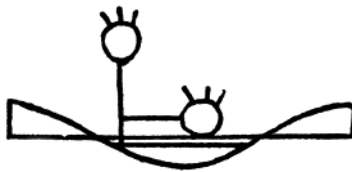


STORIES
OF
MAALAN AARUM
c Fall, 1344
ARE YOU READY TO GO?



E. S. 3:16

ARE YOU READY TO GO?

Although the people in the great room had listened quietly to Talerman, they were beginning to stir. They could sense the coming confrontation. Talerman paused. He took a drink of cool water. Then Talerman turned to Paafa Thord saying, "I know I have omitted many words, but I think I have been honest to talk about the major details. Do you agree?"

Paafa Thord with a serious expression stepped forward to say, "Talerman, you have been honest in the details you mentioned, but you have not talked about all the major details. For example you have not told what happened after the vote at sunrise. May I tell of those events?"

Talerman smiled and said, "I expected you would want the honor. Please proceed."

Paafa Thord made a mocking bow and said:

"Thank you. As you heard from Talerman, the vote of the *Manalthing* slightly favored migration to Akoman. But myself, other priests, and many farm owners realized that the men voting at the *Manalthing* actually spoke for only about one out of every eight people in Greenland.

"This year more men than usual gathered at the *Althing*. But even if we called it a people's assembly, the *Manalthing* was still only a meeting of our chosen representatives and a few other men who could take time to come. They were making life and death decisions for the other seven out of eight people who could not come.

"Those people, seven of every eight, should be heard, because the decision of the *Manalthing* may cause many of them to die before they should in the years to come. The edict of the *Manalthing* means we will all abandon farms where our ancestors have lived for over three centuries. Then we will march onto the frozen sea with its unknown dangers. If we survive the march, we will arrive, starved, in a land where we do not know how to get food or shelter. There are no farm animals there. A horde of wild men behaving like wolfpacks will be looking for any weakness so they can destroy us.

"Some of the other priests, many farm owners, and I were, and still are, concerned. So after the vote we asked to speak to the *Manalthing* before everybody left.

“I served as spokesman. I told the *Manalthing*, ‘We, in opposition, accept the vote of the assembly, but we insist that the issue involves everyone. The resolution, ‘all say they will go along, all who are free to go,’ implies everyone including women and children should say for themselves if they are free to go.

“Bishop Arne understood our position. So he helped form a plan of action. We finally reached an agreement that all the people in each kirke would be asked to decide for themselves. If more than half of the people voted to walk the Frozen Trail, the rest of the people would plan to go also unless they had very, very serious commitments requiring them to stay. If a migration happens, those people in each kirke who really can not migrate can move to an abandoned farmhouse near a kirke where the people are planning to stay in Greenland.”

Talerman raised his arm. He waited until Paafa Thord nodded. Then he said:

“Paafa Thord and I have been through this discussion many times. Yet, it seems, we both forget to be fair to the other’s viewpoint.

“My memory is that Bishop Arne and I both helped to form this plan of action. I know from personal experience that a person on the Frozen Trail must choose to be there. A person not choosing the trail becomes a troublemaker, risking his own life and endangering the life of others. It is better if those people who do not want to walk the trail are left on a farm in Greenland. It is also better for the people remaining in Greenland to be as close to each other as the food supply will allow.”

Paafa Thord gave a slight nod toward Talerman:

“I apologize. Yes it is true. Bishop Arne and Talerman stood side by side and spoke as one person. The assembly agreed only personal decisions should commit those who really wanted to walk the Frozen Trail.

“The powerful men of the *Manalthing* proposed that Talerman and I visit each kirke to present our arguments for each person’s decision. The crowd yelled in approval. Then they began scrambling for the boats to go home.

“So this past summer after the *Manalthing*, Talerman and I visited each of the fourteen kirkes in the Eastern Settlement. He presented the reasons for moving everyone over the Frozen Trail just as he has done tonight. I

presented the arguments against migration. Then we had the local priest and sakkyndig moderate as the people discussed the issue. Finally we had a 'stand or sit' vote."

Talerman interrupted, "The voting was interesting. In each of the fourteen kirkes, there were two or three men who remained seated while their wives and children stood to show they were willing to walk over the Frozen Trail."

Paafa Thord responded:

I talked with many of those families. Several of the women had long periods of being sick because there was no fat in the meat. But it was also true that many had long, long periods of hunger waiting for the men to return with seals from the sea or across the ice from Merica. Still, most of the people around the six southern kirkes in Ketilsfjord and Siglufjord desired to stay in Greenland.

