

Chapter 17

Tuesday, March 31, Sokroshera Island

The new supplies pleased Laura and Betty greatly. Only a few days before, the dusty pile of nondescript items that had been unloaded from the boat would have hardly warranted a second glance. But now, the women gazed at four large, sturdy tents, a fifth one designed as a field kitchen, two portable military-issue stoves, a moderate supply of propane fuel, and six cases of various "C-rations." And thanks to about twenty military-style folding cots and nearly as many Army-issue sleeping bags, most of them would get a much better sleep tonight. With a little imagination, the materials provided by the National Guard, plus what they had already collected, would provide for their needs for the next few weeks. Danny pointed out three large duffel bags stuffed to the gills with clothes. "Got these from the Baptist Mission when Gail stayed out there. Should be enough clothes for most of us, if we figure out how to wash the ones we already have." Betty laughed, a bit grimly. "As long as you boys can keep haulin' water from the upper lake, and keep collecting wood for the fires, we can wash clothes. Gonna take some elbow grease, though! Alice and the girls already have some laundry on the lines."

Danny had asked in town for as many jacks as they could spare, to help the repair crews lift the salvageable buildings onto new foundations. But the Cove might have to stand in line. Those were things everyone needed right now. The folks of the village were nevertheless in good spirits, and plans began whirling around like leaves in a windstorm. At last, there were plans of some kind, a sense of future, and some things they could actually do. Even though the new tents as temporary living quarters might permit them to move back to the meadow, the residents of old Fort Sheplen voted to stay up there for at least a while longer. The water supply lake in the middle of the fort had good clean water that a couple of capfuls of chlorine bleach in each bucket had made perfectly usable. No one had gotten sick from the food or the water, and nobody wanted to risk changing that. But it would take a major rebuilding job to the water mains (and most likely, full replacement), before anyone would get water down on the meadow again. Lake Stephanie was now a saltwater lagoon, full of pieces of cannery buildings, floating oil drums, shredded houses, and the remains of the school, with the *Lil' Carla* thrown in for good measure. It would never again work as an alternative water source. So everyone was better off up the hill close to the upper lake and the water supply for the foreseeable future.

In short order, the new tents were set up, two on the upper road near the sagging rec hall, and two on the lower road near the partially collapsed old mess hall. Then Mr. Hansen, the Lindseths, Laura Rezoff and the Selivanoffs sat down at the picnic tables by the old fire pit and began discussing how to start school again. Carla Bazaroff, with Rinny assisting, was watching the little ones. Nearby, the Truck Brothers and their lady friends had volunteered to set up and stock the field kitchen tent with the new rations and the old cans and cooking equipment the village had already been using. Mr. Hansen suggested shoring up the good end of the partially collapsed mess hall to make an enclosed room, to use as a temporary school and

meeting hall. "We've been using a mess hall down on the flats since the fire, and we can use this old one up here just as well!" The rest laughed and nodded, and almost immediately, Howie had a plan in place to build a temporary wall using materials from the old rec hall. He also thought they could scour the village site down below to find a repairable wood stove and some stovepipe that somebody could jury-rig into providing heat. What a school year these kids were experiencing!

Laura added that the school in Ouzinkie didn't seem to be damaged by the tidal waves, and could possibly provide some old textbooks once again. Laura continued, "We can wash down the old picnic tables that are stacked in there, pound in a few nails, maybe cover a few with scraps of plywood, and it wouldn't be too much worse than the old cannery mess hall was!" Jeffrey nodded and then chuckled a little as he added, "As soon as I can get some time back in the superintendent's house, I'll fire off a letter to the University of Nebraska informing them that young Ward needs a few replacement textbooks. It seems the tides ate his homework!" Betty adopted a sincere tone and replied, "He'll be so thrilled!" There was another round of laughter at this.

Jakob Pedersen stepped over to the table. "Your new kitchen is about done, and ready for inspection!" He held up his hand as they began to rise for the tour, and gave one more announcement. "As some of you know, Jeffrey and I opened the second door in the cistern room. Maybe we should take a break for a couple hours tomorrow morning and check out that cave. I'm afraid any more aftershocks could make it too dangerous, and I'm as curious as the next guy about what might be in there!" Jeffrey nodded, and so did the rest of the folks at the table. Jeffrey, Betty, and Laura all started talking at once, but Betty won out. "We'd best let the 'Sokroshera Cove Secrets Discovery Team' in on this or we'll never hear the end of it!" "You got that right," bellowed Howie in assent. He turned to Jeffrey and asked, "So what are we gonna do if we actually find something in there?"

Jeffrey's reply was short and to the point. "If we find anything, we'll place it carefully in one of the side rooms of the cliffside fort and wait until Brother Toma gets back. Whatever we find there, it was all stolen from the Monk that was killed, right? But I feel too much like the folks that are driving to Las Vegas or Atlantic City. Not many of 'em actually leave happy! The only thing that counts is how we feel tomorrow *after* we're done in the cave." After several days of sheer terror and extreme hardships, the people around that table were more than happy to revive the ancient legend of the hidden treasure, if only as a magnificent diversion from their current crisis. Several of the adults probably fell asleep that night wondering "What if...?" A wise Laura had advised them not to inform Sandy Ann, Jay-Jay, or Herman about tomorrow's plans, or the three would never have gotten any sleep.

April First, 1964. Mount Sokroshera, Sokroshera Island, Alaska

Jeffrey Hansen stepped into the dark ammo room where most of the young people and both of the Truck Brothers had been staying since the weekend storm, and shook young Judson awake. "Better come out to the fire, son, and get some breakfast. We're going into the mountain today!" "April fools!" Judson mumbled.

But Danny, returning for some of his gear, confirmed the news. Within moments, the large concrete room reverberated with the sound of scurrying feet and excited voices. "Where's my... oh, there it is!" "What did I do with my flashlight?" "Anybody got spare batteries?" "Where's my other shoe?" The whole, excited group rushed down to the fire circle, which now served only as a warm meeting spot. A haze of smoke in the general direction of the new field kitchen tent carried with it the welcoming aroma of pancakes and coffee.

As if on cue, Betty, Gail, and Laura emerged with platters of pancakes, thanks to some boxes of Krusteaz mix found in the Hansen's pantry. There were a couple of unbroken glass bottles of syrup that had somehow survived in the store's wreckage, and a pitcher of steaming cocoa. The kids devoured the feast, but it was all they could do to avoid jumping up and down on the picnic tables in their excitement.

While everyone cleaned up afterward, Billy Jr. and Marty came up the hill with extra flashlights that they'd scrounged from the boats in the bay. Marty was carrying a small suitcase, and both men were in animated conversation with a man in a black robe—Brother Toma! Judson, Sandy Ann, and Herman soon crowded around him, peppering him with questions, their mountain quest actually forgotten for the moment.

"I hitched a ride on a seiner taking relief supplies to Afognak, and found these gentlemen on the beach." Brother Toma shook his head, speaking slowly and soberly now. "I will tell you someday what I experienced in Kodiak on the day of the disaster, but I'm sure you also have plenty of stories to tell, after seeing what's left of your houses down there." Then he looked around at their makeshift community and finally smiled. "But you seem to be doing alright for the moment up here in your hideout, so I'll tell you my other news, about what happened after I took the *Sally G.* to Kodiak following the dives."

