Karlsson's face could have served as figurehead for the craft, if it can be imagined that a Kolosh canoe would go to sea with a parson's profile at its front. Everything of him was focused inward toward the portioning-out of effort he knew was needed to survive. Set him down in the Sahara, he would know that one step after another added up to the route to oasis. Put him on a mountain, it would foot-hold-handhold-foothold-handhold until there was no further elevation. Before that mechanism of pace in him gave out, his body would.

Wennberg was at war with a swarm of fears (foes?). The tipping water was bad enough, and the steady exertion demanded, and the terrible absence of land, but the nausea was worse because it was so insidious, within him as if it were a fault of his body. He felt weaker than he could ever remember, yet the work of paddling had to be constant. He too fell into an automatic rhythm with the paddle, jab-lift-pull back-jab, but for a different reason than Karlsson's. Overswarmed with doom, he could think of nothing to do against it but move his arms, which happened to have a paddle at their end.
Among the bigger men, Braaf sat like an urchin. He was the one
among them most in place in this situation, for at deep, this crossing
of Dixon was an act of theft—of stealing life from a hazard which had
every intention of claiming it. Braaf then understood the situation
better than any of them and did what had to be done against odds, fended
to keep them from him for as long as possible, poked the paddle to
the water as if using a stick to discourage a large dog...
Afloat, you are balanced between great distances. Above you, the sky and the down-push of the forces of the universe. Beneath, the thickness of ocean, a compressed universe of its own, with its upward law of gravity, buoyancy. But in time the greater deep, that of the sky, will win the pushing contest in which you are the point of contention, and you will go down. The game is to scamper to neutrality, land, before this can happen...
"You need to know a thing, Wennberg. Braaf, Karlsson, you also.

I heard it from Mishkin, the engineer on the Nicholas. Once he came with a trading mission the Russians tried, before they left this part of the coast to the English. There was a feast—the Russians finally figured out that the natives were trying to make more face—and Mishkin, found himself sitting with a canoe chief. The native wanted to know, as best Mishkin could understand, how many heads the Tsar had. One, like you and me, Mishkin told him. No, the native made him understand, not how many heads. How many skulls? Skulls, said Mishkin, what would the Tsar do with them? Sleep on them, the way Oo does, the native said. He pointed out to Mishkin the chief in the middle of all this carousing.

Why does he sleep on them, Mishkin asked. For strength, the native said. Anybody who sleeps on a pile of skulls is a strong man, is he not?"

Mlander had not meant to tell them this. He was not certain he should have. But no more objections were heard about care over camp fire smoke.
Wennberg pointed to the horizon.

"You've sighted Cape Flyaway," Melander said. "Clouds. Sometimes they sit down on the water like brood hens, and you'd swear they're

land. That Finn skipper spent half a morning once, trying to find

he thought was a prairie of Hawaii, this coast'd gladly trick us.
a thunderhead on his charts. Aye, we need to be careful. Read the

compasses, read the points of land, and not go

chasing clouds. That'll fetch us Astoria."

"What'll it be like?" This was Braaf. "Another woodpile like New

archangel?"

"The sailors' buzz is that it's a proper port. Sits on a fat

river. The Americans..."
W: What would you do, Melander, if the Nicholas came around that point over there just now?

M: After I emptied out my trousers, all right, Wennberg, the Nicholas is much on your mind. What about you other two? What's your guess? Are the Russians on their way after us? Aye?

K: No. They think we can't survive.

W: Why do you think we can?

K: Because we're still alive, and closer to Astoria with each stroke of the paddle.

M: Your prediction, Braaf. Are the Russians on the scent, or not?

B: No. They don't think of us at all by now.

W: We sashay out of New Archangel practically under their noses and they don't even think about us? Braaf, your head is mud.

B: They have to forget us, or we'll mean too much to them.

You learn that fast in the streets. (B's first reference to being a thief)

They may regret the canoe. They may regret the provisions I took from them.

But us, we're wisps by now.
So they had slipped themselves from the seven-year shackle of New Archangel. Melander's escape plan had tutored them through the months of wait and watch and filch and cache, had steered them around the night-black maze of Sitka Sound's isles, had nerved them to face down the Kolosh bountymen. Now all it needed to do was somehow to conquer a vast wilderness of coastline, one of the earth's longest and most wild coastlines.

Melandor let everyone sleep for three hours after that first stop, then had them back into the canoe for an afternoon of paddling. He knew, as sailors must, that time must be seized whenever it can; any distance gained here early in their voyage was that much less to be ground out later, when they were wearier.

He brought them to 200 near 00 before stopping for the night. Braaf, the least accustomed to labor, looked particularly done in. He said nothing, however, and lent a hand in hefting the canoe...
So, the matter came down to distance and speed, speed and distance.

Melander preached to his crew like a prophet now. "Dig that paddle, Wennberg. You're strong as bran wine now... Braaf, can you find it in your heart to stroke along with the rest of us...? We're doing it, Karlsson. No water is wide as forever..." The canoe moved southeast at a steady pace. They had no timepiece, but an onlooker could have clocked Melander's periods of paddling to within two minutes. Each rest period, one man would continue to paddle to keep the canoe from backsliding. He then rested briefly while the other three resumed, then once in a while plunged in again. Wennberg grumbled and Braaf shirked out of sheer habit when he wasn't reminding himself otherwise, but their strokes added up.

