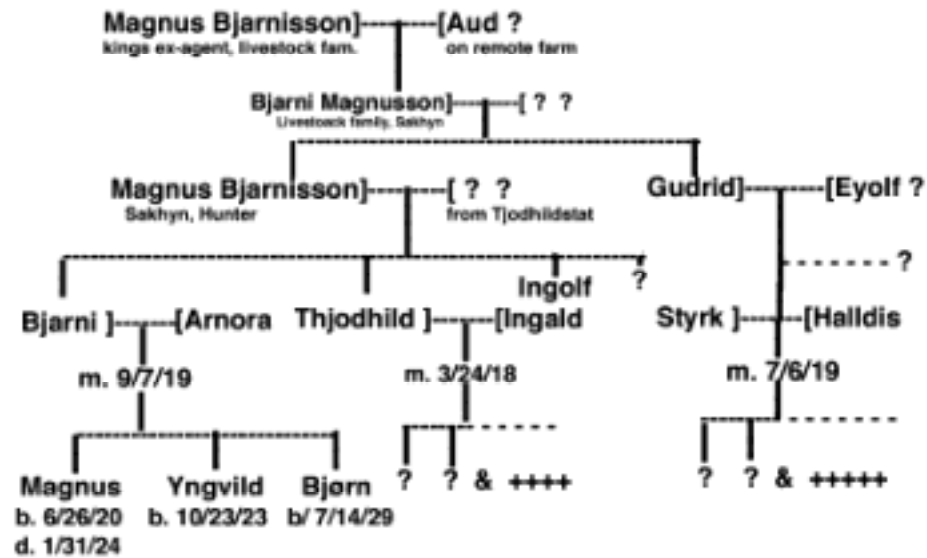


**STORIES**  
**of**  
**MAALAN AARUM**  
  
**BJARNI**



E. S. 3.12

## GENEALOGY



FAMILY AND RELATIVES DURING BJARNI'S EARLY MARRIAGE

## BJARNI

Several sleeps later, Bjarni was surprised to see green stems of grass growing in the pasture. Fourteen sleeps later Ingjald turned the two ewes and one old goat out to pasture. Seven sleeps later, their last cow was led to pasture. Within a moon's time all travel in Greenland was by boat. For the next four winters, the pack ice between Greenland and Merica was not solid enough to walk upon.

Just after the sheep and goats were put to pasture, but before the interior of the earthen forage house thawed, the families in the remote farm buried Magnus in a sunny spot at the Anavik kirke. The gravedigger took seven sleeps to dig the grave knee deep. He had to wait for the grave to have a sleep's exposure to the sun so he could remove another layer of earth a hand's width deeper.

Then Bjarni was busy restoring the farm operation after the devastation caused by the abnormal cold. The animals were transported to three different farms to breed with the only surviving buck, ram, and bull in Ranga and Agna Fjords. Remote areas of grass were clipped for forage. Caribou were moving. Bjarni harvested all he could. He made pemmican when he could. Bjarni joined the men of the fjord in the seal hunts. For the first time in nearly a decade the seals came to the ice in Ranga Fjord during the spring seasonal migration. Bjarni also joined, successfully, a walrus hunt. They made pemmican of all excess meat. The cows, sheep and goats had given birth. The resulting milk was turned into butter and stored for the future.

Tjalve and his father found very poor conditions at their home. Except for the pemmican they carried home, there was almost no food and very little seal oil for heating. When the seals returned Tjalve and his father were able to harvest enough for four moons' time. Then after talking things over he and his parents agreed the best course for family survival would be for Tjalve to leave home until the next seal harvest. The rest of the family might have enough food to eat without him home.

Tjalve thought his best chance to earn food would be in the haying fields of the Eastern Settlement. So he, wanting to be there when a boat to the Eastern Settlement loaded, walked the one-sleep journey to the Sandnes kirke.

Tjalve went to Paafa Snorri's house to ask about a place to lay his sleeping robe until a boat was available. Paafa Snorri looked closely at Tjalve. Then he said, "Are you the boy, Tjalve, from Bjørne-oen?"

Tjalve said that he was. Paafa Snorri said, "We cannot afford to lose someone like you from the Northern Settlement. You can sleep in my room. It will be snug but we will live. You can earn your keep by helping Thorgerd over there."

Paafa Snorri pointed to a small earthen house behind the larger earthen house next to the kirke.

When Tjalve went to the door to see what "earning his keep" would require, he was met by a tall, large-boned woman with her hands on her hips. At first he looked straight at the thin line of pale lips pressed together. He had to tilt his head up to look into the gray eyes recessed deep into a gaunt face. Dark, black bags sagged beneath the eyes. She wore a hood for warmth but strands of blond hair, unwashed, hung down her forehead. The front of her dress was streaked with soot, food, mucus and flecks of blood. Her apron may have been gray but it had even more streaks than the dress. Thorgerd started to say something when a scream erupted from the small back room. She spun around and dashed to the noise.

Tjalve stepped into the dim room and closed the door. He observed maybe a dozen children. Some of the children were lying, some playing, and some fighting. The two larger boys caught his eye. They were tormenting a thin girl in the far corner. They were tickling her despite her pleas to stop. Tjalve walked over to the thin girl, placed one foot on each side of her rib cage, and squatted so his knees made a barrier between the girl and the boys. Then he started asking questions.

When Thorgerd was able to withdraw from the room of screams to talk to Tjalve, the thin girl was sitting up in the corner still with tears on her face but smiling. The boys, Thorgerd's own children, had moved across the room to practice a new twist in the string game. In the middle of the room, Tjalve was telling a story to three small children while he held a baby on his lap. The noise in the room was subdued. Thorgerd looked the room over. Her hands crossed over her breasts. There was a hint of smile in her tired face. She said, "Paafa Snorri said he would pray for God to send me help. Are you the angel?"

The sleeps that followed passed rapidly as one crisis after another was overcome. Tjalve learned several things about Thorgerd. He learned that her husband and her father died in the same whaling accident. The accident had happened two years before Bishop Arne had come to Greenland. Tjalve learned that the very next year after the accident, Paafa Snorri had come to Thorgerd's small house behind her in-laws and told her about two children whose mother had died in childbirth while the husband was in Merica. Thorgerd knew the agony of loss. She also had a soft heart. She took them into her home.

