

Chapter 6

Wednesday, August 28, 1963: Sokroshera Cove

"KMZW-48 Sokroshera Cove, Sokroshera Cove, this is WB-6791 the *Evangel* calling." Laura Rezoff and Judson were talking at the post office counter when she heard the marine band radio in the office. She hurried over and picked up the microphone. "Roger, this is Sokroshera Cove. Are you headed our way, *Evangel*?" "Ah, Roger," came Reverend Norman Smith's strong, steady voice through the static. "Ah, just stopping by for a few hours, Laura. We have some things for you and for Anicia. We'll be at the dock in about an hour GWWP." "Roger *Evangel*. Use the long dock, because they're working on the front dock." "Roger. *Evangel* out." "Sokroshera Cove out."

Marine radio operators, whether on ship or shore, had long established the use of extra words like a drawn out "Ah" and repeated phrases. They needed the preliminary "ah" to give the old tube transmitters a split second to catch up with their task. The easily understood repeated phrases helped communication over noisy boat engines and the static and crackle that all the old tube marine-band radios were prey to. Puzzled, Judson stood in the doorway of Mr. Faltrip's office, looked at Mrs. Rezoff, and asked, "What was that? It almost sounded like a foreign language." He was amazed at how quickly Laura had slipped into the radio language. Suddenly he caught why they called her the voice of Sokroshera Cove. For scores of marine band radios in fishing boats, canneries, and communities up and down the islands, she represented the village. It was much bigger than just being some lady who answered the radio. He smiled with a bit of admiration. "Who were you talking to?"

"Oh," she remarked, "That's Norman and Joyce Smith of Ouzinkie. They live in the Baptist Mission building there, and run the *Evangel*. It's like a floating church. I've known them almost since I got married." Mrs. Rezoff went on to explain that the *Evangel* came to town several times a summer to have programs for the kids and services for adults, or just to visit. Occasionally, they even used the boat for their meetings, and other times Mr. Faltrip let them use the mess hall. This time, they came to visit the Rezoffs, the Truck Brothers, and Anicia Novikoff, who has been friends with them for years. "Oh, and what were those letters? Some kinda code?" Mrs. Rezoff nodded. "GWWP stands for 'God Willing, Weather Permitting.' He always says that. It fits around here, because storms interrupt our plans half the time, it seems."

Weird, thought Judson, a floating church, a traveling church. It made some kind of sense, because Sokroshera Cove didn't seem to have a church, yet many of the residents seemed to be churchgoing-type folks. He decided to go down and meet this island oddity. When he got to the long dock, he was surprised to see that Sandy Ann, along with Jake, Herman, and Barbara, were already down there. When he asked why they were hanging around, Sandy Ann said, "We like to meet the *Evangel*. They're nice to us, and sometimes they tell us Bible stories and show filmstrips and stuff." Judson suddenly realized that the kids had all been listening to

the marine radio, and that everyone in the village knew what the kids knew. Sometimes a visit like this would be the highlight of the week for a village far from the outside world. He remembered his entertainment back in Arizona. Usually it was television: always on, but hardly ever worth it. Sokroshera Cove was proving far more interesting.

When the *Evangel* came into view, Judson saw mostly cabin, with a tall pilothouse like *Tuffy the Tugboat* in the kids' book. The boat was small and low in the water, had no flying bridge, and almost no bow or stern deck. The lower cabin had a row of seven tall windows. The boat was bright white with dark green trim, and had gray, painted decks. At the stern, an Opheim skiff smaller than the Lindseths' bobbed along in the wake. After they'd tied up and shut off the engine, one by one the Smiths climbed the ladder and stepped out onto the dock. Norm Smith (nobody called him Reverend) had a thin, angular nose, a handsome face with a kind smile, and pale blue eyes that seemed to see right into you. His wife Joyce had a big smile and soft brown eyes. Their son Timmy had light brown "skiff hair," and seemed a bit shy. He was standing next to his younger brother Kelly, who had blue eyes and curly blond hair, and was too young to be in school yet. Timmy looked to be about young Jake's age. Mr. Smith had brought their little black dog up the ladder with him, draped over his shoulder. "Sootball" ran down the dock toward land to make himself more comfortable after being cooped up on the boat for who knows how many hours.

The kids were peppering Norm and Joyce with questions, and they were responding as though they recognized that the kids were people, too. "No, Robin's off in Kodiak already, getting ready to go to high school, and our oldest two are off at college." "No, we can't stay long, but we had to drop by to give some things to Will and Laura. We've got a bag for Anicia Novikoff, too, and one for Windy and Carla's kids." The Smiths seemed to be enjoying their young, energetic welcoming committee. Norman slipped back down to the boat and handed a couple of bags up to Herman, then hefted the box up, standing on the deck over the main cabin so Herman could reach over the side of the dock and grab it.