Again Talerman interrupted:

There are reasons for their choice. Most of those farms are larger and in good locations because their ancestors were powerful men when the people first came to Greenland. Also, many of the southern people have maintained family ties with Iceland. They keep hoping the pack ice will go away so normal sailing to Iceland can return.

Paafa Thord continued:

The people of the other eight kirkes did vote to walk the Frozen Trail. But an interesting trend developed. The people of the Eastern Settlement began to say to us, 'Bishop Arne suggested that the people of the North should walk the trail first. Fine, we are willing to walk the trail if the people of the North do it first.'

Once more Talerman interjected:

"The people of the east were eager to walk the trail, but they thought the people of the North, who had more experience, might be better able to make the best decision about the safety of the Frozen Trail. So, in many cases, they said, 'We want to go, but we will go only if the people of the North go first.'

“That is why we are here tonight. We want you to ask us questions. Then, at the end of the night we, too, will take a ‘stand or sit’ vote. Paafa Thord and I have a pretty good idea how the other kirkes of the North will vote. We watched their representatives at the *Manalthing*. Ketil, your praying house appears to be just slightly opposed to walking the trail.

“The people of the other two kirkes in the Northern Settlement have always been very independent, but also many of their men have been over the Frozen Trail. Most of their representatives stood for going. I think most of their people are already making preparations to go.”

“Paafa Thord is respected by most of you and appears to have influenced the vote of your representatives at the *Manalthing*. I regret that he has not been as supportive to me as Bishop Arne, but I accepted the challenge to debate him. The final decision is yours.

“Paafa Thord, awhile ago you said I had not talked about all the major details. What other details have I left out?”

Paafa Thord responded, “One example is the danger of wild animals. Last winter a white bear killed the two boys in a family trying to cross the Frozen Trail. If we put 180 families with children on the ice, they will draw white bears as if they were flies around fresh meat in the summer.”

Talerman replied:

“White bears are indeed animals to avoid. Those two young boys, who died, tried to stalk the white bear. It was a mother bear protecting a small cub. Boys doing such a foolish thing have died right here in Greenland.

"But, in our case, at least one beaver-head will be with each group of ten sleds. There will also be men from Greenland who know how to hunt on the ice. They can spot and avoid white bears, or kill them if necessary. The rest of the people—women, young boys, and elderly men—should avoid all bears, white or brown.

"Bears want to check things out but, usually, they will not pursue when we move away. I do not believe a large group of humans draws them closer. My experience is contrary.”

Paafa Ketil said, “Styrk has explained the dangers of crossing the ice to me. I am comfortable to face them except for the fog that forms in Merica in the month before the ice goes away. The last of our people to leave Greenland may be trapped in the fog as the ice breaks up.”

Talerman replied:

“Paafa Ketil, you have the talent to identify the most serious worries. Yes, the fog at the Merica end is a very dangerous situation. Hunting groups who have been trapped in the fog have never been seen again. We have found their tracks in the snow on the ice. The tracks of good hunters who must have walked in circles.

"The moisture makes the air feel colder. Even a slight wind drives the coldness into bodies. The ice breaks up with cracking sounds all around. When a fog-bound traveler is able to see again, he may not be where he was when the fog came because the ice has moved.

“The best thing to do is to sit and wait until the fog lifts. But the supply of food may be gone before visibility returns. Running out of food may happen every so often. So, if for some reason a group tries to move, they try to go along a line kept straight by observing the sleds just visible behind and ahead.

“The beaver-heads in Merica will have a fire on tall timbers as a guiding beacon to guide you during the last days of the walk. They will have similar guiding fires on Bjarni and Akpatok Islands.

"Also, the beaver-heads in Merica will be counting the sled groups who arrive, so they will know how many sleds are still on the ice. If some sleds are missing, they will search for them along the path. While they search, they will carry fire and pound a drum.

“The fog is dangerous, but if we leave Greenland as soon as we can, and if we keep our wits when we reach the other end, things will work out.”

Paafa Thord asked, “Why not have the Merica beaver-heads build ice towers along the trail as they wait for Greenland people?”

Talerman realized Paafa Thord’s question was the first indication since the *Manalthing*, that he was starting to solve the problems of the Frozen Trail rather than resist the entire idea. He replied as gently as he could:

“Paafa Thord, your suggestion seems practical. I truly wish we could make it work. The beaver-heads in Merica discussed that action for a long time. Some of us were concerned about the movement of the ice. One group of beaver-heads walked ten days east and stayed there on the ice for a moon's time. They came back with discouraging information. The ice moves southward at a rate of one notch every moon.

