

Saving Abby

Written by

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Based on a tragic drowning in Alaska.

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INT. TED STEVENS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, ANCHORAGE, ALASKA -
DUSK

Alaska Airlines Flight 99 touches down on the runway at Ted Stevens International Airport in Anchorage. Julia Greer soon makes her way through Concourse C, toting a single bag. She has just returned from a three-day nurses' conference in Memphis. Passing through the baggage area, Julia soon presses her key fob inside the parking garage and locates her truck. Once on International Airport Road, she now heads for the Minnesota Drive exit to get onto Seward Highway.

EXT. SEWARD HIGHWAY, SOUTHEASTERN ALASKA, CHUGACH MOUNTAINS -
MOMENTS LATER

Glad to finally be free of traffic lights, Julia passes the all-too-familiar Potter Marsh before taking in the panorama of the Kenai Mountain Range, which never disappoints. Lost amid the beauty Seward Highway provides, Julia passes a body of water to her right, known as Turnagain Arm, which serves as a bleak reminder of the day her best friend, Abby, slipped beneath its steely-gray waters thirty years ago.

JULIA

I don't think you ever get over the death of your best friend, especially someone so young. Abby and I met in 1985 as members of the LSU women's swim team. I was from Squaw Valley, California, while Abby hailed from Ash Grove, Missouri.

Julia begins to pick up speed for the forty-minute drive to Girdwood.

We had an amazing Freshman year and traveled throughout the Southeastern Conference doing what we did best. Swim! We were fast, both in individual events and relays, often swimming six miles a day in practice. We had a lot of fun that year!

The tidal waters begin to swirl along the rocky shore, parallel to the highway.

But, enough of that. The following summer, Abby left LSU to marry Joe Coulter and follow him to Eagle River, Alaska. I never saw her again.

(MORE)

JULIA (CONT'D)

She drowned a month later in a notorious body of water known as Turnagain Arm, home to one of the most dangerous tidal bays in all of North America.

A trio of Dall sheep cling to the steep cliffs along the Seward Highway.

This is a tale of love and loss, and the firm belief that time eventually heals all wounds. As for the turbulence in between, well, that's the stuff that great stories are made of...

Julia pulls into her gravel driveway just off Alyeska Highway. Inside the house, she drops her bag, enters the master bedroom, and soon crawls into bed next to her sleeping husband, Will, while the lofty glaciers huddled around Girdwood silently look on.

CUT TO:

INT. GARLAND FUNERAL HOME, ASH GROVE, MISSOURI - AFTERNOON

Twenty-five years earlier, mourners are waiting in line to greet the Gladstone family at Garland Funeral Home in Ash Grove, Missouri. Daughter Abby's casket, now visible, is closed for obvious reasons since drowning victims are rarely shown. LSU teammate Julia Arden now pays her respects to Abby's parents, Lyndon and Christine, as well as her sisters, Pamela and Tessa.

CHRISTINE

Julia. Come and sit down next to me.

Patting one of the seats arranged behind the receiving line, Julia complies.

That's better...

JULIA

Thank you, Mrs. Gladstone. I'm as shocked as you are.

CHRISTINE

And I'm just as numb... You know, I had a bad feeling after the wedding when she traveled up to Alaska.

JULIA

I remember you having reservations.

CHRISTINE

Why, the thank you notes weren't even written out yet, now this...

JULIA

Such a freak accident.

CHRISTINE

Life is precious, Julia! Are you planning to return to LSU in the fall?

JULIA

Well, yes. I have the nursing program to think about.

CHRISTINE

That's right!

Christine's husband, Lynn, turns around.
I'd best get back in line. Do come over afterward, we've got so much food! You simply wouldn't believe it...

Julia takes Christine's hand.

JULIA

I must be getting home to my summer job in Squaw Valley. Besides, coming here was hard enough; I can't imagine attending the funeral and burial tomorrow.

CHRISTINE

That's alright, Julia. We appreciate you coming all this way just the same... Have a great semester, and please don't hesitate to call me if you ever need to talk.

They stand up.

JULIA

I will, Mrs. Gladstone.

CHRISTINE

Time heals all wounds.

Taking Julia's hands.

JULIA

I suppose. But how long does that take?

CHRISTINE

God only knows.
(half smiling)

As Christine rejoins the line, Julia quickly exits the funeral home, only to find widower, Joe Coulter, waiting for her outside.

EXT. GARLAND FUNERAL HOME, ASH GROVE, MISSOURI - MOMENTS LATER

Julia now approaches Joe, who is standing under an ash tree. They soon embrace.

JULIA

Joe. What happened?

JOE

Well, I was in such a hurry to get to my claim the day it happened.

JULIA

Claim?

JOE

Gold claim. Where Seattle Creek empties into Turnagain Arm...

Julia remains confused as Joe continues.

I had a registered claim there to dredge for gold along the shore. Abby and I took a shortcut across the arm at low tide to save time driving into the Kenai Peninsula.

Joe looks over his shoulder at Abby's family filing out of the funeral home.

Then, our jeep got bogged down on the muddy bottom.

JULIA

That much I do know!

JOE

Anyway, I was too intent on getting Abby out myself and then hurrying over to the claim.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

You know how men are always so reluctant to ask for directions?

JULIA

I do. You were always king of the hopelessly independent.
(sarcastically)

JOE

As I was saying, the hours passed so quickly that morning that by the time I ran up to the highway, the tide was already approaching her waist. The nearest fire department was in Girdwood, twenty-five minutes away. I had a bystander call them from a nearby cafe.

JULIA

And they arrived...

JOE

They did, and quickly went to work in the freezing water, using a highly pressurized hose that displaces the glacier mud underwater. But by the time they attached it to the firetruck, the water was up to her nose.

Envisioning the tragic scene.

There was an Alaska State Trooper named Greer, who jumped off the support boards, desperately trying to pull her free. Another rescuer joined him, but became so numb he could no longer feel his extremities. That trooper, Greer, was the last one to hold Abby until she disappeared beneath the surface.

JULIA

Such a tragedy! I replay it in my mind almost every hour! What agony she must have endured that day.

JOE

I remember sitting there on the shore, waiting for the tide to ebb, so that we could retrieve her body.

Turning away from Julia's intense gaze.

When they brought her out, she
was...she was as white as any snow.
I swear, I'll never forget it.

