

Braaf, though, noticed an absence. The gulls which hung in curiosity beside them in the island waters and the early distance offshore from Dall were vanished. He discovered too that the air felt different, more tooth in it, and that off to the west a particular splotch of weather resembled neither fog nor rain.

Braaf ^{leaned ahead} turned his head enough to pass ^{the news} softly over ^{Melander's} his shoulder, to Melander, as if it were their secret: "Snow."

"Jesu Maria," Melander said back.

———
The squall hit them first with wind. Gust tagged closely onto gust, taking the canoe at an angle from the southwest.

Melander watched the surface of Kaigani intently, and what he dreaded sprung to creation. Wind streaks on the water, long ropey crawlers of white. "Neptune's snakes," Melander knew them as from his shipboard years, and knew too that they are the spawn of a thirty-knot gale.

———
"Melander!" Karlsson called forward. "We need be steadier with the paddles. That slap the Kolosh do, let's try. . ."

"Be the drum ~~handy~~ lad," Melander agreed instantly. "Braaf, Wennberg, listen sharp. . ."

Karlsson began as the next wave struck the canoe, quivered it. He paddled twice, deep strokes; then rapped his paddle against the side of the canoe, just below the gunwale.

The craft meanwhile mounted the roll of water, another hummock waited to slide under the hull, when it came, again Karlsson's double stroke and rap to signal pause.

The other three took the rhythm and the canoe steadied its pace, two ^{strong} climbing strokes up each wave, the tap of waiting, then next wave and same again.

———

The sky began to fleck, snowflakes like tiny gulls riding down the wind which now steadied into a constant whirl past the canoemen's ears. Melander looked away from his compass only to monitor the stroking of his crew and to glance at the angle of the swells to the canoe. The compass could not be wrong, daren't be, yet there was constant urge to check it against the evidence of his eyes...

———

Water was finding its way ^{over the gunwales} into the canoe. Melander needed rapid



decision. Still struggling against sea-sickness, Wennberg was erratic at the paddle. But if he lowered his head to bail, he would be sicker yet. So--"Braaf, you'll need to shovel water, and quick..."

Three motions fought in the water now: the broad sloshing advance of the waves themselves; the lizardy wrinkle of their texture; and the gale ripple skipping ahead. At odds with all these and with the wind-spun snow as well, the canoe's progress fell to a kind of embarrassed wallow, as when a good steed is forced to slog through mire.

Working the bailer, a cedar scoop which coupled over his hand like a hollowed-out hoof, Braaf pawed seawater from the canoe's bottom.

41 Karlsson gritted against ~~bowspray~~^{spray} and snow and tried to hold in mind nothing but the ~~pace of paddle,~~^{pulse stroke stroke slap, stroke stroke slap.} But he somehow ~~in front of~~^{behind him.} "Oh God who watches over fools and babes," Wennberg implored. "What am I doing in this pisspot of a canoe?"

Like a prophet promising ~~geyers~~^s of honey just there beyond shovel point, Melander preached steadily to his straining crew now..."We're straddling it, Karlsson. No water is wide as forever..." Karlsson's face could have ~~served as~~^{been mounted forward as} figurehead for the craft, if imagination permits that a Kolosh canoe would breast the sea with a ~~Skane~~^{Smaland} parson's profile at its front. Everything, each fiber, of Karlsson was set to

the twin grips of his hands on the paddle, the portioning-out of effort. In the Sahara, this human implement automatically would have begun the slog that stride on stride had to add up into the route to oasis. Loose him up the Eiger, foothold-handhold-foothold-handhold would ensue until further elevation could not present itself.

So If stone profile and millwork arms could grind a way across Kaigani, it to be done... Karlsson meant to do it...Melander: "Dig that paddle, Wennberg. You're strong as wake ale bran wine now." (Melander within: May he not go ill on us again, this lumpy water is no place for a cripple in the crew...) But Wennberg yet tussled with a hive of woes. The tipping wave surface was bad enough, and the unending exertion, and the over-the-side-of-the-world absence of land or even horizon. Worst of all, the nausea which hid so sly within him, re-ambushing whenever he thought ^{the bile} it might have receded. The blacksmith felt weaker than he could ever remember, listless, yet this uphill labor of paddling demanded and demanded of him. Wennberg too fell into a machined rhythm, jab-lift-pull back-jab, wait, do-it-again, but out of a different drivewheel than Karlsson's. Overswarmed with doom and unhealth, Wennberg could think of no way to struggle back but to move his arms, which happened to have a flat-faced rod of wood at their end...Melander: "Braaf, can you find it in your heart to stroke along with the rest of us?" (Melander within: May the canoe dance as lightly on these waves as it has been. If just they don't rise...) Among the larger men Braaf sat small and hunched with caution. He was the one of the four of them most in place in this situation, for at basis, this crossing

of Kaigani Strait constituted an act of theft. Of stealing survival from a hazard which held every intention of denying it to you. Afloat, you exist in balance between unthinkable distances. Above, the sky and the down-push of all its vastnesses. Under, the thickness of ocean with its queer unruly upward law of gravity, buoyancy. In time the greater deep, that of sky, must win this pushing contest in which you are the flake of contention, and you will go down. The game is to scamper landward before this obliteration can happen. None of this could Braaf have declaimed aloud--just as there never was a philosopher who could pocket another man's snuffbox with no itch of conscience--yet Braaf understood the proposition of Kaigani profoundly: it had to do with dodging life's odds, like all else. Braaf, then, did not stroke mechanically in Karlsson's way, nor try to fend strenuously as Wennberg did. Braaf poked his paddle to the water as if using a stick to discourage a very big dog...Melander: "Neck or nothing, now. Pull...pull...pull..." (Melander within: May this storm hold to the compass where it is. But oh God if ~~it~~ ^{the bastard} shifts, shoves us east into the miles of Hecate...) So the matter, like most of this coast's matters, came down to perseverance. While Melander ^{urged,} regulated, Wennberg ^{was grunting} grunted dismally and Braaf once in a while ^{shirking,} shirked, out of sheer habit when he wasn't reminding himself otherwise, and at the ^{stern} bow Karlsson ^{staying} stayed a human piston: all of them trying to put from mind the numbing of their knees and the deepening ache of their arms, ^{and shoulders,} and across Kaigani Strait the canoe striving steadily southeast, a ^{dark} black sharp-snouted creature stretched low against the gray

wavescape, four broad-hoofed legs striking and striking at the water, running on the sea.

—————
 Melander ~~came~~^{broke} awake on the tamest of terrain. ~~Not a sea-cliff~~^{# Anywhere in sight,}
 nor boulder nor so much as a fist-sized stone, ~~anywhere in sight.~~
 # beach of sand, all tan satin. Waves did not pound at the tideline,
 simply teased it, shying tiny clouds of spume along the water edge
 and then lapping away.

The canoe had taken shore here in the dark, Swedes having prevailed--barely--over storm in the wrestle that went on all day and across dusk and into the first of night. At last dragging their craft onto whatever this place was, the four men groped together ^{the} a shelter of sailcloth and collapsed to sleep, ~~now~~^{to find}, by this morning's evidence, that Kaigani had flung them through the customary coastal geography to an opposite order of matters: everything flat, discreet, lullful.

No, not everything meek. It registered now on Melander that the treetops spearing up through mist just to the west of him stood twice the height it was conceivable for trees to stand.

"Are we on the same ocean as last night?" Karlsson was at his elbow.
 # "Mother's
 # "Maiden's milk this morning, isn't it?" agreed Melander. "Ever see trees to that height, up to the clouds like steeples?"

Karlsson shook his head.

"Nor I. Has to be a rise of land in that fog. We ought to have a look there, aye? Wake Braaf enough to tell him, will you, so he and Wennberg won't think we've gone yachting off without them."

The tall man and the slim one pushed the canoe into the placid tidewater, turned their ~~ark~~^{row} toward the middle-air ~~mix~~^{meld} of mist and timber. They found that they were crossing the mouth of a river, a sixty-foot width of black water so dense and slow it seemed more solid than the beach and forest on either side of it. Lacquered and beautiful, this surprise ebony river, and along its surface small circlets of foam spun like ghostly anemones.

On the river's far side a gray-black rim of rock showed itself, over the waterline and just under the bank of mist. Rapidly this dour rim bent outward into a point, of no height to speak of but too sharp-sided to land the canoe.