"A food cache left on the ice would move south at least a notch before the people of Greenland found it. If the people from the Northern Settlement went after the food, they would travel extra sleeps. They might not find the food, and they might not get back north before the fog catches them."

Paafa Thord responded in a civil, but serious tone:

Talerman, my understanding is that the people of the Eastman Land want us to move into the empty lands south of them. The wolfpack people have devastated those lands. Moving into those lands would put our people into danger from the wolfpacks. Is that wise?

Talerman took a few seconds to gauge the effect of the question on the people in the great room. Hallgrim and Tjalve did also. Once again Hallgrim signaled with hands held horizontal and crossing over one another. The concern of the people in the room could not be judged. Talerman responded looking at Paafa Thord, "Paafa Thord, you always try to stick me with that question."

Then Talerman turned to face the wives who came from the farthest houses because he knew their decision was going to be vital to the outcome. He said:

"The people of Eastman Land gave us these beaver hats as an sign of brotherhood. All of us who wear the beaver hats have lived in Eastman Land and learned to be like them. I, personally, could not lead you to possess land of the people of the Eastman Land. That would be like fighting my own family. In Hallgrim's case and for a few other men in the Northern Settlement, my statement is really true.

"But the wolfpacks continue to threaten the Eastman Land. They have made the southern lands empty of people. The people of Eastman Land tell us that the men in the wolfpacks are vicious and cruel. But when confronted by a superior force of fighting men, they behave similar to wolves. They preserve their own lives by retreating. The Eastman Land sakkyndigs told me that the people in Akonsee, very much further south in Akoman, were able to resist the wolfpacks by concentrating superior forces. So we will have to organize our own people to enable us to concentrate a large number of fighting men when needed. We have worked together before, in bear and walrus hunts, harpooning whales, and in harvesting caribou. We can work together when our lives depend on it.

Our kirke groupings are a basis for establishing strong villages in Akoman.”

Talerman noted, with relief, the affirming nods from most of the beaver-heads and the lack of alarm on the faces of the women. He nodded to Paafa Ketil who was signaling. Paafa Ketil said:

I am not speaking to awaken the bad spirits, Talerman. I am trying to understand the long-range effects of moving all the people of my praying house to another land. Styrk told me many of the details of making the move. At the final settlement in Eastman’s Land, Styrk says the families will live in small houses called wigwams. Are they cramped and are they colder than our earthen houses?

Talerman responded:

“Ketil, I cannot explain how, but a wigwam, a framework of branches covered with hides, seems to be more comfortable than our sod houses. Many evenings the men sit and visit without shirts on. I have often undressed to the skin on my chest in a wigwam, but I usually cover my shoulders with an extra fur here in this sod house. The wood fire in the wigwam is small but warm. Many people have told me that the name 'wigwam' comes from our own words meaning 'stronghold nook'. “Yes, the wigwam is cramped, but in Akoman we will use it mostly to store food and tools, to tell stories, and to sleep. In Akoman, people live outside as much as possible.

"Besides, when the camp area gets dirty and smells, the people move on to a new hunting area. The wigwam needs to be small enough for the women and the children to carry it to the new site. I promise you, Ketil, most of the women here will be glad to change their cold, freezing, dirty, smelly home in this icy land for a warm, small, moveable, repairable home in a sweet-smelling forest. In the evening with the family around the wigwam does seem like a stronghold nook.”

Paafa Thord, raising his fist, whirled toward Talerman,:

Talerman, I told you. You should not use that argument. You may know what beaver-heads think, but priests are more in touch with the thoughts of the women who want to stay in Greenland. Here the women

know their homes are secure against all weather and animals. They are able to make their earthen homes comfortable. They appreciate their location near domesticated animals which produce food and wool.

Then moisture began to form around Paafa Thord's eyes. There was a catch in his voice as he continued:

“My Aunt never allowed my Uncle to walk the Frozen Trail. She always spoke about my father, who did, as an example of the Frozen Trail fever gone wrong. She used to say, ‘Going away on the Frozen Trail allows men to commit sins without feeling guilty.’ She said my father walked the Frozen Trail because he could not accept his duties as a father. He left my mother, my sisters and me behind to starve to death. My aunt insisted that if my father had stayed home, my mother and my sisters would be alive today. My aunt always said my father killed my mother and my sisters as sure as if he hit them with an axe, but he never suffered guilt because he was away in Merica.

