

STORIES
of
MAALAN AARUM

BOLD BJARNI



E. S. 3.12

THE TRIP HOME



Bjarni and his companions met Big Raven Arne after the blizzard. They returned to Ranga Fjord after staying through the winter in Merica.

BOLD BJARNI

The six men in the canoe had seen the smoke since mid morning while they rowed along the forested shore. Finally the canoe was floating out of arrow range as they looked over the village. They were disappointed. The amount of smoke they saw should have been for a bigger, older village. This camp had only five small tepees indicating a temporary hunting camp. Indeed the smoke was coming from fifteen tripods for drying meat. Seven women and maybe ten children were tending the fires. At first there were no men in sight.

Then a movement on a rocky point near them caught their attention. The young man's hand signals were for them, "Come closer. Let us talk." They slowly paddled toward the young man. Then they saw there were actually three young men, all younger than fourteen summers. Two young men remained behind the brush near the rocky point. In response to their questions, the young man on the rocky point said, "In this area hunting and fishing are important. All travelers are friends -- usually."

Bjarni asked, "What happens if travelers are not friends?"

The boy on the rocky point said, "They do not travel anymore."

The men in the canoe decided to take a break. They had been paddling on the water and sleeping in bare camps for four sleeps. They wanted to talk to someone about the local portages. So they told the boy they were friends and wanted to rest on the beach.

They relaxed through the afternoon. They hoped to visit with the men in the evening. Even if "All travelers are friends", they were wise to avoid visiting with the women until the men from the village returned. So about halfway between midday and sundown, the men who had come in the canoe rested on the rocky beach. The two local guides who rested near their canoe were from the major village on the lake upstream of Lake Attawapiskat.¹ ~ Besides them, lying on the rocky beach, were Styk, Hallgrim, Tjalve, and Bjarni.

Bjarni was surprised at himself. When he had first seen trees everywhere, he thought he would always be amazed. He had thought that a man could not possibly sleep in the daylight because there was so much to see in the forest.

Now he was looking across a lake with trees all along the shore and he was nearly falling asleep. Even the wind in the trees was familiar now, making him even sleepier. But those children splashing were not. Those high-pitched screams would keep their own mothers awake.

¹ Word Meaning

"Screams!" Bjarni shouted out loud as he turned to look toward the children. They were knee deep in the water. They were running toward him. Behind them was a bundle of brown splashing along at the edge of the shore. Bjarni guessed the bundle of brown was a bear born last winter.

What happened next depends on whom you chose to believe. Bjarni's version was that he picked up his buffalo spear, his bow, and took two arrows from his quiver. He made a couple of bounds to get past the children. The little brown bear turned into the woods along the shore. Bjarni stepped into the woods also. He heard a panting breath and a deep growl. He turned to see the mother brown bear running on a path directly toward him.

Bjarni remembered the hunting advice his father taught him:

Get the bear to stand. A knife to the heart is needed, but the ribs are difficult. Come in below the ribs pushing up to the heart. Go low and left. Bears are left-handed. Standing bears have difficulty turning right.² ~

Bjarni crouched until the brown bear was about two bounds away. Then Bjarni said, "Whhisss," and stood upright, with his arms outstretched. As the bear rose to meet the challenge, Bjarni crouched again. The point of the spear entered the hair swirl beneath the rib cage. Bjarni pushed with all his might.

Then he stepped left. He thought the right claw missed about an arm's length from his body. He also thought he took deliberate aim to drive one arrow through the neck from the side.

As the bear made one last attempt to lash out, he had plenty of time to place the second arrow through the neck from the front. When the bear heaved a last gasp and fell at his feet, Bjarni was puffing and felt chilly. He thought the chill was probably from the water.

Bjarni could not believe the story Styrk, Hallgrim, and Tjalve told, over and over, that night around the campfire:

"Bjarni grabbed the quiver by the wrong end. The arrows spilled. He grabbed the two he tripped over. He was off like a scared rabbit. He ran forty paces. We stepped them off later.

"He did not go into the water at all. He wanted to spear the little bear, but the spear was the wrong way around. So he only hit the little bear in

² Left-handed bears

the mouth with the wrong end of the spear. Then he tripped when he went through the trees.

"He was on his hands and knees when he picked up the spear. He rose. The mother bear reared up. He did get the spear aimed at the chest when the mother bear came down on it. The butt of the spear jabbed into the ground. The bear's weight nearly drove the spear point through the bear. Only the backbone stopped it.

"Meanwhile Bjarni went into a crouch trying to get away. The bear claw missed Bjarni's butt by the width of a thumb.

"Then Bjarni released the two arrows faster than we ever saw a man do it, even in practice. Bjarni could not have aimed. He was so close. He could not miss either. At least he was using the right ends."

Bjarni was disturbed because his closest friends were each telling parts of the story and laughing with the rest. Bjarni thought it was better to wait to talk to them alone. So he sat angry on the inside, but smiling when the men around the campfire laughed the loudest.

Later in the evening Bjarni took a chance to leave the tepee to relieve himself. Instead of returning he went to their canoe and curled up in his sleeping robe. He pretended to sleep when his friends came to bed, but his anger kept him awake as stars traversed the sky.

Bjarni was tired of lying there without sleep. Just before dawn he noticed that Styrk, Hallgrim, Tjalve, and the two guides were sleeping soundly. So he rolled out and picked up the fishing net more for an excuse to be gone than for anything else. He wanted solitude to reflect on the injustice of his friends' ridicule.

Bjarni knew it was a woman's job to set fishnets, but there were only men in the canoe and he was the youngest so he had accepted the necessary task. But he might get even more ridicule if the hunters in the village saw him setting fishnets. After a long walk deep into the woods Bjarni decided to set the fishnet to take his mind from the agony of betrayal by friends. He pegged one end of the net to the ground. He rose to go back a few steps before jumping the small stream. Then he saw the sakhim of the village watching him. He decided to finish setting the net in spite of more ridicule.

As he was pounding the last peg into the ground, a moccasin moved into view. Bjarni was kneeling. He looked up into the face of a big man looming over him. Bjarni was thankful he had used all of his time to study language because he clearly understood when the sakhim said, "Bjarni, I want to thank you for saving my children."

Bjarni's reply was, "After hearing the stories last night you should be thanking the Great Spirit."

"I have thanked the Great Spirit for sending you. The Great Spirit had no shafts in the bear. You had three, well placed."

"But you were laughing with the rest about the spilled quiver and..."

The sakhim said:

We are all hunters. A man who describes a great kill in exacting detail becomes tiresome. A man who can smile while his friends describe a few mistakes never has to prove how good he is. We all know you were the first to move. We all know the bear lay at your feet at the end.



The fish were done cooking before Bjarni's friends and the guides rolled out of their sleeping robes. Styrk stretched and said, "You left early last night. I told them you were tired. Were you mad at something we said while we were having fun?"

Bjarni handed Styrk the best fish saying:

I was mad last night. I misunderstood what was happening. The only other time stories were told about me around the campfire was when I got the name Brave Little Bull. I never believed I was brave at that time. When I killed the bear, I thought that I had been brave so I expected more respect from you, my friends. But I have been talking with sakhim this morning. Now I understand better.

Styrk smiled. His eyes gleamed as he said, "The quiver was spilled and the bear was dead at your feet. Only the Great Spirit knows what really happened, but I want you around when we meet the next bear."

In the days that followed, Bjarni noticed a change. Styrk had been in Akoman before. He spoke to the local people with ease. Until the bear fight Hallgrim, Tjalve, and the guides asked Styrk what to do or which way to go. After the bear fight the guides asked Bjarni too. After the bear fight the local people talked directly to Bjarni while Styrk stood off to the side. Only rarely was Styrk called in to clarify a vague point. When Styrk, Hallgrim, and Tjalve discussed plans for

the day, one of the three would say, "Let us check with Bjarni." More important to Bjarni was that Styk, Hallgrim, and Tjalve began to ask him personally what to do or where to go.