"On around," Melander decreed, and they began to skirt the protrusion.

Karlsson glanced inland, drew his paddle into the canoe, and pointed upward. ~~The~~[#] fog was lifting from the forest and abruptly, half a small mountain stepped into view: a startling humped cliff as if one of the cannonball peaks around Sitka had been sawed in half from its summit downward. This very top, start of the astonishing sunder, the pair of men could see only by putting their heads back as far as they could. They might have been peering through the dust of eons rather than the morning's last waft of sea-mist. On the sheerness, clumps of long grass somehow had rooted here and there atop basalt columns;

together with moss growth, these tufts made the cliff face seem greatly age-spotted, Methuselan. ⁴ As the men gaped up, two bald eagles swept soundlessly across the orb of stone.

Around the point Melander and Karlsson pulled the canoe to security and clambered onto the flow of black rock beneath the cliff for a fuller look.

"God's bones, what a place," Melander murmured.

The point had been convulsed into hummocks and parapets, pitted with holes as if having come under siege from small cannon, strewn with a tumble of black boulders the size of oxcarts, and finally riven with tidal troughs. ⁴ As Melander and Karlsson stood gawking, surf blasted up from a blowhole behind them. A mocking geyser of white bowed toward them as they whirled to the commotion.

"Aye, well. At least we know what's hung those trees into the middle of the air." Atop the dome of cliff over them, tall ^{evergreens} ~~firs~~ poked forth like feathers in a war bonnet. "I had better find a way up there, ^{I had,} and see if I can place us on the map. If any Kolosh show up, trade Wennberg to them for a haunch of beef, aye?"

Melander long-gaited off around the base of the cliff. Staying in range of where they had landed the canoe, Karlsson passed time by exploring into the start of the stand of forest between half-mountain and river. He was beside the ^b ~~hole~~ of a particularly huge hemlock when a fat bead of water ticked his right wrist.

In surprise, Karlsson tipped his head until he was peering

straight up. He saw another water bead detach from a limb eighty feet above him and drop like a slow tiny jewel, giving him time to step aside before it struck. # Another, another. # Karlsson stepped, stepped again. # Like strange slowed-down rain the droplets descended two, three to the minute. The forest trees had become sharp green clouds, Karlsson upturned to them as a sunflower will seek the sun, the leisured freshet the pulse of attraction between them. Drop and drop and drop, Karlsson evaded lithely, stepping back and forth around the gnath of the tree, face up like a drunk man at the gate of God. As coal is said to concentrate to diamond, the coastal world of water spun tiny in these falling crystals: the flicker of a mountain stream trying to leap from itself, the white veils of spray brushing back from the Pacific's wave-brows, the quick thin lakes strewn by a half-day rain, all here now flying down in sparkle. The moment bathed Karlsson. His mind went free, vaulted the exertions and dangers of the past many days, nothing existed but the beaded dazzles from above and his body, slow-dancing with water...

"At least I know who not to stand sentry the next time it rains, aye?"

Feeling ~~vastly foolish~~, # Karlsson halted in place, looked around at Melander, and was promptly splattered with a dew glob atop his head. The tall man's amusement twitched behind his mouth.

"Moonbeams must have got into me," Karlsson offered, ~~ruefully~~ vastly embarrassed.

"I can believe this place sends a man lopsided," said Melander.

"Let's get back to the beach before I go chasing raindrops myself."

———
Melander discovered from the summit that the arc of beach continued some miles north eastward, to Hecate Strait. This intelligence turned into taunt, however, by the time he and Karlsson returned to the campsite. A stiff wind was pushing in off Kaigani. Not wanting a repeat of the crossing they had just endured, the canoemen sat to wait out the bluster.

———
And the wind stiffened. By the afternoon, there were roars of air. A sky-filling sound like that of vast flame. The wind itself seemed cross-purposed, now in great speed to one direction and the next moment whooshing back. Kaigani meanwhile turned ice-gray, with slopes and pools of foam everywhere on it.

When firewood was needed, the men cautiously went out from the shelter in pairs, one to gather, the other to watch for widowmakers flying down out of the shore forest. Often, a gust slammed so hard a man had to bend his knees to stay upright.

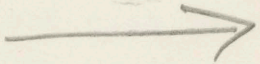
For two days of this blow, they held to the site--gaining no distance, which Melander knew was the same as losing it.

———
During a lull, Braaf scuffed a boot against something in the sand, close by where the other three sat sheltered. A dead loon, its bill thrust ahead like a bayonet, one checkered wing stiffly cocked a bit as though readying to fly, the rest of the body beneath the beach surface.

"Buried as Bering," said Melander.

"Means what?" queried Braaf.

"It's something the Russian navy men say. Bering was a skipper, an old sir, first one into the islands up where the Aleuts come from. He was sailing in the Tsar's hire, a ship called the Saint Peter. A true Russian vessel, leaky as a basket. Somewhere up there among the Aleuts they got themselves wintered in. Those islands ~~don't~~ have ^{an} a whisker of timber, so Bering and his crew dug into sandhills, pulled over sail canvas for roof. Lived in burrows like lemmings, aye? Lived till they died, at least, and then, the ^{Russians} ~~Roski~~ tell it, foxes would come into camp and gobble the bodies. Bering himself took frail



(Faint, mirrored text from the reverse side of the page, including phrases like 'I did as he desired', 'And this further', and 'James G. Swan had hastened west in the same scurry as')

and they laid him in one of the dugouts. Sand caved down over his feet, but he wouldn't let the crew dig it away. Said it kept him warm. Then sand over his knees. Still wouldn't let them dig. Then up to his waist. Next his belly, just before he died. Very nearly all in his grave before the last breath was out of him. So, buried as Bering, a ^{Russian} Rooskaya says to feel sorry for himself."

"How about melon-headed as Melander?" Wennberg suggested. "Do the Russians say that one, too?"

Melander cut a quick look at Wennberg. His sarcasm notwithstanding, the broad man did not seem to be in the brownest of his moods.

"Wennberg, Wennberg. Always ready to bone the guff out of me, aye? Tell me a thing, how do we come by this honor of having you in our crew? What sugar was it that kept you on at New Archangel past your years?"

Wennberg studied the tall leader. Then he spat to one side and muttered: "Serving for Rachel."

Melander tugged an ear. ^{Lend} "Give us that again?" Karlsson and Braaf also glanced over at Wennberg.

"Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah was tender-eyed, but Rachel was beautiful and well favored. And Jacob loved Rachel, and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel.'" Wennberg broke off his recital and spat again.

Melander and Braaf and Karlsson stared at him.

"Never heard Genesis before?" Wennberg resumed. "Doesn't surprise me, you'd all be off diddling squirrels instead of..."

"Wennberg a Bible-spouter!" Braaf looked genuinely shocked.

The blacksmith shifted uneasily. "My family were church-strong. So ~~was~~^{'s} I, when I was a young fool."

"This Rachel matter," Melander put in. "It sounds more like a sweetmeat for Karlsson than for you."

"Judas's single ball, Melander, can't you tell a saying when it comes out anybody's mouth but your own? Serving for Rachel means... it means being done out of something." Wennberg drew a breath. "'And Jacob said unto Laban, give me ~~my~~ wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her...And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah; and he said to Laban, what is this thou hast done unto me? Did I not serve with thee for Rachel?'" Wennberg glowered across at Melander. "Now d'you savvy it?"

"Aye," said Melander softly. "I just didn't recognize Laban as a Russian name."

#

"Tell us a thing, Braaf. You've earned with your pockets, as they say. What's the ^{grandest} ~~hardest~~ thing you ever stole?"

Braaf blinked in Wennberg's direction. "Your nose, from up your ass where you usually keep it."

"Just trying to be civil, you Stockholm whelp. Something to pass the time from squatting on this Goddamned sand, I thought."

"The pair of you," Melander conciliated. "Don't make a feather into five hens."

Braaf eyed up into the line of timber, ^{the treetops nodding this way and that in the wind.} "Could tell you, though, if I wanted. If I was asked right."

The request for etiquette sank through to Wennberg. "Oh, God's green socks, bones, all right, Braaf, all right--would you be so kind as to tell us whatever the hell is it you have in mind?"

"A time, I was working slow--"

"Working? I thought this ¹⁵ ~~was~~ going to be true."