"Books, I think," said Herman as Judson came alongside. The box said in big red letters, "Salmon, Our Greatest Gift from the Sea." which was the logo on the cases of salmon shipped from the Ouzinkie Packing Company in the *Evangel's* home port. "Need help?" "Naw, I got it," said Herman. "It's only about half full." As they all began walking down the long dock, Timmy held onto his brother Kelly's hand. Barbara was holding on to Mrs. Smith's hand, and Jake was jumping around beside Mr. Smith, pointing out where the big crane was going to be put in. Timmy came alongside Herman, who introduced Judson. "Timmy, this is Judson, the schoolteacher's son. He's from Arizona. We call him Jay-Jay."

Timmy had picked up on the name. "Judson. That's the name of a famous Baptist missionary to—I think Burma—a long time ago. A lot of the church books Dad gets have that name on them." Judson noticed the younger kid's intense, searchlight-style focus on only one part of the previous conversation, and guessed he was always like that. He turned toward Timmy and explained, "Dad says we're related

somehow to Judson through a branch of the family that came from back East. That's how I got the name. I'm also one quarter Hopi Indian." Timmy absorbed this for a moment, and then said, "There's a little Indian in me, too. He's about two inches high!" The young man enjoyed his joke, laughing although no one else did. He didn't notice.

Timmy continued, more seriously. "I was born in Kodiak and I've been all around the islands all my life. I got friends everywhere. But some kids call us 'white guys' and 'Americans' anyway, and throw things at us." He said this as though he were just stating facts. And he wouldn't have said anything about it at all if the present company were likely to share that attitude. Just then, Kelly pointed to several boats tied up at the front dock, taking special interest in the "kickers" hanging off the skiffs. He tugged Timmy's sleeve and said something Judson couldn't hear. "Yes, I think that's an Evinrude," said Timmy, not nearly as interested in such things as his little brother was.

They were just passing the old building with the net loft, heading toward the store. Suddenly Timmy turned toward Judson. "Me'n Jake 'n Eagle went jumping on the nets over there back in June. You done that yet? It's like a big secret hideout up there!" Jake nodded, and laughed. "Yup. Sandy Ann tried to break my neck in there already!" Maybe young Timmy was more adventurous than he appeared, having held his own with the likes of the "Holy Terrors." Timmy continued, "Our net building in Ouzinkie is just one level, and really long. Can't jump around in it very well unless you wanna just hit the *floor!*" At this, he made a sort of 'ploof' sound and laughed, but once again, he seemed not to notice whether anyone else was amused.

The group reached the store and crowded in through the door. Herman left the box on the counter, with the two shopping bags beside it. Joyce Smith saw Laura Rezoff, broke out into a big smile, and said, "Hi, hi, hi, Laura!" as the younger woman hurried around the counter to meet them. Laura gave Joyce a big hug, and they began an animated conversation. Just then, Mr. Faltrip stepped out of his office and shook Norm's hand warmly. Norm looked at the two ladies talking for a moment, and then said, "Owen! How're you doin'? Seems like you're looking after things nicely here," with a twinkle in his eye. "Best I can, Norm. Did you hear about our new operations starting up?" "I heard it from Lloyd Westerbrook yesterday," said Norm. "And congratulations. Sokroshera Cove needs it!" Norm's statement didn't seem like name-dropping, and yet he already seemed to know all about conditions on both ends of the deal. "Jake Pedersen'll do a good job for you, too, I'm sure." This man hears a lot of things on his travels, and probably knows when to let on and when to keep shut, thought Judson. Wish I did. I didn't really like what I heard about the Bazaroffs, but I had to ask!

Will Rezoff came in from the back way, hands dark with engine grease. He wiped them hard on a rag he had in his back pocket, but Norm had already shaken his hand before he'd finished wiping them. "Working on one of the generators," said Will. "Can I have a look?" asked Norm. He had a sparkle in his blue eyes that resembled a kid about to get a new toy, thought Judson. Kelly had already run to

stand beside his dad. This man loves the machinery he depends on, thought Judson. Like his son Kelly does, like Mr. Rezoff does. Will just grinned and motioned them toward the generator room, which was part of the large L-shaped building that occupied the left side of the front dock. Mr. Faltrip, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Rezoff headed out the side door, and the three boys followed. Sandy Ann and Jake seemed to be hanging around in the store.

The group of men crossed the dock to the generator shed, where a lone yellow diesel-powered generator droned along providing power to the village. Will went to one of the three giant generators that stood idle, fiddled for a minute, and the machine roared to life. Norm listened intently, turned to Will, and said over the roar, "Sounds like your third cylinder's missing a bit." As Will nodded in assent, Judson looked at Timmy, who just shook his head, turned close to Judson's ear and said, "I have no idea how he does that!"

