) "...both know they can *never* be here again. And they couldn't have done a better job of selecting their replacements, not if they were standing on the front porch with a checklist. That's my two cents, anyway!" Mr. Hansen seemed about to say something. The record had just ended. Suddenly two loud blasts came from outside and two windows at the far end of the living room shattered. Gunshots!

Marla came tearing through the kitchen, followed by Ward. "Where's the kellydoor? I'm gonna circle around..." before anyone could stop her, she had flown down the back steps and was racing around to the front. It was deathly quiet in the living room. Suddenly they heard Marla's voice, as piercing as any of her screams, and in between could make out Ward's voice pleading with her to come back out of harm's way. "*Dammit*, I just knew that was you, Daddy. You could 'a killed someone. What's the matter with you? Is this gonna help any of those good people like us *any* better? What the *hell*, dad! You're such a hero when you've hit the bottle. Now get your ass home before they haul the State Troopers out here to take you away."

Now Marla was talking slowly and deliberately, as if she were scolding a child who was having trouble paying attention. "And Marty, is that you? Been sharing some of your famous *mukoola* with Dad? Mebbe you need to come inside and sing a few more Church songs so you won't hang out with people that seem to hate everybody. *Thanks*, thanks *so much*, Dad, for ruining our party!" She was finally finished, and her dad mumbled something about just trying to hit Faltrip's windows, and trying to get rid of all the outsiders who were messing up everyone's lives. She responded with a string of bilingual curses as creative as anything her father had come up with, until they were gone. Ward, guiding her with his arm around her, brought her back inside.

Marla used the front door this time, entering with clenched fists. But she went up to Judson, shuddered, and suddenly began to cry. "Mom says it's wrong to talk like that to your parents, but I... I just couldn't help it. They could 'a killed somebody." Judson gave her as big a hug as he could and thanked her for having all those guts. When she raised her head, she was collected and resolute. Authoritative women do *not* get crossed with impunity. "We need to dance a little more, everyone," she said. The flying glass had somehow not hit Betty and Gail, who had moved from the kitchen toward the far wall of the living room to watch the dancing. They'd rushed to the kellydoor soon after Marla ran out, grabbed broom and dustpan, and had already swept up the mess when Marla returned. Except for minor wall damage and two broken panes, nothing else had been hurt. Given the shooters' condition, that was a minor miracle.

Marla walked up to Jeffrey and Laura and said, a bit intensely, "Could you please dance a little more for us? We need to *change* the *damn* subject!" They looked at each other and decided to go ahead. Laura suggested a "Lindy Hop" tune, and the

couple did spectacularly well. How did they remember all those moves? Then they ended with Owen's choice: a romantic ballad from a Crosby movie, but sung by Frank Sinatra with Tommy Dorsey, "Be Careful, It's My Heart." It was a foxtrot that looked like a waltz, with the couple dancing very close to each other. At the end, when he dipped her again, everyone felt free to say "Oooh!" Their dance ended with a tiny little smooch. Little Jake, having finally broken free from Sandy Ann's clutches, practically made them do it.

With the mood successfully changed back to reasonably festive, Betty and Gail brought a nice big sheet cake out from where it had been hiding on the chest freezer in the kellydoor. Thirteen candles were lit and flickering, made even more dramatic when the elder Jake found the light switches. Judson, thinking of two people in particular, knew exactly what to wish for. *Poof!* One breath. Good.

Suddenly Judson took a quick look around and didn't see Marla or Ward or Mr. Faltrip, or the younger Bazaroffs either. Had they left already? Marla's bag of records was still beside the table where the stereo was set up, so she's probably around somewhere. But he had a piece of cake to eat, and people talking in his ear, and it passed out of his mind. He took a seat at the big kitchen table and started in on what proved to be very good cake. The adults also sort of congregated around the table once the music ended. Released from the task of trying to dance, most everyone felt more comfortable just hanging out in the kitchen anyway.

