

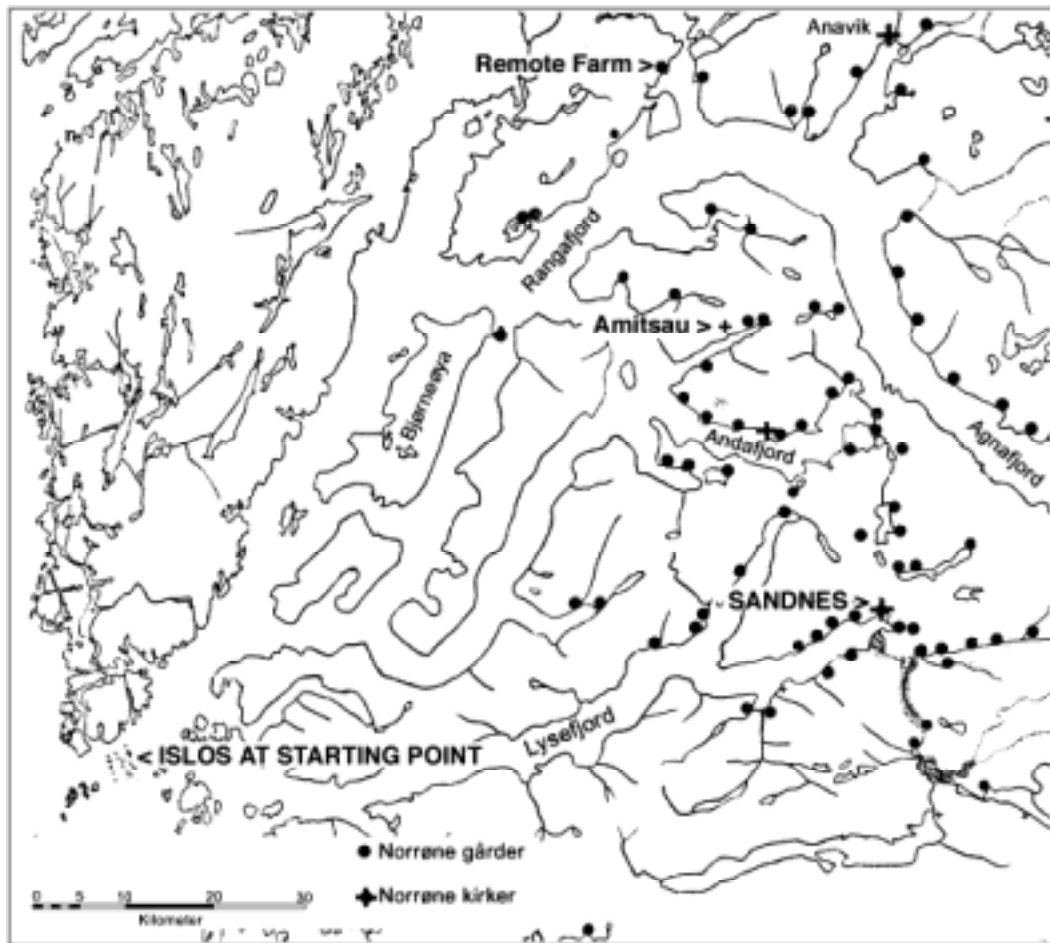
**STORIES**  
**of**  
**MAALAN AARUM**

**LEAVING HOME**



E. S. 3:17

## THE STARTING POINT



While waiting for the beaver-heads to return, the men of the Northern Settlement practiced making Islos at the starting point of the migration.

## LEAVING HOME

Eight sleeps after leaving Talerman at Merica, Captain Gunnbjørn decided against breaking the ice up to the Magnusson's farmhouse. He chose to pull up at the house before the little peninsula sticking into the bay at the end of the fjord. While his crew enjoyed the farmhouse hospitality, Captain Gunnbjørn walked the inland path to the Magnusson farm.

Arnora was feeding the outside animals. She saw the figure coming toward the house. She hid the point of her lance in her right armpit, while she watched. The figure turned into someone she recognized.

"Lose your boat, Captain?"

Captain Gunnbjørn turned and looked back. "No, I cannot see it, but I doubt the crew has moved it. Good home cooking makes them stick like flies."

Arnora smiled and said "We have home cooking also. The hour is late. Would you accept an invitation to stay the night?"

Captain Gunnbjørn seemed somewhat embarrassed. He scuffed his toe as he said, "I do not really know. I have heard of your fame."

"My fame as a hellion or a cook?"

"Uh, the first."

"I will make a deal, captain. If you do not test the first, you can challenge the second to your stomach's content."

"Deal."

Captain Gunnbjørn ate to his stomach's content first. Then he told the assembled household what he could of Talerman's activities. He expressed his amazement of the effort put forth by the people of Akoman and Merica. He thought that, without their help, many Greenland people might die during the migration. But he could see that the migration was becoming more feasible with each sleep.

Late in the evening when he and Arnora were alone, he had a chance to present the real reason for his long walk. He passed a rolled up bundle of skins to Arnora saying, "This is the message Bjarni sent for you. Mind you, these are Bjarni's words, 'I love you, I have sent special furs for the hood to keep your face warm until I can kiss it.'"

Arnora undid the strings around the caribou hide. Inside was enough martin fur to make face edging for the hoods of all the people in the house.

"Whew!" exclaimed the captain, "Good thing I did not peek. When the weather is very cold, martin fur keeps the ice from forming on the hood near the face. I

need new martin fur myself and a man can exchange those furs for many, many things.”

The following morning Captain Gunnbjørn hiked away before pale light. Later in the day, the knarr turned into Agnafjord. That evening, the knarr crew visited the farmhouse at the head of a small inlet. The captain, once again, hiked overland to the Anavik kirke. Paafa Thord was there just as the people in the farmhouse had said he would be.

“I have a message from Talerman.” Captain Gunnbjørn said as he peeled off his outer jacket, “He says, ‘Greetings, preparations in Merica are going better than hoped. There will be space for eighty-eight families or about 600 people. So the plan to come in two waves is to be followed.’”