“I say God wants us to grow where we are. God wants men to stay near their families. We all, especially the men, should stay in Greenland. With God's help and with our men staying at home to raise animals and to hunt wisely, we can make Greenland a better place for all to live.”

Bjarni turned with hands on his hips to face Paafa Thord. Anger was clearly visible in his face. His arm lashed out, finger pointing, “Paafa Thord, I have asked you, many times, not to use your emotional story in these debates. I regret the death of your mother and sisters, but your story is not true. I have talked to a few women--”

Arnora, carrying a tray of blubber cubes for the children, heard the anger in Bjarni's voice and turned to watch. Arnora knew instinctively that Bjarni's anger was the wrong answer to Paafa Thord's emotional ploy, but what could be done? Then she saw Sigrid stand up in the far corner of the room. She thought "There were other voices!"

“Bjarni, quiet!” The voice of Arnora rang out.

Bjarni, still angry, turned to face the new attack. Everyone swung to look at Arnora. Arnora was pointing to Sigrid. Arnora said loudly, “Talerman, Sigrid has something to say. Please listen to a woman who is well respected by all women.”

Sigrid did not wait for approval. She stepped closer to a boiling pot so that the firelight lit her face. She turned toward Paafa Thord and said:

“Paafa Thord, I was the attending woman when your mother died trying to give birth. I can assure you, your father stayed beside your mother, through those terrible days of agony. Your father’s family, including you, was starving. The difficulty of getting seafood and making hay was as bad as now. The death of your mother, her unborn child, and your two sisters happened because they were not healthy enough to overcome the coughs, loose bowels, the cold and other illnesses. Your father was only skin and bones. He had starved himself to save food for your mother and you children.

“After your mother and two of your sisters died, your father became so listless that your aunt and uncle took you and your other surviving sister into their home. Then your aunt began to talk against your father. She said he killed your mother by making her pregnant.

“All the community thought he would surely die of sorrow before he died of hunger. One day Styrk, returned from Merica, took pemmican to your father. Styrk talked your father into pulling on a sled team going back to Merica. Your father accepted only because he thought he would die faster on the Frozen Trail. Styrk told me that when your father did finally die in Merica, he had a wide fame as a caribou man. Caribou men from a large region gathered for his death feast. I sincerely believe your mother would still be alive if your father had walked the Frozen Trail earlier.”

Paafa Thord shouted:

No! No! Stop you, old hag! Talerman tried to tell me the same slop. He is lying. Now he has seduced you to lie for him. My aunt told me over and over, ‘Your father walked the Frozen Trail and deserted his own family.

Sigrid was not about to be intimidated by a mere priest. She scowled and clenched her raised fist. She leaned onto her forward foot and continued:

Your aunt hated your father because she believed, at first, he killed your mother by making her pregnant. Pregnant women die. That is a sad truth of life, but no one blames a man who loves his wife. Nobody would

accept your aunt's ranting. Her mind became confused. As the years passed many things that she said were not straight. Nobody, even your uncle, could stop her from twisting happenings of the past. When we tried to tell her differently, she would just repeat her words louder and longer.

Paafa Thord exploded again:

I do not know how Talerman has cast a spell on you. Maybe both of you are lovers. My aunt never lied. She taught me lying is a great sin. She also taught me walking the Frozen Trail causes unnecessary death.

Halldis was on her feet. She raised an arm and said, "Listen to me." As the crowd swung to gaze on her she said:

There is no other woman more faithful to her husband than my sister Sigrid. What she is telling you is true. Paafa Thord's mother died. Then, and only then, did his father walk the Frozen Trail.

Halldis swung and pointed at Paafa Ketil. "Paafa Ketil, why are you so silent?" Paafa Ketil appeared embarrassed as he responded with less than full conviction, "I have been very, very prudent to never criticize the dead nor repeat a confession made to me."

Halldis stamped her foot. She said:

I am not talking about the dead! A woman in your praying house has been insulted. She has been accused of lying. She has been accused of sin against her husband. Yet, you, you stand silent! You! Who preach about the support that your God will deliver if we stay in Greenland. Speak to the living!

For a moment Paafa Ketil and Paafa Thord locked eyes. Then Paafa Ketil stepped back and looked down. He slowly raised his face toward Halldis. He said:

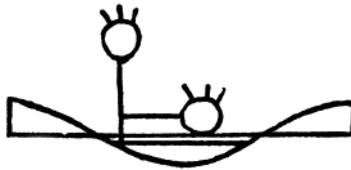
I regret the insults. I pray Sigrid will receive an apology when emotions subside. Sigrid is very faithful to her husband. I have never heard a rumor otherwise. In all the years I have known Sigrid, I have never known her to lie.