Mrs. Lindseth cornered Jeffrey and Laura after they got their cake, by bringing them her famous coffee. "So, you two have secrets we didn't know about!" She looked at them expectantly, and Judson suddenly recognized Sandy Ann's famous "You gotta answer this question *now!*" expression. Laura caught that Betty was referring to their dancing exhibition, not Mr. Faltrip's admonitions. Betty had not overheard Owen's little speech, being on the opposite side of the living room. "Well," Laura began, "I took a lot of dance classes in Oregon at the BIA school because they let it work as a substitute for regular athletics and sports, which I never really liked. I got so good at it, or so they *said*, that they asked me to join the dance team and compete. I did pretty well." Judson remembered seeing a little gold trophy up on a shelf. He had thought it was for bowling or something. "But... when I married Will, I married an artist with a socket wrench, not a dancer. I don't think he ever knew how much I missed it. I didn't either, until tonight." She glanced at Jeffrey Hansen with a shy smile. Until he saw her dance, Judson had not really realized that Laura was an attractive and graceful woman as well as one of the sweetest and kindest. It wasn't a thought he wanted to dwell on. But he realized that maybe he was finally seeing Laura through his father's eyes. He thought of his birthday wish, and again agreed with it.

"Mommy you look beautiful when you dance," said Barbara. "Yes, indeed she does!" said Mr. Hansen, and quickly launched into his own story. "Well, I learned to dance because my Mom made me, at least at first. I think I mouthed off to her one too many times in front of my friends, so she gave me something to do that would really give me grief, and enrolled me in *dance* class." He shook his head, and looked at Judson, who nodded in agreement at his Dad's assessment of Grandma.

Judson, who knew his grandma well, felt the same awe. When she had a mind to do something, that thing would be done. She'd make a good village-style authoritative woman, Judson realized. His dad continued, "When I got into hockey, and made it to my school's team, I found out all those fancy moves, that *I* thought made me look like a sissy, had turned me into a pretty smooth player on our team. They started calling me 'Jeffrey the Jet' and 'Jet Hansen.' One of my lady teachers called me 'Jet Handsome' and I could have died, but I guess I didn't." Mr. Hansen laughed a real, genuine, comfortable laugh that Judson hadn't heard for years before they came here. "Of course, she *did* need glasses!" added Jeffrey. One of Dad's endearing traits, knowing just when not to take himself seriously, thought Judson.

There was a small noise across the table; at the elder Hansen's mention of 'handsome,' Sandy Ann was choking and trying very hard not to look at Judson. Thankfully, nobody noticed but the two of them. Jeffrey Hansen's voice softened now, "Then, as fate would have it, I fell for someone, to paraphrase Laura, who danced with words, with friendships, with her heart—and that was more than enough." There was a sigh around the table at this indication of how deeply Jeffrey had loved his Kayah. Little Jake, standing behind his mom, said, "Awww," quietly, but wasn't being silly this time. Jeffrey concluded with a quick smile at Laura, "But let me tell you, it sure felt good to dance again tonight."

Danny stared at Gail and stated calmly, "Well, they say you never forget how." Gail punched him in the ribs, but no one else saw or reacted. Judson was getting tired of always being the one who noticed things. Jeffrey Hansen turned toward Laura Rezoff and said, "I'd really love to dance with you again sometime!" "Oh, I think that can be arranged," she said with a smile, adding, "We seem to have an appreciative audience!" Interesting how Judson, Herman, and Barbara were the ones nodding the most at this.

Just then, they heard someone pounding up the back steps, and Mr. Faltrip walked in from the kellydoor. He was cradling two rifles. "I walked Marla and Ward and his family home, and Alice was standing on the front porch with Billy Jr.'s rifle. She told Billy Jr. to give it to her or she would give him an operation right there, except that's not how she phrased it." Owen gave one of his snorts. "I wished everyone a good night." He sighed, still exasperated by the whole episode. "And then I thought it would be an excellent idea to go get Marty's rifle, too. When he saw me carrying Billy's gun, he became *extremely* motivated to give me his. Interesting how that works. I wish they'd buy a little less liquid refreshments and a lot more common sense!"