The evening that the people of the meat camp were preparing to leave at dawn, the temperature was higher than usual. That evening they lit the campfire in the center clearing. The children and the women joined into the circle. The children were darting here and there. The women sat close behind the men so they could hear the stories too. One of the guides entertained the group with an exaggerated tale of how Bjarni earned the 'Brave, Little Bull' name. As the laughter was subsiding, a grandmother spoke out, "Little Bull is not right! He should be Brave Big Bear."

Styk said, "But Bjarni already means 'bear.'"

So the issue was chewed upon by all in the circle. Eventually it was decided Bjarni was more than "brave." He was "bold." Because he was already a bear, only the word "bold" need be added to his original name. The village people agreed he should be called "Bold Bjarni."

Every village, no matter the size, had a sakhim but also a shaman, a religious man. The villages called the religious man in every village "pavow."

The meat-smoking camp was only a small cluster of temporary tepees separated from the larger village during the meat-smoking season. But fortunately the pavow was along in the meat-smoking camp. He stood up, and signaled for Bjarni to come forward. Then the pavow had Bjarni lay down with his face sideways on the ground. The little buffalo robe was laid on Bjarni's rump. Then the bear robe was laid over Bjarni. The pavow tied the legs of the bearskin to Bjarni's wrists and feet.

With cues provided by the pavow, the group began to chant, "Go Little Bull. Run, run."

The drum began at a slow tempo and then increased the pace. The pavow danced astride over Bjarni. The pavow often turned half around so his legs switched sides during a high leap. His head bobbed. His hands repeatedly touched Bjarni's back or Bjarni's thighs. After a drum crescendo, the pavow's hands came up from the back of Bjarni's legs pulling the buffalo hide. The pavow flung the buffalo hide aside.

The children rushed to grab the hide. They rolled it up. They carried it to Styk who slipped away to hide it in his pack.

Meanwhile the drum returned to a very slow beat. The pavow said softly to Bjarni, "Dance." Bjarni moved a wrist. The drum announced the movement. Then the drum announced every movement as Bjarni rose up and walked like a bear. He added some human dance steps and the drum kept up.

Then the drum settled into a steady rhythm. The drummers started to sing. Soon the entire camp was dancing. They formed two arcs with women in front, and Bjarni leading the men behind them. Bold Bjarni and his friends enjoyed a delightful night in Akoman.

Bjarni had watched similar circle dances at the *Althing* in Greenland, three years ago. Styk had danced once at the *Althing* when he tried to get closer to Halldis. Hallgrim and Tjalve had danced a few times when the priests introduced dancing during the small *Things* at the Sandnes Kirke.

During the summer they had danced several times at whichever village they stayed. Tjalve had been curious about the feelings they had felt during the dances. Styk admitted to a devout feeling even though the red face of Jesus had been replaced by fire. Hallgrim had said, "Fire is a light of the world too." Bjarni agreed with both of them but thought that the lasting feeling was being part of a group of people swaying together. They all agreed that as guests they would dance whenever the drum sounded in a village.

But that night Styk had difficulty dancing. The moonlight reflected off the black hair of the women in front of him. There were moments when Styk was sure he was catching glimpses of the blonde hair of Halldis. Then there were bitter moments of sadness when he realized the hair was black. Styk left the dance early. When his three comrades returned to the sleeping robes near the canoe, they saw him sitting and watching the moon touch the horizon.



The authority ranking among the four young Norse men slowly changed after the bear fight. During the previous winter Bjarni had been studious about learning the language. He could now speak almost as well as Tjalve who could speak better than Styk even though Styk had spent one more winter in Eastman Land. Bjarni and Tjalve became talkers to the village peoples. Styk was usually somewhere ahead or exploring around. Hallgrim was often sitting alone figuring something. So Bjarni and Tjalve were often faced with a social question or demand. Tjalve's style was to ask questions. By default Bjarni began to ask questions and then make decisions affecting all of them.

Styk, Hallgrim, and Tjalve had traveled as a group to Merica many times. There was no desire for the three to consider changing the ranking among themselves. Styk was the experienced one, Hallgrim was the numbers man, and Tjalve was the man to deal with people. Then Bjarni had joined them last winter.

Bjarni was younger. He had never been to Merica or Eastman Land. Bjarni should have been ranked fourth in their group. But Bjarni had been Styk's best friend back in Greenland. Bjarni had been accustomed to giving Styk his opinions.

Whether Bjarni knew it or not, Styk respected his opinions. But Styk also felt a burden because he had to watch over his cousin Bjarni to protect him from danger caused by a lack of experience.

Hallgrim and Tjalve knew Styk's strong desire was exploring. In the past they had learned to cope when Styk suggested another exploring venture. But during this summer they became anxious because Styk was acting testier. They had said between themselves, "Styk should go exploring more." Then they laughed because the whole trip was an exploration. True the trip had been an exploration, but through it all Styk felt a burden having to watch out for Bjarni's safety.

Then that big, mean, mama bear came along. When the bear's spirit was freed from her body, Styk's burden was also freed. Bjarni could take care of himself. Styk could enjoy exploring again.

In the past Styk would have signaled that it was time to go. Midday came and went before Bjarni finally realized they were not going to move until he said, "I am ready to go." Soon after he said the words, the canoe pulled away. They rowed hard until nightfall.

Several sleeps later they approached a large village. The sentinel signaled a friendly welcome. The nighttime ice was already forming as they pulled the canoe up the ramp. A couple of young men came forward to introduce themselves. Soon, in proper fashion, the six men in the canoe were seated in the sakhim's tepee. The evening's feasting and storytelling began.

During the evening Bjarni described their intentions to cross James Bay using the North Twin Island as a landmark. The sakhim said that it would take about a moon's time for the ice to be firm enough to be safe.

Their two guides wanted to return to their own village. If they could start early in the morning, they could get to their home village before the lake froze over in a few sleeps. Bjarni asked the local sakhim what hunting could be done for a moon's time. The sakhim said most of the village men were going to hunt beaver at this season. Bjarni thanked the guides and said they were free to leave at dawn.

The four Norse men had heard about beaver in Merica, so they recognized beaver dams when they first saw them in Akoman. They also recognized the gnawed trees and the small brown animal with the flat tail. But usually they could not get close before they heard the tail slap the water. Then all the beaver dived out of sight.

They were also aware of the beaver robes worn by the people in Eastman Land. These robes worn with the fur next to the body had a certain aroma, a well-greased pliability, and the uncomfortable guard hairs had fallen out. Tjalve noticed that the people of Eastman Land would trade many fine things but not their beaver robes.

The four Norse had been told a good time to trap beaver was when the young were grown and the ice was beginning to form. So the sakhim's invitation for them to join village men in hunting beaver was accepted with eagerness.

As the campfire turned to embers, the local men slipped out to their own tepees. The guides had left to curl up under the canoe. Bjarni was expecting to do so also. He started to rise. The sakhim said, "Do what you must outside but come back here. She will warm your sleeping robe."

Bjarni looked across to the young woman who had been tending the fire. She had slipped out of the hut and changed clothes. She was no longer in the buckskin dress with fringes. She was standing in a black dress with a black jacket and wearing a conical hat that held her black hair to frame her face. She wore a necklace with a single cross near the neck and a single strand of white beads that hung between her breasts. She had opened the front of her jacket and held the flaps with golden edging tightly to her sides by her elbows. The taut dress showed her firm breasts and the flatness of her stomach. The dress flowed smoothly over her hips. Her hands were clasped together below the waistband between the rounded hips. Bjarni had to force his gaze back to the stunning face framed by black hair.³ ~

The sakhim pointed to three men and continued, "Your friends will go with these men. They have five daughters to choose from."⁴ ~

Bjarni thanked the sakhim and told him they would return quickly. They stepped outside and relieved themselves. Styrrk whispered:

You do not have to be bold to lie in her robe. We three should be able to find acceptable robe warmers out of five. But I worry about us being separated. I do not think it is wise.

