

**STORIES**

**of**

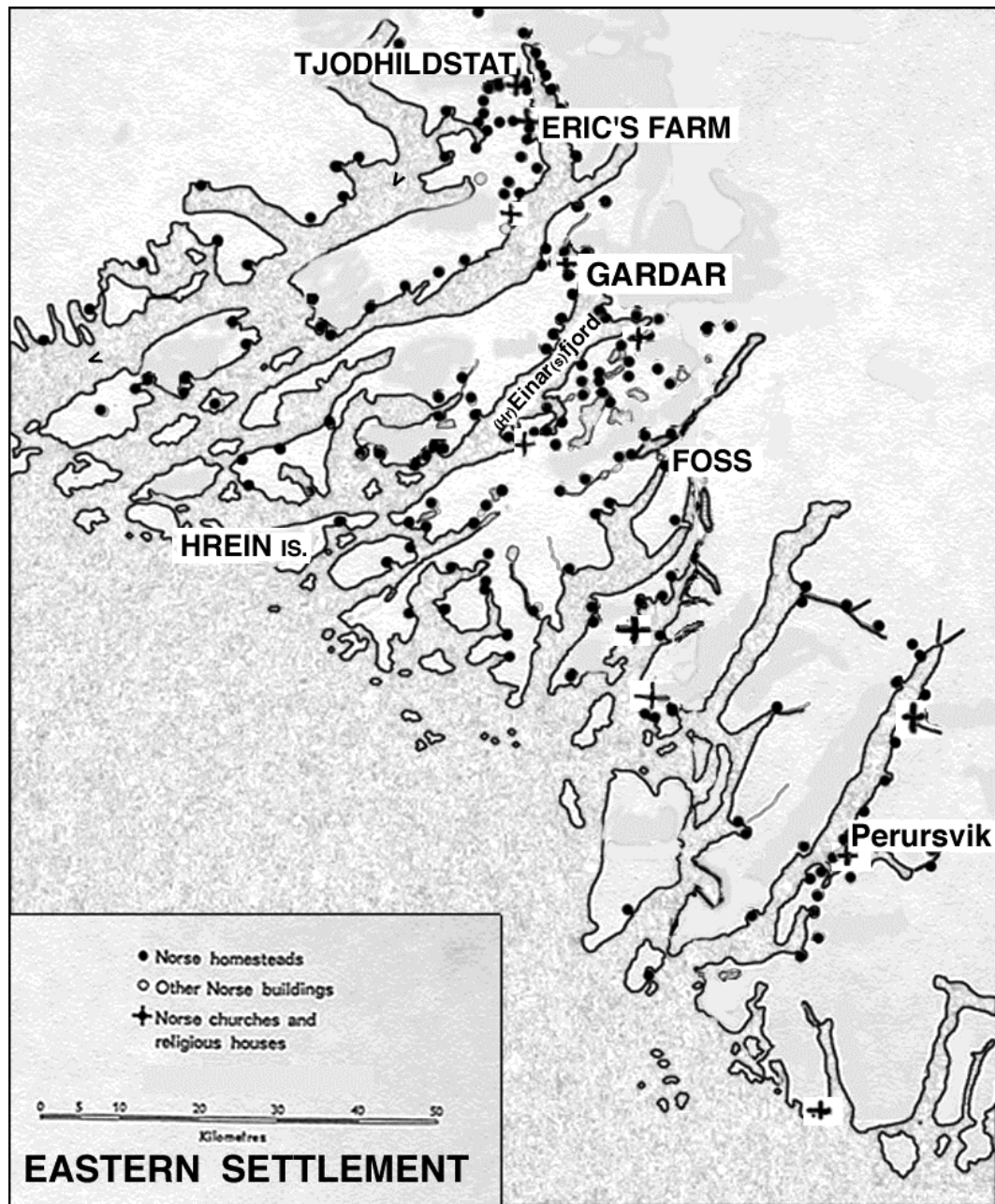
**MAALAN AARUM**

**WILL YOU GO WITH US?**



E. S. 3:15

## THE MANALTHING, 1344



Talerman and Bishop Arne presented the proposal to migrate to the *Thing* at Gardar. Then Talerman and Paafa Orm debated the proposal in all fourteen kirkes of the Eastern Settlement.

## WILL YOU GO WITH US?

After telling the people in the house that he and Big Raven Arne decided the people of Greenland should go to Akoman, Talerman said, "Let us take a break so you can do necessary things. When we get back together shortly, I will tell you about the meeting at the *Althing*."