Will shut the monster down, and with only one of the four diesels running, the room got considerably quieter. He led them into the part of the old building that was being converted to processing crab, and to a large, open junction box on the wall. Behind them was a rusting metal tank painted silver, about ten feet high and almost as big around. Faltrip pounded on the tank and said, "This thing is leftover from Marmot Bay Fisheries back in the teens, but it would cost too much to remove it right now. It's too rusted and old to be good for anything. It's a shame, because it takes up a lot of valuable floor space." Will pointed at the new gray junction box and said, "This is where we'll be running the 220-volt line for the new crane we bought for unloading crab. It's a bit of a tangle, with lines from the old herring days, lines strung by Ardet's guys when they fitted out the building for salmon, and maybe even some circuits left by the military. They used the buildings that were already here like movie sets, so any plane flying over would see a cannery and a village, not a fort." Norm nodded in agreement, and said, "At the fort on Long Island out past Woody, they put up a bunch of barracks around a house that was part of an old fox farm in the twenties and thirties. Then they strung camouflage nets over their buildings. They even built some log cabins in the clearings so that it would look like a community."

"*There you are,*" said Laura's voice from the big wooden sliding door to their left. "I've invited everybody to our house for dinner, and Mr. Faltrip is watching the store so I can go cook. Will, could you and Herman go and clean those two salmons that Danny gave us? And Jay-Jay, could you please go invite your dad? I think he'd like to meet Joyce. She's been teaching kindergarten in the villages for a while, and they could compare notes." Mrs. Rezoff, always the considerate soul, had already apologized for not inviting the Lindseths, but with her family, the Smiths and the Hansens, her little kitchen couldn't handle any more. Mrs. Lindseth figured as much, and didn't seem to mind, having done the same just days before with the Hansens. Mr. Faltrip had been invited to dinner too, but politely declined, and went back to finish up at the store. Still a quiet, solitary man, thought Judson.

Judson was suddenly alone, walking back to the school to collect his father. He wondered what his father would think of the Smiths, but he already knew how he

and his dad would react to the fresh salmon feed that awaited them. Mrs. Rezoff, Mrs. Lindseth, Ol' Dottie Kurt, and probably many others in the village were amazing cooks, given the limited food choices. In the village, most likely the only fresh things you'd get to eat came from your own garden during the brief summers. Balancing that, however, there was a seemingly endless supply of free, glorious seafood, that people elsewhere would just die for, right out in the bay and the gulf. And neither Hansen was anywhere close to getting tired of eating it. When they weren't invited to someone's home, where the fare was invariably fresh-caught something, they were treated to gifts of fish or crab, usually with some free advice on how to prepare them. Judson was learning how to behead, gut, and clean various local fish, and not to be squeamish about it. He got to the apartment and collected his dad, who eagerly walked back with him to take part in another sumptuous local feast. They were both learning fast that in spite of all the fresh fish, the conversation was likely to be the most satisfying part of the menu.

Soon they were all sitting, anywhere there was space, in the small living room of the Rezoff home. The kitchen was not large enough for a proper table, which was unusual for a village home. A smaller table beside the sink provided Laura with badly needed prep space. On the other side of the wall to the left, a larger table with six chairs barely fit in the space between the wall and a large green couch against the other wall. The couch could barely fit between two bedroom doors. This was a small home, even by village standards. The one bathroom was behind the wall on the other side of the kitchen, tacked into what was once a closet or mudroom. The house had a roly-poly feel to it, having been elderly when the haphazard additions were built. It belonged to Pariscovia's family so many years before, and it was one of the first wood frame homes in the village (or at least part of it was). Yet every visitor noticed the cheery exterior, and the comfortable, lived-in, "stay awhile feeling" of the home—to borrow one of Judson's grandma's descriptions.

Laura nodded at Norm, who gave a simple blessing that began, "Father God..." Judson didn't remember the rest, but he remembered the calm, kind, yet purposeful voice of Norman Smith. Judson got the feeling that Norm's prayer wouldn't have been much different if he were alone. It was easy to get a sense of the man's soul from the simple, unassuming table grace that addressed God as a Person that could be known, or as Norm had said, "Father God." Norm seemed to be a man at least as comfortable in demonstrating his faith as he was in talking about it.

During the sumptuous feast of a dinner, the Smiths learned a bit about the Hansens, and Timmy got to tell his dad about Judson's name. Norm and Joyce didn't seem too surprised at what their son did and didn't find interesting. Everyone talked as they consumed fried salmon steaks, rice with butter, canned green beans, and *cheetuk* for dessert. *Cheetuk* was a concoction of mashed salmonberries, unsweetened evaporated milk, and white sugar. Generations before, whale fat might have taken the place of the canned milk. It was a local and a seasonal delicacy, and the salmonberry season was almost over. Salmonberries tasted like a cross between raspberries and blackberries, with a slight edge toward the

raspberries. They were named because on the bushes they resembled little clumps of salmon eggs, not, thankfully, because they actually tasted like fish. Judson and everyone else practically inhaled their little bowls of *cheetuk*, in spite of the filling feast they had already consumed. Herman tipped his bowl and slurped the last drops, Judson followed suit, and no one objected.