In his trademark clear and informal way, Brother Toma shared that the knife, the Monk's box and its contents, the section of mast, and the remains of the leather pouch had all been sent to a university in Seattle for further study, or would be, once reliable transportation in and out of Kodiak resumed. The remains of the Monk were now in a new spruce casket, lovingly made by men from the Kodiak church. Brother Toma and the Priest in Kodiak agreed that the martyred Monk should be buried on the bluff above east beach, the site of his Martyrdom. The ceremony was planned for early May, right after Lent and Pascha. The Priest in Kodiak would do everything he could to organize and facilitate the interment ceremony on the island. But they were hoping that Father Gerasim of Monk's Lagoon would be able to conduct the ceremony. He was everyone's first choice, with a direct connection to Father Herman and to Father Zachar's original mission. The kids nodded solemnly; it was a very good plan. Judson didn't quite understand all that Brother Toma had said, but was happy that something important and suitable would be done with the Monk's remains. All three of them gave Brother Toma a hug, and if it surprised him, he didn't let on. Finally, Herman said, "To the mountain, then?"

After a short check of supplies, and after getting a bag of snacks from Laura, which Herman agreed to carry, they all started up the road toward the fort on the cliff face. The portable generator they had used to open the doors was now providing electricity to the radio and the town's remaining freezers down in the superintendent's house, so this would be a flashlight adventure. The village was in danger of blowing most of its battery supply on this little enterprise. The kids, Jakob, Billy Jr. and Marty all had flashlights. Jakob's and Billy Jr.'s were of the big searchlight variety that would come in handy. Herman carried a short coil of rope someone had brought up the hill from the field of debris that was formerly their village. Jeffrey Hansen held a section of galvanized water pipe that he had removed from the fort's old shower room next to the mess hall, "In case we need to pry open anything." Jakob Pedersen had scrounged a pick and a shovel from a spot down in the village near where his shed had once stood, and handed the heavier pick to his brother Danny to carry. After a couple of hilarious half-hearted attempts at complaining, Danny lapsed into silence, and so did the three kids. Now that the adventure was actually before them, no one wanted to talk much.

Brother Toma hung back with Billy Jr. and Marty, and Judson managed to hear a snatch or two of their conversation. "I doubt if you're the only adults here who need baptism or communion," he was saying to them. "This is something your parents normally would have done when you were infants. But the ceremonies of the Church can be given to an adult convert, as they were once given to me. I could begin the instruction process if you like, and I know that Jakob will be honored to continue it. I'll check Anicia's books to show Jakob what to use, and I'll speak with the Priest when we conduct the burial ceremony about continuing the rest, the parts that only Priests can do." Judson noticed Brother Toma's way of explaining complicated things in simple terms, doubtless because he also was a convert as an adult, and someone had once explained these things to him.

Billy Jr. said something that Judson couldn't quite hear. "Oh, I'm sure there's rejoicing in Sokroshera Cove and among the angels over what you men decided to do," responded Brother Toma. The group was turning a corner in a section of dense trees, and the three men were falling behind the eager kids. Billy Jr. was doing well, considering that he was nursing an injured foot. He had insisted on coming along. Judson heard another snatch from Brother Toma: "...not responsible for anything our forefathers did. But we *are* responsible for our own journey of faith..." Judson did not get to hear anything else. Sandy Ann, close beside him, was busy speculating on what they might find, but Judson stayed silent.

At last, they reached the fort on the face of the cliff, and ducking into the lower hallway, soon reached the outer door of the cistern room. After a brief discussion, they decided that Jakob Pedersen would take the lead, then Herman, then Mr. Hansen, then Sandy Ann and Judson, and that Danny would bring up the rear. Marty, Brother Toma, and Billy Jr. would remain outside, with a couple of spare flashlights, in case anyone needed assistance, and because the cave most likely didn't have room for much of a crowd. The three seemed satisfied to continue their discussion. Jakob insisted that for safety's sake, they should all hang onto the rope Herman had brought, and he tied it around his waist. Danny, in the rear, also tied

the rope around his waist. Jakob told everyone else to keep one hand firmly on the rope at all times. As they stepped into the cave, they all agreed to take it slow and easy. They passed the old handwritten words on the concrete wall: "Caution! Slippery Rocks! Do Not Enter!" Good old Mr. Faltrip hated that cave because of its "slippery rocks" and the badly bruised shoulder they once gave him, and had seen no reason for anyone to enter that cave again!

The newly unsealed door into the cistern chamber was at a right angle to the pipes that descended into the pool below the pump room. Once inside, they all saw why. The cistern was deep, and the only navigable cave floor stretched to the right, roughly parallel to the back wall of the fort that had been built along the cliff face. Jakob instructed all of them to follow the path of his flashlight so that they could get a more formal survey of the cave. Their voices sounded close and almost stuffy, as opposed to echoing, as one would expect in a large cave. This was apparently a very small one, formed when water created a narrow space between two different types of rock. Starting with the cistern, which stretched only about fifteen feet straight back from the pipes, they swept from left to right, and up and down. The cistern ended to the left with a swift upturn of slate rock, which met a low overhanging ledge of the same gray granite they had found in the tunnel above. This ledge extended over their heads, and once they turned to their right, with their back to the cistern door, now seemed to continue for a ways straight in front of them. Now to their immediate right was another upturned ridge of slate, creating a narrow and low cavern. They couldn't tell yet how far the cave extended.

With the cistern door now to their backs, they slowly began to ease their way along the ridge of rock that made up this part of the cave's floor. The granite was just barely above the heads of Herman and Judson, and all the adults had to walk hunched over to avoid getting clobbered. The other main difficulty was that the cave floor was slanted down and to the left as the moisture drained toward the cistern. The rocks below their feet were frequently uneven, and were extremely slippery. Judson noticed that the further in they walked, the louder the sound of trickling water seemed to get. Water was visibly seeping, sometimes running, across the slate beneath their feet, and it didn't feel any more secure to their shoes than a kelp-covered reef at low tide. On the granite slab above, there were places where water dripped almost at their feet. Very carefully, they managed to find places to step that avoided walking through, or walking under, the dripping water. Herman suggested that they shuffle along slowly on the slippery rocks, one foot solidly down before moving the other, as they would do if walking on ice or on kelp. That seemed to work.

Slowly, deliberately, they hunched, shuffled, and felt their way along the slate ridge to the right of the cistern door. Sandy Ann, sandwiched between Mr. Hansen and Judson, held onto the rope with her left hand, and swept ahead with her flashlight, even though Jakob had suggested they not do that. "Look," she said, pointing slightly upwards and to the left. Her flashlight illuminated a long section of overhanging granite that seemed to be dry. A large crack in the granite made a jagged ridge in the ceiling in front of them, where a huge section had dropped a good six inches lower than the rest of the slab. Water was trickling from the low

side of the crack, which was probably why the rest of that section was dry. As they followed the path of her flashlight, Mr. Hansen, a couple of feet ahead of her, was able to aim a little higher into the crack. "I think I see some concrete and bent rebar up there," he said. "Do you think the quake did that?" asked Sandy Ann. Herman's voice cut in. "No, remember the guard shack and the big crack in the floor? We're looking at the underside of it, I'll bet. This has been here awhile." Sandy Ann let out a low whistle, and asked, "Are we that far in already?" Jakob began, "Yes, and we shouldn't spend too long in here..."