During the meal that followed, Captain Gunnbjørn also mentioned:

“Talerman says there are twelve sets of low-walls with arched roofs in five sites. Some shelters are longer than others are. He suggests you organize the people so that each kirke goes into a set of shelters close together. Only the people of two kirkes should walk in the first wave of sleds. The first kirke should go to the north shelters. The second kirke should go to the shelters south of the first group. They should vacate the shelters in five sleeps.

“The last two kirkes of the Northern Settlement should come in the second wave, five sleeps later. They should go into the shelters using the same pattern and stay only five sleeps.”

Paafa Thord said that he had not thought about assignments to the shelters, but he thought it was a good idea. He could easily work it into the planning.

Paafa Thord gave information for the captain to take to Bishop Arne. Basically, he said the physical preparations in the Northern Settlement were slightly behind what he had hoped. The summer had been cold. Many people were sick or weak. There had been no real hay harvest. Men and women worked many hours trying to find forage for the animals. Yet because of the cold summer, the resolve to walk to Merica seemed stronger than ever. Farmers were already starting to feed the remaining food to the livestock now. Many intended to feed full ration until the moon before Christmas. Then they would slaughter the animals to prepare pemmican.

When the captain was ready to leave in the pale light of morning, Paafa Thord said “Tell Bishop Arne that, with God’s guidance, there will be no one in the Northern Settlement next spring.”

The colder weather forced the knarr to move away from the fast ice clinging to the shore and to be extra wary of the icebergs flowing north. Passage to the eastern settlement took twelve long sleeps of little sailing and much rowing. The captain's experience with the icing process in the southern fjords made him choose to go up Ericksfjord to the farmhouses opposite the Gardar Kirke. Once again the crew enjoyed home cooking while he walked to visit Bishop Arne.

Bishop Arne was in great spirits. His Nemesis had moved south to Foss in early spring. He had heard word from the southern people that His Nemesis was behaving like a petty King, but the people of the south understood their role in God's world. Even if their hatred of His Eminence was growing, it would not lead to manslaughter if the man would be gone by next spring.

In his own pasture Bishop Arne had personally visited all eight of the kirkes planning to walk to Merica in the years to come. At this time there was little to do except to scheme to prevent His Nemesis from knowing the plan. The *Althing* during the summer had been a small affair. Most of the people from the Northern Settlement chose not to come. His Nemesis also chose not to come "because listing the kirke property in the south was more important."

Captain Gunnbjørn commented wryly, "His Eminence might have come to the *Althing* if he could have walked on water."

Then Captain Gunnbjørn delivered Paafa Thord's and Talerman's messages. When it was time to tell about Talerman's message, Captain Gunnbjørn said, "All Talerman told me to say was 'John 14:3.' Do you know who this man, John is?"

Bishop Arne's eyes flashed. He rushed to get his manuscript from the high shelf in his bedroom. He flipped through the pages, found the right spot and read, "And I shall go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you onto myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

Captain Gunnbjørn guessed, "It means the place is prepared and Talerman will be coming to get you. How did he know all this fancy writing stuff?"

Bishop Arne smiled and replied, "A young man can learn much during a long walk on the ice. What young men learn, they remember a long time. God is truly showing us the way."



As they walked to Merica after Talerman's forty-fifth birthday, the beaver-heads knew the climate had become cold enough to freeze the sea between the

Northern Settlement and Merica again. They did not learn that the sea also froze as far south as the southern tip of Greenland.

The chilly autumn before Talerman's forty-sixth Birthday reassured him that, at this time, God had very cold hands. Early in the moon of little spirits, he walked on the ice with confidence. He was headed from the fire tower in Ungava Bay to Pamiok Island. He did not know that the coast of Greenland was free of ice half way between the Eastern and Northern Settlement. Nor did he know the ice and water interface at the edge of the ice was always changing as the Eastern Greenland Current and the Labrador Current floated icebergs toward each other. The pack ice was not freezing enough to stop iceberg movement.

Without that knowledge Talerman hurried to Pamiok Island. There Styrk, Hallgrim, Tjalve and twelve other beaver-heads were more than ready to go home to the Northern Settlement. Talerman came off the ice after an extended daylong walk. So they stuffed Talerman into a sleeper robe and, without ceremony, pulled the three sleds onto the ice.

In Greenland the same moon was called the Christmas moon. The weather seemed cold in Greenland too. But while Paafa Ketil made his way from house to house to celebrate mass, he noticed that a large ring of the roof area around the fire holes of several houses had melted free of snow. Paafa Ketil thought, "Can the melting on the roofs be a signal that this winter will not be as cold as the past two years?"

By the time of the full Christmas moon, Iqquk had taught forty Norse men to build icehouses at the mouth of Ranga Fjord. He had taught four Norse men at a time how to build one icehouse. When the instruction was over, the ten icehouses were functional, but their shapes were nowhere as neat as Iqquk's personal icehouse.

The Norse men were slightly embarrassed to be taking lessons from a meat-eater. So they reacted to the outcome of their efforts in typical fashion. They made sly and humorous comments about each other's efforts, troubles, and finished icehouses. They agreed most of the icehouses looked like ice piles. In the Norse language "is" means "ice" and "lo" means "pile". So the comments went something like, "My islo is a Norse islo, it has a taller peak than anyone's." and "I had to make room for my whole family, that is why my islo is so wide and flat." To the Norse all icehouses became known as "islos."

Then the forty men each built another islo to train three more Norse men how to build ice houses. The primary purpose of building the islos was to insure that someone on each of sled knew how to make islos if it became necessary.

When the training was finished, there were fifty islos standing in groups of ten. Ten islos were assigned to each kirke and the first ten islos were used as common

storage, shelter for the sick, and places to receive the incoming beaver-heads from the west.

Paafa Thord assigned the islos to the kirkes according to the starting sequence. Talerman had asked that the Anavik kirke be last. Paafa Thord would go with Talerman. Paafa Thord decided Paafa Ketil's Amitsau praying house should go first because Paafa Ketil knew the plans and Styrk, the pathfinder, was the man to have up front.

The sakkyndigs of the other two praying houses played three games of chess to determine the placing. The three games turned into seven because of draws but every body agreed the contests took their minds away from just waiting around. The people of the Anda Kirke with Paafa Thorbjørn would go second. The people of the Sandnes Kirke of Paafa Snorre would go third.