"Near enough the truth for common purposes, as we say on shipboard," Melander suggested. "Let ^{Braaf} ~~him~~ get on with it, ^{aye} Wennberg?"

"Your little finger's between your legs, Wennberg. Working slow is a way we go about it in the streets. Walk as if counting the cobblestones, that's what it means. Do that, and you see what's around."

See who's forgot a window, or whose purse is sleeping fat in his coat. So I ^{spied} ~~saw~~ the thimble then. A shopman was sweeping--"

"Thimble? You went round Stockholm stealing thimbles? Christ and the devil, Braaf, some tales I've heard in my time but--"

"The thimble's the chance, iron-puddler. Means you see a chance for yourself. Haven't you heard anything in this world but a hammer?"

Wennberg muttered this or that. Braaf resumed.

"The shopman was sweeping the steps. Had one of those birch brooms-- widow's musket they're called, isn't that so, Wennberg? So he had his back away from me, and the door open, ^{like so.} I slipped in, knew I had to be fast. A shopkeeper likes to be clever. Else he wouldn't be a shopkeeper. Sometimes he'll stash money right there, in some crock like any other. Biscuits here and salt herring there and just maybe rijksdalers somewhere around. This time, there're crocks on parade. All along there. So I picked one, lifted the lid. And there they were, rijksdalers and more of them. My pockets had mumps when I went out of the place. I slid behind the shopman, he's at the other end of the steps by now, ^{please sir,} ask him ^{is} the store open? Never to the likes of me, he says. Runs me off. Tells himself, clever man like him he'll not let in some street stray."

"The money, Braaf," ^{prompted} asked Wennberg. "What'd you do with it all?"

Braaf reflected. "It lasted just about as long as it's taken to tell of it."

#

"A lazy wind, we call this on Gotland. It goes through you instead

of around you."

"Melander, serve you a plate of fly shit and you'd declare it pepper," muttered Wennberg.

"And you'd lend me your soul as salt, aye, Mister Blacksmith? But we have deciding to do. We've been holed here too long. The water ahead of us doesn't shrink while we're here. I say we had better chance the next stretch today, wind or no. Karlsson?"

"You're the sailor of us. ~~But~~ how much of this wind is between us and the next island?"

"I think six hours' paddling."

"Six hours, we can last. I say chance."

"Braaf?"

The thief glanced out into the white-capped water, then somewhere above Melander's brow. ^{"If you say so,} ~~Chance."~~

"Wennberg?"

"The only thing worse than that ^{bedamned} water is this ^{bedamned} waiting. Chance, ^{You know so God-all much,} Melander. ~~Teach us how to eat the wind.~~ May it sit better on my stomach than that last ration did."

———
For a change, luck puffed on them. Once the paddling men had struggled the canoe around the horn-tip of the beach, they came into a wind skewing directly across Hecate Strait. For the first time since their leaving of New Archangel, up went the canoe's small pole of mast and ~~a lugsail,~~ ^{the cloth,} "Not much of a suit of sails, more like a kerchief,"

as Melander said, but the canvas carried them across the strait and once more into a scatter of shoreline islands.

———
"Even this hardtack isn't as bad as it might be." Melander, musing, their first day of south-paddling after wafting across Hecate Strait. "A time I can tell you on the brig Odin, we had to break our biscuits into our coffee and skim away the weevils as they came up. No, not so bad, aye?"

———
Braaf, at the onset of their second day after: "I know what Valhalla is now. It's where I never again hear Melander say, 'Tumble~~up~~.'" "

———
Wennberg, midway of their third day and yet another Melander monologue: "Melander, I wonder you don't swallow your tongue sometime for the savor of it."

———
"Good job of work done": Karlsson, startling them all as they hefted ashore at the close of their fourth straight progressful day.

———
The river shoved through the land like a glacier of slate. Had the surface been solid as its turbid appearance--one newcoming settler

or another had inaugurated the jest that in the season of run-off not much more mud content was needed to make the flow pedestriable-- a man crossing here from its north shore toward its south would have had to hike steadily for a full hour. That man would have stridden the Columbia, largest river of the Pacific shore of the Americas, and there on ^{the} ~~its~~ south bank he would have stamped silt from his feet at Astoria.

~~Another frontier pin-spot of great name, Astoria.~~

settled as a place
~~Already, Astoria was in its third incarnation.~~ John Jacob Astor's wealth, not to say intentions for more of it, installed the settlement as a fur depot in 1811. ~~The War of 1812 dealt the site to British control, with a consequent rechristening as Fort George. By 1818 it stubbornly was American, and Astoria, once more.~~ The ensuing ~~three~~ **four** and a half decades had not made it much more of a place: post office, customs house, long T-shaped dock straddling into the tidal flow, cooperage, Methodist church, handful of stores and saloons catering to the settlers sprinkled south and north of the river's mouth, several tall Yankee houses along the foot of a shaggy Columbia headland. Yet also the recognized port of America's Pacific Northwest, tapping the 1200-mile-long Columbia and its tributaries like a cup hung to gather the sugar of a giant maple. If, through, whatever unlikelihood, you found yourself at Astoria, you could aim yourself onward into the world aboard one of the dozen or fifteen vessels which plied here month by month. ⁹ This night, the four canoe-going Swedes are encamped ~~just more than~~ ^{not quite} half the water distance downcoast from New Archangel

change distance?

A reflecting tin of great name,

ship names?

to that long T of dock at Astoria.

← cursor
deer

Trying to yawn the last of sleep from himself, Karlsson eased out through the trees toward the island's edge. As usual, he was the first awake and the earliest to wonder about weather. [#]This morning he found that the Pacific lay gray with cold, but no storm sheeted up from its surface. Along the beach ahead of Karlsson a small surf pushed ashore, idly rinsed back on itself: low tide. A pair of cormorants amid a spill of tidal boulders hung their wings wide. High up on the beach gravel a hundred or so strides away the sharp-prowed canoe rested, as if having plowed to a furrow-end and now waiting to be turned for another day's tilling.

Between one eye-blink and the next, Karlsson's brain filled with the jolt of what he was seeing. He and Melander and Wennberg and Braaf had carried their canoe as ever into the cover of forest for the night: this canoe sat larger by half: the painted designs entwining the prow were different, simpler, bolder: and Karlsson by now was in crouched retreat toward the trees, staring hard at the wall of forest beyond the canoe for any sign that he had been detected.

Putting his fingers lightly across the tall man's mouth to signal silence, he roused Melander. Melander snapped awake with the quickness learned of arising to some thousands of shipboard watches and crept behind Karlsson away from the camp.

"A big one," Karlsson husked when they had sidled far enough not to be heard. "Eight, ten paddlemen at least."

"Cabbageheads. Why aren't they holed up for the winter like the ^{Sitka es} Kolosh? What do they think this is, the Midsummer's Day yacht races? Aye?"

"We had better hope they're not going to hole up here."

"No, just one canoe, they couldn't be. Seal hunters or some such, out for a few days. Cabbageheads."

"You already called them that, and they're still here."

"Aye, so. What's your guess, can we get our canoe to the water and slide away without them seeing us?"

"No."

"No. Outwait them without them tumbling onto us?"

"No."

"No." Melander grimaced as if his echo-word had hurt his ears, then looked back toward camp. "You greet Braaf, I'll do Wennberg."

Again fingers of silence awoke lips. Again Karlsson told the situation. # When his words had sunk into Wennberg and Braaf, Melander sent Braaf, the most accomplished slinker among them, to keep watch on the beach. # Then Melander glanced at Karlsson, and Karlsson, after hesitation, nodded. "Yes, it ^{needs} ~~has~~ to be him."

The pair of them turned their eyes to Wennberg. Melander asked:
"How are you at turning yourself into a sand crab?"

—————
Wennberg's debut into the art of creeping also marked the first occasion in his life that he ever regretted his strength. Regretted, rather, that more of his power wasn't directly beneath his nose, as Melander's was. "This one is your line of country, Wennberg. You have to do it, or those people of that canoe will snore tonight on our skulls." And Karlsson in his rock-faced way agreeing that only Wennberg possessed the muscle for it; Wennberg could not choose between fury at Karlsson for siding with Melander or ire at him for doing it dubiously. Every lens of clarity, Wennberg believed, had slipped from his life when he leagued himself with this muddle of...