Jakob cut in, "Oh, I'm afraid they used up their supplies from town already, and had dipped into Marty's *mukoola*. That's the devil's own brew and Marty's *waaay* too good at makin' it!" Anya nodded, "*Ah-Hookh!* We got personal experience!" This was followed by a little shudder; she was not bragging as she might once have done. Danny was just shaking his head and pointing at the two guns. "So the former door mat of a woman takes a rifle from a drunk bully with no sense and lives to tell about it! I'd love to have *seen* that! And then you 'bid them good night,' as you say, and I would have loved to have *heard* that. And then you scare the

pants off Marty Pankoff just by carrying his master's gun and coming from Billy Jr.'s house. I bet he thought you'd just plugged 'im! And I would've loved to've seen *and* heard that! I'm missing everything!" He turned to Owen and said a little softer, "You got some... er... *guts* for what you did tonight, and I hope everyone appreciates it."

Then he turned toward Gail and said, "Your sister is turning out to be one of the great souls of the village, but your brother is slipping pretty badly right now." Gail shook her head and spread her hands in exasperation. "I don't know what to do. At Christmas when he joined in the starring, well, I had hopes he had developed a backbone. He was doing alright then, but he has to keep choosing right every day, or boneheaded things like this'll happen, and I don't see much hope until he gets out from under Billy Jr.'s thumb."

The week of March 23, 1964: at school and in the village

On March 24, when he learned that the cannery's shipment had arrived safely in Seattle for distribution, Owen Faltrip went to Kodiak and boarded a Pacific Northern Airlines *Constellation* for a journey Stateside. He headed off to Louisiana to meet with his investors and to discuss a proposal with them. The townspeople, no longer grouching at the "rich cannery man" after getting a lot of his money, admitted that he "deserved a good vacation." Thus, Owen was in the village for a couple of small events, and for one major development, but would be absent for two of the most dramatic events in the island's long history.

Like usual, before he left, Owen Faltrip did not spend any time telling people about his business. But he did tell Laura, who told the Hansens. A couple of days after Owen's departure, Laura and Judson were talking in the store. "You're gonna notice a difference pretty soon," said Laura, with a good deal of amazement. "Owen keeps a low profile, but he has his way of influencing almost everything." She cleared her throat dramatically. "And when he's not here, you're left with a bunch of old gossips like me!" Judson politely tried to disagree, but before he could get much out, Billy Selivanoff, Jr. came in. Judson decided that he would do some serious looking down one of the side aisles, where he could hear, but not really be seen. Billy Jr. was true to form, and his tone was accusing, intimidating. "*Mrs. Rezoff*, I understand you've taken to dancing and carrying on with outsiders in front of the children." Suddenly he's concerned about propriety, marriage vows, and children?

Laura would have none of it. "Mr. Selivanoff, I hear *you've* taken to shooting at buildings where your son, and daughter, and niece, and sister-in-law are having a party..." she was counting these things on her fingers as she spoke, her hand close to Billy's face. "And, as far as being an outsider, remember when I first moved here, and you kept calling *me* an outsider? This place never will be your own private kingdom, so you'd best learn to get along with the rest of us." Billy Jr. laughed. "Well, without your boxer protector around, who is going to stand up for a *slut* like you, dancing and carrying on with the first *white* guy who comes to town?" "I will," said Judson, walking out from behind a shelf of goods, his anger instantly kindled. "Sir, if you had any sense at all, any *decency*, you would be apologizing to

me, to your daughter, and to this wonderful lady here." Judson was red in the face, and he knew it. And it took every atom of his self-control to avoid flying at Mr. Selivanoff in a rage. He wouldn't really have cared what happened to him as a result.

