

## Chapter 15

### Friday, March 27, 1964: 5:36 p.m. in Sokroshera Cove

At 5:36 p.m., Dottie and Petey Kurt were preparing to sit down for a nice dinner of halibut head chowder. Dottie had retrieved a whole halibut head from their freezer, and had been simmering it with vegetables, potatoes, and seasonings for several hours on the back of the stove. It would be delicious, "halibut cheeks" being the most tender and flavorful part of the massive white fish. "Remember how our boys used to fight over who got to eat the eyes? I don't know why they were fighting, because we had two boys, and there were two eyes! I guess to keep the girls out of the contest," Dottie was saying, but instead of a misty-eyed, nostalgic laugh from Petey, he just looked around and said, "What is that? Do you hear that?"

At 5:36 p.m., Sandy Ann was upstairs in her room, rather grumpily tidying up. Even with Orthodox Pascha (Resurrection Sunday) weeks away, Sandy Ann had persuaded her mom to make a batch of *kulich*, "To share with Jay-Jay and his dad for *their* Easter," and Betty Lindseth had cheerfully agreed. That was before the room inspection! Mrs. Lindseth's surprise visit had found it sorely lacking. "Why doesn't Jake get in trouble like I do?" she had grouched, before getting shooed upstairs. "Hurry up," her mother had said, as her father brought a tray with six tall, rounded *kulich* loaves out to the table. The bread filled the house with an intoxicating aroma of fresh-baked loaves with their hint of citron, cardamom, vanilla, and raisins. "We need your help to frost them!" she said, slapping Jake's fingers away from the bowl of white, creamy frosting. Mr. Lindseth had looked around, as Petey was doing, and said some variation of, "What is that? Do you hear that?" In a world with so few strange noises to identify, this one was a puzzle to a lot of people. It would be a life-altering shock to all of them.

At 5:36 p.m., Marla was just taking a sheet of chocolate chip cookies out of the oven. Her little portable phonograph, thin sounding and scratchy compared to Judson's big stereo, was in the next room, set up on a table, the speaker facing the open door to the kitchen. She'd left all her Beatles records except one at Judson's place. She would probably go over and get them tomorrow. The Beatles were grinding out "She Loves You" for the umpteenth time since she got home from school, and her mom had gently complained that Marla would be a lot faster at baking if she didn't have to walk over to change the record every few minutes. A few other hits and oldies were stacked on the table beside her record player, along with the Burl Ives children's LP *The Little White Duck*, for which the twins were patiently waiting. Their favorite song, "The Whale," would fill the room the instant Marla relinquished control of the phonograph.

Marla didn't notice the rumble in the ground until she had just placed the last cookie sheet in the oven and was placing the just-baked one on the side table to cool. "Hey!" said Marla, mostly to herself. The Beatles single on Swan Records, with

its memorable slogan on the label, "Don't Drop Out," had just ended. The swish-click, swish-click of the inner groove was demanding Marla's attention when the first wave of what would be five minutes of gut-wrenching terror began. Marla felt a little unsteady on her feet as she removed the tone arm from the swirling 45, and within seconds, the house began behaving like a seiner rounding Spruce Cape. The twins rushed in calling, "Why, Marla?"

Across the village, what happened next would be the topic of endless conversations for a few days. But soon it all would be buried in the recesses of memory, brought out only if the storyteller dared to endure a reprise of the emotions of these awful few minutes. Across the village and across the Gulf of Alaska, every soul was feeling a visceral sense of panic and utter helplessness as the world around them, the very ground itself, seemed to have gone mad. By the time Judson and Jeffrey Hansen had made it to the front porch of the superintendent's house up on the little hill, they had been pitched back and forth into the doorframe, bounced like a pinball between paddles. They looked out across the meadow in shock. The entire coastal flatland, on which the village, the old airfield, and the lake rested, was heaving as though it were a rug being shaken out, or a flag rippling in the wind.

Judson saw the houses on the other side of the creek appearing and disappearing as the ground heaved in increasingly intense waves. Jeffrey thought he saw spray like surf rising from the outlet of the lake, where the channel had cut into the runway years before. He may have been witnessing the quake forcibly shattering the lake ice. Windy and Lil' Carla, having been called outside to view a castle of cans and mud built beside the creek by the industrious young Jimmy and Maria, said they saw the creek go completely dry, run backwards, and then rush at twice its normal volume back toward the cove. Alarmed, they took children in arm and scurried as best they could up the heaving creek bank to the higher ground of their front yard.

Petey and Dottie were old enough to remember the 1912 Katmai volcanic eruption fifty miles away on the mainland. Dishes had rattled in the cabinets constantly for days, and six feet of ash fell from the sky. The couple came out into the yard near their garden and gazed upward, this time at a completely clear sky. They noticed the superintendent's house and the school rising and falling as though in heavy swell, as the ground began to behave like the Gulf of Alaska after a storm. Petey later recalled that he thought every nail in his recycled Army house was popping out, and that the incessant squeaking was almost as loud as the rumble of the quake itself.

Anicia Novikoff, roused from a nap by the rumble, was about to bark at Eagle and April, when she heard their surprised voices outside. April was crying and calling for her. Anicia's first thought was also of Katmai. It took her longer to reach the door, and she looked without seeing as a large porcelain sculpture of Victorian dancers, given to her by her late husband, fell from a sideboard and shattered into tiny pieces on the floor. As she emerged into the kitchen, an ashen-faced Anya took her by the arm, and together they struggled out the red door and down the rickety front steps to join the equally terrified Eagle and April on the brown grass and

random piles of crunchy, melting snow of their front yard. Anicia turned toward Anya and noticed baby Dilly cradled in Anya's other arm. "Where's Ward?" several of them said at once, as Anya looked up in alarm as one of the upstairs windows in Ward's room broke into a dozen pieces.

Ward and Sandy Ann both had some difficult navigation ahead of them. Ward, who had actually been reading his history textbook on his bed in the attic bedroom, was about to scream at April or Eagle for bouncing on his bed when he looked up and found himself alone. The Navy transports and big Coast Guard spotter planes would sometimes pass overhead, and Ward thought of that at first when he observed the rumble. Now he was pitching, the old logs were squeaking and groaning in protest, and he decided to evacuate. Sandy Ann, likewise blaming a bratty little Jake for suddenly bouncing her bed, let out a little scream as her bookshelf overturned and pitched its contents onto her bed and the heaving floor. She also opted to evacuate, accompanied by the near-scream of her mother to come downstairs "Now!" Both Ward and Sandy Ann found the narrow, steep stairwells of their old homes almost unmanageable. Both felt it better to back down the steps on all fours rather than get their heads and knees hit by the heaving sides of their narrow, steep stairwells. They each complained of bruised knees and sore wrists many hours later when the initial shock of the disaster was beginning to wear off and they were finally aware of the strain they had endured in the descent.

Jakob Pedersen had been doing some of Mr. Faltrip's rounds in his absence, and was walking by the oil shed when the quake struck. With some effort, he walked down the heaving dock, and was soon next to the row of generators. There he could see most of the power lines that snaked through the village and up the to the pump house by the upper lake. He was looking at that long stretch of the wires when the big wooden water main attached to the bottom of the bridge broke and plunged into the creek, one end dangling by its spiral wires, accompanied by a sizeable jet of water from the side still attached to the water tanks. The water system for the village was now out of service. He vaguely realized there would be a lot of work to do in the aftermath. He could have no idea how true that would soon be. His boom truck, parked just beside the generator shed, was bouncing as though it were trying to drive across a field of boulders. The cables supporting the boom were snaking back and forth, and something on the truck was pounding with a metallic clang. Jakob heard constant squeaks and squeals from every nail in every board and plank of the dock. The generators, bolted to their concrete bases, somehow kept right on running. But no one could think much about water or power just then.

In the Rezoff household, Laura had just stepped into the kitchen after closing down the store for the day. She, Herman, and Barbara opted to go outside once the rolling began, and went out past the gate and elderberry bush to wait it out. The backside of the center section of their home, the oldest portion of a series of shacks strung together, collapsed downward about three feet as ancient and rotting pilings gave way. Herman looked back to hear a wrenching noise, and watch the planks that covered the seams connecting the sections of their home suddenly rip apart. The middle section, where the living room was located, was now a sagging, broken

mess. "We have two homes now," said Barbara, pointing at the intact outer sections. Laura would later marvel at Barbara's detachment in the face of what to Laura and Herman was a perfectly terrifying event.