A stone nicked Wennberg's right knee and cued his attention back to creeping. Here in the first eighty yards or so he had cover of a sort, a rib of rock and drift logs behind which he managed to scuttle, chest almost down to his knees, without showing himself, much. But next lay a naked distance of thirty yards. An angle across and up the beach, to the unfamiliar canoe.

At the end now of his final driftlog, Wennberg squatted dismally, rubbed the stone bruise on his right knee, and glared back toward where he had departed from Melander, Karlsson and Braaf.

"Puny bastards," he muttered.

From amid the spruce there a hand flashed into sight--Wennberg knew it would be Melander's--and patiently waved him on.

Wennberg braced, unhunched himself, and in a rolling stride ran toward the beached canoe. [#] He ran with his elbows cocked almost full out and his head sighted low, as if butting his way. Under his boots gravel clattered wildly, avalanche-loud it seemed to him. ~~Jesu Maria,~~ ^{God's pity} those fish-fuckers in the forest would have to be without ears not to hear this commotion...

Past the stern of the canoe Wennberg plunged, like a ball rolling beyond its target. He hovered an instant, selecting, then stooped to thrust both hands beneath a gray boulder wide as his chest. Gravel ^{roweled} ~~bit~~ the backs of his hands, his wrists, and finally his forearms as Wennberg wrestled the rock. His breath ached in his throat. With a grunt he brought the burden upward. Grappled it into balance on his knees, next across his waist. Now like a washerwoman carrying an overfull tub of water, turned with the boulder toward the canoe.

Five staggering steps to the wooden wall of the craft, Wennberg more certain with each that the gunblast which would close off his life was being cocked behind him.

Above the bow, just there where the interior of the canoe ~~came~~ came to sharpness and the prow began to rise--just there where Melander had told him to target, Wennberg heaved the boulder within his arms to the height of his neck. Then with one last grunt let it crash onto the cedar craft.

The crunch was not loud, to Wennberg the first luck anywhere in this situation. But the end of the canoe, thin-carved for its sharp slide through water, split open--and back from the rock as well, a fracture wide as the side of a hand sprung toward 'midship#.

[#] Wennberg gave a rapid glance at his sabotage, skirted the

stern of the canoe and was running again, a bear in a footrace.

He had just passed the driftlog when he heard the shout behind him, and he did not look back.

Ahead of him, Melander and Karlsson and Braaf were putting their own canoe into the surf, Melander somehow finding time as well to ^{urge} shout ~~at~~ Wennberg to hurry and lend a hand.

They shoved with their paddles just as the first musket ball ^{tossed up} ~~blooped~~ the water beside them. Wennberg in puffing agony glanced around to see two natives with rifles raised, others clustered around the ~~spine~~ ^{bow}-broken canoe, more oh God more ^{ing} emerged from the forest.

Karlsson, who had ended up in the bow, turned and hurried a shot at the two riflemen. It missed but caused them ^{to} flinch back from the bullet's ricochet among the beach gravel.

"Paddle-Jesus Jesus-paddle-paddle-paddle!" Melander was instructing. ^{bullet's} Another ^{toss} of water, this one nearer. The

Swedes stroked as if hurling the ocean behind them as a barrier, and the canoe climbed a mild breaker, sped down its seaward side, climbed a stronger wave and downsped again, then slid rapidly southward from the firing figures on the beach.

———

Out of the fear and excitement of the escape something other began to grope through to Karlsson in the next ^{moments} minutes. From his place at its forepart, he sensed a change about the canoe. Its rhythm felt lightened, ^{not} gone erratic as during Wennberg's sickness at Kaigani, but lessened, thinned.

Karlsson turned enough to look straight back.

"Sven?" he called. "Sven!"

At the stern of the canoe Melander, almost tidily, lay folded forward, the upper part of his long body across his knees, the back of his head inclined toward the other three canoemen as if to show them where the musket ball had torn its red hole.

✓
OK

Merlyn--please resume numbering,
with this as page 146.

REVISED

Death's credence comes to us in small costs, mounting and mounting.

At first ^{within} in the canoe, capacity only for the disbelief, ^{gone from life,} Melander

dead, mainbeam of the escape collapsed, the long coast ^{snapping} ~~bursting~~ down

^{cleverest} the ~~life~~ of one of them as an owl would a dormouse. ^H Like wild new

hearts ^{this} the repeating shock of ^{loss} ~~it~~ hammered in Braaf and Wennberg and

Karlsson, there never could be room for all the resound of ~~it~~

^{any minds,} in their minds, it thudded around their ears and trembled in their

throats, ^{such} this concussion of fresh circumstance: ~~its message always~~

and terribly the same: Melander's body now a cargo, deadweight,

^{clotting} clogging not just the pulse of the canoe but of whatever ^{of existence was} lives were

^{other} left to the ^{three} of them ~~now~~...

After, it ^{could only seem it} appeared that during this blind thundrous time the canoe

must have sensed out its own course. ~~For~~ when the thought at last

^a forced its way to one of them--Karlsson in the bow, it happened to be--

that to pull numbly on paddles was not enough, that a compass heading

and a map reading were necessitated, the needle and the drawn lines

revealed the canoe to be ^{precisely} where it ought; where Melander

would have steered it.

In that catch-of-breath pause, Braaf whitely burrowing the compass and mapcase from beneath the corpse that was Melander, Wennberg in a sick glaze handing ^{on} the instrument and container ~~on~~ to Karlsson--in that stay of time, the absence began its measured toll on them.

M/S

~~Melander's~~ That sailor-habited scrutiny of the water around, every chance of rock or shoal or ^{tide rip} current announced.

The Reminding word to Braaf when he made his habitual dawdle in shifting his paddle.

Regulation on Wennberg's bluster, which evidently even Wennberg had come to rely on.

The musing parleys with Karlsson, treetop communing with stone.

Day on day and all the waking hours of those days, ^{such} the losses

of Melander would be exacted now, ~~all of them conspicuous by their~~ ^{s/ conspicuous} silence where there ought have been the watchword of that voice--aye?

#

Mid-day, the canoe ashore at the next southward island, Melander's three-man crew ~~stood~~ ^{yet} trying to unbelieve the folded-forward body in trench of cedar. the canoe. Three men, each with new age on him.

Three men, each with new age on him. During the crossing Wennberg had blurted periodic and profound curses, but now said nothing, seemed to be gritting against whatever ^{slunk} was on its way next. Braaf, too, ^{stood} still and wordless as a post. Karlsson ^{it} was who stepped first out of the silence.

"We need to bury him."

They managed with Karlsson's ax, the gaff and the cooking pot to gouge a shallow ^{grave} trench in the forest floor.

Then, with struggle, they brought the body from the canoe. Queerly, lifelessness had made Melander greatly heavy to carry, even with Wennberg's strength counted into the task, while at the same time the sense of death somehow seemed to thin the gravity around Braaf and Karlsson and Wennberg. ~~This emotional addle,~~ ~~The surprise of it,~~ not a man of them would have known how to ^{utter} speak. But now in each there ~~was,~~ ^{swirled,} atop the dread and an almost-giddy confusion and gut-gall from Melander's killing, ~~a~~ ^{feel of ascension,} Of being up high and more alert than ever before, alert in every hair, aware of all sides of one's self. It lasts not long--likely the human spirit would burn to blue ash in more than moments of such atmosphere--but the sensation expends the wonder that must course through us at such times: Death singled thee, not me.

They dared not spare ~~the~~ sailcloth
~~None of the sailcloth could be spared~~ for a shroud. Karlsson
 took ^{up} the axe, whacked limbs from nearby spruce. Melander's last
 rest along this green coast would be under boughs rather than ~~the~~
 atop them.

Next, they ~~The three of them~~ pushed dirt ^{was pushed} into the grave. When they had done,
 Karlsson stepped amid the loose soil. ^{Trod} Pressed down his right heel,
 his left. Moved sideways, repeated. *Wennberg and Braaf* ~~looked~~ looked
 loath, but in a minute joined in the tromp.

Firm dirt over Melander, they ~~next~~ hefted stones from the beach
 and piled them onto the gravetop to discourage--~~more~~ likely, merely
 delay--animals.

In the unending windstorm of history, how Sven Melander of Gotland
 and the sea was ^{put to earth} interred could not possibly make a speck's difference.
 Yet to these three, ^{this} ~~the~~ forest grave seemed to matter ^{all} mightily. They
 had done ~~all~~ ^{what} now that could be thought of, except--

Karlsson and Braaf looked to Wennberg. *The broad man* licked his
 lips as if against a sour taste, and much white was showing at the
 corners of his eyes. *Goddamn, no.* "No. I don't believe in that guff any more.
 Particularly after this."

