

Aleutian Rogue

WITH

The Amanat

SERIALIZED

Chapter Ten

1.

UniSea, Unalaska, Alaska—

Before the crowd disperses from Catherine Alden's hotel room, long distance phone calls spread news of the two shootings to the outside world. One call trips relays eastward across time zones and a continent, trips relays all the way to the Glen Cove house in New York.

Two Justice informants dead, executed, a local fisherman responsible—Viktor takes their svoi's scrambled call in his study. He had sent Peter halfway around the world to correct an active measure gone awry, a *proval* that's particularly odious. But so far, the svoi hasn't located the drug dealer who learned of last summer's ivory collection, mimicked the security codes by whistling, then diverted the shipment god-knows-where. He's out of patience with this svoi, and now that a local fisherman has removed what few options he had He'll have to make a deal with the Columbian family Sarah McPhearson double-crossed.

Although drugs aren't of particular interest to either himself or GRU Command, walrus tusks are. Ivory, especially surreptitiously obtained ivory, provides needed hard currency. Their svois serve as two-way middlemen between the Columbians and Alaskan dealers, and between those dealers and Hong Kong ivory carvers. Catherine Alden represents the Columbians, but a DGI swallow reported last week that she was on her way out. So for Catherine to have made a deal with a meddling fisherman, well, that wasn't wise. She has no market for nine thousand kilos of tusks. All she has accomplished is to hasten the inevitable while creating a new problem for him. A perverse problem if *their ugly sister* gets rumor of the active measure as it stands now. He can't say he's sorry to have Catherine out of the way.

He still doesn't know how McPhearson learned their transfer codes, those frequencies randomly changed within their automated ship routing. That's a breach in his department, probably a damn svoi. And he can't risk *illness* and *a stay in the hospital*; he needs *a blind date* with *a wet agent* that he can send to Alaska.

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0400 hours:

Glen Cove sleeps quietly so there is little to disturb Viktor as he paces before the illuminated Mercator projection, the world distorted before him in a predictable way. And he curses all women operatives. Despite being responsible for more women attending Department 35576—they're not taught in school how to go private, which both Catherine Alden and Sarah McPhearson have apparently done—he doesn't trust women. He shouldn't have trusted the Columbians, and for damn sure, he shouldn't have trusted Catherine, not with her background.

It's always dangerous to trust walk-ins, and yes, he knew that it was especially dangerous to trust anyone with a Columbian connection. The agent environment, though, is so bad in this country he overlooked the warning flags and assigned a svoi to her. Now, she, the dealer, and the kilos of raw

ivory are missing. What else will turn up missing in the morning? What else can? His career and the privileges of foreign travel? Not if he can redefine this proval. Not if he can turn it into something it hasn't been, escalate it perhaps, make it large enough that it attracts their ugly sister's attention while remaining small enough not to be noticed by the Americans. The KGB will want the ivory—their ugly sister can also have the blame if this proval erupts in the Premier's face.

Catherine has captured a fisherman who has local knowledge of the coastline, of the thousands of kilometres of rocks and kelp and wind. He knows the effect she has on men: the fisherman will do anything for her affections, which are as practiced as a pious priest's liturgy.

Moments ago, he issued orders for Catherine's permanent removal, but the orders create another problem. Intelligent, experienced, she will know her only hope is Justice, so she must also be discredited in case U.S. authorities *date* her before she's erased.

Is the ivory worth the risk being taken? Everything in Alaska has turned sour. He was assured that the DGI could control the Organization, but the Cubans are no closer to controlling the Columbian families this year than last.

Revamping families takes time, he understands that. But he don't have the luxury of time. This proval has enormous potential for embarrassment and for a stay in the hospital, or worse, the Gulag. Hard currency and manpower will have to be committed to the search for Catherine.

Manpower will be a problem until the mobile squad Tunlaw Road promised arrives. In a way, he's lucky this proval happened now. He already has in-country an expert capable of directing their manhunt. Employed by the U.N.S.G. as an agricultural assistant, Tanya Grinenko tracked down bandits along the Amur without exceeding quarterly fuel allotments. She'll need no introduction to the rigors of a wilderness manhunt. Too bad she's a woman.

2.

Noon Wednesday and two days behind schedule, two days traveling from New York, two continents away from her beloved Altai Mountains—but nearer than she has been for the past two years—Tanya angrily snorts to no one in particular, "Confirmed reservations, on a standby list." *Reeves*. A name she has come to detest. She doesn't give a damn about their safety record. What good is having the best record in the world if their planes are always grounded?

But the storm has finally eased today. Unalaska is in sight. She didn't know there were places in America so hard to reach. And she rehearses her cover as the plane banks into the wind. Since her accent is, to a trained ear, unmistakably Mongolian, her legend identifies her as an agent of a fictitious U.N. police team hot on the trail of an international assassin, Catherine Alden, a red-haired IRA extremist responsible for the machinegun executions of a dozen Ulstermen. She carries papers authorizing the arrest of this newly invented terrorist. But she doesn't intend to let Alden be taken alive.

Alden isn't their first walk-in to go private, but she might become their most damaging defection to date. Western allies of the Proletariat won't understand killing walrus for hard currency. Although she finds their fears ludicrous, she knows the mere perception of environmental harm inflames American intellectuals, the philosophical comrades the Proletariat needs in this era of Fundamentalist resurgence.

Her weather-caused delay will make recovering the ivory difficult; however, she is certain she will locate and eliminate Alden shortly. So as she descends the built-in flight of stairs, she feels both good and apprehensive about her assignment. She adjusts the red carnation on the lapel of her jacket, rolls her copy of the *New Yorker*, and scans the men who wait on the apron. Blue gloves and a thermos under his left arm, Peter, the *svoi*, had better be there.