Early in winter a written message with a Christmas homily from Bishop Arne had arrived by a sled team. Attached to the message was a request to the priests. Bishop Arne asked the priest of each kirke to carry the mask of the leading patron with him.<sup>1</sup> When the priests reached Merica, they were to hang the mask in the main shelter. Bishop Arne prayed that he would be able to collect all twelve masks in a few years. Then if the Lord allowed he would carry all the masks to Eastman Land.

Paafa Ketil and the people of his Amitsau praying house were now ready to go. Forty sleds with six people each would leave from the farmhouses surrounding the Amitsau praying house as soon as they received word that the beaver-heads were here.

Everything among his people had looked as good as he could expect. He was getting restless. So Paafa Ketil had arrived at the starting islos two sleeps ago. Then the problems started to come.

First was the man with his dogs. The man desperately wanted to go along to Merica. He would not be denied. Then came the new meat-eater people who made square houses like the Norse. There were three families totaling twenty-one people. They had heard of the walk to Merica. They had walked to Greenland from Merica years ago. They wanted to go back. They built their own islos. They took in the man with the dogs. At the moment, the new meat-eater people and the man were not causing problems, so Paafa Ketil and his sakkyndig decided to wait for Talerman who was expected, with the beaver-heads, from Merica. Paafa Ketil was patiently praying for them to arrive, right now!

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<sup>1</sup> Twelve masks



Talerman was one of the four pullers. The sun had shone for some time before it disappeared. The southern sky was getting darker again. The stars indicated his time to pull was nearly over. Soon they would stop for food.

Talerman sensed they should be close to Greenland. During the last sunny interval they knew that they were looking at the icecaps on Greenland. Talerman looked down to step over crumpled ice. When he looked up, he saw the firelight.

The firelight was south and east of them. They decided to not make an answering flame because making a fire would take too long. The hunters turned toward the light, and Styrk unwrapped the drum. He began to pound, “Thump, Thump, pause, Thump” and listen. Soon they heard a responding drum. They stopped the drumming and moved rapidly toward the firelight.

As they approached the light, a figure ran forward. The figure opened his arms wide and said, “Welcome home, father!” Talerman and Bjørn hugged briefly. Iqquk led the group through the darkness to the islo he and Bjørn had been sharing. Iqquk's wife had the seal broth boiling. Eating and conversation started. Ketil came through the entrance tunnel and popped up. The eating and conversation continued. As soon as he determined the plan was going well, Ketil slipped out to send runners to inform the people in their farmhouses.

The four priests and the four sakkyndigs had selected sixteen of the fastest walkers. These men were staying in the islos, four men from each kirke sharing one islo. When Paafa Ketil shouted, “Time to go!” beside the islos, the men crawled out of the entrance tunnels, adjusted their double furs, and strode away into the night. They had slightly less than a two-sleep walk to reach the nearest farmhouses and over three sleeps walk to reach the most remote farmhouses. The sleds from the near farmhouses would then take more than two sleeps to get back to the islos. When the sixteen men vanished into the night, Paafa Ketil returned to Iqquk's islo to listen to the stories around the boiling pot.

After the sleep Paafa Ketil was outside, waiting near Iqquk's islo, when Talerman came out for necessary things. A few minutes later Talerman walked up to Ketil and asked, “You wanted to see me?”



“Yes,” Paafa Ketil said, “We have some problems for you to handle.” He pointed to a cluster of men wearing meat-eater clothes standing beside their islos in the distance. Just then the sakkyndig for Paafa Ketil’s praying house came up to join them. Iqquk and Bjørn came out of the islo while small talk was exchanged among Talerman, Paafa Ketil and the sakkyndig. Then the group of five walked over to the meat-eaters.

Bjørn interpreted as the meat-eater spokesman said:

“About thirteen years ago when the weather was so very cold, we crossed from the west, hoping to find better hunting here. Our grandfathers who were Norse encouraged us to come. They thought the people here might have animals for meat. They said the people here would help us if we asked for help.

“Hunting was good here, but we think it was because the weather was warmer than normal for many years. Now our older men, including me, have observed the weather is growing colder again. Open water was hard to find last winter. We think the temperature this winter will also be cold. Last winter we asked the Norse people for meat, but they drove us away. Only the people that Iqquk knows would trade caribou meat for seal and walrus blubber. Now we want to go with you to Merica because you are going to where the water never freezes. There will be plenty of sea animals for all of us.”

Paafa Ketil, Talerman, the sakkyndig and Bjørn withdrew for consultation. Paafa Ketil expressed his concern, “I do not want to do anything to disturb our plan. We do not have much food to share. Things will be confused enough when we get to the shelters at the low walls without the meat-eaters crowding us.”

Talerman was more positive. He said:

They said nothing about sharing our food. They can hunt better on the ice than we can. They might be able to get extra food for us on the Frozen Trail. I do not think they even want to go to our shelters because they will have friends near by the open waters in Merica.

Talerman and the men discussed the issue for many minutes. Then they all nodded their heads and stepped back to the waiting meat-eater spokesman. Talerman spoke, with Bjørn translating:

After seven more sleeps, we will not be sending anyone onto the ice for another five more sleeps. During that time you may travel on the ice if you want. We ask that you stay away from our people. We will also stay away from you. At the end of the walk on the ice, we will find shelter near the low walls. We ask that you continue on to find shelter with your friends. You can hunt where the water never freezes if you do not interfere with us. You are good hunters on the ice. We request your assistance in getting extra food. We would be grateful. We have planned our food supply carefully, but if we can move faster than expected we may be able to share pemmican with you later in the travels.

There was no hint of emotion in the stoic face of the meat-eater spokesman. With only a nod, he returned to his people. The meat-eaters discussed the offer for a long time. Their spokesman returned to Talerman's group and said, "We will move onto the ice after eight sleeps from now. If we have extra meat on the way you will find it stacked inside small houses of ice blocks."

Iqquk commented "An offer, fair to all men, needs no bickering."