The people in the house stirred, stretched, and went outside as necessary. Cold air from the opening door moved into the house brightening the fires. Smoke curled up to the fire hole. Arnora added more meat to the stews.

Arnora and Thjodhild moved from woman to woman discussing places to sleep. A few couples were planning to sleep under their boats or in small tepees. Those men were outside checking on the bedding. Thjodhild's family was going to sleep in the pasture tent. Bjørn and Yngvild had already planned to stay with them.

Arnora assigned the thirty-two sleeping locations in the great room to twelve couples and their children. She chose extended families and best of friends.

Without making an issue of the situation, Thjodhild showed the guests who were known to be more troublesome to other rooms including her bedroom. Halldis and Styrk were invited to sleep on the floor in the Arnora's bedroom.

The talking in the great room would continue until the people reached a decision. Then everyone would sleep at the Talerman's farm because tiredness, distance, and darkness would discourage traveling. In the morning when they awoke, families would leave as they were ready. A few people with long distances to row would eat something before leaving.

Arnora checked the food supplies for the morning. Yngvild went around to refill the oil supply in the lamps throughout the house.

Arnora passed through small clusters of visiting guests to slip into her bedroom. She was after spare robes stored under her bed. She noticed her lance was not in the usual location on the block of wood beside her bed. Then she remembered the last threat she had made to Bjarni. She had been far too busy to think about her words.

But now she felt harried. A few of the women had said that they were surprised how well she was coping. So she knew that they had noticed she was coping. She was not surprised that they could see she was coping. Her struggle to be a good cook under the trying conditions was as plain as the nose on her face. Her fame as a cook was being tested to the limit. The verdict was still much in doubt.

After this mob left Arnora thought that she would confront Bjarni with the lance in her hands. Perhaps he would be startled enough to avoid making her cope with big crowds of unexpected guests in the future. She went to her side of the bed to find the lance. She could not see it. She felt on the floor. She could not feel it. The lance was gone.

Returning to the great room, Arnora gave the robes to the guests to sit on until later. Then she went outside the food room door to pick up a small water pail. One of the few blessings of living near mountains of ice was cool water. Then she took the pail and Talerman's cup to him. The men visiting with Talerman sensed her desire to talk to him alone. As they moved away, Talerman turned to take the cup of cool water from Arnora. After a long drink, Talerman whispered, "I hope Paafa Thord's ghost stays away tonight."

Arnora was caught off guard. She whispered, "What are you saying?"

Talerman said softly, "You will soon hear that Paafa Thord and I traveled to each kirke in the Eastern Settlement. There we held meetings, like this one, to decide if the whole kirke was willing to migrate. If the meetings in the Eastern Settlement kirkes appeared to be undecided, Paafa Thord used the deaths in his own family as the clinching argument. He argued that his aunt had said his mother and his sisters died because his father abandoned the family to walk to Merica."

Arnora asked in a normal voice, "Are you talking about Paafa Thord's aunt who raised him after his mother died in childbirth?"

Bjarni glanced around the room. He was thankful the noise level swamped Arnora's question. He said:

Please speak softly. Yes, that aunt. But Paafa Thord says his aunt told him that his mother and sisters starved to death because his father abandoned them and walked to Merica. When he told the story in the meetings, his eyes showed moisture almost as if he would cry. Those moist eyes swayed most women and a few men in every crowd. I know Paafa Thord's story is not true because I learned the truth from his father, long ago, around the campfires in Merica.

Arnora replied softly:

Paafa Thord's mother died the same year as your mother. But he was much younger than you. Paafa Thord's aunt, who raised him, repeated the

starvation story to anyone, who would listen, until the day she died. So most of the younger people here probably believe her story.

Bjarni shook his head slowly. He said, "I could not tactfully tell the people in the other meetings that Paafa Thord was not telling the truth. People believe a tearful priest talking about his family."

Arnora said, "Why did you not tell the truth that Paafa Thord's father gave you. He was closer to the matter than the aunt."

Bjarni lowered his head, talking to the floor. Arnora could hardly hear him say:

The one time I told the truth about the matter, the people thought I was lying. The truth weakened my other arguments. That time, almost all of the kirke people voted to stay in Greenland. In the other meetings where the vote was close, all the earnest talking about going to Akoman seemed wasted because the final decision often hinged on Paafa Thord's emotional argument.

Arnora tapped her right foot lightly. She said, "The issues are different. Why should a story of a man going to Merica and starving his family concern the wives when most men here in Greenland are now pleading for their families to come along?"