Bjarni replied, "Our guides who have just been with us told me this village is well known for its friendliness. I do not sense any hostility."

³ Conical hats

⁴ Sexual mores

Tjalve nodded in agreement and said, "This is a situation where refusing the hosts may cause more trouble than gratefully accepting the offer."

Styrk pondered, "How do these people react to babies from girls without husbands? I intend to get back to Halldis with nothing to stop me from marrying her. I do not want to be tied to a marriage robe here."

Bjarni said, "I will ask before we lie down."

There were no other people in the sakhim's tepee except his daughter and the other men waiting for Styrk, Hallgrim, and Tjalve. Bjarni asked the question: "You have an attractive daughter. Will my lying in her sleeping robe make it more difficult for her to find a man to marry?"

The sakhim responded:

"You are wise to ask so kindly. Shortly after their breasts form, all of the young women in the village go along to winter hunting camps. Most of them have lain with several men. My daughter is an active maiden. She desires to warm your sleeping robe for a moon's time. She plans to select a village man when you leave. She has a few men in mind.

"Who knows when a baby may start? It makes little difference if you start the baby or the man after you. Many men in the village are proud of the children started by blue-eyed men. They think the children are stronger and more handsome. My daughter's suitors really do hope she warms your sleeping robe. If she does, then they know that she may be choosing one of them soon."

Bjarni turned to Styrk, Hallgrim, and Tjalve saying, "This is the most pleasant trap I have ever fallen into. I hope you have a difficult time deciding."



There is no moon of taking beaver. A good time to take beaver begins in the last half of the moon of the falling leaves and continues through the freezing moon. The Norse men spent a moon's time taking beaver. Bjarni had trouble setting the traps. He got only eleven beavers. Styrk, who had no difficulty selecting his robe warmer, was also a natural trapper. He brought back nearly one beaver a day. He was pleased to be exploring new places and new things without watching after Bjarni everyday.

The robe warmers converted the beaver skins into useful clothing. They made a beaver robe for each man. They also made beaver hats for their men. Bjarni was trying on his beaver hat when the sakhim entered the tepee and said, "Your hat looks good. You will leave this country as a beaver-head."

Bjarni asked, "What is a beaver-head?"

The sakhim replied:

"A beaver-head is a man from your land who has been in our lands for a year. Also a beaver-head can speak our language. He has lain with a woman in our villages. Then she has made his beaver robe and hat in thankfulness. Last but most important the village men must agree that a beaver-head thinks and acts like them. I would not have let her give you the beaver hat if the village men had disapproved. It is not easy to earn a beaver hat. It is not easy to be a beaver-head.

"Our young women have created excellent beaver clothes for you. You will be the best of the beaver-heads when you go to the Blond Area and join the others going to Greenland."

Bjarni said, "But there are only four of us."

"Oh, no, there will be more," said the sakhim:

"Old beaver-heads miss their family across the sea and want to visit them again. It happens every year. So beaver-heads from this region join together to go back to your land. They say traveling in a big group on the ice is better. I have heard of a total of eight beaver-heads coming from three other villages. Four of the beaver-heads wear old, old beaver caps meaning they have been here many times before."

"In three sleeps of walking, you will get to the main village in the Blond Area, Attawapiskat. There you will see many blond, blue-eyed men. But you will see few beaver-hats because they do not speak our language or understand us. My daughter speaks well of you. We hope you pass this way again."

After the morning sun cleared the treetops, Bjarni, Styrk, Hallgrim, and Tjalve turned to look at their robe warmers one last time. Black-haired young men from the village were standing beside them. The Norse men nodded ever so slightly as they adjusted their new beaver hats. Then they turned to walk on the ice down the river toward the Blond Area. Three of them never looked back again.

Hallgrim, who was slower to leave, did look back one more time. He had just stepped onto the ice when he glanced back and immediately tripped over a tree limb frozen into the ice. His robe warmer stifled a laugh and ran to help him to his feet.

Styrk's sensitive ears heard Hallgrim whisper, "Wait for me." So he signaled a stop. Without looking back, he, Bjarni, and Tjalve stopped to adjust bootlaces and pack straps until Hallgrim came hurrying along side.

Bjarni and Styrk would find out years later was that their two robe warmers were indeed with child. They would learn that within a moon's time after their departure, the young women shared marriage robes with young village men. The children, a boy and a girl, had black hair and black eyes. The boy was stronger than his peers. The girl was more attractive than other girls. The "fathers" loved each child.

What time and distance prevented Bjarni and Styrk from ever knowing is that, the two children grew up and married each other as children of leading families often do. They raised five active children. Their second girl had blonde hair and blue eyes. The village adored her.

But our story must follow the young men who walked downstream to Attawapiskat.



Attawapiskat was like most other villages that they had seen in Akoman. The houses were tepees, but they were covered with birch bark and timber instead of fur. Many had wooden portals for entrances. A few of the houses were elongated as if two tepees had been joined. They looked like the earthen homes of Greenland except they were made of wood.

A major difference for this village was the blond hair and blue eyes of the people. Many people, especially women and children, had black eyes and hair, but the few young blonde girls made all of the four new beaver-heads gawk. The village men, who also had blue eyes and blond hair, did not notice the visitor's blue eyes and blond hair. But many of the men did notice and respect the beaver hats. Bjarni and his three friends were directed to the sakhim's house.

The sakhim spoke Norse with an accent. Sometimes he used words none of them understood. The sakhim, with black hair and black eyes, claimed he was almost pure Norse. His great grandfather had "gone into the woods" for his wife.

The sakhim laughingly joked, " the sins of the fathers are still visible in my black hair and eyes."

The people in the Blond Area could trace their ancestry back for more than two cycles of grandfather's grandfather. Retaining the Norse language and looks had been a strong value in Attawapiskat. But the sakhim said the youth were not that interested any more. The number of Norse men coming from Greenland made courting a Norse looking woman difficult for many local men. The sakhim said the result was in plain sight. He swung his arm in the direction of the surrounding villagers. More than half of them had black eyes.

The sakhim had prepared several big old tepees for the annual migration of beaver-heads. The beaver-heads would be in the village only a short time. The sakhim also expected that the visitors would prefer to gather together. So the sakhim traded small talk, accepted his token gifts, and directed them to the tepees with an open invitation to join his evening campfire if they wished. The new beaver-heads sensed he did not really expect them to appear.

The first two beaver-heads were already in a tepee. They invited the four newcomers to join them. During the day seven other beaver-heads ducked into the tepees. Getting-to-know-you chatter went on all day. That evening the trip planning began even before all the expected blue-eyed men arrived.

Already the men had been in Akoman long enough to adapt to the local method of making plans. Every person around the campfire offered suggestions, but usually without a definite firm opinion.

The beavers-heads' overall plan, which everyone accepted, was to walk over the ice to Akimiski Island. Then they would walk to the North Twin. From there they would walk to the west shore of Ungava Peninsula. When to go exactly? How to load supplies? Should they go north or south of Akimiski Island? All these questions and many more were discussed without decisions being made.

Finally five more beaver-heads came to the village. Most of the beaver-heads had family in all four of the northern kirkes and praying house. Eight had family in kirkes in the Eastern Settlement. All were carrying buckskin or beaver-skin clothes and all intended to take clothes in addition to as much meat as possible to their families.

The evening campfires brought out stories from most of the men. Styrk contributed his stories about "Brave Little Bull" and the bear fight. Bjarni sat smiling.

The fire was burning low one evening. The discussion had been rancorous. It seemed to Bjarni that the men were getting angry. They were discussing whether to go on the north side of Akimiski Island or on the south side. Bjarni had never walked to Akimiski Island. Many of the others had. The decision should have

been theirs. So Bjarni just sat and listened. But as the heated conversation went on, he was worried the men might actually fight.

Finally Bjarni spoke up saying:

I hear that most of you want to go to the north side of Akimiski Island. Those who want to go on the south side are worried over things that we must decide when we see what the ice is really like. I suggest we make plans for the north side of Akimiski Island. We can discuss the other details when we can see what the ice is like.