Turning to watch the Gladstones get into their vehicles.
Then, after a funeral director in
Anchorage prepared her body for
transport to St. Louis, Abby was
flown home. I followed her here the
following day. I tell you, meeting
the Gladstones after I landed
was...gut-wrenching.

Choking back the tears.

JULIA

Oh, Joe, I can only imagine.

JOE

I can't see how I'll ever be able
to forgive myself.

JULIA

But it wasn't your fault. You
mustn't blame yourself. Surely...

JOE

It was reckless of me. Alaska
presents enough danger without
attempting to cross the mudflats of
Turnagain Arm at low tide.

JULIA

Turnagain, what?

JOE

Turnagain Arm; it's a bay just
south of Anchorage fed by Cook
Inlet and the greater Gulf of
Alaska. It has the second-highest
tidal flow in all of North America,
as much as thirty feet. It's said,
and I can attest to it, that if
you're out on the flats at low tide
and you begin to hear water
trickling around your feet, it's
already too late to escape the
swiftly charging bore tide! Add mud
to the mix, and the outcome is
almost always, well...fatal.

JULIA

And just how deep is this mud,
anyway?

JOE

It's not the depth, as much as the properties that constitute the stuff. When glaciers grind over the top of bedrock, the ensuing powder, or flour, as it's called, is filled with tiny shards of stone that can act as a vice around almost any boot entering its surface.

JULIA

And that's what happened to Abby?

Joe hangs his head in acknowledgement.
We'd better get over to the Gladstones.

JOE

You go ahead. I can't face them, not tonight. Tomorrow will be hard enough. Let's get out of here...

JULIA

There's a bistro not far from here. We can get something to eat and drink.

JOE

That sounds good. Come on.

JULIA

You can follow me. Better yet, I'll drive. It'll be easier. Let's go.

They both get into Julia's rental car and drive away into the dwindling light.

INT. UNITED AIRLINES FLIGHT 69 TO RENO, NEVADA - MORNING

Flying home the next day, Julia looks out the window at the dense cloud cover from twenty-five thousand feet to once again reflect on the life of her best friend, Abby.

FADE TO:

EXT. FRESHMAN MOVE-IN DAY, LSU, BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA - AFTERNOON

Eleven months prior: It's Freshman Move-In Day at LSU. An eager Abby Gladstone is assigned to an all-female athlete high-rise located next to the natatorium.

Her three-person room is comprised of two swimmers and a softball player. Abby and her family soon enter the room.

ABBY
Quick, Pam, grab the top bunk!

PAM
What?
(confused)

ABBY
Climb up the ladder and stay on top!

Pointing out the bunk. Pam looks over to her mother, who nods in approval. She now scales the ladder at the end of the rack and flops down on the bed.

PAM
Like this? Just like camp!
(laughing)

ABBY
I always got the top bed at camp, too, not to mention the Junior Nationals last year!

CHRISTINE
Tess, start unpacking those boxes over there and put the items on that desk in the corner, in front of the window.

TESSA
Yes, Mother.

Abby's father now rolls a large bin into the room from the hallway.

CHRISTINE
Lynn, bring that over to the dresser next to her desk. I'll put her clothes away...

LYNN
Got it!

ABBY
Mother, that's not necessary!

CHRISTINE
The way you keep your bedroom at home, oh, yes, it is! Don't be a stranger to the laundry room.

(MORE)

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)
I'm told it's in the basement, and
free of charge! How are you doing,
Tess?

TESSA
I've plugged everything in: the
lamp, the alarm clock, and the
cordless phone.

CHRISTINE
Good. Lynn, you had better return
that bin. Someone downstairs in the
lobby may need it.

Lynn rolls the bin out of the room, glad to be free of the
women. As he's leaving, a roommate and her large family
suddenly appear at the door.

LYNN
Hi, I'm Lynn Gladstone.

Acknowledging the roommate's father and shaking hands.

RUSSEL
Russ Kepler, Fort Smith, Arkansas.
This is my daughter, Rebecca, and
my wife, Lynn.

LYNN
Nice name you've got there, Lynn!
(laughing)

Rebecca's mother only smiles and slides her way into the
room, leaving the rest of her family standing in the hallway.
Do you need a bin?

RUSSEL
Thanks. They were plum out of them
down there.

Commandeering the precious cart.

LYNN
My pleasure. Fort Smith? Let me
guess, your daughter's a softball
player...

RUSSEL
(nodding)
A pitcher. The SEC is big on
women's softball. It helps even the
score where Title IX is concerned.

CHRISTINE

Lynn. Can you help me hang these drapes I made?

LYNN

What's wrong with the existing drapes?

CHRISTINE

For starters, they're filthy. Besides, these will brighten up the room a bit.

LYNN

Alright. Duty calls.

Turning to Russel and grinning. As Lynn begins to work, Russel and his wife begin to unpack.

PAM

Are we almost done? I'm hungry!

TESSA

Me too!

CHRISTINE

Sorry, ladies. This is taking longer than I expected. I'll remember that when you start college, Tess...

TESSA

By that time, I'll be swimming for Kentucky!

CHRISTINE

Tess, leave your sister alone! You'll be saying goodbye to her any minute now.

RUSSEL

Where did you say you're from?

Opening up his toolbox to assemble a floor lamp.

LYNN

Missouri. Southwest of St. Louis. We've got ten hours ahead of us, after stopping to eat...

PAM

Yes!

Looking over at Tess and pumping her fist.

CHRISTINE
 Alright, the drapes are done.

ABBY
 They look great. Really.

CHRISTINE
 Thanks, honey. One more thing to do, then we're out of here!

TESSA
 What's that, Mom?

CHRISTINE
 I have to make up Abby's bed.

The Gladstone girls render a collective sigh.

ABBY
 That's not necessary!

CHRISTINE
 (emphatically)
 I didn't come all this way and fail to make my oldest daughter's dormitory bed. Pam, you can get down now!

Pam jumps down from the bunk.
 Tess, get out the sheets and pillow cases from the footlocker.

After making Abby's top bunk, this fully satisfied mother vacates the crowded room with the rest of the family, surrendering it to the preoccupied Keplers. Outside, the Gladstones give Abby an affectionate kiss and bid her farewell. On the drive home, Christine leans her head against the passenger window, sobbing all the way home at the thought of leaving her eldest child so far away at college.