Bjarni continued to look at the floor. He very slowly shook his head. He replied, "I used that logic at every meeting, but life is not a chess game. Emotions swamp truth. Paafa Thord's strong emotions tying Merica to starvation overrode my mere statements that there is more, not less, food in Merica."

Talerman raised his head, took another sip of the cool water, gave a shrug of his shoulders and said, "I was thankful that eight of fourteen kirkes finally chose to say they would go. But five of those decisions had been right on the edge of the ice. Three of the opposing kirkes might have been persuaded to go if Paafa Thord had not used his aunt's ghost."

Arnora poured more water into the cup. She whispered to Talerman, "Why not counter with your own experience. You stayed home and hunted well, but our son still died."

Talerman bit his lip and said, "That is something I never want to talk about."

Arnora responded with a soft voice, "You could have moist eyes too."

Then she saw the sad look in his eyes and said quickly, "You are right. The decision to walk to Merica should be made only on the basis of the best

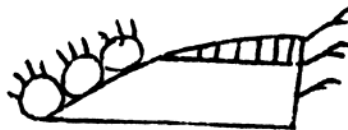
arguments." They both knew that people would accept moist eyes on a priest, but not on a beaver-head.

Arnora looked around and thought that this roomful of people was going to be very difficult to persuade if the ghost of Paafa Thord's aunt did return. That aunt had told her lies over decades. Most of the people in the Northern Settlement had comforted her without learning the true facts.

Arnora whispered to Talerman, "Try to avoid the subject. Do not argue with ghosts." She turned to go back to the food room for more bva, when she suddenly remembered why she had carried the water to Talerman. She turned back. She leaned close to his face.

"What did you do with the lance?" she hissed in a low whisper.

"It is safely hid. I will give it to you later. The sight of blood would make me hungry."



Paafa Ketil returned to the great room from the doorway of the livestock family. Styrk followed him. Halldis stopped visiting with the other women and went to Styrk. They returned to their bench.

Paafa Ketil moved to meet Paafa Thord who had returned from outside. Arnora carried a mixture of warm bva to them. They held out their drinking cups as she poured. Then they returned to a corner away from the door. Arnora left them talking in low voices and went to the food storage room to pour the warmed water and blood into a large serving bowl and to refill the vessel over the lamp with cool water and blood.

When she returned to the great room, the three men from the furthest houses down the fjord had come back inside. They were shedding their outer furs and wiping off their cups. Their sons and daughters had remained inside, visiting with the young group. Arnora realized that there were now ten young people in the room.

Two beaver-heads came back inside. With them was Bjørn who had two birds dressed for the pots. Bjørn's face was flushed red from the coolness, but his eyes revealed his internal pleasure. Once again Bjarni's eyes flickered with surprise. He had not yet realized Bjørn could hunt.

Bjørn responded to a young woman's question "I got the first one with an arrow, and the second one with the harpoon—in the air!" Bjarni's eyes opened

wide. Bjørn must be joking. Bjarni could never harpoon anything except a seal lying on the ice. Still Bjørn was smiling with pleasure, but not with humor as if he were joking.

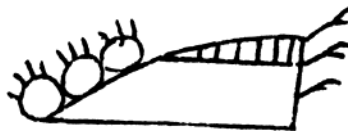
Paafas Thord and Ketil rose and began to mingle with the reassembling crowd. The younger people congregated at the other end of the room. The volume of talking became louder.

Valthjof Ormsson with his two daughters, Grimhild and Thurid, had just arrived. They shed their furs and held out cups for bva. Valthjof had lost his wife four years ago. Before she died, women of the settlement spread rumors of cruelties he had inflicted upon her. After her death even desperate single women with children had avoided Valthjof's advances. Now Grimhild, his oldest daughter, kept his robes warm.

Arnora had served as the midwife when Grimhild gave birth. Thankfully, the child appeared to be normal. Arnora told Grimhild about the dangers of incest. She also explained to her about methods to avoid having more children.

She had used those methods herself after Bjørn was born. She had realized then that more mouths to feed in Greenland would not be wise, especially with Bjarni away from home for eleven moons' time a year.

Arnora took a good look. Grimhild's coverlet was stretched firm over her breasts. She was still nursing and so probably not pregnant. Grimhild nodded to Arnora with a sly smile and followed Valthjof to a bench against the wall. Thurid's eyes sparkled as two of the older boys moved apart to give her a spot between them.