Laura glanced down the driveway behind their home to the Pedersens' plywood house. It and her neighbors' houses all seemed to be holding up alright. Then Laura pointed across the meadow to the little hill with the stand of spruce trees. "Would you look at that," she said, almost calmly, at one of the most surreal effects of the quake. The spruce branches were waving frantically as though in a raging gale, but there was no wind. Across the village, people were taking in almost unbelievable scenes like this, and the present sensory and emotional overload meant that many would remember such details only years later, if at all.

Danny was down on the *Salmonchanted Eve* tied up at the dock, contemplating a weekend run into Kodiak, when the quake struck. His first thought was that some idiot had run into his boat, and looked out to see if the *Marla S.*, tied up nearby, had somehow broken loose and hit him. No, the *Marla S.* was still tied up. His seiner was still repeatedly slamming into the dock. A glance outside revealed a strange pattern of tiny ripples seeming to spread in all directions across the calm cove, so they couldn't account for the strange rocking.

He climbed out on deck and saw that this time the dock seemed to be slamming into his boat. Returning to the cabin, he switched on the AM radio bands, and heard nothing but static from Anchorage stations. This thing must be big to affect stations two hundred fifty miles away! He clicked over to the marine band frequencies, switching between 24-50 and 25-12. From the disjointed squabble of intersecting traffic, he got the general idea that things were being shaken all up and down the island. He heard a seiner at the oil dock in Ouzinkie reporting that the fuel lines ruptured, and were spilling gasoline and diesel oil all over the harbor.

That news finally prompted Danny to action. Requiring surprising effort and balance, he scrambled up the metal ladder to the top of the long dock, where he had moored earlier in a leisurely preparation for his Kodiak trip. He walked as quickly as he could down the long dock, the planks rattling as they did when you drove a truck on them. The tall pilings amplified the ground motion, and the beams squealed in protest as they were twisted and yanked this way and that. He quickly opted for a path down the middle of the dock, staying far from the sides to avoid actually getting pitched off. It was slow going. As soon as he was able, he made it to the oil shed, and then to the place where the fuel lines angled past the front dock to the oil tanks beyond the generator shed. At the corner, someone had installed emergency shutoff valves, and like a cowboy on a bucking bronco, Danny leaned over the dock and shut off each one in turn. "Hope that's enough," he thought.

By the time he had finished, the quake had finally ground to a halt. He looked at his wristwatch. 5:42 p.m. The quake had lasted over five minutes in Sokroshera Cove, and over seven minutes in hapless Anchorage, nearly on top of the epicenter and cursed with a city center built on mud flats. Whole buildings were now sunk below

street level, and many citizens there would never see another sunrise. Out in Sokroshera Cove, Danny noticed that the yellow and black Bazaroff boat, the *Lil' Carla*, was tied up at the front dock. Wonder who's warning them? Do they have a marine radio? The thought was gone from his head in moments, in a world suddenly chock full of distractions.

Marty Pankoff's home was past the two huge wooden tanks up on pilings that gave the village and the cannery its water pressure, and beyond the cannery's three large oil and gas tanks, which rested on concrete footings on their sides like barrels ready to be rolled. The creek was just over the embankment from his front yard on the other side of his Quonset hut. Marty Pankoff was at that moment outside his home, which itself resembled a half-buried oil tank. He was not conscious of the incredible danger he was in next to such enormous amounts of fuel, and in fact was headed toward a shed that was even closer to the oil tanks, which had a makeshift heating apparatus, its propane flame glowing bright blue beneath his famous *mukoola* barrel. Marty was checking on his latest batch of moonshine when the quake hit.

The first thing he noticed was that his precious recipe was in danger of spilling all over the yard. As the ground buckled, growled and heaved, his precariously perched barrel sloshed and clattered, the maze of tubes and pipes disconnecting and clattering to the ground. Marty swore and shut off the propane. The blue light sputtered out as the whole contraption sighed and fell against the none-too-sturdy wall of his little shed. This batch was likely ruined, and Marty swore again. In the back of his mind, he was surprised at the fact that the quake was still going on.

Marty heard a loud rushing noise over the deep rumble and the loud creakings of every nailed wooden joint in every structure in the Cove, and looked up to see a long plume of water spraying out onto the beach; the main water pipe to the cannery had just broken, and right at the tank. No one would be able to fix it until the whole tank emptied. Just then, one of the pipes to the gasoline tank broke as well. Marty made his way over to the tank as best he could; the soft dunes beneath his feet made it worse than walking across a field of Jell-O, and he fell down more than once. He shut off the valve to the gasoline tank, subconsciously grateful that it had broken *after* the valve. He was mid-way through shutting off the diesel tanks when the shaking finally stopped.

As he walked back to his place, past the gasoline tank, he was shocked to see that the fitting had cracked after all between the tank and the valve, and that gasoline was leaking steadily onto the dunes. He could hear the fuel still sloshing violently in the big, rusting tank above him. Marty turned to find that his shed and barrel had crashed to the beach grass, his precious home brew soaking into the sand. He hadn't even heard it in the surrounding roaring and creaking. He realized that shutting off his propane contraption had perhaps saved his life; the steady stream of gasoline was filling the whole beach with fumes. Marty Pankoff at last raised his eyes in the direction of his Quonset hut home. He finally noticed his sister Gail and her daughter Rinny, standing outside on the wooden walkway, ashen-faced and clinging to each other. Marty glanced their way as the shaking finally subsided. It

was the first instant he had even thought of them. Satisfied that they were ok, he turned again to stare in consternation at his collapsed still shed and ruined batch of mukoola.

### **March 27, 1964: The Evening of Good Friday**

The shocked residents of Sokroshera Cove would temporarily count themselves lucky that all their homes were built of wood frame or logs. No brick walls collapsed here, because there weren't any. Except for Anicia's attic window and the center section of the already sagging Rezoff home, everything looked to be in OK shape. The broken water mains would need immediate attention, but so far so good. These were the thoughts of Danny and Jake Pedersen and old Petey Kurtashkin as they met up just outside the store minutes after the quake. They were beginning to talk about making the rounds to all the neighbors when Petey gasped and pointed. The old rockpile was completely exposed, all the way to the shoreline, and the *Salmonchanted Eve* was listing at an odd angle in only about three feet of water.

Petey was struck by a sudden realization. He spoke as calmly as he could, but the "Truck Brothers" could sense the urgency in his voice. "I think the ocean got messed up. We should all go up the hill—I remember hearing stories of *Apa* Herman stopping a tidal wave, and we don't have him here to help us now!" Jakob Pedersen was in no mood to argue, and took it as some kind of a sign. "Maybe he's sending us a warning now," he said firmly, and Danny nodded. Jake stated, "Aw, heck, it makes sense to me. I'll get on the radio and tell everybody to meet us on the east side of the bridge with whatever they can carry." And with that, he headed toward the store and its radio. He called to Petey to get Mr. Hansen to move the fire truck, while Danny rushed over to the side of the mess hall where he'd parked his Ford pickup.

By the time everyone got back into their homes, the radio was crackling with instructions from Truck Driver Jake. "Sokroshera Cove, Sokroshera Cove! Everyone get ready to move to higher ground. Meet us between Anicia's and the Rezoff place with whatever you can carry for staying overnight. Go tell your neighbors in case they aren't tuned in right now." Jakob repeated some version of this several times. Then he got the boom truck and headed toward the rendezvous point. He met Howie Lindseth and Herman heading towards them in the jeep. "The Rezoff home fell down, and so Laura, Herman, and I saved a few things. We're gonna leave their stuff with the Hansens." "OK, hurry! You're the best one to carry Anicia and maybe you could bring Dottie and Petey if he's back home." Jake noticed that the jeep's trailer had the old Victrola and three or four hastily stuffed open boxes.