At the time, Thorgerd thought her children and the two children without parents were the only orphaned children in the Northern Settlement. But in the following years, Thorgerd, with her soft heart, accepted children from every family needing

help. The number of children living in the two rooms kept increasing. Finally she realized that fifteen children pushed the space and her own energies to the limit. So she reluctantly turned other needy children away until a child left her care. Paafa Snorri maintained a waiting list for her services.

Getting enough food was always a challenge. Fortunately her in-laws loved her as a daughter. The father-in-law and his many sons were good hunters. The sons who enjoyed the chase were especially keen on "getting another one for Thorgerd's kids". When the sons began to make their own families, many other hunters in the kirke harvested extra seals for Thorgerd's kids. The whales killed by the men of the Sandnes kirke were divided by the traditional method, except Thorgerd's kids always got the first two cuts of the meat for the weak, the old, the lame, and the starving.

The people of the Sandnes kirke felt good about their support of Thorgerd's kids. They also thought that the food they gave her was the same as tithing to the kirke. Paafa Snorri expressed his concern to Bishop Arni. The food eaten by Thorgerd's kids could not be sent to Gardar and then a portion to Rome.

When he had come to the Northern Settlement, Bishop Arne had visited Thorgerd's kids. When Bishop Arne had walked back from Thorgerd's house, he asked Snorri if he remembered how the God's final division of sheep and goats would be done. Snorri thought for a while then he said, "I think it has something to do with 'If you do it onto the least, you have done it onto me'" Bishop Arne smiled, patted Snorri on the back, and said, "You surely are doing it onto me. I think you are also doing it onto the Popa in Rome. I will confirm the Popa's opinion the next time he comes to visit."

Later in the many nights they would talk around campfires in Merica, Tjalve talked to Hallgrim about Thorgerd's surprise that there were so many children needing help when extended families were expected to help needy children. Hallgrim, reflecting on the numbers, was not surprised. The ninety farmhouses in the Northern Settlement held more than two hundred families. Hallgrim estimated five out of a hundred families might need temporary care for their children for some reason or another. So, he thought, ten or more families might need full-time child care for long periods.

On a warm afternoon, a moon's time after Tjalve told his first story to the children, Thorgerd was washing her clothes for the coming Sunday at the kirke. The girls were all playing house nearby. The older girls were using the babies for their own children. Thorgerd looked up to see Tjalve and all the boys walking the ridgeline in the distance. They were going on a "hunt". Her own two boys were

at the rear of the column holding onto the hands of a two-year-old boy. Tjalve was behind them, carrying a baby boy in a cradle on his back.

Because of being with so many children, Thorgerd was used to saying every thought out loud. So, as she focused on Tjalve, she heard herself saying, "He is not an angel. He is a man. Only a man. Thank God. It is nice to have a man around."

By midsummer, the remote farm had adequate pemmican for another winter. Forage for the animals was being collected. In a moon, the hay harvest would require everybody's effort. For a few sleeps, the work slacked off. Then Bjarni and Ingolf rowed to Sandnes.

Meanwhile at her father's house, Arnora had helped with the housework. All of her spare time she stood working at her loom. The loom stood vertically against the wall. Stone weights pulled the strings taut. The orientation of the house enabled sunlight to come into the room in the afternoon.

Her marriage blanket, extra warm with a buffalo and bear hair design, was already finished. She hung it on the end wall of the room. She was working on house clothes. As she worked, she turned after every shuttle stroke to look out the doorway at the fjord. She had been making the turning motion for two moon's time.

Finally, she saw the boat coming. A few moments later she knew Bjarni was in the boat. Swiftly she went to her room and changed dresses. She put on the new long tan pullover woolen blouse with long sleeves, worn only for fitting. The sleeves were tightly cuffed at the wrists. Then she ducked into the narrow skirt of a dress also worn only for fitting. The dress and blouse matched in color. The dress was full length from the ankles to shoulders. The long arm openings dipped down to be even with the elbows.

In front the dress had a neat, clean, off-white apron tied under a rectangle of cloth covering her waist. The cloth was attached to a small belt. Arnora pulled her waist in as tightly as she could and tied the belt behind her.

The dress and blouse design had a hole at the shoulders allowing the head to slip through. The head and hole were to be covered by a shoulder coverlet and a hood. The coverlet was a full circle extending to the outer ends of the shoulders and falling down in front and back. The hood had a long tail to slip over the hair.

Arnora had widened the small head hole of the dress by three finger widths in front. Usually no one would notice her exposed neck because the hood and coverlet was worn all the time.

Arnora slipped off the old dirty stockings and slipped into matching tan stockings. She slipped on her long-toed shoes, barely worn.

She undid her braids. She quickly brushed them out. The hair responded easily to the brush because she had been brushing it every sleep. She chose a white flower and pinned it to her hair at the right temple. She would be turning right to face the door. She dabbed a cloth into the flower scented water and wiped her face with it. She compressed her lips together four times. She picked up her hood and coverlet and returned to the loom. The chill on her neck told Arnora that the room was still cool, but not unbearable. She hung the hood and coverlet on the end of the loom just as the men on the boat pulled up to the ramp. Arnora focused on the loom, keeping the shuttle flying. She did not turn to look as the men made noisy steps on the path. She heard the steps stop at her doorway. She kept the shuttle flying. Then she heard Bjarni say, "Arnora?"

She turned as if startled and said, "Oh! What are you doing here?"



Styrk brought his new bride, Halldis, to the Northern Settlement at the end of the summer. Bjarni and Arnora had set a wedding date in the fall in hopes Styrk would be home in time to be best man.

Arnora's wedding was one of the best ever performed at the Sandnes kirke. Those beaver-heads who were home in Greenland brought their families. Arnora, as the daughter of the leading sakkyndig, had many women friends. Everybody agreed the clothes made the wedding. Bjarni took plenty of good-natured ribbing about the fine suit of clothes he was wearing. He heard comments similar to, "If that old she-bear had seen you in those things, she would have hugged you to death for sure."

