

In the WAKE of the JOMON

Stone Age Mariners and a
Voyage across the Pacific

Jon Turk

AUTHOR

Cold Oceans

Jon Turk

JOMON

*Stone Age Mariners and a
Voyage Across the Pacific*

International Marine / McGraw-Hill

Camden, Maine • New York • Chicago • San Francisco • Lisbon • London • Madrid
Mexico City • Milan • New Delhi • San Juan • Seoul • Singapore • Sydney • Toronto

The **McGraw-Hill** Companies

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 DOC DOC 0 9 8 7 6

© 2005, 2006 Jon Turk

All rights reserved. The name "International Marine" and the International Marine logo are trademarks of The McGraw-Hill Companies. Printed in the United States of America.

The Library of Congress has cataloged the cloth edition as follows

Turk, Jonathan.

In the wake of the Jomon : stone age mariners and a voyage across the Pacific / Jon Turk.
— 1st U.S. ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-07-144902-7

1. Prehistoric peoples—Travel—North Pacific Ocean. 2. Jāomon culture. 3. Turk, Jonathan—
Travel—North Pacific Ocean. 4. Ocean travel—North Pacific Ocean. 5. Kayaking. I. Title.

G88.T87 2005

970.01'1—dc22

2005003142

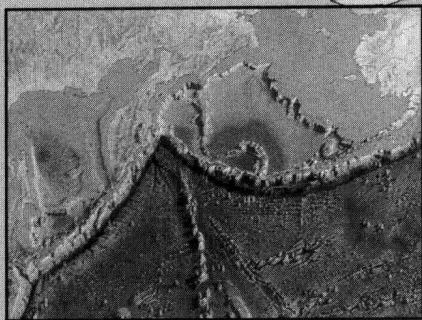
Paperback ISBN 0-07-147465-x

Unless noted otherwise, photographs by Jon Turk

Maps by International Mapping Associates

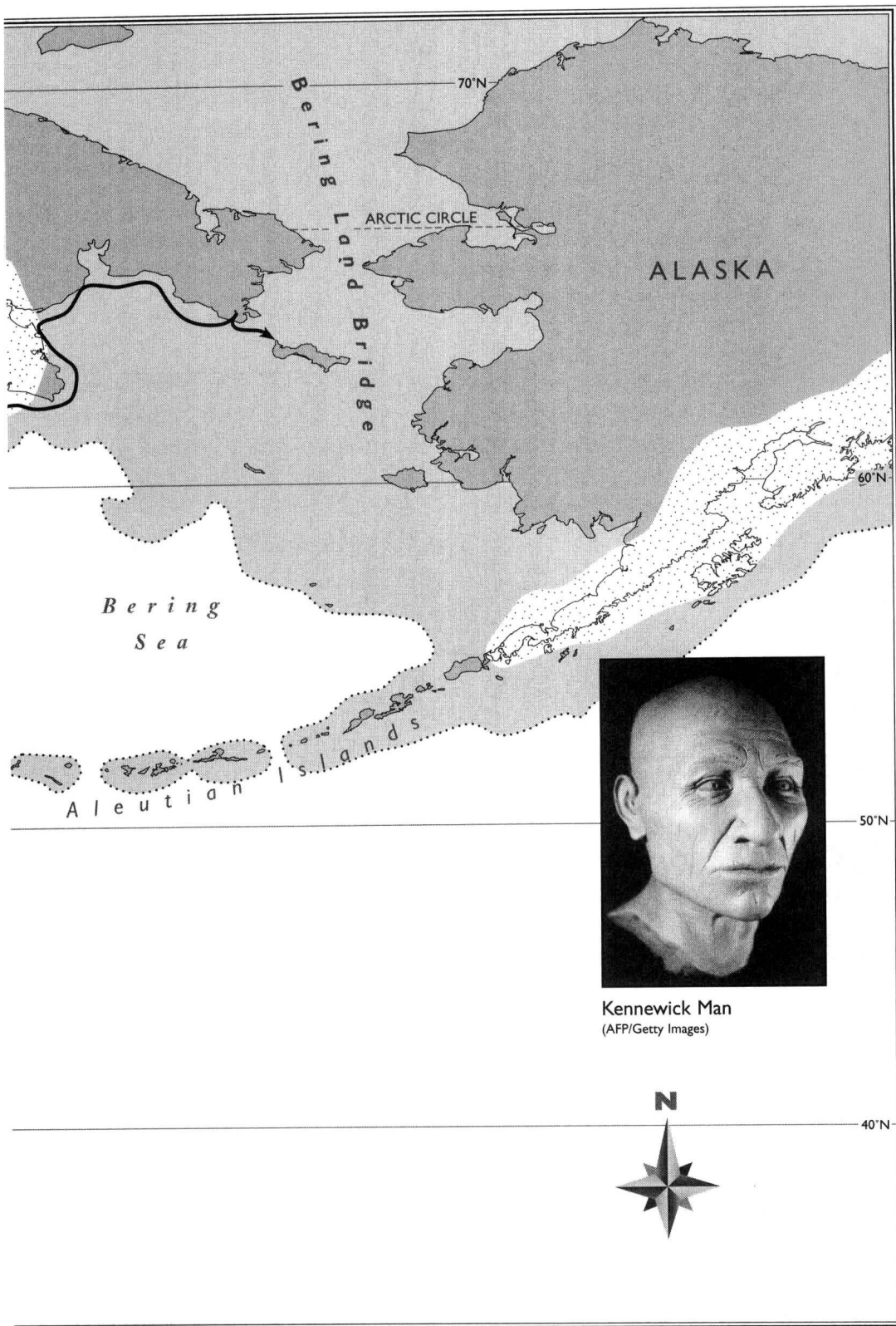
Design and illustrations by Dennis Anderson