Bjarni was startled to hear the eldest man with the most time in Akoman say, "Thank the Great Spirit that is settled." There was a low murmur sounding like approval as the beaver-heads rose to call it a night.

As they settled in for the night, Tjalve explained his view of the evening's events to Bjarni:

"Those men are ornery, independent Norse just like us. The older men have been in Akoman so long that they think like the people here. Do you notice that they do not give direct opinions? Even those of us who have been here only a year are beginning to think that way.

"Normally they all follow their own minds. But they all know that we must now act as a group. No one wants to lead the group because they all know the others do not want anyone to lead them. They each gave their suggestion but not their definite opinion. Then they waited for group agreement before acting. There was no group agreement, so then they each tried to decide who was the wisest one they could follow.

"They do care, a little, about how old the wise one is. They do care, a little, if the wise one is experienced in the country. But those concerns are minor as long as the wise one listens well, makes good decisive decisions, and thinks more about the group than himself.

"Somehow most of the beaver-heads have selected you, Bjarni, as the wisest one. You nearly threw away the role of the young wise one because you did not make the first big decision soon enough.

"Keep listening. They do not want snap decisions. But stay alert to speak when you should. They do not want you to take forever to make a decision."

The beaver robe under the caribou hide was warm. The soothing aroma usually made Bjarni fall fast asleep. But that night in Attawapiskat, Bjarni turned and

turned. He was turning around another curve in the trail of life and he was not sure of what lay ahead.



At the next campfires, decisions went much faster. Bjarni would listen awhile and offer a suggestion. Usually the suggestion would be accepted. Sometimes experienced hunters would suggest changes. They had knowledge Bjarni had not heard about. Bjarni would agree the changes seemed better for the reasons given. Then Bjarni's suggestion with the changes became fixed in the planning.

The day to leave arrived. Three sleds were lined up at the shore. One of the sleds had a lame man. Styrk who always wanted to be the pathfinder was planning to be on the sled with Bjarni. At Bjarni's suggestion Styrk and a man with the sled of the lame man exchanged places. Bjarni wanted the sled with the lame man and Styrk to be the lead sled. The sled was going to go slower than Styrk liked, but he would still be out in front. Styrk had drawn the sleeping slot and was already lying down.

Aslak, the old lame man on the lead sled, was not greatly handicapped. A small but vicious bear had mauled his right leg. The leg had healed as a rigid limb. Aslak could swing the leg along at a reasonable pace and he could sustain the pace when other pullers grew tired. But still Aslak thought the limp meant his sled would be going last. He had always been the last sled on other trips.

There had been a couple of heated arguments among members of the other sled team. Tjalve had agreed to trade places with a beaver-head in the other sled. The rancor appeared to die down.

Bjarni and Hallgrim were waiting with their sled mates. Their sled had the fastest men but Bjarni wanted to be last because his father had always told him, "The strongest man should always walk the trail last." So Bjarni was waiting for Aslak's sled to start.

Then Bjarni realized that he had not discussed the traveling order of the sleds. He was the only one who thought that Aslak's sled should go first. Bjarni slipped out of the harness and walked forward to signal the pullers of the sleds to come closer together. He told them he thought the best way to travel was for the slowest sled to take the lead. His sled with faster men would be last. That way they would be there to help when the other two sleds had rough going. Bjarni

expected Aslak's sled to be slow, but once the sleds moved onto the ice, Aslak with his stiff leg set a pace that made all the pullers almost sweat.



Considering the unexpected events often encountered in traveling on ice, the crossing of James Bay was routine. Slowly Bjarni became fully mindful that the sixteen men in the sledding group were all Norse and not the local guides he had learned to know. Bjarni and his friends had been with local guides since they arrived in Eastman Land eleven months ago. Many of the other Norse men in the group had traveled through Akoman in pairs but without a local guide.

Two sleeps later as they passed around the south side of the North Twin, Aslak, the lame man, stopped his sled. Aslak had been a sailor during the first years of his manhood. He was interested in the sky, clouds, rain, snow, ice, and water. His close friends knew better than to argue with him about coming storms.

When Bjarni's sled came up, Bjarni stepped over to talk to him. Aslak said, "If we go on, I think a blizzard will catch us by nightfall. We would have better shelter if we stayed in those rocks and brush near the North Twin."

Bjarni did not think much about the weather before. But then he noticed the southeast wind was increasing its speed. The clouds in the northwest had begun to build. Even though it was just slightly after midday, Bjarni decided to follow Aslak's advice. He told the group to move to the rocks and prepare to remain dry during a snowstorm. That evening they clustered around a campfire in the center of a shelter formed by the three sleds. The snow had begun falling. One of the older men commented, "I am amazed. How did you, Bjarni, a young wise one, learn so much about weather?"

Aslak answered. "He didn't. He learned something many men never do. He learned how to listen."

The blizzard whistled around North Twin for two sleeps. On the evening of the second sleep, the men were again clustered around the fire. Bjarni said:

Aslak thinks we will have one more sleep of hard wind. The wind should blow the snow off the ice tomorrow, but we would not like walking in the blowing snow. We do not have to. So prepare to stay here for another sleep.

Then the campfire stories started, but the men had heard most of them. One older man with a gray beard commented, "I sure see a lot of young faces in this mob. How many of you do not have wives?"

Before the tally could be made, a definition on robe warmers was needed. The group agreed a robe warmer was not to be considered a wife unless a man had been back for a second year. With that understanding the number of men without wives was eight. One of the eight was an older man who said he preferred to avoid any woman anyway, anywhere, or anytime.

The questions continued. "How many here are intending to take food to families in Greenland?" They all were.

"How many were taking food for wives and children?" Six of the eight men with wives were.

"How many men have wives here?" There were four.

Hallgrim did the math. "That means two of you have wives here and in Greenland?"

Aslak the lame said:

The wife here makes clothes for the family there. The wife there is very thankful when I come with both food and clothing. She sends beads back to the wife here. Neither one really likes the arrangement, but given the climate situation I do. The first year when I had to spend the summer away from the wife in Greenland, I got so sad and sick I nearly did not make it back. The second summer I went exploring for something to do, but I was still sad until I met my wife here.

Styrk asked, "What would happen if they ever met?"

Aslak looked into the swirling snow and replied:

"I wish they could. The walk to Greenland is cold and dangerous, but I worry most about the family in Greenland. Every time I make it home, they seem to be starved close to death.

"I told my wife here, I may not be able to get back for three or four years. She has moved back to her father's house.

Styrk asked, "Three or four years? Why would you leave her for that long?"

Aslak replied:

"You were probably only four or five years old the last time the climate got warm, so you do not remember the swarms of icebergs. During those

warm years the boats could not get into Merica because of the icebergs and the pack ice.

"My father had a woman here. He could not get back to her for six years. When he did, she gave him back his half of their marriage robe. He was annoyed, but he consoled himself by always telling us about the strong, handsome hunter she lived with."

Styrk asked again, "Why did he not walk the ice?"

"Believe me, he tried all six years," replied Aslak:

Three times he went to Nordsetur to get north of the icebergs from the river of ice. I was old enough to go with him. I learned a lot about ice I did not want to know. It was never safe to walk across from Greenland to Merica.

Styrk pondered the statements, "Look, you say the ice was not solid enough to walk on, and yet it was too thick to allow the boats through. Something does not make sense to me."

Aslak replied:

"It's the icebergs. Icebergs in water make the water much cooler than a big frozen patch of ice on the surface. With icebergs the water stays colder longer than with surface ice because most of the iceberg is under water. Icebergs move with the currents. Pack ice, the ice frozen on the water's surface, moves with the wind.

"In warm weather there are more icebergs, so the pack ice is always being chewed up. But, because of the colder water, the broken up pack ice does not thaw. Boats can go around icebergs, but they can get trapped and torn up by pack ice. A man cannot get out and walk either. In winter the warmer weather delays the re-freezing of pack ice so it does not really get solid. Besides more icebergs also come crashing through."