The weather contributed to the lovely day. The warm sunshine enabled most of the visitors to shed coats. Arnora led the women on the inside circle during the friendship dance around the icon of Jesus. Bjarni behind Arnora led the men. He thought the drum and the dance steps were livelier than in other wedding ceremonies he had attended.

Aslak and his eldest son had walked a full sleep from their remote farmhouse south of Sandnes to get to the wedding. Styrk made an effort to talk privately to Aslak. When they were briefly standing together, Styrk commented:

"Looks like your prediction of warm weather may be correct. This year has been very warm. Already we have had five moons where water did not freeze most nights.

"There are small icebergs floating in Ameragadla Fjord, and most of the men say there are more icebergs near Greenland than in the past decade. The boats made valiant attempts to get to Merica. They twisted and turned to get past the icebergs moving north near Greenland. They sailed south to get away from the icebergs coming off the cold breast of Hel. But they could not risk going between icebergs near Merica where the pack ice was still churning. My father is still in Merica. He may not be able to walk home this fall."

Aslak replied:

I am preparing to take the family with me this time. We are making plans. My guess is three more years of warm weather. Are you interested in going as soon as the cold returns?

Styrk pointed to Halldis and responded, "I have a good reason to stay here now."

Aslak said, "She is a good-looking woman. But I predict that if she stays here, you will be sleeping next to a rack of bones. I am."

Styrk said, "I think I will wait until I know for sure the weather will be cold. This is the first warm summer in ten years. Maybe there will be more warm years."

Aslak replied:

Squeeze her tightly every chance you can. The cold will be coming back. Someday soon you will have to hunt the open-water marvels and the caribou in Merica to get enough meat to keep her alive. Then you will see her only one moon's time a year.





The first winter of bliss was over much too soon for Bjarni and Arnora. Arnora did have daily appreciation about the remoteness of the farm. She and Thjodhild worked in harmony. The Northern Settlement returned to "normal." Few men felt the need to discuss ordinary problems with Bjarni. His role as a young wise-one subsided. That was fine with Bjarni. He only needed one person to think he was wise.

The summer after the wedding was cooler once more. But Bjarni hardly noticed the coolness because another adorable person came into the world. Magnus Bjarnarson was born just after the middle of summer; two moon's time after Halldis had her first boy. The time with a new baby in the house seemed to pass slowly, sleep by sleep, but the year was over all too fast.

The following two summers were warmer. Water did not freeze overnight for six moon's time from late spring to late fall. The old livestock tending routines of Greenland were nearly back to normal. On the third summer after marriage, Bjarni and Arnora visited Styrk and Halldis before the haying season. During the brief visit, Halldis and Arnora watched their three-year-old boys romp in the green pasture. They agreed a warm Greenland was a pleasant place to raise a family.

Meanwhile, Bjarni and Styrk were standing near the boat pull out, discussing the weather. Bjarni said:

Aslak and his family were on the boat going for wood from Merica this year. It did not get through. The weather was too warm. They were turned back by the loose pack ice. Aslak is discouraged because he really wanted to take his family to Akoman. This is the fourth year of the warm weather and he thought the boat could get through. Even so he still thinks the cold may be coming soon. I am concerned that a cold Greenland will be a difficult place to raise children.

"A difficult place to raise children" was also on Tjalve's mind. Summer, when the children could be outside, they were actually delightful. But the winters with

fifteen children in two small rooms had been longer and more difficult than he had expected. Although Thorgerd was much cleaner, by each spring the bags under her eyes were back. Worse, she was often testy for sleeps at a time.

One evening in the third summer after Bjarni's marriage Tjalve carefully asked Thorgerd if she knew of a reason why she was so testy in the spring but not in summer. He was surprised at her answer, "You are near me and touch me more in the summer, when we are outside and the children are playing. Remember that we sit near each other while the children play. We often touch hands. Sometimes you give me a playful hug."

Tjalve asked, "How can I touch you more in the winter when we are surrounded by kids in the house? One of us must usually be in each room all the time."

Thorgerd's response was rapid. "You could lay in my bed at night."

Thorgerd and Tjalve were married in the fall. Thorgerd's two sons were best "men". Two of the older foster girls were bridesmaids. Ten of the children responded "I do" when Paafa Snorri asked, "Who gives this bride?"

Bjarni, Arnora, Styrk, Halldis, and most of the beaver-heads with their families in the Northern Settlement were at the wedding.

Hallgrim was not at the wedding. There had been a good chance a wood harvesting boat might get through to Merica so Hallgrim chose to go with the boat. He left a message with Bjarni. If he was not heard from in a couple of years, ask for him in the village of the robe warmers.

The boat Hallgrim took could not get into Merica near the open-water marvels. The boat eventually harvested wood in the fjord where the big fight had occurred in the ancient past. The returning sailors told Bjarni that Hallgrim had joined a village on the shore and was planning to walk to the west side of James Bay in the winter.

One year later Styrk came to visit the remote farm. He said to Bjarni:

Aslak says the weather is starting to change. A boat just came back from Merica with wood. It got through just this moon. The boat is going to try to get through one more time this year. Aslak says the boat getting through means the cold air will be here by next spring.

Bjarni responded, "I know Aslak is good at predicting the weather a few sleeps in advance. I am not sure about his five and nine theory."

Styrk said:

I am not sure either, but I am going back on the boat. My father is still in Merica, I hope to find him. The livestock man will help Halldis watch after the boys. I trust Aslak enough to think we may be able to walk across on the ice this winter. I hope to bring home a good supply of pemmican in early winter. If we can store up food ahead of our needs, Halldis and Gudrid will not have to starve. Do you want to go along?

Bjarni shook his head:

I do not want to leave Arnora and Magnus now. Besides, my father always said there was game to hunt here at home. Except for the year when my Mother died, we were able to get enough food by hunting here. Mother died from childbirth, not starvation.