Paafa Ketil gained renewed conviction. His gaze turned to Paafa Thord. He said with strength in his words, "Sigrid is not lying now!"

Paafa Thord's face flushed red. Beads of sweat stood out on his bald head. Suddenly the left side of his face sagged.¹~ The flesh on the cheek dropped. The left side of his mouth sagged downward. The left eyelid drooped closed. Paafa Thord's left hand came up to shield his left face. He hunched over to hide his face. He stumbled around the boiling pot and then barged his way out the door.

Paafa Ketil called out, "He needs help!" He grabbed furs from the doorway pegs and also left the great room.

Talerman allowed the conversations to subside. Then he said, "We all need to do our necessary things before we take a vote. I pray the priests will return."



The subdued murmur in the great room rose to a higher level when the two priests entered the passageway from the outside door. Paafa Thord slumped down against the passageway wall, keeping his hood over his face.

The murmur reduced as Paafa Ketil worked his way around the boiling pots to Talerman. Paafa Ketil and Talerman conversed for a few minutes. Then Talerman held up his hands to quiet the room. Paafa Ketil stepped in front and said in a loud voice:

"Paafa Thord will be well after some time. I have seen his affliction twice before. It seems to occur when a man is tired. Usually after two or three months the ill person recovers to almost normal. But, right now, Paafa Thord does not speak very clearly. He wishes me to speak for him.

"First, Paafa Thord begs forgiveness. He has listened to his aunt for too much of his life and not enough to God. He does apologize to Sigrid and to Talerman. He regrets he did not listen closely to many others who informed him correctly.

¹ Bell's Palsy

“Both Paafa Thord and I have not been listening closely to God. We have heard many, many mothers tell of limited food, of sickness from eating lean meat, and of the lack of husbands. We thought that the latter caused the former. We supported each other’s thoughts, believing that more food could be harvested if the husbands stayed near the farmhouse. But Styrrk disturbed my thinking when he convinced me, with strong words, that his absence was worth four months of food for his family.

“Until now Paafa Thord’s strong belief about the deadly effects of walking the Frozen Trail convinced me that we were following the true word of God.

“Now both Paafa Thord and I admit we have not been listening to the word of God as spoken by most of you. We now realize that having more men near the farmhouse does not increase the yield if the crops and the animals are not there.

“Our praying book begins with a story of the sorrow of the original people leaving paradise. But this land is not paradise. Later in the same praying book, people walked across the bottom of a sea to a land God gave them to possess. The land that lies in Akoman for us to possess sounds much better than here. Let us walk across the sea!”

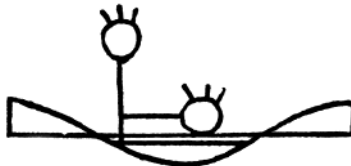
The great room resounded with a roar. The young people leaped to their feet. Many men were already on their feet. Their wives reached up for a hand and pulled themselves to their feet. Paafa Thord in the passageway struggled to rise. Two beaver-heads lifted him to his feet.

When Talerman was finally able to silence the crowd he said, “Those of the north agreed.”

Paafa Ketil sang out, “So, those of the east agreed.”

The young people began to chant, “Over the water, over the frozen sea.”

Men turned to their wives to promise “We are going to enjoy it.”



Arnora lay snuggled under Bjarni's arm, her head lying on his chest. She could see daylight through the hole in the roof. The design on her wall hanging was becoming distinct. It was late in the morning.

Bjarni coughed, then raised his head again. His head lay down again, but his breathing indicated he was awake.

"We fell asleep again," Arnora said softly.

Bjarni said, "It was a long night."

"And a good morning."

"Ah, yes," Bjarni reflected with a smile. "I suppose you are going to turn into a hostess again?"

"Soon, but they must be as tired as we were last night. I can lie here for a while. Now that the decision making is done, what are you going to do?"

"The first thing I have to do is pick a Greenland coordinator. I need a man who can organize and talk people into doing things. I need someone who can keep calm when people begin to complain. I need someone who can be an accepted leader without question."

Arnora rolled further onto Bjarni's chest and pushed herself up saying, "How about Ormsson?"

Bjarni's head snapped up so he could look at Arnora's face. He said, "It is a good thing you are smiling."