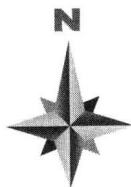
*To my expedition partners Franz Helfenstein, Chris Seashore,
and Misha Petrov, and to all the wonderful people along the
Siberian coast who helped us on our way. This journey would
not have been possible without you.*



The floor of the
North Pacific Ocean
(World Ocean Floor: Bruce E.
Heezen and Marie Tharp, 1977)





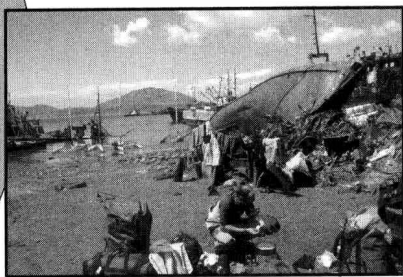


S e a o f O k h o t s k

Sakhalin
Island
(RUSSIA)



Sunset colors lighten the sky on our first sail with Jenya.



Franz brewing up hot soup in the ruins of Yuzno Kurilsk.

Chirpoyev Island
Shear waves and whirlpool, July 14-15
Arrive lighthouse, July 13
Urup Island

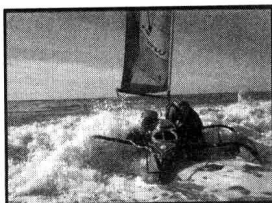
Kurilsk
Jenya leaves the expedition, June 25
Iturup Island

Kunashir Island

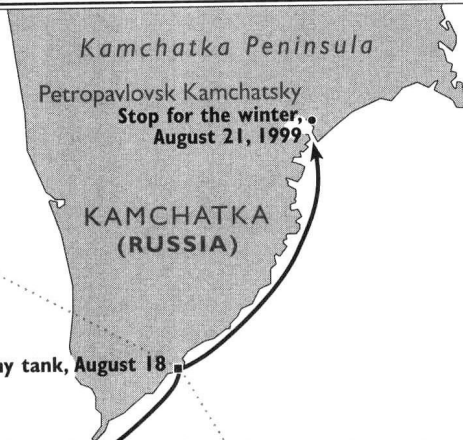
Yuzno Kurilsk
Meet Jenya, June 17

JAPAN

Nemuro
Launch, June 14, 1999



Battling the surf with heavy, cumbersome WindRiders.