INT. LSU NATATORIUM, BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA - EVENING

A month later, the LSU men's and women's swimming teams host their annual Purple and Gold Intrasquad Meet. The next event on the program is the 400 medley relay, with sprinter Julia Arden set to leg the foursome in the freestyle. She is the only freshman competing this evening. Contestants have already jumped into the water for the backstroke and are soon ready for the starting horn.

INT. FAIRCHILD DORMITORY, LAUNDRY ROOM, LSU, BATON ROUGE,
LOUISIANA - EVENING

Abby is sorting out her clothes, just as Julia enters the
laundry room.

ABBY
Well, hello there...!

JULIA
Hi.

Setting down her clothes basket.
I thought I'd get some laundry done
before we leave for Stillwater.

ABBY
Hey, let's sit together on the bus.
I want to compare notes.

JULIA
Notes?

ABBY
Swimming notes!

JULIA
Ah, I see...

Julia begins to load a washing machine with clothes.

ABBY
I prefer to keep up with my
competition.
(amusingly)
You're fast!

JULIA
And so are you...

ABBY
They don't call the 50 Free a drag
race for nothing.

Both laugh as Julia pours some laundry detergent into the
washer.

JULIA
Well, alright, I'll ride with you.
We sprinters need to stick
together!

ABBY
Especially, freshman sprinters.
Right?

JULIA
Right...!
(nodding)
Well, I've got to get back to my
room. I have an early Biology
midterm to take tomorrow.

ABBY
Yuk!

Shoving her forefinger into her mouth.

INT. LSU TEAM BUS, INTERSTATE 49, SOUTH OF SHREVEPORT,
LOUISIANA - MORNING

After 250 miles of highway, Julia closes her chemistry book
and sets it next to Abby.

JULIA
That ought to do it!

ABBY
Hey, that book is digging into my
thigh! I'm sorry, but studying
chemistry that intensely would
cause my eyeballs to fall out! Just
do your best...!
(sighing)

JULIA
A legendary statesman once
remarked, uh, I think it was
Churchill or somebody, that it's
not enough to do your best, you
have to do what is necessary.
Anyway, the nursing program is
demanding enough and will get
tougher as time goes on. I want to
keep my GPA as high as possible
before the difficult subjects
begin, like Organic.

ABBY
Organic. That's Biology, right?

JULIA
(laughing)
No. It's chemistry!

ABBY
More chemistry?

JULIA
Uh hmm... My grades weren't the best in high school, but my future's at stake here!

ABBY
Well, I'll stick with my major, thank you...

JULIA
Sociology?

ABBY
What's wrong with that?
(defiantly)

JULIA
Oh, nothing. It's better than Communications, I guess! Not to change the subject, but I heard that your roommate is leaving school.

ABBY
You heard it right. Rebecca said she misses her boyfriend at home something fierce and can no longer go on without seeing him every day.

JULIA
Seriously? I made it a point when I came here to never date anybody while attending college, let alone nursing school.

ABBY
Hmm.

JULIA
So, you're in a double now?

ABBY
You wanna move rooms?

JULIA
I don't know... You don't seem to be much of a studier.

ABBY
I don't study in the dorm, only in the library!

JULIA

Well, since that's the case, sure!
Let me talk to my RA. It shouldn't
be a problem... Three swimmers in
one room. Kind of like the Swim
House off campus!

ABBY

Right! It'll be fun.

They cross the Alabama State Line.

JULIA

So, why did you choose to swim at
LSU, anyway? You claim to have had
many other offers. Alabama, right?

ABBY

Yes, and Indiana, Florida, and
Kentucky.

JULIA

Name dropper.

They both share a good laugh.

Long Beach State, Pepperdine, Cal
Berkeley, and UNLV were my other
choices. LSU just felt like the
right fit, academically.

ABBY

Well, I came here to swim! My
Mother strongly encouraged it.

JULIA

And why was that? My God, Indiana
and Florida are two of the best
programs in the country.

Abby turns from the window as if to impart something
insightful.

ABBY

When I visited here with my Mother,
a champion high school swimming
coach in her own right, she was
impressed by Coach Fielding.

JULIA

In what way?

The bus begins to slow down to make a scheduled lunch stop.

ABBY

Good. We're getting ready to stop. I'm famished! Anyway, with my Mother looking on, Coach Fielding said, that while he couldn't teach me anymore about my technique, since I was already the fastest seventeen-year-old in the nation at the time, he would school me on my mental approach to the blocks during my Freshman year, and, by the time I'm a Senior, the final crawl to the touchpad. That way, I'd be ready in time for the U.S. Trials, just before the Summer Olympics in Barcelona.

JULIA

Hmm. Who knew? Wow, I never got that pitch.

ABBY

Well...

JULIA

But you did! Ask me if I'm impressed.

The bus now pulls into a Shoney's Restaurant in Shreveport.

ABBY

Are you impressed?
(grinning)

Young Californian, Julia Arden, fakes a southern accent while batting her eyes.

JULIA

Why, I certainly am!

Drawing stares from the upperclassmen exiting the bus, Abby and Julia, immersed in laughter, now file out behind them.

INT. COWGIRL INVITATIONAL, STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA - EVENING

The Cowgirl Invitational is being held on the campus of Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma, on September 20-22, 1985. The following women's swimming teams participating in the three-day event include Tennessee, Auburn, Kansas State, Kentucky, LSU, Oklahoma State, Arkansas, Colorado State, and Northern Iowa. Abby and Julia locate a copy of today's program in the locker room.

Both are surprised to learn that they will be swimming in the 200-meter Freestyle Relay at 5:10 pm. During this event, Abby and two other LSU participants later crowd around the starting block, waiting for Julia to finish her leg. While LSU places fifth in this event, Abby has the second-best time overall and the best split time of the entire field.

REMINISCENCE END

INT. ALASKA AIRLINES FLIGHT 99 TO ANCHORAGE, ALASKA - MORNING

Returning to Eagle River after Christine Gladstone's funeral, Joe recalls the early months of his relationship with Abby while gazing out the window at the snowcapped peaks of the St. Elias Mountain Range.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GUADALAJARA SWIMMING INVITATIONAL, GUADALAJARA, MEXICO - AFTERNOON

Abby stands on the awards platform with three other LSU teammates on January 22, 1986, as they receive their silver medals for the 400-meter Medley Relay, comprising one hundred meters of backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and freestyle. In addition to their medals, each is presented with a bouquet of dahlias arranged by a local florist. Julia and other members of the LSU swim team look on while applauding the recipients.