Bjarni pulled the rolled robe up under his head so he could continue to see Arnora's face. He continued, "I have waited a long time to see my woman smile."

Arnora looked at the wall hanging as if she were thinking. She said, "I think Paafa Thord with Paafa Ketil as his assistant is the only choice you have."

Bjarni used his left hand to turn Arnora's head toward him again. He said, "You are not smiling now."

"Think about it."

Bjarni lay his head onto his hands behind his head, "I think Paafa Thord is organized and very persistent. He can read and write."

"And do numbers."

Bjarni continued thinking out loud:

Paafa Ketil is a dynamic leader. He is passionate. Somehow people just seem to like him. He can persuade them to do things a man with a big club cannot. Maybe you are right.

"Can there be any doubt?"

Bjarni was silent for a moment, then he said, “Yes, Paafa Thord lost his composure last evening.”

“Suppose Sigrid, a mere woman, had proven your arguments baseless. How would you behave?”

“I would never talk to her a-- it took a lot of courage for Paafa Thord to return and to apologize to everyone. Paafa Ketil has assured me that Paafa Thord will rapidly improve and soon his affliction will not be noticed by many.”

Arnora said, “I think no one who was there will ever accuse Paafa Thord of failing to stand by his convictions.”

Bjarni took another close look at Arnora’s face. He said, “You still are not smiling. I will think about them. Aha, now I see a slight smile.”

“I am smiling at my big gruff bear, Bjarni. But I should not be. You will probably go somewhere too soon.”

Bjarni said:

“I would like to make a trip to the mouth of Ranga Fjord, where we will set up the departure camp. The shore ice should be strong enough to travel in about a moon’s time. Meantime, I have to have many planning meetings, but they can all be here in the Northern Settlement. I will take you along.

“The beaver-heads for each kirke in the Eastern Settlement will go back to tell them our decision. From each kirke, they will bring back a stone mason and wood working man to go to Merica with us.”

Arnora asked, “Why do you want a stone mason and a wood working man from each kirke?”

Bjarni said, “To build the shelter houses in Merica for when we walk off the ice.”

“But, if I heard correctly, only the people in this settlement are going to cross the first time.”

Bjarni continued:

True, but it would be a difficult task for our stone masons and wood working men to build enough shelters for our people. The people from the Eastern Settlement will also be using the shelters in the following years. They should help with building them. If the eastern men assist, we can be assured of shelters on time, and the Eastern Settlement will have experienced men to guide their people to the shelters during the coming years.

Arnora looked Bjarni in the eyes. Then she said, “Sounds much too complicated for my brain. I had better become a hostess again. If you will show me where you hid the lance, I will put it away.”

Bjarni blinked his eyes and said, “Lance? That reminds me. Who taught Bjørn to use a harpoon?”

Arnora wrinkled her nose and hesitated before saying “Iqquk.”

“Iqquk? Isn’t he the meat-eater living north of the thicket?”

Arnora nodded tentatively. She remained quiet.

Bjarni rose on his elbows with an insistent tone as he asked, “How did Iqquk do anything with Bjørn?”

Arnora replied, “It started about four years ago, when Iqquk observed Bjørn having difficulties catching fish. He signaled a better spot. Then he showed Bjørn a better way to throw the net. Since that time Iqquk has remained in our region. They often hunt and fish together.

“Bjørn says Iqquk talks about a son who drowned in a chase after a whale. He thinks Iqquk likes teaching a boy again. I think it is good that someone is teaching Bjørn the things he needs to know.”

Bjarni’s tone was still insistent, “That is my role!”

Arnora met the firm voice with her own, “You are never here.”

“But a meat-eater...?”

Arnora retorted, “Yes, a meat-eater. Thanks to him, I can still play at being a hellion.”

Bjarni shook his head, then asked slowly, “What are you saying?”

Arnora signaled calm as she said:

One night two years ago, Iqquk, his wife, and Kuptana, his daughter, burst into our great room. Kuptana and her mother grabbed Yngvild. They rushed her into our room. Iqquk talked swiftly to Bjørn. Bjørn has learned Iqquk’s tongue. I can only understand a few words. Then Bjørn said to me, ‘Mother, four mean men who have landed in kayaks are coming toward our house. Behave as if you are Iqquk’s woman.’

Bjarni’s face showed alarm. He hissed through his lips, “You knew how to behave as Iqquk’s woman?”