Truck Driver Jake stopped about midway between Anicia's and the Rezoff home. As he passed the yellow Selivanoff home, he saw Alice and Billy Jr. arguing in their yard. Alice and the kids had armloads of clothes, some still on hangars, and some stuffed animals. But Billy was walking off in the direction of the dock. Ward and Marty were with him. Alice approached the truck, dumped their load in the back, and helped her little ones into the back as well. She swung into the front seat, and Jakob could tell she was near tears. "He won't stay with us—says he's gonna go

save the boat. But we need him *here*—I can never talk sense to that man!” Marla appeared at the passenger window and leaned in. “Mom, I know where there’s a lot of blankets. I’ll come up with the Hansens, however they’re coming.” Jakob cut in, “I asked him to drive the fire truck. You can get a ride on that. The key is on the wall in the cannery office – uh, in the store’s office.” The arrangement seemed suitable to Alice, if not ideal, seeing her daughter and husband all running in different directions. She called for Marla to be careful, and turned toward Truck Driver Jake, “She really wants to do something... do something *helpful*. I think this thing has made us all feel very helpless.” Jakob patted her arm and told her it would be all right. He had a sinking feeling that all bets were off for the lot of them.

Judson and his father, having been warned by Petey about the wave, were already heading toward the dock to get the fire truck. Once they retrieved the key from the store’s office, a rather difficult job because of all the fallen cans and broken bottles, Jeffrey and his son dumped as much of the hoses and other firefighting paraphernalia as they could pry loose onto the dock next to the mess hall, to allow for more room in the back. They were surprised when Marla emerged from the mess hall with an armload of blankets. They caught her drift, and had already loaded most of them before anyone had as much as said hi. “I was supposed to tell you to get the fire truck, but I guess you figured it out on your own. We’ll need these blankets.” The Hansens merely nodded and finished loading the blankets. They had to wait for a moment at the intersection near the bridge while Mr. Lindseth, his jeep loaded with Dottie and Petey, some of their gear, and Sandy Ann and little Jake plus Herman, passed across ahead of them. Where were Windy and Carla and their kids, Judson wondered, but nobody said anything. And the thought immediately left his head. It was terribly easy to get distracted at that moment, and no one really had a handle on what was happening.

Judson had grabbed his battery radio as they left the apartment. Now he dialed in the marine band. “...water is over the D & A dock...” somebody was saying. A seiner out of Ouzinkie, perhaps the *Sally G.*, was saying that they were taking as many boats as they could move and heading out into deep water to try to save them. He shook his head in disbelief. He reluctantly shut off the radio as they pulled up to the rest of the Rezoffs and everyone piled in. Judson moved to the back with Marla and all the gear, and Laura and Barbara squeezed into the bench seat. “*Whooftie*,” said Judson. Marla nodded; that said it all.

They had just put the old fire truck into gear to go out to the main road and head up the hill when Jeffrey stopped again, to let Danny’s Ford pass them, with Anya and her kids (minus Ward) and Rinny hanging on in the back. Judson noticed with a strange satisfaction that Gail was sitting up with Danny, a tiny glimmer of humanity and hope in a day that was quickly going from bad to worse. Jeffrey threw the fire truck out of gear again as he noticed Herman trotting over. “We rearranged ourselves to help Anicia get a seat,” he explained, as the jeep passed them, now with the elderly Kurts lounging on various sleeping bags and coats in the trailer, the Lindseth kids behind the front seats on the metal benches, and Anicia sitting and waving at everyone, wearing her faded pink headscarf and bright pink housecoat.

"She's trying to make everybody feel calm," said Judson aloud, startled that he'd voiced his thoughts. Marla just nodded grimly.

By now, it was nearly dark, and Judson could see the headlights bouncing out of sight in the dip above east beach, and then disappearing up into the trees. They were bouncing along themselves, and soon reached the dip. As Jeffrey headed down, he suddenly screeched to a halt, and gingerly put the big old REO into reverse. Judson could barely see swirling water that seemed filled with junk that he couldn't see clearly. He even saw a log or two passing in front of them where the road had been. Not high enough to reach the lake yet, he reasoned, but plenty high enough to block this road. They all silently prayed that the wave was not going to come as high as the crest of the small bluff where Jeffrey was idling the fire truck; with the water already this high, they had nowhere else to go. The truck's headlights revealed more of the objects of various sizes floating inland as the insistent current rose higher and higher. Judson didn't bother trying to identify anything; the fact of the rising water overpowered all other thoughts. For a few agonizing minutes, the headlights made it appear as though they were adrift at sea. The water came right up to the bottom of the tires before slowly receding.

Judson and his father, flashlights in hand, surveyed the road as soon as it was clear. A shaggy log almost twenty feet long lay across the roadbed. When the Hansens gingerly examined the shore side of the road, the flashlights revealed that the receding water had already eaten away the grassy bluff to within five or six feet of the roadbed. Herman and Marla joined them as they struggled with the log, and it was all they could do to roll it over onto the east beach bluff. Jeffrey examined the shoulder and the embankment on the landward side, and saw a swamp now filled with logs and debris, right up to the edge of the old gravel roadbed. Mr. Hansen decided he could make it through. "Looks like this could be a one-way trip for this old truck, at least until we find a way to fix this road. Hang on, and don't be afraid to jump off and run for it if the road collapses or the wave comes back!" Jeffrey Hansen was being realistic, not dramatic, Judson realized, but hated the sound of it.

Mr. Hansen carefully eased the truck down the sloped road. For one heart-stopping moment, all the left wheels were in the soggy embankment on the lake side of the shoulder, and they slipped sideways a little before Jeffrey gunned it and turned sharply back onto the grass-covered old roadbed. After they made it safely past the eroded section, it was only a few minutes before they reached the others, who had stopped just before the big bunker near the top of one of the hills. The sound of the elder Jake's chainsaw filled the air. The four of them rushed forward to check out the action. "There are several trees down, and probably more up ahead. I'm cutting these into larger pieces to save gas, but thanks to Smart Brother Danny for grabbing this when he passed the house!" Jakob patted his brother on the back, and then they all lent a hand pulling a five-foot section of tree off the road.

The others had already pulled another section back, and there was now room for the little caravan to roar through. But not before somebody asked Jeffrey what had taken him so long. When he explained the wave that reached their tires, the log



they had to move, and the soggy condition of the low spot in the road, he could tell that their news shook up everyone who heard it. Nobody wanted to voice what that meant for all the homes and cannery buildings. Herman ran and told his mom where he was, and hurried back to the fire truck, where there was more room. Danny's truck took the lead, because, as all the other drivers admitted, he had the best lights. The jeep was next; with only one dim headlight, he mostly had to rely on Danny's 'brights' to get him to the right place. Then came the Power Wagon, then the fire truck. At the next downed tree, they decided where they were going. Up ahead was a section of the fort where all the living quarters were off side roads to the left of the main road. It was the largest collection of possibly usable buildings in one place. The lower side road on either side of the old partially collapsed mess hall still had usable structures. On the ridge fifty yards above, another collection of Quonset huts on the near side of the 'rec hall' seemed to be the most likely places to find enough shelter to set up temporary quarters. Everyone would be just a short incline away from each other.

Anicia and the Kurtashkins, with Anya and her three youngest ones, were soon set up in the third Quonset hut off the road, the one nearest the old mess hall. A quick inspection of the mess hall revealed that about three-fourths of it was still standing, and would be useful for storing gear. Judson remembered Herman telling him that it was a snowstorm several winters earlier, and not the quake, that had flattened the end away from the main road. On the ridge above, the Rezoffs and the Hansens opted to try one of the three Quonset huts on the near side of the 'rec hall,' and the Lindseths and Gail and Rinny set up shop in the one next to it.

Howie always kept his toolbox in the jeep, which was a habit everyone could be thankful for now. He remarked, "I know what *everybody's* gonna need next!" He grabbed Herman, and together they hurriedly converted the Quonset closest to the road on the mess hall level into a makeshift *nooshnick* (outhouse). They removed a section of floorboard (which were laid down in three-foot square sections) and built a little seat to sort of sit on over the hole, using boards he scrounged from the collapsed end of the mess hall. It was quite a feat for near total darkness, although the Truck Brothers got a fire going outside the old mess hall, and that light helped. Herman was relegated to holding Howie's flashlight, but in this case that was the most helpful thing he could have done.

Finally, the camp had a toilet of sorts, for all the folks who wouldn't be comfortable finding a tree. The Ritz it was not. But it would do. His wife gave him a big kiss in appreciation when he produced a roll of 'Viz-Queen' plastic sheeting from the old trailer of his jeep. Privacy or at least opaque vagueness for all! He had been planning on building a greenhouse in the side yard this spring, and admitted to forgetting the plastic sheeting was still in the trailer after buying it in town some months earlier. She kissed him anyway. Judson remembered seeing the roll propped behind the toolbox the very first day they had arrived, and was thankful that Howie had been too busy to finish his greenhouse, and too messy to clean out the jeep trailer.