Styrk asked another question. "Why are there more icebergs when it is warm?"

Aslak replied:

"I wish I could tell you, but I cannot. All I know is when father came home after the first cold year, he said that there were fewer icebergs than before. I began to cross the ice nine years ago. I could see for myself that

the icebergs were fewer. The ice sheets were bigger between pressure ridges. If an iceberg tore it up, the open water re-froze quickly.

"During the late summer in the cold climate the boats often got through at least once, sometimes twice. In a really cold year like this one, the boats might not make it. I doubt they got through this year. But coming on the boat was always chancier than the walk on the ice. I prefer walking."

Styrk asked, "So you think the weather will be getting warmer, the icebergs will come back, and you cannot get back either by boat or walking the ice?"

Aslak said:

I do. We have walked the ice for ten years. We are overdue for a warm year. My father says we have about nine cold years and five warm years. The warm year is late. Besides I see the sky is clearer than it has been for years. I think the summer will be hot.

Hallgrim commented, "Big Raven Arne said something about seven years of feast and seven years of famine. That adds up to fourteen years the same as five warm and nine cold years.⁵ ~ Are we talking about the same thing?"

Aslak said, "All I am saying is we should cross the ice to Greenland as soon as we kill our quota of meat. I hope the cold stays until we get there."



When Bjarni's group reached the western shore of Ungava Peninsula, they turned north. During the next daylight they came upon a camp of beaver-heads at the mouth of a river. The men in the camp had been caught on the ice when the blizzard hit.

The beaver-head leading the group of sleds from the Eastman Land had not listened to the voices of other pullers who warned of the coming storm. Instead of stopping at possible places for shelter, the leader had exhorted the column of sleds to move faster to reach a cove ahead.

The column of sleds was hit broadside with the full fury of the wind-driven snow. Most of the people in sleds took refuge in the snow banks along the shore.

⁵ Fourteen years

They dug holes in the snow and crowded together for warmth as they waited out the storm.

During the time Bjarni's sleds were walking from the North Twin, the Eastman Land group was digging out and trying to find everyone. One sled with three men was still missing. The sled leader had stopped the group and sent a search party to look for the men. The search party had gone south past the spot where the men were last seen and returned without finding a trace.

Upon hearing the story of the chaos caused by the blizzard, Bjarni asked if Big Raven Arne was with the group. The beaver-head from Eastman Land, who was talking to Bjarni, knew that Big Raven Arne was along before the blizzard but had not seen him afterward.

Just then Styrk saw Big Raven Arne walking with snowshoes on the snow in the distance. He was wearing his black cape on the outside of his fur clothes. Bjarni, Styrk, Hallgrim, and Tjalve ran to him. All of them tried to hug Big Raven Arne at the same time. Then they calmed down. Each took his turn, Styrk first and Bjarni last. Then they continued to talk in turn as they walked to the campsite to prepare to stay the night. The only thing that really mattered was that the five were together again and headed home.

Later around the campfire of the combined sled groups, Big Raven Arne was able to say more. He was very pleased with the summer's activities. He was able to visit a different village every other sleep. He was treated with reverence at all campfires. Everyone seemed excited about seeing and touching his black robe.

Big Raven Arne told his young companions about the most remarkable of all the strange things to see in the woods. When he had returned from the Blond Area, the pavows took him by canoe up the river Nemiskou. Big Raven Arne thought the name sounded like "No Lost Course." He thought that the river was so easy to follow that the river's name was appropriate.

Then they took him further into the woods until they came to an opening of easy access into a mountain. Inside the opening was a cave looking like white marble. The surface of the cave looked as if a workman had carved and polished it. The whole interior was lighted through the access. In one corner was a slab of the same stone forming a table as if to serve as an altar.⁶ ~ The pavows and the local people told him that it was a house of prayer where the spirits gather. All the pavows were comfortable going into the room. But the local people would not.

⁶ Cave

Big Raven Arne estimated forty to fifty different men came to see him at the cave during the light of day for five sleeps. Everyone wanted to touch the black robe. Everyone wanted to be baptized.

Big Raven Arne thought that the Big Raven from ages ago might have used the cave. So Big Raven Arne told them he would teach them all but only baptize the pavows. He thought about how they had remembered the "light of the world" for centuries. He decided to concentrate on one simple verse but use many examples. Remembering the Nemiskou river, He chose John 14:6 "...I am the way, the truth and the life." If pavows and their followers learned the verse well, then all the rivers and pathways they used would remind them of Jesus. Each day for five sleeps he instructed a new group of people. The morning following each day of instruction he baptized the pavows who had attended the day before. The newly baptized pavows helped in the instruction of a new group of people.

Big Raven Arne was surprised at the understanding they had of the Great Spirit. They truly had faith, they understood simple concepts, and they willingly searched for more instruction. He was pleased he had helped forty-three pavows get a better understanding of Christ. As he confided to Tjalve "That is more than twice the number of priests I have in Greenland. Some of them here even understand God better. They now know the way and I think they will not lose the course."



After an evening around the campfire, the two groups of beaver-heads combined and tried to choose a wise one to lead them. Even though the group coming from Eastman Land had more members, Bjarni, the young wise one, was favored over their leader. The loss of the sled and people was a sore issue with many. The Eastman Land group was trying to decide what to do next. The older hunters thought the men and the sled just went back to Eastman Land. Bjarni agreed with the older hunters and suggested leaving at pale light of dawn in the morning. It was more important for the combined group of men to move.

The men wondered about the fate of their comrades for only three months. During the blizzard they had, indeed, stopped at the first good shelter and waited out the storm. Because they were not satisfied with their leader, they returned to the Eastman Land to find a hunting village that would hunt closest to Pamiok Island in the spring. The three beaver-heads joined a village hunting its way north.

They came out of the forest near the mouth of Leif's River and walked north on the ice to Pamiok Island. They arrived two sleeps after the beaver-heads with Big Raven Arne had left Pamiok to walk to Greenland. The three decided they could pull their sled at a faster pace if they took only a small load of pemmican. So they decided to try to catch the main group of sleds. Luck and good weather was with them. They caught up in ten sleeps.

Meanwhile back at the snow camp, when everybody, except the sled of three was ready, the combined group of nine sleds and forty-six people walked the ice along the western shore of Ungava Peninsula to the Kogaluc River. There they made snowshoes. Then using the snowshoes, when needed, they carried their sleds from one frozen lake to another along the Kogaluc River. The portages were difficult climbs but short. When they were on the next long lake, they easily covered the distances to the next portage.⁷ ~ After Payne Lake they used snowshoes to follow the Payne River valley to Pamiok Island. They arrived at the open-water marvels late in the moon of little spirits.

As soon as they prepared shelter using the low walls, they began to hunt seals and walrus to take back to Greenland. The weather was still colder than normal. Some of the open-water marvels began to freeze over sooner than expected. A large number of hunters had already been hunting the open-water marvels since fall. They had reduced the number of seals in the vicinity. It was possible for the group to make enough pemmican to take to Greenland, but staying around to harvest more seemed like wasted effort. Aslak's warning convinced Bjarni that the group should return to Greenland after the moon of the rising spirits. Then as they prepared to go, the weather grew warmer.

After passing over the Indrawing Seas, the group of sleds moved at a good sustained pace. The distance between pressure ridges was wider than Bjarni had seen on the crossing to Merica. There was more rafting of the ice, which made it easier to change floes. They were about three sleeps out from Merica when Styrk saw the wall of ice in the north. He went back to wave Bjarni forward. When Styrk showed Bjarni the icebergs, they discussed the wisdom of moving in front of them. The temperatures for the last three sleeps had been much higher than normal.