Judson found Norm Smith easy to talk to, and told him about their move from Arizona, his impressions so far, and even that he'd been conscripted to work for "Old Mr. Faltrip" — for playing around in the cannery. Norm let out a good, hearty laugh at that news. No one so far seemed to call Norm "Reverend," and Judson finally asked why. Norm explained that people never used that title with him unless they were trying to sound official or were actually being derogatory (what would be their problem? Judson had thought). As Judson listened to their conversation, he noticed that Mr. Smith's most common reaction of surprise or shock was to say, "Honestly!" and shake his head, something he undoubtedly brought with him from his farmer background in Washington State. For him, the expression was worth whole sentences in someone else's mouth. And Joyce Smith had said "Hi, hi, hi!" again, as she had at the store, when she entered the home, a descending series of tones almost like chimes, thought Judson. The Smiths had felt free to keep these signatures of individuality.

As they talked with folks on their travels around the islands, the Smiths met all types, to be sure. And they both seemed to have personalities that meshed well with village culture and style. Joyce seemed to love telling the folks she was visiting now about the people she had just visited. But it wasn't gossip; it was happy, pleasant details, almost as though she were bragging about a member of her family. When she left here, she'd probably be telling all the folks in Ouzinkie about the wonderful time she'd had at the Rezoffs, and about meeting the schoolteacher and his boy. Everyone in Alaska seems to have personalities to match the size of the state, laughed Judson to himself. Judson was fascinated by the Smith family, people who would pack up and move to a strange and challenging place, much as he and his father had done. They seemed comfortable and at home in their chosen world; Judson hoped it could be that way for him.

After dinner, Judson helped clear the dishes. Soon, Herman was up to his elbows in suds at the sink, so Judson helped dry. Kelly and Barbara were playing in the corner, Kelly with a small wooden tugboat, and Barbara with a stiff-looking doll with eyes that blinked when you tilted her head, and ratty clothing that bespoke ages of playing in the yard. Who knows how they were managing to play together, but Judson, having worked with Barbara a few times, was not really surprised.

Mrs. Smith and Mr. Hansen were discussing a sheaf of papers he had brought with him, and Judson caught a few words as he passed in and out of the room. "Twins... alcohol... pregnancy... show all the symptoms... hopefully a mild case... some abilities but not all... look for what they can do well... extra patience... probably cheerful most days, but easily upset by sudden changes." Paris and Sonya Selivanoff apparently had some kind of special needs. His dad was saying things

like “should have been retained... no one really helped them... last year’s teacher ignored... I’ve seen this on the reservation... I appreciate your advice.”

I’m so *chismoso*, thought Judson, using the Spanish slang for a nosy gossip. But he couldn’t really help himself, because he was carrying dishes in and out, and wasn’t deaf yet, he assured himself. Joyce Smith spoke authoritatively and confidently, yet seemed to be giving practical, rather than technical advice. Apparently, his dad was in for some challenges, even with only eleven students. Judson mentally promised to help, but realized that he might have trouble keeping his vow. In a school setting, Judson could be as bad as young Jake, and maybe worse.

Norm was talking to Will, after a tour of the yard, at the other end of the table. Judson noted that he’d missed yet another opportunity to get acquainted with Mr. Rezoff’s unusual collection. Norm hefted the box of books Herman had carried for him up to the table surface, and Will peeked inside. “Oh, good, *Readers Digest Condensed Books*. I can read four or five books at once!” He laughed heartily, and Judson realized that even since he’d met Mr. Rezoff, the man seemed to be blossoming into something better than before.

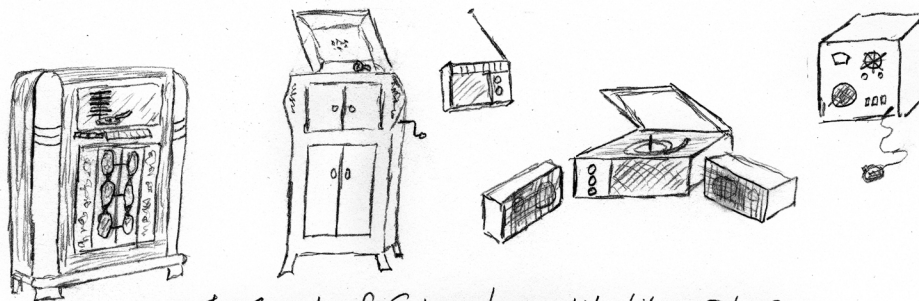
“Oh, is this the Bible you told me about?” Will asked, as Norm brought out a thick hardbound book with a gold and blue slipcover. *The New Testament in Modern English*, J. B. Phillips. “It’s more like talking or telling a story,” said Norm. “So, more like the way *you* talk, and not in old stuffy words, haw?” said Will, and punched Norm playfully in the arm. Mr. Smith, for his part, just turned to a section of the book and removed a bookmark. “Here’s a card with the ‘Christ Our Pilot’ painting we have in the boat, the one you liked,” he said. About that time, Barbara hopped up into Norm’s lap, and neither he nor Will thought anything of it. Most people are very comfortable around this guy, thought Judson, people of all ages. And it surprised Judson that Will had accepted a Bible without any of the ‘tough guy’ protestations that Judson had expected. There was real, mutual respect between these two. Did Norm know about the drinking?