They were all feeling almost cozy in their new surroundings, the campfire seeming to have lifted their spirits, when a sizeable aftershock hit. The Hansens, flashlights in hand, had walked in the direction of the rec hall in case it would be usable, and were shocked to see it pitch off its foundation in the direction of the hill below. Constructed of leftover materials, it had spruce logs as pilings, rather than the concrete posts of regular Army construction. These spruce pilings had rotted badly over the years, especially on the windward side overlooking the valley, and in the aftershock, they had finally given way. The building was in no danger of sliding down the hill, because the trees that grew up beside it acted like a barrier, but it was not going to be usable either. It made Judson a little sad, as well as shocked at the sight of the building groaning and sliding right in front of him. Faltrip's dance hall was essentially no more. When they told Howie Lindseth about it, he said, "That one and the collapsed end of the old mess hall will provide us with lots of firewood if we need it!" Always the practical sort, folks like him would be the kings of the new order if the tidal waves were doing as much damage as everyone feared.

Soon there were roaring fires above and below, in front of each cluster of Quonsets, providing light and warmth. Mrs. Lindseth and Mrs. Rezoff dragged two boxes toward the firelight, and produced pots, pans, various cans, and even cooking utensils and can openers. What genius had thought of that, wondered Judson, and Laura had explained: "When I went into the kitchen after our living room collapsed, I found all of these laid out on the floor like they were waiting for me. And the cans had already fallen out of the shelves, too. I just grabbed a box and pretended I'd thought of it. Hope you won't complain that these utensils were on the floor?" Judson laughed, "Least of my worries." Mrs. Lindseth said she kept a box of old pots and pans in the kellydoor for use when they went camping, and just grabbed it without thinking much about it. Judson told her she didn't give herself enough credit. The people on this island seemed to have been born ready to take on anything.

With some creative sharing of empty cans and pan lids as dishes, everyone on the hill had a makeshift meal. They all decided they should try to sleep. Suddenly Miss Marla Selivanoff was the queen of the moment, a one-woman Red Cross, dispensing all those thick and scratchy army blankets once used to cover the windows for movies down at the mess hall. Marla's mom gave her a big hug and told her she was proud. After the rec hall collapsed, Herman, Judson, and the two Lindseth kids asked (begged was more like it) to join Danny in sleeping in one of the two rooms of the ammunition bunker just up the road from the rec hall level. "Ok," said Mrs. Lindseth, apparently speaking for Mr. Hansen, who just nodded. "But you're gonna hear every move the earth makes, sleeping inside the hill like that!" She was right; they did. However, far worse was the roar that came from the shore and Marmot Bay beyond, a roar that seemed to come and go all night as huge waterfalls were formed each time a wave receded over the cliffs of exposed rock. Mr. Hansen and Laura, around a campfire in front of the Quonset huts, remarked that if the waves were going out that far, they must be coming in that far, too. Everyone on the hill should expect a shock in the morning, because Sokroshera Cove was a shoreline community built on land that was barely higher than the tide flats, with few hilly areas. Their voices were calm. But Judson was not

fooled; the adults also struggled to process the massive scope of the disaster. Just that realization somehow made things worse. Judson shuddered and tried not to think about it, but he could feel the little stabs of worry moving across his chest and down to the pit of his stomach.

The Selivanoffs went off to a Quonset near where Anicia and the Kurtashkins were staying. Rinny and her mom joined the Lindseth parents and little Jake in a Quonset, until Rinny realized the other kids her age were going to the bunker just up the hill. The Lindseth kids, and Herman, and Judson, joined by Rinny, dragged themselves into the bunker well after midnight, armed with their thick blankets. Danny, who had a sleeping bag, insisted on sleeping between Judson and Sandy Ann. "Don't even *think* about it," he had said with a laugh. Think about what? Oh, *that!* Brother, these adults can worry about the strangest things sometimes! But somehow, Judson felt as if old Anicia had just teased him just the same.

### **Saturday, March 28, 1964: Fort Sheplen and Marmot Bay**

Judson was not aware that he had ever gone to sleep, but awoke, stiff from the concrete floor, to the echoing voice of Sandy Ann in the dark bunker. "Jay-Jay, Danny left already but Herman's back and told us to come down to the campfire for a bit of breakfast. It's by the old mess hall." All the memories of the evening came flooding back. The last thing he remembered was a shuddering aftershock that lasted about three seconds. He found that he automatically counted now. If it was over in two or three, then fine. He'd get a lot more nervous when the five and six second aftershocks hit, about twice a day. The little ones were happening two or three times an hour. Enough to drive anybody's nerves crazy. He suddenly realized that the gnawing in his stomach was not all fear; he needed food. A hot bath would have been great, but that was out of the question.



Judson and Sandy Ann both thought of holding hands as they went down the road to the campfire and the adults, and both ruled it out. Judson thought he might have felt better if they had held hands for a while. They approached the fire and saw to their amazement that there were a couple of a rather dirty picnic tables, shorter than the ones in the cannery's mess hall, set up in the middle of the side road, near the campfire. "Found these in the old mess hall up here, and Danny and I pulled 'em out. There's another eight or ten that aren't collapsed under that section of roof there. But this'll do for now. We'll all take turns in the Fort Sheplen restaurant!" He laughed, and pointed to a big pot filled with an indescribable puddle of food that nevertheless smelled great. "Today's breakfast: two cans of beef stew, two cans of cream of chicken soup, a can of green beans, and two cans of corned beef hash. We added about a half-gallon of lake water to that, and it's a pretty decent slop if I do say so. We'll have to go retrieving if we want a supper, though." Danny handed Judson a can and instructed him to hold onto it with his coat sleeves and slurp it. He tried the mixture, and whether it was his hunger, or the nervous excitement of their new lives, or the crisp morning air, he found it delicious. Not that anyone ever wanted to repeat the recipe, mind you.

Mr. Hansen was standing off to the side with what turned out to be a mug of coffee, and Judson noticed all of the contents of Mrs. Lindseth's camping box laid out on one end of the table. Among the picnic items, there were several coffee cups of the thick, military style mug variety, as well as a jar of instant Hills Brothers coffee. Who knows, these mugs might be returning to their home base for the first time since they were *pagooked*. Mr. Hansen spoke up. "Howie and I took the jeep, minus the trailer, down the hill this morning at first light. It's not good. We got as far as the spruce trees and turned around. We won't be able to get any closer until we get some gas for the chainsaw, because there's logs and bits of houses and all sorts of junk all over that field down there now. There's even big sections of lake ice, almost a foot thick, strewn across the meadow. But we're hoping that there's enough left of the store to be able to scrounge... er... *pagook* some more food and supplies. We're gonna need volunteers, and wondered if you guys were interested?"

Judson looked around while his dad was speaking, and saw that they were feeding the kids now: Eagle, little Jake, Herman, and Rinny were all nearby, with Eagle and Jake looking like they had just been roused. They all said yes. Mr. Lindseth then explained that the more they found, the more they'd put to use. "We've got no idea how long it will take anyone to find us, or if anybody will even look. Judson's radio—thanks, by the way—says a lot of Afognak is destroyed, the cannery and some houses are gone in Ouzinkie, and there's nothing left in the channel in Kodiak. Nobody's been able to reach anyone in Old Harbor. And it's like that all up and down the coast." He cleared his throat and continued, "All the news seems very bad. But we won't know if it's rumor or truth for a long time. In the meantime, once we get a closer look, be prepared that... uh, to see that our homes are probably gone, and for sure, the cannery is gone. And nobody's likely to check up on us for a long while." He groaned as if in pain, and stopped talking, staring into the distance at nothing in particular. The listeners sat in shocked disbelief. It was hard to even imagine.