Bjarni turned to ask Aslak's advice on the strange development and about the risks of going on. Aslak identified the ice wall as icebergs from the river of ice spun off the cold breast of Hel. He noted the ice near to the sleds was not yet showing any stress cracks. Aslak judged the sleds could pass, but they must not

⁷ Kogaluc River

tarry. Bjarni decided that to go back would surely cause the loss of life to starving people in Greenland. Following Bjarni's orders five of the six beaver-heads pulled, ate on the move, and took quick necessary breaks as the sleds moved on. Aslak out in front forced an even faster pace. The pullers stripped off the outer jackets to avoid sweating.

As the sun moved toward the horizon after the third sleep of the faster pace, the beaver-heads lifted their sleds over the last pressure ridge onto a wide floe of more solid pack ice. In the west a mammoth iceberg was splitting the pack ice behind them.

Eleven sleeps later Bjarni, Styrk, Hallgrim, and Tjalve delivered Big Raven Arne to Paafa Thorbjorn at the Sandnes kirke. Styrk had decided that he would go to the Eastern Settlement with Bishop Arne so he stayed at Paafa Thorbjorn's too. Hallgrim went to his home. Tjalve left for his home on Bjorne-oen Island.

The sun was a red disk setting into the horizon as Bjarni stood in the cold air of an icy land by himself. He reflected. They had left the moon before Christmas over a year ago. The forest had amazed him. He had learned another language. There had been the Little Bull fiasco at the beginning of summer. Then the bear fight at the start of fall. Then the robe warmers and the beaver hats just as the ice froze solid. He still could not yet believe he had been the young wise one of a group of rough, tough, and very opinionated men. They went through blizzards, hunting at the open-water marvels, and racing the icebergs. Now on a peaceful evening a moon's time after spring, seventeen moon's time after seeing Arnora blow him a kiss, Bjarni was standing alone taking stock of his feelings in a world of ice.

His feelings said:

Bjarni, you are just nineteen years old. You are now scared to death. You are scared she will not be behind that door. She was old enough to marry last winter. You are more frightened that she is there and you do not know what to say to her.

He watched the red disk of the sun slip into the boat that carries it back to the new dawning. He took a deep breath. He turned around, strode up to the door, and knocked.

Arnora's brother, the chess boy, opened the door. The boy smiled, gave a gallant bow, made a sweep of the arm to signal Bjarni to enter, and called out "Arnora." Bjarni saw a hooded woman near the boiling pot rise and turn to look. Then the hood flew off. The blond hair fanned out as Arnora came with quick

steps. This time Arnora's kiss landed hard on target. This time she hugged the body of the target tightly.

That evening there was a long discussion about Merica and Akoman with the thirteen people crowded around the boiling pots. Then aunts, uncles, cousins, brothers, sisters, and finally, parents withdraw to their rooms. The parents had agreed Bjarni would stay the night in the great room.

When they were finally alone, Bjarni gave the little bull buffalo and the big brown bear hides to Arnora. She was delighted to have the unique hair to weave into a wall hanging.

Arnora said she had thought about him almost every day. There were so few young men of marriageable age in Greenland that she had little chance even to talk with another man. The competition for marriageable men was high. Girls, more eager for marriage than she, had accepted the first offer of any man who courted them. Two older men who had lost their wives had come to visit her. After the second man had left the house, she had said to her father, "I have a special man in mind. Please wait two or three years before you make me choose a husband."

Bjarni asked, "Why did you ask to wait for two or three years?"

Arnora said, "Because I am not sure when the special man will come for me."

Bjarni replied, "Oh, you are smart. You would know when your special man comes for you."

Arnora said:

It is not as easy for a woman to know. For example you brought me two robes of different hair for my weaving. I like the hair very much. But to me the gifts say 'Remember me when you put these into your weavings.' They did not say 'Arnora I came for you.'

Bjarni said, "I do not see much difference."

Arnora responded, "Oh, there is. When my special man walks in the door and says, 'Arnora I came for you.' Father will have to prepare the wedding feast immediately."

That night Bjarni fell asleep trying to understand how a woman's mind works. He thought over and over, "Why would Arnora choose a special man without even giving him enough time to show his interests?" He had a fitful sleep.

The next morning Arnora's father told Bjarni the sad news. Arnora's father had not even told his own family, until he told Bjarni, that Bjarni's father had died two

moon's time ago. At that time Magnus was found frozen sitting on a rock overlooking a caribou trail. The livestock man thought he might have stayed through the night hoping to be there when the caribou moved in the morning. It was a very cold night. Some people said it was the coldest of the very cold winter. There were fresh caribou tracks the morning they found him. The tracks came right up to him.

Bjarni was angry that he had not been told sooner. Arnora's father explained that Bjarni could not have done anything the night before. Arnora's father did not want to spoil the mood of the evening. Joyful evenings were rare. Arnora's father asked forgiveness.

Bjarni could see the logic in the timing of the news. Two moon's time had already passed after his father's death. But Bjarni sat stunned through the morning food. He had been waiting to tell his father how the hunting advice saved his life. He wanted to tell about backtracking moose, about the mini "wait and see" game with deer, about the big mounds of bird feathers, and much more. Now all that was no longer possible.

Bjarni's stunned actions did not last long. Styrk and Arne had guessed he would be staying overnight at Arnora's home. They were ready to travel south with sixteen other men and three sleds. They wanted to let Bjarni know they were on their way to the Eastern Settlement. They were also stunned at the news of the death of Bjarni's father. Arne found the right consoling words. Then Styrk said, "The people in these houses are close to starving, you better get home or you may have even more grief. Your old livestock man may be dead or nearly so. Is your sister Thjodhild trying to survive by herself?"

Bjarni collected his things and readied the sled. He was distraught and worried about his sister. He was so engrossed in his anxiety that he hardly noticed Arnora's helpful assistance. He paid almost no heed to Arnora's parting kiss on his cheek, or her parting words in her soft voice, "Bjarni, please take care. You are an unique man."

With a new purpose and a driving concern, Bjarni hurried home with the remaining food on the sled. He made the journey with only one actual sleep, instead of the usual two.

When he arrived he was relieved that his fears were worse than reality. While he had been away, his sister, Thjodhild, age sixteen, had married a man called Ingjald age twenty-two. They had a newborn child. Thjodhild was nursing her child when Bjarni arrived.

Thjodhild told Bjarni her story:

"Paafa Thord visited often after the old livestock man died. Father was away hunting for long periods of time. Paafa Thord was concerned that there were no adult men in the house during that time. So Paafa Thord brought Ingjald to see father. Father liked Ingjald and thought you would too.

"So one night they called me to the boiling pots in the great room. There were the three of them: Father, Paafa Thord, and Ingjald. I saw Ingjald for the first time that night. Father wanted Ingjald to be livestock man. By tradition that meant I should marry Ingjald, but father offered to give me a few years to decide whom to marry. Paafa Thord thought it would be better in God's eyes if we were married soon after Ingjald came to live in the house. Ingjald said he was not interested in a temporary place to live. He was still needed at home. Also he was not yet sure he was even interested in me. If he were not, the remoteness of the farm would make it hard for him to court other girls.

"I asked to speak with Ingjald alone. So father and Paafa Thord went to bed. We talked of many things that night.

"Ingjald is the third son of a livestock man in Agna Fjord. He really had no good chance to have an enduring place to live. Ingjald had walked to Merica and back three times, but he said it was a cold, difficult task. He detested the slaughtering of seals. He prefers to nurture animals. So he thought Merica was not a place for him.

"Because I was already resigned to be married to a man who tended livestock, I thought Ingjald's desire to nurture animals was unique."

Bjarni had been adjusting the lamp's wick, but when he thought he heard Thjodhild emphasize that rarely used word "unique", his head snapped back to listen more closely to her. Then he thought, "No, she is just talking normally, but somebody recently did emphasize 'unique'. Who was it?"

Thjodhild was oblivious to Bjarni's reaction. Her tale continued:

"Ingjald told me of enough events in his past to indicate to me that he would be a good, reliable husband. So in the morning I told father I would marry Ingjald. Since we married I have learned Ingjald is an even better husband than I thought he would be after that first night of talking.