Will stood up, stretched a bit, and went outside, after telling everyone he’d be right back. He returned a short time later with a cardboard box, and placed it carefully on the table. After asking Laura for a towel, he opened the box and gingerly laid out a large object on the towel, something that Judson could not identify. “This is part of a mast, I think,” Will said. “I found it half buried in the gravel down at east beach near Teplov Point, after the big storm last March.” Will pointed out part of a pulley, still attached to a metal hasp. Crude metal bolts connected it to an eighteen-inch long piece of withered wood, which was shaggy and worn at both ends from its encounter with beach and surf. “What do you think it is, Norm?” “Well, I’ve seen block and tackle arrangements and various mast setups around here that date back to the twenties,” Norm said, “And none of them look exactly like this.” He pointed to the bolts and the hasp. “These look more hand-tooled than machine made – even after years in the water, I think you could tell the difference. If I didn’t know better, I’d say it looks Russian.” Will nodded. “That’s what I thought, too,” said Will. “But I don’t know of any old stories that talk about a ship that went down off Teplov Point or east beach.” Norm mentioned that things can sometimes travel a long way

under the ocean due to weather and currents, and Will added, "Or maybe it just came up from a long way down." He carefully replaced the mysterious artifact and put the box under the table.

Soon Will's conversation switched to other things he'd collected over the years. Will was enjoying this grown-up version of 'show and tell.' He pointed to a rather battered-looking old wind-up phonograph cabinet in the corner, which Judson had not noticed beneath a camouflage of lush houseplants on the lid. "Somebody was throwing that out, but I figured out how to fix the spring, and it works!" He was justly proud of a repair job that had no relation to his skill as a diesel mechanic. He was simply a craftsman at most things.

Then Will stepped to a bedroom and came back with a binder full of old records that could be played on the equally old phonograph. "Most of these I found at an abandoned whaling station on Sitkalidak Island, down by Old Harbor ...Port Hobron." Norm nodded; they'd been there, too. Will carefully pulled out a few titles. "There Ain't No Sweet Man that's Worth the Salt of My Tears," "Why Don't You Do Right?" and other interesting and quaint old titles slid out onto a pile on the kitchen table. Judson, not impolitely, looked over Norm's shoulder. On the inside cover of the record binder was a yellowed piece of notebook paper taped to the cardboard, and written in grease pencil, like people sometimes used for labeling boxes. "To the Swan from the Scrapper, with all my Love." Where had Judson seen writing like that before?



*The Sounds of Sokrasheera: Wurlitzer Juke Box,
Victrola, transistor radio, Judson's stereo,
marine band "Ship to shore" radio and microphone*

Judson moved aside as Will pulled out another record. "Look at this, Norm." He handed him the disc, and Norm read the title. Will described what he knew about the record. "It's from about 1912. Look, it's the most worn of all the records." Will pointed out the graying grooves. His guest was looking at the title "I can see why they played it so much," said Norm, nodding. Will hopped up, removed the plants carefully, and opened the lid of his phonograph, spun the crank a few times, then came back for the old record. Soon a gravelly sound filled the room, followed shortly afterward by a few tinny-sounding brass instruments and at last a tenor, his words nearly buried by years of being ground away by a steel needle. "Jesus, Saviour, pilot me, Over life's tempestuous sea, Unknown waves before me roll..."

Deep in thought, Judson could almost imagine the sailors from innumerable voyages crying out in peril as they journeyed through the famously treacherous waters of the northern Gulf of Alaska. When the song ended, Judson's thoughts were interrupted by young Barbara's request, "Daddy, play Grandma's favorite song!" She fairly skipped to the couch, grabbed one of the pillows, plopped down on it, facing the phonograph, and became suddenly still. Barbara's famous concentration, thought Judson. Timmy sat on the floor nearby. He, too, was mesmerized by the sound of the old music.

Will Rezoff carefully removed a disc from the folder of delicate 78s and placed it on the turntable, and after selecting a fresh steel needle, cranked the machine again. A man's familiar voice, soon joined by a group of men and women, sang with no other accompaniment. Judson felt the room begin to spin around him, and he tried not to move, gripping the sides of his chair. "Wrong, it can't be wrong to kiss, knowing I feel like this; It can't be wrong to try..." With great effort, Judson sat through the song. He suddenly recognized the printing on the note, and the conclusion descended like with the force of a cartoon anvil on his mind. But the effect was not humorous, but shocking. He had connected the dots, and the knowledge was nearly doing him in.

He felt an overpowering need to get out of there. Almost rudely once the song had ended, he called to Herman. "Let's... let's go to the spruce trees and ride the swings." Try as he might, his face had registered shock at the song, and it had been noticed. Norm Smith looked intently at Judson, and the young man got the feeling the minister had somehow figured out what the trouble was. Jeffrey Hansen called to his son, "Jud, you ok?" Judson struggled to reply, trying to sound as normal as he could. "I'm just full I guess. I need to go get some air." Herman had seen Judson get claustrophobia in the depths of the fort, and had seen him get seasick, too, so he seemed to shrug it off, and headed toward the door. "Honestly!" said Norm, quietly, and shaking his head. He didn't elaborate, and no one noticed. Norm's eyes never left the young man as Judson quietly excused himself and followed Herman out the door.