When the agreement was acknowledged, the group of five broke apart. Iqquk and Bjørn walked with the meat-eater spokesman back to his islos. The sakkyndig strode toward the Norse islos. Talerman felt a touch on his sleeve. He turned toward the direction Paafa Ketil was pointing to see Runolf standing between two furry dogs with backs as high as the tips of the mittens on Runolf's hands. The dog's small ears were standing upright, their mouths were held shut. Talerman thought the dogs looked like Ingjald's Norwegian Elkhound. They had the alert foursquare stance, the dark fur coats with the fairy marks behind the shoulders, and the furry tails curved up over the back. Yet there was a difference. Instead of the black facial fur he expected, Runolf's dogs had white fur on the inside of the pointed ears, around the eyes, around the nose, and all the way under the body to their very feet. Their bodies were longer, the necks higher, and they stood about a hand higher than a Norwegian Elkhound. Talerman was curious, but slightly wary, about the dogs as he walked up to Runolf to say, "Runolf, it is a surprise to see you here. There is a lot of land south of here in Greenland."

Runolf responded, "That land would be holding my body, if I had not left."

Talerman guessed, "You killed a man?"

Runolf looked away to the western horizon. Then he nodded, "He kicked my dog." Runolf touched the female dog near his right hand. "When she turned on him, he pulled out his knife. I should have been more careful. My knife went into his throat somehow."

Talerman guessed again, “Then you ran away?”

Runolf retorted:

No, the young pups were in a cage and I could not leave them. Friends of the man caught me at the cage and took me to the sakkyndig. After talking the situation over, the sakkyndig told the family and friends that they were allowed kill me after the second sunrise. The sakkyndig and the family thought I could not get far away especially without a boat. So I was allowed to go free to put my affairs in order. Then I took my dogs and ran. The sakkyndig and the family did not know how far a dog team could take a sled in a sleep. With this dog sled, we created a new meaning for fast ice.

Talerman looked at the sled. The sled was similar to the sleds the beaver-heads pulled, except it was much shorter. The sled had handles on the rear. The handles were high enough for Runolf to grab comfortably as he trotted along. But a man could not lie down to sleep in the sled. Talerman asked, “How do you get your rest with that sled?”

Runolf answered:

I do not. The dogs must rest too. Then I use the sled for one end of a shelter. I roll up on the ground in a double robe and pull the shelter robe over me. But we can cover about the same distance as four men pulling a sled all the time. I am asking to go with you. I can be a good messenger. I am one man self-sufficient and traveling fast.

Talerman considered the situation before he answered, “We had not thought we needed a messenger, but someone who can travel from the front of the sleds to tell those behind when we change plans might be useful. Still, you had promised me that you were going to stay far away from Arnora.”

“I surely intend to,” replied Runolf:

I have been listening. The people tell me you and Arnora will be sledding with the last kirke. I could go with the sleds of the first kirke. If what I have heard is correct, we should be about nine sleeps apart. That is almost the distance from here to the Eastern Settlement.

Talerman said, “Styrk and Paafa Ketil need to be part of this decision. Please tie your dogs and come with me to visit them.”

While Runolf was tying his two adult dogs, Talerman chose to ask, "I am curious, where did your dogs get the white markings and the larger bodies?"

Runolf answered:

I do not really know. The Scotsman, Vifill, brought a big mongrel bitch from Scotland. He said her white markings might have come from a breed of dog they call a beadle and, maybe, the larger size from a breed they call a blood hound, but he was not much of a dog man. All I know is that her pups which had the pointed ears and white markings could outfight, outrun, and outlast all of the other pups.

Talerman guessed again, "You bred her to an Elkhound?"

Runolf straightened up when his tying task was finished. He said:

Two different Elkhound sires. I kept the two best bitches from each litter and bred them to different Elkhound sires. The two adults I have now are the best of those litters and my six pups, four she-dogs and two males, are their pups. So, now I have two bloodlines from the original bitch.

Styrk was opposed to the idea of using Runolf as a messenger. Paafa Ketil, who had known Runolf as a young man, was more in favor. So the decision fell back to Talerman who finally decided in favor of Runolf based on his willingness to talk openly about embarrassing situations. Talerman told Runolf that he and his dogs should move out with the first eleven sleds from the Amitsau praying house. Styrk accepted the decision with reluctance, but told Runolf his place to walk would be slightly behind the utility sled so he would be available to deliver messages.

In the pale light three sleeps later, twelve sleds were aligned in front of the Amitsau islos. The sleds were loaded with pemmican weighing as much as two men. Many of the sleds carried extra pemmican. The men with the sleds had checked their bows, arrows, traps, lances, and harpoons. They had added the hunting tools above the pemmican near the sides of the sleds where they could be reached quickly.

Caribou robes were stacked on top of the pemmican in each sled, and arranged so that two people with their feet overlapping could lay on the sled.

In the dawn to the east, several of the arriving seventy sleds were visible as they moved toward the islos. At the departure point the people on the ice became

strangely still with only Paafa Ketil slowly walking from sled to sled checking preparations.

As the sun moved toward the high spot in the sky, Talerman, Styrk and the other beaver-heads emerged from their islos. They walked along the sled row to talk briefly with the twenty-one men, twenty-two women, nine young boys, eight young girls, and three babies that would be traveling in the first set of ten sleds. Styrk, Paafa Ketil, and Halldis would be pulling the utility sled. Their sons were in the harness of a sled where their grandmother Gudrid was lying between the robes. Gudrid had protested about going because she was too old and because Eyolf had another woman taking care of him in Merica. Styrk finally convinced Gudrid that Eyolf's deep desire to be near her had made the first crossing of the Frozen Trail a reality. Because of that desire, this crossing was possible for her. Styrk knew Eyolf would never forgive him if they left her behind.

Runolf, who was shivering, stood off to the side with his two large dogs in the harness of the sled and the six smaller dogs in collars. He had bartered away his knife, his two cloak clasps, and good fur clothing for pemmican for his dogs.