Bjarni switched to his public role as Talerman by making his traditional circle around the room and visiting with as many people as possible. Then he moved back to his bench and sat down. The crowd was more animated than earlier but slowly the room became quiet.

Talerman smiled as he spoke, "Paafa Ketil and Styrk, you left us with an opportunity to create many rumors. Most of the people here say they want to hear about the *Althing*. But the first question they ask me is, 'What have Paafa Ketil and Styrk said to each other?' So Paafa Ketil, would you enlighten us?"

Paafa Ketil stepped nearer Talerman's bench and talked to the group:

"Styrk and I did have a short, private discussion. I appreciated learning why he thinks hunting in Merica is best for his family's survival. He does provide four more moons' time of food for his children than he would if he hunted here.

"I had thought that his sending pemmican home instead of coming home himself on the summer boats from Merica was abandonment of his family. Now I understand that if he had put his weight in the boat that meant thirty sleeps of pemmican for the family had to stay behind. I also now know about his feelings of loneliness after each boat pulled away. Styrk very much loves his family. He is making great sacrifices for them to survive."

Styrk leaped to his feet and spoke:

I also can understand Paafa Ketil's concern for my family. He baptized all of my children. He came to care for them when illness afflicted Halldis. He arranged for other families to help feed my children until my sons grew enough to become hunters. Paafa Ketil truly desires to help my family make the best choices for the future.

Talerman asked, "Pave Ketil, are you ready to recommend walking the Frozen Trail?"

Paafa Ketil looked at the floor for a moment. Then, raising his head and turning to the people he said:

I am trying to discern what God is saying. Bishop Arne taught me to collect all the information possible before becoming a messenger of God's will. I was not at the *Althing*. I want to hear what was said there.



Talerman responded:

"Very well, then. I had told you how we beaver-heads had gone to convince Bishop Arne that the people of Greenland should move to Eastman Land in Akoman. I also told you I was surprised to learn that he



had already decided that a move to Eastman Land in Akoman would be best for the people of Greenland.

"So the next step was for Bishop Arne and I to convince the *Althing* that the people of Greenland should walk to Eastman Land.

"Before we went to the *Althing*, the beaver-heads and the priests talked things over in Bishop Arne's great room. Naturally the beaver-heads were all in favor. Despite Bishop Arne's exhortations, five priests, including our own Paafa Thord, were opposed. Three priests were undecided. Six priests in favor of the move themselves expressed extreme concern because they thought their people would not accept the idea. Four priests were in favor and thought their people were also in favor.

"Then we all, beaver-heads, priests, Bishop Arne, and myself, went to the *Althing* grounds.

"During the spring the priests had announced to their kirkes that Bishop Arne would present an important motion at the *Althing*. They had encouraged the men to come if they could. So more men than usual were at the *Althing*. Most of the sakkyndigs were there and many of them had large followings. The *Althing* grounds were packed with men.

"Almost immediately the priests opposed to the plan began talking to people throughout the *Althing* grounds. I appealed to Bishop Arne to silence them. Bishop Arne said, 'As far as I can tell, they are not spreading false rumors. They are telling the men that there are valid questions, which must be answered. If we cannot prevail, then God is not for our plan.'

"Now, Paafas Thord and Ketil are here tonight and are still asking those valid questions. I will tell you what happened at the *Althing*. Then I will allow Paafa Thord, who was in opposition at the *Althing*, to correct any statements I make. After that, Paafas Thord and Ketil can say what they think and ask us, beaver-heads, questions. The rest of you can ask questions also. Then we all, especially the women and young people, must make a decision. We beaver-heads want you to decide if your family will be willing to leave Greenland and walk the Frozen Trail, never to return. That is the plan for tonight. Is the plan all right with everybody?"

Talerman slowly scanned the room. The beaver-heads nodded readily. The wives who had walked the ice before also nodded reluctantly. Six wives held their heads rigidly with lips pressed into firm lines. A few of the youth nodded, the rest acted confused. Valthjof and a few others sat in stony silence. Three men

from the far houses checked each other and then nodded together. Their wives looked at the men, then at Sigrid, and nodded when she did. Paafas Thord and Ketil saw that no one was shaking his head. With stern expressions they slowly nodded also.

Talerman continued:

"Good. One of the first actions was to name the *Althing*. By acclamation the people there called the meeting the '*Manalthing*' meaning the people's *Althing*.

"Bishop Arne had asked for the chance to introduce the first major business. Because he was Bishop, he was granted his request. I will shorten Bishop Arne's words, because many of you have already heard about them. Bishop Arne spoke something like this:

"People of Greenland. I do not need to tell you the troubles we are facing here in Greenland. If I did, most of you would think I am just repeating words you have often said to your own families.