Karlsson was a human piston at the bow of the canoe. Dixon Entrance began to swallow them—they were farther from land than they yet had been since leaving New Archangel, and were not quite halfway across—and Melander consulted a compass more often. They moved their arms and tried to put from mind the numbing of their knees, and across cedar-colored Dixon Entrance they came, a creature on gray, four broad-hoofed legs working at the water, running on the sea.
A low wall of reassurance lay behind them: the outline of Ball Island and its neighbor, Prince of Wales. Distant as it was, the island shoreline seemed a foothold, a place to return to. Then, just after Melander reckoned and announced they might be a third of the way across, Braaf glanced back and saw that the land-wall was gone. In place of the islands stood a sheet of fog.

They were now in a bowl of sea, nothing but water or its air-alljes, fog and cloud, all about them.
Near to what Melander estimated must be the mid-point of the
channel, waves began to chop harder than at any other time of their
voyage, as if annoyed that anything frail as a canoe would dare onto
the plateau of water. There was a new sound against the side of the
canoe, and a more stinging spray.

While Melander was noting these additions, Braaf noticed an absence.
The gulls which cruised in curiosity beside them in the island waters
were gone. He discovered too that the air felt different, more biting,
and that a curtain off to the west did not look like fog, nor rain.
Braaf turned his head enough to say softly over this shoulder to Melander,
as if it were their secret, "Snow."

"Jesu Maria," Melander said back.

The storm hit them first with wind. Gusting, it took the canoe
immediately at an angle from the northeast (?), as if sneaking behind
the range of vision of the prow designs. Then the snow arrived, flakes
kiting on the drafts to them. The flakes were fat and wet,
like spume blown off the clouds. Melander hoped it meant the storm
was a squall, the unloading of a few clouds which had got too heavy for
themselves, rather than a settling-in blizzard.
Wind streaks lay on the water, long ropey crawlers of white.

"Neptune's snakes," Melander knew them as from his shipboard years.
"Rye-cakes," Wennberg burst out one night beside the fire.

The other three broke into laughter.

"Laugh yourselves crooked, you bastards, but you'd give as much for a rye-cake right now as I would."

"Mister Blacksmith is right," Melander admitted with a chuckle.

"Though with me it's not rye-cakes, but a featherbed in a sailor's inn I know at Danzig. Sink I could bob in that for a week and never open an eye except to look for more sleep, aye?"

Karlsson nominated next. "A woman I knew in our village in Skane," he said slowly...

Braaf blinked as the other three looked at him. "I'll settle for three paces of headstart on each of you."
Melander let his breath out with great slowness and said:

"Yes, I have heard of that."

Braaf nodded above his armload of wood. "I thought they did;"

he said, and turned back toward camp.
in the evenings, and so would feed us supper catch-as-catch-
could at home, with Harold arriving whenever he found space
between waiting repairs. Once after he made his wordless come
and go, I went to the kitchen and joked to Gertie: Harold
must've been here for his supper, hmm? I heard the kitchen
door slam twice. She whooped with laughter, and to my alarm
retold the lines to Harold when he came home after closing.
He looked across at me and gave me a great
surprise as I waited warily, and then gave me a great
dark silent grin.

And Tom: Tommy Chad, as the townspeople sometimes
liited about this boy-man.

The one uneasiness I felt about Grandma's
instant deposit of me with the Chadwicks was the news that they had a son
of their own. Ever since my winter with the Kelsos, when their son Eric
was my classmate in the third grade, my boardings had been without such
a complication, and I had been free to get by with my learned habit of
walking into a strange living room, opening a book and disappearing into
it until the weekend. But now I stood shaking hands with Tom, his eyes
great with curiosity about me, but saying almost as little as I did. It
ever did
turned out that we would not need to say much aloud, but, like a Brazilian
and a Lapplander somehow falling into step in the same forest, we could
appreciate each other by instinct.

His mother's thick-set look
had rebuilt itself on Tom: anvil shoulders and solid beams
of arms, his neck a collar of heft, blocky power everywhere
you looked on him. Not you looked first at his
eyes, bright under their dark thatches of brow as mountain
ponds beneath a ridge of timber.
"Tumble up!" Melander roused them as rapidly as if they were the crew of a schooner aiming into storm, and for the same reason: He knew, as a sea veteran must, that time had to be snatched whenever it could be. Any distance gained here early in their voyage was that much less to be ground out later, when they were wearier.

Accordingly, Melander captained them to near 00 before stopping for the night. Braaf, the least accustomed to muscular labor, looked particularly done in. He said nothing, however, and lent a hand in hefting the canoe into shelter among a shore-touching stand of spruce. Wennberg was cajoled into building a fire, Melander apportioned beans and salt meat into a kettle, Karlsson spread the sail-cloth tarp which would serve as ground-cloth. Night two of their leaving of New Archangel had commenced.
"Cheery as a long gravestone, isn't it? The Russians deserve such country." They were into their second day of paddling beside the gray rock shoreline of Baranof Island, and Melander was trying to brighten the situation.