EXT. LSU NATATORIUM PARKING LOT, BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA - DUSK

The following day, Joe Coulter is sitting in his Jeep while parked outside the LSU Natatorium. He is waiting for Abby, who is returning from a weeklong contest at the Guadalajara Intercollegiate Tournament in Mexico.

Joe locates the Moody Blues' CD *The Present* in his console and places it into his Dolby player while waiting for her to arrive. The song *Behind the Wheel* begins to play, causing him to smile. The buses from the airport soon appear and make their way through campus to the Natatorium. Abby and Julia now appear outside with elaborate Mexican hats hanging down their backs, as they wait for their baggage to emerge from the storage hold.

ABBY

I'll catch up with you, Julia. Joe may want to eat before the cafeteria closes.

JULIA

(glowering)

Can I at least take your bag with me? I'll set it on your bed.

ABBY

Thanks. Joe, over here!

Waiving her arms. Joe exits the car and approaches the pair.

JOE

Bye, Julia!

Now directing his attention to his girlfriend.
How was your trip?

ABBY

(smiling)

It was great! We took in plenty of sunshine at Guadalajara's outdoor swimming complex. Very professional, I must say...

Taking his hand.

You must be hungry! Come on, we'll hit the 459. I still have money left over from my trip.

JOE

Great. I ate at a Waffle House in Cape Girardeau around ten this morning, but haven't had anything since...

ABBY

Poor baby!

JOE

Sure, you probably had food on the plane!

Abby laughs as they enter the 459 Dining Hall and stop at the counter to purchase a meal pass. Once inside, they select their entrées and beverages, slide their trays onto a nearby dining table, and begin to eat. Moments pass. Joe is now seen having a rather animated discussion with Abby.

ABBY

Alaska?

Later, back at the dorm, Abby and Joe's bare feet are sticking out of the top bunk, while Julia, wide awake, plugs her ears below.

INT. GLADSTONE RESIDENCE, MOUNTAIN GROVE, MISSOURI - DAY

One week later, Christine Gladstone opens a letter from daughter, Abby. In it is a clipping from the *Bayou Buzz*, the LSU Athletic Department's weekly newsletter. Biting her lower lip as she reads, Tessa soon comes downstairs into the kitchen.

CHRISTINE

Your sister received a silver medal in Guadalajara for the 400-meter Medley Relay. Shall I read the article to you?

TESSA

No thanks! Where is Guadalajara, anyway?

CHRISTINE

It's in Mexico, silly. I'm told they have quite the swimming and diving complex down there...

TESSA

It's probably one of those short pools!
(giggling)

Christine appears flustered.

CHRISTINE

Well, if you won't read it, then I'll read it for you!

TESSA

Go right ahead, I won't be listening.

CHRISTINE

Very well...

Adjusting her glasses.

Headline: Lady Tigers Bring Home
Silver at the Guadalajara
Intercollegiate Tournament
Dateline: January 22, 1986
Guadalajara, Mexico

(MORE)

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

The LSU Lady Tigers won silver in the 400-meter Medley Relay at the Guadalajara Intercollegiate Tournament in Mexico today.

Christine scans down to the final paragraph. Freshman Abby Gladstone (Mountain Grove, MO, Mountain Grove HS) finished the relay in blazing speed, resulting in a combined time of 4:08.05. Miss Gladstone turned in a similar performance in the 200-meter Freestyle Relay at the Cowgirl Invitational in Stillwater last September. Look, there's even a picture of her on the awards podium. My, what lovely flowers they received!

Tessa runs up the stairs and slams her door. Hey! Take it easy up there! If you're lucky, I'll be getting the same clippings from you next year. (shouting) So, be happy for your sister for once, Tess!

TESSA

(yelling)

I'll be happy for her when I'm a star swimmer at Kentucky!

Christine gets up and posts the article on the refrigerator under an LSU Tiger magnet, with Abby's image plainly visible for all to see.

INT. COULTER RESIDENCE, EAGLE RIVER, ALASKA - AFTERNOON

Fifteen-year-old Gracie Coulter is seated on her bed with a scrapbook belonging to her father, Joe. There, she makes an astonishing discovery. Unaware of his previous marriage, she comes across a wedding photo of Abby Gladstone, dated June 7, 1986. In the pages to follow, she finds a dried bridal arrangement of hydrangeas entwined with honeysuckle, a nuptial program, and a souvenir napkin embossed with the names Abby and Joe. But, perhaps the most troubling keepsake of all is an article from the *Spokane Chronicle*, dated July 17, 1986, titled Alaska's Deadly Mud Flats Trap 18-Year-Old Newlywed. Opposite this article is a sheet of paper containing lyrics to a song Gracie's never heard before.

GRACIE
 (in voiceover)
 Once upon a time
 Once when you were mine
 I remember skies
 Reflected in your eyes
 I wonder where you are
 I wonder if you think about me
 Once upon a time
 In your wildest dreams...

Alarmed at the realization that Abby could well have been her mother, Gracie closes the scrapbook, suddenly anxious to question her father.

SEQUENCE

EXT. SEWARD HIGHWAY, PORTAGE, ALASKA - MORNING

Joe crosses over the Twentymile River while driving on Seward Highway, just north of Portage, at the head of Turnagain Arm. His newlywed bride, Abby, suddenly straightens up in her seat to take in the enormous glaciers surrounding this slate-gray forty-five-mile body of water on their left. So moved by the beauty this moment affords, she instinctively reaches for Joe's hand. As they make their way up the valley towards Anchorage, the Moody Blues' latest song, *Your Wildest Dreams*, accompanies this scene courtesy of the Dolby player hidden beneath the dash.

SEQUENCE ENDED

Returning home late from work one night, Joe pulls onto Dawn Street, where Gracie is waiting for him in the driveway, holding a flashlight.

JOE
 Is everything alright?

GRACIE
 We need to talk, Dad.

Joe gathers his coat and follows his daughter into the house.

