

Chapter 19

Sunday, April 5, 1964: Sokroshera Island, Alaska

On Sunday, two days after the big aftershock and the catching of the robbers, the whole town felt almost in a party mood, sensing their luck beginning to change. That is, until breakfast. As they staggered over to the picnic tables, Betty was in near constant apologetic mode. "These are some of the C-rations we got, folks. They're guaranteed to keep body and soul together, but that's about it. Please eat up, because it's all we're serving this morning." Into the bowls they'd scrounged from the village below was poured a steaming mess of what the can lid called "Lima Beans with Ham and Applesauce." It was worse than its title implied, even though Betty had added some water and spices to try to help it out. Not too far different in color from the cow pies that frequently graced the roads, the slop seemed to have picked up none of the good qualities of any of its ingredients.

Herman took one look at his bowl and said, in mock sincerity, "Shall I eat this, or have I already?" Marty observed, "This would have made a nice, hot meal for our prisoners! 'Specially if they'd caused us any more trouble." They all struggled to force it down. Danny joined the group at the table a little later than the rest of them, so Sandy Ann decided to tease him a bit. "Uncle Danny, this is Gail's new recipe. She says one bite and you'll *have* to marry her." Then they all waited for his first taste.

Danny just took a spoonful and said, "I wouldn't eat this unless I was *starving* on some hillside after a major disaster! So, can I have some more?" That got as big a laugh as anyone could muster first thing in the morning. Danny apparently would eat anything, and soon cleaned his bowl. As he scraped it and licked the spoon, he looked at Judson and winked. But Judson, whose least-favorite edible commodity on the planet was lima beans, borrowed something he'd heard Mr. Faltrip say about his Army days and declared, "How can we eat 'S.O.S.' if we don't even have a shingle?"

Laura, sitting beside Barbara across from him, began to giggle. But Mr. Hansen looked at his son, shook his head, and sharply stopped that line of talk. He launched into a little speech about how, of course, everyone was trying their best here, and some things might be harder to take than others. So like a *teacher*, Judson thought, and *almost* rolled his eyes. But in the end, he just stared at the gelatinous dark gray-green mass in his bowl, kept any further thoughts to himself, and tried another bite. Laura defended Judson, sort of. "Do you notice how he gets right to the edge of saying bad words and then backs off? That's real talent, Jeffrey!" Laura continued to giggle as she watched Betty sit down to eat her own helping of the now famous "Lima Beans with Ham and Applesauce." The rest of the breakfast crowd held their breath.

Mrs. Lindseth took a large mouthful, and seemed to take a good long time to swallow it. All eyes were focused on her, and no one spoke for the duration. She finally looked up after concentrating hard on her task. All she said was something about "C-ration-induced morning sickness," and the fact that they needed real supplies, and real soon. She was certainly right about that! And then she apologized again. Teasing season was over, because Judson noticed several people giving Betty hugs as they left. He gave her a hug too. She and her helpers had been extraordinarily creative in staving off hunger in the worst of circumstances.

Judson never found out whether the "Holy Terrors" had eaten any breakfast, and if so, what. But a few minutes after breakfast cleanup, in which Judson and Herman discovered that even the dogs were reluctant to eat what was left in the bowls, up ran Eagle and Jake, very excited. Jake appeared to be hiding something behind his back, under his coat, which made him look very odd as he ran. "Look, Mr. Hansen, look what Jake found!" "Yeah, I was over by the lake and I found this under a piece of the cannery roof. It still works!" With that, Jake pulled the object from under his coat. The sharp clear notes reintroduced the school bell, its handle now scuffed, and the brass a bit muddy around the edges, but fully functional.

"You know this means we have to start school now, don't you?" said Mr. Hansen, a twinkle in his eye. Eagle turned toward Jake, saying, "Why did you have to..." and was about to slug him, when Anya, emerging from the kitchen tent, said, "Son, you didn't think you were on summer vacation yet, did you?" Mr. Hansen took this opportunity to make a general announcement. "As you know, we now have a place that could serve as a temporary school. And yesterday morning, a skiff with plenty of spare textbooks arrived from Ouzinkie. In all the excitement, Laura didn't get a chance to show me the shipment until this morning. So...today is Sunday, and tomorrow, on Monday..." He dramatically cleared his throat and adopted his most authoritarian teacher voice, "...we will begin regular classes at the Sokroshera Cove Mess Hall Number Two, Hillside Campus!"

This news was *not* greeted with thunderous applause. Nonetheless, Judson felt glad; some kind of routine would be good for all of them. Since the day of the disaster, their lives had been full of terrifying, exciting, and often very difficult surprises, one after another. It was time once again for some stability. Surprisingly, all of the older kids felt the same way; he could see nods and even hear sighs of relief. None of them had been afforded a proper chance to process what they'd experienced, and the ebb and flow of class work would provide that, especially with a teacher like Mr. Hansen. It might even be nice to sit and fill their brains for a change, instead of hauling lumber, fetching water, pulling treasure out of caves, and catching robbers.

Laura interrupted Judson's thoughts. "I heard from Mr. Faltrip by way of Marty, who was down on his boat this morning and took his radio call. He'll be back this afternoon sometime. I've been asked by Mr. Faltrip to announce a village meeting for everyone who can make it..." There was a general giggle at this; what else have we got to do, huh? "...tonight in the mess hall over here sometime after supper. Mr. Selivanoff has brought his generator down from the fort, and we'll have lights

and everything!" "Ooh, lights!" said somebody in mock awe, to more giggles. What a life they were experiencing right then! Laura continued, "Jeffrey, could you ring the bell after supper when we're ready?" "Don't you ring his bell *already*?" said Marla, softly. Judson heard it and punched her lightly in the ribs. Laura heard it too, and turned a bit pink around the edges; Judson thought it looked very cute indeed. I guess adults are *susceptible*, too, he reasoned, pulling another Sandy Ann vocabulary word out of his memory.

Jeffrey nodded at Laura's request, and decided to leave the bell in the field kitchen until needed. Laura smiled at him, and then dismissed everyone. The "Holy Terrors," the Discoverers of the Bell, scampered off for a few more hours of carefree freedom. Jeffrey whispered something in Laura's ear. She nodded, and then looked up at him with a smile, "After my radio schedule. And I'll bring Barbara, if that's ok." It was. Jeffrey and Laura smiled at each other again. Something is definitely going on between those two, thought Judson.

Herman, Rinny, and Sandy Ann were wandering over in his direction, and they would all be off on some adventure soon. As Laura headed back toward the field kitchen, Judson asked her, "Sorry to be such a worrier, but where is the treasure? I don't see Danny's truck anywhere..." Laura suddenly gave Judson a big hug. "Oh, Jay-Jay, what would we do around here without you? Without all of you?" She looked at each of them in turn. "Danny and Jakob and Howie unloaded everything into the 'jailhouse bunker' right after the prisoners left. Jakob Lindseth found part of a cannery door down by the beach that had a padlock on it, and sure enough, it's one that he still had a key to. Ain't being *pagooks* just wonderful? So the bunker doors are locked up tight, thanks to the chain and the padlock. That'll do until we can think of some other place out of sight to keep everything. I think the whole thing makes us nervous now..." Her voice trailed off.

Judson nodded. He knew how she felt. How could they handle such a precious responsibility while they were scraping for their lives up here in cold, musty Fort Sheplen? The cave had been in some ways ideal, especially compared to anything they had available on the island now. The fort on the cliff was damaged, and far too open to the elements. Judson could think of only one other place. As Laura walked to the kitchen tent, Judson shared his idea with Herman and the others. They liked his proposal, and rushed off to find supplies.

When they all collected back by the tables moments later, Rinny came up and apologized; Anya needed her help today with the little ones, since Carla was feeling a bit under the weather and was resting on her cot at 'Bandage Man' Jakob's insistence. Seeing that she was needed, Rinny seemed content to stay behind and help out with the little ones. When she left, Herman actually looked relieved. Judson was relieved, too, but was curious as to why Herman would react that way. Unfortunately, so far Rinny had been a distraction to the group. Everyone seemed to sense that, and no one wanted to admit it. In fact, no one actually said anything until the three of them were halfway up the hill. But they were all thinking about it, and about what they should say.

Sandy Ann turned to Herman and suddenly broke in as though they'd already been in mid-conversation. "She's a really good person, Herman. And Lord knows she's pretty. *Whoof—Tee!* You're lucky and you know it. But she's... she's all *dizzy* over you right now, and we need thinkers, don't we. Mebbe we give 'er some time, haw?" Judson decided not to bring up how Rinny had appeared to be on the verge of being *extremely* unhelpful when they'd first spotted the robbers. He nodded and said, "Sandy Ann, that's pretty correct, I think. Rinny — Miss Kateryn Alice Pankoff — has turned out to be a lot *bigger* person than the one we first met, that's for damn sure! We need to be careful to include her in everything we can. Do you think she'll understand if sometimes she's *not* included?" What he'd said was very blunt. Suddenly it was as though the very future of the 'Sokroshera Cove Secrets Discovery Team' hung in the balance. Judson caught himself holding his breath. Give him time, he thought. Herman'll figure this out, like he always does.

Herman paused for a long minute, and when he spoke, he was unusually forthright. "She's almost too much for me right now. When she sat close to me in the truck, I was thinking—here I am with a priceless treasure in the back of a truck I can barely drive, trying to escape people who could have shot us—and all she can think about is sticking her nose in my neck! Normally that would've been amazing, but... well, when I finally got parked safely, checked the cargo and saw I hadn't ruined anything, and *then* made sure that the truck wasn't gonna roll anywhere, she was pretty much in tears. I was, too, but from the pressure of trying to save the treasure, all resting on *me*."

Herman shuddered, collected his thoughts, and continued. "Well, I certainly wasn't ready right then to handle one of those 'don't you love me at all?' speeches. I thought those only happened in movies, but no such luck. She was heartsick, and wouldn't let it go." Herman turned to look Judson in the eye. "Remember how you told me once she had a low opinion of herself? Well, she really does. Anything that looks like she's being turned down just ties her into little knots. So halfway down the hill to meet you, I couldn't think of anything else to do. I told her I thought she was beautiful and amazing. Then I just turned to her and I kissed her. She seemed to calm down a lot after that." Herman seemed at a loss for words, so they let him think it out. His expression conveyed his confusion. He wasn't embarrassed at kissing Rinny; he was perplexed as to what he should do next, as to what all of this meant. This was brand new territory for him, and he obviously didn't feel ready. In a moment, he continued. "And *now* you know why we were holding hands when you saw us."