"Maybe we should have pointed north." Karlsson was going along with the try. "I've been up the coast with the bear-robbers"—as cottages—the hunters—"and the cliffs are white there."

"You'd see enough white, all right, sooner than soon. Icebergs and glaciers. It's the north slope of hell up there. No, credit me with knowing enough to aim us the other way."

"Does that mean you're taking us down the south slope, Melander?"

(Wennberg)

Melander sighed. "Wennberg, your soul is as gray as those rocks. Shut up and paddle."

(Original text on this page is incomplete or illegible.)
Braaf and Wennberg and Melander now realized, though it never
would have occurred to the first two to offer it aloud and even
Melander found it a matter to unwieldy to frame into words, that in
all their time at New Archangel they never truly had seen the Alaskan
forest. Pinched onto its site as it was, New Archangel was grand as
Stockholm, in comparison with this vastness of standing wood. Oh, when compared
the green flow hedged the fort and settlement, furred the isles of
Sitka Sound and the humped back of QO Island to the west, but now
the forest stretched beside them like some boundless garment of time.
The horizon on their left constantly jutted with trees as steadily
as there was firmament for them to fasten themselves upright on
where soil ran out at the shore edge, they would try rock. Each
tree offered dozens of branches in its long pointed pile of shape
It took them the next day and most of the one after to reach the southern tip of Baranof Island, Cape Ommeny. In that time they saw not another human—which was what Melander had banked on—nor even any sealife; for the Russian-American Company’s hunters long since had harvested these waters bare of otters and seals. But birds were constant. Baleful crows sometimes circled them. Eagles rode the air above the coastal lines of bluff, making their watchful glides before letting the air spiral them high again. Seagulls, cormorants, breathing ducks of a dozen kinds; at times, everything seemed thing of this coastline except the four paddlers seemed to take wing.

Cape Ommeny stood as the land’s sentry against the open all water around it, a promontory which rose as it went until it had hunched itself into a stony bluff nearly half a mile high. Perhaps it reminded Wennberg of the humped mountains around New Archangel, for that evening after supper he nodded out toward the bay between them and the cape and asked: "What would you do, Melander, if the Nicholas came around that point just now?"

"After I emptied my trousers, do you mean? So then, Wennberg, the Nicholas is in your dreams tonight. Me, I think she’s still
By now they were at the southern tip of Kuiu, off a rocky point which looked more now than any profile of the island yet. Clumps of timber stood in the water beyond. Melander looked at his map; a thread of line hung in this channel, indicating a ship had navigated through here. They set off for the islands, and pulled to shelter on one just short of full dark.

It had been a day of stumble, two stairs down when they had intended, but they had alit still secure.

In the next days, they worked southeast through constant islands. The big island called Prince of Wales rests in this topography like a long platter, and the scatter of land is as if its western rim has been shattered to bits. The could cut a course which, while Melander said a snake would break its back trying to follow their wake, kept them steadily shielded from the ocean's weather. With the days merely steady paddling, they began to be a kind of floating household.
The North Pacific has its own logic of existence; is, in a way, a shard-shaped planet unto itself. Its special law of gravity is lateral; currents and winds dominate rule. Most of the world's climates are arrayed somewhere along this coastline, from polar cold to the sting of desert heat.
Karlsson had suggested they try trolling, so a line and hook baited with salt pork was let out of the canoe behind Melander. On their second day, the line whirred behind Melander, and he struggled to pull in their catch.

_Melander got the head of the fish out of the water at the side of the canoe, then stopped tugging._ "Mother of Moses," he swore in wonder.

"Ugly pig of a thing," Wennberg observed. "What the devil is it?"

"Looks like a shark fathered by a toad," Melander muttered. None of them had ever seen the species of small shark called dogfish. "Well, what do you say? Do we try to eat it?"

No one wanted to be the first to admit how repellent the dogfish looked. At last Karlsson said, "I'm the chef, and I'll give it a try. But I don't know..."

"Hunger is good sauce," Braaf said dubiously.

"It better be," said Wennberg.

"At least cut off its head first," Braaf prompted. "Else it looks like it'll be gnawing on us before we can get to it."

"Somebody reach the hatchet and conk the bastard," Melander ordered.
A twenty-nosed sea creature poked abruptly from the water, them a thunderous burp, and sank. "Sea lions," M said. When the school surfaced again, each head making quick thrusts as if puncturing the water, they swam beside the canoe..."Mermaids," O0 said...
Their faces were becoming barbed with beard—Melander's and Karlsson's blonde, like barley chaff, and Wennberg's a surprising sorrel shade—except for Braaf's. His cheek-coverlet was a downy fuzz. "Angel whiskers," Wennberg said derisively.
A moment of each of these dusks, cherish with Melander the scroll
he fetches from its snug place in the canoe. Hunkered within the circle
of firelight, one by one he polishes four biscuit-sized stones against
his pant-leg. Like a Muslim unfurling a prayer rug, he rolls out
the Tebenkov maps, setting a scrubbed stone to weight each corner.