"Just do it for the words," Braaf murmured. "Do the words for
 Melander."

5

Wennberg eyed Braaf; ~~then~~ ^{rapid} Karlsson; then the psalm; started from
him in a low rumble.

"...A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it
is past, and as a watch in the night....We spend our years as a tale
that is told...." So teach us to number our days..."

#

The next bad time, ~~of course~~, was quick to come.

They needed a meal, and somehow ^{pieced} got one together. Just after,
crossing the campsite on

↑ saw
↑ med to do

one fetch or another--all the budget of fuss Melander had attended to
now ~~had to~~ ^{needed to be} shared out--Wennberg clomped past the sitting Braaf, stopped,
and examined. # "What's here on the back of you, then?" ~~he~~ ^{Wennberg} demanded.

Braaf glanced dully up toward the blacksmith. Slipping his arms
from the Aleut parka, he brought the garment around for a look.

Across the shoulders and the middle of the back showed small dark
splats, as if a rusty rain had fallen.

The three men stared at the stains where Melander's blood had
showered forward.

At last Wennberg shifted awkwardly. "Maybe it'll wash..."

Twin ~~laned~~ ^{glistens} ~~lanes~~ of tears ^{round} ~~laned~~ Braaf's face. "Say anything, either of you," he choked out, "and I'll gut you."

lengthen?

After, ~~Later~~, Karlsson was never sure what the flag had been between Wennberg and him, how it happened that they faced each other, off ^{brink of shore} ~~the~~ ~~tideline~~ away from the weeping Braaf.

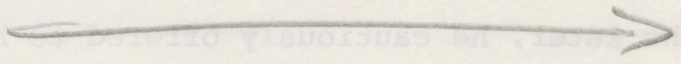
Wennberg began fast, as if the words needed to rattle their way out of him. "Karlsson, listen now--we've--Hell's own dung-ditch, we're fallen in now. The lucky one of us may be Melander. So--"

"You didn't trade places with him there at the grave."

"What? No!" Wennberg seemed startled by Karlsson's rejoinder. Then tried to muster: "No, bad choices're getting to be a habit with me. As when I went out that gate with you damned three."

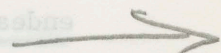
"But out it you are." Karlsson scanned

~~looked~~ from Wennberg away into the forest, the constant ~~green~~ ^{shaggy} nap of these islands. Tried to find concentration in the convoking of all these green beings, the way they touched each to each. Karlsson's head swam a bit



and ached a lot and he was wearier than all the ~~innumerable~~ ^{se}axwork of his life ever had made him, and here loomed Wennberg to be dealt with, and Melander dead, and . . . "And a far swim to get back in," Karlsson bought a further moment with. God's wounds, think now, ~~somebody~~ how to halter this damned bull of a blacksmith. . .

"Karlsson, hear me. Just--just hear me, will you? We can't go at each other like cats with tails tied together and ^{slung} hung over a fence. Not now, ^{not} after-- Someway we've got to make miles along this God-lost coast. So somebody needs to lead. Decide, this way or that, or we'll meet ourselves in a circle in these bedamned islands. Not even Melander's going to make himself heard up through the ~~grave~~ ^{earth.}"



Karlsson's weariness abruptly doubled. "So you're ^{kinging} offering yourself."

Exasperation flooded into Wennberg's voice. "Karlsson, Goddamn-- You won't see a ^{matter} thing until it lands on your nose and has a shit there, will you?"

With effort, Wennberg ^{tried to steady} steadied his tone. Karlsson remembered the

same ominous tremor, the earthquake ^{in a man} when temper fights with itself, through ^{the blacksmith} bread man when Melander informed him the cache had been spirited away. "No, not--not me to lead. You."

As Karlsson tried to believe his way into the ^{seven} six words he had just heard, Wennberg discharged more. "It's sense, is all. There're the maps to be ^{savvied} handled and ^{bedamned} this canoe to be pointed, and you've done some of ^{so} that, out with the bear-milkers. So it's sense, you in charge of that." Wennberg scratched his beard as he sought how to put his next premise. "All the other, we'll just... we don't need a sermon at every eyeblink, like Melander gave. We can divvy tasks without ~~that~~ all that yatter. "we can."

Wennberg paused. Something was yet to ~~force~~^{try} its way. Finally--

"Braaf, there. He'd never take to me as leader. Be happy to see him left here to bunk with Melander, I would, but we need the little bastard."

"And you." Karlsson someway found the mother wit to say this more as statement than question. "You'll take to me?"

Another effort moved through Wennberg. He lifted his look from Karlsson, ~~sent~~^{bent} a bleak gaze to the ocean. He said: "I need to, don't I?"

#

~~of inlets and fingers-- the bay lying stretched from north to south for~~
Close by that night's firelight, Karlsson in kneel.

~~twenty-five miles, and nearly ten across its greatest width--wedges~~
Untying the flap of the waterproof map pouch. Bringing out

~~the scroll of maps. Performing the unrolling, then the weighting~~
~~The mix yields a maximum of tan warshes and gray muddy fidelists.~~
of each corner with an oval pebble from the beach gravel.

Into view arrives all their declension of the coast, ~~so much~~^{an amount of}

~~journey~~^{trek} across white space that ~~Karlsson is startled~~^{surprised}, as if he were ~~gaying~~^{though}

~~looking on~~^{seeing} sudden new line of tracks across snow.

Only the top map of the lot had Karlsson ever seen, the one on which Melander's pencil route ~~made~~^{took} its start at the square house-dots of New Archangel. That once, Melander ~~was~~^{had been} borrowing opinion, and here was traced Karlsson's advice, the canoe's side-loop around Japonski Island and then veering down and down, at last out the bottom of Sitka Sound.

~~map~~ Karlsson, the ~~forest~~^{night-} of a continent ten paces on one side of him and half a world of night-ocean thirty paces on the other, ~~could~~^{Karlsson} scarcely credit it--that there had been time when he, when any of this canoe's adopted men, existed at

~~that~~ regiment of dots, answered work-call, ~~dwelt~~^{fought fleas, wintered on salt fish...} in barracks, ~~set~~^{honey} bait for a gate guard named Bilibin.

On the next map, the penciled line ~~hugged~~^{hugs} the west shore of Baranof Island to Cape Ommaney, then, as if deflected by what ~~waited~~^{waited} south, ~~strikes~~^{struck} east to Kuiu. Because of Melander's ~~simplified~~^{simplified}

route-sketch in the dirt and the knowledge that their port of destination lay southward, Karlsson had supposed that they were going along the escape route much like men shinnying down a rope--

~~a~~^{maybe} side of effort this way or that, but the total plunge all into one direction. It ~~is~~^{was} a revolution in his thinking to see now that all the ~~while~~^{time} they ~~have been~~^{were} canoeing south they also ~~have been~~^{were} sidestepping east.

More of angling down the North Pacific, map three brought. The Kuiu-Heceta-Noyes-Suemez-Dall skein of islands and the crossing of Kaigani Strait to the horn-tip of the Queen Charlottes. Those days of voyage, Karlsson tried to sort in his mind. In the waters along Heceta, ^{was} had it ~~been~~, where they caught the ugly delicious fish? On which island did the carved creatures rear over Braaf? The great trees ^{beside dome of} ~~under~~ that cliff, the water diamonds dropping in dazzle, had they been--? But the days of this coast blended like its trees, none could be made to stand in memory without the others.

check Heceta

Karlsson has unscrolled to the fourth map, the one showing how they crossed Heceta Strait, ^{stairstepped} descended the islands of the past several days, and then, just more than halfway down this ^{chart} ~~map~~, at a rough-edged small island with no name written in beside it, Melander's penciling halts.

^{Yes}
Aye, well...

changes?

Melander. In every corner of Karlsson's thoughts, Melander. A painful stutter in the mind, him, his death, the cost to it.