Suddenly, Sandy Ann slipped sideways. Her flashlight was with her until her body landed and her right arm hit a little ridge in the slippery rocks below their feet. Then the flashlight spun out of her hand, slid down the incline, and rested against a bump in the floor below them, at least ten feet out of reach to their left. To her credit, Sandy Ann still held the rope tightly in her left hand. Although both the Hansens had held onto the rope as she fell, they had been unable to stop her fall. Sandy Ann let out a low moan, which finally formed into a soft, "*Whooftie... Abahutchahuck!*" At this last word expressing strong pain, all attention and all the other flashlights were now on her. Jakob, her "bandage man" uncle, circled gingerly back and bent down over her. He carefully removed Sandy Ann's sweatshirt and ripped open her shirtsleeve, revealing an ugly bruise forming on her upper arm, where her weight had slammed into the same ridge in the floor that had caused her to slip. "Well, Serafina, I guess we need to take you back out..." She shook her head, but no one could see that. "Wait!" she said, as loudly as she could manage through her throbbing pain. "Look at... where my... flashlight is pointing! *Look!*"

Sandy Ann's flashlight was shining on the far wall of the cave. It illuminated a section of the vertical slate ridge where it turned to meet the cracked granite above. A smooth section of the ridge had cracked open, revealing the edges of a stone that had been mortared in place. Several other cracks, running down and away from the loose stone, revealed a carefully disguised wall of stone and mortar. "Don't you dare take me back!" she nearly hissed. "I think we found a hidden cave!"

In a moment, Jakob had fashioned a makeshift sling out of Sandy Ann's sweatshirt. He slipped his own coat over her shoulders. "Ok, Serafina, we'll take a look for you. But I need to get you a proper splint soon... you may have broken your arm. Hold onto Mr. Hansen's hand and don't move your other arm! Let Jeffrey know if you start feeling cold or dizzy, and we'll try to hurry this up and get us all out of here." Sandy Ann nodded as vigorously as she could. He turned in the direction her flashlight was shining. "Ok. We'll see what your flashlight has decided to show us!" Although no one could see his face in the shadows, Judson could hear the smile in the voice. His patient was stable for the time being, but would clearly become emotionally *unstable* if she had to leave now. Sandy Ann would rather die than miss what was happening, and her uncle had decided to comply, at least for the moment, with her wishes.

Thoroughly forewarned by Sandy Ann's mishap, the remaining members of the party carefully stepped toward the circle of illumination provided by Sandy Ann's

wayward flashlight. When they each found secure footing, they shone their own flashlights on the suspicious-looking rock wall. Danny had Mr. Hansen tie the end of the rope around his own waist, and then Danny was able to follow the rope to join the others at the broken wall. Jakob narrated everything, for Mr. Hansen and Sandy Ann to hear. "The floor takes a bit of an upturn about five feet before this wall, and the water comes down from about six or eight feet to the left. Maybe whatever's in here has been kept dry!" A few seconds later, they all heard a loud thump as Danny pulled the first stone from its place in the wall. Jakob explained, "Sure enough, these stones have been mortared in to look like a solid wall...this is very good work, even after all these years. If it weren't for the granite overhead that shifted and damaged it, we might never have seen it!"

Herman's voice replaced Jakob's. "My dad told me once that some of the papers he found... they said that some of the men in the original Selivanov family were stone masons in Russia, and... he showed me a wall underneath the bushes near their house." Herman was overcome by this memory of his father, but he managed to finish. "It had mortar the same color as the rock, too." Jakob Pedersen suggested, "Let's hold this first stone aside and carry it out for Billy Jr. This is good work, even if it was for a bad reason, and he should have the first stone we removed." Jakob then sent Judson back to his dad to get the length of pipe he'd been carrying. Judson bent down and kissed Sandy Ann's forehead before he carefully returned to the rock face. As he turned away, Sandy Ann managed a weak, pretend shocked "Ummmm!" Still got a sense of humor even through all of that, thought Judson, and he was sure she caught his little laugh as he left. "Pretty smooth operator sometimes, that boy of mine," said Mr. Hansen, mostly to himself. "No jokes," mumbled Sandy Ann.

Jakob had left the shovel in the pump room. Danny had the pick, and Jakob now had Jeffrey's old pipe. With the tools they had, they managed to loosen and pull away enough rocks to peer inside the exposed cave behind the wall. "This cave is only four, maybe five feet high, and I can't see how far... how far it goes back, but I don't think it's very deep. What are these things?" Jakob was trying to peer past misshapen piles of some dense, dark substance. "Pew! They stink!" Jakob soon answered his own questions. "This is Evgeni Teplov's cave alright. The rebels had a fortune in furs stashed in here... Of course, they're just a rotting mess now!" He touched a stack, and called back to any and everybody. "Any objection to just tossing these aside? I'll try to stack 'em away from the water even so." Several voices indicated no objection. Herman added, "I'm pretty sure there's no market for rotting furs!" Judson shook his head at the strangeness of this conference in the dark.

Jakob instructed everyone to try to breathe through some kind of cloth if they could, just because of the deteriorated condition of the ancient fur pelts, and the dust and hair they were shedding. From Sandy Ann and Jeffrey's vantage point, there was a blur of activity as bodies moved in and out of the light from her wayward flashlight, and muffled voices as they all seemed to be talking through their sweatshirts or undershirts. Finally, a clearer voice, pointed toward them. Jakob said, "We've got a crawl space through the furs now, and there seem to be

some boxes and packages stacked along the back wall. We'll make a chain and bring them out." Jakob addressed Danny now: "Do you see a dry spot away from the furs where we could stack the rest of this for the time being? I don't want anything getting wet!" Danny swept around and found a spot about ten feet back where there was a small rise up to a level section of floor that was dry to the touch. He showed it to Jakob: "Here, this should do. It seems more or less dry over here. But we have to get the packages or whatever they are out of here as soon as we can." "Good idea! But one step at a time," his brother responded.

Herman spoke up: "I've got less of a problem with small spaces, so I'll go in first, and hand things off to Jay-Jay. He can hand them back to you guys." Judson nodded, and realized that was useless to do in the dark of the cave. So he said in mock irritation, "Thanks a lot for bringing *that* up, Herman. But you're right. I'll try not to think about it. Be careful in there!" Judson's voice sounded more cheerful than he actually felt, which was on the edge of panic. He pushed that aside with great effort and crawled in after Herman. The deteriorated stacks of pelts were even more pungent close up, and they both stifled a gag. "There's hardly room to turn around in here, so Jay-Jay, you'll probably have to back out with each thing," said Herman. "The floor slants up and then levels off - it's pretty dry in here, even dusty. Hey, Jakob, these things look like they were wrapped in some kind of hides, maybe sealskin or something!"

At this point, Judson had backed out of his part of the cave holding a flat, thick package about two feet wide. When he handed it off to Danny, Jakob looked at it and called back into the hole, "It's sealskin all right. Very old sealskin. This one looks like it might be a tray or a picture or something else flat." He turned and placed the package carefully against the rock face in the dry corner Danny had scouted out. Since the floor here was reasonably dry, nobody needed to be as careful about slipping, but all the adults were ducking their heads to avoid hitting the uneven and cracked granite slab overhead. Jakob repeated Danny's earlier concerns, "The sealskin could have kept whatever is inside it dry, but it's a lot wetter out here than behind that wall. We will need to get this stuff to someplace dry soon!"