Outside, in the cooler air, his mind raced, and he still felt as though he might faint. Mr. Faltrip had been in love with *Will's mother!* The questions, the ramifications, all raced through his mind. What should he do next? He felt he really needed to talk to someone at that moment, and realized he couldn't. This was obviously Mr. Faltrip's secret to tell. His head spun, and he suddenly felt confused and very alone. Judson tried to enjoy the rope swings, once they got to the stand of spruce trees near the road to the old fort. But Herman noticed his heart wasn't in it, and suggested they go back. Judson seemed uncharacteristically unwilling to talk, and Herman wisely let him be, sensing that something had happened at dinner that had upset his new friend. Finally, Herman's eyes narrowed and he said quietly, "Did you get in trouble somehow?" Judson shook his head. "Tell me about it sometime, ok?" Judson only managed a nod.

They returned to the Rezoff home just as the Smiths were saying their goodbyes. "...we have to get into Ouzinkie before dark, since we don't have radar, and it's a

bit tricky through the narrows at night," Mr. Smith was saying. Sandy Ann and Jake had shown up at the Rezoff house while the boys were at the swings, and the whole group accompanied their guests to the dock to wave goodbye. Judson guessed correctly that this was a common occurrence in villages and canneries up and down Kodiak Island for the crew of the Evangel. Judson tagged along, but stayed behind the others, hoping no one would bother him. Sandy Ann, engaged in a happy conversation with Mrs. Smith, didn't seem to notice.

When the group became engaged in animated conversation, Mr. Smith let them surge ahead toward the dock, turned to Judson, and put his hand gently on Judson's back. He didn't ask how Judson had learned the secret. He just said quietly, "I think you figured out something, didn't you? But there is someone *else* who needs to tell that story," and Judson nodded. He felt as if he were about to cry; it was almost too much to bear. He didn't ask how Mr. Smith knew the story, but figured that pastors were likely to know and keep many secrets. Mr. Smith patted him lightly on the back, and they continued on down to the dock. Judson felt as if this were one of the worst days of his life, and there was no one else he could talk to about it. Grateful for this small amount of comfort, Judson responded to Mr. Smith's admonition and said weakly, "Thank you, I think I can do that..." But his voice faded out before they rejoined the others.

Thursday, August 29, 1963: Sokroshera Cove and Fort Sheplen

The next morning, he and Sandy Ann were taking the long way through town past the houses to the beach trail beyond the Rezoff's place. Little Jake was nowhere to be seen, likely on some mayhem with Eagle. "The school is as ready as we can make it," his dad had said, and with a smile had waved him off to have fun. Sandy Ann had noticed that Judson had kept mostly to himself the night before. "Why were you acting so *weird* last night? You acted like you had seen a ghost or something. Herman said he thought you were getting sick." Sandy Ann turned her earnest face toward him, and he knew he needed to provide a reply. "Oh, maybe I ate too much, and sometimes the adult talk gets a little strange," he said, as casually and as vaguely as possible. He hoped his suddenly undependable voice wouldn't be noticed. "You're telling me! Booorrrrrinnnggg, haw?" said Sandy Ann, satisfied with his answer.

He realized that telling Sandy Ann the secret at this point would be a mistake, as much as he wanted to. He had a question at the ready, to keep her from returning to the topic of last night. "Why, in all the really old papers we sorted, does it say "Bazarov" or "Selivanov" or "Novikov" with an *-ov* ending, and the spellings from nowadays all have *-off* endings?" Judson was genuinely curious. "Oh, that's because everybody's *off* their rockers and this place is *off* the beaten path!" Sandy Ann laughed. "Both my grandmas originally had Russian names before they married, so I'm a bit *-off*, too!" Much as she enjoyed her string of awful puns, eventually her role as Judson's tour guide took over. "I heard Anicia say one time that the Americans made everybody change their spelling soon after they switched all the schools to English. I guess they thought that spelling with *-off* was closer to the sound in American or something." Judson nodded, but as soon as he pondered

it, he was appalled. How many times had these villagers had their culture and their ways invaded by outsiders who insisted on such deep and sweeping changes, with no thought as to how the changes might be affecting everyone?

In the beach grass behind the power shed building, beside the creek and within rock throwing distance of the store and the mess hall, was a slightly rusted Quonset hut that someone was using as a home. On the beach side of the half-cylinder building, an addition with windows and a straight, sloping tin roof nearly doubled the home's size. "Wonder what it would be like to live there?" he asked Sandy Ann, who said, "I'll bet it's like living in a submarine. I saw a submarine movie once when Mr. Faltrip showed it. *Run Silent, Run Deep*—I think that's the name. Like living in a tube." "Whose house is it?" asked Judson, guessing the owner from something he'd overheard in an earlier conversation.