It was the longest speech Judson had ever heard from Herman, at least about himself, and certainly the most mature. Herman looked like he was almost ready to cry. Who at his age is ready to be in a serious relationship, especially with someone so vulnerable? Rinny had been deeply hurt when her relatives had sent her away, and those feelings of rejection, from not that long ago, still haunted her. Herman was good, decent, and solid. But still, that was a lot for a mere sixth-grader, even a mature one, to have to take on. Judson remembered his own tearful conversation with his dad on Valentines Day, and completely understood how hard this must have been to express. When have any of us had any private time to really *talk*?

Judson mused. He stayed silent at Herman's confessions, and merely nodded, keeping all his thoughts to himself. Too big a reaction would have clammed Herman up for good, and hurt a good friend. He hoped Sandy Ann could stay quiet, too. She couldn't. But when she spoke, her focus was on Judson, not Herman and Rinny.

Sandy Ann had turned a bit pink around the edges when Herman had mentioned the kissing, and now she asked, "That kissing thing—is it magically supposed to work on all girls or something?" Judson was suddenly taken aback, couldn't think of anything else to say, and replied rather clumsily, "I dunno. Does it?" Slightly pink turned to red immediately, and Herman gasped, "You mean you guys, who I thought were actually the most—what's the word for 'just friends'— uh, *platonic* couple on the island—you *kissed* her? When?"

"Oh, it's a long, boring story, and why did you think we were platonic?" returned Judson, desperately trying to deflect the question. Herman waved his palm in Judson's face. "Oh, no you don't. This is the topic, and this is what you'll talk about! We've all gotten close to each other through all these adventures. I saw you holding hands after the little quakes and thought it was friendly and sweet. I saw Sandy Ann blush sometimes around you, but heck, she blushes if you only *pretend* to tease her. C'mon, spill it. When did you guys kiss?"

Sandy Ann, in spite of her famous ability to change color, stepped up for this one, and explained her horrible night at the Valentines Day party, her deathly fear of losing Judson, and how he'd been *such* a gentleman. When she was done, Herman pounded Judson on the back and said, "That was amazingly smooth, Jay-Jay. Amazingly smooth." Judson nodded, and then remarked, "You know, my Dad said almost exactly the same thing when I told him. And besides, you were just as 'smooth,' as you say. You told Rinny just what she needed to hear, and I'll bet you meant every bit of it, too. I know *I* did!"

As Sandy Ann returned to red, Herman ignored another opportunity to tease, and just marveled, "You told your *dad*?" then softer, almost to himself, he added, "I wish I had..." But he didn't finish. Judson thought he heard Herman mumble, "I wonder if he'd listen to *me*?" but he wasn't quite sure, and stayed out of it. Judson mused: I keep saying this, but it's true... Good to have friends like this—*really* good.

The three friends actually did remember the practical purpose for their little hike. Herman brought them back to it. "We're nearing the summit. Let's watch for any signs of... of the kind of damage that the other side of the mountain got. Don't want to go sledding down some new hole to the bay if I can avoid it." Judson shuddered, with a sudden pang of panic in his chest. He remembered Marla's awestruck, fearful reaction on the cliff. He was still plenty afraid of heights, and had no wish to look over the edge of that damaged road again. Ever. He was even sure that he'd eventually have a nightmare about being buried by those rotting fur pelts, too. Sometimes in his mind, he could still smell them, and when he did, he felt like gagging. Besides, the thought of being in that bunker when the cave collapsed gave

him the willies even when he was outside in the sunshine. They'd been through a lot. Judson fervently hoped they wouldn't find any more scary damage anywhere!

The friends turned left and walked up the bare rock of the road that had meant so much to Pariscovia and Owen. Somehow, that seemed even longer ago now. The kids had lived several lifetimes in the last week or so. They passed the last trees and came out into the clear, out to the most spectacular view on all of Sokroshera Island, at least from a road. The day was becoming steadily cloudier, and by morning, they might have some more rain. Strike that—knowing the island as he did now, Judson *knew* they'd have rain. Their task loomed insistently in the back of their minds. Where would be the best, safest, and driest place to put the treasure?

They hurried on. "No problems to this road at all," remarked Judson, looking down at the solid roadbed beneath them. "Mind if we look in on your dad?" Judson realized that he was almost talking like Barbara now, but Herman just nodded. Stepping carefully down the hill, they soon saw that the mound next to the viewing rock was secure, and its strong white cross still stood undamaged. Herman's voice was a bit shaky, but he said, "See, no damage anywhere except where we *already* saw some. It seems the quakes didn't start anything new. Good." "No jokes," said Judson, getting a giggle from Sandy Ann and another pound on the back from Herman. "Ok, couple more things to check," said Herman. Forevermore, Herman will be the tour guide for this mountain, as it should be, and no matter how much I learn about it, thought Judson.

Herman continued walking, leading them on around to the gun circle, and then they hiked up to the summit lookouts, ignoring the tunnel to the inner hallway for the moment. Again they saw no damage, and inside the "tripod" lookouts they saw not a crack, except for occasional old ones still sporting their tiny white stalactites. Even the radar tower seemed to have stayed nicely bolted to its concrete supports. "Good," Herman remarked again. "Let's look at the lake for a minute," he said, and headed east, over the summit, and down the far side to the little bluff that overlooked Summit Lake.

"Well, *this* is new," Herman said with a low whistle as he looked down at the lake from the high side of the shoreline trail. The little lake, deep though it may have been, was now lower by at least three feet. The huge slabs of broken surface ice looked like a mosaic that someone had assembled in a pie tin, some sections still propped up near where the old shoreline had been. Up here, no tidal waves could scatter the broken surface ice, so the fragments had stayed close to their original position. "What happened to it?" asked Sandy Ann, and the boys remembered that she had not been with them when the cave collapsed. Herman nodded in recognition. "We were right; the water from this lake feeds into the cistern. Since the ceiling collapse in the cave, it's been leaking out faster. I'll bet if we went back to the cliffside fort, the bottom floor would be wet or even flooded now," said Herman. "No thanks!" said Judson, "*Whooftie!* Uh-uh!" said Sandy Ann, almost simultaneously.

"Then we'd best be sure that the fort up here on this side, the ladder room, is still dry," said Herman, and turned back toward the lookouts at the peak. Reminded once again of the purpose of their journey, the three went back into the central lookout structure, the one with the infamous ladder. "I thought so, guys. Look, this ladder hole can be sealed from up here!" Herman closed a rusty round steel hatch, which screeched in protest. "This one was designed to lock from the *inside*, in case the top of the mountain was overrun, so the soldiers on duty up here could escape down the ladder and through the tunnel to the cliffside fort," said Herman, momentarily back in the same narrator mode he had used on Judson's first visit in August. That day had gone very badly at this stage, and Judson didn't like what he was about to hear.

"We have to go down this, and lock it from the inside. Then we can inspect the ladder room and see if it would be suitable." Sandy Ann was shaking her head vigorously, and not from nervousness. "Aren't you forgetting something? I have all the... uh... *manual dexterity* of a brick," she reminded them, turning her huge cast their direction. "Oh... yeah," said Herman, meekly. "Sorry." They were probably pushing it to have her along on this hike as it was, but why stop now. Pushing it is what they always did, thought Judson. Then Herman thought for a moment, and offered to go down alone. Judson was considerably relieved. "Ok," he said brightly. "We'll meet you in the ladder room. If *anything* looks funny, Herman, go back out the top, and same for us... if anything looks damaged at all, we'll go back out the tunnel. Agreed?"

Judson waited until everyone had nodded, then until Herman had his dependable yellow plastic flashlight turned on, had entered the shaft, and had locked the metal hatch with a loud squeak and a solid clunk. Then he and Sandy Ann carefully made their way down the rocky summit trail toward the artillery rings and the long tunnel that led to the ladder room. Funny how sometimes it's harder going downhill than up. It was a short trail, only a few hundred feet really, but Judson, concentrating on watching Sandy Ann pick her way down behind him, slipped on a loose rock and clobbered his left elbow against a boulder outcropping. He'd only scraped the skin, but shortly he'd have a fine bruise there.

Once she saw that he had not duplicated her crash in the cave, Sandy Ann just quipped, "Gotta keep your appendages on rotation, like I told you at the skate lake!" What a bank full of shared experiences they had saved up, marveled Judson, but he just held his left elbow and said "Oww!" as they descended the last few feet and stepped lightly onto the old roadbed. "What's the word you used when you were in pain?" Sandy Ann understood, and thought back to the fall in the cave. "*Abahtchahuck!*" Judson nodded. "Yeah, that's the one. It sounds like this feels!" He chuckled to himself and added, "Just don't ask me to say it."

Within moments, he had his flashlight on and they were walking down the long corridor to meet the ladder room. Judson led Sandy Ann by her good hand. A few feet in, they reached the little jog designed to discourage invaders and took a moment to inspect it, not noticing any new cracks or signs of distress in the concrete. They walked down the rest of the passageway, again noting no problems,

and then reached the ladder room. Unlike before, the room was fully dark; there was no more dim circle of light from the now-closed hatch far above. But there was no gleam from Herman's flashlight either.

Judson shone his light toward the base of the ladder, expecting any second to see Herman standing before them. But around the base of the ladder lay the remains of Herman's flashlight, in a zillion pieces. Well, not quite, but if they had not known what it was, they might not have guessed. Herman had lost hold of the thing somewhere near the top of the shaft. A drop of three and a half stories to a thick concrete floor is more than enough to obliterate a yellow plastic flashlight. But... where was Herman? He could have reached them by now. *Should* have. "Herman!" The two crowded as close to the ladder as they could, and strained to listen.

"I'm sorry, guys... I was a klutz," said a dim, rather shaky voice far above. Herman had frozen in place after losing the flashlight, and didn't seem to want to move. "I feel... like you did, Jay-Jay, remember? Could you come up and show... uh... help me down? Just knowing you're below me... I'll be fine." Herman seemed to be having trouble talking, and wasn't speaking very loudly either, as though he were somehow out of breath. Judson was worried for him, knowing a good deal of how he was feeling. Except Herman was in total darkness, and alone—that *had* to be worse; that had to be *awful*. "Well, Sandy Ann ain't gonna come getcha," said Judson, as brightly as he could. "Listen, I've got the only flashlight now—is it ok if Sandy Ann just shines up the shaft for us? I'd hate to lose our only light!" That statement had come out badly if being a comfort to Herman was his goal. Judson muttered "Eeef" under his breath, shaking his head, angry for saying it that way. He waited a moment, holding his breath, until he heard a feeble "Ok." Then Herman added, "Keep talking, ok? *Please?*" "You got it. Chatterbox coming right up. Literally."