"Today, I stand here with a new hope. I believe that I see God's plan for us to take action to get a better life for our children.

"Most of you, I am sure, have been praying for a way, short of death, to escape this freezing cold of Hel that we call Greenland. Most of you have heard the beaver-heads tell of the mild, cool lands with many deer and buffaloes. Most of you have prayed to be delivered into those lands before you enter paradise.

"Now, God is telling us to go to those lands. We can do it the same way as the followers of Moses in my prayer book did -- by crossing a sea. Those who followed Moses walked on a sea bottom without getting wet. God is making it possible for us to walk across on top of sea without getting our feet wet. God wants us to go to a better land that he will give us to possess.

"We can do God's will, but doing it requires the effort of all of Greenland people. In the land God wants us to possess, we must have the combined forces of all the men to protect our families from savage attack. All the wives and children must be there to support the men. Our men will strive to possess land only where their families live. So, the business I want us to discuss is: Will you join together to move all of Greenland's people to Merica?"

"The crowd was silent during the first words of Bishop Arne, but at this point they began to speak out. Some shouted, 'Yes, yes, let us go!' Many more shouted, 'What are you talking about?' Bishop Arne raised his arms holding up his robe as if he spread his mighty black wings. The crowd quieted. Then he said, 'Please listen as Talerman explains to you how the people of the Eastman Land and Merica can help the people of Greenland walk across the sea without getting their feet wet. Please listen to Talerman.'

"I arose to stand beside Bishop Arne and I told them:

"As most of you know, most men and many women have walked the Frozen Trail to Merica during the very cold years. Many of you know that beyond Merica there is a better land called Akoman. Some Greenland families have already gone to stay in Akoman. During past centuries many young men have gone there. They have not returned to Greenland because their life in Akoman is much better than here. There are trees all around. The trees shield the people from the driving cold wind. There are many animals to eat. The climate is warmer. The spring and fall feels like summer here. The whole summer feels like the hottest day of summer here. There is open land for us to settle. You and your children would have a better life in Akoman.

"The beaver-heads you see at this *Manalthing* have walked from Akoman to Greenland this spring. We came because all of us believe we can guide your families safely to warmer lands in Akoman.

"Our plan is this: If you agree to go, the beaver-heads will return to Akoman to prepare for your coming with the peoples of Merica and Akoman. Then next summer they will help us prepare shelters and food for you. The shelters will be built in Merica on the seacoast facing Greenland. The low walls for the shelters are already there. The people helping the beaver-heads will dig pemmican storage pits beside the shelters. They will fill the pits with pemmican. They will provide caribou hides for the roofs of the new shelters.

"Meanwhile here in Greenland, you will be preparing. Each family who is willing to go will prepare pemmican. You will take enough pemmican to last two moons' time. You should be able to

walk the Frozen Trail to Merica in a moon's time. We beaver-heads have sometimes walked the distance in half a moon's time.

"You will also make sleds to be pulled on the ice. The sled should be long enough so that two people, feet to feet, can lie down on the pemmican. Two people will be sleeping on the sled, while four people will be pulling it. The sled load will be the same as having four people on a sled.

"Then in the winter beyond this coming one, we beaver-heads will walk east on the Frozen Trail. We will come from Merica to Greenland to test the ice. At least sixteen beaver-heads will walk as fast as we can to get to Greenland as soon as the Frozen Trail is solid.

"When we beaver-heads arrive in Greenland, the people must be prepared to leave. It is important for the people to be ready, because we will have only a short time to start everyone walking across the Frozen Trail toward Merica.

"On the other side of the Frozen Trail, when you walk off the ice you will recover your energy in the shelters we will have prepared. You will also make snowshoes and learn to walk on them. Then, you will take some of the stored pemmican along for the rest of the walk to Akoman. You will walk over a short stretch of land to reach the frozen ice of another sea. Then you will use sleds as before to walk on to Akoman.

"At Akoman the people there will show you how to build a house very fast. You will cover it with the caribou hides that have kept you warm during the walk across the ice.

"There is only enough shelter in Merica for about a thousand people at one time. We plan for about a thousand people to walk to Akoman the first year. If things work out well, we will make additional trips in each of the following three years. This cold spell, that we are in now, should last about seven more years. So, we think, four trips in the next four years will get everyone safely to Akoman.