After a long pause, Judson broke the silence to ask about the men who had headed down toward the docks, and especially about Windy and Carla and their kids. Nobody knew anything. "How's the road?" he finally asked. Jeffrey looked at Howie, who finally answered. "Something's wrong still with the tides, and the water comes up almost to the road now. I'm afraid the road won't last long if that keeps up. We're gonna have to find another way in or out, or find a way to build it back up. And our little motor pool isn't set up for earthmoving. So for now, only my jeep and Danny's pickup can sneak across the low spot safely. We gotta get back up here with what we need. Wish we had a marine radio to hook up somewhere." Just then, Laura came up to the campfire, holding Barbara by the hand. In her other hand, she held a small black and silver object. "Herman, I found your camera on a shelf in your room, along with a couple of rolls of film, and threw it in the box we brought. Today might be a good day to take it along." She handed Herman his Instamatic, and he nodded. Judson felt sick at the thought of all the things that had collected in the superintendent's house since Brother Toma had arrived, and the prospect of losing those priceless clues to the past. He shook it off; there was work to be done.

The kids, Mr. Hansen, and Truck Brother Jake, temporarily demoted to shotgun in his brother's pickup, all headed down the hill in Mr. Lindseth's jeep and Danny's Ford. At the dip in the road, everyone except the drivers piled out and walked across so that the drivers could safely negotiate the soggy lower section. It was obvious to even the casual eye that the War-era roadbed would be no match for the erratic tides, and that the damage it had already sustained made it too dangerous for heavy equipment. Up on the higher part of the road on far bluff, the passengers piled back in the vehicles. Soon they reached the stand of spruce trees, where Howie had been stopped by debris. Now, with the help of multiple pairs of sharp eyes, the vehicles soon scouted a circuitous route across the meadow toward the village, or toward where it used to be.

There seemed to be no sign of the Rezoff's home, but portions of the fence, and a few of the larger items from their yard still remained. The gate and elderberry bush stood as if untouched. The Truck Brothers' home had floated several hundred feet inland, but looked more or less intact, at an odd angle on one of the dunes, with its floorboards mostly attached, but without its foundation. "So did your house grow a mast overnight?" asked Herman. Sure enough, a mast and rigging could be seen above the displaced Pedersen house. As they all rounded the corner of the damaged house, they saw the *PES-7*, the port side of its bow punched through above the waterline, leaning at a slightly sharper angle than the house. "We'll worry about that thing later," said Jakob Pedersen. "There was nobody aboard that one last night. Let's have a look at my house."

They all turned back to the damaged house, and scrambled up into the open doorway. A quick look inside revealed that a large log had punctured the floorboards. By some strange water magic, Jake Pedersen's Gibson guitar case was lying on the kitchen table, which was propped precariously on the stove, which was lying on its back where the old sofa once stood. The sofa was nowhere to be found, and neither was the big window in the kitchen, suggesting how it had escaped. Uneasy, Jakob grabbed his guitar case, pulling off pieces of kelp and brushing off

miscellaneous debris. Jake opened the case, found it dry inside, and wiped away a tear. The case had been splashed and tossed, but not submerged. Strange, how important the little things are at a time like this. "Guess you'll *never* get over those blue eyes now!" said little Jake, and punched him in the ribs. The elder Jake just nodded and smiled, and stepped outside to the nearest vehicle to stash the guitar.

Anicia's house was roughly where it belonged, but considerably saggy. It took a moment to open the front door, but once they wrenched it open, they saw a rippling floor with several sections missing, and pieces of old piling sticking up through the boards. The waves had lifted and moved the house slightly, just enough for the former foundation to skewer the floor. Even so, since the outside and floor had separate foundations, as all old Russian log houses did, Danny said days later that they could probably rebuild the floor where it was and jack the rest up to meet it. Eagle carefully snuck upstairs and said everything up there was dry, including all the old books Anicia told him to stash there before they left. At this, the elder Jake bowed his head and wept quietly. All the prayer books and volumes on the lives of Saints and texts with liturgical instructions were still safe; it was a good sign. Judson nodded appreciatively, and patted him on the back. Jakob collected himself, and they moved carefully across the rippled floor and went outside.

The Selivanoff house was almost at right angles to its foundation, and one whole corner of the log inner wall had separated, its yellow clapboard covering hanging loose at one end as though ripped away by a monstrous claw. When they rounded the yard to the far side, they saw why. Pieces of what might have been the cannery's oil shed, and what looked like a section of Marty's old Quonset, had slammed into it. But even so, most of what was in the upstairs rooms was probably still dry. The building was pulled apart in places, but remarkably, none of these upstairs windows had broken. What strange patterns the water must have made!

Not far away, the Lindseths' house lay partially on its side, and the kellydoor, which had once been attached to the now uphill side, was nowhere to be seen. The wall that had dug into the ground had also caved in pretty badly, and Mr. Lindseth shook his head and looked away when asked if he wanted to try to salvage anything. Judson noticed, however, that most of the floor had come along with the rest of the house, meaning there might be some of their things still bounced around inside. Little Jake came and stood by his dad's side and they hugged each other. Sandy Ann, surprisingly calm now, looked at Mr. Hansen and said, "This looks just like that river movie you showed us." Her teacher nodded slowly; the view across the meadow and the movie's scenes of flood destruction were eerily similar. Howie Lindseth looked in the brown grass beneath his feet, and pulled up an iron grate. "We use this for camping, and we're camping now!" Howie's voice was unsteady; he coughed and tossed the grate in the jeep. Judson recognized it as the grill they'd used for bacon up at the pond during the skating party. All of that seemed like a lifetime ago now.

The three old homes that had been vacant since before the Hansens arrived were almost completely gone—as were the two sagging, abandoned ones beyond. The waves, or perhaps a big piece of the cannery, had mowed them all down. The meadow where they had stood was now covered with wreckage, and gave little hint that it once had been dotted with homes. Only a few scattered foundation posts remained here and there to tell the tale. But on closer inspection, one could see an occasional root cellar, or a short section of someone’s picket fence. In one former yard, a low retaining wall of flat slate stones had once held a flowerbed, and still had a rusty iron rooster on a metal pole, somehow undamaged by all the flotsam and jetsam that had floated past. Since none of those structures had been occupied when the waves struck, the survivors from the hill took little notice of these details, and turned instead toward examining their homes nearer the beach.

The group was planning on doing a quick check from the Lindseth’s place to the cannery when suddenly someone shouted, “Hey, look in the lake!” A strange, unexpected object was partially visible near the northwest end of the lake, but there were large sections of debris floating there also, obscuring their view. They decided to see if they could drive over for a closer look. They couldn’t. The bridge across the creek was long gone. So stepping rock to rock, or using logs and bits of buildings as bridges, the villagers began to ford the stream. Within a minute or so, puffing a bit, they all made it across the creek. As a group, they walked around the debris and sections of broken lake ice, and down the road to the runway. They helped each other avoid the most dangerous wreckage. The old runway road was covered with broken and shattered remnants of buildings, and parts of the dock with huge spikes still sticking up through what was left of the cross beams and planking. Picking their way through the obstacle course, they all eventually stood on the old airstrip, staring at the lake beyond.

There, floating serenely in Lake Stephanie, with a tie-up line looped around a large cottonwood tree along the far shore, was the Bazaroff’s seiner, the *Lil’ Carla*, its black and yellow paint gleaming in the sun. In the calm, bright morning sunlight, the boat on the lake looked like a picture postcard, except for the big slabs of ice that dotted the shoreline and the pieces of buildings that poked up here and there through the water’s surface. Windy, Carla, and family waved and got into their skiff. In a couple of minutes, they were on the closer shore and hopping out. Their little black and white dog began running and sniffing, probably very relieved to be off of the little boat. The group of survivors from the hill rushed to the shore of the lake to greet them.

Mr. Hansen spoke first. “No matter what you say, that must have been an adventure!” “I’ll say it was,” said Windy. “I’ll never be able to explain it.” He looked at Carla, who tried anyway. “When the quake struck, we were outside looking at something the kids had built down by the creek. We went inside afterward because the kids were crying. We saw that not much had been knocked down, so we just decided to feed them supper to help them calm down. When we came outside, it was after sunset, and everyone was gone. All the boats at the dock except ours were gone, too. So we assumed that everyone had escaped that way. By the time we’d collected what we needed for the kids, the water was almost up to the top of

the dock. Windy had to cut the stern line to get it free. We stepped off the dock onto the boat as if it was a boat harbor float. We wanted to go out to the PES-7 and save it, too. But we started to have some bad luck. Windy couldn't get our engine started. The current pushed us all over the place in the dark. We saw a lot of things floating past us..." Windy added, "...or we were floating past a lot of buildings... we couldn't tell." Carla shuddered and continued. "We just kept saying that as long as we were afloat, we'd probably be alright. Then for a few minutes, we were floating free, and except when we nudged a big piece of ice, there was almost no sound. Then..."