Laura looked sternly at Judson and waved him out of Mr. Selivanoff's reach. Laura spoke softly now, but with deadly earnestness. "Do you know what a laughingstock you've made of yourself? *Your* ancestor stuck a knife in a Monk once, and you've been turning that knife in the soul of this village ever since. Billy! Come to your senses before your family and neighbors get *seriously hurt!*" He threw the items he had planned to buy down on the counter and stalked out of the store, slamming the door behind him. But not before he had managed to call Laura a slut again, and the Hansens "white devils," and reached into his bilingual lexicon for every other swear word he could think up.

Laura put her head on the counter and cried for a few moments, but when she lifted her head, she had stopped. "Thank you for standing up for me, young man, but don't ever do that again, at least with him. He's just too dangerous. I'm afraid he's capable of just about anything." Judson started to argue with something Billy Jr. had said, but Laura put her hand up. "Oh, don't *bother*. He sucks you into his whirlpool that way. Of *course* what he said isn't true; that's probably why he said it. If he ever took a good look in the mirror, he'd pass away from the shock at what he's become."

Judson responded, "But wasn't he accusing you of things *he's* done?" Laura's face registered the futility of arguing with such a man. "Don't expect reason and logic to work on someone like Billy Jr.," said Laura, with an air of resignation. Judson had calmed down a bit, and finally wondered aloud, "I wonder if there's anything that would change his... uh, way of looking at things?" Laura had no answer. He patted her arm, still enraged deep inside at the sight of this kind and caring person, reduced to tears by such a hurtful, hellish man.

Judson decided to change the subject; he had to ask Laura about that word he had heard several times lately. "Laura, what's *mock-muck*...what's the thing Marty makes?" "Oh, you mean *mukoola*," said Laura. "Well, it's hooch, white lightnin', moonshine, whatever it's called wherever people like Marty have too little alcohol and too much time." Laura made what almost passed for Sandy Ann's patented Vomit Face. "Marty gets yeast and sugar and whatever's on hand, raisins, lentils, rice, whatever – I don't wanna know – and makes his own home brew alcohol. And Marty is unusual. He learned how to build a still from an old Army buddy, and distilling makes it even stronger. I have no idea how potent it is officially, but you can see how brilliant it made those two," she grimaced a bit in reference to the shooting heroes of Judson's dance party. "You'd have to be pretty desperately intent on leaving your senses to drink it. We've had some very serious cases of passed out drunks because of somebody's *mukoola*. I'm afraid there's been a lot of accidents, shootings, and even people who won't wake up 'til the Judgment Day because of that cursed stuff." Judson decided not to tell her about his own father's previous binges and rages. Dad'll do that when and if he feels like it, Judson

realized. "Well, then, I won't... *imbibe*." Judson declared, seriously. Laura just reached out and mussed up his hair. "You're a good egg, Jay-Jay!"

At school that week, everyone was very kind to all of the Selivanoff kids. Most of the other kids seemed to sense that being in that house was like living in a kind of hell right now. To be a Selivanoff kid meant trying to hold up in the presence of an increasingly unstable and dangerous man. Yet mercifully, only Marla seemed to grasp her situation. The twins were oblivious to any of the latest intrigue, and proudly announced (if it was once, it was a dozen times—that was their way), "*Our* Daddy has the biggest boat in the Cove!" Everyone readily agreed with them, happy to grab on to something positive. "I come fwom a faymust famwee!" said Alexander once, showing Judson how Billy Jr. was framing the story at home. Even little Jake seemed to have been forewarned about not taking on the Selivanoffs right now, and didn't launch into any automatic putdowns.

But sadly, Marty Pankoff, possessed of a gentle friendliness and a quick sense of humor, had become a puppet, a spineless slave, and practically a cartoon character around Billy Jr. And Judson could hardly believe that such a course of action would be chosen by an actual adult. Shooting at a house containing his own sister and nieces was nothing to Marty while under Billy's thumb and his own *mukoola*. It had to be especially painful for Gail and Rinny, who shared the same roof with him. It would take a miracle, or cataclysm, to change the village's two bad boys.