There is not much that Melander is reverent about, but these maps
qualify. Each of them seemed not just a line rendering, but a miniature
country in itself. Tiny shrubs indicated forest. Tidestills were delicately
dotted, as if speck-sized clams were breathing beneath. The rises in
elevation, in which the coastline abounded, were shown as scalloped
plateaus with shadow-lines fanning down. Proven sailing routes ran
thread-like, as if an exploring spider had tested out the journeys.

The total of engraver's strokes upon each map was astounding, thousands.

Melander could not imagine who, among the Russian pen-jabbers in the
Castle, had the skill and energy for such work.
In our time, a poet has offered the thought that it is within the civilized portions of maps now that the injunction should be inked, Here be monsters. Melander’s maps represent a point of balance in humankind’s relationship with the North Pacific—an era beyond sea serpents, and before dismay. They were, in short, an intelligently drawn estimate of the waters and the stubs of land.

As craftsmanship, the maps would have pleased a king. Governor Tebenkov wrenched the information from Russian captains who had at last begun to think themselves modern men, and turned it over to a gifted one of the New Archangel Creoles, a gifted copper-worker named Terentiev.

The Creoles’ linecraft would have pleased a king. Casting a glance onto these maps was like looking suddenly beneath the skin of this coast, to the bones and ligaments: ledges of rock, clots of rock...

The frame of this coastline was what Melander needed to know, and the Tebenkov maps delivered it.
A moment of these encamped nights, cherish with Melander the scroll he fetches from its snug place in the canoe.

Hunkered within the firelight as Braaf and Wennberg and Karlsson settle to sleep, one by one he polishes four biscuit-sized stones against his pant-leg. Wipes his fingers down his shirt front. Digs from a pocket a stub of pencil. Now like a Muslim with a prayer rug, unfurls the roll and sets a scrubbed stone to weight each corner.

There is not much that Melander is reverent about, but the Tebenkov maps qualify.

Each of them unfolds as almost a tiny country in itself. Miniscule shrubs indicate forest. Tideflats are delicately dotted, as if speck-sized clams breathe beneath. Wherever the land rises—and this coastline abounds in up and down—the elevation is shown as a scalloped plateau with shadow-lines fanning down. Threaded among the shores and islets are the proven sailing routes, as if an exploring spider has tested out each journey. The total of engraver's strokes on each map is astounding, thousands. Melander cannot imagine who among the Russian pen-jabbers in the Castle had the skill and energy for such work. (In actuality, none. After Governor Tebenkov
wrenched the navigational information from his Russian captains, he turned it over to a gifted copper-artist among the New Archangel Creoles.)

In our time, a poet has offered the thought that it is within the civilization's portions of maps now that the injunction should be inked, Here be monsters. Melander's maps in the firelight represent an instant a point of balance in humankind's relationship with the North Pacific: an era after sea serpents were discounted, and before towns and cities proliferated. To cast a glance onto these functional maps was like looking abruptly beneath the fog-and-cloud skin of this coast, down to the bones and muscles and ligaments. The frame of this coastline is what Melander needs to know, and the Tebenkov maps deliver it to him steadily.
But the coastscape at hand is not Sitka, but the country of the
in furl of third if Melander's maps. The canoeists were among a lingual stew
here--islands named dubbed Heceta and Noyes, Baker and Suárez--which
represented the contention of British explorers with Spanish.
Yet when you came to think of it, everything of these maps was in pieces; dabs, driblets, chunks... The entire coastline was something like a school of sea things--jellyfish and barnacles and ...

It took an effort of will to believe they actually would hold still, either on the map or in actuality, to permit voyage among them.
Just here, as Melander permits a few hours of champagne-aided sleep before an afternoon of paddling, another picture is needed in the mind, large as you can manage to make it. Perhaps larger yet, for this image must be of the northmost arc of the Pacific Ocean: the chill ascendant quarter-moon of that hemisphere of water, the rough curve of expanse from the islands of Japan past the Siberian coast and then the Alaskan, then downcurving south and east along the continental extent of Canada and America.

This rough vault of outline and the tremendous water in between is a section of the planet the Europeans were uncustomarily tardy to get to. Something beyond the ordinary was required to carry their curiosity into the North Pacific, the Englishman Cook's obdurate genius as a floating expeditionary. The Spaniards' religious enclaves in southern California, the Russians' almost hypnotic curiosity as to what would happen if they inched farther and farther out onto the limb of the Aleutians. By the time the United States of America had come into being and the French were beheading Bourbons, fewer than a dozen (?) ships of Europe are known to have ventured as far as the Gulf of Alaska.
Of this Pacific-planet, these four Swedes in a Tlingit canoe are attempting a thousand-mile fraction. Not all that much; In forty or fifty sturdy days you could walk the distance, Except that this particular version of it is broken into archipelago, or barbed with forest where not broken.
Marlsson was the bow paddler; behind him, Wennberg; behind Wennberg, Braaf; Melander in the stern. Melander had thought through this placement, and as ever had his reasons. Karlsson was the strongest paddler.... Wennberg, behind K's example and with the eyes of the other two on him, would try to keep pace with K. Braaf, Melander wanted under his own scrutiny, to see that he didn't shirk.
Melander, as would be expected, had made it his business before they left New Archangel to gather what he could of lore about the southerly coast.

Indeed, some of what he had heard of the people of the coast he would have given much not to know.