He heard a snort from Sandy Ann, who said, "Jay-Jay! How can you joke *everywhere*? You are for sure crazy!" "That reminds me of what 'The Falcon' told me when I was translating what he wrote," said Judson, and used his climb to recount the details of the interrogation, which he hadn't had time or opportunity to share with anyone earlier. It was easier to tell a story than to think of climbing that long, narrow shaft in the dark! Telling it, the story seemed to be so far-fetched as to warrant the 'crazy' label, but of course all of it had happened, and only night-before-last. He tried his best to ignore the 'head in the garbage can' sound of his voice in the narrow concrete shaft. As he climbed, he mentally kept his body in mind: left hand, left foot, right hand, right foot. His friends heard him pausing in his storytelling every few seconds, but probably didn't know why. He sometimes went silent until he'd secured the top and bottom rung from the last move. His bruised elbow made it harder for him to move, but helped him keep his mind off his claustrophobia. In spite of Sandy Ann's attempt at illumination, not much was reaching the ladder. An occasional flash of dim light would appear on the sides of the shaft, and then his body would block the light as he moved positions.

Finally, Judson's head hit one of Herman's feet, dangling free. Then in a flash, he understood. Herman had nearly slipped trying to save his flashlight, and had

frozen, terrified, in a semi-slipped position until Judson arrived. Herman was probably lightheaded and having trouble breathing, just like had happened to Judson in nearly the same spot. Judson carefully secured his own other three appendages, and then used his right hand to place Herman's foot on the closest available rung. He gave up on telling any stories; that could wait. He tilted his head up in the dark and said as calmly as he could, "Awright, Herm. Down we go, one little step at a time. First, tell me how you're situated. Where is your right hand, above or below your head?"

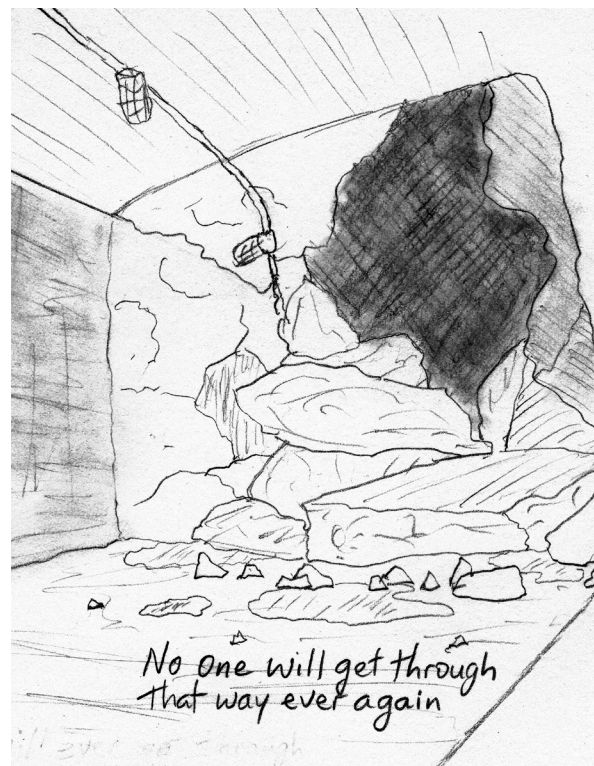
He continued like this until he had a clear mental picture of Herman's position on the ladder. Next he said, "Herman, I'm gonna go down one rung below you, so that you don't step on my hand. That wouldn't be fun, because I just bumped my elbow coming down the hill, *also* like a klutz. Is that ok?" Hearing a muffled assent, he descended one rung, and then called out "Left foot, left hand. Got it? Ok. Now right foot, right hand. Awright. Now..." and on until, almost by surprise, he had run out of ladder and was safe on the concrete floor of the ladder room. It almost felt funny to sense both feet touching the solid floor of the ladder room. Judson kept calling out until Herman was also standing before them.

Safe, and standing on the floor, Herman hugged both of them, a bit unsteady on his feet. Herman was now breathing heavily, and what he was saying came out almost as a pant. "I would have been fine... until my flashlight slipped... Then there was this god-awful crash... and total darkness... You know, my brain told me... told me there was nothing around me... but open space? I felt myself tilting and... leaning like a tree... in the wind... but it was all... in my head. I've been up that ladder dozens of times." Herman seemed to have more breath now. "I know I can reach out in any direction in that shaft and touch concrete. Just doing *that* would have kept me from falling. But I could *not* get..." Herman coughed, let out a very soft moan, and continued. "I could not get my body to cooperate."

Judson returned the hug. Suddenly a new flash of understanding swept over Judson. Based on Herman's position on the ladder when he froze, Judson guessed that Herman had been reading the part where he and his dad had signed the concrete wall of the shaft years before. He lost his flashlight just as he lost his father: suddenly and with no warning. In each case, the light had suddenly been snuffed out. Herman's brain had made an instant, visceral connection between the two, the grief and the fear combining in one horrifying instant. That was more than enough to freeze him there. It dawned on Judson that he himself had not been particularly scared this time—he'd been too focused on something he just *had* to do. But he kept quiet about that, and about what Herman had been doing when he lost his flashlight, too. Some things just don't need saying. And truth be told, Judson still felt just a little embarrassed at how much he had said, and how boldly, on Friday with the robbers. He hoped the adults wouldn't talk about that anymore, or ask him any questions. Judson didn't feel like being a chatterbox, especially not right now. It's not really my second nature to be the center of things, he realized.

After a minute or two to catch his breath and get his hands to stop shaking, Herman rallied with a deep breath and a sigh. Judson certainly understood, having

met that ladder shaft before. Herman asked, "Can I borrow the light for a moment? Let's look down the other hallway." Both Judson and Herman knew what they'd find, remembering the large plume of dust rushing out of the lower entrance after the quake, but they didn't know exactly where it would be. "You ok with going down there?" asked Judson, and Herman said, "Yup!" Sandy Ann was probably unaware that this part of the tunnel had collapsed, and it was just as well. They walked down the sloping tunnel. Almost immediately after the walls turned from concrete to bare granite and started to slope more steeply downward, the flashlight illuminated a jumbled mass of huge boulders in front of them. Little pebbles crunched underfoot where the smooth concrete floor had been. Water was dripping from somewhere in the open space above. "Yikes! Why did we come down here again?" said a shaky-voiced Judson.



"End of the line," said Herman, matter-of-factly. "Point is, nobody's gettin' in that way, ever. And nobody's gettin' down my little terror tube either, until somebody crawls back up there and unlatches it. Terror tube. Hah!" he said, with an attempt at a laugh. The others managed to join him, but none of this had been funny at all. Judson collected himself and said, "There's a little water coming in down here, but we're way lower than the ladder room now, and the tunnel slopes downward even more from here. I don't think it'll flood up there." Herman agreed, and suggested, "So... let's go see if the outside blast door could be made secure. If it can, then we've got a safe and *inaccessible* place to put the Ikons and stuff. Now, do we all agree it's dry in the ladder room?" Judson did agree. He noticed a larger quantity of dust than before, and that this tunnel had looked like the dust-filled hallways in the cliffside bunker did when the cave collapsed. The dust might help to absorb whatever moisture was seeping into the lower, blocked section of the tunnel.

All of them agreed that the ladder room would work fine as a temporary storage site for the treasure. It would be much better than the big bunker down near the beach, which any visitor with a skiff could accidentally stumble across during a hike up the hill, and whose doors let in the damp sea air. This site was far more hidden and hard to get to. As Judson thought about it, he was thankful for the section of steep roadway that was mostly bare rock. To the casual hiker, it wouldn't even look like a road, and certainly wouldn't look important. The kids didn't notice that they'd sped up, but by the time the light from the tunnel told them that the entrance was near, they were almost at a trot. At the half-open blast door, Herman and Judson found that neither of them could open nor close it, but they thought that if the hinge could be broken free, it might be possible to lock the entrance securely. A wizard like Sandy Ann's dad should make easy work of it. Mr. Lindseth's trusty jeep tool kit probably had everything he would need.

When the three came out into the open air, they turned left from the gun circle, walking toward the face of the summit, and were surprised that it was already less than an hour before sunset. They'd spent longer in the hillside than they realized. The gathering clouds had assembled to make a spectacular display over Whale Island and the Kodiak mainland as the sun gradually descended behind them. The kids stood, taking deep breaths and taking in the glory of Pariscovia's favorite view. Someone remarked that it *had* been dry and dusty in there, and shortly thereafter, Judson and Sandy Ann both sneezed. Suddenly they heard a call from the direction of the viewing rock and Will Rezoff's grave. They turned down the road, and soon met up with Jeffrey, Laura, and Barbara. Jeffrey was holding Barbara's hand. And Laura's. That looked nice to all of the 'Discovery Team.'

Laura spoke first. "Where've you been? Any new treasures today? C'mon, kids, yer slackin' off!" She was teasing, naturally. Herman first told about the great storage spot they'd surveyed and prepared, and then about his misadventure in the terror tube. He had only gotten to the part when he dropped the flashlight, when Laura shuddered. "Ooof, I *hate* that place!" she said almost under her breath. Then Herman added, with a voice on the edge of tears, "Jay-Jay is the best brother anyone could have!" Jeffrey Hansen looked quizzically at his son, and then asked Herman, "And why is that?" It was a calm question, not a 'who broke this window' question, but Herman could not speak. Judson wouldn't tell his story for him, but Sandy would. "When Herman was stuck on the ladder, Jay-Jay went up after him and helped him down. He talked to him all the way to the floor. We had only one flashlight then." Sandy Ann nodded, satisfied that she'd told the whole story.

Herman gradually mustered the emotional energy to tell more. Judson stood ready to quiet Sandy Ann if she interrupted. After a long moment, he said slowly, "Do you know that I was reading the wall where Dad and I signed our names, right at the moment when I lost the flashlight? I was just looking at it and thinking of him when the flashlight slipped out of my hand. It's like... *that* reminded me of how I'd suddenly lost him, too. I was in complete dark, and all of a sudden, I couldn't move. I felt like I was in this huge, empty cave all alone. It hit me that Dad is really gone. I still have him here," Herman pointed to his head, then his heart, "but he's

really... *not* with us anymore, to talk to, to be with. That hurt, and made it *worse*... I could *not* move. I could barely breathe. My chest hurt like it was full of knives. It was... the weirdest thing." Herman's delivery almost recreated his breathless speech in the cave. He was silent for a moment. For once, Sandy Ann, catching Judson's cues, showed no desire to interrupt. Herman sighed. "Then Jay-Jay came and got me. I wasn't alone."