Kamchatka Peninsula

Petropavlovsk Kamchatsky
Stop for the winter,
August 21, 1999

KAMCHATKA
(RUSSIA)

Rescued by army tank, August 18

Severo Kurilsk
Phone call to my father, August 10

Paramushir Island

Oneketon Island

Ekarma Island, July 26-27
Shiashkotan Island

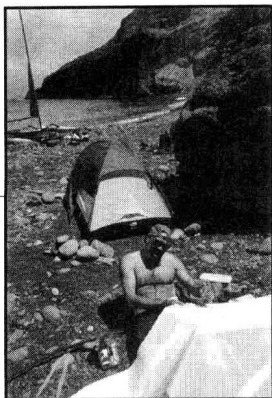
Big storm,
July 23

Simushir Island

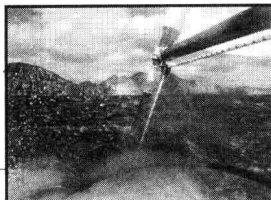
N O R T H P A C I F I C
O C E A N



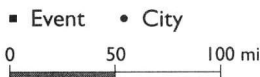
Rescued from the surf by soldiers in a
World War II Russian army tank.



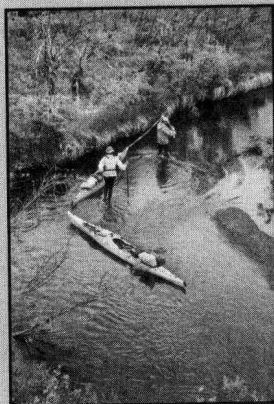
Our gear deteriorated
rapidly and we were con-
stantly making repairs.



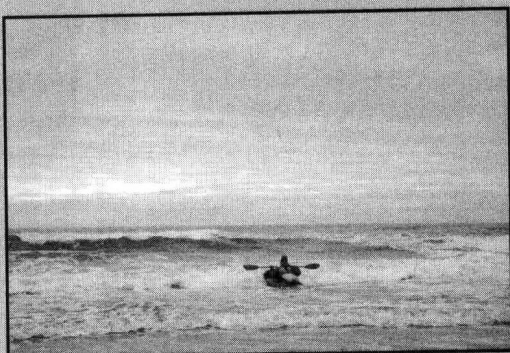
Sailing with "decks awash"
and "a bone in her teeth."



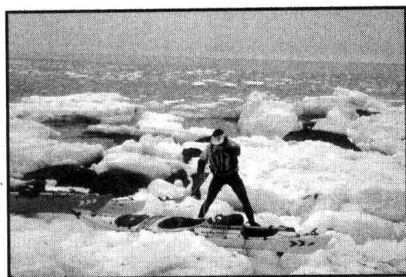
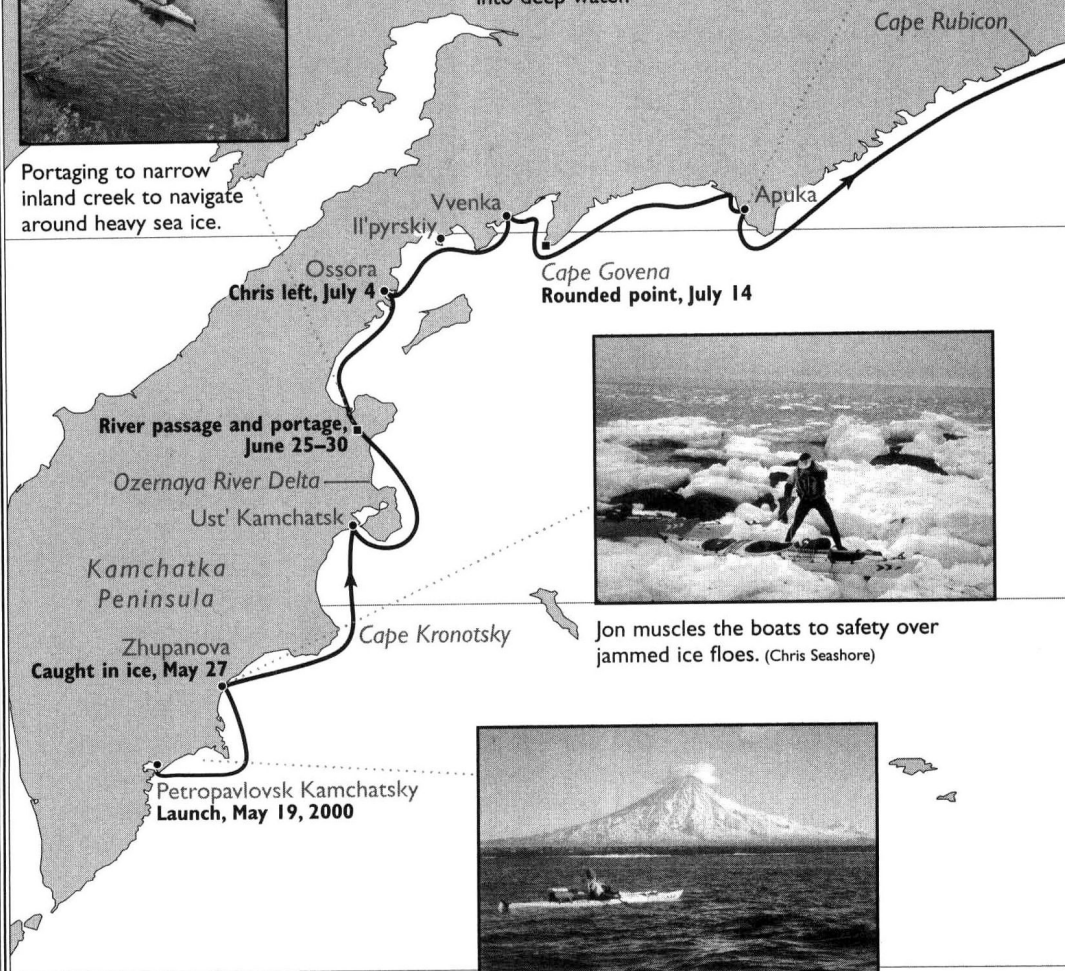
RUSSIA