"Too much smoke," he said on the fourth evening, and dropped to his knees to fan the fire into purer flame.

"You'd never have lasted over a forge," Wennberg rumbled. "A bit of smoke tans the soul."

Melander calculated it was the third night in a row of this smokey debate with Wennberg. The tall man made his decision, and began.
The next morning, they prepared to cross the channel from Cape Ommaney to Kuiu, the first of the island stairsteps onward from Kuiu could have been the mapmaker's attack of palsy, and on Melander's map a spatter of crooked shores and hedging rocks. Melander said nothing of this to the other three, simply told them that he judged there'd be stout current up this passage and they would need to aim south to end up east. It worked out that way, and by noon the canoe was nearing the shore of Kuiu. Here, however, and squiggles, the muss of dots on the map became real, and the shore stood to them "No hole in the shore, aye?" with headland and snow decorated with blown whiteness off peaks behind. Surf hit onto rocks not far south of the point. "Let's stay away from that horse market," Melander decided, and avoiding the channel between headland and rocks, the canoe aimed south again. In a few miles, they found a cove which faced open to the weather from the west, and voted in. The next morning, Kuiu was a more exposed yet. "'Sesu Maria," Melander said, "is this whole damn island unbuttoned. Finally, near dusk, Melander steered them into a rock-rimmed bay like this?" Two further inhospitable coves answered him.

Dusk was not far by now, and the work of paddling against the current was wearying. They nearly blundered into a big patch of kelp before Karlsson spotted it in the gloom.
By now the canoe had reached the southern tip of Kuiu, off a rocky point which looked more unwelcoming than any profile of the island yet. What looked like clumps of timber stood in the water beyond. Melander peered close at his map. A thread of line hung through this channel, indicating a ship had navigated it; that testimony was needed, because rocks could hide themselves in this dusk. Melander set the craft off for the timber clumps, and the canoeists pulled to shelter on one of the narrow islands just short of full dark.

This had been a day of stumble, two stair-treads of island when but one had been intended. But Melander and company had alit still secure.
"Braaf, you piss near me one more time and I'll rub your nose
in it like a pup." Wennberg's warning halted Braaf in mid-pull
at the front of his thighs. He arced a look from the object of interest
there to the seated figure of the blacksmith, as if calculating
Across the campfire from Wennberg, Melander carrying power. Melander
minutely shook his head in message to Braaf: don't rile him.

"I'll wait for the day I have enough to drown you," Braaf said
off-handedly and moved away into the trees. As he stood with his
legs wide, he became aware that something seemed focused on his back:
some pressure of watching, as when instinct told him the instant was
wrong for pilferage. But in these woods...Braaf whirled and met the
eyes. Eyes as big as his hands, blindly staring at him from either
side of a long hooked beak.

It took him a half-moment to realize that the creature was wood, and that atop it, half hidden by tree limbs, squatted other
staring creatures, a ladder of sets of eyes.

Braaf plunged from the trees, beckoned to the other three men.
Melander remembered a morning in the Kolosh market beside the stockade gate. A canoe party had come in from somewhere, and amid those who were hawking their wares sat a seam-faced man, a carver. Word had spread through New Archangel about his strange work: knife blades that... Dobzhansky the interpreter managed to converse with the man. Melander asked what had been said. Dobzhansky said he had inquired how many years it had taken to attain such skill. The carver told him, "As long as I have lived, I have carved. If the spirit people will let me, I will carve even after I am dead."
M recalls a carver who visited at Sitka, selling knives with carved walnut--from gunstock--handles. (ex in Reid/Holm book) Complimented on his work, or asked how long such skill has taken to learn, the carver says, "I have carved all my life. If the spirit people will let me, I will carve even after I am dead."

Karlsson goes over and puts a hand on the carved columns.
"What is this?" Braaf asked.

"It's a cathedral," Melander replied.

"Don't give us your goddamned riddles, Melander," Wennberg rasped.

"What are these things?"

Melander looked steadily at Wennberg. "It's a cathedral," he repeated. "Whatever these people believe is said in these carvings, understand. If we can't read them, that is a matter of language—like trying to listen to what a Finn says." Around them the columns shot to the sky, pillars of an edifice of legend built for 00 generations. Eagle perched atop bear, orca dove through the bodies of 00, 00, 00. The forest seemed to watch the display, and the men, without knowing what it was, felt the watching.

"Why is it deserted?" Braaf wanted to know.

"Maybe they're like the Kolosh," Karlsson guessed. "They have summer villages where they hunt from; in winter they pull back to a main village, like Sitka."
On the next of the Tebenkov maps—had Karlsson had a next map—
Vancouver Island lay angled like a colossal oyster shell... Blunt at
each end, 000 miles in length and generally 00 wide, sharp with inlets
and bays... Midway down its western shore, a particularly large and rough
nick showed. Ныцка, the cyrillic script beside it read. Nootka, the
Sound where...

One further thing was noticeable on this 00 map. No thread of
route went along that west shore. Melander knew enough of the navigation
of this coast to realize that the sheltered route lay along the opposite
side, and he would have taken them east. Karlsson headed them west.
opinions

These places of frontier enterprise, whether they were called Sitka
or Santa Fe or Johannesburg or Leopoldville, were the framework of
particular
an age. Empires pulleved from them: the haul of Sitka was fur. Fur
mean 00, and 00 meant 00; both meant 00.