"That's the palace of Martin Pankoff, the immortal 'Smarty Pants,'" said Sandy Ann, and giggled, not noticing Judson's wry nod at being right. "He has one of the blue and yellow cannery boats, but Dad says if he doesn't take better care of it and start paying his bills, he won't have it for long. It's the *Kashka Cyerry*. That's Russian for 'Gray Kitty.'" Sandy Ann explained, and was off on a wordy explanation, "The Native word for cat is *kooshkuk*, and the Russian word is *kashka*. I guess the Natives copied that word." Sandy Ann looked proud of herself and her bilingual lesson. "Makes sense," said Judson. "I bet there were no cats here before the Russians came." Remembering Jakob's story, he half wondered if more cannery equipment was hidden beneath one of Marty's tarps. But he kept silent; it was best not to judge.

As they walked past the shed that was close to the road, they saw Ward Bazaroff leaning against it; the place must be his favorite hangout, thought Judson, and something in the back of his mind told him to play it cool and not provoke any trouble. Judson was at this point willing to cut Ward some slack. He knew that was the right thing to do. Besides, he'd been intentionally rude the last time they'd talked, and had been scolded by both Herman and Sandy Ann. He promised himself that he'd try to be careful. Ward hopped off the porch and stood right in front of Judson, so close their shoulder blades could practically touch.

Ward had apparently heard a bit more of Judson's history from somebody in the village. This time he began with, "How ya doin' *half-breed*?" He stepped back, and shoved Judson, but not enough to make him lose his balance. Judson countered, "Let me get this straight: a few days ago you acted this way because I was *an American*—I guess you mean 'white guy.' And now you're bugging me because I'm *not* a white guy. Could you make up your damn mind?" Judson hadn't intended the extra word in there. "Don't get smart with me," said Ward, fiercely. Judson found the setup irresistible, "Apparently there's no chance of *you* getting smart." Again, not the best speech for this occasion, he thought. "You don't know *half* of what I know," Ward blustered, but seemed to be having trouble formulating his sentences. His school record was a bit of a sore spot for him, apparently.

Sandy Ann interrupted at this point, and moved between Judson and Ward. "You are Mr. Ward Bazaroff, but I christen you *The Weirdo...*"—she paused for effect—"Bizarro! You know, like the comic book guy!" She waved her arms around as though creating a spell, then smiled sweetly and bowed to him. It wasn't a bravura performance on her part, but Ward was irritated by it just the same. "Aw, shut up!" he practically shouted. "Wow, *that* was brilliant," said Judson, whose obviously limited patience had finally expired. "Gonna have to give you a name of my own. Bob. Bob Oso."

"Who the hell is Bub... Bozo?" steamed Ward, taking a threatening step forward again. This time Judson ignored the perfect joke setup Ward had just handed him, and instead decided to translate. "Oh, that's Spanish: *baboso* means someone who *drools* a lot..."—Judson also paused for effect—"...or a *retard*." At that, he turned and walked down the trail in the direction they had been going. Ward made a step to follow, and Sandy Ann turned and said fiercely, "Cool it, Bizarro!" When they made the turn to go down to the beach, Ward was nowhere to be seen.

After a few minutes aimlessly walking on the beach, they returned to the trail, and both were a little upset. Judson finally spoke. "Don't... *don't* fight my battles for me, ok?" he turned intensely and stared at her. She was a little shocked; this was their first argument since ever. Sandy Ann took her best defense. "He fries me!" she pounded her fist into her hand. "He thinks he's really something wonderful. But you had him tongue tied in a minute!" She paused, turned toward Judson, and looked at him seriously. "He's been a troublemaker and a bully all his life. He can take you, y' know. I'd watch what I say next time, like I told you before."

Judson made a *pfffft* noise, and didn't look at her. But he sort of agreed with her. He *had* made that little encounter a lot worse. And using a Spanish insult on him, especially *that* one—was just plain mean, even if the guy didn't understand it. Just saying that word would have landed him in the principal's office for sure back in Arizona. His dad believed in treating people with as much respect as possible, and he had a sneaking suspicion that Mr. Smith would probably say the same thing. Oh, well. Better luck next time! But in the back of his brain, Judson was shocked at how quickly all the good advice he'd heard, and his best promises to himself, had gone out the window when he'd faced the real Ward again.

He changed the subject, adopting an accusing tone: "So... you know about *Bizarro*, meaning that you read your little brother's comic books from time to time!" Sandy Ann was still thinking about Ward. She ignored the accusation and just said, "Well, he *is*, especially when he acts like he did today." By this time, they were near the Lindseth house, and heard a loud engine on the road behind them. They turned just as Truck Brother Jake honked his horn. The yellow Dodge Power Wagon boom truck was behind them. There were only two reasons for honking in Sokroshera Cove: clearing the road of cattle and scaring children. No one was overly concerned about honking. The window was down, and Jakob Pedersen was calling to them. "Wanna go with me up into the fort and cut trees off the road? Jake's already up here, riding shotgun." Young Jake, as if to emphasize that fact, reached over and honked again. The kids were grateful for a complete change of subject and scenery, and

jumped in the back. Truck Brother Jake's chainsaw was in the truck bed with them. Heading up the hill, Judson thought that driving in a tank would have been no noisier or slower; the beast of a truck was seemingly unable to outrun its own fumes.