The next package was heavy, and nearly square. Danny was telling Judson, "Here, let me help you," and Judson had turned slightly, when the entire right column of rotting furs fell over onto Judson and the little path they'd cleared. Sandy Ann and Jeffrey were back to hearing muffled scuffling sounds again. Judson emerged feet first, pulled by Danny, and when the rest of him showed up, he was still grimly holding his large package. Jakob checked him, and then took the package to the dry spot. Judson coughed and gagged, barely stifling a strong urge to vomit. He was followed by a small shower of fur pelts as Herman pushed his way back out of the hole. He was coughing and gagging too, but both of them were able to stop after a few seconds. Danny called back to Mr. Hansen and Sandy Ann to tell them what happened, and that everybody was ok. Sandy Ann mustered up enough strength to say, loud enough for everyone to hear, "Jay-Jay, you're the only kid in town who can say you've been attacked by a pack of hundred-year old sea otters!" They all managed a laugh. The fur avalanche had not been particularly unsafe, but

it had been jarring and nauseating. Sandy Ann had inadvertently moved her arm, and stifled a groan.

Jakob and Danny quickly cleared out another row of pelts to make the path easier, but Judson said, "My knees are *killing* me! Can we leave a few of these furs on the rocks? May's well use 'em to help us." The Truck Brothers agreed, and quickly threw down a pathway of disintegrating furs. Then Herman, followed by Judson, crawled back into the hole. They kept the daisy chain of packages and boxes going for awhile, and then it stopped. There was a good five minutes or more when nobody saw either of them; they just heard the boys' muffled voices and occasional tapping. Danny was about to investigate, but Jakob just said, "I think I know what they're trying to do in there. Give 'em a minute."

Herman and Judson finally emerged empty-handed after what seemed like a long time to Sandy Ann, but according to Jeffrey's glowing watch, had only been about twenty-five minutes since the fur avalanche. "Nothin' left in there now but dead otters and stuff," said Herman, a little out of breath. "We checked every corner, and even checked for anything that looked like another plastered-up wall. It's granite, and uneven, too. That other wall was smooth after being plastered up. So I'm pretty sure it's clean." Jakob complimented Herman on such a thorough investigation, and then announced, "Ok, boys, time to take you and Sandy Ann back out. Let's all go out to the fort, get some air, and rest. I'll watch Sandy Ann out there until we can get her safely down the mountain." Bandage Man Jakob insisted that they all leave the cave, and none of them had any complaints. "I'm in love with fresh air," stated Herman, a bit weakly. Out into the pump room they emerged, then out to the little foyer, and on into what seemed the brilliantly lit lower hallway of the fort. Its partly open blast door was glaring painfully with pure daylight outside; they all turned away.

Billy Jr., Marty, and Brother Toma were waiting in the outer hallway for them. Danny and Herman told them what they'd found, and about Sandy Ann's mishap in the cave. Danny had grabbed one of the bundles of sea otter pelts at the last minute, after persuading Herman to carry the pick (Herman had no wish to touch any more pelts). Now he laid the bundle carefully at Brother Toma's feet. "You say that the cave was stacked floor to ceiling with these bundles? About how deep did it go?" Brother Toma was asking Danny. They all estimated that when they'd opened the false wall, the pelts extended back about six or seven rows. Jakob cut in: "The furs, stacked that closely together, could have acted like a natural desiccant. They absorbed any moisture seeping in from the cistern side of the wall." Brother Toma said, "Maybe the packages wrapped in sealskin helped, too. We'll just have to wait and see. You said the packages were on a little ledge in the back, and that it was dusty in there?" As if in answer, Herman sneezed and Judson stifled another gag. Brother Toma glanced at the boys with concern, but Herman indicated that they were starting to feel better. He thanked them, and added cautiously, "That dust is a good sign that it was pretty dry. But we won't know until we start opening them."

Jakob had brought out the first rock removed from the false wall, and soon was speaking to Billy Jr. "Well look at that! Mebbe it's the same rock-colored mortar

that ol' Stepan Selivanov used. You know, to build the wall out in our yard! This is his masonry work, all right!" Brother Toma looked at Billy Jr. and smiled. He spoke softly. "And another thing your ancestor did was to inadvertently preserve the Monk's treasure until this day. That is undoubtedly what these guys found in there. Once again, it seems, God is working to bring good out of intended evil. That is just how He operates."

Then Brother Toma addressed all of them. He had to have been excited, Judson thought, but he was doing a remarkable job of hiding it. "Let us all, *please*, promise to keep this discovery a secret until it can safely be used as it was once intended," Brother Toma declared, took a deep breath, and looked rather solemnly from one face to another as he spoke. There was a murmur of assent and nodding heads. "If what you found really is the Monk's lost treasure, then it was originally intended to equip a church, not a museum, and certainly not some rich person's collection. We need to be sure to handle everything with care, but also with reverence and respect. And we need to guard it. Which I'm sure we will. Marty, could you hand me my satchel and a flashlight, please?"

Brother Toma looked for a second or two in his satchel, having a bit of difficulty reading things by flashlight. "Here it is!" he exclaimed, retrieving what looked like one of those copies of documents he had showed them on that night around the Hansens' table, a meeting that seemed like forever ago. "Here's what we may have found. This is a letter from a monastery near Irkutsk, Russia, written in 1842, asking if any trace of the Monk's cargo had ever been found." He glanced over the paper, which seemed to be a copy, with a handwritten English translation in the margins. "Apparently, to honor the memory of *Apa Herman*, who already had a high reputation back in Russia, the monastery, or its devout wealthy patrons, donated some rare and valuable Ikons to the new church to be built here. They seemed to want their gifts to the new church to be significant and not just cast-offs and leftovers, as sometimes happened. And they trusted Father Zakhar to get it there safely."

Brother Toma paused for a moment and scanned the letter again. "The letter goes on to say that the shipment included the only known copy of an Ikon written by—you would say *painted* by—Andrei Rublev, the first artist to create Ikons in the Russian style. The church here was to receive a copy of Rublev's second Ikon of 'Christ the Redeemer.' If it exists, it is the only copy of a priceless Rublev Ikon, which was lost in a church fire over two hundred years ago. The letter also says that there are two other notable Ikons (at least that they mentioned), one of the Annunciation, and another of the Transfiguration, that are not only painted, but *oklad*. That means 'covered' in Russian. The original painting has a covering of hammered silver or gold that reveals only the painted faces underneath. Sometimes they refer to those types of Ikons as *risa*, which means 'robed' in Russian. The letter also mentions a *Panagia Eleousa*. I am not sure what kind that is, but I've probably seen one; I'm somewhat new at this, you know. It goes without saying that after giving such lavish gifts to the new church, the monastery wanted to know what had happened to them. Let's hope we can now provide an answer."

Brother Toma paused, looked around again, and added with a smile, "Sorry about the long lecture. But when I asked you that evening if there were any caves around here, it's because I had my suspicions. There were treasure hunters all over this island for years, most of them looking for a cave, and it's a tribute to the skill of Stepan Selivanov that nobody ever found it. Folks here on the island have told me that the Army found the first concealed entrance as they were building the fort, but they didn't know that it was significant. I suppose we can thank God for the slippery rocks, because anyone who tried to explore gave up before suspecting that there was a hidden wall deep inside. The Army used the water in the cistern, and sealed it up nicely until we came along. The cave partially collapsed after the doors were welded shut, allowing you to find the damaged wall."