"We must go together as a group. The land available for us to possess is empty because vicious men, who behave like wolfpacks, have killed or driven out the people in that land of Akoman. But the wolfpacks have not settled the land. So it is empty. There is great danger if we try to settle the land without having enough

fighting strength to repel the wolfpacks. The people of Akoman tell us the wolfpacks avoid villages with many fighting men. We will have more than 200 fighting men in each migration of 1000 people. But all of the people in each kirke must commit to going to Akoman at the same time. A small group of families could not resist the wolfpacks.

"So, the decision to move requires the full commitment of all of us: men, women, and children, in every kirke in all of Greenland. If most of you decide to stay in Greenland, we are all condemned to live and quickly die in this frozen land of Hel. If we all choose to migrate we can reach a land God has given us to possess in three moons' time or less. Please join those of us wanting to move our families to Akoman.'

"Then our Paafa Thord and three other priests led the resisters with a series of heated questions and scathing comments. Tonight, I will give Paafa Thord, Paafa Ketil, and others a chance to speak later. First I want to tell you more of Bishop Arne's comments. He stood up to speak again after the arguments of the resisters had been heard.

"Bishop Arne told the *Manalthing*:

"If the people of Greenland agree to this plan, I suggest the people of the Northern Settlement walk the Frozen Trail first. I make this suggestion because the Pope's and King's Agent, His Eminence Ivar Bardarsson, is now in Greenland. He would do anything possible to stop us from moving beyond Greenland. Fortunately, at my suggestion, he has chosen this time to survey the farmhouses in the south. The less he knows about our decisions today, the better it will be for all of us. But he will surely want to see the Northern Settlement someday. If God and time are in our favor, there will be no one there when he does visit.

"When Ivar Bardarsson has convinced himself there is no one in the Northern Settlement, he will probably return to Foss to continue to record data for tithe and fee collections. With Ivar Bardarsson back in Foss, the people in the northern kirkes of the Eastern Settlement can prepare to go over the Frozen Trail in the following winters. In five years all of us should be able to walk the Frozen Trail.'

"After Bishop Arne finished his statement, the *Manalthing* recessed for two sleeps. There was much discussion during that day of recess. Priests and beaver-heads moved from booth to booth explaining details. In some cases, for example, with Paafa Thord and myself, we discussed opposite viewpoints. Sometimes the discussions led to minor fights. In other cases, where the priest and the beaver-head were in agreement, only positive arguments for walking over the Frozen Trail were heard. The arguments were so intense and the issues so contested that the sakkyndig of the *Manalthing* decided the talks within small groups should go on yet another sleep. He hoped more discussion would get a visible majority large enough to prevent an outbreak of total rioting.

"Finally we met together again on the fourth day of the *Manalthing*. What an assembly! First there was an immediate motion, by those opposed to migration, that the people of Greenland should concentrate on improving farming and stop wasting time on other things, such as talking about walking to Akoman. The issue failed because the powerful men of Greenland, the southern farmers, felt insulted. They were already doing the best farming they knew how. Many of them stood up to say so.

"Then a motion about taking more sea mammals was shouted down without much discussion. All of the available boats were already stressed to the limit and most people knew it.

"Finally Bishop Arne's motion, 'Will you join together to move all of Greenland's people to Akoman?' was brought before the assembly. The arguments lasted from a little after midday until the sun approached the horizon. Because the summer sun would just dip below the horizon and arise in a short time, Bishop Arne recommended everyone take the dark time to take care of necessary things. Then when the sun rose above the horizon, those standing would be counted as in favor of going; those sitting would be counted as not in favor of going. If those standing were many more than those sitting, everyone would be expected to walk the Frozen Trail.

"A man of the powerful Eriksson family in the south stood to protest. He did not want to be forced to go. He was bound by commitments to his relatives in Iceland. If he had to leave Greenland, he would go to Iceland. Both Bishop Arne and I agreed that people who are not truly free to go should not be forced to go. We suggested the motion should be reworded to be: 'Will all say they will go along, all who are free to go, to move

Greenland's people to Akoman?' By voice acclamation the new wording was accepted.

"The next morning, the nine standing priests moved through the crowd taking the count. The people for six kirkes, all in southern Greenland, were almost all seated. Another six kirkes in the Eastern Settlement had almost all of their people standing. Two kirkes were almost evenly divided. One kirke had slightly more than half standing. There were slightly less than half of the people standing in the other. In the groups for our northern kirkes, Paafa Thord sat with slightly more than half of his people. Paafa Ketil was not there, but slightly less than half of his people stood. The priests and the people from the other two northern kirkes were solidly on their feet.