*The "Lil' Carla" tied to a cottonwood  
with ice and debris all around*

This time it was little Jimmy's turn to interrupt. "We tied owa boat to a twee!" he said, and jumped up and down and giggled, pointing at the little yellow and black seiner floating in the lake beneath a large cottonwood tree, whose trunk swung out a little over the water. Carla patted his head, "Yes, Jimmy's right. The bow bumped the tree about ten feet up from the usual shoreline. Windy was out there in a flash, and tied us fast. I think part of a wall from the retort building or maybe the store floated by and bumped into us, and there were at least a couple more times when the water receded fast and we were straining on the tie up line, but thank God, the rope held, and so did the tree!"

Windy took up the story again, "Early this morning I woke up and looked around, and felt like I was on another planet. It took me a couple of minutes to get my bearings. It was actually peaceful out on the lake. I couldn't see a soul, couldn't hear any sounds, and as you know, there's not much left of the village. I was beginning to think we were the only survivors. Then I saw a little glimpse of Lindseth's jeep, but it turned around and went away before we could hail you. When we saw that you'd noticed us on your second trip, we came over." His dramatic tale ended with a matter-of-fact "So what happened to you?"



There was a general hubbub as a couple dozen voices answered at once. Windy pointed to Mr. Lindseth and said, "You can tell us later. Do you have a place to stay, and does anyone have food? We sort of used up all of ours because I usually don't leave much on the boat except tea and crackers and maybe a few cans of chili. So anything except chili, please," he said, and burped. Carla giggled. They all started walking across the meadow when Carla let out a loud squeal, like little Maria getting a new toy. "Look Windy, there's our new house, safe and sound!" Sure enough, there stood the partially finished house, its incomplete siding and vacant doors and windows acting like a sieve. The water had flowed right through the structure, and except for ripping off some of the exterior plywood panels as it left, the water had done almost no damage. The house stood strong on its foundations, just inviting Windy to finish it and move in. There was no sign of their old house except the pilings it had rested on. "Suddenly, Windy has one of the best houses in the village," said Judson, and Windy just pounded him on the back.

Mr. Lindseth helped the young Bazaroff family cross the creek, and then piled them all in his jeep and ran them up to the fort to get settled in their own old Quonset hut. The rest of the villagers continued to survey their village site. The first thing Judson noticed since coming to this side of the creek was that the superintendent's house was still there. They all decided to go up and take a look. There were logs everywhere, pieces of the bunkhouse and what might have been the school in various places, and the play yard's pet *jitney* was parked halfway up the driveway. But a quick look inside revealed that the water had only come up a few inches into the kellydoor, which was a step down from the rest of the building. It was a near miss, but one that the whole village could be thankful for. The Hansens went inside, loaded a couple of slightly damp Blazo boxes from the kellydoor with their cans and dry goods, handed them off to people to cart across the creek, then took some pots and pans and as many of the dishes as they could carry in as many more boxes as they could find.

Judson, out of curiosity, looked in the office, where Brother Toma had placed all of their historic papers, and found them safe and the room dry. He sent up a silent prayer of thanks for whoever had chosen this little hill as a construction site. He touched the old jukebox as he headed outside, and noticed Will's old Victrola beside it, several boxes of the Rezoﬀ's things stacked haphazardly around it. Mr. Faltrip and Laura will be pleased, he thought. He heard a roar outside, and looked to see Mr. Lindseth in the jeep, with trailer attached this time, parking just below the wayward *jitney*. "I found a way to cross the creek. There's a section of the dock that's stuck sideways, down by where the store used to be. I propped a few planks up at both ends and snuck the jeep across it. The trucks wouldn't make it, though." Mr. Lindseth looked grim; would everything be a massive struggle from here on out? Howie helped to load the jeep, and at the last moment suggested three mattresses, for the three oldest villagers. Mr. Hansen thanked him for remembering such an important detail.

Before everyone left the hill, Mr. Hansen took a quick stroll around the rest of the building. Judson heard him calling, and he and Sandy Ann rushed to see what he'd found. There, propped up against the hill, in the little gully that separated the

superintendent's house from the graveyard, was the peaked roof section of the old bunkhouse's kitchen. Pieces of what appeared to be the rest of the building were scattered in the gully. The lovely round window was damaged, but mostly there. Sandy Ann went over to it, placed a hand on its white wooden frame, and burst out crying. "It's still here... let's use it for something *important!*" It was the first time anyone had actually mentioned rebuilding. But except for the stash of canned goods and kitchen supplies found in the Hansen's apartment, very little of immediate use had yet been salvaged. They decided to turn their attention to the shoreline, to the site of the cannery and all of its buildings.

The place where the bunkhouse once stood was merely a series of lonely pilings holding up nothing but air. To the left, along the old shore road, the can labeling and casing structure was a total loss, although still recognizable in spots. The long building with its row of windows along the peak of the roof was now shaped roughly like a W. Parts of the building had collapsed. The net loft, farthest from the shore, was precariously attached to its pilings. A ten-foot section in the middle, and a twenty-foot section built over land, seemed almost undamaged. The rest had caved in when parts of the building were lifted and separated by the tidal waves, and moved just enough that the pilings below became a pincushion instead of support.

They walked past the collapsed wreckage and found themselves staring at bare ground and stubs of pilings where the front dock and new crane and buckets had been. The mess hall, with its foundation over land, had a better fate. It was fifty feet back from its former location at its closest point, and rested at a forty-five degree angle to its old foundation. They decided to have a look inside. The door was completely missing, the floor was a warped and broken jumble, and tables were strewn across the room and even on top of each other. At the end that was now farthest away from the shore, the corner had dug into the ground, and a large quantity of gravel scraped from the playground was now piled on what was left of the floor, with boards randomly sticking out of the gravel like chopsticks in rice. It might be possible to save the building, but only by carefully separating it from its floor, bracing it, and dragging it onto a new foundation and floor. They didn't look in the kitchen except to notice a confused jumble of metal, wood, and broken white dishes. None of the school equipment was still usable, and most seemed to have vanished. Mr. Hansen shook his head. "This town seems bound and determined *not* to have a school. Don't worry, kids. I'll figure out a way to start giving you grief sometime soon!"

Part of the mess hall now rested over where the store had once stood. The only recognizable architecture from the store was part of three exterior walls that had seemed to fall outward. The wave had essentially exploded this building. But cans don't float, so the scavengers soon found a large quantity of canned goods, some still in the remains of the sturdy plywood store shelves. They also found a few rather battered tubs and washbasins that had once hung for sale on the walls, and a few other odd cannery buckets that had once held oil or paint or whatever, all scattered many yards from the store. At Mr. Lindseth's suggestion, little Jake and Eagle zigzagged through the field behind the store and retrieved as many tubs and buckets as they could carry. These were all pressed into service sorting cans. All

the cans that had labels were placed in the tubs over by the jeep, and a far larger collection, the ones with no labels, were placed next to the pickup. Mr. Lindseth found a couple of bottles of bleach, a jug of Pine Sol, and three bottles of dish soap, and said they would all be very useful soon. He carefully placed them in the jeep's trailer, packing cans around them to keep them from breaking. "There's more here, kids, but that has to be enough for today. It'll take a bit of work to make these cans safe enough to eat," said Mr. Lindseth, but did not explain. He sounded tired, and Judson looked at him. The burden of losing his home, his neighborhood, and possibly his entire way of life now seemed to weigh heavily on the usually cheerful Howie. His face held a somber expression that Judson had not seen since Will's death. All of the villagers were sobered by their first-hand tour of the devastated town, but now Howie Lindseth's demeanor was speaking for all of them. The adults were experiencing the same shock and sorrow that he was feeling.