Styrk said:

Bjarni, you are a wise-one. It disturbs me when my decision is different from yours. I remember how thin and weak the people were when we came home five years ago. We came early in the winter, sooner than expected, and still found them near death. True, your father had died. Maybe he could have found food, but I really doubt it. I am not going to risk seeing Halldis as thin as my mother was.

Styrk did embark on the next boat to Merica. The boat got to Arnaud River with difficulty. Once at Merica, the Captain Gunnbjørn hurried the loading. The boat barely escaped the pack ice and icebergs swirling down from the north. As he approached Greenland, Captain Gunnbjørn was able, by using utmost skill, to dodge the icebergs coming north.

The weather did turn colder. The sea froze solid a moon's time before the new year and stayed that way all through spring.

That winter Hallgrim returned to the open-water marvels bringing along his robe warmer. He and Styrk walked back to Greenland on the first solid ice with a small group of men pulling as much pemmican as they could.

A moon's time later they were ready to return to Merica with a larger group of men. Styrk and a few of the old beaver-heads stopped by to visit with Bjarni.

They all wanted Bjarni to go with them. Bjarni repeated his reasons for staying home: Arnora, young Magnus, and the newest addition to his family, Yngvild.

So the group of men started back to Merica without an experienced wise-one along. Styrk went ahead, as usual, finding the best path through the pressure ridges. Hallgrim walked with the sleds in the middle of the group. Several sleeps past the halfway point, the sled pullers saw a string of icebergs almost like a wall coming from the north. The icebergs came from Kangia, the river of ice, and were being spun off the breast of Hel into the cold flow. The Greenland men, new to the Merica crossing, could see birds near the icebergs. So they turned away from Styrk's path and, despite Hallgrim's pleas to continue on, they went toward the icebergs. When they got close they found a few seal in the open water behind the icebergs.

Most of the experienced beaver-heads, including Hallgrim, asked each other, "What would Bjarni do?" The answer took little thought. They increased their pace to catch up to Styrk crossing ahead of the biggest icebergs.

Most of the new men were able to get seals and birds, but they got only enough to maintain themselves in the cold shelters they made on the ice. A half moon later, many of them decided they had better continue the walk to Merica. They had difficulty walking on the jumbled pack ice left behind by the big icebergs. They had to find the way across the pressure ridges and jumbled pack ice by themselves because Styrk, Hallgrim and the experienced beaver-heads were already long gone.

The laggard men arrived in Merica a moon and a half later than the men who followed Styrk and Hallgrim. A few of the men who went to the icebergs became discouraged and returned to Greenland.

While they waited for the stragglers, Styrk and the lead group of men were able to quickly get a full load of pemmican for Greenland. The weather was still cold. The ice was still solid. Styrk told the others, "Let's try to make it back to Greenland. If we do get there, our families can eat better. If we cannot, we will come back to Merica to wait for the boats."

They did get back to Greenland at the start of spring. But the weather was still like winter. So, they returned to Merica after a half a moon's time at home.

During the next year when the people in the Northern Settlement were finally able to add up the score, three men were never heard from again, seven were crippled because of frozen limbs, and two died in Merica because they were so weak when they arrived. Styrk, Hallgrim and the experienced beaver-heads kept a grim silence, but most of them thought the fiasco would never have happened if Bjarni, the wise-one, had been along.

That incident occurred during the winter before Bjarni was twenty-three years old. He was able to get enough game by hunting in Greenland. The summer's extra effort of collecting forage enabled them to feed the new young buck through the winter. But still, everyone in the house did get thin. By what should have been spring they were tired of pemmican and skyr.

During his brief time in Greenland, Styk had come over with Halldis and their two boys. Halldis was nursing the one-year-old. Styk also brought a sealskin of blubber and a sealskin of fermented birds. Styk and Halldis had chosen the gifts with sensitivity to Bjarni's pride. The gifts were not desirable food to Norse Greenlanders. So Bjarni would be less likely to take the gifts as an insult to his hunting ability. Yet, both gifts could be eaten when good food was scarce.

Still, Bjarni was slightly upset by the gifts. "This is Greenland, not Akoman. Here each household gets and stores their own food. Only when the destitute come begging, do we share with others."

Styk's response was patient. "Bjarni, you and I are also beaver-heads from Akoman. We are men of both lands. My house is using most of what we brought back, but my Akoman desires are for you to join the feast."

Bjarni admitted Arnora had lost weight but he thought not much. When Styk compared the two nursing women, he saw that Halldis' eyes still flashed and Arnora was listless.

Styk tried repeatedly to discuss a trip to Merica with Bjarni. Bjarni did not want to discuss going to Merica. He kept switching to talk about how best to hunt in Greenland. Styk finally gave up and listened with despair to Bjarni's schemes for building and locating more fox traps. Styk confided to Halldis later, "What good are more traps if there are no more foxes?"

Styk and another large group of men left for Merica at the end of what should have been spring. A majority of the houses in the Northern Settlement had a man in that hunting group going to Merica.

When Bjarni was twenty-three summers old, the fjord froze. Seals were not to be found. The people in the remote farm had used all the blubber and had eaten the fermented birds before Bjarni saw the first caribou. The single caribou had been searching for early grass to eat, when it saw Bjarni sitting on the stone blind. Bjarni played the "wait and see" game successfully. Bjarni was concerned because the caribou did not have much fat. The meat was difficult to eat. They made as much pemmican as they could. A cold spring meant a late start of the pasture grass. All forage was used up.

A cool summer turned to a bitterly cold fall. The forage collected would not feed all of the livestock. The old cow miscarried. She was butchered and made

into pemmican. But worse the young heifer never settled, posing a dilemma; feed her precious forage for another winter or butcher her for meat. Bjarni chose the latter. The third milk cow was going dry. A winter without milk would require more meat.

Then the third milk cow did go dry. A moon's time later Arnora, herself, went dry. Young Yngvild was weaned at only a year old. Arnora and Yngvild were thin but Magnus four years old also became a listless eater.