Herman seemed to change the subject next, but for him it was part of the same event. "And you know what else? On the hike up here, Jay-Jay told me about a really... uh... *private* thing that he talked to his dad about, and suddenly I really wished I had a dad to talk to. I know Dad is really gone, but *still*. I guess I need that..." His voice trailed off. Suddenly he looked apologetic, and glanced at his mother and Mr. Hansen. "Oops, I should stay out of your grown-up business—I'm sorry!" Herman looked stricken, afraid he'd hurt someone's feelings or ruined their moment. But he'd stated his opinion more clearly than ever before. Barbara ran over to him and gave him a hug. "I want a new daddy too. And I *found* one!" She calmly went back and resumed holding Jeffrey Hansen's hand. So much for staying out of the adults' business! Barbara was continuing to be more of a catalyst than a chaperone; Judson wondered for a second if he should find this little Cupid a set of wings and a bow and arrow. Not that he hadn't been hinting around himself, lately!

"I get the impression that any decision in that regard is gonna be made by this whole group, or it's gonna be made right out in front of everybody, or both," said Jeffrey, sounding almost as if he were in a classroom. Suddenly he laughed and shook his head. This *was* a unique situation, in every way. He turned toward Laura and smiled. Then he said much more softly, "Listen, Laura. We already know that we can dance around. We proved it at Jud's party. But we've been dancing around this one for a bit. Our kids, Owen—a lot of people have put pressure on us. I even heard Marla razzing us, but it was an 'isn't that sweet' kind of tease, not a 'what do you think you're doing' tease, if you get my meaning. I know how *I* feel, but I'd like *your* thoughts on this. Could you... I mean you're gonna be the wealthiest woman on several islands when Mr. Faltrip passes away, and I'm just a village schoolteacher. Seems like I don't bring a whole lot to this equation." He paused, and Judson realized for the first time just how much trouble his own father had with self-confidence. How brave, even foolhardy, his dad must feel to push through the acute pain of losing Kayah to cancer, and to dive into the strangeness of this—acquaintance? friendship? romance? —what is this thing?

Jeffrey Hansen's strangely worded, elongated and self-deprecating question hung in the air for only a split second. "If you're asking me to marry you, Mr. Jeffrey Hansen, then the answer is yes." Laura's voice was soft, her eyes shining. Sandy Ann was jumping up and down like little Jake, holding her cast with her good hand to avoid shaking it too much. "I can't clap very well with this cast," she complained to nobody in particular. Laura was now watching Jeffrey's face with an intensity Judson had never seen before. The waning sunlight made her look like some proud, powerful Amazon Warrior Princess—or more precisely, a proud, authoritative Alaskan woman—mostly the same thing, observed Judson. Her face relaxed into a wry smile. "Owen was right, you know, when he said that our late spouses couldn't

have come up with better choices if they were on the front porch with a checklist." Maybe it was Laura, too, who helped Herman develop his amazing recall. "That's just about word for word Owen, right there, Laura! I'll never forget that night!" admitted Jeffrey. In his mind's eye, Judson could suddenly see Owen's intense expression as he talked to the couple at his party, and he realized that Laura and Jeffrey remembered it just as vividly. Like everything else in their relationship, that scene had played out in full view of almost everybody. Even their first kiss was at the behest of the partygoers. Jeffrey had just been reassured that all of it had been real. Laura had said yes!

Suddenly Laura patted her old berry-picking coat and said, "Oh, sh... oh *shoot* ...oops, sorry kids." She fished around for a moment and pulled out a thick envelope with several large stamps on it. "The plane that brought Sandy Ann and that robber guy also brought a sack of mail. This was in it. I put it in my pocket to deliver to you. Oh, I'm so *bad* at remembering sometimes." "On the contrary, young lady, you seem to remember things at the most dramatic moments. Now since you've already said yes," at this he leaned over and kissed her, "we'll work out the mountain of details later. But sooner, rather than later, let's hope. Now lemme see that letter, please." Barbara had now walked over to Herman's side and said almost in a whisper, "Look at where we *are*!" "I *know*," said Herman. "Isn't it amazing?" Then she said something that Judson didn't quite overhear, but sounded like, "Do you think Grandma and Daddy are watching us?" Herman nodded, tears in his eyes, and gave his sister a big hug. Was Barbara actually jumping up and down and smiling?

Mr. Hansen opened the letter and began to read. The sun had just ducked behind a mountain on Afognak Island, so Sandy Ann stood by with the remaining flashlight just in case. The letter was from his mother in Minnesota, Judson's favorite grandma. Mr. Hansen gave everyone a synopsis as he read the letter. She had sold the company she and her husband had owned for years, after getting tired of trying to manage it on her own following her husband's passing seven years earlier. The family business was the largest Chrysler-Plymouth dealership in several counties, and had been very successful of late. Jeffrey was her only heir. She'd kept most of her money to live on, and to buy a house in Sedona, Arizona. It was beautiful there, she was tired to death of Minnesota winters, and there was always a chance that her boys might want to move back to Arizona someday. She still was intent on sending Jeffrey a huge check, "...because from what Judson tells me, you seem to be making a new start. This might help. Of course, you'll get the rest of it anyway when I kick the bucket!" There were sheaves of legal paperwork that Jeffrey had to read through and sign before seeing a check. It seems that when he was very young, his parents had listed him as a "non-voting" partner in the car dealership. Nevertheless, the sale had gone through, and his signatures were only a formality.

When Mr. Hansen closed the letter and put it back in the envelope, Herman let out a low whistle. Judson said, "Grandma, you crazy lady! You always do whatever you set your mind to!" and suddenly burst into tears. The events of the last few days and the last few minutes were finally just too much for him. Jeffrey gave his son a strong sideways hug. Barbara asked, "Is Mr. Hansen in trouble? Is Jay-Jay in

trouble?" It was one of the few times that Barbara's trademark intuition had failed. Sandy Ann said, "No, Mr. Hansen and Jay-Jay have never been in less trouble in their *whole* life!" But Jeffrey just grabbed Laura, gave her another kiss, and said, "Wrong, Sandy Ann. I am definitely in *big* trouble now!" Laura looked around, shocked. "Oh, sh... *shoot*, we've got Mr. Faltrip's *meeting*! What's the *matter* with me? We've almost lost our light, and that's not a fun walk down the hill in the dark." "I guess most people would understand if you're a little distracted," said Judson, dryly. Laura leaned over and kissed him on the forehead. Then Mr. Hansen asked a question in Judson's ear, who nodded vigorously. "Perfect!" said Judson to his dad, adding a thumbs-up, but his cheeks started getting wet again. Smooth move, Dad! Jeffrey turned back toward Laura. "Ok, family, I'm going to borrow Herman for a minute. Meet me at the bottom of the rock ridge, where this road meets the main one."

Herman and Mr. Hansen hiked down the steep bedrock jeep trail, and then turned right on the grassy main road until they came to the top of one of the longest downhill stretches on the island. Then Mr. Hansen turned into a short driveway. In the failing light, Herman could barely see an empty concrete shed, and a Quonset squashed by a fallen tree. Mr. Hansen approached a large, tarp-covered object. "I parked it here, in case the battery went low and we needed to pop the clutch to start it," explained Mr. Hansen. As they removed the tarp, Herman asked, "Can I talk to you alone sometime? It's about Rinny." "I just tripled my Daddy jobs, didn't I," said Mr. Hansen with a smile, and told Herman they could talk anytime, "But please, don't take me for any kind of expert. You boys have been doing a fantastic job so far of figuring these things out!" "Still, I'd like to hear what you say about it," Herman said.

Jeffrey patted the young man on the back. They stashed the tarp, and Jeffrey hopped into the driver's seat. The battery was fine, the engine fired right up; what would one expect from Mr. Faltrip's pride and joy? Soon they met the rest of the family at the intersection at the top of the hill. "Pile in, everybody. You know, I'm not even sure Owen knows we saved this thing," said Jeffrey above the roar of the old engine. Laura scooted over close to him. "But I can bet any money he'd approve of how we're using it, having used it that way himself!" said Laura leaning over toward him, but loud enough for Judson to hear. Jeffrey nodded with a grin, and placed the old Army-green REO fire truck in gear. The family roared down the road in the twilight.

The Hansens and Rezoffs made a grand entrance, because everyone else on the island was already present in the mess hall. No one had seen them at dinner, and the Lindseths were beginning to be concerned over their half-plaster daughter, wandering around who knows where. They were mollified when they found out that Judson, Herman, Barbara, and both sets of parents were missing too. It was impossible to sneak up anywhere in that big old fire truck, so Jeffrey parked it within inches of the first picnic table, and hit the horn, just once. Out they all piled. When they walked into the mess hall and future school, they blinked in the light of a motley string of extension cords, floodlights, bare bulbs, and even a salvaged

floor lamp somebody had persuaded to work. Mr. Selivanoff's power plant hummed from out back somewhere.

Marla, in her best imitation of Laura's radio voice, teased, "Attention Sokroshera Cove! There will be a village meeting this evening for everyone who can *make it!*" Little Jake came humbly up to Mr. Hansen and said, "Mr. Faltrip says we can't start until you ring the bell. That's what he said Laura said. So here's the bell." Jeffrey looked at him and suggested, "Could we start if *you* rang it? You ring five times, and Eagle can ring five times, and then we'll start." The boys ran to the doorway and were poised to start when Laura, alarmed, suggested, "He meant *outside*, boys, please!" A few laughs and exactly ten rings later, the meeting had officially begun. Judson glanced around. If anyone was missing, he couldn't figure who it might be. The place was packed! Mr. Faltrip looked for a moment at Laura, and knowing his long-time employee well, said quietly, "Do *you* have any announcements to make?"

Laura called Jeffrey to her side, and then all their kids. "We will officially be one family sometime soon—oh, we don't know any details yet. But we're getting *married!*" And she let out the tiniest little squeal, blushed, and was answered by a roar of approval and clapping and stomping feet. Mr. Hansen looked up at the now swinging light bulbs and said, only half joking, "I'd love to still have this building on Tuesday when school begins again!" There were titters, but the stomping stopped. "Judson and I have been so honored to be here, and see history being made in this beautiful community. And now, you are going to change *our* history. I'll do my very best to take care of your beautiful Laura, the voice and the conscience of Sokroshera Cove, and her wonderful children. And Judson is overjoyed to have a brother and a sister in Herman and Barbara."