Shaking himself out of his sad thoughts, Judson glanced out at the waters of the cove. He suddenly pointed toward the southwest entrance, Selivanoff Point. Near the channel, halfway up the beach, was one of the cannery's big fuel tanks, its near end popped open by impact with something solid. Another fuel tank was a few yards to its left, obviously smashed. The third had disappeared. Whatever fuel had been in the tanks was now spread across miles of open water, contributing to a general trashing of the coastline. People would be finding pieces of boats and sections of houses in the oddest places for years to come. On the eastern shore of Woody Island, for example, sixty feet above the tide line and more than a hundred yards from the cliff, a line of foam coffee cups, empty plastic bottles and small pieces of driftwood gave mute witness to the sheer magnitude of the waves whenever shallow water allowed surf conditions to form. On Sokroshera Island, the cliffs below the old concrete fort would tell the same tale if anyone could climb down and look. The high cliffs with shallow water beyond had formed a huge breakwater, and saved Sokroshera Cove from complete destruction, although for those looking today at the remnants of their ruined homes, it was a moot point.

Judson turned grimly back to the task of salvaging some food. They were nearly finished loading the tubs and getting ready to drive up the hill. Howie asked the kids to walk back up to the fort beside the jeep and the Ford pickup, making sure none of their cargo fell out. Suddenly they heard a low squawk from across the water. Danny's *Salmonchanted Eve*, looking none the worse for wear, came sailing slowly into the bay, with the *Kolodka II* tied beside it. They watched as someone hitched the two boats to Danny's mooring buoy, hopped in the skiff, and sped toward shore. The man expertly cut power on the "kicker" and pulled the motor up out of harm's way just before the bow hit the beach. They all had collected on the beach by now, and Mr. Lindseth and Jake Pedersen were talking to the man who had just jumped out of the skiff. It was a man, all right, especially now, Judson realized after recognizing him. Ward Bazaroff.

Ward's face said he was about to complain that all the back pounding was making him hurt. Mr. Hansen stepped beside him and said, "Let's let the man tell his story." Ward's father, Jake Pedersen, came and stood close to where his son was standing, a proud smile on his face. "Is everybody... alive?" Ward's face appeared worried

and exhausted. Jake Pedersen answered his son, "Well, everybody so far. Can't find Billy Jr. and Marty yet." "Oh, they're alive all right, and still out there in the bay," said Ward, jerking his thumb out toward Marmot Bay with a hint of disgust.

Ward looked up to see that all eyes were staring expectantly at him. So Ward began his story, hesitantly, not as if shy, but as if trying to sort out the most important details of a tortured ordeal. "Well, I went down to the dock with Billy Jr. and Marty, and we tied the *Kashka Cyerry* up alongside the *Marla S*. Then we started to head out of the bay. I looked back and saw the *Salmonchanted Eve* at the dock, and the *Kolodka II* still in the harbor. I said we should try to get those. Billy Jr. just swore at me for suggesting it. I stood right in his face and told him that if he didn't leave me back on the *Salmonchanted Eve* immediately, I'd punch his lights out and then swim back. And then I'd steal Marla and move away to Arizona or somewhere." With this, he looked at Judson, who just gave him an appreciative grin and nod. "What the *hell*? I couldn't let those boats get destroyed, and Billy couldn't let 'em be saved. So I stomped on his foot as hard as I could (my hands ain't the greatest for fighting anymore) and looked at Marty, and he jumped to the flying bridge and turned us around. I stayed out of Billy's way, but he didn't do nothin'—guess I actually hurt him. As soon as I was within jumping distance, I got onto Danny's boat, untied her, and fired her up. If she hadn't started, I dunno what I would have done." The tale of what happened to his uncle when the engine on the *Lil' Carla* refused to start would have to wait, Judson and the rest decided.

Ward's face was one of grim determination, as his mind raced over events that he himself was having a hard time believing. And yet, here he was. "I don't know how I did it, but I managed to get the engine running, and get the boat over by the *Kolodka II*. I didn't think I could save Windy's boat too—hell, I wasn't sure I was gonna save anything! I tied us together after a couple of tries—sorry if I scraped up your boat, Danny. But I couldn't get the Kurtashkins' boat off the mooring line—water was so high it was pulling hard on the bowline. There was too much tension to untie, so—I finally had to cut the line." He had spread his hands in a gesture of helplessness, and the assembled folks saw the rope burns and blisters breaking through his burn scar tissue, and a bit of dried blood. Judson shuddered, thinking of Ward doing all that rough work, in a hurry, doing full manual labor for the first time since the fire, and by himself. The whole ordeal must have been excruciatingly painful, thought Judson.

Ward noticed that folks were looking at his hands, and reflexively hid them behind his back. He continued, "I saw that the tide was pulling us in pretty fast by then, so I got the *Kolodka II* started and put 'em both in gear, and used Danny's boat to steer as best I could. I just barely made it out of the cove before the *Kolodka II*'s engine started missing and sputtering. Dunno what happened, but I guess I had the engine up too high or something. So I shut 'er down, and thought that would be the end of my adventure. Good thing the tide was sweeping me offshore by then. It was dark out there, but there was a full moon, and I was able to steer out of the way of the biggest things floating out there in Marmot. I finally saw Selivanoff's running lights, and made for them. I'm sorry, Danny, I don't know how to turn yours on. But I stayed just in sight of the lights, because dammit, I don't want to

see those bastards ever again, 'specially Billy." Those men clearly deserved that appellation, and young Ward, who actually *was* one, clearly didn't. "Anyway, I came back in when I thought the waves were over, because..." with this he yawned, "I'm pretty tired. I'm not a night owl after all."

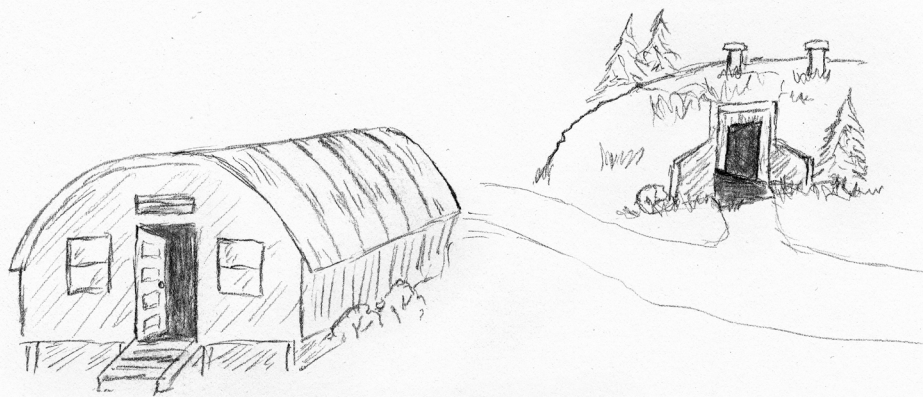
Jake the elder stepped to give Ward a hug, but Danny was faster. "Young man, you are my hero. Thank you for saving my boat and Petey's boat. Thank you." Danny's second hug looked to crack a couple of ribs. When his father Jakob came up, gave him a softer hug, and told him he was proud of him, Ward couldn't stand it anymore. He broke down and cried. "It was so lonely out there, and I was afraid that even if I made it, none of you were still alive. It was... *awful*, feeling like that... so *alone*." Judson could only imagine. As they walked toward Danny's truck, Judson told Ward, "We don't have to worry about that old school anymore, you know. Your uncle Windy told Mr. Lindseth that most of it ended up in the lake. So did they, but we'll tell you about that later." He paused, collecting his thoughts. "You're a good man, Ward, and I'm proud to know you." Ward looked like he was getting a little misty again, so Judson turned away. No use for them both to cry.

The trip across the ruined meadow toward the hill was slower this time, because most of the people were walking. Little Jake and Eagle had enough energy to run over and check the play forts and swings in the spruce trees. They came running back, out of breath, and launched into one of their tradeoff conversations, "no more forts... all washed away... swings are still there... but Petey and Dottie's house... it's hiding behind the trees... not even any windows broken... *musta* floated over there." Judson remembered the pilings holding up a dock-like sub-floor, to which the original walls had been nailed. The planks and sub-floor had acted a bit like a boat, and the house floated away better than any of the other buildings. Good. The Kurtashkins deserve not to have to start over at this point in their lives. "Oh, and one more thing, Dad, I think we found one of our freezers over there, and part of our kellydoor," said little Jake. Mr. Lindseth stopped the jeep, and instructed the volunteers to scour the area for other freezers that may have floated free, and some more Blazo boxes to carry stuff in. Perhaps something other than cans could be added to their menu.