He paused again, this time to smile at Sandy Ann. "Our Serafina risked life and limb to help solve this mystery, and again, we were blessed that Jakob your medic was right there with her when it happened. What a day!" Judson noticed that for all his excitement, Brother Toma did not seem very surprised at their discovery. He was even naming off what he expected to find before anyone had opened a single package. Ever since the meeting with the town elders at the Hansen's kitchen table, Brother Toma had seemed to exude that kind of quiet confidence. He was sent here to find something, and he fully expected to find it. Judson thought it was interesting that Brother Toma, the former seeker and doubter, now seemed to be a model of faith, and filled with the "assurance of things hoped for." But why did they need to guard what they'd found? Were there still treasure hunters on the trail of this discovery? His thoughts trailed off; he'd ask Brother Toma about that later.

The explorers from inside the cave were very tired, Sandy Ann was injured, and both Herman and Judson had bruised knees and elbows from crawling in and out of a small, rough space with heavy packages. Mr. Hansen, still holding tightly onto Sandy Ann, broke in with, "Didn't Laura provide us with some snacks? Herman, where did that sack from your mom go?" Within moments, Herman had retrieved the large sack of grub, and pulled out two plastic pitchers Laura had provided.

While the rest broke into their feast of freezer bread and salvaged peanut butter and jelly, Herman and Judson scurried as quickly as their bruised knees would allow down the bluff to the little spring on the cliff. They came back soon enough with their pitchers full of cold spring water, and Herman retrieved some paper cups from the bag, which undoubtedly came from Betty Lindseth's camping box. Judson had to share what they had just seen, which had shocked both of them. His voice shook a little as he explained, "Do you know the cliff down there used to have about forty feet of grass before the drop-off? Now it only has ten, max! We had to be really careful!" Herman added, "You can see all the way down to the reef off Cape Unuak from the spring and you couldn't before!"

The group had no time to digest this news, for suddenly they heard the familiar sound of the Lindseth jeep outside. Within moments, Laura, Betty, and Howie scurried into the dim hallway, blinking as they attempted to adapt to the semi-darkness. Laura blurted out her news before anyone from the cave could share

theirs, so the explorers took that opportunity to finish eating. Even Sandy Ann was able to eat, with Jeffrey's help. Laura delivered her news with great excitement, as though she could hardly contain herself. "When I put on my old berry picking jacket today, I found the telegram Danny brought from Mr. Faltrip, and finally read it. When he went to New Orleans a week or so ago (could it be only that long ago?) he used his share of the profits from the crab season, plus some savings he had in the bank, to buy a majority interest in Pacific Endeavor Seafoods. That was on a Wednesday. Then when the folks down there heard about our quake and tidal wave, on top of the fact that they had lost a lot of money last season with their canneries down along the Gulf coast, well—by Saturday, they practically *gave* him the rest of their interest in the Alaska operation. He's now sole owner of Pacific Endeavor Seafoods."

Howie Lindseth laughed, and said, "How nice to own one old duplex and a whole collection of empty pilings!" Laura raised her hand like a stop sign. "Oh, not quite," said Laura. "Our Owen is quick; a few of us here can vouch for that." She *didn't* look at Marty and Billy Jr. when she said this. "Even the water rights are worth something, and he's got a lot of the meadow land, too. And I believe there's Sandy Ann and Jay-Jay discovered an old Marmot Bay Fisheries land grant. He now owns that, too, and it covers most of the rest of the island. But since the season had been so bad down there on the Gulf, he had already persuaded the Ardet family to sell him a floating processor—I guess it's a big barge with a cannery on it. He bought a couple of their 80-foot metal-hulled shrimp boats at a rock bottom price, and this was even *before* he flew down there to meet with them. He got the whole Alaska operation as an extra bonus! So, the processor and shrimp boats are on their way up here, through the Panama Canal, if you can believe it, and should be arriving in a few weeks." Laura had stopped to breathe a little more often than Sandy Ann would have done, but she still got a lot out in a short time.

Laura paused for a moment, shaking her head, and then added, "This is bigger than his arrangement with Westerbrook, and it looks like he's saved the village *again!*" Howie, serious this time, added, "Let's hope his investment pays off for him *and* us!" How typical of Owen to see disaster as opportunity, thought Judson, and guessed that Owen was more than happy to be rid of the tired old cannery buildings that had cost Will his life. "Well, another thing might help save the village, too!" Mr. Hansen cut in, "I think we will be able to credit a certain Stepan Selivanov also, because we just found the Monk's treasure, sealed up behind a false wall. This is also thanks of course to a few young people we know who *insisted* that we open those doors! It's all inside the cave, and we were about to haul it out when you arrived."

Jeffrey turned to Betty, then to Laura, and continued. "But we *should* have started with this part—didn't want to interrupt you, Laura—we need to take care of young Serafina, who seems to be following in ol' Mr. Faltrip's footsteps, and slipped in the cave. She might need evacuating to town, if we can arrange that soon." Betty and Laura looked at Jake Pedersen, who had walked over to Sandy Ann's side. Betty began apologizing profusely. "Oh, Serafina, I couldn't see you very well in the dark here! What did you do in there?" She had rushed to her daughter's side. Jakob

Pedersen explained what he thought had happened. "She probably broke her upper arm. It's not too serious, because it didn't break the skin, but she at least cracked her bone. She'll need to get an x-ray and have the bone set if need be, and placed in a cast. She could be back with us good as new, but probably with a cast, in just a couple of days, *if* we can get her to town right away."

Faced with all this attention, Sandy Ann finally let down her guard and began to cry, but her only words through the sobs were, "We did it! We did it!" "Yes you did," exclaimed Betty, cradling her daughter gingerly in her arms. She spoke briefly to her husband, and then turned to Jakob Pedersen. "Jakob, please take Serafina and Laura and me down to the superintendent's house so we can call for a plane to get her into town before it gets dark. Howie's gonna stay up here and help you intrepid explorers bring the stuff out of the cave."

The jeep soon roared away, and Howie turned to Brother Toma and asked, "Where's a good place to store what you've found until it can be properly cared for?" Brother Toma turned toward Herman and Judson, who said, almost in unison, "The mess hall!" Herman continued, "They had a mess hall down on this level, and it's a big room, with a few tables still in there. I think things could be safely laid out on those tables... they're just like the ones we've been using by our campfire." "I think we could even get the door to close, too," added Judson, evoking a chuckle in the group. Who would bother anything way up here?

The invigorated explorers, now minus Jakob and Sandy Ann, but with Brother Toma, Howie, Billy Jr., and Marty added to the team, made short work of their task. Howie had the group review with him why his daughter had slipped in the cave, but it wasn't just out of fatherly concern. He fished around in the bunker and hauled out an empty round five-gallon can that he found hiding behind the pumps in the room with the pipes. It had once held paint or lube oil or something. Using his side knife and a rock, he quickly peeled back the lid and folded it down when he'd gotten halfway around. He grabbed the shovel Jakob had left in the pump room, and carried the bucket in his other hand. Then he scouted the roadbed outside, and found a spot where the Army had filled in a little gully. He returned lugging the shovel and a now very heavy bucket. He and Danny, with Jeffrey providing the flashlight, then proceeded to sprinkle a foot-wide path of road sand and gravel on the slippery rocks. Marty followed them in, pointing out any areas they'd missed. After two trips to refill the gravel bucket, they reached the dry spot where the first group had temporarily stashed the items from the hidden cave.