In the center of the ten sleds Talerman gathered the men around him and checked their preparations. Yes, they had three men, besides Styrk, who could read the Kimal but they had only one Kimal between them. Styrk would wear it. Yes, they knew the position of the stars to tell them when to rotate sleeping and walking. Yes, they had men selected to count paces. Yes, they had men selected to be hunters if pulling was easy. Yes, they knew what to look for when hunting seal on the ice. Yes, they knew to back up immediately if water began to come onto the ice. Thin ice made of seawater sinks under too much weight. So backing up was the best way out. Yes, they knew where the guiding fires should be seen as they approached Merica. Yes, they knew there were food reserves on the three islands with the fires. Yes, they knew the food was to be used only in a desperate situation. Yes, they knew to sit tight during thick fog. Yes, they knew how to keep a line of travel in mist, light fog, and snow. Yes, they knew what the landfalls would be like.

Finally, Talerman turned to Styrk and asked, "What have I forgotten to ask or say?"

Styrk said, "I think it is time to step aside and say good luck."

Paafa Ketil stepped in front of Talerman, raised his hand to secure the silence of all, and then said with a firm strong voice, "The prayer book says, 'Who is this that comes, ... traveling in the greatness of his strength? I, that speak in

righteousness, mighty to save.”<sup>2</sup> Then Paafa Ketil raised his right hand to close with a benediction “God be with you until we meet again.”

The people of the sleds did not say any more. Then the sleepers slid between the robes and tucked themselves in tightly. The forty-three pullers picked up their harness. When all lines were taut, Styrk leaned into his harness and stepped off. Twelve sleds moved forward with the sun slightly forward of their left shoulder. Nobody looked back.

After the first set of sleds were moving westward, the second set of Amitsau sleds formed up with a lead beaver-head and two men pulling the utility sled. The sun had already slipped below the horizon when the stars indicated the time for the second set of sleds to move out. Although it was nighttime the sky was not totally dark. When the eyes became adapted, the pullers could see well enough to walk with no problem.

When the stars indicated another watch had passed, the third set of sleds departed. Sigrid and her men set the pace for that group of sleds. Her nearest neighbors kept their ten sleds closely spaced as if they were afraid of losing their direction in the darkness. When the stars showed the middle of the night, the remainder of the Amitsau praying house went into motion on the ice.

After the sleds were out of sight, Talerman, Paafa Thord, Bjørn, and Iqquk returned to Iqquk’s islo for seal meat. Around the boiling pot they agreed the first set of sleds had started well. They talked of the slight improvements in things to say or do tomorrow. Then Talerman, Bjørn and Paafa Thord slipped into their islos for a long sleep.

There was a twelve-hour intermission in departures as the people of the Anda Kirke began to assemble. Bjørn and Iqquk left for the remote farm. When the sun reached the high point, Paafa Thorbjørn and two other beaver-heads started moving the utility sled for the first ten sleds of the Anda Kirke. A ragged line of ten sleds followed. By midnight of the second sleep, all of the people of the Anda kirke were walking westward. Vifill, the Scot, helped to pull the utility sled in the last group. Talerman had asked Vifill to remain behind at the low walls to supervise the clean up and to guide the next set of sleds into the shelters.

Then there was a lull at the departing islos. For five sleeps after the word came to them, the people of the farmhouses of the Sandnes and Anavik Kirkes maintained nearly normal routines of eating and sleeping. There were some

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<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 63:1

exceptions. Before this year, eating of healthy dairy cattle was in direct violation of Greenland tradition, which restricted the slaughter of producing cows. But now in most households, the milking dairy cattle were quickly slaughtered. The Merica style of feasting before walking was practiced. The meat not eaten during those feasts was frozen and laid into the sleds to be eaten first on the trail. The people of the Northern Settlement ate themselves out of the dairy business, leaving only the useless hooves of the cattle scattered on the floor.

The in-laws of Tjalve's wife had the largest surviving dairy herd. Within hours of hearing the word from the islos, they butchered the bull. They invited Tjalve, Thorgerd, and the fifteen hungry children to the feast. Every day for the four following sleeps, they killed the remaining cows and everyone feasted. Five sets of hoofs were left behind in the butchering room.

For the next five sleeps Talerman and Paafa Thord were occupied by every little detail that people believe only leaders can solve. Meanwhile the 'new' meat-eaters had formed up in a line of widely spaced walkers and, they were already out of sight on the ice. During the daylight after the sleep when the meat-eaters left, Talerman and Paafa Thord talked to the first arrivals of the Sandnes and Anavik kirkes. As the sun was going down, Talerman and Paafa Thord were walking back to their islos when Talerman noticed a fast-moving sled, coming down the ice on Ranga Fjord. He thought it looked familiar. Then he realized he was looking at the shapes of Bjørn and Iqquk. Beside Bjørn was Arnora. Beside Iqquk was a shape he could not recognize. He saw Bjørn wave, so he turned and walked toward them. He was a little miffed. They did not need to arrive until three more sleeps.

When they reached shouting distance, he shouted, "What are you doing here?" Arnora shouted back, "Bjørn wants to talk to you."

The distance was closing so Talerman said loudly, "What for? He was talking to me before he went home. Why didn't you stay until the right time."

Bjørn answered loudly, "Father, I lacked the courage to tell you before. I must tell you now. I want to take Kuptana with me."

Bjarni and the sled came even closer together, he said, "Who is Kuptana? That sounds like a meat-eater name."

Bjørn said, "It is father. Kuptana is Iqquk's daughter."

Bjarni stopped and stood still as the sled continued to close the distance. He stammered, "You, you, are still so young. How old is Kuptana?"

Arnora said:

She has seen thirteen summers. But her going with us does not mean they are getting married. Iqquk thinks this land will see many more cold years. He wants Kuptana to live in a better place.

Iqquk nodded his head as if he understood.

Bjarni stared at Bjørn in disbelief. He said, "You are encouraging this. You know full well the thing you are talking about is as serious as accepting marriage sometime in the future."

Bjørn answered:

Yes, Father, I know. But while you were away Kuptana has become like a member of our family. Mother likes her. Yngvild likes her. Mother says, by the way I behave, I love her. I think I do, because if you do not let her go, I plan to stay on the remote farm. Mother says I can.

Bjarni turned to glare at Arnora. Even though they now formed a conversation circle, he shouted, "Arnora, what have you done? Those are decisions for men to make."

Arnora smiled and said:

Yes, Bjarni they are decisions you must make. But letting Bjørn stay behind is one valid option. The remote farm has kept four generations of your family alive. Bjørn can hunt even better than you could at his age. Another option is letting Kuptana walk to Merica with us and seeing if young love survives. There may be other options.