Judson walked over to the stand of spruce trees, and saw the Kurtashkin house, a water line halfway up the walls still clearly visible. Then he found a Blazo box under one of the spruce trees, with an empty plastic bottle and a piece of rope inside. It was just a castoff fuel storage box, part of the general debris of this disaster, but very useful now. He heard Herman shout that he'd found a freezer, and made a beeline toward him to see, carrying the Blazo box. Herman had a funny look on his face. "I think this one was ours, Jay-Jay. So welcome to the Rezoff free food store and restaurant. None of this will be any good in a couple of days." They opened it up, and although some salt water had gotten in, most of the items were still frozen. The things wrapped in plastic bags would be safe. "Mom always wrapped our fish in paper and then put them in plastic bags, because she said they kept longer. She's right; here they are!"

The boys loaded the Blazo box with as much semi-frozen salmon and halibut as they could carry, and then on top they stacked as many plastic wrapped loaves of bread as they could balance. They left behind whatever was resting in the salt water at the bottom. Most people in the village had bought bread in bulk and then froze it, because fresh bread was not generally available in the store. Judson remembered having to get used to the idea of getting their loaves of bread from a big chest freezer in the store. Towards the end of the supply, the last few loaves at the bottom were only good for making toast, which removed the freezer burn taste well enough. These were likely to be elderly loaves, but beggars can't be choosers, and everyone on the hill would be grateful, of that, they were sure.

Several other people brought boxes filled with similar perishable treasures; the next few days would be a feast of fish and bread and salmonberries packed in sugar. Could be worse, thought Judson. After that, they'd all be back to whatever that moist pile of cans could offer. It was a long, slow slog up the hill when they finally cleared the low spot and started up into the fort. It was mid-afternoon, and after stashing the thawing frozen goods in boxes at the back of one of the sleep bunkers, where "It will be as cool as a fridge," noted Betty Lindseth. The kids all crawled onto their blankets and took a nap, and could vouch for the "cool as a fridge" part of their accommodations. Both physically and emotionally, it had been a draining day so far. Betty came and rounded them up in an hour or so to tell them that fried halibut and toast with salmonberries on it would be their lunch. It was nice to eat from real plates, too, thought Judson.



Homes on the hill: One of Fort Shepley's  
Quonset huts and the two-room bunker  
(outer doors not shown)

At lunch, Mr. Lindseth announced a major improvement to their *nooshnick* arrangement. "We will all use the Viz-Queen'd off section of that Quonset," said Howie, "But I've put the floor back in. We now have a 'honey bucket' system, thanks to the Pine Sol I *pagooked!*" It was good to see Mr. Lindseth smiling, and everyone was grateful for the opaque plastic sheeting. But Judson had to ask Herman what a 'honey bucket' was. Herman just showed him. Mr. Lindseth had found a real toilet seat somewhere, perhaps from what was left of the Army's

shower room on the lower level, and had placed it on a round metal five-gallon bucket that used to have lube oil for the heavy cannery machinery. He'd pried off the lid, and the inside was about a third full with a white liquid that smelled like pine cleaner. Judson got it. You do your business and the Pine Sol masks the stench and helps to keep flies and germs away. A couple of capfuls in a couple of gallons of water and that's all you can smell, a vast improvement over all other outhouse arrangements! "After sitting on that thing, I don't think I'll ever consider Pine Sol a *clean* smell ever again," admitted Herman, and Judson laughed. He had been on the verge of saying the same thing.

Sometime in mid-afternoon that Saturday, the weather abruptly changed, and became windy with sleet and blowing snow. The temperature hovered in the upper thirties all day. A major storm front passed over the islands. Adding insult to injury, gusts of up to eighty miles per hour in some places slammed damaged boats onto the rocks up and down the coastline of the already injured Kodiak Island archipelago. Many salvageable buildings across the tsunami-ravaged coastline, awaiting retrieval in shallow water, were shredded strips of lumber by the time the weather cleared. The little community on the hill huddled miserably in the semi-dry, semi-sheltered, moldy old Quonset huts, or tried to find a gust-less corner of the bunker.

Jake Pedersen, now taking on the role of "bandage man," was worried for the small children and the three elderly villagers. He finally brought all of the villagers up the hill to the two-room ammo bunker, and built a roaring fire at the end opposite the direction of the wind. The rounded top of Mount Sokroshera above them gave some shelter, and so did the surrounding forest, but not nearly enough. The huge metal outside doors on the uphill, windward side were forced shut by a combination of WD-40, Lindseth's hammer, and what looked like slave labor but was willing volunteers, shoving against the ancient doors with all their might. Once the workers got the doors to shut, and the fire was roaring at the other end of the outside hallway, the bunker became the most reasonable shelter on the island.

Everyone found a spot to hunker down in the two dark, echoing, clammy rooms. The kids hung out in the room farthest from the fire, out of courtesy to the older residents. The boxes of melting fish and other freezer treasures were stacked at the far end of their hangout. In their cold, damp lair, which smelled increasingly of thawed fish, a sort of graveyard humor gradually overtook them. Soon they all moved to the outer hallway of the bunker, where there was more light. Judson pointed at the boxes at the back of their room. "Welcome to the Sokroshera Ritz Carlton Hotel and Food Storage Suites," he said. The others picked up on this train of thought. "What's as cold as a fridge and smells like dead fish? Our new home!" —Herman. "Why is this room like inside of Judson's head? Because it's as hard as a rock and echoes, echoes, echoes!" —Sandy Ann. Judson contributed, "Why did Herman take Rinny into the concrete room? He wanted to *cement* their relationship!" His best one was, "*Bunker?* I don't even want to sit next to her!" A loud "Ummmm!" of pretend shock accompanied that one, once his audience got the joke. But his dad told him to stop that train of thought.

Soon, their stomachs told them it was suppertime. Without any indoor kitchen, and the wind gusts threatening to blow out even the semi-sheltered campfire in the mouth of the bunker, Howie and Betty huddled with Laura to try to come up with a reasonable way to feed everyone. The once-frozen fish was still raw; eating it was out of the question. But they might find something to add to the loaves of bread they'd scrounged from the freezers. The three adults debated for some minutes, wracking their brains. Finally, Howie grabbed a blanket to put over him, tucked another under his arm, and rushed down the hill to the makeshift pantry in the old mess hall. He returned, his blanket drenched, carrying the second blanket on his back like some half-drowned Santa.

After taking a few moments to warm up by the fire, Mr. Lindseth unrolled the blanket, revealing a stash of labeled cans, a few short, stubby tins, and half a dozen metal coat hangers from somebody's clothes pile. "Tonight, we invent a new and daring cuisine, called 'this is what we've got, folks!'" With that, Howie managed a laugh. He held up one of the cans, with a yellow and red label, and one of the stubby tins, with fancy lettering on it. "Presenting, 'Tunies' canned hot dogs and extra fancy European strawberry preserves—thanks to you *pagooks* who helped collect them." He then instructed Herman to take his flashlight and get some loaves of bread. Judson inwardly groaned; he had once vowed never to touch those Tunies. Oh, well... food is food.

Out of his back pocket, Howie produced a pair of tin snips, retrieved from his toolbox, which he'd stashed in the mess hall when the rain started. Almost before Herman returned with the freezer bread, Howie had made six roasting sticks out of the former hangars. Howie and Jakob the "Bandage Man" agreed that everyone should take turns roasting hot dogs and eating their dinner by the fire, rather than trying to eat somewhere in the cold bunker. Judson inwardly grimaced at the prospect of finally having to eat Tunies, which he'd so soundly rejected on his first visit to the store. But the hot dog and bread liberally slathered with premium jam was so delicious, and his appetite so ravenous, that he nearly inhaled his meal. He couldn't detect any fishy taste in the hot dogs, and thanked the jam and Mr. Lindseth's ingenuity.

In spite of his fine dinner, Judson had a very difficult time sleeping that night. He guessed that everyone else did, too. The wind outside was a near-constant howl, and occasionally swirled around the doors of the bunker, sending first cold air, and then smoke from the bonfire into the cold and echoing room. The young people survived the night by talking about any topic they could think of except the disaster at hand. They killed an hour or two by taking turns naming a country and asking, "What do you know about..." At about three in the morning, somewhere in the middle of "What do you know about Ireland?" Judson finally fell asleep.