The energies of nations pulsed out along the routes, met the
forcefield of existing cultures, changed or broke them. The effect
was cumulative as that of glaciers.

Peltry was a soft gold.

At a place called Nootka Sound, like mountaineering parties
clambering in from all sides of the same precipice, the empire-makers
adventurer
all enmeshed. The Englishman Meares had Chinese crews building trading
vessels, the Spanish came up from Mexico to stop him, the Russians were
on the northern verge, the Americans prodding along the southern.

involved continental chunks big as all of Europe
The trade-off was colossal, at least in spans on the map:
Wennberg's face hung open in a look of surprise. His mouth made motions but no sound. Then, with effort: "I'm getting sick."

"If you don't paddle, you'll get dead, and us with you. Have a puke now and be done with it, Wennberg. We need your arms."

Wennberg put his head over the side of the canoe and opened his mouth as if gasping help up from the ocean. After a minute the gasps became words: "Can't. Too. Sick."

"You've got to. Wennberg, listen to me. Run a finger down your throat, do anything—tell yourself you've swallowed soapberries—but get the sickness out of you now. Do it, Wennberg. Dump your gut."

"Keep on, you'll have me puking too," muttered Braaf.

Just then Melander's advice had its intended effect on Wennberg.

"There now," Melander proclaimed in satisfaction. "You'll be a bull again before you know it. Rest a bit, we can spare you until you get your breath back."

Wennberg focused whitely toward Melander. "Melander, one time I'll reach down that mouth of yours and..." But in minutes, he had picked up his paddle and, while still not smoothly in phase with the others, added propulsion to theirs.
"More beef, Wennberg. Push that paddle deeper, aye?" Melander's urging began while the tips of the fir trees of Dall Island still were distinct behind them. He had not expected Wennberg to be slack in this situation; Braaf was the one who chronically scanted his labor.

But Braaf was thrusting steadily, [his rag-wrapped hands as if bound to the paddle] and he added a gibe to Melander's admonition: "Bashful are you, Wennberg? Reach right down there and meet it, why not..."

Wennberg grumped something unhearable at these remarks to him, and his paddling picked up markedly. But forty or fifty hillocks of water later, he again was faltering, a step in the rhythm of the boat.

"Wennberg, you're dabbing at it again." Melander's tone had sharpened

The broad man held his paddle just above the water, as if trying to recall whether water or air was the element in which it operated.

He swiveled the upper part of his body enough to look back at Melander.
On Melander's map, three widths of a thumb would have spanned the space inscribed "Dixon Entrance." In actuality, the entire span of water extends twice the distance of the English Channel between Dover and Calais, and no calm white cliffs stand as guides. The canoeists' crossing would be stretched even farther because they would need to go oblique, angled east to the arm of land. All in all, calculated Melander, it added up to most of a day of paddling.
"Sleep deep," Melander said. "Tomorrow we introduce ourselves to Kaigani."

The letters lay large near the bottom of Melander's third map, and in sober block rather than the delicate script elsewhere on the paper. [Prok Kaigani. Kaigani Strait.]
A wavery wall of reassurance yet could be seen behind them—the outline of Dall Island and its neighbor, Prince of Wales. Distant as it had become, the shoreline of the islands seemed a footing, a place to return to. Then, just after Meander reckoned aloud that they might be a third of the way across, Karlsson glanced back and saw that the landwall was gone. In place of the islands hung a sheet of fog. The canoeman now were in a basin of sea, nothing in the air, and fog, but water or its flying allies cloud all about them.
The river carved through the land like a great smooth glacier. Had the gray surface been solid enough to walk on—it would have come to be a measure in some seasons of runoff that not much more mud content was needed to make it pedestrian—-it would have taken a man striding from its north shore to its south an entire hour. That man would have crossed the largest river of the Pacific shore of the Americas, the Columbia, and there on the south bank he would have stamped his feet on Astoria.

Astoria was tiny, but already in its third incarnation. John Jacob Astor’s wealth had installed the settlement in 1800 as a fur depot. The War of 1812 passed the site to British control, and it became Fort George... By the late 1840’s it was Astoria once more. Not so much of a place any more—a post office, some stores and saloons... all in all, a few dozen structures huddled at the foot of a Columbia headland. Yet, a port, ships calling regularly...

If for some reason you found yourself at Astoria, you could make your way on into the world from its little docks.

This night, the four canoe-going Swedes are 000 miles upcoast from Astoria.
Amidships of the canoe, Wennberg heaved the boulder within his arms to the height of his face, and with a grunt let it crash into the bottom of the craft. The crunch was like the enlarged noise of a club striking an animal's skull, and the canoe bottom broke in a descent of splinters beneath the rock.

Wennberg gave one rapid look then skirted the stern of the canoe again and began running, 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 Karisson and Braaf
were struggling to the beach with their own canoe, somehow finding time as well to yell at Wennberg to hurry up and lend a hand.