Bjarni looked around the faces. He saw Arnora with a sly smile, Bjørn with an earnest, almost defiant face, and Iqquk with his wife who had stoic masks for faces. He thought for awhile then he said, "Since you have come this far, let us walk on to the islos. Arnora, I want to talk with you first. Then, Iqquk, you and I will visit in an empty islo with Bjørn doing the interpreting."

As they separated the harness lines, Bjørn looked at his mother's face. She winked. He swung into the harness with spring in his stride. Under the covers of the sled, Yngvild felt the sled move forward at a jouncing pace. She had not heard a screaming "No!" from her father. Yngvild had inherited her mother's intuition. She squeezed Kuptana's legs tightly. Kuptana giggled.





On the last evening before leaving, the families in the big farmhouse near the Sandnes kirke had their final, most delicious meal.<sup>3</sup>~ As in many farmhouses, a first born calf was sacrificed along with the sacrificial lamb as mentioned in the praying book. For the first born calf, Paafa Snorre recited “Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your increase so shall your barns be filled with plenty.”<sup>4</sup>

For the sacrificial lamb Paafa Snorre found the proper phrase from the praying book to be, “Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.”<sup>5</sup> He repeated those two phrases in seven different homes that night.

In the pale sky of the approaching dawn, a tired but strangely awake Paafa Snorre tried to sleep. But sleep did not come. Paafa Snorre lay there wondering if anyone else in the world would ever know that a thousand people chose of their own free will to walk across the ice toward the Indrawing Sea. He thought other people might never hear from the people of the Northern Settlement again. He sat up and lit one of the precious altar candles from the flame of the seal oil lamp. He found his writing quill. He melted the ink and added a little more water. He found a small piece of parchment and smoothed it out on the altar table. Then he carefully printed a short message in Latin.

Tjalve hailed Paafa Snorre from the door of the kirke. Paafa Snorre blew out the seal oil lamp. He carefully placed the inkstand on one corner of the parchment, the quill across the other corner, and the candle at the top. He blew out the candle.

Paafa Snorre, Thorgerd, Tjalve, the two eldest sons of Tjalve’s wife, and the girl who had been tickled pulled one sled. The remaining twelve children were divided into four sled teams where three adults made it possible that two adults would be in the harness all the time.

In the large farmhouse doorway of Thorgerd’s in-laws, the old man watched all of the children depart by sled. Only the sled with his wife, his two sons, and their

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<sup>3</sup> Last supper

<sup>4</sup> Proverbs 3:9

<sup>5</sup> Revelation 5:12

wives had stayed behind. The two sons responded to the old man's wave. They walked back inside the house with their lips pressed firmly together.

When they returned to the sled, the old man laid a bundle of meat at his end of the sled and lay down in the robes with his wife. The young sons joined their wives in the harnesses and pulled the sled away. The old man was relieved for the darkness beneath the robes because he could feel the moisture of the tears around his eyes. Although he had prepared himself for weeks, killing the faithful Elkhound was sadder than he thought it would be.

After the acute sadness receded, the old man began to reflect on the deeds of the day. In a way the events had been a blessing. Forever after, he told his grandchildren that those deeds made it possible for him to never desire to go back to his old farmhouse.

At the islos two experienced beaver-heads replaced Tjalve and Paafa Snorre on Thorgerd's sled. Tjalve and Paafa Snorre and Hallgrim pulled the utility sled. When the first ten sleds of the Sandnes kirke moved away from the islos, the five sleds from the orphan house were grouped on the far right end. As they walked Tjalve and the other pullers of the utility sled checked on the children often.

The second and third sets of sleds from the Sandnes Kirke left the islos at their appointed times with Arnora's father and mother in the second set of sleds. He had hidden the lump of coal and the arrowhead beneath the floor of his house. He was still secretly hoping that he might someday return. The last set of sleds from the Sandnes Kirke slid onto the ice in the darkest moments of the night. Gard and two other beaver heads pulled the utility sled for the last set of sleds. Gard had received from the poor side of life for so long that he accepted his role, which was being with the rear set of sleds going into darkness, as normal.

Ingjald, Thjodhild, and their children had arrived with the second sled from the remote farm while the Sandnes kirke was leaving. Ingolf, his wife, and his in-laws also came with three sleds from their house. Most of the people of the Anavik kirke stayed overnight in the islos for one final sleep.

With Ingolf, Ingjald and an experienced beaver-head pulling the utility sled, the first ten sleds of the Anavik kirke left at noon as planned.

Talerman's neighbor on the peninsula with the remote farm was one of the pullers of the utility sled for the second group. The second set of sleds left at their appointed time with an eagerness to avoid being left behind.

The pullers of the third set of sleds and their beaver-heads were from Agna Fjord, the second most remote fjord in the Northern Settlement. They had their gear together and were in harness, ready to go, long before their time. The

beaver-heads on the utility sled shouted to Talerman, "Let us start moving, we will walk slow."

Given their desire to move, Talerman thought the pace would not be slow. Never the less, he turned his back on the stars indicating the start time. After a few more conversational exchanges with the sled pullers, Talerman stretched his arms, yawned, and said, "It must be time to go now." The sleds were on their way, pulled by men setting a brisk pace, before he could reconsider.

All that remained was to assemble the last group of ten sleds from near the Anavik kirke. Talerman, Paafa Thord and Arnora would pull the utility sled. Iqquk and his wife came up to Talerman. They had been checking the vacated islos for things. They were pulling a sled full of good pemmican, a few bows, several arrows, three sets of mittens, and one boot. In Iqquk's islo they had already stashed five stone boiling pots, too heavy to carry, eight seal oil lamps, unused seal oil and blubber pieces, many pieces of wood, and other items. Talerman distributed a little of pemmican among the sleds and left the rest for Iqquk. He took the arrows and the mittens, putting them in the utility sled. The rest of the items he gave back to Iqquk. Then he reached under his own parka skirt and pulled out a metal knife that his father Magnus had often carried. He told Iqquk the story of the knife. This was the knife his great grandfather had used it to knock on the remote farm door long, long ago. He told Iqquk that he and his wife could continue to live and die on the remote farm. He extended the knife to Iqquk who bowed his head as he took the gift.