After another half hour of effort, everyone had safely removed all the packages, and several wooden boxes, from the cistern cave. Jeffrey Hansen, who had been right next to Sandy Ann when she slipped, clapped for Howie and congratulated him on such a brilliant solution to the slippery rocks. "Aw, we add sand to our paint when we do our boat decks, and that's what gave me the idea," explained the highly practical Mr. Lindseth. All told, the group hauled out over twenty items of varying size, shape, and weight, all carefully laid out on the picnic-style tables of the cliffside fort's internal mess hall.

They left the hill just in time; almost all their flashlights were out of batteries. The treasure finders were halfway down the hill when they heard the roar of a Grumman Goose departing from the cove below, and knew that Sandy Ann and Jakob were safely on their way. Meanwhile, deep in the cave, the light from Sandy Ann's flashlight slowly changed from yellow to orange to red to black, its fading light illuminating the opening still stacked with piles of rotting sea otter pelts. Hers was to be the last light ever to shine in the cave of the Monk's treasure.

Wednesday, April 1: Sandy Ann in Kodiak

When Sandy Ann and her concerned adult entourage had passed the campfire and cooking tent, Jake the bandage man had given her a pain pill from his bag in the sleep bunker. "Here, take these, Sandy Ann. They'll help with the pain," her uncle Jakob had said. She did, and they did. When they arrived in Kodiak, they landed wheels down on the municipal runway at the edge of town, and not in the channel as expected. The pilot explained, "We're using the Harvey Flying Service facilities here, bless 'em, because the whole Kodiak Airways terminal, hangar, and a couple of our planes are gone. They were down in the channel, and there's nothing but gravel where our facility used to be. Thankfully we were able to fly a few planes out of the channel and land 'em up here before the waves took out everything."

In a couple of sentences, the pilot had casually explained what must have been a terrifying race against time in the waning daylight of that horrible Good Friday. Everyone had stories like that to tell, all over the Alaska Gulf coast. Sandy Ann was able to walk into the waiting room on her own power, guided on her good side by her uncle Jake. She took a seat and waited for a ride to the hospital. Jakob Pedersen went to the counter to arrange for her medical needs.

At the counter, Jakob was explaining that he had just flown in from Sokroshera Cove with a medical emergency, a young lady with a possible broken arm. Appearing very interested in what he had just heard, a man in a long black robe approached Sandy Ann and sat down beside her. When he spoke, he had a thick accent that she couldn't identify. "Young lady, I understand you come from Sokroshera Cove." He pronounced the name *Soak-ROW-Chur-Eh* Cove, and besides emphasizing the wrong syllable, he rolled the *r*'s. She looked at him quizzically. He looked at her makeshift sling. "How did you hurt yourself?"

The man seemed sincere, and looked like he might be a Priest. Sandy Ann was feeling pretty good by now, thanks to the pills her uncle had provided, and began talking before she could think much about it. "I fell down in a cave. We found some old stuff in there, uh... some old Russian things. There were a lot of slippery rocks, and that's how I fell down and hurt my arm. I lost my flashlight, too!" She suddenly felt as though her mouth was talking all by itself. Must be the pills.

Jakob Pedersen was beside her in a flash, and cleared his throat. She stopped talking. Jakob turned to the man. "Pardon me, but who are you?" The man in the black robe stood up. His accent seemed even more pronounced this time, and he offered his hand to her uncle. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am Dr. Delacueva,

and I am the Ecumenical Liaison for Religious Objects of Byzantine Antiquity. I have volunteered my services to assist local churches in replacing Ikons and various religious objects that have been damaged or destroyed in the recent disaster." Jakob frowned, looking the man up and down briefly. "So you represent the Russian Orthodox Church then?" asked Jakob. He was already a little more than curious at the man's sudden interest in his niece, and this man seemed somehow different from Brother Toma. "Oh, no, I represent many churches and... ah... individuals. My specialty is religious art, and my calling at the moment is to help churches to replace those precious, sacred things that they may have lost in this horrible tragedy." The mysterious black-robed man was possessed of a melodious, almost mesmerizing voice, and he seemed sincerely devoted to his task.

Jakob was about to ask more questions, but a car arrived and a woman who announced herself as a nurse walked into the waiting room. Soon, she and Uncle Jake were busy discussing Sandy Ann's injury and what Jakob had done so far to treat it. The nurse nodded appreciatively at the makeshift but effective sling Jake had built, but had brought a much sturdier canvas one, with straps, which she and Jake carefully put on Sandy Ann's right arm. While being poked and prodded, Sandy Ann tried to focus elsewhere: she zeroed in on the mysterious black-robed man. She watched him step outside and begin an animated conversation with a man dressed like a tourist ready to bag a Kodiak bear. Sandy Ann mumbled to herself that it was a strange time to be playing big game hunter. But the idea passed out of her mind in the battle between pain and painkillers.

The two men walked away, still talking, and got into a cab that had just approached. But before they did, an approaching passenger propped open the door to pass some suitcases in. This allowed Sandy Ann to hear a snatch of their conversation, which seemed to be a flood of quickly delivered words in another language. She didn't understand what they said, and she wished Jay-Jay were there... maybe he would know what they were saying, or at least know what language it was. She couldn't concentrate on that thought any longer, for the nurse was tightening the straps, and her arm was suddenly afire again with pain, in spite of Uncle Jake's pills. "*Abahtchahuck!*" Sandy Ann hissed through clenched teeth, and this time it was the nurse who couldn't understand what had been said. The nurse knew well enough that her adjustments were painful, and apologized for having to do it. Jakob and the nurse helped Sandy Ann to the waiting car, and soon they were bouncing along on gravel roads toward the hospital above the Near Island Channel. The mysterious black-robed man, his odd colleague, and his strange accent faded from Sandy Ann's mind, as every pothole in the road seemed to set her arm back on fire.

Thursday, April 2, 1964: Kodiak and Sokroshera Island

Sandy Ann awoke shortly after dawn the next morning, dressed in a thin cotton robe and lying in a hospital bed. From her propped up pillow she could just see the little spruce trees on Near Island, on the other side of the channel, and realized she had spent the night in Griffin Memorial Hospital. High on the bluff above the channel, it had been spared the devastation of the waves that had swept the

shoreline clean below them. When Uncle Jakob saw that she was awake, he approached her bedside. "Well, Miss Serafina, you have a cracked bone in your upper arm. Because we have to restrict your movement for a while, *and* you'll be quite a ways from a doctor, you're going to be fitted with a big, clunky cast, to be on the safe side. But the doctor says that as soon as the cast is applied and has set up, you and I can go home. Maybe this afternoon!" Sandy Ann thanked her uncle for his care, and fell back on the pillows. She was surprised at how tired she was.