Arnora put her hands up, palm outward to signal patience. Then she continued:

"I have watched Iqquk and his wife many times. When people are visiting they never touch. They hardly look at each other. Now and then they make eye contact with a sly glance. She seems to anticipate his needs and does them. Once in a while she smiles slightly. She sits near, but slightly behind him when she is not serving. I behaved like that.

"Bjørn had gotten his harpoon. Iqquk and he were cleaning their harpoons when the four big ugly meat-eaters came through the door. Their faces showed a flash of surprise. Iqquk waved toward the stools near the boiling pot. Bjørn told me, 'Bva, Mother.'

"I served bva. The men leaned their harpoons against the wall and came to the boiling pot facing Iqquk and Bjørn. Iqquk's eyes and mine met in a sly glance. I thought his glance said 'You are doing well.' I hope my eyes read 'I am thankful you came.' Iqquk said, later, it was my slight smile that convinced the men I was his woman. They visited while drinking three or four cups of bva and eating many mouths of food from the pot. Then they left.

"Later Bjørn told me, 'Mother, no one made any threats. Iqquk did tell a story about his father killing a man who tried to steal Iqquk's mother. The man had too much of a load on a broken sled. He could not carry Iqquk's mother away fast enough. The men understood. To them you, Mother, are now Iqquk's woman. If they harm you, or your family, Iqquk will hunt them down to kill them.'"

Arnora lowered her hands to Bjarni's chest, nodded, and said, "After you, I will trust and depend on Iqquk."

Bjarni's face was limp with disbelief, "Why would a meat-eater do a thing like that? He must want something very much."

Arnora said, "I think he was just returning a favor."

"What favor?"

Arnora continued:

About three years ago, Bjørn went to visit Iqquk. He came right back with the news that maybe they all would die. When Bjørn, Yngvild, and I went to their ice cave, we found them very weak. I thought the symptoms seemed to be of eating meat without fat. Iqquk was almost too weak to talk but was able to tell Bjørn that he had hurt his knee three moons' time before. Their meat-eater friends had moved north for the foxhunt.

Iqquk's family became so desperate for food they traded two walrus tusks to Ormsson, near the ice, for pemmican.

"Ormsson! The meat-eater sure made a bad choice there. Nothing goes right near that man."

Arnora said:

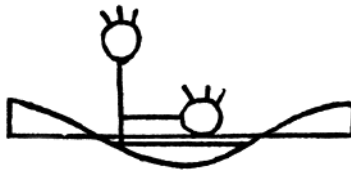
You are right. Ormsson's second wife, his own daughter, probably did not know how to prepare the pemmican correctly. Her mother may not have known either because she was so young when they married. We quickly gave Iqquk and his family meat with fat. In two days they were better. In two weeks, they were restored to life."

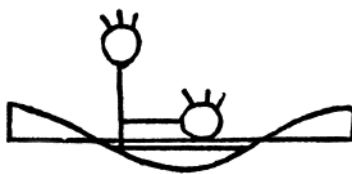
Bjarni's slight smile reminded her to ask again, "Now, where is the lance? I will put it away."

Bjarni asked, "Why would you put it away?"

"With a gruff old bear around, the hellion can rest for a while

."





Vignette eighteen

THE FROZEN SEA

Azon was waiting at the waterway. He looked up to watch Pitolo making his way along the path. He thought, "There is no spring in his step. He is not skipping as usual?"

Last night until the stars indicated the coming dawn, they had both stayed in the Big House listening to the young men tell of their quests. Azon pushed himself to his feet. He went to meet Pitolo at the waterway.

Pitolo said:

Azon, I am getting tired. This ordeal is worse than a quest. I hate spending all afternoon in a tepee with a dying man. On the other hand, I sure do not want to eat Maalan Aarum's final feast. Somehow I do not feel worthy to carry his knowledge.

Azon responded:

Pitolo, you are not alone. I think it is good there are two of us. Let us try to concentrate on the immediate things. How did your carving come out?

Pitolo answered:

"Fair, but not good. Maalan Aarum asked us to show people from four praying houses crossing the ice and going into many shelters. Also, he wanted us to show that other people were along.

"I used your engraving of the land, water, and ice. Maalan Aarum seemed to like that yesterday. Then I put four circles with three hairs each representing the people from four praying houses headed to many shelters that I show as tepees on the 'to' shore. I think the shelters look too cluttered. I used a small circle with no hair for the other people. Let me see yours, Azon.

Azon gave his engraved stick to Pitolo,



Azon said:

“Here you are. Look, I used the same land, water, and ice engraving. Also I used circles to represent people from four praying houses and another circle to represent other people.