Behind two well-dressed Japanese fish buyers and several scruffy cannery workers comes the woman he is to meet: the flower and the magazine. He's certain that's her. Short blonde hair. Tall, muscular, neither young nor old. And as she approaches, her skirt snaps. Her abruptness hides, he suspects, latent femininity. A product of the Revolution. She'll be another minute getting here, so once again, he silently goes over the double parol.

"I need a car, a Pontiac."

Her first half is correct. He answers, "Pontiac was chief of the Ottawas." Then stiffly, he says the first sentence of the second parol, "Perhaps you would like a cup of tea instead."

"I have no honey to sweeten it."

He relaxes. The recognition signals are completed.

She extends her hand as if she were a man. He hesitantly takes it. And she about crushes his fingers as, with machinegun rapidity, she says, "Your reports, please. Where can we talk? Where is your auto? Has the fisherman been located? I'll require charts." She pauses. But before he can answer, she resumes her staccato monologue: "What leads do you have? What have you done to locate McPhearson? This settlement's too small to conceal three people. You're not making a robust effort to locate the cripple."

"She disappeared—"

"People don't disappear. They go somewhere."

What's with her? Although surprised by the acidity of her words, he defends himself as best he can, ending with: "She's disappeared, vanished, probably sunk. The Coast Guard's looking for survivors around Egg Island. There're five boats down that I know of. The *Hellion* is also missing. Same area. Same time. About the same size."

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This *svoi* is soft. Maybe he's lived too long in the West. He makes excuses. He's a dog without snarl or fangs.

If what he tells her is true, her task will be quite different from what Viktor outlined. Having the fisherman's boat sink adds difficulty. Unless Alden's body is recovered, an unlikely feat when the ocean floor is covered with crabs, there will always remain doubts about what happened to her. Alden must not live twice. Plus, she must locate and recover, if possible, their ivory. No excuses will be accepted.

"Nine thousand kilos of," the arrival of the taxi cuts short her sentence. She scowls as Peter tells the driver, "We want the cab alone. Come back in a minute."

"Screw you. You want a ride or not."

Not wishing to be overheard, Tanya sits quietly as she surveys the inside of the dirt covered vehicle, not at all what she has come to expect in America. Refusing to put her case in the boot, she holds it on her lap, and sits alone in back. Peter rides in front. And ricocheting from mud puddle to mud puddle, the cab jolts and jostles her. Her head bangs the ceiling, twice, four times. Bumped and bruised as she bounces across the backseat, she realizes how far she has flown. New York is thirty years in the future.

By the time she arrives at UniSea Inn, she feels like she has gone three rounds with her judo instructor. She leaves Peter to pay the driver. She will not see him again until his shift ends. Perhaps, by then, she will be able to stomach him. As an agent, she suspects he butchers crabs well.

UniSea's desk clerk, a heavy set woman with dyed black hair and about her own age, checks the Inn's reservations calender, then hands her a key. Tanya believes she detects a desire on the clerk's part to break the day's tedium by talking so she asks, "Were you on duty Saturday night?"

The clerk, bubbling, raises blackened eyebrows and bats blackened lashes. "I sure was. Right here."

"Good. I'm from the U.N. Secretariat General's staff." She pauses, smiles, and knows that merely mentioning the U.N. will start rumors. "And I'm here to investigate what happened Saturday." She explains about Alden being extremely dangerous, then adds, "You're lucky to be alive."

"Oh, I know. Eric told me." The clerk, who has spent the last couple of days with Eric Pettersen, says, "He told me all about her. About how she enticed men into bed with her so she could kill them, how she sold dope to school kids. Can you image that, a teacher who was a terrorist, and one professing faith in God? He said that she would get her students hooked on free junk so that they would do the actual shooting, then would give them bad dope so they OD'd. No wonder she had to be stopped. But the crabs have her now. Serves her right."

Taken back, not knowing who *Eric* is but recognizing a fiction when she hears one—and a fiction close to what they intended to use—she instantly adopts her story to match whomever's: "I have an arrest warrant for Alden—yes, she must be found and stopped...tell me exactly what happened, what you saw, what you know."

With eyes aglow—Tanya suspects the clerk drinks too much—the blackened woman tells her everything she knows and probably much more. The clerk, Tanya's certain, believes the fisherman Jay Shoulders possesses the best characteristics of William Tell and Jack London. If she were to believe the clerk, about the only thing Shoulders isn't is the Metro to Moscow, and that is, probably, only because the clerk is without one spiritual thought anywhere from her breast to her brain: the clerk is the most secular-minded woman Tanya has met in America, with certainly the most vulgar mouth, but then, she hasn't met many women outside of her official duties as an under-agriculture Secretary (most of the women she has met have been with one university or another). Since arriving in New York, she had begun to think that Americans are the most superstitious people on the planet, praying to their god for everything, even giving thanks to this god when one of them scores a touchdown in their utterly brutal game of football. But this blackened woman has restored her faith in Western decadence.

She doesn't know if she should add any of what the clerk told her to their sketchy, computer-generated personality profile of the fisherman. Her angry doubts are that she shouldn't. Nevertheless, in as pleasant of sounding words as she can utter she thanks the clerk: "You have been most helpful. The U.N. has a special interest in Alden, so if you know of anyone who might be helpful please ask the person to contact me...I will be in my room."

Climbing the stairs, her steps hard as if she were tramping out her anger at the weather, at Reeves, her anger at being behind this *Eric* of Justice, she enters her room, satisfied only with her knowledge that rumors will sweep, like the wind, though Unalaska. Having been raised near a small village, she knows the velocity of rumors, especially when someone like the clerk fans them: they will catch a spark—an innocently tossed cigarette—and drive that spark into a fire that devours the tiaga beyond the horizon. Oh how rumors spiral, becoming cyclones, twisting the truth through oak trees as if facts were straw. Taking her PPK from the lining of her bag, she points at the second pillow on the double bed. She could no more kill the rumors now than she can stop the wind from blowing here, where the ends of the earth are knitted together with seine twine and tar.