They put the canoe into the surf just as the first musket ball blooped the water beside them. Wennberg in puffing agony looked back to see two men in skins kneeling to fire, five or six more on their way to the beach, as many more clustered around the spine-broken canoe.

Karlsson hurried a shot at the two nearest shooters, missed them but made them flinch away from the shot's ricochet among the beach gravel, and threw his musket into the forepart of the canoe. "Jesu ari, get in and paddle!" Melander cried. They stroked as if hurling the ocean behind them as a barrier, and the canoe climbed a mild breaker in slow surge to the beach, sped, climbed a stronger wave, then slid rapidly southward from the figures on the beach.
Morning. Melander stood just outside the line of trees, studying the shore, when Karlsson came beside him. To their right, the beach extended in a smooth arc of tan sand and treeline as far as they could see. To their left the beach cut sharply inland, and beyond the cove-like cut a wall of trees sheered out to meet the water of Dixon Entrance. Melander dipped his head toward the trees in a pointing nod, and Karlsson realized the treetops were They rose, however, as they neared the shore, into towering tops. Melander dipped his head toward the green spires in a pointing nod. "We should have a look there. Tell Braaf we're going..."
Having pushed the canoe into the placid water, Karlsson and
Melandar found themselves paddling across the mouth of a river, dark
and flowing very slowly. Small circles of foam spun
along its surface toward them like ghostly anemones. On the far side,
they began to discern a black rim of rock between the waterline and the
(overlined "forest")
Around the point of rock they pulled the canoe to security and clambered onto the flow of black rock for a full look.

"God's bones, what a place," Melander murmured. The point had been convulsed into hummocks and parapets, pitted with fist-size holes as if having been under siege from small cannon, riven into troughs by the waves. As they stood looking, surf blasted up from a blowhole behind them, a mocking geyser of white falling as they whirled to it.

Inland, a tumble of black boulders the size of ox carts. Then a narrow stand of fir trees. Then a sharp upshot of cliff, which went into the fog just above the tree tops.
Karlsson stood under the great trees, waiting for Melander.

A bead of water ticked his right wrist, and he looked with surprise at the moisture. He turned his head until he was looking straight up. He could see a water bead leave its limb fifty feet above him and drop like a slow tiny jewel, and still he had time to step aside from it before it struck. It was like strange, slowed-down rain.

The droplets occurred two or three to the minute; Karlsson found he could dodge nearly all of them, stepping back and forth around the tree trunk, head aimed up like a drunk man at the gate of God. The play of it took him over without his being aware of it happening; his mind went free and nothing existed but the dazzles of water and his strangely dancing body...

(Have M find him at this?)
Rain stayed with them steadily. This was not New Archangel's
soft, muslin-like showers, but cold hard rods of wet, drilling
down on them. Its sound wax came up off their garments--00,00--
like fingers drumming on an impatient knee.
The others were in well-worn rainshirts, but Braaf sat resplendent in a thigh-length Aleut parka, colored yarn sewn into designs at the wrists, a front-ruff of eagle down... (check details with Cook slide, ref in Voyage Details card file)

"What're you, the crown prince?" Wennberg had demanded that first morning. "Where'd you get that?"

Braaf held up a wrist and admired a scroll of sewn design.

"Oh... round and about."
It took a number of nights to become accustomed to the noise of the water along the shoreline. Melander, for his part, was made uneasy by an absence, and at last placed it; he was listening for the creak of ship timbers, the other part of the choir whenever ocean was heard.
Usual bruised-looking sky, tatters of fog in the tree tops.

wore as if

This coast's mornings looked like brawl had gone on all night.

in the heavens
Trees pushed down to the absolute waterline: green, then blue. You could reach up from swimming and make your way hand-over-hand thru the forest.
The nearest mountains stood green as meadows. The next, higher
group darkened toward black. Then the highest, the horizon peaks,
were a shadowed blue, as they were being thinned of substance as they
extended down the coast.
The sun swung so low along the southern horizon that its glare struck the water in front of the canoe. Its dazzling path squinted was a hazard to the eyes. Melander breathed and swore. "Too much of everything, this coast has..."

After the days of gray, an hour or so of sun left them sozzled, light-headed.
Occasionally the current twirled witches' knots in itself. The canoemen watched once as a drifting tree made a complete circle such a whirlpool took a drifting tree into a complete circle, like a compass needle in total turn.
It was noticeable now that they were gaining a bit of daylight each day. "After Christmas, each day gets a chicken-step longer," Melander recited.
Among these four voyagers, crosscurrents waited which, if they were let to flow free, might prove as roily as any of the North Pacific's.

Wennberg was the source of most tension, for after his manner of wedging himself into the escape, none of the others could entirely put trust in him.

As with many strong-tempered men, the anger in Wennberg which could flare pure and fast as fire covered his other qualities.

He was a highly capable voyager, able to put up with discomforts day upon day, as steady a worker as could be asked, if some incident did not set him off—but the trigger in him was always close to click.

As for Melander, the problem with so toplofty a type is that ordinary men cannot always see eye to eye with him. Difficult to be totally at ease with a man who thinks so many steps ahead, even though those stairs of thought may be your salvation.

Similarly, Karlsson's silent style could be thought a bit too aloof. There was not much visit in this slender man from Skane, and less jokery.
"Buried as Bering," said Melander.