"When every head was counted, three times, the motion passed by a very slim majority. Thus the sakkyndig ruled that the *Manalthing* agreed, 'All say they will go along, all who are free to go, to Akoman.' But considering the large number of people still sitting, nearly half of Greenland felt they would not be free to go.

"Bishop Arne met with the priests after the *Manalthing* vote. He asked if any priests wanted to exchange assignments to kirkes so they could minister to people who thought the same as they did. Three priests decided they would prefer changing. So three more priests in favor of the move are now with kirkes where people are also in favor of the move.

"Our Paafa Thord, who is committed to staying in Greenland, has decided to remain with his kirke even if we, in his kirke, decide to walk the Frozen Trail. Paafa Ketil was not at the *Manalthing*. As you have heard tonight, he appears to be committed to remaining in Greenland. Also slightly less than half of his people said they were willing to walk the Frozen Trail.

"As you can conclude, this *Thing* tonight is important for all of Greenland. If we in this house decide to walk the Frozen Trail, we tip the balance in the Northern Settlement. Then, the Northern Settlement priests must report to Bishop Arne that the Northern Settlement is willing to go. If the Northern Settlement goes, the Eastern Settlement will go.

"Our decision tonight is truly up to a few wives here. Many of the men here are beaver-heads. You men have already gone on to Akoman at least once. I think there are eleven other men who have made the pull to Merica and back. I see here fourteen wives who have pulled sleds to

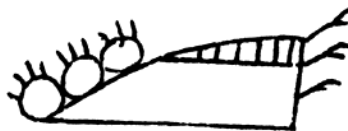
Merica. So most of you know that walking the Frozen Trail to Merica can be done. It is difficult but, with care, it is not deadly.

"You women especially those of you who have not been on the ice hold our fate in your hands. If most of you decide you are not free to go because you think you must live in your farmhouse for the rest of your lives, then the whole community will have to live with that decision. If you can decide that you, too, can live in the world without the shelter of an earthen farmhouse, please say you are willing to go. Then the whole community will work together to enable everyone to go to a land that God has prepared for us to possess.

"I hope, for my family's sake, that you will decide you are willing to take your family to Akoman. You will need to decide before you start home tomorrow. I want you to respond 'yes' to the *Manalthing* motion that 'All say they will go along, all who are free to go.'"

Talerman's voice had risen gradually as he talked. His voice was loudest and he punctuated the "Yes" with a fist raised high in the air. When he finished "free to go", he stood silently with both hands raised, moving his fingers slowly as if he were drawing the crowd to himself. He was silent. The room was silent. The spell lasted until a woman blew her nose.

Then Talerman quietly said, "Now is the time for Paafas Thord and Ketil to speak. Then we, the priests and the beaver-heads, will answer all the questions you have.





## Vignette seventeen

## ALL WILL GO

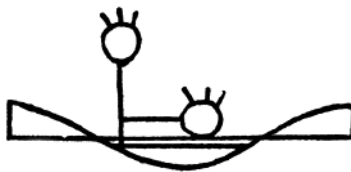
Azon did not need to look up to know Pitolo was approaching. The "swish, whoosh" sound of Pitolo's stick through the orange leaves on the ground clearly announced Pitolo's walk. Azon swiftly drew two horizontal lines on his engraved stick. Then he looked up to watch Pitolo lower himself down the north steps.

When he reached the bottom of the steps, Pitolo began to complain:

"It is bad enough having to spend most of the day sitting in a dark tepee with a dying man. I think it is even worse trying to make an engraved stick of the curious requests made by his deranged mind.

"Picturing a decision made at a council meeting was difficult. But I think it is impossible to show the people of the North and the people of the East agreeing to cross a frozen sea. I have a star, the North Star, and a sunrise with stick people beside them. But I do not know how to show a frozen sea. Let me see if you have anything, Azon."

Azon held up his engraved stick.



Pitolo squinted at it and exclaimed:

"I do not believe it. You have done it again. Circles with three hairs must mean people in the land to the east. The highest circle must mean North. If I face North, this circle to the right must mean the people of the East. This curve is similar to the bottom of the ocean from one land to another. Then these two lines must be ice on the surface. The lines connecting the two circles indicate they are on the 'from' side of the water. We agreed, by convention, that 'from' would be on our left, 'to' on our

right. Azon, you amaze me. I wish I had half as many arrows in my intelligent quiver."