When she figures the island buzzes with the story of her U.N. legend, she returns to the lobby and reengages the desk clerk. "Now that I have had a moment to think about what you said, I have more questions." She asks about the sinking of the fisherman's boat.

"I was real sad to hear about Jay goin' down—but Eric figured out where he was going. Kodiak, that's where. He's a real smart fellow, not like the guys here in town."

Who is this *Eric* person? and suspicious of a story that seems too pat, she asks, "Who saw it, the fisherman's boat sinking?"

"The *American Pride*. They were tryin' to get to town about six Sunday mornin'. Said they spotted the *Coyote* enterin' Akutan Pass and that the Pass was really wild, too wild for even them, and they're big."

"This wasn't repor—"

"Oh they didn't report it until yesterday. Said they would've come forward sooner if they'd known no one was searchin' for survivors. But they were blowin' smoke to coverup gettin' stoned as soon as they offloaded. They really got stoned. But I told all of this to Eric a couple of times."

"If his boat didn't go down, as they reported, how long would it take him to reach Kodiak?" She wonders if she can believe the destination. Perhaps. The clerk seems too simple to deceive anyone but herself.

"Jay used to fish up that way so—I dunno—five days, a week? But he's on the bottom, and that's a shame."

Her first bit of real information. While she had waited at Cold Bay, like everyone else who has and who will wait in Cold Bay, she studied a chart of the Alaska Peninsula that was used as wallpaper to slow the wind that pushed even through the corrugated steel walls. Even steel couldn't stop the wind and the cold, the strength of her homeland, her strength.

There is nothing west of Unalaska but the naval base at Adak and multiple kilometres of emptiness, where every vessel is as conspicuous as a priest in a brothel. So if the fisherman isn't on the bottom, or isn't holed up on the island here, he had to go north along the east side of the Alaska Peninsula, towards Kodiak, past the Fox Islands. He had to go to where people hurdle under the ravages of Capitalism.

She again thanks the clerk: "You've been most helpful. We'll speak again." Then she pivots smartly and returns to her room.

Now, she isn't certain what she should do next. Check with Viktor? The story of the fisherman's boat lost—that seems too easy a means of escape. What would it take for one boat owner to lie for another? A bourgeois promise? Priests lie for one another all the time. If she were chasing the fisherman's soul, she would expect the local priest to shield him. His vessel, thirteen metres, is certainly small when compared to forty, fifty metre craft, but she chased one bandit who, without food or water, crossed the Sea of Okhotsk in a five metre open dory. Desperate hooligans, she learned, become magicians.

While this situation differs from the one she faced in the river deltas near Nikolayevsk when the whole island camp...she wonders if Viktor knows she tracked those bandits without exceeding the camp's quarterly fuel allotment. Even the one who made it to Japan. Her father would have been proud of her; he taught her how to hunt.

Did Shoulders overestimate his ability? The capabilities of his craft? Or underestimate the sea? The clerk believes him to be a myth.

A knock interrupts her speculation. She scowls, checks the chamber of her PPK, and wonders who her rumors have drawn so soon. A fat, city policeman. She lets him in, smiles, and is only surprised by how quickly he has come.

"I'm Chief Closa. What's this I hear about you being with the U.N.?"

She hands him her diplomatic visa. He glances at its official appearance, then returns it. "You said something about having a warrant for the Alden woman?"

"You are very well informed."

"Ahh, her NCIC check don't say nothin' about no warrant outstanding."

She wonders what this fat policeman wants to hear. "The report you have says she's involved with drugs, is that not correct? That she's a top member of a drug smuggling organization. That there're no want-warrants out for her."

"You've read the report."

"Yes, I have. And that's the information you're supposed to have because of the serious strain it would place on UN-US relations if the Justice Department admitted that they cannot prosecute her because of international interests. That's why I'm here rather than someone from the Justice Department—"

"Oh, they already sent a pinheaded pick out here to cause trouble."

Interrupting, she asks, "Eric?"

"Yeah, I think that was his name...Eric Prickhead. Somethin like that."

"And," she decides to go fishing, "he told you less than the truth?" She sees the policeman smile like a primary school boy with a crush on his teacher.

"I don't have no interest in the Alden woman. She was here just long enough to get herself raped, but Jay's part of the town here. A good guy. And I'm real interested in what happens to him...that federal boy wanted to arrest Jay for murder one, two counts, and that ain't right. So I'll need somethin from you that I can take to a grand jury, somethin to show 'em that, maybe, Jay didn't go along voluntarily, that he was taken hostage, boatnapped so to speak."

"I, ahh," needing a moment to think, she stammers, "don't know the word, *boatnapped*. What does it mean?"

"Means she made him take her in his boat."

"Is it true Catherine Alden is lost at sea?"

Before answering, the chief gives her a queer look that almost says, *I'm going to lie to you*. But he says, "I was surprised and saddened to hear that report. It makes everythin relatin to this case moot."

"I don't think so—and neither do you."

"Don't be too fast there...the Coast Guard will resume their search in a day or two, seeing that the *Hellion* is also missin, but I doubt they'll find anythin."

"What grids, quadrants have they concentrated on?"

"Local—the Pass...now about that somethin."

"Nowhere else? Not closer to Kodiak?"

"I wouldn't know, but that federal prick who was here chartered a flight for Kodiak last night. Somethin about a phone call Friday made from Pacific Pearl's office. But Kodiak's a bit far away for me to worry about."

She couldn't torture more from him, she suspects. Touching his forearm with her free hand, she lightly squeezes thanks. "How many vessels, fishing boats and others, have left since Friday, or maybe Thursday?"

"Wouldn't know, but I can ask around. Couldn't be more than a dozen." He pauses, then volunteers what he knows about Jay's call to Kodiak before asking: "Now about that somethin?"