Portaging to narrow inland creek to navigate around heavy sea ice.



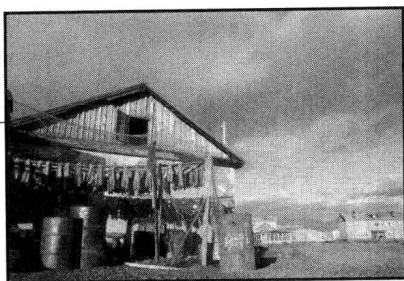
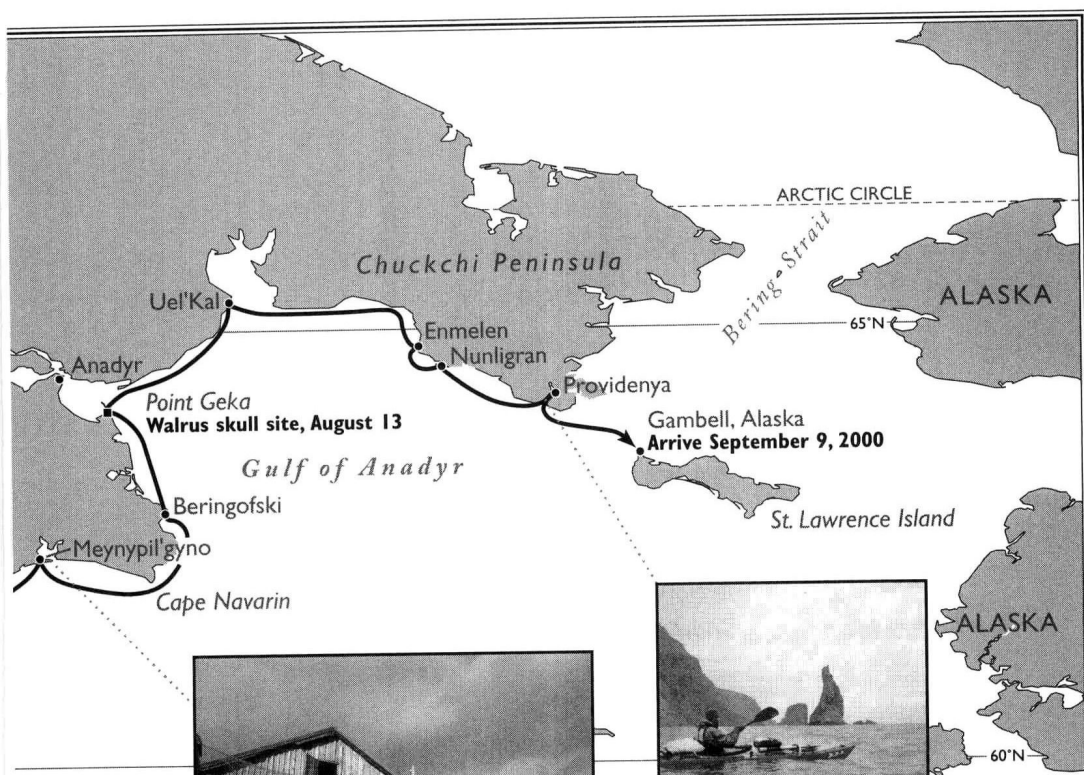
Caught between angry surf and a rocky coast, Misha fights his way into deep water.