Melander

with that abrupt alert face atop his length, like the ^{glass cabin up} light ~~on~~ a lighthouse; Melander who believed that an ocean can be fended with, ridden by a Kolosh saddle of wood and reined with these ^{Russian} maps. But Melander no longer ~~was~~ on hand ~~here~~ to dispense ^{such} ~~that~~ faith. Too well, Karlsson ^{understood} ~~knew~~ that he and Braaf and Wennberg, none of them ^{anything of} a Melander and as different from each other as hip-high and upstairs and the moon, ^{needed} had now to find their own resources to endure sea-run.

carefully

At least Braaf had wrinkled smooth again. When Karlsson and Wennberg returned to camp and the who-ought-lead proposition was put to him, it took the young

at all. ^{then} thief an instant to realize he was being polled. He blinked and said as if it were common fact: "You've to do it, Karlsson. I can't read the maps and Wennberg couldn't lead his shadow. You've to do it."

And at least there were the maps, ^{these} ~~the~~ extra eyes needed to know the intentions of this coast and ocean. Glancing to the bottom of down from where Melander's tracery of route left off, this fourth map, Karlsson saw that the coastline was shown as far as the northmost tip of Vancouver Island. Cape Scott, Melander had penciled in beside the ragged thumb of land. Karlsson ^{recalled} remembered Vancouver Island to be the third of the landforms, those wheres of their escape, scratched into the dirt by Melander the day of last summer. The maps next would bring Vancouver's shore and then the ~~harsh~~ ^{southering} final coastline from the Strait of Fuca to Astoria.

REVISED

-101

Karlsson slipped his fingers beneath the top and bottom edges
 to lift away this map to those next ones. And ~~turned to stone~~, ^{was fixed to that motion,} as
 if the ~~touch~~ ^{chill} of beach gravel against his knuckles had conducted
 petrification into him. ~~Nothing lay~~ ^{lay} beneath the fourth ~~map~~ ^{map} except that
 gravel. The fourth map was the last of the scroll.

Karlsson drew in a breath ~~in~~ which met his heart at the top of
 his throat. # Came to his feet, yanked a ~~stick~~ ^{brand} from the fire ^{for light} and
 was gone past the sleeping lengths of Braaf and Wennberg on his
 way to the canoe. # There he ~~dug~~ ^{digs} through the entire stowage, then
 dug again, and still found only what he dreaded most, confirmation.
 # There were ~~no~~ ^{aren't} more maps.

"Narrow enough matter it was... . Needed to paw through every
 bedarned scrap of sheet. . ." Melander's words spun through the months
 to Karlsson, their shadow of meaning with them now. "Skimpy bastards,
 these Russians. . . Should ~~have known~~ ^{figured}. . ." Should have ~~known~~ ^{figured}--that
 the pilothouse of the steamship did not hold the ~~farther~~ ^u maps; that
 since the cumbersome ~~Nicohlas~~ ^{Nichlas} never voyaged far enough south to go
 beyond these four, the Russians simply didn't provide more. So Melander
 during his theft himself ~~had been~~ ^{was} robbed; had to glom just these four
 maps and clamber away from discovery. And then, being Melander,
^{at once} fathered a judgment; that when these charts of the tangled top
 of the coast were expended,

the rest of the voyage could be borne on by his sailor's sense; that he would bother the heads of the other three escapees with this only at some far-downcoast bend of time, when necessity ^{showed itself.} ~~showed itself.~~

Through and through Melander would have worked it, and when time came would have made the further maps seem as ^{little} ~~as~~ vital as extra whiskers on a cat.

But Melander ^{was stretched} ~~lies~~ under that heap of stones, with the back of his head shot off, and Karlsson ^{would} it will be to point the prow of the canoe into maplessness.

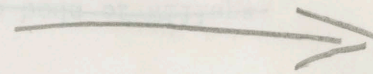
perhaps

The sensation going through Karlsson ^{was} ~~now is~~ Karlsson ~~now~~ had a sensation of being emptied, as if his body from the stomach down had vanished, the way the bottom of ^{the} this fourth map dissolved their route of escape.

#

This Karlsson now. Circumstance's man.

. . . Do I? Do I say, Braaf, Wennberg, surprise in the pot this morning, we haven't the maps we need? Going to voyage blind now, we are. . .

More than any of the other three runners of the sea, a man too of the countryside of Sweden which had birthed him. 

[Faint mirrored text from the reverse side of the page]

1891

Karlsson was a ~~particle~~^{dispersion} of the Swedish diaspora which began ~~in~~^{with} the ~~fourth~~^{fifth} decade of the nineteenth century, the bitter years of bad weather and worsening harvests. Rye thin and feeble in the fields, cows like walking boneyards for lack of hay, potatoes rotten lumps in the earth--as though the elaborate clock of the seasons was awry, whatever could happen wrong did so sometime in Sweden in those years, and all too much of it repeatedly. ~~Like~~

check

Karlsson's father was confounded by the coil of the times, ~~centuries~~^{generations} of landholding ~~shrinking~~^{crimping} ~~shrinking~~^{dwindling} to futility before his eyes. But bafflement was not a helpful crop. Like

many another, young Karlsson in that harsh time became extra to simply cast to drift, his home soil of Smaland, early was uncoupled, from his family's farmstead. The two brothers older than he caught America fever, put themselves into the emigrant stream ^{coursing} ~~aimed~~ to the prairies beyond the Great Lakes. At their urging that he come along, this brother of theirs shook his head in his parson-serious way and said only: "I am no farm maker."

His father

15A

to Christ

. . . Melander had reason, whatever ~~it~~ it was, for saying nothing
of the maps. Melander had reason for what direction he stirred his
tea. So he said nothing, and now ~~I, I'm~~ I'm the Melander of us,
is that the matter of it? Or...



as a reward . . . Within a few days, four more Makah children
come, and are treated to Swan's picture show. By the end of the
first week, twenty children present today exercised them on the
alphabet and then gave them a pan full of boiled potatoes.
Success in the schoolroom, discord in the world. Something
here sets Swan to brooding about the Civil War and its politics:
I do not believe in the principles of the Republican party as
emanated by Greeley, Sumner, Phillips, Beecher. . . but I do
believe that the country is in real danger and I believe at
each time it is the duty of every true man to stand by his
government (no matter what the party) in saving the country and
ourselves from ruin.
That out of his system, Swan goes on to note that the
Indians' dogs killed two stumps in the lumber pile.
He next has to take three days out to supervise the digging
of the schoolhouse cellar, introducing the Makah laborers to the

But just what he was seemed to take ^{the} that young Karlsson some finding out. While he turned the question, he set to work as a timberman on the largest estate in the parish, and there the forester's first words to him, after a look up and down this silent youngster, were: "Hear what I tell you, lad. I don't boil my cabbage twice." His next were: "We do the day here. Up like lamplighters we are, and late as a miser's tithe." Stropped by that forester's relentless tongue--until he encountered Melander, Karlsson had thought it the most relentless possible--Karlsson began to come keen, learn all of axework, of woodcraft, of a pace ~~the~~ to life.

. . . First hour on the gallows is the worst, Melander'd have said. We are still three, we're strong enough yet. We've the chance...

The merchant ^{arrived} had come to the estate in the winter of 1849, another ^{corner} crow's-winter in that part of Smaland, bleak cold week on bleak cold week, with the announcement that he was looking for supple wood for sled hames. His true eye, though, was for the grain on men. What he saw in Karlsson suited very well. Karlsson's lovely ^{at work} thrift, that

check

knack of finishing an axe stroke and drawing back for the next before
 it seemed the first ^{could} ~~should~~ be quite done, the self-sufficiency of
 him, working his own neighborhood of timber, the forester never
 needing to hawk over him. Even the still-water-touches-deep reputation
 of the lithe young timberman, that no

parent of ^{any} ~~a~~ daughter--and perhaps too ~~many~~ husbands of some wives--

would weep to see Smaland soil go from under Karlsson's feet; even

~~this~~ ^{for} that augured ~~well~~ the purpose of the merchant.

There was this, too. The merchant was ^{not entirely at ease} uneasy about trafficking
 in men, and ~~in~~ Karlsson he could ^{account} see as a salving bargain. ~~As~~

The Russian-American Company would gain an excellent workman, a
 seven-year man, as consigned; but evidently one with enough flint
 in him to maybe strike the Russians a few Swedish sparks someday, too.

. . . But kill one of us like a rook on a fence, why Melander?