Talerman and Paafa Thord gave the same briefing that they had given fifteen times before. The pullers returned to their sleds. Talerman counted and said to Paafa Thord, "There are only nine sleds. I thought you said there would be ten sleds?"

Paafa Thord turned to count the sleds himself. He said:

There are supposed to be ten sleds. Who is missing? Oh, no. I should have known. The Ormsson sled is not here.

The men turned toward the east to look through the darkness of night for anything on the ice in Ranga Fjord. Iqquk said, "I see movement there." He was pointing near the north shore. No other sleds had used that route. Talerman, Paafa Thord, and Iqquk decided to go look. They took the utility sled. Arnora thought it better to stay in the harness and to go also rather than stand alone in the cold.

The time for the last sleds to leave the Northern Settlement was fast approaching when the utility sled came up to the Ormsson sled.

The reason for the delay was immediately obvious. The runners of the sled were made of bones lashed together. The runners had bowed outward in the center of the sled and then the lashing divided. The sagging load and jagged runners tearing into the ice effectively slowed the sled.

Iqquk surveyed the situation and said in broken Norse, "Can fix. Maybe sunrise. Need fire."

Talerman pulled items from the utility sled saying, "We have seal oil, fire starting tinder, and a spark striker, also new lashing strings."

Paafa Thord asked, "Do we hold the other sleds?"

Talerman looked at the Ormsson crew. The crew was Valthjof, an old white haired man who walked with a foot he had to slide along, a pale faced underdressed boy, Grimhild with Eyvind, and Thurid obviously heavy with child. Talerman responded, "Valthjof needs four strong pullers. We need time to fix the sled. Take the man and the boy with you. Place them with sleds having five strong pullers. Find more clothes for the boy. Ask four strong pullers, all men, to come back here to help. Then start the rest of the sleds and come back with the men."

The last set of nine sleds left the islos about a half a watch later than planned. Four of the sleds were slowed by the loss of their strongest pullers. Two of those sleds were handicapped further because of the boy and the old man. So the entire group of nine sleds moved more slowly than the sleds far ahead of them in the darkness.

The original load in Ormsson's sled was more than twice as much than the sled crew needed. All of the pemmican was stacked on the ice. As he piled on the last parcel of pemmican from the sled, Iqquk said, "No good. Poor fish."

While the Ormsson sled was being fixed, Arnora talked with Thurid and determined that she might be able to walk a little, but she should not pull. Grimhild confided to Arnora that Thurid's child was from their father. Her father could not wait until Grimhild was willing to have sex again. Thurid's resolve had not been as strong as Grimhild's. Arnora insisted that Thurid was so close to birth that she should ride in the utility sled so Arnora would be nearby when the time was ripe.

The sun was above the horizon half way to the highest point in the sky, before the utility sled and Ormsson's sled left the Northern Settlement. They had wisely left the pile of poisonous pemmican on the ice and taken half of the pile given to Iqquk. Valthjof was in the pulling harness with three of the strong pullers. Grimhild, her child Eyvind, and an old married man who had many grown

children were paired as sleepers. Throughout the rest of the trip Grimhild would never have to be in the sled with her father. When both were in the pulling harness, they walked in the outside harnesses with two men between.

As they moved past the islos, Talerman and Arnora were pulling the utility sled with Paafa Thord and Thurid under the robes. The sun briefly warmed the cold air. Arnora threw back her hood. Glancing at Bjarni she strode an exhilarated mood and with a lightness of foot. Even if they were coupled to the most powerful priest in the Northern Settlement and were pulling a sled with a child carrying a child, she realized they were beginning another new life together. During the next moon's time they would be walking on the stone hard water above the great tidal sea, and then over the humped ice to a new land.





## Vignette twenty

## SLIPPERY WATER

Gee Hiz had climbed to his highest. The last of the falling leaves lay on the ground. Azon was resting, nearly asleep, against the bank near the waterway when Pitolo came swinging his crutch along the path.

Early in the previous evening, Azon had told the people in the Big House the story about the powwow in the land to the east fooling the bigger, more arrogant powwow. Early this morning, Pitolo had told them about their ancestors leaving home. Both Azon and Pitolo had stayed at the Big House ceremony until nearly dawn. The telling of the quests had been repetitive and boring. Azon was so tired he could feel it in his body, and he expected Pitolo to be tired too. Pitolo's first words proved that. Pitolo said, "Ah Azon, here we are. Faced with another long day with the living dead and the dead living. I enjoy these Big House ceremonies a lot less than when I was a child."

While Pitolo was hopping across the waterway, Azon said,

I thought you were enjoying the story you told last night. Honestly, I think you behaved just like Talerman must have. I especially enjoyed how you described the Talerman and Bjørn showdown. Many of the older gray-haired people really paid attention.

Pitolo stopped near Azon and retorted, "Well, they should have. All of them have black eyes which tells me their ancestor mothers might have come from somewhere other than the original blue-eyed Leni Lenape. If I am hearing Maalan Aarum's stories correctly, you and I may even have meat-eater blood in our bodies.

Azon replied, "I have been thinking about that too, but the stories are not over. We call ourselves Leni Lenape, meaning pure men from a decent place. So we must be pure."

Pitolo shook his head and said,

"I prefer to use the 'decent' meaning for 'Leni'. I looked every one directly in the eye last night. I saw five sets of blue eyes and two sets of slightly green, but I do not believe those people were any more pure than you or I. I think we are all decent people.

"Speaking of decent, I listened closely as you told about the decent island and fjord in the land to the east. You were careful to say, slowly and distinctly, "Hrein-aa-byy".

But during the breaks many people came up to ask me if there was really a place named "Lenape" in the land to the east?"

Azon smiled and said, "Many people asked me the same question. I told them that there was still a decent place in the land to the east because the ancient ancestors named it 'decent' seven grandfathers ago. Then I told them that our old ancestors thought this land was better than the decent land, so they all migrated here."

Pitolo studied Azon intensely. He said, "Azon, when we first met I was impressed by your thinking. Now, we seem to be thinking alike. If so, that is a good sign for me."