"I'm sorry. I'd like to help you, but I'm only authorized to verbally relate what information I find necessary to apprehend Alden. You can get this information through your State Department although they might plead ignorant for national security reasons." She sees his disappointment. "Don't look sad. As you said, with the fisherman's boat sinking, all of this is of little consequence."

"So it is. Still, I don't like to see someone's name drug through mud. We all liked Jay here. He wasn't who he pretended to be, being another one of those Vietnam vets that maybe didn't like themselves as much as they ought to, but he kept his nose clean so we never asked who he really was."

"I don't understand."

"It's not important."

"You *are* referring to the fisherman?"

"That federal boywonder who was here ain't really interested in the Alden woman. He wants blood for blood, Jay's blood for his two *special* agents'."

"I'm sorry to hear that, but let me assure you that the U.N. has no interest in the fisherman other than he is in danger as long as he remains with Alden." Certain she has now gotten all this fat policeman knows, she gently crowds him out the door as she repeats herself. "We've no interest in anyone but Alden. She's dangerous and must be stopped before she kills again. Now, please excuse me, Chief. I had just entered my room when you arrived." She closes the door in his face.

Only part of a day behind the Justice Department, not good, but not as bad as she had feared. She loves Americans. They will tell everything they know, will sell you the rope to hang themselves.

3.

After showering, Tanya enters the restaurant and scans its interior before taking a booth seat near the door. Except for two waitresses in brown uniforms and a fellow with a scraggly black beard sitting with the waitresses, the upper section is deserted. The roped off, lower section and the adjoining bar are silent. The Inn seems in mourning.

To the waitress wearing a nametag reading *Peggy*, she says, "Tea, please. Very strong." Then raising her voice so she will be overheard, she adds, "I need to speak to anyone who knows what happened Saturday night. Were you on duty?"

The fellow with the untrimmed beard turns, nibbling, but not biting. And Peggy seems to duck answering by asking, "Are you with the police?"

Again loud enough for all to hear, she repeats the story she gave the Inn's desk clerk.

Pointing to the fellow with the untrimmed beard, Peggy says, "Walt, there, can tell you as much as anyone, since he was the first up the stairs after the shots were heard."

"First?" The inflection she had hoped to achieve makes her word an invitation, the sound of her word conveying a concealed promise, her promise, though, as hollow as a priest's promise of heaven after death.

Without waiting, Walt picks up his coffee cup and saunters over to her booth. She smiles.

"I heard you ask what happened."

"Please join me—tell me about Saturday."

Walt begins slowly, telling first about the fresh halibut he brought the Inn and how he quibbled with the cook over how much he should receive for it. She wonders why he tells her about a fish. Then as if hearing her thoughts, he says, "Well, I usually don't fish on Saturday, the Sabbath, but I was hungry, and if it's all right to catch one to eat, then it ought to be okay to sell one and buy dinner. Same thing, don't you think?"

She doesn't know how to answer, or even if she should.

"Aren't you gonna ask what that halibut has to do with all of this? I would've expected you to have asked before now."

"Okay, what?"

"That's more like it. When a fella tells a story, he wants to make sure the other person is listening. If he doesn't put something a little odd in his story, he'll never know."

"I don't have time for—"

"Sure you do. You ain't going anywhere this evening. Hear that wind come up? Ain't gonna be nobody coming or going outta here tonight, maybe not for a couple of days."

"I have to—"

"Naa, that wind's gonna hold you hostage—at least until I finish my story, and sometimes I take days telling about what happened on a particular day. After all, that's what life is, a story about how we got here, wherever here is at the time."

"I don't have," she softens her voice when she hears how hard her words are, "days to listen."

"Suit yourself." Walt picks up his coffee cup and returns to the table where he had been sitting, leaving her alone to wonder if he has anything really useful that he could tell.

By the time she finishes her second cup of tea, she hasn't thought of a better idea than to humor the fellow who was first. No one else has come forward. It's still too early to telephone Viktor, who's handling this proval himself, his feelings being that the fewer officials who know about what has occurred the healthier. So reluctantly, she carries her cup to his table where he seems altogether too satisfied with himself.

She asks, "Maybe you know his friend in Kodiak?"

"The one with a funny nickname? *Little John* for John Littlehaus, German spelling...say, you pronounce Kodiak like my sister does, making the *o* sound like a soft *a*. Reminds me of home."

"Where would that be?"

"You're with the U.N., so you ain't a Yank. You're not Slav, so probably Russian. Been in the Far East, I think, but you're not from there."

Coldly, she says, "Your friend, the fisherman, what is his real name, please." And to herself, softly, she curses him.

"I'll be damned. Don't that beat everything. You are Russian." And in words as gentle as if they were being said to a frightened puppy, he adds, "It takes a long time to quit swearing in your first language."

She doesn't answer. He understands words, but why Russian? Why here? Is he a countryman? another *svoi*? a sleeper? or a right-wing radical suffering Russophobia?

Despite her legend, she fears to tell him who she is. Yet if he is a sleeper, she dares not deny her Soviet citizenship. While hotel rooms in this country don't usually have ears, everything has a way of getting back to her people. That's why she is in Alaska. Alden's going private was known in New York within minutes of when it happened. And the nearness of Alaska to Siberia makes the state of prime importance for penetration.

She knows of *Article 58s* whose crimes were nothing more than denying their citizenship. They received *quarters* for gambling that the person with whom they were sharing coffee wasn't KGB. They lost their waggors...heads, he's a sleeper; tails, he isn't. If it lands on its edge, he's a radical—she swallows the bitterness of fear as she says, "I'm German." Technically, that's true. Her father and grandfather were Volga Germans a very long time ago.

Saying she is German leaves a bad taste in her mouth, one the tea doesn't wash away. So again, to herself she curses him, making sure that her words are not uttered.