INT. COULTER RESIDENCE, EAGLE RIVER, ALASKA - LATER

Before long, Joe climbs the stairs and enters Gracie's bedroom, closing the door behind him. He immediately spots his scrapbook lying open on her bed.

GRACIE

Why didn't you tell me you were married before?

JOE

Does your mother know you found that scrapbook?

GRACIE

No, but she's noticed I've been quiet for the past few days...

Dropping her eyes on the book.

JOE

Since you found...

GRACIE

Why did I have to find out this way?

Holding up the keepsake, causing a shiny blue matchbook to fall out onto her quilt.

And what's this, Dad?

(baffled)

It says, J & T...

JOE

Please put that back!

(flustered)

It's a matchbook from Aunt Julia and Uncle Tim's wedding...

Looking over at Gracie's clock radio.

Look, it's late. I suggest we discuss this tomorrow after I get home from work. Okay?

GRACIE

(sighing)

Okay...

JOE

I promise to tell you everything you want to know. I'll build a fire out back, and we can...talk. Come on, put the book down and get some sleep. I'll see you in the morning.

GRACIE

Alright.

(resigned)

Gracie returns the matchbook to its rightful place and sets the album down on her nightstand. As her father tucks her in, he draws the top sheet and quilt tightly up to her chin, and bids her a fond goodnight.

INT. COULTER RESIDENCE, EAGLE RIVER, ALASKA - THE NEXT DAY

The following morning, Joe and his wife, Stephanie, are seated at the kitchen table having their morning coffee. With school over for the summer, Gracie and her brothers gratefully sleep in. A quiet pause settles in between the two. Eventually, Joe speaks, albeit hesitantly.

JOE
(hesitating)
Gracie found my scrapbook...

STEPHANIE
So that's why she's been acting so funny! Oh, dear, so she knows...?

JOE
She knows about Abby and her death. I cut her short last night due to the time. But I promised her that we would talk tonight. I thought I'd make a fire out back so we'd have some time alone to talk about it. She's curious, that's all...

STEPHANIE
True... But I don't know what perspective a fifteen-year-old can bring to the conversation. I was hoping to give it a few more years. I'm just surprised she hasn't heard it already on the school bus.

Getting up.

Practically everyone in Eagle River remembers what happened to...

JOE
Stephanie, please! I have an entire shift ahead of me to supervise.

STEPHANIE
You're right. Would you like some toast? I'm putting some in for me.

JOE
Sure.
(somberly)

STEPHANIE

I just thought one of the parents would have said something by now, causing the children to, you know, tease.

Joe remains quiet.

Sorry, I brought it up...

JOE

(regrettably)

No need, honey. No need.

Stephanie brings the toast over to the table and proceeds to butter the pieces before pushing two of them to her husband.

Thanks! If Gracie wants to know everything, I'll tell her everything. But, carefully. In a way that any young person would understand.

Joe looks at his watch and quickly dispatches his toast and coffee before kissing Stephanie and leaving for work.

See you later!

INT. COULTER RESIDENCE, EAGLE RIVER, ALASKA - LATER

Gracie awakens and rolls over onto her side before reaching for the scrapbook on her nightstand. Finding the errant matches still in place, she reads Aunt Julia's wedding invitation preserved on the same page.

GRACIE

(in voiceover)

Mr. and Mrs. Richard J. Arden request the pleasure of your company at the marriage of their daughter Julia Lynn to First Lieutenant Timothy Michael Buranich, U.S. Army, on Saturday, the tenth of June nineteen hundred ninety-five at two o'clock in the afternoon at The Chapel of Our Lady, Presidio of San Francisco, 45 Moraga Ave, San Francisco, CA. Reception to follow at the Officers' Club.

Running her fingers across the invitation's raised calligraphy, Gracie now turns the page. On the reverse side, she finds a laminated St. Francis prayer card containing the name Timothy M. Buranich and an obituary.

Long Beach Press-Telegram, Friday,
April 30, 2004
First Lieutenant Timothy M.
Buranich, U.S. Army, was killed in
action during the Battle of
Fallujah on April 28, when the M2
Bradley he was driving ran over an
improvised explosive device,
killing him and injuring three
others. He was a member of the 2nd
Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment
from Fort Benning, GA. Lieutenant
Buranich was a graduate of Long
Beach State University. He is
survived by his wife of 8 years,
the former Julia Arden, of Long
Beach, as well as his parents,
Michael J. and Patricia Buranich,
of Anaheim; brothers Richard T.
(Joan) and Glenn P. (Angela), both
of Newport Beach and a sister,
Joann (Lawrence) Briggs of Los
Angeles, several nieces and
nephews. Visiting hours, scheduled
for Thursday, May 6, from 4 to 8:00
pm, will be held at Luyben
Mortuary, 5161 E. Arbor Road, Long
Beach, CA. A rite of Christian
Burial will be held at the Church
of the Holy Innocents in Long Beach
on Friday, May 7, at 11:00 am.
Burial to follow, with full
military honors, at Forest Lawn
Cemetery. In lieu of flowers,
donations may be made to the
American Red Cross.
Luyben Dilday Mortuary

INT. TRIDENT SEAFOOD, PROCESSING LINE NO. 5, ANCHORAGE,
ALASKA - DAY

Like the workers he supervises, Joe walks processing line
number five at Trident Seafood, dressed in protective rain
gear, rubber boots, waterproof pants, gloves, safety goggles,
and a face shield. Today, the line he's supervising is busy
packing frozen Pacific Cod. Joe is now approached by a front
office superior. During the morning break, he calls home,
where Stephanie soon picks up in the kitchen.

JOE
Hi, it's me.

STEPHANIE

What's up?

JOE

We have a large load of cod coming in this afternoon, and I've been asked to supervise an additional shift.

STEPHANIE

Well, we sure could use the overtime, my being off all summer!

JOE

I know, but I promised Gracie that she and I would talk tonight.

STEPHANIE

Oh, that's right. I just heard her getting up... I'm sure she'll understand.

JOE

Still...
(hesitating)

A loud bang echoes in the plant.

STEPHANIE

What was that?

JOE

A forklift accidentally dropped a crate of snow crab on the line next to us. Oh, boy...!
(cringing)
Anyway...

STEPHANIE

Leave it to me, Joe. If she poses questions that I don't know the answers to, which are few, you can address them with her tomorrow. I'm perfectly capable, you know!