When Styrk and Halldis with their sons, visited a half moon after the new year, they found thin and haggard families in the remote farm. The last three daughters of the old livestock man were still there. The older boys and one girl had joined sled teams pulling to and from Merica. They were bringing some food home. Still Ingjald and Thjodhild were very thin. Thjodhild was nursing another child, a boy. Halldis, obviously with child again, was still talking with a lilt of laughter. Arnora was gaunt, speaking only briefly to answer questions. Bjarni asked Styrk, "How do you stand being away from Halldis for so long?"

Styrk replied, "I do not like it, but out there I am always doing something. In the evening after eating food all I think about is finding a dry place to sleep. You remember how it was."

Bjarni replied, "We have enough pemmican to survive this winter. Do you really think being away eleven moons a year is the best for your family?"

Styrk nodded, "Halldis and the rest in the house have more than enough pemmican to eat well. They also have blubber and birds. If you need some, please ask Halldis. A healthy family is better able to survive. If Aslak is right, I will be home all year around playing with my healthy children in several years."

"Have you seen Aslak?" asked Bjarni.

"No, not this year," said Styrk:

"Remember, he took his family to Merica by boat when it was warmer, eighteen moons ago. A Tunit hunter told me Aslak and his family went on to the west bank of James Bay where his other wife lives.

"A couple of beaver-heads said they saw Aslak this summer. He was pleased as a skunk in a flower patch. His families were living in three wigwams.

"His oldest Norse son was on a marriage robe with a good-looking black haired maiden. Some of Aslak's blond siblings were in their wigwam.

"Aslak, himself, was sharing a wigwam with the black-eyed wife and her children. His blue-eyed wife and two youngest children were in another wigwam. The strangest thing was that she was sharing her robe

with a black-eyed man. The man was one of Aslak's hunting friends. Aslak bragged about her happiness while she and the black eyed man sat near him at the campfire. Everyone was smiling.

"Things work out unexpectedly, don't they?"

Bjarni responded, "I do not want a black-eyed man making Arnora happy. Would you accept one for Halldis?"

Styrk smiled, "Remember we do not have wives in both places. When I get Halldis over there, I intend to keep her happy myself."

"You are planning to take her across the ice?" asked Bjarni in surprise.

Styrk replied:

"We have talked about it. Our parents are getting older. You remember that when my father was trapped in Merica by the last warm spell he decided to walk to Akoman during the winter hunt. He hurt a leg on the way and became lame. He found an older woman to keep his house. She had lost her husband in a fight. He says living with her is more acceptable to the villagers than living with another man.

"He would like to be with mother but he thinks a lame man cannot be useful to his family in Greenland."

Bjarni commented, "It appears my father loved my mother more than your father loved Gudrid."

Styrk retorted:

Bjarni, that was not a good thing to say. I take no joy in pointing out that both of your parents are already dead. Your mother has been dead since you were twelve. My father fed mother and the rest of his household for over nine years, until the weather trapped him. This winter he sent new fur clothes for mother. Who loved whom the most?

Halldis jumped into the conversation, "We cannot judge love by the results of life's decisions." She swung her arm in a complete circle around the room as she continued, "Who in here will die next and who can love that person more to prolong their life?"

Styrk and Bjarni realized they had "walked to the edge of the ice" in their discussion. Bjarni returning to the role of the wise-one asked, "What will happen to the parents now?"

Styrk considered the question before replying:

"They may die soon. If the cold continues Halldis' parents may even die in the next two years. But, right now, because of our parents, I think we will stay as we are for several more years. The warm air should be back by then.

After a moon's time of finding empty fox traps and barren caribou grounds, Bjarni began to doubt that things were working out for him. He was correct. Within a moon's time, Magnus complaining of stomach cramps stopped eating and his ankles swelled. His condition grew worse. He also developed a cold. Two moon's time later Magnus, not yet five, died during the night while he was cuddled between Arnora and Bjarni.

Bjarni was devastated. He sat staring at the seal-oil lamp as Arnora wrapped Magnus in her finest cloth. She carried him to the forage shed. She hung Magnus high to wait for spring when he could be buried.

According to the custom, Magnus's name was never mentioned again by the family. Magnus had carried the family name. In the past when a man called Magnus had a son, the son was given a last name of Magnusson. If Magnus' grandson would have been born, he would have been named Magnus. So the cycle of life would repeat. Now there would be no Magnusson, and the Magnus name was lost to the family forever. Bjarni felt responsible for this disaster to his family's heritage.

For sleep after sleep Bjarni stirred for only the minimum tasks. The big room grew colder. Frost formed on the inside walls. The pemmican supply was disappearing. Once again, the butter reserve was a memory. Spring came but spring weather had not yet come.

After a sleep Bjarni looked up to see Arnora taking the last bits of blubber from the lamp in the bedroom and eating it desperately. Two sleeps later he listlessly watched her put on her outside furs. She picked up her lance. He asked, "Where are you going?"

"We need meat with fat in it," Arnora spit out. She closed the door behind her.

Bjarni returned to gazing at the firelight of the lamp. He thought there was certainly no way to improve his life, with his only son dead and his wife going crazy.





Bjarni was awakened from his stupor by the sound of a knife striking stone. In the food room, Arnora was cutting through the limbs of a skinned Arctic hare.

Bjarni was shocked. "What are you doing? People in Akoman say you can starve to death eating hares."<sup>1</sup> ~

Arnora shot back, "Yes, we can if there is no fat in them. This one has no fat. It is as bad as our pemmican."

Bjarni retorted, "We have enough pemmican!"

Arnora raised her voice also; "We do not have enough fat! We in this house are getting stomach cramps, the runs, and ankles are swelling. We are eating pemmican with no fat in it. We will die eating the pemmican too!"<sup>2</sup> ~

Bjarni was stunned at the tone of Arnora's voice. He tried to placate her. "Well, there will also be very little fat on a caribou, even if I could get one. What can I do?"

Arnora picked up her lance, pointing it at Bjarni, saying, "You, big man, can get up and hunt something, anything. Then you can go ask Halldis for a swap. She has plenty of blubber, more than she needs. She might like some real red meat."