The reaction was equally deafening, no matter what his warning had been about protecting the old building. The instant the crowd died down, there was a small voice from down in front. Barbara. "Sandy Ann, are you gonna be Jay-Jay's sister, too?" "Oh, let's hope *not*," said Judson, automatically, before anyone else could react. Herman looked at Serafina and said, "And Sandy Ann turns red in one, two... done!" but he ran over and gave her a hug, then came back and hugged Judson, too. Judson, having also embarrassed himself, just spread his hands, shrugged, and sat down as quickly as he could find a spot. Betty and Howie Lindseth, about a third of the way back at one of the refurbished picnic tables, were laughing so hard they could barely breathe, and Betty had to use a corner of her apron to dab her eyes.

When everything quieted down, and Mr. Faltrip stood up to speak, he asked, "So... are there any other announcements, now that Serafina and Judson are *not* going to be siblings?" There was a return of the laughter, but when it quieted down, there came a quiet little voice from near the back. Everyone turned to see Carla Bazaroff, standing, with a bit of a pink face herself. In this light, Carla looked like a grown-up version of Sandy Ann, thought Judson, who shook that thought off as too serious to handle right now. "Sorry, Anya and Rinny, for getting sick lately. Jakob Pedersen tells me it's ok to share this. In the wake of the Someday news..." —She looked at Laura and Jeffrey, "...and the Maybe news..." —She looked at Sandy Ann, then

Judson, eliciting more giggles across the room, "...we have some Baby news! I'm *expecting*." Carla held up her hand for quiet, and continued, "I think that's wonderful, even at a time like this, because it's... well, it's a symbol, like finding that treasure. It's a symbol like finding our new house still standing after the waves. It's a symbol that Sokroshera Cove will go on." At this soft-spoken but inspiring little speech, the village erupted again, and poor Windy soon likely had a sore back from all the slapping. Finally, Mr. Faltrip got the room quiet.

Owen was beaming ear to ear, an expression few had ever seen before. "I've gotten all my wishes. I really have. First, my number one employee Laura, and our remarkable schoolteacher Jeffrey, decide to see in each other what we all—starting with their own kids, by the way—saw in them. Then, I come back after the worst disaster in the island's history and find that some of my favorite kids have helped to solve the mystery of the ages, helping us to find a priceless treasure. Then, my old boxing buddies, Billy Jr. and Marty are out there capturing bad guys for God. For *God*, mind you! And on Friday night, another fantasy of mine came true when I got to play the heavy and conduct my first ever police interrogation. Billy Jr., Jeffrey and young Judson here will vouch for the fact that we had *waaay* too much fun with it! And finally, Mr. Hansen managed to save that 1936 REO/Stutz fire truck from the Tidal Wave; that thing is my favorite toy and make-out machine, I guess you know. And that's *apparently* what those two were using it for tonight!" The room again erupted in general tumult. Mr. Hansen, now sitting closest to Jakob and Anya, leaned over and said, "D' ya think we could repair some *other* building by Tuesday? This one's coming down any moment!" But he had a huge grin on his face.

Owen began again, and his suddenly serious expression calmed the room right down. "But what happened down there on the flats is *not* what anyone wished. We've got a bunch of equipment down there, and we've got some of the materials we need, but most of all we need a plan. So anyone who's interested in how to rebuild our fair city, please stay behind after the meeting. I'll share my ideas, and hear yours. Suffice it to say, now that we've been nearly swept clean, we can remake ourselves pretty much how we want to. And if the state or the feds come in with their own plan, believe you me, they won't tear ours up if we've already started. They've got too many other places to help that are starting over *without* a plan. We don't want the layout to look like a bunch of Aleutian Homes on a mud flats, so we need to start planning right now, for how we *do* want to look. I brought a chart from Kodiak that shows the boundaries of all the property owners in the village, and would be happy to discuss trading cannery land for yours if you'd like to move to a better spot. And so on."

When Owen paused, there was an immediate question, and there was a bit of an edge in the voice. "Are you gonna make anybody move?" the voice came from young Windy, whose half-completed house was the only home in the village still in its original location, except for the cannery's duplex, the superintendent's quarters, which didn't really count. Owen smiled at Windy. "Short answer: no! And I'm not going to be the only one making any of these decisions. There's a few spots I have to reserve for the new cannery buildings and a new dock." There was one loud "Yay!" at this, and a smattering of applause. "Thanks, we appreciate it, Mr. Faltrip,"

Windy said, calmer now. Owen smiled, and proceeded. "Well, for almost everybody else except Windy and Carla, your house has *already* moved, and so you get a chance to choose another site if you think it might be nicer. Now's your chance. Or, you can rebuild where you were. That's why we'll have the meetings."

Mr. Faltrip turned and called Sandy Ann to stand up with him. She had a look on her face that said, 'please don't tease me anymore,' but up she came. "Serafina, what did you find propped up on the hill outside my apartment?" She broke into a big smile and said, "That big round window from the old bunkhouse! It's still mostly there!" "Right," said Owen, and motioned her to sit back down. "The old cannery mess hall is also *mostly* there. I propose three things to start, and we'll see how agreeable a process this will be. First, we must find a way to get the water back on, and that means replacing all the old water mains. Second, I always liked the old mess hall, and we had a lot of good times and important events in it recently, so I propose to put it on a new foundation, turn it so that the old laundry room end faces the mountain, and slap that round window in the end that will face the bay." Sandy Ann fidgeted in her cast and said, "*Dammit*, I wish I could clap!" She got a few chuckles and nods from everyone who heard her, including Mr. Faltrip.

Owen paused to let Sandy Ann's comment settle, and then added, "Ok, I've got a third thing, and then I'll shut up. Petey and Dottie Kurt, are you here?" The Kurtashkins waved from the second table, seated next to Anicia. "You've told me that you'd just as soon live next to that grove of spruce trees, which is where your house ended up. Well, that's cannery land, so we can trade. We'll put a new foundation there, and send water, sewer, and electricity your way. We'll trade your plot on the far side of the creek for however much land you need near the spruce trees, just as we talked. Don't forget to allow for another of your splendid vegetable gardens! There's a good chance a lot of the cannery land over by your old spot will be wanted for the school property, since they are making the lots for new schools bigger now. So good move, and thanks for agreeing to it when we spoke earlier. And *that*, ladies and gentlemen, is how it's done. I hope *everybody* ends up happy!" And with that, Mr. Faltrip abruptly sat down. There was nobody growling about 'that rich cannery man pushing us around' or any such nonsense. Owen could just as easily have taken his earnings and savings and left when he flew out in mid-March, especially after hearing that the Tidal Wave had removed his old cannery forever. Instead, here he was, investing, dreaming, planning, and building. Judson hoped that finally the villagers were realizing what a great friend they had in Owen Faltrip.

Judson tried to stay interested, but eventually decided that watching the adults pore over Mr. Faltrip's map was boring, and yawned his way out the door and off to his cot. He was pleased to see, from the limited glow of his flashlight, that the Truck Brothers had retrieved their gear from the "jailhouse bunker." Judson wondered if that would become its permanent name now. This is how legends are born. He went to sleep smiling about his Dad and Laura kissing in the sunset. Mr. Faltrip was right: his Mom and Will would surely approve of their replacements. Didn't Laura and his dad notice how cool it was to get engaged right there on the mountain, where so much of the Rezoff story had taken place?

The week of Monday, April 6, 1964: The first week of the Old Mess Hall / "New" School

At around 8:30 a.m. every morning, as soon as the breakfast dishes could be cleared and the school things put out, the school bell rang. Mr. Hansen began class in the much grubbier and smaller mess hall classroom up in old Fort Shepley. The schedule was odd, almost like being in a boarding school, because it was necessary to clear away the breakfast things before there would be room for the kids. Likewise, nobody was "walking home" for lunch, because the schoolroom was also the whole community's lunchroom. Now that the old mess hall was enclosed and heated, nobody wanted to have to eat out on the cold, damp outside tables, and in fact, several of the tables were now back into the mess hall from whence they came. Outside, the fire pit was still the unofficial gathering place for the displaced village.

There were two tables left outside by the fire pit for those who liked to hang out there—mostly the adults, nursing a cup of Betty's coffee thanks to the recovery of a couple of non-electric, top of the stove-style percolators. Occasionally the stove in the kitchen tent was too busy for one or both of the percolators, and they'd find their way to the top of the wood stove in their classroom. The aroma of perking coffee was almost good enough for Judson to want to try some.

After lunch, a small army of volunteers would clean the tables, put away all food-related items, and help Mr. Hansen pass out the books and writing materials for the afternoon lessons. Mr. Hansen provided a handy wall chart of which books to put out in the morning, and which books to distribute for the afternoon classes. He'd written the instructions on the unprinted side of a cardboard box and nailed them to an exposed beam. All the kids helped to put the materials for their grade at the table where they sat. Mr. Judson remarked that their challenges gave the kids a chance to learn all kinds of cooperation and organizational skills if nothing else. He always told his students how much he appreciated it whenever things went smoothly.

Mr. Hansen's lessons had also changed. Several times, he had all the students, regardless of age, draw pictures of something that had happened since their last day in the other mess hall. Then that would develop into a discussion, followed by a writing assignment, the older students helping the younger ones with spelling and sentence structure. Judson and Barbara had great success in this regard. Barbara's first drawing was not of disaster, treasure, or robbers, but of a dramatic sunset, with distant mountains, a bay, and a man and a woman kissing. Below this, she had printed "Groka dady and mommy." Judson helped her sound out the kissing command, *gorka, guh-or-kuh-uh*, and told her that last sound needed a letter *a*, not a *u*, even though it sounded like a *u*. He didn't know why that was, and she accepted it. Then he told her to use double letters on *daddy*, like she had on *mommy*, and she wrote it all perfectly, on her own, below her first try. Judson

found it interesting how she grabbed a book and used it to cover her first attempt, to avoid being distracted by it.

The twins, Paris and Sonya, had an animated conversation, and then each drew nearly identical pictures of their house sort of scrunched up, and their boat in the bay beyond. They asked how to spell the word "squashed." Then they wrote, consulting constantly with each other, April looking on, "Our house is squashed, but not our boat." Young Alexander drew a rather round looking man holding a gun, and two men standing with their hands in the air, to show his dad drawing a bead on the robbers. This didn't actually happen, but no matter; Alexander was rightfully proud of his daddy. Sandy Ann helped him to write, "Dad can stop the robbers. Dad can shoot a gun." Alexander was able to spell almost all the words himself. Sandy Ann showed Judson the picture, and they looked at each other and smiled; the Selivanoffs had some big things to be proud of lately.

Mr. Hansen held all their artwork for them after they'd shown their parents; nobody had any refrigerators to tape homework to anymore. He suggested saving the student work for a gallery if they ever got a museum. Betty and Danny, for example, thought that idea was brilliant. The older kids, when they were done helping the younger ones, wrote about the worst part of the disaster, the best part of the disaster, and what they hoped their new village would be like. Marla's essay concluded with this sentiment: "Since we moved up into the fort, we have all been like a big family. I hope that part never changes. But I dream of a bubble bath!"