Azon asked, "I wonder if you thought grandfather was giving us the words at the end of the story again?"

Pitolo started toward the first step. He turned and said:

Sure he was, 'On the stone hard water above the great tidal sea. Over the humped pack ice.' He wanted to be sure we told about a great tidal sea. We have not seen any tidal seas. He wanted us to know about pressure ridges in packed ice, whatever that they are. A frozen sea with pressure ridges rising higher than a man must be gigantic. So, what did you compose?

Lifting Pitolo at the correct times, Azon said, "Four praying houses went west, sliding on the stone hard water, on the great tidal sea, over the puckered pack ice."

Pitolo stopped half way up the steps. Turning to look down on Azon, Pitolo said:

"We are beginning to think alike. You are getting better at finding the important stones. My version is, 'On the wonderful slippery water, On the stone hard water, all went, on the great tidal sea, over the puckered pack ice.'"

"I think Maalan Aarum wants people to be impressed by how hard the pack ice was, how it piled up, and how important the tidal sea was. The sixteen sets of sleds or the four praying houses are minor details, even if he took a long time telling about them."

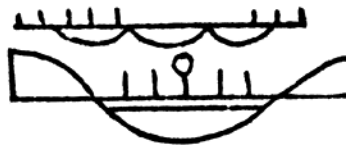


Azon waved for Pitolo to go onward up the steps. Three maidens were waiting at the top. When Pitolo and Azon reached the top, they stood aside for the maidens to pass, Azon said, "Let me see your engraving for today."

Pitolo held out the bark and said:

"I really think Maalan Aarum is losing touch with reality. We know how to draw the ice over the sea, but how do we show the darkness, always darkness, and three moon's passage of time in a simple engraving? Then he wants us to show that three people died and five were born during the crossing. Finally he wants us show the people going into five major shelter areas. I had a tough time. I have drawn the ice and the sea. I show three moons. I stacked up three heads with "x" on them on the "from" side and five small heads on the "to" side. Finally, I resorted to five sticks and heads to be the shelter areas. I have a cluttered engraving. Let me see yours."

Azon held out his engraving.



Azon explained:

I have included the sea and ice engraving. Over head is a solid line to represent "Always darkness." The three loops hanging below the line represent the three moon's time for passing over the ice. The five short lines on the left above the line shows the births. The three short lines on the right shows the deaths. The five lines above the ice with one head indicate the five shelter areas.

Pitolo studied the engraving and said, "We make it easy for Maalan Aarum's decisions. He will take my verse and your engraving again. Why did you show the births on the left?"

Azon said, "Because those born came from the land left behind. The marks for the dead on the right show that they went 'to' their final resting place."

Pitolo asked again, "What about the single circle without the hair spike? What does that mean?"

Azon replied, "That represents the head man, Talerman, telling the people to go to five different camps."

Pitolo shook his head in amazement and said:

It seems so simple when you do it. Those maidens that just passed us, reminded me of something I want to talk about. Our villages will soon be going in different directions. We may never see each other again.

Azon asked with a mocking voice:

What? The maidens remind you that we are going to separate. Do you have me confused with my sister? She sat next to you all last night.

Pitolo avoided looking at Azon. He said, "Uh, well, uh, have you thought about how you will find a maiden as pleasant as the quiet maiden when the Big House celebration is over."

Azon smiled broadly. He said, "Yes, I have. It is a good thing I am still a growing boy. I did what growing boys do. I asked my mother about it."

Pitolo's face showed his concern. He replied, "Your mother! -- Uh, what did she say?"

Azon answered:

She said my eldest sister has already learned everything that mother can teach her. Mother has talked to the mother of the quiet maiden who says the same thing about her. This morning my sister, Mother, and father went over to talk with the parents of the quiet maiden. Mother thinks an exchange might benefit both maidens and families.

Pitolo retorted swiftly, "If that happens we will be in the same predicament that Bjørn was."

Azon said, "I know, but Bjørn did not think it was a predicament."

Pitolo paused to think. He studied the north village where the exchange meeting might have already taken place. Then he thought he caught a glimpse of movement along the path. He waited until the figures escaped the visual obstruction caused by the trees. Then he saw them clearly. They were two

maidens running swiftly down the path leading directly to Azon and him. He turned toward Azon, smiled slightly, and said softly, "Nor do I."

After the good news about the impending exchange had been shared, Pitolo glanced at Gee Hiz who had already started to descend. He said, "We can talk more about the plans tonight. We are late again so let us go hear Maalan Aarum's story for today."

Azon's grandfather was asleep on his side with his knees up toward the tepee wall. Azon touched his shoulder. Slowly grandfather's legs stretched out and he rolled onto his back. Grandfather tried to rise by pushing down on his elbows and then fell back. He tried again and Azon lifted the shoulders, pulling grandfather to a sitting position with his back against the backrest. Pitolo brought the dipper of water. Grandfather took several sips and put the dipper carefully within reach. Silently he extended a hand, indicating he wanted to see the engravings.

Pitolo was correct. The decisions were easy for Maalan Aarum. Maalan Aarum's voice slowly came back. After a few more sips of water, he was ready to start the story. Azon and Pitolo found places to sit.

Maalan Aarum said, "Let me tell you, boys. It was a mob of people, really a mob. Think of taking our two villages and adding eight more. Then shoving all of us out on the ice to walk across Michigamme at the same time. This story stretches even my belief, but it must have happened.



**Engraved Stick 3:17**

On the wonderful slippery water,  
On the stone hard water, all went  
On the great tidal sea,  
Over the puckered pack ice.



## FACTUAL FICTION

## LAST SUPPER

"The hooves of these five beasts (cows) were scattered among food remains on the lower layer of one room . . . The larder contained the bones of a lamb, a new born calf, and the skull of a large, elkhound like hunting dog." (Brian Fagan, 2000) **(Return to Last Supper place.)**

## TWELVE MASKS

The decision of twelve praying houses in Greenland to migrate conforms to the Lenape tradition of twelve tribes represented by the twelve masks in the Big House. (Bleeker, 1953) **(Return to Twelve masks place.)**

## WORD MEANING

"Kuptana" is the name of an Eskimo woman.