"So I'm a bastard, huh? And you're a German?"

Never before has she claimed her German heritage, has she denied being Russian. In fact, while growing up, she repeatedly denied being German. And how did he know she called him a bastard? That wasn't what she said before. She shudders thinking he might be able to perceive her thoughts.

"How come you deny being Russian? Your accent is all mixed up, like you have lived all over—and right now you'd like to escape to some mountains." He pauses as he strokes his beard, his eyes locked onto hers as if he sees through her.

Still, she says nothing.

"Just curious. My father's an Old-Believer. Lives in the Village on the Kenai."

He isn't, she notices, wearing the colorful tunic of an Old-Believer; plus he is eating and drinking with nonBelievers. But he has the untrimmed beard of those ignorant, superstitious, human fossils.

"They may be ignorant, and maybe superstitious, but when my father doubled a length of rope, he wasn't a fossil...name's Kasatkin, Walter Barnabus Kasatkin, Walt to you."

Walt, not Walter, anglicized sonofabitch. But maybe she should be thankful that he is one of *them* and not a sleeper.

"So I'm a sonnabitch as well as a bastard? What else do you want to call me? You might as well say it. I'll hear it whether you do or don't."

At the moment his words make no sense to her. They mean something, but their objects have divorce their icons...as if she's suddenly propelled into the home of an Old Believer, all she sees is an painted icon on a corner shelf a little more than head high and right where a person cannot miss it when the person enters through the front door. It's blue and gold, white. She can't make out the other colors.

Trying to ignore the image of the painted, corner icon in the decorated livingroom with its Christmas-tree look (the image floods her mind with light until all of her thoughts are as undiscernible as over-exposed film), she coolly considers what she should say. But no words come. Without their icons, the words that form her thoughts bubble below her consciousness as if they were cooking porridge, watery corn meal mush imported from America.

Somewhere in that iron pot of bubbling mush is the question of just how badly does she need what he knows.

"I crewed with Jay Shoulders the past three summers. We got to know each other fairly well...you know he's Indian, a damn Rogue from Siletz, Oregon, but I don't know that he's not who he claims to be."

No, she didn't know that he was an Indian, nor know where he was from. Their personality profile of the fisherman is sketchy at best. If Walt, here, has worked for Shoulders for three seasons, he should know the fisherman better than anyone. And while some light conversation might loosen his tongue, she can't seem to find the words necessary to break her silence.

"It's not true about you being German, is it?" Walt pours himself another cup of coffee. "As thin as this is, I don't know why they bother using grounds...you know, I'm not someone you ought to lie to."

What is a lie? the truth? Can anyone, she wonders, really know? And if the person could recognize the difference, could the person tell the truth? She doubts it.

"It'd be kinda interesting if your nose grew every time you told a lie. Wouldn't be too long before you'd know when you did. Truth would be easy it recognize. It's all of those things that don't make your nose grow. But," he sips his coffee, frowns as he looks into his cup, "I can see the bottom. This coffee's a damn lie."

She inhales a long breath, slowly exhales, then says, "I went to a boarding school in Novosibirsk."

"How about that. My grandfather lived farther down the Ob, about where the Irtysh joins it."

No, conversation with him will not do. Finishing her tea, she rises to leave. She has work to do, and trading family histories will not get it done. And she would tell him so if she could get the words out of her mouth. She can't; so she just goes.

On her way out of the restaurant, she stops in the lobby, and now able to find words, she asks the black-haired clerk, "How do I make a long distance call from my room?"

"There are no outside lines to the rooms so you can't. You gotta use the pay phones in the entryway."

She almost snaps, *How backwards can you be*, but catches herself in time. Instead, hoping to show the folly of no long-distance lines to the rooms, she asks for sixty dollars of quarters. But apparently thinking nothing of her request, the clerk hands her six rolls of coins. She frostily thanks the clerk, then proceeds to call New York from the phone nearest the outer door of the entryway. She would have Peter make the call, but the *svoi* must work his scheduled swing shift to keep his cover. Besides, she doesn't think much of him. In a couple of hours, she has gotten more than he has since the shooting.

Her pocket scrambler speaks to the scrambler in the Glen Cove house, but before she can ask for a computer projected ETA for Shoulders' vessel to reach Kodiak, considering weather and routes that minimize detection, a scroungy young man uses the other phone. The pay phone is

inconvenient as hell, and she wonders if life in Alaska is like life in Siberia, and she wonders why she still sees the image of the icon in that livingroom as clearly as if she were staring directly at it.

Returning to her room, she lies on her bed, staring at the ceiling, impatiently waiting for rumors of her being from the U.N. to spread. She can almost feel the tension mounting, almost hear the whispered words being quickly repeated. People differ little in how boldly they covet, gossip, murder one another. And her thoughts briefly linger on Walter before again seeing that icon, blurry in the whiteness of the light surrounding it. She shouldn't be surprised to find the son of Old-Believers in Alaska, living so close to the Motherland, yet so far. Superstition, candles, old women's prayers for the dead, statues, icons—these things have no place in the Revolution. But what does surprise her, though, is the intensity of the light that surrounds the corner icon that truly dominates all of her thoughts.

Her blinded thoughts drift towards images of Alden: she doubts the story of Alden being lost at sea, but her mind sees crabs tearing the flesh from Alden's bones. Hundreds of crab pinchers tugging on decaying flesh, waving pincherfuls around before reaching under their shells to stuff their mouths. The sight of so many crabs feeding on Alden is revolting, but she can't look away, the scene lit by the light coming from that corner icon.

As she watches the crabs finish cleaning Alden's beautiful bones, she sees Shoulders walking across the sea. She knows it's him even though she sees only a faceless fisherman walking on water. She opens her eyes, sits up, wads her pillow. But when she lies back down, she sees him walking away from her, and in his hands is something, a spike, white. An ivory tusk. He is not dead. She knows he isn't. And just then he turns and motions to her with the tusk, now bloody, the drops falling into the sea, staining the water, the clouds crimson, the color fading into a sunset.