It was Holy Week according to the American calendar, and for Judson that felt a bit weird. When his mother had been alive, there had been special ceremonies, readings, and services at the local Lutheran church they had attended. Judson understood on some level the purpose of the liturgies and rituals, more so now because he was older. In this village there was an almost complete lack of any such thing, except for the beautiful Christmas "starring" that had somehow survived. Judson thought, maybe that's why Jakob Pedersen has decided to become a Blessed Reader – to restore what so many people here are missing. Judson could understand how people would miss it, but not in a million years why people like generations of Selivanoffs could hate it so much. That made no sense to him.

Friday, March 27. Good Friday at Sokroshera Cove

Good Friday dawned clear and almost warm, and after several cloudy days, the old-timers noted with satisfaction that the sun was coming up earlier and earlier. The school day came and went without incident, the kids all silently hoping none of the adults would mess up the delicate equilibrium that had managed to return to the village. Right after school, Judson happened to remember something important, something that had been on his mind, and went to talk to Laura about it. "What happened to Will when the Troopers were done with the investigation? No one ever told me." Laura put her hand on Judson's shoulder, knowing by now the spirit behind the question.

"One day when you were all in school, the second week of November, the Truck Brothers and Howie, Betty, Anicia, and Mr. Faltrip met a charter Widgeon at the

beach. They used the “coffin door” Widgeon, the one with the hatch in the roof—first time I’d ever seen it actually used for a coffin. Norm was aboard, too. We all went up to the hill, and buried Will near that big rock where Jeffrey found Barbara that day. It was a beautiful service. That’s when I got the first hint that Jakob was going to become a Blessed Reader. Norm read scripture, said a few good words, and then Jakob Pedersen prayed the Orthodox prayers, and Anicia and the rest sang the ‘Memory Eternal.’ It was a beautiful service.”

Laura paused and wiped a tear from the corner of her eye. In a moment, she was ready to continue. “Will has such a great view from up there, watching over us.” Like with Barbara, Judson knew she was not being exactly literal, but there was a sense in which it was true, just the same. “I didn’t take the kids out of school, because I didn’t want everyone making a big deal, bringing up that pain again. So a few days later, Danny drove us up there and we sat on the big rock, looked at the grave, and talked about Will. When I explained why I hadn’t taken them out of school for it, they both said it was good to do it that way.”

Laura paused for a long, quiet moment, and Judson saw a bit of Barbara in her gaze. That would be impossible, thought Judson, since Laura and Barbara were not actually blood relatives—unless Barbara’s quiet, thoughtful ways had somehow rubbed off on Laura, or Laura’s ways had made Barbara blossom into herself. Judson, mimicking one of the gestures so often used by this wonderful person, placed his hand on her arm without a word. His supply of Ludens Honey Licorice Cough Drops was once again running low, so he grabbed a box. He also decided to buy one Uno Bar and a can of Shasta Cream Soda, and think about all of this on the walk home. He pushed his purchases across the counter, and Laura made change. It was a simple, ordinary, uncomplicated series of small events, but it was the last transaction ever to take place in the old cannery store.

That evening, the Hansen men had an early dinner of grilled cheese sandwiches and tomato soup. Judson ate with an adolescent’s appetite, seemingly unhampered by the soda and candy bar already inside him. Judson told about his conversation with Laura, and when he compared her to Barbara, Jeffrey smiled and nodded. Apparently, he liked that about her. They had nearly finished eating when they heard a loud rumble, like a big plane overhead or a freight train going by. They both decided to step out onto the porch for a look, and suddenly the world began coming unglued. It was about 5:36 p.m., the moment in the lives of thousands of Alaskans that would forever mark the division between Before and After. They hadn’t reached the door before the increasing and insistent rumble explained itself. *Earthquake!*