JOE

You're right. Thanks, babe. See you tonight.

STEPHANIE

Bye, Joe, and be safe in there.

Joe looks at his watch and returns to the processing line, now able to put in two shifts.

INT. LONG BEACH MEDICAL CENTER, HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE, LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA - MORNING

Julia knocks on the half-opened door belonging to her Human Resources Officer for a scheduled appointment.

JULIA

Is this still a good time?

Setting aside his work, Roger stands and greets his longtime executive nurse.

ROGER

It sure is! Come in, come in.

Roger shakes Julia's hand, and both sit down.
How are you, Julia?

JULIA

I'm fine. As busy as ever!

ROGER

How I know!

Letting out a deep breath.
So, what brings you here? Is everything alright with your staff?

JULIA

Oh, yes. Everything's fine.
(hesitant)
I believe I'm in need of a change,
Roger...

ROGER

(sympathetically)
That's understandable given your situation.

Julia looks away.
After all, it's been five years...

JULIA

I agree. I have no ties to speak of in Long Beach, with the exception of this hospital.

Rising to announce her intention.
I'm thinking maybe a year with Mercy Ships or Doctors Without Borders would suffice...

ROGER

I see. I can certainly reach out to their recruiting departments, if you like.

Julia sits back down.

JULIA

I'd like that. Thank you.

ROGER

I remember Kate Riley inquiring about something similar a few years ago. She ended up with a group called Nurses Without...no, that's not right. What was that group? They're up in Marina del Rey. Maybe it's Nursing, uh, something!

JULIA

I can find out...

ROGER

There's also the Nurse Corps, run by HHS, which serves areas of the country with limited access to healthcare. They have a repayment program. Are you still paying off any college loans?

JULIA

I was on an athletic scholarship while attending LSU...

ROGER

That's right!

JULIA

But after graduation, I went for my nurse practitioner's degree at Cal State Fullerton. After years of deferment, the last time I checked, I still owed a little over sixteen thousand dollars.

ROGER

I'm sure the corps would pay that off. They generally require a two-year commitment.

JULIA

In the boonies, I suppose!
(laughing)

ROGER

True! But there are literally thousands of HPSA sites all over the country.

JULIA

Except Hawaii!

ROGER

There may be a few there, too.

(chuckling)

You'd be surprised, Julia! Tell you what, if you're interested in taking a two-year leave to serve in the corps, I'll, ah, provide you with a list of qualified HPSA locations and we'll go from there.

Julia nods in agreement.

JULIA

I'd like that very much.

(halting)

Okay! Great!

Getting up to leave, Roger takes his cue and stands.

Thank you, Roger.

ROGER

Not at all. I'll be in touch.

Julia leaves the office and returns to the emergency department.

INT. COULTER RESIDENCE, EAGLE RIVER, ALASKA - MOMENTS LATER

Gracie comes down from her bedroom and enters the kitchen. She reaches into the cupboard for her favorite cereal, grabs a bowl and spoon, swings open the refrigerator door for a carton of milk, and sits down at the table, just as her mother is coming out of the pantry.

STEPHANIE

There you are! How does it feel to sleep in?

Squeezing her shoulder affectionately.

GRACIE

It's great, Mom.

STEPHANIE

I heard you had a conversation with your Father last night.

GRACIE

About his first wife? Abby?
(curtly)

Suddenly catching Stephanie off guard.

STEPHANIE

Well...yes!

GRACIE

Honestly, Mom, I had no idea!

STEPHANIE

Your Father and I discussed the matter earlier this morning. We were just waiting for you to get older, that's all. Besides, it was a painful time for Dad...

GRACIE

Painful? Can you imagine my shock finding out about Abby Gladstone?

STEPHANIE

Scrapbooks, where adults are concerned, are private, young lady! You simply shouldn't be snooping around in places where you don't belong. Besides, your Father and I have tried to shield you from sensational details you're far too young to fathom...

Gracie drops her spoon into the bowl.

GRACIE

Try me!

STEPHANIE

Alright!

Beginning to sob quietly.

Dad was asked to work overtime. He called me, all worried that you'd be disappointed if he agreed, since you were going to talk out back tonight.

GRACIE

He did?
(surprised)

STEPHANIE

(shrieking)
Of course, he did!

GRACIE

(upset)
Oh, Mom, please don't cry.

Now pleading with her mother.

STEPHANIE

Your Father loves you very much, Gracie, and is as concerned as I am about you learning the fate of...of Abby Gladstone. So, I told him not to worry, that I'd, uh, answer any questions you may have today. And, if I don't know the answer to specific questions, Dad said he would take them up with you face-to-face tomorrow.

Sitting down across from her daughter.

(ardently)

Look, as a woman and as your mother, I'm probably better able to explain events as they happened. Unpleasant as they may be for you. Okay?

GRACIE

Okay.
(submissively)

STEPHANIE

We'll talk over lunch on the patio. Say, one o'clock. I'll make something good. And please, don't let on to your brothers about this.

GRACIE

I won't. I promise. I'm so sorry, Mom...

Gracie gets up from the table and places her bowl in the sink before sheepishly returning upstairs.

INT. LONG BEACH MEDICAL CENTER, EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT, LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA - LATER

Eating lunch at her desk, Julia checks her email. She soon opens a message from Roger containing an attached list of HPSA sites currently seeking qualified medical professionals. Inspired, Julia suddenly takes great interest in one site in particular.

JULIA

(in voiceover)

AK - Anchorage Borough, **Girdwood Health Clinic**, providing medical services to the Turnagain Arm communities of Girdwood, Hope, Bird Creek, Indian, Sunrise, and Portage.

She now replies to Roger's email as follows:

Please forward my name and CV to the HPSA site operating in Girdwood, AK. To the boonies, I go! Thank you.

EXT. COULTER RESIDENCE, EAGLE RIVER, ALASKA - AFTERNOON

Gracie comes downstairs, where she is summoned to the outdoor patio. She now steps out of the house.

STEPHANIE

Out here, Gracie!

GRACIE

This looks lovely.

Sitting down to a meal of chicken salad on croissants, mixed fruit, and iced tea.

STEPHANIE

I thought we'd eat first and talk later.

GRACIE

That sounds great!

Helping herself to a sandwich.

STEPHANIE

So, anything more from the Youth Employment Program?