The fisherman knows where the ivory is, she is certain of that. He will be a worthy adversary. An Indian. And she wants the satisfaction of tracking him down. The ultimate challenge. One on one. An armed, intelligent man; a Native American.

Two hours have passed when she rises from the bed, straightens her skirt, and leaves the room to question those who might clarify still cloudy aspects of Alden's disappearance. She has learned how to ignore that blinding icon, which has become as annoying as a toothache. She still sees it, but she doesn't.

Her first stop is UniSea's bar where she asks, "How many boats, large and small, have left here since Thursday?"

"Maybe a dozen." The bartender names the fishing vessels that left for Seattle Monday before saying: "Only the *Amumali* and the *Northford* before the weekend. *Amumali* for Akutan. *Northford* for Kodiak."

Why, she asks herself, couldn't Peter have gotten this information. It is so damn easy.

She leaves a tip and her beer, and heads for Pacific Pearl Seafoods, the cannery from where the call originated that sent *Eric* scurrying to Kodiak. The cannery is close so she decides to walk. And as she steps from the Inn, she feels the wind tug at her shirt and jacket. Mud has risen to the surface of the gravel road, and clings to the leather soles of her boots, bought in New York because she liked how they looked. The boots she needs here, though, are the ones she had in Novosibirsk. The real rubber ones.

Novosibirsk, she hasn't thought about the city for a long time. Five years maybe. Damn him anyhow. Him and the damn icon, bright as the sun. And she catches herself wondering if his grandfather was one of the Old-Believers who fled the Tsar, then the Chinese, or one that the Bolsheviks expelled, not that it makes any difference to her.

Her wet feet feel good in a way. Honest perhaps. Mud clinging to boots. Cold Bay, Unalaska—both have weather with more character than can be found in the flocks of gray-suited sheep grazing

alongside the brick and asphalt thoroughfares flowing between canyon walls of concrete and glass in Manhattan, the sheep pretending to be men, each armed with a knife with which he sheers himself.

Following the arrows pointing to Pearl's office, she ascends the outside stairs, pauses on the top landing to dispel thoughts of Novosibirsk, then enters and meets Marge who tells her everything without further prompting. She jots a note or two as she listens, thanks Marge, and returns to the pay phone where she separates Canadian quarters from US coins, both rolled together.

She knows now that the woman drug dealer was to have been met by *Little John*, however his name is spelled. The dealer left, she is certain, on the *Northford*, and the dealer still has their ivory.

Again by scrambler, she learns that Shoulders' estimated time of arrival in Kodiak is today. She returns the receiver to its hook. Viktor will arrange a charter for her; she is to remain in the Inn until they call her with details. And frustration causes her to jam the scrambler into her bag without putting it into its case.

Knowing that with a flight out of here she could end all of this today, that the mobile squad isn't needed; believing that the dealer cached their ivory in the hold of the fisherman's vessel, that the fisherman is not an innocent, that Alden went with him and is, probably, directing operations, she only needs the weather to cooperate for her to eliminate Alden, the fisherman, the dealer. Svoic can then load the ivory in a container. The Americans will ship that container to Hong Kong, and the Revolution will receive the hard currency needed to buy the rope with which to hang Capitalism. Viktor will be happy. Her reputation, which really is of little importance to her, will be secure, and then, maybe then, she can return to her beloved mountains, to her horses, to the child she never was. All she needs is for the wind to sleep.

But until the wind eases, no flights will arrive here. She is, indeed, held hostage by the weather. She is, as her grandfather would say, an amanat of the wind.

She stares at the pay phone, waiting for it to ring, hoping for it to ring.

But it doesn't ring. Not in a minute. Not in ten minutes.

With nothing to do, no TV, no radio in her room, nothing to read, she might as well wait in the restaurant, where Walter again sits at the table with the waitresses. She sees him before he sees her; so she tries to sneak into the lower section. But a waitress hollers, "That section's closed until five." The other waitress and Walter turn to stare. Now she's faced with the choice of acknowledging him and answering his inevitable questions or returning to her empty room—her choice wouldn't be terribly difficult if not for that icon, which still annoys her. So despite her strong desire to flee to a room, where, she's certain, she'll again see the images of crabs devouring Alden as if the images are omens portending reality, she has read Moscow Center's manual on developing Americans. What the Revolution needs are additional Americans who will work for world peace by ending Capitalism's exploitation of workers, her thought guilty of sloganism, but she knows of no better way to phrase what she must do and she isn't above using any of the techniques Moscow Center recommends regardless of how personally distasteful they might be. She is a daughter of the Revolution. Her likes and dislikes are really of no importance.

She wonders why he doesn't have anything to do but drink coffee as she strides towards him and sits at the table behind the employees'.

He doesn't wait for an invitation: with his cup in hand, he joins her. "What's Novosibirsk like? Dad and Grandpa would only talk about it when they were alone."

Is he interested in the land, the people, the heritage of his family, or, she wonders, in just spending the night with her? She folds her hands and selectively remembers aloud what the city looks like. And the distant steppes. At first, she talks to his chest. But after a few minutes, she raises her eyes and studies his beard, seeing in his beard Russia's lost generation, most of whom have been drowned in vodka. Finally, her gaze meets his as she describes the three thousand metres high Altai Mountains to the south, the mountains of her dreams, and the Sayan Mountains to the east of the

sprawling, gray-brown city. She describes rows of poplars turning green in the spring, green blades of wheat poking through a late snow, swaying seas of yellow and blue flowers. He listens without interrupting as she speaks for half an hour in lowered voice. She tells him about the development of the city and the dam, about the equality the Party brought to Soviet society, about the strides being made in agriculture and education. She talks about the smell and feel of the soil, the strength of the people, the beauty of mares foaling in the spring. She even describes a secret hollow north of the city, and her grandfather, and a dog she once had. His eyes show understanding, which pleases her as she sips lukewarm tea before insisting that he tell her more about Shoulders.