^{there.}
 Wennberg Bellied into this on his own, take him. Wennberg broke

^{Kolosh}
 that canoe for us, maybe earned life with that. Earn life, no,

it just happens. Braaf. Never'd have been him, Braaf survives

^{the way a writer here} like a snow fox knows ^{then. Could easily been.} how to hide. Me I was Captain Nose instead

^{steersman}
 of ~~sternman~~ or I'd be under those rocks and Melander'd be here

guzzling this tea...

The recruitment was made, and Karlsson rode in the merchant's sleigh to Stockholm, a place, like heaven, where he had never been and ~~did~~ ^{hadn't} much expected to get to. Then voyage, the passage to the America of the Russians, if most of a year of patient endurance of tip and tilt can be called passage. Patience, Karlsson ~~had~~ ^{possessed} in plenty, had it to the middle of his bones; to the extent where, like any extreme, it ought not entirely be counted virtue. This forbearance of his

~~It~~ kept him in situations, for instance, when a Wennberg ^{might} would have crashed out or a Braaf wriggled out. Indeed, ^{now} had done much to deposit him, without over-ample debate or decision, onto that whittled spot frontier of the ^{sea-months} shore where the ~~voyage~~ at last ended, New Archangel.

Karlsson promptly was paired on the timber-felling crew to a stocky Finn as ^{close-tongued} silent as he, the ^{two} pair of them so wordless the other tree cutters dubbed them "the standing stones." The labor ^{was} had not been all that bad--axework was axework, Smaland or on the roof of the world--although Karlsson had been caused to rethink ^{the} that task a bit when he overheard Melander ^{state} josh that New Archangel's true enterprise was the making of axes to cut down trees to turn into charcoal which was then used for forge-fire to make more axes. ~~And~~ Looked at that way, any man within an enterprise such as the Russian-American company amounted something like one slat in a waterwheel. ^{laboring} Traveling in a circle, and a damned damp one at that. But the hunting leavened Karlsson's Alaskan life some. And the Kolosh women more so.

So Karlsson had been self-surprised by his readiness to hear out Melander's plan of escape. Never would Karlsson have put it so beribboned as this, but what drew him was a new echo of that years-long purll of question.

...there, then, to Swan, or at least a start on him. A man from Boston of Swan's for me to bring down...

the makers, cedar carvings of magic which would be the slave's monument-- and this further: He also brought up the judge's commandment-- I did as he desired, marked out the spot and dug out the first sand...

There, Swan's brother Peter came and warned me to go with him and hundred miles to winter at the maker village of near Bay. along the strait to accompany Swan's still matter up strong, for the expense of going to winter the murderer...and at last came once more

Where ought a man to point himself, how ought he use his ableness? or heard hint of, Not the answers Karlsson ever had expected, Melander's: down one of the wild coasts of the world, to see whether seven-year men could endure their way to freedom. Which maybe was the beckon in them.

. . . Melander. Melander fathered this, and I've to get on with

The maps,
it. So. Do I . . .

REVISED

Karlsson knew he was not so wide a thinker as Melander. Come all the way to it, he and Braaf and Wennberg together probably were not that spacious. Melander's province of interest ^{was} had been this entire coastline, ^{plus} and whatever joined it over beyond the bend of the planet. "A roomy shore, this, aye? Not like that Russian woodbox, New Archangel. Here's where you needn't open

the window to put your coat on." That was all very well, ^{the power in} a grandness of view, it had sprung the gate of New Archangel and propelled them and opened the North Pacific to them, skimmed them across Kaigani and through the labyrinth of isles, propelled them all these hundreds of water miles. But grandness had ^S its eventual limits too.

In Karlsson was the ^{instinct} ~~instinct~~--he had never needed to think it through to the point where it ought be called creed--that realms much tinier than Melander's counted for something, too. The circlet of strength,

say, where the palm of a hand went round the handle of an axe. Or
the haft of a paddle.

check

"Tea, you pair," Karlsson called. # As every morning, Braaf arrived
drowsy, a blinking child somehow high as a man. # Wennberg sat with a
grunt, at once fed more wood to the breakfast fire as if stoking a
forge for the day.

. . . May as well, get it behind us . . .

"I'll show you what we face." As the other two slurped the first
of their tea, Karlsson opened the map case and pulled out the fourth
map.

"We're this place, here"--midway down the map, amid a shattered
strew of coast--"and Melander meant to aim us east, ^{over} to this channel"--
trench of white, inland a way, north-south through the coastal confusion.

"Then we've a sound to cross"--Milbanke, read Melander's penciling here--

"then more of channel, then another sound"--Queen Charlotte, this

^{inscription}
penciling--"and we're to Vancouver Island."

Wennberg and Braaf were ^{gazing} looking down at the map with fixation,
tea forgotten. The Russians' map, Melander's map, ^{white-and-ink} the tapestry of
their escape there to see. . . Braaf said softly, "I don't savvy front

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OK

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from back of it, but it's Tsar's wealth to us, isn't it?"

Wennberg's eyelines were crinkled in concentration. "Christ sideways on the cross, this's a coast. How we've got this far and only Melander ~~...~~"

That trend of thought treacherous, Wennberg peered to the bottom of the map. "And more of more, ahead of us ^{there} yet. The piece here, ^{Just a tit of it,} this's. . ."

what'd you say, Karlsson?"

"Vancouver Island," said Karlsson, and

~~Just a tit of it here, rest~~

~~"Vancouver Island. Rest of it's on the next map, must be?"~~

~~drink~~

Karlsson took a slow ~~sip~~ of tea.

"Only one way to get there," Wennberg rumbled on, "and that's pry ourselves off our asses. Isn't that so, Captain Nose?"

"That's so," ^{agreed} ~~said~~ Karlsson, *and re-rolled the fourth map.*

#

As they pushed east, all three men eyed around at the shoreline on watch for continually, ~~apprehensive~~ ^{of} another canoe-load of Kolosh ^{es}.

apprehensive?

~~Apprehension eats~~
This ~~ate~~ fast at stamina, and Karlsson called an early halt for mid-day.

He did so again for the night. Melander had been able to stretch men beyond what they thought were their heavenmost limits.

Karlsson already was calculating just how much he was going to have

how?

to ration his ~~excess~~ ^{these} demands on the other two. Both of them ~~looked~~ ^{were} ~~bleak~~ ^{wan} by the end of this day, looked hard-used, despite Karlsson's care with pace. But then, Karlsson supposed he himself didn't look newly minted.

...But there's a day. They're pulling full this way, Wennberg and Braaf, not worrying their hair off about maps. ^{we don't have.} We've made miles. Melander, old high-head, we're keeping on with it, this voyage of yours. We'll maybe step out at Astoria ^{for you} yet. . .

#



on in Swan's first set of months on the payroll, the Mahan named Captain John came down with smallpox. (Swan visiting the patient: John is alone in one corner, surrounded by a net screen. He tells me that the small box will collect in his head and when it leaves him it will come out of the top of his head like a puff of smoke. To prevent it spreading he has a large hole left open in the roof directly over his head, through which the sickness is expected to escape. During rain a board is slipped over the opening. but a pole is left handy to punch it open as soon as John feels the gas escaping from him.) Declaring himself leery of the disease, Hitchcock departed and Swan saw him off in the diary with entire lack of regret: His services will not be missed on this reservation, as he has done nothing more than shift work ever since he has been here. He is about the most perfectly cultured Chinook jargon word for "worthless"--can I ever get with. Luckily Naggs, and a subsequent hardworking farmer named Jones, was more congenial, and probably more interesting to Swan. They

OK

~~The day was not yet certain what it wanted to be, merely~~ ^{next day arrived} ~~gray~~ ^{average}

or storm-dark. Behind the campsite, the forest walled close as ^{the highest green} ~~stammered~~ always, and somewhere up in it a limb ~~stuttered~~ in the breeze.

Gazing in the direction, Braaf ~~Braaf glanced in the direction and said:~~ "Waste of noise, like a blacksmith."

^{glanced} Wernberg looked to Braaf, then turned aside and spat.

. . . Melander's line of country, this ocean, not mine. Savvied water, him. To the others of us it's a kind of night. See it but not into it. And try not catch a tumble from it. ^{God's bones,} Can it be deep under here as Melander said? Some places as far to bottom as these mountains go high? Take ~~his~~ Melander's word for it, thank you. Sitka Sound a millpond ^{any of} to this. If this coast was other we'd maybe be hiking out. More my journey, that'd have been. Forest you can thread your way through, sort ~~it~~ for yourself as you go. In Smaland lead me with a mealsack over my head into any woods and straight out I'd find my way. ^{Toss} ~~Dance~~ one foot in front of another, you know you get somewhere. But water, can't keep a fix on water. Only keep after it, stroke and stroke and stroke. ^{Say} This paddle work was axe strokes, how many trees'd been brought down by now? How many forests, more like. Could've built our own stockade and town.

insert refer to map?