Bjarni left the house within moments. He had a half-day of daylight. He knew that if caribou were nearby they would be in the thicket where leaves might be coming out. He went over the ridge looking for tracks. To his surprise he found two sets of tracks. The cold was chilling his bones as he settled into the stone blind where his father died. He was shivering when he heard the footsteps. He laid out three arrows and put one into the bow. He saw the ears of the first caribou rise above the ridgeline.



---

<sup>1</sup> Starving

<sup>2</sup> Protein poisoning

Bjarni carried a hindquarter of the caribou to Styrr's home. Halldis was thrilled to have real red meat to cook. She retrieved a sealskin full of blubber from storage. Halldis passed it to Bjarni saying, "We have been saving this for you. Styrr said you might need this."

As he sledded back home, Bjarni reflected. His obsession to hunting near his earthen house had blinded him. He had not realized meat without fat could be deadly. The animals of Greenland were all without fat because of the climate colder than normal.

His cousin had really chosen the better path. The seal and blubber Styrr could send home was more vital than the meat killed in Greenland. The local hunters could kill enough meat. But there was no place to get meat with fat in Greenland.

As their health improved, Bjarni and Arnora had a prolonged talk about the future. Bjarni asked forgiveness for not thinking straight before their son's death. Arnora asked forgiveness too. She wanted Bjarni around so much that she did not want to believe when she saw the first symptoms of eating meat without fat. They both agreed the people in their farmhouse would have a difficult time surviving without fat for six more years of cold, assuming Aslak's estimate of the climate was correct.

Then they discussed how the situation would change if Bjarni went to Merica with Styrr. Arnora said she had talked with Halldis and had some idea about what the eleven moons without a man were like. She thought she could survive if the rest of the household had good food to eat. Her only concern was the isolation of the remote farmhouse, especially when Ingjald and Ingolf made the sled run to Merica and back. Other than that she thought that she, Thjodhild, and the older girls from the old livestock family could cope.

Bjarni brought up the real possibility that warm weather could trap him, the same way his uncle, Eyolf, had been trapped. Arnora responded:

Bjarni, you are a healthy man of twenty-five summers. Go wrestle another bear. Go exploring. You do not need a woman to keep house if you are on the move. I expect you to return to me even if it takes all five of Aslak's warm years. I will wait. You better be walking.

Bjarni replied, "Five years is a long time, but the boats may get through sooner. Still, Arnora, let us agree. If there is no word from me in six warm years, find yourself a man for your protection."

Arnora said, "I will decide on that when the time comes."

The next week in the evening after the visit to the kirke, the simmering pot of caribou and seal blubber gave off a pleasant aroma. Bjarni told the assembled household, "I will be on the first boat to Merica this summer. I will be pulling home seal meat and blubber before the first of the year. Do you think you can get by without me for six moon's time?"

Thjodhild smiled saying, "With enough fat coming home with you and without your big mouth to stuff all the time, we can live even better."



Bjarni did sail in the summer. The boats could only complete one trip. Even during the summer, water in shade sometimes froze during the sunlight of the day. The warm East Greenland current melted the pack ice near Greenland until it broke up. The surging tidal flows broke up the ice in the Hudson Strait. The Labrador Current sucked the ice off of Hel's cold breast and moved the churning pack ice south. For less than a moon there was sailable water between Greenland and Merica. Styk, in Merica, was delighted to see Bjarni jump off the boat with the rest of the men coming to hunt.

Then for three years in a row, Bjarni and Styk walked the ice to Greenland and back. During the first two years, the climate was so cold the sea was frozen for eight moon's time. They made three round trips: one in fall, winter, and spring. The third year was warmer. They could walk across the sea ice for only five moon's time. Still most men were able to make two trips.

Beginning with his return to Merica that first summer of the two very cold years, Bjarni resumed the role of the wise-one again. None of the beaver-heads praised Bjarni to his face. But Styk told him the journeys seemed almost pleasant without everyone griping all the time. Styk, Hallgrim, and Tjalve assumed their roles as sub-leaders. All three could suggest, promise, or threaten in Bjarni's name and the other beaver-heads usually responded positively. An unwritten rule on the pack ice for new men coming from Greenland was that instructions from the beaver-heads were to be followed. Most beaver-heads relied on Bjarni's decisions for their actions.

Each year Halldis kept her lilting laughter. She became pregnant again and delivered a healthy girl. Arnora recovered her energy but decided to make adjustments to avoid giving birth during the cold years.

Arnora knew what she had to do because when she was a young lady, one of the many travelers who had stayed at her father's house had brought a woman companion with a reputation for "knowing" many men. Yet, the women did not have children. While the men went out hunting for several sleeps, another group of visitors arrived. The woman was moved to sleep in Arnora's room. Shy but curious Arnora had worked up the courage to ask the woman how she avoided children.

The woman had asked laughingly, "How many sleeps do you bleed?"

Arnora responded, "Four or five, not over five."

The woman said, "If you bled for eighteen sleeps, you would avoid children. Men want to have sex all the time, but good men will not engage you if you are bleeding."

Arnora wondered, "How can I bleed eighteen sleeps?"

The women laughed:

Girl, all the meat we eat, except seal, has red blood in it. But even if you have no fresh meat, you can prick yourself. You just need enough drops of blood to convince a nosy man. Believe me, they do not nose around much if there is blood on the rag.

Arnora had always told Bjarni they should not have sex until she finished bleeding. Now, even on those rare moons when Bjarni had just walked home, she waited eighteen sleeps after the blood started before saying she was available again. Bjarni often wondered if Arnora was healthy because she was spotting with blood so long each moon. Arnora assured him, "Everything is under control."

On the fourth year, the ice was not firm enough to return to Merica in the spring. The men tried to go several times but they were forced back each time. The icebergs moving through the pack ice opened many areas of open waters. The pack ice was more loose than solid, increasing the risk of floating away. The decisions Bjarni made on those dangerous attempts were respected. Many men did get wet and cold, but there were no deaths.