Jon muscles the boats to safety over jammed ice floes. (Chris Seashore)



Zhupanovsky Volcano rises above the coastal plain.



House and fish drying rack in Meynypil'gyno.

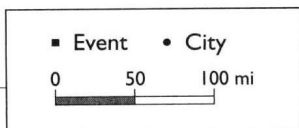
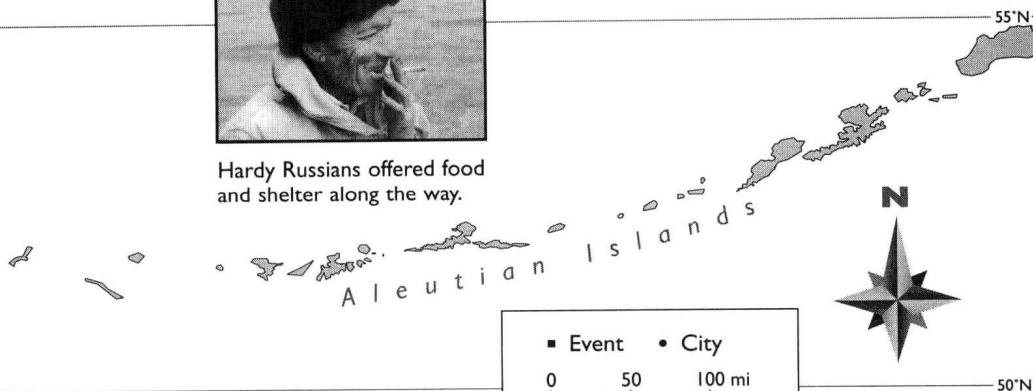


Misha rounds the last rocky point before turning into Providenya Bay.

B e r i n g S e a



Hardy Russians offered food and shelter along the way.



Author's Note

WHEN I sit down to a meal with people, or squat around a campfire, I refuse to create a barrier between us by pulling out a tape recorder. Instead I enjoy the easygoing camaraderie of the moment, then transcribe the conversations in my notebook as soon as I am alone. Naturally, I don't remember everything verbatim, and the dialogues in this book are all written from memory, usually a few hours after the event. Yet I believe that this approach produces a more accurate view than if I held a microphone in people's faces or sat aside, observing, with notebook in hand.

One joy of the expedition was meeting the hardy Russians, Koryak, Chukchi, and Inuit who live along the northeast coast of Siberia and who sheltered, harbored, and fed us along the way. We talked in a confusing mixture of Russian, Koryak, and English. I speak a little pidgin Russian and understand a few simple words and snippets of conversation. Misha's English is quite good, and I would have missed many nuances without his patient translations. In the book, conversations spoken in Russian (and English translations of Russian) are printed in italics. I tried to mimic Misha's English syntax whenever possible.

Anthropologists debate the exact dates of many events in the distant past. Although an accurate chronology is exquisitely important to develop our understanding of Stone Age history, the details can be dry and technical. Rather than participate in arguments I'm not qualified to judge, I present many dates as ranges. Thus, I say that Kennewick Man or his ancestors arrived in North America between 20,000 and 9,500 years ago and defer to the experts for more precise numbers.

In researching this book, I used a scattergun approach, following leads that struck my fancy. I conscientiously read three basic research journals: *Science* and *Nature* cover a broad range of scientific pursuits from nuclear physics to anthropology, while *Arctic Anthropology* focuses on people of the North. Sometimes I skimmed magazines for weeks without finding anything pertinent, then some amazing gem appeared that I never would have dreamed of investigating had I been feeding keywords into Google. Finally, I subscribe to several popular science magazines: *Scientific American*, *Science News*, *Discover*, *Archaeology*, *Archaeology Odyssey*, and *Discovering Archaeology*. I list my major reference books in the annotated bibliography.