There were three or four sections of the road to be cleared, and Jake the elder was (today at least) almost as fun to be with as his more outgoing brother Danny was. Jakob would cut the tree that had fallen at both ends, then after some limb trimming, they all would roll it to the side. Then he would pull the truck next to the severed log and cut the wood into sections a little over a foot long. At that point, the kids made a game of trying to carry the thick trunk section, lift it onto the tailgate, and roll it into the truck bed. Even with three of them, Truck Brother Jake had to help most of the time. Yet it still seemed fun for some reason that Judson couldn't put his finger on. "These logs'll make nice wood for my stove. I prefer to cut rather than pump my fuel!" At this, Truck Brother Jake laughed almost as loudly as Danny would have. Then he admitted that he had a nice little oil space heater as well, for those extra cold days.

Back once again in the village, Jake Pedersen parked the truck near his shed. He had the kids help him roll the log sections off the tailgate and over next to his shed, which took far less time than the loading had. Jake put the chainsaw back in the shed. Then the younger Jake said, "Can you sing us a song now? Please?" They all filed in to the Truck Brothers' home, a frame and plywood structure built just a few years before. As befitting a bachelor home, the walls were still original, unpainted plywood, as was the floor. In sharp contrast, a lovely stone wall insulated the wood-burning cookstove from the walls, and another, smaller stone wall stood behind a little oil heater near the opposite corner. It was a charming sort of practicality.

Judson noted that all the seams around the windows, doors, and corners were tight and well constructed. They wanted it airtight, not pretty, Judson guessed. Jakob noticed Judson looking around. He explained, "We were living in a house that belonged to Betty's in-laws after they passed away—you know, one of the old houses nobody lives in now up the east side of the creek. But we got tired of living in a drafty old run-down place, and built this house four years ago after the salmon season." "Ok, Uncle Jake. Now he knows. But music now, *please?*" Sandy Ann could be very blunt when she wanted something done. Was Jakob actually stalling?

From behind a ratty old rust-colored couch haphazardly slid into a corner, Truck Brother Jake pulled a big black guitar case. "Bought this thing instead of buying a new truck like Danny," he said. He opened the case and reached inside, carefully drawing out a lovely dreadnaught guitar. Judson knew this model well, being that it was recently very popular with the local Country and Western singers who entertained regularly on the reservation back in Arizona.

That's a Gibson "Hummingbird," said Judson, staring at the engravings of a flower with a hovering bird above it, all over a sunburst red soundboard. His recognition drew a big smile from Truck Brother Jake. "So I suppose you like the Four Seasons

and Bobby Vee and Andy Williams?" "Naw. Johnny Cash mostly, thanks to my friends back on the Reservation, and Dad likes the Kingston Trio." The elder Jake evidently approved of both. He tuned up and launched into a familiar guitar lick, singing the song about a guy who "shot a man in Reno just to watch him die." His next one was equally familiar, about a guy who "met her accident'ly in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and it tore me up every time I heard her drawl, Southern drawl..." The elder Jake was batting 1000 so far, Judson decided. The man's voice was higher and thinner than ol' Johnny's, but he had the guitar licks down cold. After seeing the real Cash on TV a couple of times, Judson realized that it was the guy behind him doing all the fancy playing, and this Jake guy was doing most of it himself, and singing, too.

All three kids sat at attention in various places in the sparsely furnished room, as if they were in the front row of Carnegie Hall. Jake Pedersen actually seemed to be enjoying his time as a legendary performer, live, on stage in Sokroshera Cove! "Play the sad one now," said Jake the younger, and Sandy Ann clapped her hands in anticipation like a little girl. Part of her still is, Judson reminded himself. Truck Brother Jake tried to wave them off, but Danny's voice cut in from the doorway. "Sing it, brother. I've always liked that one, too."

Jake fiddled with the tuning on strings that were fine just seconds earlier, cleared his throat, looked like he was trying to get out of it, and finally launched into his song. It was another Johnny Cash number, but one that Judson had only heard a few times. "...I'll never get over those blue eyes; I see them everywhere! I miss those arms that held me, when all the love was there. I wonder if she's sorry, for leaving what we'd begun. There's someone for me somewhere, and I still miss someone."

At the end of the song, Danny was staring at his brother with the same enigmatic look that their sister Betty had that night in the mess hall. Judson was having another episode of revelation, a little less sure this time. Did she have blue eyes? He couldn't remember. Quiet, sleepy little fishing village – *my eye!* he concluded, borrowing yet another of his grandma's sayings. Maybe I'll find out tomorrow, he said to himself. But he felt strongly that this would turn out to be a secret he'd just as soon not discover.