So in the fourth year since Bjarni started walking to Merica, he was home from the middle of spring to the middle of summer. Even better, as far as Arnora was concerned, the climate was getting warmer. Her "bleeding" reduced to about four sleeps. Bjarni thought that the three moon's time at home during the ninth year of marriage were better than the sleeps of the first honeymoon.

The boat trip to Merica was treacherous because the ice over the Indrawing Sea was still breaking up. Bjarni gave Captain Gunnbjørn good advice about the movement of the ice and the chances to get a sea-lane. Following Bjarni's advice the boat went into Leif's River to unload the men and then sailed away to the east to catch open water on the way back to Greenland.

Bjarni's reputation as a good man to follow increased even more.

That summer, the flood of icebergs kept the pack ice from completely melting. The one boat made it to Merica. But the pack ice never froze solid enough to walk upon so the men waited through a miserable, wet winter with nothing sent to Greenland.

The next summer was the same. Bjarni and Styrk had been away from home for a full year. Bjarni, now twenty-nine years old, was not home when Bjørn was born in summer. Bjarni, Styrk, and Tjalve waited in vain all summer long for the boats. In the fall after the lake ice was solid, Hallgrim with his robe-warmer wife and their children went up the Payne Lake trail with a few other beaver-heads and some men who had never been to Akoman. They intended to walk on the fast ice to the Eastman Land.

The rest of the beaver-heads and men from Greenland stayed through the winter on the shores of Merica. The five moons that winter and spring could have all been called the moon of low spirits. The Merica hunters had so much pemmican that there was a risk of it rotting in spring and the ice was not solid. Bjarni had his hands full trying to stop the fights before any serious wounds occurred. One tactic he used was to challenge the men to figure out a better way to make a shelter from the low walls.

The low walls were about chest high. Most of the men used a cover of several hides sown together. They would put one edge of the hides on top of the walls and weigh it down with stones. They would stretch the cover outward and weight the outer edge with stones on the ground. This created a slanting roof from about chest high to the ground. A boiling pot lamp was placed near the wall under the hides. The men had to duck under the roof and sit on the ground to prepare food. The men slid under the cover and stretched out to sleep.

Because they all wore their "walking houses" all the time, the need for a warm shelter was not pressing. Yet Hallgrim had pointed out to Bjarni that there must be a better way to use the low walls for shelter. Life would be easier at the open-water marvels if they could figure out the better way. Maybe even women and children could live in the better shelters. So evening after evening the beaver-

heads and the new men from Greenland had a discussion of "How would you make a shelter using these low walls?"

That summer the warm weather finally melted the churning pack ice. In late summer brave Captain Gunnbjørn slipped his boat between the multitude of icebergs to get to Merica.

For the return trip, the available spaces on the boat were taken by men who had been away from Greenland the longest or by sick men needing to go home to families. Finally, Captain Gunnbjørn said the boat would still float safely if one more man could crowd aboard. Bjarni picked up a stone. He put his hands behind his back. He placed the stone in his left hand. Clenching his fists, he held his arms out in front saying, "Choose one. The one with the stone goes." Styk chose the right hand.

Styk sent Bjarni on his way with instructions, "Tell Halldis I love her. Give her a hug. Leave the kissing for me."

So Bjarni, at age thirty, finally saw Bjørn at age one. He also found Arnora looking well. Bjarni knew there were two sayings about being gone and love. He had wondered which was true. After a few sleeps at home he knew, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder" was more true than "Out of sight, out of mind."

Pleased to be home again, Bjarni often watched Arnora with pride during the next few moon's time as she wove and sewed. But he was never much interested in her creations. He knew she collected many buttons and pins to use for clothes, so he did not have any suspicion when he saw an odd-looking cape fastener in her sewing bag. Wise Arnora did not tell him that the odd cape fastener was the Campbell Shield badge, left by a man from south Greenland who had said he had been born in Scotland.<sup>1</sup> ~

When Bjarni got home, the pasture at the remote farm was supporting four cows and seven sheep. The harvested forage was ahead of the season. The meat supplies were also ahead of the season. He asked Ingjald, Thjodhild's husband, "Who is hunting the game?"

Ingjald replied:

Ingolf is getting the caribou. He and Styk's sons have been hunting together. Arnora also gets a lot of meat with her lance. She does use the nets for birds and fish. But she has killed many hare, a few foxes, and

---

<sup>1</sup> Campbell badge

three geese with the lance. She prefers to use the lance instead of a club on the seals also. They were back in the fjord again the last three springs.

Bjarni asked, "Why not teach her the bow and arrow?"

Ingjald replied, "We tried it, but she cannot pull enough. She can actually hit a running fox better with a lance than she can with an arrow. Have you seen the edge she hones on the lance?"

Bjarni said, "No." Then he thought about it for a moment. "I guess that her going hunting is better than her sitting and thinking that I should be here to do it."



That winter the beaver-heads sitting around the boiling pots in Merica and in Greenland often discussed Bjarni's leadership style. A typical conversation usually went as follows:

One beaver-head said, "Have you noticed that when Bjarni is with a group of sleds, they do not lose a man or a sled. Other groups seem to have more trouble."

A second beaver-head might have asked, "I thought he was called Bold Bjarni?"

A third beaver-head said, "I was with Bjarni the spring when we could not walk back to Merica from Greenland. There were many times I thought there was a good passage on the ice and Bjarni refused to go. He was any thing but bold."

The first beaver-head asked, "Do really you think you could have crossed the ice Bjarni refused to step onto?"

The third beaver-head said, "A few sleds of bold men maybe could have made it, but as things worked out, being bold would have been risking many men's lives. I agree with you. I follow Bjarni because he did not lose men or sleds in that mess."

The second beaver-head said, "Then Bjarni is not really bold, he just makes good decisions in difficult situations. Maybe his name, Bjarni, is all the authority he needs. We should just call him Bjarni."

The first and third beaver-heads usually looked at each other, then looked at the second beaver-head, and asked together, "Have you listened to us?"

Among the men who talked about leaders in Merica and in Greenland that winter, 'Bjarni' was enough to identify the Bjarni who had been called 'Brave Little Bull' and 'Bold Bjarni'. Bjarni was a well-respected sakkyndig in Rar fjord of the Northern Settlement and a leader on the frozen trail between Greenland and Merica.