"This spring Father was found frozen in a sitting position. So Ingjald went to the site, wrapped the body in the sitting position, sledged him home, and pulled him to the peak of the forage shed. Thank God and

Paafa Thord for Ingjald. He is very special for me. Treat him like a brother."

Thjodhild could see Bjarni looking at her as though he was in a trance. She could not see Bjarni's thoughts repeating, "unique-special" over and over again as if a drum, louder and louder, was driving the words into his mind. Thjodhild asked, "You will treat him like a brother, won't you?"

Bjarni rubbed his jaw and tried to come to the present. Then he smiled and said, "I will certainly treat him like a brother, if you will treat Arnora like a sister in the summer."

Then the joyous, tight hugging by Bjarni and Thjodhild briefly excluded all other brothers or sisters.

So Ingjald had become the livestock man. The children of the old livestock man still lived on the farm. They were older children, but Thjodhild and Ingjald told them to stay at the remote farm until they found mates.

Bjarni's brother, Ingolf, Thjodhild's family, and the children of the old livestock man were all thin and listless. They were pleased to see Bjarni, but even more pleased to see the pemmican and blubber. In spite of Aslak's prediction of warmer weather to come, Bjarni began to ration the pemmican immediately.

One night the weather in the Northern Settlement was still so cold that a man outside could not safely remove mittens. Then the next day the same man pushed back his hood to let his body heat escape. The following day ice in the shade was melting to form pools of water.



Vignette Thirteen

The COVERLET

Azon awoke to feel a hand on his shoulder gently rocking him. He heard his sister softly calling to him, "Azon, please wake up. Azon, please wake up."

Azon opened his eyes wider. He saw that his grandfather was still asleep with shallow breathing. He rolled onto his back to look his sister in the eye. He asked, "Why?"

She answered, "I want to show you something before Pitolo gets here."

Azon asked, "Where is Gee Hiz?"

His sister said, "A little while before the high point." She pulled on his arm saying, "Please come. I heard you tell Pitolo to meet you when Gee Hiz is at the high point."

Azon was still yawning as his sister led him out of the palisade, down the path, and then off the path to the favorite grassy spot on the bank. She sat down quickly and pulled him down beside her. Her insistent pulling irritated Azon and his voice reflected his feelings. He snapped, "What foolish thing do you want me to see?"

His sister pointed across the waterway. Azon said, "I see her. She is the quiet maiden from the north village. She appears to be sewing on a coverlet. The coverlet may be for me."

His sister said quietly, "Only if you notice her."

Azon, still irritated, retorted, "I have noticed her. She made the moccasins and leggings for me."

His sister asked, "Does she know if you noticed?"

Azon thought about the situation a brief while. Then he said, "Maybe not. She acts shy. She gave me no chance to say 'Thank you'. What difference does it make?"

"She may save the coverlet for a hunter who will pay attention to her," his sister said with a straight face.

Azon was puzzled. He asked, "Why would she do that? I thought she was helping you make new aarum-tid clothes for us."

The sister shook her head swiftly, causing her braids to fly out. She said:

"No, she and I are both making clothes to get attention from you and Pitolo. Both of you have a strong body and a stronger brain despite your bad legs. But both of you do not dance because of your legs. Both of you do not play games because of your legs. Both of you sulk off by yourself

because you think too much about the bad legs. How else can interested maidens get close enough, often enough to be noticed by you?

Azon asked, "Why would the quiet maiden want to be noticed by me?"

"Azon, men are the hunters," snapped his sister:

Hunters are the ones who capture the prey. A maiden is similar to prey. Most maidens will be captured to be a wife of some hunter. But a wise maiden is a different than a rabbit. A rabbit does not choose which wolf eats it. A wise maiden tries to interest the hunter who pleases her before some other crude hunter takes away her chance for a favorable life. Being interested is not enough; the desired hunter must pursue his prey before the crude hunter does.

Azon studied his sister's earnest face. Then he looked across the waterway. The quiet maiden had her head down sewing. His sister could detect enlightenment in Azon's face when he asked, "What does a hunter say to a maiden to let her know that he is interested in her?"

Azon's sister responded eagerly:

You talk about her and do not talk about the things she has or makes. You do not say that you like the pattern on your moccasins. You do say that she must have a talent to sew the beads so closely. You tell her how her movements make her dress, and its fringes, seem alive. You do not tell her how nice the dress looks. You tell her how well she braids her hair.

Azon studied the quiet maiden again and said, "Her braids look like all the other maiden's braids."

His sister winked, nodded toward the quiet maid, and said, "Are they not good enough for you? Azon, a hunter must hunt!" She stood and walked back to the palisade.

Azon sat reflecting. Then, after a deep breath, he hobbled his way down the steps and over the waterway stones. He was halfway up the steps on the north side of the waterway before the quiet maiden raised her head. She was smiling broadly.

As Gee Hiz made his passage through the sky to a while after the high point, the scene at the stepping stones changed. The quiet maiden and Azon, wearing

the new coverlet, had crossed over the waterway to sit on the shaded, grassy spot on the south bank. Azon's sister had picked up her coverlet in the tepee and returned. She understood that the pair on the grassy spot would benefit without her attention, so she told them that she wanted to work in the sunlight. She had just crossed the waterway to sit on the north bank when the sounds of Pitolo coming grew louder.

Pitolo looked at Azon's sister. She was sideways to him with her head down as she worked on a string of beads. Pitolo hesitated as if he were going to say something, and then he started skipping down the steps.

After crossing over the waterway, Pitolo saw that Azon was talking to the quiet maiden and was in no way indicating he was coming to help Pitolo. So Pitolo, grunting louder than usual, struggled up the steps himself. As he neared the top of the steps, the quiet maiden rose and walked away along the south bank.

Pitolo turned to Azon and said, "Beware. If I ever get the chance, I will gladly sit with a maiden who is interested in me and let you, my friend, deal with your own problems."

Then Pitolo turned to look across the waterway saying, "I see you have your coverlet already. I suppose your sister will wait until I am asleep so she can throw the coverlet at me."

Azon rose to his feet, touched Pitolo gently on the shoulder, and replied, "Pitolo, it is too bad you do not have an older sister. Please sit down. I want to tell you what I learned about maidens today."



Gee Hiz, the light of the world, was more than half way down to the night boat before Azon and Pitolo stepped into the tepee.

Maalan Aarum was sitting cross-legged with the engraved sticks displayed in front of him. He had relief on his face when he said, "I am so glad you finally came. You will barely have time to hear the story you must repeat in the Big House tonight."

Pitolo said, "We apologize for the delay, but we had to make several, uh, adjustments before we could put on our coverlets."

Maalan Aarum looked at Azon and Pitolo from top to bottom. Then he said, "I am pleased your families remembered the clothes. I was so concerned with the stories that I forgot how an aarum-tid should dress. Azon, your grandmother

made me the moccasins, leggings, and coverlet before I realized..." Maalan Aarum stopped talking and stared at the female side of the tent as if he was looking for grandmother.

Pitolo smiled and said:

We are beginning to realize many things. One of the things we realize is how angry the families of the young men telling of their quest can get. They were mad that we were not there to hear the quests last night. Now we have to visit each family in there own tepee after the Big House ceremony. The visiting will take, at least, six nights instead of just last night at the Big House. We do want to get on with the story for today so we can go in with the parade at the Big House.

Maalan Aarum said, "I think we have a problem. If I am thinking straight, we have nine stories to tell and only eight nights left for the Big House celebration."

Pitolo asked, "How many engraved sticks do you think we have left to make?" Maalan Aarum answered:

"Assuming you made one today, I think only eight engraved sticks are needed. But if we want to stay on pace, we should have also created the verse for the engraved stick of today and have a new engraved stick for tonight's story. But the story after Bold Bjarni coming home to the end of Talerman is too long to tell at one time. I usually divided the story into two parts. I called the first part, 'Bjarni' and the second 'Talerman'"

Pitolo said, I see the problem. We have seven migration stories plus 'Bjarni' and 'Talerman' to tell in eight nights. Also 'Bjarni' and 'Talerman' are too long to tell at one time.