For the gearheads among my readers! Franz, Misha, Chris, and I measured distances in nautical miles, recorded by a GPS. I use the terms “miles” and “miles per hour” rather than “nautical miles” and “knots,” just to make life easier for my non-nautical friends and readers. A nautical mile is about 15 percent greater than a statute mile, a critical difference in navigation but an insignificant correction in a narrative set against the vast Pacific.

Franz and I completed the passage from Nemuro to Petropavlovsk Kamchatsky in *WindRiders*. They were great boats, amazingly stable in steep seas. We would have died in a lesser craft.

Misha, Chris, and I paddled north from Petropavlovsk Kamchatsky in plastic Prijon Kodiak sea kayaks. I chose Prijon because their kayaks have the toughest plastic and because the Kodiak is an elegant boat. I prefer plastic over fiberglass or Kevlar because I'm willing to sacrifice weight and speed for the assurance that a boat won't break in the surf.

We wore Lotus Designs paddling jackets and PFDs (lifejackets) on the kayak passage. Lotus makes top-notch paddling gear, and its parent company, Patagonia, has a refreshing environmental ethic.

We wore wet suit Farmer-John bottoms during the second year because I have an old man's irrational, atavistic opinion that neoprene is the best material for the conditions we faced.

I have four great financial needs in my life: gear, gas, grub, and airfare. I thank the folks at Polartec and Gore-Tex for the cash grants for airplane tickets and their help with the gear. Our Gore-Tex suits kept us dry in the Kurils, and Polartec base layers over our core kept us as warm as possible in one of the wettest, coldest environments on Earth.

One final thought: If anyone is planning a vacation or expedition in Kamchatka, I recommend contacting Martha Madsen at explorekam@elizovo.ru.

I encourage you, my readers, to visit my website and to drop me a line expressing your feelings or criticisms about my work.

Jon Turk
www.jonturk.net
jon@jonturk.net

Contents

Author's Note	xv
Prologue	i
Kennewick Man	5
Passage to Petropavlovsk	29
Interlude	125
To Cape Rubicon	135
A Candle for Evdokia	239
Annotated Bibliography	285

Prologue

MY KAYAK slid gently off a wave and settled into an eerie calm, sheltered by mesmerizing gray-green walls of water. A part of me relaxed, even though I knew that this moment of peace was ephemeral. To windward, the next wave reared higher and steeper than its neighbors. The wave loomed, then overreached itself and hung above my head. An instant later, cascading droplets leaped over the precipice and exploded into a growing line of white.

A kayak is so long and skinny that it should roll down the face of a breaking wave like a window shade gone amok. But just before the wave crashed onto my deck, I grabbed the turbulent water with my paddle and cocked my hips to set the edge of my kayak. The motion was automatic and relaxed by now; I felt as though I was resting on the shoulder of a friend rather than combating an enemy. The wave broke against my left cheek, washing away the encrusted salt from the previous wave and leaving a new coating to crystallize in my beard, eyelashes, and even the small hairs inside my ear.

I had launched this journey from Japan fifteen months previously to follow a small group of Stone Age mariners who—all evidence suggests—migrated to North America between 20,000 and 9,500 years ago. Most likely these long-forgotten sailors made their journey in open log canoes, paddling these same waters and marveling at the same menacing waves and the same magic that bears a small, frail boat over their crests. I had come here to share the thoughts, dreams, fears, and exaltations of these ancient seafarers—and in some indefinable way to understand why they had set out across this roiling and tempestuous sea.

At the moment, however, wonder was overshadowed by an acute pain in my elbow that jerked me rudely back into the present. I reached into a small waterproof bottle in my life vest, shook out a white oblong pill, and swallowed it. Soon its anti-inflammatory drugs entered my bloodstream. These molecules were designed to attach themselves to sites of tissue inflammation, but my body was a forest of sore, injured, and inflamed tissues. How were the molecules to know where I wanted them to go? I shouted down into my bloodstream, “Skip all the minor things—the countless little aches and pains, the sore muscles. You can even forget the bruised

vertebrae. Go for the elbow tendon! The left one!" Another wave hit, and when I leaned against my paddle my inflamed tendon throbbed. "Go for the elbow tendon," I whispered hopefully.