His name and his reputation filtered through the woods to Eastman Land and to the Blond area. Village leaders in those locations sometimes asked, "Who is this Bjarni I hear so much about?"

Then the village storyteller usually replied in this fashion; "Maybe you remember him as 'Brave Little Bull' or 'Bold Bjarni'? Many village storytellers, like myself, tell those stories all the time."

A gleam of recognition usually came to the leaders. Then they said, "Ah, yes, I always thought the boy would make a name for himself."

The village storyteller usually hid a smile as he replied, "He did. The youth in many of our stories is now best known as 'Bjarni'."





## Vignette Fourteen

## MARKS

After he finished the Bjarni story, Maalan Aarum reached for his bji. He took a slow swallow. Then he leaned against the backrest and covered his eyes with the palms of his hands.

Pitolo looked over at Azon and asked, "How are you going to remember all of that comings and goings?"

Azon held up a fan of sticks and said, "I have been making marks on these sticks. I think I have most of it." He turned to his grandfather who was seated against the backdrop with his head lowered almost to his lap. Azon said, "I think I see a possible connection between the low stone walls and the Big House. How ...?"

Azon's grandfather lifted his head, gave a sidewise wave, palm out, and said, "I am trying to stay alive long enough to tell you that at the correct time. The Big House parade will be starting soon. We must deal with the verse for the engraved stick of the open water marvels. Pitolo do you have a verse?"

Pitolo said:

*At the surging pack ice,  
the humped, humped pack ice,  
there were plenty of white-feathered geese,  
and white bears.<sup>1</sup> ~*

Maalan Aarum asked, "What is your verse Azon?"

Azon recited:

*The white-feathered geese soared above.  
The white bears walked on the pack ice.  
The pack ice floated on the water.  
Fish swam in the surging water.*

Maalan Aarum tilted his head left, then right, several times. Finally he said, "I have to choose Pitolo's verse because of the word 'plenty'. Remember, the fate of our ancestors depended on plenty of food around the open-water marvels."

---

<sup>1</sup> Verse 3:12

Maalan Aarum put engraved stick of the open-water marvel onto the stack of engraved sticks. Then he said:

"I want Azon to make an engraved stick for Talerman story tonight. The engraved stick should show a man in a canoe on the shore of Akomen. Somehow, Azon, you need to show the man being in rich lands.

"I want both of you to have a verse for that engraving when we get together tomorrow. Also we need yet another engraving for the story tomorrow. I want both of you to engrave a stick showing Talerman making an agreement with Bishop Arne. As usual, I want to chose the best engraving.

"This will be a long night for all of us, so let us plan to meet when Gee Hiz climbs to his highest."

A sound of a distant drum was heard. Azon put his sticks into his medicine poach. Maalan Aarum said, "You will have to run to catch your spot in the parade." Azon moved swiftly out the door. Maalan Aarum watched Azon go, then he turned to Pitolo and said:

I must do necessary things. Please help me up and stay close as I walk. When we get back, I need to nap. I think you should too. I will ask my daughter who has not yet gone to the Big House to wake us when Azon finishes his story. Then we should have enough time to talk about Talerman before all the quests are finished tonight.



**Engraved stick 3:12**

*At the surging pack ice,  
the humped, humped pack ice,  
there were plenty of white-feathered geese,  
and white bears*

## FACTUAL FICTION

### CAMPBELL BADGE

A silver Campbell shield-badgemade in Scotland about 1330 was found in the Northern Settlement. **(Return to Campbell badge place.)**

### PROTEIN POISONING

Protein poisoning occurs when there is not enough fat in the food. The kidneys are forced to work overtime to breakdown the protein for energy. The breakdown causes a fluid build-up in the lower legs. Cramps and diarrhea cause a loss of appetite and dehydration. McKinlay wrote about his own encounter with protein poisoning and the death of other expedition members who tried to live on poorly manufactured pemmican. (McKinlay, 1976) **(Return to protein posisoning place.)**

### STARVING

"Starving on Rabbits" was a phrase heard often in childhood. (My parents grew up near Indians.) It never made sense. The youthful assumption was that you could not catch enough rabbits.

The phase is often repeated, as a whimsy saying, in authoritative Indian books. The truth is that humans **can** starve to death eating the only animal alive in a cold, famine area because the rabbit can digest fiber to make meat but not create enough fat to sustain a human. **(Return to starving place.)**

VERSE 3:12

The words of the verse used in the story were developed by cross checking Raider T. Sherwin's 16,000 comparisons of Algonquin to Old Norse, Cree word lists, and modern Norwegian dictionaries against the original recorded Leni Lenape words.

The original English translation (by Rafinesque, 1836) was:

*By the dark fish sea,  
The gaping hollow sea,  
Settled the white eagle clan  
And the white wolf clan.*

The revised English translation of the verse (Brinton, 1885) is:

*The Fathers of the Bald eagle  
And the white wolf remain  
Along the sea rich in fish and mussels.*

The original verse by Rafinesque appears to be describing an open-water marvel. The "sea" was translated from the word "pek," which is also used for "frozen sea," (v. 3:16), "slippery water," and "stone-hard water." (v. 3:17) The modern Norwegian word "pakkis" means "pack ice." A reasonable guess is that the "is" syllable fell away after four centuries of reciting the verses. After the first century most of the speakers probably did not know what "pakkis" was.

The original Leni Lenape words "newa" and "tumewi" are closer to Cree words for "goose" and "bear" than they are to words for "Eagle" and "Wolf".

When the old Leni Lenape, who may have grown up in Delaware, tried to explain the verse to the missionary, four centuries later, he probably was more familiar with eagles and wolves. The missionary certainly was. Thus the original Leni Lenape words and the English words name different animals. **(Return to verse 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.]

"Bjørn" means, "Bear."

"Thorgerd" means, "Thor" (the thundergod) and "Gerd" (protection).

"Yngvild:" "Yngve" was another name for "Frei/Frey/Frøy," Njord's son, and "hild" means, "clean, pure."