Azon made a proposal, "Is it possible for one of us to tell 'Bjarni' early in the evening and the other to tell 'Talerman' after the quest speeches are finished?"

Maalan Aarum's eyes brightened. He said, "I think it is. At this point in the Big House celebration, the important people **will** have all said their speeches and the good quest stories have been told. The quest stories will be starting to sound the same."

Pitolo commented, "I have certainly noticed that."

Maalan Aarum continued:

Azon could tell the 'Bjarni' story at the start of the Big House ceremony tonight. The story has many facts to explain clearly. Meanwhile I will be

telling the 'Talerman' story to Pitolo. Pitolo can tell it to the Big House audience after the quest speeches. In the past people have stayed late to listen to the 'Talerman' story. It is a story for you, Pitolo, with your passionate style.

Azon asked, "How will we resolve the verse for today's stick and make an engraved stick for the 'Talerman' story?"

Pitolo said, "We both will still be here after the 'Bjarni' story. We could create that verse right then. Then you, Azon, can make an engraved stick for 'Talerman' as you listen to me tell the story in the Big House.

Maalan Aarum looked from Pitolo and Azon and back. He said, "We have little time but now we do have a plan. It is time to stop cutting bait. Let me see your engraved sticks. Pitolo, what do you have?"

Pitolo passed Maalan Aarum his engraved stick. Maalan Aarum studied it. Then he rotated the stick so the original left side was on the right. Maalan Aarum asked Pitolo, "What am I looking at?"

Pitolo said:

Imagine you are a bird. You are looking down on an open water marvel. The small marks around the circle are pack ice. The wavy lines in the circle show water. The odd shaped circles in the water are also pack ice. The little circles on the odd shaped circles are bears. The lines with a curved line through them are geese.

Maalan Aarum studied the engraved stick one more time. Then he laid it down and asked Azon for his engraved stick.

Maalan took Azon's engraved stick and studied it closely.



A slight smile formed on grandfather's lips. He said:

I think this is the engraving to choose. I can see the goose. I assume the four round marks are bears. The iceberg is plain to see because it sits on the water. The shore is on the "to" side, which implies Akomen.

Maalan Aarum passed the stick to Pitolo. Pitolo asked, "What is the one fish for?"

Azon said:

To indicate the iceberg sits on surging water. When you see one fish, you know there are many of them. I used the same thought about the geese. When we see a goose, we always see a flock of geese.

Maalan Aarum said, "The engraving is actually a very clever way to show an open water marvel. Please bring me some more bji. We do not have much time to change 'Bold Bjarni' back to 'Bjarni'. I will be talking about the twelve most important years in any man's life."



Engraved Stick 3:12

FACTUAL FICTION

CAVE

Jesuit Laure described the cave near the Nemiskou River. (*The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, [JRAD], Vol. LXVIII, CCII)

The cave was probably a mica mine. The Hudson Bay Company personnel spent time and resources trying to develop a mica mining operation somewhere up the Nemiskou River
(Return to cave Place)

CONICAL HATS

Conical hats are found in references of historical fashion. (Ribeiro, 1989)
They are shown on Swedish Laplanders in 1800. A conical hat design, without the hood, appears to be similar in both Lapland and Labrador. Five panel conical hats are not intuitive artifacts in any culture. The hat relationship is more strong evidence that the Laplanders and the people of Labrador shared common ancestors.

The Vikings may have driven Albans from Iceland to America via Greenland. Other Albans may have chosen to flee Iceland by sailing northeast to the extensive forests of northern Norway and Sweden. Those Albans may have developed into the Laplanders of today.
(Return to Conicat hats Place)

FOURTEEN YEARS

"Behold, there shall come seven years of great plenty ... and there shall arise after them seven years of famine." (Genesis 41:29–30)

"...The speed of the [salinity] event, the 1968–1982 time table translates into a rate of flow ...[that is] almost exactly as the same as the average rate of current flow for the subpolar gyre. ...[This] continues to stand as the best explanation anyone has yet devised for the *fourteen-year* saga of the Great Salinity Anomaly." (Arms, 1998, p. 194)

Researchers believe salinity in the North Atlantic controls the world's climate. The subpolar gyre is the flow of water counter clockwise around Iceland, north up the west coast of Greenland, south via the Labrador Current and eastward on the Gulf Stream Current. From there the water flows north around Iceland again. The same mass of water passes a given point every fourteen years.

When the climate is warm more icebergs are calved into Davis Strait. The icebergs melt to reduce the salinity of the surface water. The water with less salinity shuts off the conveyor-belt that is carrying warm, but salty, water from the Pacific Ocean. The North Atlantic climate turns cold. These events repeat on a fourteen-year cycle. (Arms, 1998, p. 193)
(Return to fourteen years Place)

KOGALUC RIVER

Rousseau described a summer trip across Ungava Peninsula via the Kogaluc River. The river is a series of lakes, connected by short portages. (Rousseau, 1948, Vol.1, No 2., pp. 133–135)
(Return to Kogahic River Place)

LEFT-HANDED BEARS

Malaurie wrote about a protracted fight with a polar bear. The Inuit and their dogs avoided the left front of the bear. (Malaurie, 1982)

While the knowledge of left-handed bears is not common, many modern hunters, who may have never confronted a bear, use the information during a conversation to impress others.
(Return to left handed bears Place)

SEXUAL MORES

Sexual mores and marriage customs are conjecture based on reports by Jesuit Albanel, the first Jesuit to travel to James Bay (*JRAD*, 1953); Richardson, a modern reporter who visited Cree winter hunting camps (Richardson, 1976); the *Graenlendinga* and *Erik's Sagas* (Magnusson, 1966); and many authors.

Several authors reported on the occurrence of a man, in Greenland, burned at the stake for seducing another man's wife. (Seaver, 1996) The Greenland burning at the stake is surprisingly similar to a "custom" reported by the Beothuk. (*HNAI*, Vol. 15, p. 106.)

(Return to sexual mores Place)

WORD MEANING

NOTE:

[Words can be viewed via the BOOKMARKS Click on the triangle in front of WORD MEANING. If the definition of a word is too long, point st the word and hold . A definition should appear. Other comments related to the word can be viewed in the list below. Click on the word in bookmarks to see the full comments. You can return to the bookmarks section by clicking on BOOKMARKS, but you cannot return directly to a place in text.. To return to a place in the text, enter the word in the EDIT(FIND) funtion.]

"Akimiski:" "Aki" means "land," "mis" is derived from "miste" meaning "lost" and "ki" is truncated from "kilde" meaning, "spring." While there must be waterways on the Island, detailed maps do not show stream traces from a spring. The name may mean "land missing springs."

"Aslak:" derived from Áslákr; "Ás " is "God," "leikr" is (playing or fighting) a game. Name means "Fighting for Gods."

"Attawapiskat" means, "Never wasps (think mosquitos) [at this] headland." "Atta" is derived from "audhr" meaning, "never," "wapi" from "veps," meaning "wasp," and "skat" from, "skag" meaning "low headland."
(Return to Attawapiskat Place)

"Ingjald:" "In-" is a part of a name strengthening the following part. Gjald means to "repay, pay back". This is a man that keeps his promises, a man to trust.

"Kogaluc" derived from "goo bit" meaning, "good tooth" and "logg" meaning, "log." A reasonable name for beaver dams." (Note the "b" and "g" transformation again.)

"Kobet" meaning, "Beaver" was also derived from "goo bit" meaning, "good tooth."

Nemiskou:" "Ne" means "no," "mis" is derived from "miste" meaning "lost" and "Ko" is derived from "Kurs" meaning, "course." The meaning appears to be "No lost course."

"Nordsetur" is the "North Sector" hunting grounds. The area was north of present day Disco Bay in Greenland.