He reaches across the table, lays the fingers of his right hand on her forearm, their tips resting lightly just above her wrist. After a stretched moment that seems several minutes in duration, he says, "I saw something in your description of the Altai. It's not real clear. Something like genetically inherited memory. But your mountains, they look like Eastern Oregon, Idaho, Washington, the Wallowa Mountains, the land of the Nez Perce Indians, an area I'm pretty fond of—and the horse you had was spotted. White, black spots on its rump, little spots, the spots extending forward almost to the front shoulders. An Appaloosa. Only it didn't come from the Nez Perce."

When he mentions her horse, Sazhen, she quickly pulls her arm away so he can't touch her. She said nothing that she can recall about having a horse or about the color of Sazhen.

"Don't be so afraid. You aren't in the Motherland. Tables here don't have ears—and I'm not gonna tell anyone about you having a horse, one not owned by your collective farm." He leans back, arcs his spine backwards, bending from the small of his back, stretches, then says, "These chairs and this waiting is killing my back."

Peggy sits, lights a cigarette, then to Tanya says, "Don't let him spook you. He likes guessing what you're thinking, then telling you that he read your thoughts. Don't believe him. None of us do."

"A prophet is without honor—"

"Prophet?" Peggy snorts, "my ass! You were just around that Ivan Chickenof too long—and when you see him again, tell him he still owes the bar forty-three dollars for that broken stool. Sally was asking about him last week."

To Tanya, Walt says, "Ignore the help," as he pours himself coffee from the insulated pot that Peggy keeps filled. "And it doesn't hurt my feeling any to know that Communism produces cheaters. Every type of legalism does if the restrictions don't come from within the person, the reason why under the New Covenant the Law is written on hearts."

"Right, like how," Peggy asks, "do you get off telling any of us how to live? What about last summer?"

"To everything there is a season...even sin."

"So that's what it was?"

Looking Peggy directly in her eyes, he says, his voice lowered, "It is a sin that you still have a boyfriend in Spokane—yes indeed, a sin."

"Well, I almost didn't. And I'm not gonna fall for that line again, *Redeem the time because it is short*. What the hell was I drinking anyway?"

"Broaga. It'll make the road jump right out from underneath yuh."

"It was damn smooth that I know—too damn smooth. I don't even remember what happened other than I woke up in your bed, and that's not gonna happen again. Ever!"

Again to Tanya, Walt turns and asks, "Why seven? Your horse, why the number? It wasn't born with seven feet so I don't understand the connection."

"Nor I your question." If he is guessing her thoughts as the waitress said he does, he makes very good guesses, too good. She suspects he is clairvoyant, a field of study in which Soviet scientists are years ahead of their American counterparts.

If he is genuinely clairvoyant, he needs to be returned to the Motherland for the benefit of the Revolution—and maybe she needs a glass of broaga to make tolerable the taste of what she will have to swallow. But first, she must ask, "What do you do that allows you to drink coffee all day?"

"I have a ranch. On Akutan. Nothing to speak of now. A few cows on a volcano. That's all...but that mountain's really alive, really is, its spirits powerful in Aleut tradition—and those spirits give me all the geothermal heat I need for hydroponics." He tells about his plans for growing salad vegetables yearround. "The market is here. Order dinner and you'll see what I mean."

"That doesn't explain why you can drink coffee here."

"Ahh, I been in town five days waiting for a shipment of eggs."

"Eggs?"

"Yeah, hatching eggs. Six hundred of 'em. You can't fly day-old chicks in here. Hell, Reeve's can't even guarantee getting us a letter from Anchorage in three days. And it'd cost too much to freight in adult birds. So if I'm gonna get into the egg business—I didn't mention that I was, did I?...I'm gonna have to hatch the hens, my laying flock."

Before she can further explore his capitalism, she sees the bartender, who has stepped into the restaurant, motioning to her.

"I believe I have a call." She excuses herself and hurries to the front desk. A charter has been arranged, but because of the wind and because the strip is unlit, it will be sunrise before the Cessna 440 arrives.

"That will put me a full day behind Justice."

"Use your time to develop your man there, if possible. But if he is clairvoyant, be very careful. No clairvoyant can ever be trusted."

She returns to find Walter where she left him. Other than his coffee cup being almost empty when it had been full, he seems not to have moved. If he, as a farmer, is married to his land, he is having an adulterous affair with the Inn. She wouldn't mind living on a farm in her beloved Altai and having an affair with Moscow, but such things are impossible. Agriculture, though, is her first love. She truly is an agricultural specialist, one who comprehends the potential of the Aleutians.

As she settles into her chair, she is surprised to hear Walt address her in archaic Russian. She tries to stop him before they are overheard by the waitresses, but he doesn't seem to care if he is overheard. And apparently the waitresses don't care what he speaks. They seem unable to tell the difference between Norwegian and Russian.

What she really needs is more data about the fisherman—

"What do you want to know about Jay? If he's on the bottom, starfish bait? You know he isn't."

"What he's like?"

"Indian quiet most of the time. Not always though. He is a Rogue, and that whole culture has a mean streak in them when provoked...he can kill you from a thousand yards if you look like a North Vietnamese."

"A sniper, then?"

"He won't talk about what he did, but I know he lost his soul before he came here. He's hollow inside, hurting till he doesn't feel it anymore...like you are."

Walter is dangerous. How is she to recruit him? He will be like taking an adder to bed. But he just gave her more about the fisherman than anyone else has. She must press him, though, for more yet: "You have your farm when you're not fishing. What does he have?"