Then, on Wednesday after school—actually, school let out the instant they arrived—Billy Jr. and the *Marla S.*, with Windy and Ward assisting, had returned from Kodiak with a huge load of supplies. It was still mostly canned goods, but supplemented heavily with flour, sugar, rice, dry noodles and the like, plus a large assortment of packaged food of the "just add water" variety. Any variety would be splendid to the refugees on the hill. All of this was bought on Mr. Faltrip's dime. It took a lot of work from a lot of people to unload that boat, there being no more forklifts or cranes or docks around. Unloading from the temporary float was practical for some things, but usually it proved to be easier to put it all in a skiff and unload into a truck right from the beach. So a section of Stepan's Beach that was more gravel than sand became the temporary freight terminal for the village. The Truck Brothers and Mr. Lindseth were kept very busy whenever a shipment of anything arrived.

The makeshift freight operation created its own drama from time to time. For example, on Wednesday afternoon, Windy was lifting a case of chili into a skiff, and his hand slipped. The whole case slid neatly beneath the waves like a stone. "No great loss, boss," said Windy to Mr. Faltrip, up on the deck of Billy Jr.'s boat. Owen looked puzzled. Since that can of chili aboard the *Lil' Carla* that he and his family had eaten on the night they found themselves floating in the lake, Windy had lost his taste for the stuff. He told Owen the story, and the man just shook his head, amazed that the young Bazaroff family was still around to tell their tale. Ward, standing on deck with Owen and getting ready to hand a case of cream of mushroom soup down to Windy said, "Uncle Wendell, I suppose you're entitled to

hate chili after a night like that! I understand Betty still has a few cans of Lima Beans with Ham and Applesauce if you prefer!" Windy laughed, but asked, "Well, what do *you* hate most after your... uh... adventure?"

Like Marla with her Beatles song and Windy with his chili, most of the people in the village had something or another that triggered memories of the disaster, something they would now most likely avoid for the rest of their lives. "I hate being alone," came the quiet reply. Owen just laid his hand on the young man's shoulder, seeing the image of a terrified young man desperately trying to save his neighbors' boats, in the dark, in treacherous waters, alone. The people of Owen's village had been through pure hell while he was gone, and he was frequently shocked to learn their stories.

On Friday that week, just as they were cleaning up the "school" room for dinner, Anya and Betty came into the room and Anya asked, "Ok, everybody, what's your favorite food?" There was much consultation, and some kids were calling out one thing and some another. Barbara went over to the twins and whispered something in their ears, which looked rather odd, because she managed to whisper into both heads at once. Paris and Sonya then looked at Anya and said, in all seriousness, "Chocowate ice kweem sothas!" This was, of course, a line from the infamous whale song they'd sung in the talent night program. Marla just said, "Oh, no. Oh, Lord, *pleeeese* no!" However, truth be told, she would have given most anything to be in that nice warm house listening to the strains of "The Whale" one more time, and impatiently awaiting her turn with her stack of Beatles records.

Anya finally cut the suspense and said, "Did someone say *cake*? I thought I heard *cake*." The older kids chuckled, but politely, at this, because at that time, no one had said 'cake.' Anya continued, unperturbed, "Well, even if that's *not* your favorite food, we are going to have cake tomorrow at dinner, because it's my beautiful Amy Marie's ninth birthday tomorrow!" Judson had to think for a split second to realize she was speaking of pretty little April, who took her nickname from her birth month. Little Jake was figuring in his head if they were old enough to get married yet; in spite of being unceremoniously dumped in the long distant past, he still held a torch big enough to start a forest fire for the lovely Bazaroff girl. In his favor was the fact that she was far less skittish around him than formerly, now that she'd watched all the adult couples around her, especially her mom and Jakob Pedersen, acting so caring and sweet with each other.

Judson thought that whole Jake and April plotline cute beyond measure. But he had a sneaking suspicion that was how many of the adults viewed Sandy Ann and himself. The following night they indeed had cake—two sheet cakes, one chocolate, and one yellow. There being little available in the way of frosting makings, the chocolate cake had chocolate chips in it; Owen had the kids in mind when he placed his food order! The yellow cake, taking a cue from Carla's wonder at the Thanksgiving feast, had chopped pieces of canned peaches in it. Both cakes were welcomed like long lost friends, and devoured to the last crumb, thanks to the magical ladies of the kitchen tent.

April 1964: The Reemergence of the Village of Sokroshera Cove

As to the cake, and the general improvement in their cuisine, that was due to Mr. Faltrip. That very morning, everyone had been treated to a breakfast of scrambled eggs, fried Spam, and toast with peanut butter and grape jelly. Judson noticed with amusement that Spam, that Alaskan staple, had recently slid back and forth between survival food and delicacy, depending on the situation. Cold Spam was the worst; fried Spam was becoming one of his all-time favorites.

Judson had not been down to the meadow for a few days, so on Sunday he strolled down the hill. At the old village site, he was surprised to see that Danny and Jakob's house had been put on logs and dragged to a location close to the creek, across from where Marty's house had once stood, and just up the beach from where the mail plane usually unloaded. The walls had been hammered solidly into place, the picture window had been replaced by a couple of the smaller, much older ones from the sagging rec hall on the hill, and there was a sturdy, locking door again. At this point, the foundation was just the logs it had been dragged on, a setup the locals called a 'skid shack.' When Judson quizzed Danny about it, he just said, "Jay-Jay, meet the new store!" It had been determined in one of those evening grownup meetings that a temporary store would be a very practical item for the village to have, especially compared to the closet-sized pantry in the fort's mess hall, a building that was also being used as a school.

Judson quickly figured out the reason for the Truck Brothers' generosity in donating their old home. Danny and Jakob were going to start over, and *separately*, when the time came to rebuild. They both had plans to marry ladies with existing families, and neither brother wanted to force the other to live in their old plywood palace, so it was no great sacrifice to give Owen their old house as the temporary store. "Too bad I already *pagooked* the stove outta there and put it in the Army mess hall; it's gonna be a bit cold inside," Danny added. "Maybe I'll try to find all the pieces of our oil heater, and see if that'll work."

When Judson did a quick inspection of the building's interior, he saw that shelves made entirely of scrap wood replaced the broad, sturdy shelves the old store had. In spots, the "store" was a hilarious hodgepodge of painted, bare, varnished, and stained sections, of at least half a dozen shades. Yet it would work for the moment. Mr. Faltrip announced that the villagers could now use any of this food that they needed, and that he wouldn't charge anyone for groceries until people were back in houses again, with their own kitchens. Mr. Faltrip did tell Jake and Eagle, with a twinkle in his eye, that there was no candy in there, and that the door *did* have a lock on it. Owen said the whole operation would be under the control of head mess hall cook Betty Lindseth, who promptly joked, "We've got everything all *wrong* around here. Mess hall? I got no *hall*, and I'm a *mess*!" Faltrip had laughed and added, "Now of course, when my new cannery barge arrives, I'm gonna expect all of you to work there." As though that would be a hardship!

The adults spent the next few days collecting gravel and boulders to shore up the dip in the road at east beach. Howie's collection of five-gallon buckets was now cast

aside in favor of the skip loader, dump truck, and D8 Caterpillar tractor that had arrived on the landing barge. With that kind of firepower, the adults (not “men,” because Gail was one of the drivers) were able to move the road along east beach more than fifty feet inland, beyond the little swamp that the leaking water pipe had once created. The land was higher there, and with the gravel and rocks that they were able to move with their heavy machinery, the roadbed was now ten feet higher than the old one. There was now a dependable road up into the fort. It was a bumpy ride over the new section, because they had a backhoe but no grader, but nobody cared. The old road was still there, but just bypassed. When Judson first saw the new road, he smiled with satisfaction that most of the old alder brush patch that Pariscovia had once used as cover while waiting for Owen was untouched.

To build their new road, Howie and Jakob had found that the best and most accessible materials were found between the new lagoon’s outlet to the northeast and the outer, northwest beach of sentry point, a rough shoreline that hugged the Unuak Channel and then curved south. With minimal effort, they continued the jeep trail along the Cove and across a short stretch of grass to the far beach. The dump truck transported tons of gravel back to the village via the road that curved past the sad, empty pilings of the old bunkhouse site and the sagging remains of the net building.

The next project was to replace the temporary bridge across the creek, which only Howie’s jeep could safely navigate, with a proper, permanent roadbed. Thanks to a couple of culvert sections that arrived with the barge, the new bridge across the creek was soon a firm road, strong enough to handle all the heavy equipment, and wide enough to accommodate two lanes plus a new water main. Below, the two sturdy culvert tubes gave the water from the old lake (now a lagoon) easy access to the cove. But since the tides had cut a swath out of the dam on its western end and formed a lagoon, not much water flowed down the creek, except after a very high tide. Danny suggested that they just plug up the old streambed and let the new lagoon use its new western channel, but everyone decided to leave things as is for now, and just build a good bridge.

The workers of the village were overjoyed to have all that equipment at their disposal, and set up a hectic work schedule to put it all to good use. Howie was the best operator of the skip loader. Either of the “Truck Brothers” could run the big D8 Caterpillar, and of great joy to Danny was that Gail turned out to be a natural with the dump truck, “Since I never have to worry about parked cars,” she quipped. They’d all be using the two portable cement mixers soon; six pallets loaded with sacks of concrete sat near where Marty Pankoff’s old Quonset house once stood. Of perhaps greater importance were three long trailers stacked high with sections of thick plastic pipe. It looked like there might be more than enough pipe to reach the meadow from the pump house at the upper lake, and bring water to the old village site again.

One day in the second week of April, during a lull in the hectic dawn to dusk work schedule they’d given themselves, Danny walked over to Howie and asked him, “How the heck did we get this stuff and these big machines *now*? I’m sure there’s a

waiting list a mile long for every piece of construction equipment anywhere on the whole Gulf of Alaska since the disaster.” Howie just shook his head. “This ain’t disaster relief stuff. This is a *cannery* lease, and some of it Owen bought outright, like the loads of pipe. Would you believe Mr. Faltrip had this equipment on order since *before* the Tidal Wave? He had it on order even before the season ended. I don’t think Owen wanted to mess with the old herring plant stuff any more. So this load was already en route from Seattle to help prepare the Cove for the new processor barge – he was going to get one and put it on a gravel landfill just east of the old front dock area.”