REVISED
OK

Called it New Stockholm. No, Melander in charge, New Gotland it'd
be. . .

Karlsson caught up with his drift of mind. Bothered that it had
happened--new wife of ocean, this--he shook his stare from the backs
of Braaf and Wennberg, purposely scanned the entire length of the
water horizon. Sober anyone, that gray endless seam of sea and sky
would.

add detail?

around?

#

Wennberg with joy would have been back at his forge. Any forge,
anywhere. ~~The~~ glowing charcoal before him, ~~the~~ circle of water
ladled around its edge to concentrate the heat, then hammer and
metal in their heavy dance, fire-flakes leaping from the iron as
Wennberg ~~he~~ imposed shape on it, ~~decreed~~ ^{his arm decreeing} it axehead or hinge or bolster-
plate, ~~there~~ ^{now} was proper work, not shoveling ocean all the bedammed day.

Wennberg went in his mind time and again to that morning
when he strode ~~softly~~ up behind Braaf in the parade ground--and

~~each~~ ^{re-made} of these ~~times~~ ^{Wennberg}, ~~he~~ deflected like a scalded pup away from
the laden thief.

of course

Thinking on it was like trying to undo fire in the forge: raking
coals out in hope they would lapse to fresh charcoal

OK

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REVISED

~~once~~ again. Indeed, Wennberg's wishing was of ~~the sort~~ ^{a fervency} which ~~amounted~~ amounted

to reversing a forge fire all the way back to living tree. # And

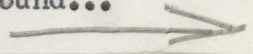
~~sermoned~~ ^{sermoned} made, he ~~told~~ ^{little} himself yet again, as much sense. In this life

paths cross paths and there you are, jangled up with a Braaf and

a Karlsson. No help for it, who can number the clouds or stay the

bottles of heaven? ~~at~~

But oh Hell take it, if he just hadn't crossed that parade ground...



sermoned
*Let it go,
I did
every
day
at
B but
good
damn,
I'm
just
do'n't*

#

Braaf, now--
~~Braaf?~~ Braaf always was a guess. As best could be told, though,
 something as an
 Braaf was enduring coastal life as a kind of ouzel--that chick-sized
 bird common along the rivers which cut the Northwest shoreline and the
 streams which vein down from the mountains into those rivers. Slaty
 in color, peg-tailed, the ouzel ^{at streamside} ~~is not much to~~ ^{notice,} ~~look at,~~ except as
 an example of bother; the bird constantly bobs, as ^{though} ~~if~~ wary of some *life-long*

peril overhead. In actuality, the motion must be practice for its
 livelihood, which is to ^{plunge} ~~dive~~ into the water, immerse, and walk the
 bottoms of the rivers and streams, picking bits of feed as it goes.

A hydraulic adaptee, the ouzel: ^{the bird} ~~it~~ somehow has learned to use the
 flow of current to keep itself pinned down into place during this
 dinner delve beneath the riffles. Much in that way that the ouzel

can shop along the cellar of the river, Braaf ^{was} ~~is~~ held into route,
 into canoe and camp routine, by the sum of the pressures all around.

Weather above, ocean beside, forest solid along the continent edge--
^{each day's life} ~~the course~~ was pressed to him by ^{such} ~~the~~ powers of the coast, and Braaf
 had the instinct simply to stay wary ^{while letting} ~~and~~ let the push of it all
 carry him ~~ahead~~ ahead.

#

OK

Kelp drifted alongside them in a tangle, here, a skim of the Pacific's water's deep layers of life.

#

As in the forest when branches become moving wands overhead but the air at ground hangs ^{keeps} strangely still, the coastal weather now cruised over the canoemen without quite touching down. Streamers of cloud shot along, would-be storms jostled with pretensions of clearing; the sky all hither and thither in this fashion, Karlsson and Wennberg and Braaf never knew what to expect except that it evenly. Putty weather, gray and changeable. True, would be ~~disorderly~~. Sitka with its weather-of-the-minute had

evenly?

accustomed the Swedes to changeableness, but at least ~~at~~ Sitka ~~surface of the planet~~ the concern was not that the next gray onset would cause the ocean to erupt under them.

#

Crone mountains, these ^{above} now, old bleak places gray-scarved above the green shore.

#

The weather held stormless, as though curious to watch down at this orphaned crew for a while. At the mid-day stop, Karlsson's pencil mark on the map moved east. Moved as much again at evening's camp--but south now. They were in the channel.

ahead

#

"Those Kolosh^{es}," Wennberg fed a branch to the supper fire. "Those ones that--back at that island, there. What d'you suppose they're in the world for?"

"For?" Karlsson ^{regarded} looked over at the blacksmith. As steadily as he tried to keep a reading of Wennberg, moods kited in and out of the broad man.

"What I mean, how d'they spend their ^{lives} time?"

"Paddling their arms off," Braaf guessed, "about same as we are?"

"Sit on mine and ride home, Braaf. I mean truth here. This bedamned coast now, like forty kinds of a Finland. What's the use of these fish-fuckers, scattin around here and there? Whyn't it just empty?"

check

...We need to hope it damned well is, here ^{on}...

Karlsson aloud: "Maybe people are like crops, come up everywhere."

"Or weeds, if they're Wennbergs," added Braaf.

"Oh, Hell take the both of you." ~~Wennberg's disgust was profound.~~

"A man tries to figure life, and you ~~point~~ fart from the front of your faces at him. I'm turning in. A blanket's better company than you pair."

#

...Still can be as ~~hard~~ ^{touchy} as a poisoned pup, Wennberg can.

But at least it's not war. Maybe he's in troth about it, needing me to lead. Or thinking that I'm leading, instead of just tumbling us down this coast. . . .

#

Karlsson came awake just after daylight had begun to hint.

4/1/18 24 dark

By the time Braaf and Wennberg were roused and breakfast was into in their cloaks and hoods of dark the three of them, ridgelines and mountains were arriving to sight all around the channel.

Canoe prow into water, three paddles into the shimmer sent by the craft. The near shore, the western, was coming distinct with trees now. Then within the first few hundred strokes by the canoe men the

horizon to the east ~~lit~~ ^{brightened} with low strips of dawn as ~~if~~ ^{though} chinking had fallen ^m out between mountains and clouded sky.

unmanned

The dawn warmed from silver to ~~oo~~ ^{straw} yellow, to peach. Then ~~the~~ clouds, burnt free by the light, began to drift from view over the eastern crags. Karlsson's third day as escapemaster was going to be stormless.

#

...Thank you to this, any day. Sun, easy water. Wine and figs next, aye, Melander? . . .

The paddles dipped, glistened wet on the forward reach of the stroke, dipped again.

Braaf haphazardly hummed. That he seemed to have no acquaintanceship ~~with~~ ^{mattered none to Braaf.} whatsoever with tune did not matter his random buzzes irked Wennberg, which sufficiently justified them.

Wennberg ^{today} you would have thought a ^{prisoner} man on his way ^{showed} into exile. In his armwork ~~was~~ none of Karlsson's thrift nor

Braaf's minimum attention, ^{just} ~~simply~~ the resigned plod of a man wishing he were anywhere else.

Karlsson while he paddled scanned steadily ahead, as though he could pull the horizon of water nearer with his eyes.

The canoe glided higher in the water now, without Melander. Without, too, as much food. Dried ^{peas} ~~beans~~, tea, corners of biscuit, not much salt horse, less than half the deer. . . the provisions seemed to dwindle these days as if seeping out the bottom of the boat, and Karlsson spent long thinking how to replenish.

Queer, but with forest stacked high on both sides of them now, the timber put less weight on their days than had the ^{single} ~~one-sided~~ throng along the ocean. The calm of the channel, ^{stretching lake-wide,} perhaps made it

so. ^{stood} The ocean-neighboring forest never ~~was~~ quite so quiet at this, there one breeze or another ^{seeking} moving through the upper boughs, birds conversing in the lower limbs, the devil knew what rustling behind

check