"Nothing that I know of. He's a damn good fisherman." Walt looks towards the kitchen to see if Peggy is on her way back. When he doesn't see her, he says, "It's hard to know what Jay's thinking. His thoughts were always encapsulated by a fog so thick you'd think he was a fox, or a coyote. He'd reach up and tug on his beard, and his thoughts would disappear right in front of you, Indian magic-like."

"You're not making sense...how's his seamanship?"

"Good. He knows how to read both water and weather. Actually, he's real good. And think about what I just told you before you go after him. You won't come back unless he lets yuh."

"He's really of no interest to the U.N. other than he has been incorporated by the Alden women into her escape plans."

"Didn't look that way to me. Hell, he was lugging her down the hall, the stairs, and past the crabpots like she was a pumpkin he had to get home before midnight."

"You make no sense when you speak. Why do you use such—" She pauses. With her fingers outstretched, her hands open and about a foot apart, she twists her hands as if she were holding a soccer ball and inspecting it from all positions. "Your expressions, are they how you talk all the time?"

"Look, I'm trying to tell you something you don't want to hear. Forget Jay. Let him sleep out there off Priest Rock. Don't wake him up...unless you don't ever want to see your Altai Mountains again."

"What do you think of his boat sinking?"

"And I'm really not making any sense to you, am I?" He sees Peggy coming to sit down, and he reaches over and slides Peggy's chair back an additional inch as she lowers herself—not enough back to cause her to fall but enough to make her think that he has pulled her chair out from under her. A juvenile trick, but one he couldn't resist. "Careful there," he tells the waitress, "or I'll think you've been drinking more broaga."

"And I'll have Sally throw you outta here. Then who'll serve you coffee?"

"I could always go over to the Elbow Room."

"Their coffee isn't drinkable, and you know it."

"Well, there's Stormy's—"

"And you can't afford theirs so be nice, if you can be."

Returning his attention to Tanya, he says, "There are witnesses who saw him go down."

"They didn't see him go down. They saw him disappear off their radar screen, if they can be believed, and I don't think they can be—nor do you."

"Explain his boat disappearing from radar."

"Stick a sea between you and them, get in the trough and stay in it until you're behind a rock."

"Yeah, that'd work. Sounds like you've done it...you know the *Coyote* is painted gray with black trim for a reason."

"What reason would that be?"

"So we could fish a little tight to stream markers. You know, Jay has a beach seine permit for area M, in addition to his longline permits. There aren't many of those beach permits."

"I'm not familiar with how you fish."

"If you have time, I'll give you a crash course."

"I would rather know for sure if your friend went down."

"That's an answer already within you. Your vision of him. You had one, didn't you?"

She is now certain she is dealing with a clairvoyant. But why here? why now? why so far from her beloved mountains? Can he see into the future as well as comprehend her thoughts? He has warned her not to go after the fisherman. Does he know what will happen when she catches up with Alden and the fisherman? Is knowing even possible? Has time here, where the ends of the earth are tied together, been folded into a warp so that the future and the past appear as the present? Can, under Capitalism, a metaphor about being at the end of the word lose its metaphoricalness? or is even the sound of this thought capable of existing as one leg of a tripod supporting reality?

"I agree." Walt twists on his chair so he can see the entryway into the bar.

"About what?"

"What you were just thinking about."

"What was I thinking about?"

"Whether one thing can really become another thing...everything is made up of atoms, which in turn are made up of charged particles without dimensions. So it's all a matter of whether your thoughts precede particles and thus can command them, or whether your thoughts are made up of particle charges within your brain."

She stares at the farmer. Not knowing exactly how to respond to what he said, she doesn't expect his addendum.

"You see, you have a spirit that's like a tree extending its boughs towards heaven. You can either let it grow, or load its boughs down with a lot of ornaments till it looks like a dead Christmas tree, or you can prune it with sin till it's more of a brush than a redwood. Our choice...so is one thing like another? No. But sometimes we have to handle them as if they were so we can understand what it is that we have destroyed."

"Don't pay him any attention," Peggy tells Tanya. "He'll chase you up a philosophical pole if you do, then chop it down. He's done that to all of us at one time or another so we don't listen to him—other than when he orders dinner which," turning to face Walt, "you ought to be doing about now. And you should buy dinner for her," indicating Tanya, "for giving her one of your bad times."

"Sure. What's the special?"

Before answering Walt, Peggy tells Tanya, "You know why he's here, don't you? His dad kicked him outta their village, said he was the seed of the devil...his dad was right." Then returning her attention to Walt, she asks, "Two specials?"

"Not till you tell me what I'm ordering."

"Meatloaf, all beef, so you can eat it."

He looks towards Tanya who seems confused by the interplay between himself and the waitress. "Want something else? There's a menu around here someplace."

Peggy reaches for a menu, but Tanya waves it away. "What you are having will be satisfactory."

"Good. Now we're getting somewhere."

She smiles a little more knowingly than a minute ago. Other than insisting upon the exchange of money, training manuals aren't explicit about how a man should be compromised, especially one who has been disowned by his father. She is not a slug, though. While she will sleep with him tonight if that is required to develop him, she has feelings, perhaps even feelings that are contrary to the goals of the Revolution.

She asks, "Would you like to visit our Motherland someday?"

"Sure, and I suspect that I will. But I wouldn't be looking to stay so I won't be going until the Chekists become toothless tigers."

"Chekists? Your father's word for the KGB....That is not a word you would want to say aloud in the Motherland."

"I know. That's why I'll wait awhile before I visit."

"With your help, the day their fangs are pulled may be sooner than you think."

"How's that?"

"Does talking to a Communist scare you?"

"No...should it?...Peggy wasn't kidding when she said my dad thinks I'm in league with Satan, so why should I be afraid of you?"

"Are you afraid of me?"

"After dinner, let's go somewhere quiet."

"Where do you suggest?"

"Your room."

She again smiles.

* * *