GRACIE

Yeah. It's down to either staying on at Chugiak Pool for the summer or flower maintenance at Turner Park. I prefer to work outdoors, so I guess Turner Park is my choice.

STEPHANIE

I would let the office know today.

GRACIE

I will.

STEPHANIE

When would you start?

GRACIE

Next week, July fifth. Turner Park has better hours, eight to four, with a lunch break. I'd make more money as a lifeguard at the pool, but hey!

Reaching for another sandwich.

STEPHANIE

These are good, aren't they?

GRACIE

They are. I don't know why I'm so hungry!

STEPHANIE

Somehow, fresh chicken tastes better than canned. Pass the fruit.

Gracie passes the bowl to her mother, but not before helping herself to some of it.

Let's get down to business, shall we?

GRACIE

Alright.

STEPHANIE

Ask me anything. And, like I said before, if I don't know the answer...

GRACIE

How did they meet?

STEPHANIE

Well, your Father was from Sennet, which is the next town over from Mountain Grove, where Abby was from.

GRACIE

In Missouri?

STEPHANIE

Yes, just outside of St. Louis. Your Father said they met in a local grocery store where Abby was working.

GRACIE

So, they began dating?

STEPHANIE

I suppose... Anyway, it couldn't have been more than a couple of months since Abby left home to attend LSU that August.

GRACIE

They graduated from high school the same year?

STEPHANIE

Yes.

GRACIE

But Dad never went to college.

STEPHANIE

No, he didn't. Oh, he regrets it now, but he's doing alright for himself. Between us, we earn a decent salary. Not to mention what we get from the Permanent Fund. But you're going to college, young lady!

GRACIE

So...this Abbey went to LSU?

STEPHANIE

Yes. In Baton Rouge.

GRACIE

Louisiana, right?

STEPHANIE

Right. It's about a ten-hour drive from Mountain Grove.

GRACIE

Yikes!

STEPHANIE

Oh, it'll be just as long a drive if you attend the state university in Fairbanks...

GRACIE

Okay, so Abby goes off to LSU on a swimming scholarship?

STEPHANIE

Yes. Her mother was the swimming coach at the high school she attended. She was heavily recruited by Indiana, Florida, Kentucky, and, uh, let's see...and Alabama, among other schools.

GRACIE

What was her event? I'm friends with swimmers at school.

STEPHANIE

I believe she was a sprinter.

GRACIE

So, she was fast...

STEPHANIE

Very! Your Father told me she was the fastest seventeen-year-old woman swimmer in the country before signing with LSU.

GRACIE

How tall was she?

STEPHANIE

Oh, about five-two, I'd guess by her pictures.

GRACIE

More pictures?

STEPHANIE

Yes!

GRACIE
(timidly)
May I see them sometime?

STEPHANIE
Sure, as long as you ask.
(poignantly)

GRACIE
Don't worry, I've learned my
lesson...! She only stayed at LSU
for one year?

STEPHANIE
Sadly, yes. Your Father, eager to
start a life with her, proposed,
and they were married shortly after
the NCAA Swimming Championships
that year.

GRACIE
Did they get married in Missouri?

STEPHANIE
No. Carson City, Nevada. Her
parents were furious! First, that
she quit LSU, and second, that she
decided to get married in Nevada,
instead of her hometown. At Joe's,
uh...I mean, your Father's
insistence. Then, they traveled up
to Alaska, where he owned this
house...

GRACIE
Abby lived here, in this house?
(surprised)

STEPHANIE
Oh, it was a different structure
then, to be sure, but in the main
part of the house, yes!

GRACIE
And that never bothered you?

STEPHANIE
At first, it did. But with the
additions we made, and the enlarged
kitchen, I don't know... Your
Father and I have made a life
together here, with three beautiful
children!

(MORE)

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Eagle River is our home, and it
doesn't get much better than
that...

Gracie gets up from the table.
Where are you going?

GRACIE
I have to pee. I'll be right back.

She soon returns to the table.
Where were we?

STEPHANIE
This house. You asked if Abby
living here caused me any angst.

GRACIE
Yeah. So, Dad and Abby came up here
after their wedding. How long were
they married?

STEPHANIE
One month.

Drawing a blank stare from Gracie.
You saw her bridal photo?

GRACIE
Yes...

STEPHANIE
Well, she was married on...June 7,
1986, and she, she died a little
over one month later on July 15.

GRACIE
Five weeks.

STEPHANIE
Just five weeks.

Taking a sip of her iced tea.

GRACIE
I know she died in Turnagain Arm,
but where?

STEPHANIE
As your Father tells it, Seattle
Creek, where it empties into the
Arm.

Gracie appears confused.

It's on the other side of Turnagain Arm, opposite where the Seward Highway crosses over the Twentymile River... Near Portage!

GRACIE

I see...

STEPHANIE

You're probably curious about how Abby died.

GRACIE

Well, yes.

Sitting up in her patio chair.

STEPHANIE

Gracie, what I'm about to tell you is what your Father conveyed to me. And, I want this to stay with you for now. You are not to tell your brothers yet. Understood?

Gracie nods her head while her mother takes in a deep breath.

Well, your Father was in a hurry that morning to get to his claim, near Seattle Creek, where he had a permit to dredge for gold along the shore. He decided to take a shortcut across the arm at low tide to save time driving through the upper Kenai Peninsula. Once they got out onto the floor of Turnagain Arm, his Jeep became bogged down in the muddy surface. So, young Abby jumped out to push. At last, freeing the vehicle, she attempted to rejoin your Father, but her boots became stuck in the mud from all the exertion she used to push him out. Anyway, he got out of the Jeep and tried and tried to free her, but in that glacier mud, one can become so easily mired that it's close to impossible to escape its grasp! You've probably noticed the many danger signs along Seward Highway.

GRACIE

I have...

Suddenly, more serious.

STEPHANIE

Dad said the hours passed so quickly that morning that by the time he ran up to the highway to get help, the tide was approaching her waist.

Gracie covers her mouth.

GRACIE

My God!

STEPHANIE

The nearest fire department was in Girdwood, twenty minutes away. A driver witnessing the struggle agreed to call emergency services from a cafe up the road.

Observing her daughter closely.
Are you going to be alright, honey?
Maybe this is too much for you...