Azon replied, "Pitolo, do not belittle your arrow supply. I had a difficult time to put all those names and the complicated plan into a simple verse that our descendants will remember. I trust you have one better than mine."

Pitolo handed back Azon's engraved stick. He said:

"Azon, you can be so creative with direct, but silly, instructions and so incapable of boiling a story down to bones. When our grandsons have grandsons, who will care what the story was? For that matter, anyone can think of a plan for the people to cross on the ice. Maalan Aarum told us, and then he repeated the main stone of the story. The stone our descendants must remember."

Azon said, "I do not remember any stone."

Pitolo replied:

"Oh, you see only the swirling waters, not the stones at the bottom. Maalan Aarum told us, 'All say they will go along, all who are free to go.' The sentence says it all.

"Our descendants can remember the saying because it is easy and catchy. They will know the people were at a meeting. They will know their ancestors agreed, as a group, to go somewhere. They will know a few were not free to go. When we tell about it, maybe you and I can pass along the rest of the story and the complex plans. If we cannot do it, they will still remember, 'All say they will go along, all who are free to go.' Then our descendants will make up their own stories to enrich the important idea that our ancestors were free to choose their fate."

Azon replied,

I am not sure of your reasoning, but we will see what grandfather thinks. He took no food after we left yesterday and none this morning. Mother is sad. She told me she would go for a walk as soon as we start to visit with him. She said, 'Do not try to serve him food, unless he asks.'

Pitolo replied:

"My father says Maalan Aarum is deciding his own fate. If I remember correctly, there is today's engraved stick and then, according to Maalan Aarum, only four more.

"The decision of our ancestors must have been a very important event. Maalan Aarum is using up three engraved sticks to tell about the decision. He has only four more to tell about the actual crossing. The decisions happened in a few moons' time. The crossing must have taken years."

Azon said:

The way we live, we are used to moving. We rip up our houses and move nearly every third moon. We enjoy the excitement of the move to new hunting grounds or to the summer camps. Think how difficult moving would be if we had grown to be as old as we are living in just this valley since we can remember."

Pitolo answered. "I have thought about their decision. The vision to live on the other side of the water must have shown brightly or they must have sensed the shadow of certain death creeping up on them where they lived. They were pulled or driven by great forces."



A brief while later Pitolo and Azon ducked through the doorway of the tepee. When their eyes adjusted they moved along one side of the tepee until they were near Maalan Aarum in the back. Maalan Aarum was seated resting against his

backrest. His legs were extended along the ground. He smiled feebly as they sat down.

Maalan Aarum listened to Pitolo's verse. He said, "I am pleased you caught the essence of the story. Although I would have been disappointed if you had not. I repeated the words twice."

Azon admitted sheepishly, "Grandfather, you must be disappointed in me. I could not think of a short saying to describe your story of yesterday. My story is much longer."

Grandfather said, "Let me be the judge. Please say your story." Azon did.

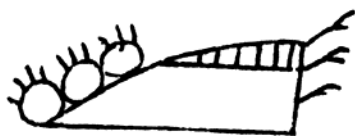
When he had finished Grandfather said, "You have done well, Azon. There are many people and the story is complicated. And now, both of you, please show me your engraved sticks."

After grandfather carefully studied both engraved sticks by holding them close to his eyes and moving them from side to side, he said"

"Good. Pitolo and Azon, in a few sleeps, you two will each have to do the engraving and compose memory verses of the important events for your own village. Now I am satisfied to know that each of you can do both the engraving and the memory saying. You have both done well, but today I must choose the better engraved stick and verse. So I will choose the saying, 'All say they will go along, all who are free to go' for the verse to go with yesterday's engraved stick.

"For today's engraved stick I will chose the one with two heads, each having three strands of hair. The tall head is the people of the North and the lower head to the right is the people of the east.

"Yesterday the engraved stick and today's verse told us all the men, who were free to go, said they would go. But life is not that simple, especially if the people have been living in one place for many, many grandfathers. The real decision to go was much more difficult. The men were inclined to walk the Frozen Trail, but were the women and children willing to go?"



*All say they will go along,  
All who are free to go*

Engraved Stick 3:15

## 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 at 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) function.]

"Grimhild:" "Grim" means, "mask" or "face shield," and "hild" means, "clean" or "pure."

"Manalthing:" "*Manalting*" is a word used in the *Walam Olum* 4:4, The word, in Lenape, means "meeting in council."

"Ormsson" means, "son of worm."

"Thurid:" "Thur" means, "Thor" and "rid" means "beautiful."

"Valthjof" means, "some one who steals from graves."