The long Arctic summer was sliding into autumn, and the sun was finally dipping into the sea. A quarter moon glowed orange as it hung incongruously above the sun, like two companions on the same watch rather than alternating guardians of day and night. The first stars appeared in the eastern sky, then suddenly more twinkles appeared to the south. It took a few seconds to realize that this wasn't some strange celestial event but the streetlights of Gambell, Alaska. After a passage of 3,000 miles, I had finally crossed the North Pacific.

The Stone Age mariners saw no streetlights, yet somewhere near here they must also have rejoiced to a feeling of accomplishment and relief. When they sailed, the sea level was lower than it is now; more land was exposed, and a map of the North Pacific—had one existed then—would have looked different. At about this latitude, the ancient coastline of North America veered toward the southeast. As the weary sailors turned southward, they must have realized that they were at last heading toward warmer, more temperate lands.

Misha pulled ahead in his fire-engine-red kayak. For months I had been joking with him, "You get the red kayak because you're the Communist Russian." He always smiled patiently at my weak humor, revealing his prominent gold tooth and disarmingly blue eyes. I would smile back, wondering how he managed to maintain such a tidy appearance in this remote land of ice and storm. His Viking-blond beard was always neatly trimmed, and there was never a smudge of campfire soot on his cheek or a stray fish scale lodged in his moustache.

Misha's kayak dropped into a trough between two waves until it disappeared, leaving only his brown hat, which seemed to float like an apparition in a medieval legend. I had watched that brown hat bob on the waves for so many miles; it had stared at me when Misha bent over the campfire and greeted me when we awoke on cold, foggy mornings. Misha and I had been strangers four months ago, and now we'd be fast friends for the rest of our lives.

Enough idle thoughts. I forced ten quick strokes, then tried to hold the faster cadence.

I searched for danger one last time, running through the mental checklist that had kept me alive through all the crossings and sudden storms of this journey: barometer, steady; sea, steep but not rising; clouds, fluffy cu-

mulus with no indication of a nascent storm. Good. I punched the “where am I” button on the GPS and the screen blinked our position:

I scrolled through the menu:

Six miles—two hours to go.

Throughout the voyage, I had been deluding myself that we were in no great danger. But all the while I knew that this was a transparent, self-protective lie. We had been paddling across a vast, turbulent, unpredictable ocean. The ghostly truth had hidden itself in the folds of my brain, whispering its demoralizing logic and slipping into the shadows when I tried to exorcize it. Now the floodgates opened, and fear welled up inside me. For a brief moment, my body shook with adrenaline; but now that the fear was free to speak, the danger was over. Six more miles and we would be safe. The anxiety had no direction or purpose, so it spilled out of my body and dissipated into the great sea and sky. I felt drained, empty, exhausted, cleansed.

My elbow still throbbed, but it didn’t matter anymore. We were going to make it. I switched off the GPS and concentrated on an efficient paddle stroke, using my torso as much as possible to relieve pressure on the elbow. The dark, menacing sea was flecked with white foam and offset by streaks of red-orange twilight that shimmered from the wave tops. “Concentrate on this sea, these colors, this feeling,” I reminded myself. “You’ll never be here again.” But I couldn’t achieve a Zen-like focus for more than a moment.

Instead I saw my journey from beginning to end. I remembered the tidy harbor in Japan where we had embarked, and all the rough-hewn outpost camps in Siberia. I saw mirror-smooth calms and hurricane-force katabatic winds screaming down from glaciated peaks. I also saw mysterious, quixotic dreams—just wisps of thought—that propelled the Stone Age mariners, and me, across this inimical and capricious ocean.

For the past several years, I had been obsessed with two questions: How had Stone Age mariners crossed this northern ocean, and why? The quest had consumed me, but the answers had proved elusive—as I had always known they would—flickering over the next wave top and whispering behind the next headland but always receding, just beyond reach. At night, asleep in ancient campsites, I chased phantoms through dreams, struggling to interpret signs and images. The answers I sought were out there, hidden in the shadows beyond ocean swell or firelight, if only I could see them.