“You mean Faltrip was planning on bringing in a processor even *before* he lost the cannery?” asked Danny, incredulously. Howie answered with a wry smile. “Yup. Owen knew he’d never be able to coax another crab season out of the old buildings, ‘specially if we switched to cold storage. Hell, we all had *that* figured out. The Westerbrook castoff stuff was just barely holding together by the end of the season, the buildings were old, and I don’t think Owen could’ve handled another accident like the one Will got. It would ‘a cost him more to upgrade all the facilities than to just move in a new one. So he was shopping around for a barge processor. The deal he made with the Ardet family just helped him choose *which* barge. After the tidal wave, since our village and cannery were nearly destroyed, the disaster relief ‘powers that be’ decided to let the equipment continue on to us instead of being diverted elsewhere. So by the time the landing barge got here, Owen just gave his collection of toys a new job. I’m sure he’ll want us to build that gravel pad for him soon enough!” Danny observed, “He just never gave up on his dream of a working cannery, did he? I think that’s why he did crazy stuff like keeping his extra seiners at anchor instead of selling them when the cannery closed down.” Danny’s laughing eyes were serious now.

Howie pointed to the big generator on skids and continued: “Owen believes in overkill, I think. He wanted to use this generator for all the construction, so our city power wouldn’t be affected, and now here it is, our main power source, ready to light up our new village. It’s almost ridiculous how he seems to anticipate what this place will need. He’ll tell you it was just a lucky happenstance, but still...” Danny just shook his head. It seemed impossible to stay ahead of old Owen Faltrip, a situation his old boss Penny Ardet had known since the War. Finally, Howie just had to laugh outright. “With Owen, it’s always ‘hang on and let the good times roll!’ ain’t it? The fact that he used to be a supply officer at this very fort, that he returned, and that he stuck around all these years, I could go on and on... he’s been very good for us!” Howie appeared bewildered by all of this. “I don’t think we have any idea of the good things he’s been up to all these years! And frankly, I don’t see any particular benefit for him in all of this. He could ‘a took his dough and retired like a king long ago.” Danny’s smile suddenly returned, remembering the meeting in the superintendent’s apartment after Will Rezoff died. “Remember the Pariscovia Rezoff story? I think we’re like his family,” he finally said.

As work progressed, the adults on the construction crew broke up into two teams, one for building repair, and one for replacing the water pipes. The military had laid the original mains, made from those foot-wide sections of wooden pipe wrapped in

wire, beneath the roads, from the pump house at the upper lake all the way to the superintendent's house and the airstrip. That was the logical place to lay the new plastic pipe as well. Mr. Faltrip was still a wizard at finding sources for supplies and fuel when no one else around the islands could; his old boss Ardet would be proud.

All across the meadow, things were taking shape. At first, except for the Kurtashkins, no one had yet opted to move to a new home site, but so far, the village had occupied its time in repairing whatever buildings they could. Eventually, new homes, and new home sites, would be required for most of the villagers. The one cannery building that Owen wanted restored, and the only one that actually could be rebuilt, was the mess hall. The new location for the old mess hall was steadily taking shape. A gravel mound at right angles to, and about four feet higher than its old elevation, and twenty feet further from the shore, was prepared and leveled. After taking careful measurements, the crew dug the frames for the foundation and prepared them for concrete.

Then the walls of the mess hall were braced with a web-work of scaffolding from the inside so that the building wouldn't fall apart when it was moved. You can bet they were careful; most everybody shared Owen's affection for the place. Once the scaffolding was installed, the old floor was cut out and removed. The workers salvaged as much of the floor planking as they could, and scrounged about for the rest of what they would need. A section of the old store that was finally located near the herring cannery's old pump house was found to have exactly the same planking, and that was disassembled and recycled for the cause. Sandy Ann was worried about the round window. But her dad just said they would fix it and brace it and leave it in the wall it came from, which was leaning on the hill outside Mr. Faltrip's apartment, and then move the wall when the time came.

A close inspection of the Kurtashkin home revealed the reason for its comparatively intact condition. The dock-like platform it had been built on had easily come loose from its foundation. It had depended mostly on gravity to hold the sub-floor platform on its pilings. The platform and house had floated like a half-submerged scow wherever the tides had taken it, until it took refuge near the stand of spruce trees. After determining exactly where the Kurtashkins wanted their home to go, the work crew just pulled out the original pilings from across the meadow to use over again. Almost all of the creosote logs were still in good shape, and Petey and Dottie's home stood proudly beneath the spruces in its new location in a matter of days.

The old couple was pleased that there was plenty of good, clear, sunny land to the west of the house in which to replant their famous garden. Within a week or so, Petey and Dottie had transplanted their prized raspberry bushes, not yet ready to bloom, and likely to survive just fine. Petey was already collecting wood to build a new smokehouse. Of course, water, sewer, and power would have to come later, and the "Kurts" were still camped out in a drafty Quonset hut on the hill, but no one was complaining.

In the days that followed, the men that weren't working with the heavy machinery quickly did what they could to finish the Wendell and Carla Bazaroff home. With a new baby on the way, they would need a warm and enclosed home sooner than most everyone else. Windy assured them that "Wendell Mansion," as he jokingly called it, had been built to this point with scrounged materials, and there was no reason for him to stop now. So from various scouting trips across the meadow, and even in the lake, Windy found what he needed. There was a white bathtub from the old school, an avocado green kitchen sink from Marty Pankoff's old place, and a vanity sink in a fine pastel pink color, which Herman recognized as one of the few surviving mementos of their old place. Windy was just fine with all of that, and Judson knew, having seen Windy work, that once water and sewer were hooked up, the Bazaroff home would be one of the best-constructed in the village. Their home would forevermore be a conversation piece, and that's just how Windy and Carla wanted it. The sturdy building was both the first *new* home in the village, and one of the few to survive from before the waves. And it had been made from bits and pieces of the old neighborhood. It was a collective labor of love; Windy viewed it almost as a work of art. Carla, the matron of the mansion, was completely delighted with her truly "custom" home.

"Things can go pretty fast when the boys get the right toys," laughed Howie one day as he stepped down from the big Caterpillar tractor. With the Kurtashkins' house repaired where the waves had moved it, and the Pedersen brothers' house now serving as the temporary store, there were only one or two more possibly salvageable structures left from the old village site. With great delicacy, the crew examined the two surviving log homes: Anicia Novikoff's house, and the old Selivanoff Mansion. Mr. Faltrip and Mr. Hansen, they who had once been thrown out of the place, argued that any home owned by the man who inadvertently preserved the Monk's treasure (among other things to be sure) deserved to be restored as much as possible. "Notoriety makes good history, I suppose," said Jeffrey, dryly. "Besides, how many other homes from the 1830s still exist around here?" Alice swore she never wanted to live in it again, and Billy Jr. just shrugged and said, "Well, we can't change history, can we? If you can pound it back into shape, it might make an interesting museum." Mr. Faltrip thought that was a splendid idea. So using "come-along" cables and constant bracing, the old mansion was slowly squeezed back into shape, much as a collision center repairs a dented fender. The crew working inside occasionally got the creeps in the process, trying to prevent ancient log walls from collapsing.

The Selivanoff home's foundation, always sagging and squeaking anyway according to Marla, was replaced with actual concrete footings, and that went a long way toward stabilizing the antique shaved log walls. Huge square beams, all of them dock salvage, were then bolted into the corners of every exterior room and everywhere the logs joined, where their presence could eventually be hidden behind wallboard if so desired. The Selivanov Mansion, dating back to Evgeni Teplov in the 1830s and Dunya Selivanov in the 1840s, was now poised to last another century or so. Knowing that they would no longer be living there, Owen traded the Selivanoffs for the lot between the old log home and the beach. Owen knew just how to keep his neighbors satisfied, and by so doing, he was able to give the

Selivanoff family a prime building location with one of the best views of the entrance to the cove, and their own direct beach access.

Judson was happy to see that Anicia's house was easier to repair, although moving a huge log home in any direction was no small task. Since the house had only pivoted in place, they anchored it where it was and rebuilt the floor to match the walls. First, the outer log walls were jacked up and supported with brand new timbers and pilings, then the floor was removed in sections, its pilings replaced and its planking repaired as needed. So with workers rotating in and out whenever there was a moment's break in the pipe laying and road building, the two oldest structures in the village reemerged. And amazingly, Anicia would soon be able to move back into hers if she so wished.

Brother Toma returned to the village on the morning of April 16, and the village greeted him like a long-lost family member. Judson was shocked when he realized that they had only known Brother Toma for about a month. The 'Discovery Team' bombarded him with their news and peppered him with questions as he hopped out of the Kodiak Airways Goose. The kids excitedly told him, as briefly as they could, where the Ikons were being stored, told him about their proposed storage site in the ladder room, and excitedly shared what had happened between Laura and Jeffrey. Sandy Ann told most of the news, and managed to stay focused enough of the time to give him a good recap. Seeing the joy in the faces of all three children, he heartily approved of the engagement. The kids were dying to hear his news, having heard nothing of the goings-on in town since sending the robbers to town with the authorities.

Brother Toma gave a brief recap of his trip to Kodiak with the MPs, and the robbers' encounter with the Kodiak legal system. "As you might have noticed, the Navy men towed the robbers' skiff back into town, but only after I insisted they stash those two sealskin packages in a safe place on their own launch. Once we got to town, we were met by a committee of legal folks, who processed the evidence and handed all of it over to the judge in Kodiak. The men we caught were appointed a lawyer for their defense, who raised no objections when the matter of their confessions came up. The lawyer asked, and the judge asked, if the men agreed with what they had written, and they both assured them that they did. The MP fellow—the one who spoke to you, Judson—stood by and helped to translate. The matter of how the confessions were obtained, which I understand was highly... uh... *creative*, well... that never came up. It didn't hurt that the defense lawyer's neighbor just happened to be the one whose skiff they stole, or that the judge is a prominent member of the Russian Orthodox Church in town. Kodiak is just too small a town for such little things not to occur. Given their signed confessions, their defense was that they had only taken two items, and had not killed anyone. It didn't impress the authorities very much.

"Well, to keep this short, the judge decided to deal with what was actually stolen, rather than to get into intent or potential damage or the whole gun thing. He limited their punishment to restitution, to only..." At that last word, Brother Toma made a double quote sign with his fingers, and then repeated himself for emphasis:

"...to *only* five times the combined appraised value of the two Ikons that were stolen, to be used for a church or museum or whatever the good citizens of Sokroshera Cove should decide. At my suggestion, he said that the check from the Talon Group, which is a real outfit, and loaded, should be made out to both Mr. Faltrip and Mr. Selivanoff, to insure that it got where it should go. Interesting that those two historic adversaries should now be forced to cooperate, but in light of recent events, let's pray that's no longer an issue. Oh, and the two robbers are being delivered to the international authorities. Representatives of the State Department and most likely Interpol too, are meeting them in Fairbanks right about now, because Anchorage is still such a mess. The Military Air Transport ferried them up to the Air Force Base up there. So, unless they have some amazing strings to pull, they're likely to be out of action for quite a while!"