Before she nodded off again, she thought of the cave, the plane ride, the strange man in the waiting room. Had she talked too much? What could anyone get from telling them they'd found "Russian things in a cave?" Sandy Ann couldn't wrap her brain around any of it anymore, and slept until mid-morning, when she was fitted with her large and cumbersome cast that included her right shoulder and armpit. Then a nurse instructed her how to dress herself and bathe. *Bathe?* There's a good joke, she thought, given conditions in their little fortress home. The nurse told Jakob to bring her back in after six weeks for a recheck and possible cast removal. Being that it was only a crack in the bone, it wasn't serious, but because it was in the upper arm, any motion could prevent healing or make it worse. She was in for a clunky good time!

Back on Sokroshera Island, in the little community camped out in the old fort, the day began with the giddy realization that the town of Sokroshera Cove was going to be rebuilt. The town was going to have a cannery (on a barge, but still), it was slated to have a new school, and it was possibly going to be famous with the finding of not only the missing Monk's body but now his treasure as well. Everyone felt it was a sign of some kind that the things originally sent to help set up a church on the island had been found at this time in their history, when they were indeed hungry to build one.

The villagers were *meant* to build a Church after all these years, several of them said. After all, they were the generation that had seen the revelation of all things hidden. And whether they put it in those exact words or not, they also felt they were nearing the end of the town's ancient rebellion. They all awoke ready to work to make it all happen. Up in the fort, there was a surge of activity. By mid-morning, Mr. Lindseth and Windy Bazaroff, with a lot of help from Ward, had disconnected the broken end of the old army mess hall from the intact end, and using some of that lumber and parts of the sagging rec hall on the hill above them, had framed in a wall. Seeing that the floor beneath the part that collapsed was still sturdy, they built a kellydoor beside their new wall and built a stairway, then *pagooked* a real door from the rec hall, so kids could come to school without passing through the old army kitchen and pantry. That space was being used as storage for all the salvaged cans and jars and whatnot that they were still eating. By the end of the day, the men had replaced every broken window in the intact end of the building, even if it meant cutting a different sized hole for each frame. When they were done, the building looked like it had been built by a committee, with two different sizes of windows at random intervals on the side facing the old road. Nobody cared.

Quiet and patient Alice Selivanoff had volunteered to take over most of the laundry duties, and now had an almost permanent tub of water heating on whatever fire or stove was handy. Gail or Carla frequently helped her, but her most dependable help was from her own twins, Paris and Sonya, and their best friends, Barbara and April. Not only didn't they mind getting their hands wet, they also were near wizards at getting stubborn grass and grease stains out, usually using nothing more complicated than various bars of soap that people had scrounged from the wrecked homes of the village site. They made good use of a fine washboard Eagle found near the creek.

The only downside to Alice's Laundromat was the certain and guaranteed duty of bringing buckets of water up from the lake. This task fell upon any able-bodied soul who happened to pass by while Alice and her crew were running the laundry operation. The "Holy Terrors" were by far the best at avoiding the duty, having already forged a fine trail in the forest on both sides of the kitchen area, where you could get where you wanted to go and yet remain just out of sight beyond the mossy mounds in the trees. Suddenly the whole hillside was back in the pioneer days. In many ways, their life would have been no different if they were in the village at the time of the lost Monk.

There were a few small children in the little hillside community, and Carla Bazaroff and her sister-in-law Anya seemed to be doing most of the care giving. Betty, Laura, and Gail were handling all of the cooking and some of the laundry duties, with Laura taking regular trips down the hill to staff the little radio room in Mr. Faltrip's apartment for a couple of hours every morning. But the little ones certainly did not run wild. Carla kept them entertained with a skill that bordered on genius. Anya, with twice as many kids of her own as Carla, seemed to be taking notes from her younger sister-in-law. Anya was making up for lost time, both with Jakob Pedersen and with being a mother. And she was learning fast.

When the weather turned rainy, Carla took the little ones into the two-room bunker's outer hallway, with a bag of the most outlandish of the donated clothes, and the kids played dress-up. Then they played "duck, duck, goose" until they were bored. Carla could come up with the most amazing and kid-centered stories, always including each of them in the action. Eventually, Anya came up with a few variations of her own. One innovation involved taking over the back part of the "honey bucket" Quonset with a large tub of hot, soapy water, and telling a sea story that somehow resulted in all of the young ones getting a nice bath. She made a game out of helping the kids dry off in the unheated and drafty old building. Even Carla was impressed with that.

Sometime in mid-afternoon, Mr. Hansen and Danny drove up, with the wood stove from his sagging plywood house in the village dangling from the cables of the boom truck. Earlier, the men had laid some planks on the softest part of the road through the dip, and that seemed to work. Even though the Dodge made it across with its load, the planks had already cracked before the tires hit solid roadbed. The quick fix had been good enough for one trip through, but they all knew they were pressing their luck.

When they arrived on the hill, Danny did a quick check of the stove's firebox, and removed some ashes and soot once he'd lowered it to the ground. He grabbed some helpers, and they quickly carried the stove into the old mess hall. Soon they had placed it mid-room along the back wall, and cut a hole in the side of the mess hall for the stovepipe. Then from the back of the truck Danny produced a large pile of stovepipe sections, and by the time Howie, Windy, and Ward completed their framing and window work, the stove was crackling merrily, with a fine stack of chopped wood and logs nearby, and a Blazo box full of kindling beside that. Several grateful residents of the fort initiated the stove in the most appropriate way possible: they took turns warming their hands over the hot cooktop. There were smiles all around at this tiny hint of normalcy.

With the return of Brother Toma, Mr. Hansen had insisted that the nicest place to sleep was in his office down in the superintendent's house. He set Brother Toma up there, over his objections. Meanwhile, Mr. Selivanoff, driving the Lindseth jeep, the light plant, extension cord, and floodlights that they'd used for the talent night up to the cliffside fort. Marty had found a long, unused extension cord in the trailer that housed the Onan that was powering the superintendent's house. So Marty and Billy Jr. brought Brother Toma up from the apartment, then collected Herman and Judson, and spent most of the day up in the cliffside fort. The longer extension cords they'd found allowed Billy Jr. to put the small gas generator outside the door of the bunker, and downwind, too. This made for much better working conditions. The generator's gas engine made only a quiet purr in the bunker's hallway, and almost no sound at all in the bunker's mess hall. The panels of soundproofing on the ceiling actually made it hard to hear quiet conversation, which Judson was grateful for after their earsplitting experience of grinding the blast door open in the bare concrete foyer.

Marty was one of the best men in town with a fillet knife, a talent he had allowed to be overshadowed by his dubious reputation as a distiller of fine *mukoola*. Now, however, he was happy to put his talents to use helping Brother Toma delicately cut open and unwrap all the carefully sewn sealskin coverings from the Monk's treasure. Marty and Brother Toma found each package to be a challenge. After opening two of the packages and finding Ikons, Brother Toma asked Marty to open the next package from the opposite end, rather than cutting open the binding. "Some museum might be interested in how these were shipped," he explained.

The packages were masterpieces of global shipping techniques, circa 1839. From the outside in, the way Brother Toma and Marty unwrapped them, they all had an outer layer of sealskin, folded and sewn tight to discourage moisture at the seams, since the skins were already watertight. Under the sealskin were several inches of wrapped burlap in sections four to six feet long, followed by another half-inch thick layer of what was possibly linen, in lengths that varied from six to eight feet long. Then just above the surface of each Ikon, there were thin strips of wood, to keep the cloth from rubbing on the painted surfaces. Protecting the frames, little rolls of linen that looked like bandages held the strips of wood so that they could not touch

or scrape anything. These items had been packed with painstaking care, and everyone in the bunker unpacked them with equal reverence.