“He will still choose yours,” replied Pitolo, “I did not think of putting the heads on a line to show they were walking.”

Azon placed an arm around Pitolo, pushing him gently toward the south steps. When they were on the path to the palisade, Azon said, “We will accept whichever engraving he picks. My verse was:

‘The beavers-heads and the paves agreed
The people of North and East agreed
They all would cross the frozen sea.’”

Pitolo responded, “You have used good words, but I believe Maalan Aarum knows the end is coming. He also knows the words he wants and he is telling them to us directly.”

“What words did he say directly?” Azon asked.

At the entrance to the palisade Pitolo turned to face Azon, saying,

“Those of the North agreed.
Those of the East agreed.
Over the water, the frozen sea,
They went to enjoy it.”

Azon nodded his head in agreement, “If you are correct, he will still choose your words.”

Silently, Azon and Pitolo walked the path to Azon’s tepee. Inside the tepee, Azon’s mother was holding a water gourd to grandfather’s mouth. Grandfather saw them come in the entrance and pushed the gourd away. Azon’s mother swiftly slid around the fire. Avoiding looking at them. she left the tepee. As Gee

Hiz came through the doorway to fall on her face, Azon noticed a tear streak on her cheek.

Grandfather whispered with a raspy voice, "I am pleased you came early today. I may need a nap before I can finish this next story. Let me see what you have made."

Grandfather looked at the two carvings. For several cycles he looked at one and then the other. He appeared confused. Azon asked, "Is there something wrong?"

Grandfather asked, "Is my guess correct that you chose to use only one hair on each head pointing to the 'to' shore because you wanted to emphasize that the people left the land to the east and are headed to the land of the Great Spirit?"

Azon replied, "Yes, Grandfather."

Grandfather nodded and said, "Also does the opening on the head on the ice imply the other people had no Great Spirit?"

Azon simply nodded. Grandfather nodded in reply.

Then grandfather said, "If only we could combine your drawings. If we could make the four walking praying houses appear to go into many shelters, the picture would be best. But I do see the many shelters get confusing. I do not know which to engraving to chose."

Pitolo asked, "Which is the most important to tell our grandsons?"

Grandfather answered, "There were four praying houses in the first move, but they walked in two groups. The first group went into the many shelters in Merica where they prepared snowshoes and after five sleeps they walked on. Then the second group came to the shelters. Some other people walked between the two groups."

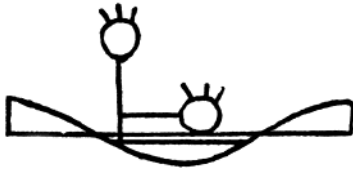
Azon suggested, "The four praying houses going to the land of the Great Spirit would seem more important to remember than temporary shelters. I could move the little circle to be between two pair of praying house symbols to illustrate the two groups"

Grandfather said, "Let us do it that way. Now let me hear your verses. You first, Azon."

Pitolo's verse was selected rapidly. Pitolo was correct. Maalan Aarum had been putting the words he wanted into the story.

Grandfather asked for another drink. After he sipped, he signaled the boys to come closer. He started the story by saying, "The people of the North and the people in the East accepted the decision to migrate to America. In the following days, the cold continued and most people realized they had little hope to live a long life unless the plan of the beaver-heads and the Big Raven worked. Their thoughts and actions began to move toward their own role in the adventure. A

year in the freezing cold was a long, long time to prepare and the Frozen Trail went a long, long way over icy waters. Still the thought of the being alive to experience the adventure and to have plenty of food overcame the thought of death from cold, open leads in the ice, or wolfpacks.



Engraved Stick 3:16

Those of the north agreed.

Those of the east agreed.

Over the waters

Over the frozen sea

They went to enjoy it

FACTUAL FICTION

BELL'S PALSY

Bell's Palsy is a nonprogressive facial nerve disorder characterized by the sudden onset of facial Paralysis. Paralysis results from decreased blood supply and /or compression of the seventh cranial nerve.

Symptoms

The early symptoms of Bell's Palsy may include a slight fever, pain behind the ear, a stiff neck and weakness and/or stiffness on one side of the face. The symptoms may begin suddenly and progress rapidly over several hours, and sometimes follow exposure to cold or a draft. Part or all of the face may be affected.

In most cases of Bell's Palsy, only facial muscle weakness occurs and the facial paralysis is temporary. (The Family Doctor, 3rd Edition)
(Return to Bell's Palsy place.)