"Mean what?" queried Braaf.

"Knock again," Braaf invited.

"It's something the Russian navy men say. Bering was a skipper, up in the islands where the Aleuts come from. He was sailing in the Tsar's ship, a ship called the Saint Peter. A true Russian vessel, leaky as a basket. Somewhere up there among the Aleuts they themselves got wintered in. Those islands don't have a whisker of timber, Bering dug in burrows like and his crew into sandhills, put up sail canvas for roof. Lived like lemmings, tell it, aye? Lived till they died, at least, and then, the Rooski say, would come into camp and foxes gobbled the bodies. Bering himself took ill and they put him in one of the dugouts. The sand fell 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 Rooskaya says to feel sorry for himself."
In the rivers which cut the Washington shoreline and in the streams which feed down from the mountains into those rivers, a chick-sized bird called the ouzel is common. Slaty in color, peg-tailed, the ouzel behaves as if perplexed about something overhead: every wary of few seconds the bird bobs, as if flinching from that peril in the sky. Evidently, however, the motion is merely practice for its livelihood, which is to walk the bottoms of the rivers and streams, picking bits of feed as it goes. A hydraulic adept, the ouzel seems to be; somehow it has learned to use the flow of current to keep itself pinned down into place during this dinner delve beneath the riffles.

Much in the way that the ouzel can shop along the cellar of the river, the canoeists too were held into route now by the sum of the pressures on them. Weather above, ocean beside, forest solid pressed to along the continent edge—there course was held for them by the powers of the coast.
Braaf? Being around Braaf was like being in the presence of a natural phenomenon, such as St. Elmo's fire or marsh vapors. Braaf simply was there, on his own terms, take for what he was.

As if still in echo of their encounter in the parade ground, Braaf and Wennberg jangled with each other again and again. Wennberg would suggest that Braaf had about as much weight in the world as the fart of a fly, and Braaf would recommend that Wennberg shove his head up the nearest cow's behind to see whether it held any more turds like him. Melander slowed the slanging, without managing ever to quite stop it.
Wennberg, crossing behind Braaf, stopped and looked at the back of Braaf's Aleut coat. "What's this on your back?"

Braaf slipped an arm from the coat, brought the garment around to have a look. Dark splats, as if a rusty rain had fallen, showed across the back and shoulders.

"Blood. From Melander."

Braaf stared at the stains, then gulped, and twin tracks of tears came down his face. Karlsson and Wennberg shifted awkwardly.

Braaf choked out, "Say anything, either of you, and I'll slit you loose from life."
Karlsson knelt close by the firelight, carefully unrolled the map and weighted it at the corners with small rocks. Melander's pencil marks began near the top of the map, at a bite of harbor which K recognized as Sitka Sound, then traced from island to island, the Kuiu-Kosciusko-Heceta chain of their first days, across the channel of peril to the Queen Charlottes, down their shores to the island—not named, Kunghit—where Melander had been killed. Karlsson saw that the island where they now were, just off the mainland, was named Aristazabal.

Then Karlsson glanced to the bottom of the map, and froze. In his mind's eye he saw again the sketch of the escape route M had scratched into the dirt that first day: the briefness of Baranof, then the Queen Charlottes group, then Vancouver Island, then the south from the Strait of Juan de Fuca to Astoria. The map showed the topmost portion of this succession, the north of Vancouver Island, then ended.

Karlsson saw too, in that flash back to Sitka, what had happened. Melander was the one to steal the map from the steamship: he had
to hurry because of the wood crew, had not had time to search through all the maps; would have told them eventually, as he had of the OO, and borne them on. Except now Melander was dead, and it was Karlsson who had to point them into the unknown. He had a sensation of being emptied, as if his body from the stomach down had vanished along with the bottom of the map.
Except for the triple windrows of surf, he woke to rainsound. The day's colors were all grays, sea and sky nearly the same, rocks and forest darker. The big cape to the north was obscured this morning.
Meeting the ocean swell at the mouth of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the brig rocked and dipped as though in introduction. A curtsy, it may have been, for the vessel was named the Jane. Her hold was filled with pilings which would help to underpin the multiplying docks of San Francisco, and she was outbound now from one of the many new sawmill settlements of Puget Sound to the California city. The Jane worked clear of Cape Flattery, bore south at a heading of 00,

Wennberg saw the vessel two hours later. Its twin masts and tail-like gaff sail were like tepees on the water, two miles or so out from the island. He roused Karlsson and Braaf.

They stared at the ship like men yearning to jump to the moon. Under full sail as she was, they couldn't catch her. A signal fire, even if one could be built in time, was unlikely to cause a ship to hove to along this wild coast, but guaranteed to attract the whale-hunting natives. Gunshots were the same proposition. What was left to them was to stand and watch the sails plow out of sight to the south.
Wennberg would happily have been back at his forge--any forge,
wherever--heat and hammer in their heavy dance before him, the
glowing flakes falling from the metal as he imposed shape on it.

He went in his mind a number of times to that morning when he came
behind Braaf in the parade ground at New Archangel--and each time,
he veered yards away from Braaf...But this was like trying
to undo a collision of comets: paths cross paths, and there you are.