Even in the harsh light provided by four glaring searchlights, which didn't come close to illuminating the whole room, the men could see that the Ikons were in a remarkable state of preservation, "No worse for wear than the Ikons hanging in unheated churches all over Alaska," remarked Herman, who had seen the Ikons in the beautiful Karluk church. He and Judson were helping by removing the yards of cloth and folding them, placing them in piles in the far corner of the room. Occasionally they helped to move the floodlights as needed. Everyone tried to keep track of where the extension cords snaked across the floor. Both Judson and Herman occasionally asked questions when they saw the objects that emerged from the sealskin packages.

The first Ikon unwrapped was of the Madonna and Child (as Catholics might refer to it) or the *Theotokos*, in the terms of the Orthodox churches. In this Ikon, the Christ Child was cradled tenderly in Mary's left arm, her right hand pointing toward her Son, whose tiny hand was uplifted in blessing. Both Mother and Child gazed rather solemnly out from the Ikon. Brother Toma explained that no Russian Orthodox Church is without at least one *Theotokos* Ikon. The next Ikon, which the men slid out from the back, opposite the sewn seam to preserve its packing, was one of the *oklad* Ikons, this one of the Annunciation. With the care of a surgeon, Brother Toma and Marty slid off the tarnished but intact silver version of the image, which had been carefully pounded into a near duplicate of the Ikon beneath. As usual with such paintings, the Ikon underneath shone with bright colors except for small circles of discoloration where the faces had been allowed to show through the silver, and thus had been subjected to many generations of candle and oil-lamp smoke.

Brother Toma carefully replaced the silver *oklad* covering and set the Ikon on a table behind him, next to the others that had been unwrapped. He was slowly moving down the table, left to right, in whatever order the packages had been removed from the cave. The next thing on the table was a large, almost square wooden box. He called Billy Jr. over, and the three adults consulted on the best way to open the locked box. "Even if we had a key, it's not likely to open after all these years," remarked Billy Jr. Marty added, "It's what's inside that matters anyways, right? We c'n always clean up the box later if people're interested in it." Brother Toma agreed, and Judson looked at Herman and nodded, too. They both were pleased at how helpful and knowledgeable the town's previous bad boys were turning out to be.

With the small hand tools borrowed from Mr. Lindseth's toolbox in the jeep, the men had the box ajar in no time. The hinge was frozen in place, and they didn't want to break it. Billy Jr. went back out to the jeep and brought back a familiar blue and yellow can: WD-40. "Well, using that would be highly unorthodox, now wouldn't it?" said Brother Toma, with a sly smile aimed at Judson and Herman. It was the first time they'd ever heard him joke, and they were still laughing when with a pronounced squeak, the lid opened. Marty held the lid open, because the old

hinges probably could no longer support the weight of the heavy wood, while Brother Toma and Billy Jr. removed the contents. They made a pile of several nondescript bundles of burlap, and Marty closed the empty box.

This time the burlap wrapping was more haphazard, and it took awhile for the men to unwrap the long strips hung randomly around the objects inside. When Brother Toma finally got down to the first object, he pulled out an ornate silver censer with a long silver chain. The decorative ridges and ripples and occasional silver beading made it by far the most beautiful object they had yet uncovered in terms of pure craftsmanship. "Beautiful things for a beautiful purpose," explained Brother Toma, when Judson let out a low whistle of astonishment. The other objects he removed were almost as ornate and intricate: two hanging lamps called *lampadas* that serve as votives near an Ikon, wrought in ornate silver with gold accents. The last item in the box was the largest and heaviest, a tall, ornately carved silver chalice. Each side had images of saints or lovely engravings of the Orthodox cross. This cup was for Holy Communion, and Judson recognized it as similar in size to the much simpler chalice used by his grandfather on his mom's side in his Lutheran church.

They were not even halfway through the packages on the tables, and already there was an impressive treasure arrayed before them. When Judson remarked on that, Brother Toma agreed, but said, "It's a treasure of faith. Without the eyes of the Spirit, these are just pretty art pieces or just pieces of wood and metal. These were all made, and given, to focus us on the things of Heaven. I feel sorry for anyone who misses that, because if they do, they've missed everything important about these treasures." Brother Toma patted Judson on the back and smiled. "But you already know that, don't you, Jay-Jay?" Both Judson and Herman nodded, and Judson noticed that so had Marty and Billy Jr. Herman frowned for a moment, and then spoke almost as if he were thinking aloud. "But if the rebels on the island wanted to get rid of the Monk and stop what he was trying to do, then why did they keep all the Ikons?" Brother Toma sighed. It seemed that the whole story of Father Zachar and his enemies was just too sad to think about. Finally, he said, "I am glad they did keep them, but probably it's because they somehow thought they could sell them. If so, then God used their greed to actually *preserve* them!" Billy Jr. seemed about to join the discussion, when suddenly the lights began to flicker. Billy Jr. interrupted, "Time to gas 'er up again! How about lunch?" Everyone thought that was a great idea, especially since they were about to be in the dark, and scurried outside before the gas generator ran dry.

After a hearty bag lunch courtesy of Betty and Laura, they were ready to think about how to safely store and transport the items they'd already unwrapped. Billy Jr. had a plan. After he'd gassed up the light plant again, Billy Jr. drove down the hill and returned a half-hour later with a hand saw, a pile of lumber and scraps of plywood, a stack of the rattiest of their blankets (spares of course) and Marla. Brother Toma gave her a short tour of the things they'd already uncovered, and Marla's reaction was one of amazement, as theirs had been. After looking them over and hearing something about them, she turned to her father and said, "I want to learn more about all this Church stuff." "Well, so do I, Marla. Maybe we can learn together soon."

Brother Toma just looked at Marla and nodded, unfazed by her unconventional language. He saw sincerity in her eyes. Billy Jr. turned and left to bring in some of the wood he'd brought. Judson was soon amazed and pleased to see father and daughter working together to measure, cut, build boxes, line them with cut strips of blankets, and slide in the precious Ikons that were emerging from the sealskin packages. Then they stacked the wooden crates carefully against the wall, and covered them with the tarp that Marla had used to help hide Judson's phonograph on talent night. Considering the fact that the whole island was scrounging and scratching for any means of simple survival, the skillfully constructed little crates were remarkable in their practical purpose.

In a quick consultation with Billy Jr., Brother Toma agreed, as frustrating as it may be, to unwrap only as many things as they could make crates for, so that none of the treasures would be left unprotected. By the time the last drop of gas was speeding through the portable generator's engine, they were just sealing up the last of the crates. Tomorrow they'd all have to come up and do it all again, and they were all eager to do so. Judson and Herman decided to walk down to their little encampment. Marty, Brother Toma, and father and daughter Selivanoff hopped in the jeep. On the drive downhill, Brother Toma explained as best he could what some of the Ikons meant, and a good many Bible stories came Marla's way. Judson and Herman, grateful to be back in the clear open air, talked for a long time about all the things they'd seen, and wondered if Sandy Ann would be back tomorrow. It just didn't seem the same without her.