Sandy Ann always seemed to think of questions that the boys didn't; Herman and Judson were thinking mainly of the lawyer, and his friend who owned the skiff, and how the rough-edged, uncomplicated Kodiak justice had been meted out. "So how much are those two Ikons *worth* then?" asked the practical Serafina. Brother Toma laughed, then resumed, once again serious. "It turns out that two of the most valuable Ikons in the collection just happened to be in those packages. Of course, the men had no way of knowing this, since the Ikons were still wrapped when they took them. Our good friend 'The Falcon' just groaned when the Ikons were revealed. He had to pay big money for the privilege of *not* stealing them. Once again, I am beginning to suspect that God has a sense of humor. But the Ikons—they were the *oklad* of the Transfiguration that I'd expected to find—the *risa* for it looks like it might be gold, and one of the most beautiful Ikons I've ever seen, the *Panagia Eleousa* mentioned in the letter. Now that I've seen it, I know what that type refers to. In most Ikons of that type, the Christ Child is on the left side of the painting, and either cheek to cheek with the Holy Mother, or touching Her face with His hand. It is the tenderest type of Ikon I have ever seen. In the one from the cave, the Baby Jesus is touching Mary's face and looking up into Her eyes, but Her eyes are looking out at us, with a remarkable kindness and softness. As I said, 'The Falcon's' Talon Group is out at the minimum a hundred thousand dollars, given the age and quality of the Ikons, which are worth at least ten thousand each. In this case, all the technical details of the art dealer world that the robbers swam in rose up and nearly drowned them! I watched our fake 'Dr. Delacueva' sign the agreement, and he looked like he'd just lost his own mother. But he could count himself fortunate that he didn't steal the Rublev copy, or he'd really have lost his shirt. Such a shame, though, that all he saw in those Ikons were dollar signs; what an empty soul he must have to be blind to their real value. By the way, I need to speak with Owen and Billy Jr. soon about what they will do when that check arrives! Suffice it to say that my dream of a permanent, safe place for these treasures to be seen and used for their intended purpose is well on its way to coming true!"

Brother Toma got settled back in Mr. Hansen's office in the cannery duplex, again at Mr. Faltrip's insistence. Soon he was as busy as the rebuilders were. Brother Toma borrowed Marty from his construction crew, and the two of them unwrapped the rest of the sealskin packages and wooden boxes from the secret cave. They used the Hansen's kitchen table, since they had electricity available in the

superintendent's house. Although he couldn't provide the same access to the Ikons in the "jailhouse bunker," Brother Toma was able to bring Anicia, Dottie, and Petey in for a detailed look at the more recently unwrapped treasures. The village elders ended up giving *him* the historical lectures, between tearful side conversations, frequently in Russian. They kept saying over and over how blessed they felt to be alive to witness the revealing of the legendary treasure. This was coming from three people who had nearly lost their homes and their whole village. Brother Toma gave them each a big hug before Howie gave them a ride back to the drafty Quonset hut up in the fort.

Marla and her dad built suitable crates for each of the newly unwrapped items as soon as Marty and Brother Toma were finished examining them. Then, on a very sunny Saturday, April 18, Brother Toma, Howie, Billy Jr., Marty, and Marla, joined by the "Sokroshera Cove Secrets Discovery Team," who hiked up, and Danny, who drove his truck, placed the entire treasure inside the undamaged ladder room deep in the bedrock of Mount Sokroshera. They wrapped it all with tarps, top and bottom, to ward off any extra dust or moisture. And then Howie chained and padlocked the blast door. He kept one key, and gave the other to Brother Toma, who left it with Mr. Faltrip. "Talk about hiding your light under a bushel," laughed Brother Toma as they rode down the hill, but he was satisfied that until the village could build a suitable chapel, everything would be as secure and dry here as they could possibly make it. The Monk's treasure was once again safely hidden deep within Mount Sokroshera.

The following Tuesday, Mr. Hansen, Mr. Lindseth, and Petey Kurt dug a hole and built a serviceable *nooshnick* (outhouse) close to the Kurtashkins' relocated home. Petey and Dottie moved into their house that very evening. Howie provided lake water for anyone who needed it, using a small tank he'd found on the backside of the lagoon. After several other *nooshnicks* were built, plus a good-sized *banya* (steam bath) that Howie, Marty, and Jakob built in what Marty claimed as his future back yard, everyone who didn't have school children agreed to move down the hill. The trucks instituted a ferry service to bring them up to the old fort's mess hall for meals. Because of the fragile condition of the cannery's mess hall, work to rebuild it took longer than the other restoration projects. Although both the school and the kitchen up in the fort were only barely adequate, the villagers couldn't hope to transfer those operations to the rebuilt mess hall for a few more weeks.

Brother Toma took the mail plane back into Kodiak on Friday, April 24, after receiving a short letter from the Priest in Kodiak. Brother Toma was invited to participate in the activities of Russian Orthodox Holy Week, which was only days away. The letter also stated that the Priest and the community hoped to travel to Sokroshera Cove on the day after *Pascha* (Пасха – Resurrection Sunday in the Julian calendar), which would be celebrated on the third of May. So Father Zachar, the martyred Monk, would be interred in a formal ceremony on May 4, and the Priest expected Brother Toma, so instrumental in the discovery of the Monk, to participate in that event.

Brother Toma explained all of this at dinner the night before he left. Jakob Pedersen looked at Brother Toma, and then at Herman, Sandy Ann, and Judson, and remarked, "Perhaps you kids don't realize what an important discovery this is, not just the hidden Ikons, but solving the ancient murder as well. This is big news all over Alaska, in the States, and probably in the Churches and Monastery back in Russia, too. The mystery has been solved, the treasure has been found, and now it is time to honor Father Zachar, whose delayed ministry we will now get to continue." Brother Toma nodded at Jakob, with tears in his eyes. "Well said, future Blessed Reader!"

May 2, 1964: The Kitchens of the Cove

On Saturday morning, the day before *Pascha*, Dottie Kurt and Betty Lindseth could be heard clattering around in the little field kitchen tent. Shortly thereafter, Howie took them, plus a box of supplies, down to Dottie's recently moved home, where more clattering and banging could be heard. Howie soon accompanied the women back to the jeep, and he was carrying second box that rattled a great deal. Once back in the jeep, Dottie held a large metal mixing bowl that looked almost as big as she was. They crossed the new bridge to the cannery duplex, where, by arrangement with the Hansens, their oil stove waited, all heated up and ready. The apartment's stove was the best on the island, having come through the Tidal Waves unscathed. Once inside the Hansens' apartment, the ladies laid out their scrounged treasures on the kitchen table and set to work. One more search of the Hansens' spice rack and they were ready to go. Marla, suspecting what the others were up to, trotted up the steps and jumped into the action. Soon, she was washing out a dozen old coffee cans scrounged from Dottie's house and her mom's pantry, and placing them on the hot stove's cooktop to dry.

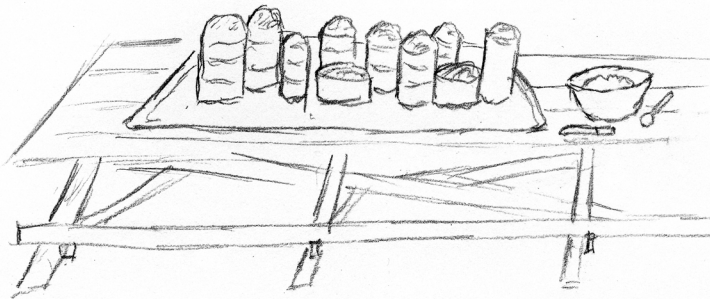
The three women were quite a picture of multigenerational village ingenuity, for when they emerged in the late afternoon, they had twelve cylindrical, dome-topped loaves of *kulich*, fresh out of coffee cans, carefully placed in boxes, and ready to transport up to the fort's mess hall. There, they intended to enlist a willing army of young people to help them frost the loaves. The ragtag village on the hill would get to enjoy traditional Russian Easter bread at tomorrow's breakfast, and it would be appreciated by all, that was guaranteed.

Betty had made her own customized version of the "South End" recipe collected and compiled by Joyce Smith, thanks to some cardamom hidden in a corner of the Hansens' spice rack. That same rack had produced the lemon extract used in the recipe from the "North End" of Kodiak Island, for which Dottie Kurt was famous. Both ingredients owed their presence to the days when the cannery was in operation, and Anicia Novikoff had served as the personal chef of the superintendent, whenever he had needed to have guests at that long table.

The Hansens' larder had also produced a box of dried out raisins that earlier scroungers had somehow missed. Marla knew how to fix that. A quick soaking in hot water in one of the saucepans from the field kitchen restored the raisins nicely. Alas, the women could find only dark raisins, so the golden raisins used in Dottie's

recipe, and the candied citron used in Betty's, would be missed by the purists. Or maybe not; no one on the island expected to get *kulich* this year, under the circumstances. The women of the Hansen Bakery were about to become the most popular people on Sokroshera Island.

Anyone in the neighborhood of the cannery duplex would have suspected what was coming once those coffee cans hit the oven. But the cannery duplex had no neighborhood anymore, and the other end of the village was awash with diesel fumes, so the workers suspected nothing at all. And except for Marla, and Howie who was the driver, and Alice Selivanoff, who broke away from laundry duty to make the frosting, no one on the hill knew what was coming. After supper that evening, Betty Lindseth asked everyone to stay seated. Petey Kurt brought in a baking pan with his wife's loaves on it, followed by Howie Lindseth bringing Betty's loaves, followed by Alice Selivanoff, with a tray of bowls filled with creamy white frosting and a stack of kitchen knives.



*Kulich (baked in old coffee cans)
on a mess hall table, frosting
ready to go! Russian Easter.*

Every school-aged kid in the village got to decorate a *kulich* loaf, and Marla got to decorate two. There was loud applause when Alice Selivanoff produced two bottles of sprinkles that had somehow survived the waves on a shelf in her kitchen. Over the happy, sticky hubbub, Owen and Jeffrey, standing near the oil stove in the old mess hall, turned toward each other and each spoke at the same time. Owen said, "Sometimes this is the damndest place!" and Jeffrey said, "You know, this place could make a grown man cry!" Hearing each other, Owen snorted and smiled, while Jeffrey just nodded.