GRACIE

Please continue, Mom.
(crying)

STEPHANIE

When the Girdwood Fire Department arrived, they went to work above the freezing water on floatable support boards using a highly pressurized underwater hose that quickly removes glacier mud surrounding a victim's feet. But by the time this hose was finally attached to the fire truck, the tide had risen to Abby's neck.

Sensing her daughter's alarm.
Okay, I'm going to stop here!

GRACIE

I'm fine, Mom. I am!
(defiantly)

STEPHANIE

But honey, you're trembling...

GRACIE

I'm good!

STEPHANIE

Alright! But I'm going to be quick about it.

GRACIE

I'm good!

Stephanie now reaches across the table, joining hands with Gracie.

STEPHANIE

A state trooper who was at the scene then jumped off the support boards into the water, desperately trying to free her. Another rescuer joined him and apparently became so numb that he could no longer feel his extremities and was soon pulled from the water. With the tide now over her nose and gaining quickly, that lone rescuer, the trooper, was the last one to hold Abby until the freezing water ultimately rushed over her head, causing her to vanish beneath the surface.

Crushing Gracie's knuckles.

Such a tragedy! Dad says he remembers sitting on shore waiting for the tide to go out so that her body could be retrieved.

(drained)

I'm almost done...

GRACIE

Alright, I'm ready, Mom.

(bravely)

STEPHANIE

Very well. He said that when emergency services finally brought Abby out of the flats and onto the shore...

(now whispering)

She was, as your Father described it...*as white as any snow!* These were his very words.

Mother and daughter fall silent until Gracie finally gets up to clear the table.

GRACIE

I've got this, Mom...

She soon departs the patio with an armful of dishes, leaving her emotionally spent mother in far worse condition than herself.

EXT. COULTER RESIDENCE, EAGLE RIVER, ALASKA - NIGHT

Joe pulls into the driveway after his twin shift, where Gracie, holding her flashlight, soon approaches him to tightly wrap her arms around his drooping neck.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GIRDWOOD HEALTH CLINIC, GIRDWOOD, ALASKA - MORNING

Weeks later, Julia approaches Turnagain Arm for the first time while taking in the breathtaking Chugach Mountains that surround this infamous body of water. Driving the 3500 miles alone from Long Beach, she makes a right turn onto Alyeska Highway, just north of Portage, until reaching Glacier Creek, where she takes a left. Hired only weeks ago, Julia pulls into the Girdwood Health Clinic parking lot to be sure of its location, eager to begin work tomorrow as a Nurse Practitioner in this remote, federally-designated Health Professional Shortage Area, nestled deep in the wilds of Southeastern Alaska.

INT. GIRDWOOD HEALTH CLINIC, GIRDWOOD, ALASKA - THE NEXT DAY

Julia enters the front door of the Girdwood Health Clinic and immediately reports to the reception desk. This facility, shared with the U.S. Post Office, consists of a series of interconnected trailers.

JULIA

Hi, I'm Julia Buranich, the new Nurse Practitioner.

IRIS

Oh, yes, welcome to Girdwood, Ms. Buranich.

JULIA

Why, thank you!

IRIS

Our personnel director slash chief nurse, Margaret Stastny, stepped out for a minute, but she'll be right back. It's a small town, so she doesn't have far to go!

JULIA
So I've noticed.

IRIS
By the way, I'm Iris.

JULIA
You have a lovely name, Iris.

IRIS
Well, thank you there, Julia.

They shake hands.
Where are you staying?

JULIA
I'm renting a chalet up the valley,
across from Moose Meadow, near the
ski resort. On Aspen Mountain Road.

IRIS
How wonderful! You'll have a
beautiful view of Mount Alyeska
from there!

JULIA
I know! So very different than Long
Beach.

The front door opens.

IRIS
Margaret, this is Julia Buranich.

Margaret gives Julia the once-over and takes her hand.

MARGARET
Welcome! We've been waiting for
you. Your resume is most
impressive. We don't get someone
like you every day. We're used to,
uh...

JULIA
Graduates fresh out of college and
wet behind the ears.

MARGARET
Yes! How did you know?

JULIA
I supervise ER nurses in a large
hospital setting, many of them new
to the field.

MARGARET

That's right. Well, it's different here. You'll find out. Come on back to my office and we'll talk some more. Then I'll show you around the clinic and introduce you to the staff.

Julia follows her to the back of the trailer.

IRIS

Welcome aboard, Julia.

JULIA

Thank you, Iris.

INT. GIRDWOOD FIRE DEPARTMENT, GIRDWOOD, ALASKA - AFTERNOON

A pickup truck pulls into the parking lot of the Girdwood Fire Station. The driver exits the vehicle, passes through the open garage doors, and walks to the back of the building to the Chief's office.

CHARLIE

Hey, Will, how are you?

WILL

You old dog, you. Come on in! Take a seat.

CHARLIE

I don't mind if I do.

Still fascinated by the wall of awards and mementos mounted behind Will's desk, mostly from his career with the Alaska State Police.

WILL

So, what's news? You know everything that goes on around here. I swear, Charlie, if you lived in New York, you'd know everything there, too...

CHARLIE

I'm retired, remember.

Yuckking it up.

I ran into Bruce a minute ago at the post office, and he tells me we have a new nurse in town. From California... Southern California, at that.

WILL
You don't say?

CHARLIE
She's forty-two, drives a new Land Rover, and is quite the looker.

WILL
And how would Bruce Larsen know?

Leaning back in his chair and stretching.

CHARLIE
Why, Iris Stebbins, that's how...

WILL
A new Land Rover, you say?

CHARLIE
With California plates!

Will changes the subject.

WILL
Hey, how are the Fourth of July festivities coming along?

CHARLIE
Good, good. We have another meeting on Thursday. You should come!

WILL
I just might do that! What time?

CHARLIE
Seven o'clock, over at the Gerrish Library.

WILL
You know, I'm still impressed with that building every time I see it, particularly on those swarthy winter nights...

CHARLIE
Thanks, Will!

WILL
For what?
(blankly)

CHARLIE
My work on the building committee!

WILL

That's right...! You're a distinguished member of this community, Charlie, and don't you forget it!

CHARLIE

Likewise.

Getting up from his chair.

So, are you going to follow up on Bruce's intel regarding our new nurse?

WILL

I might...

Charlie touches the bill of his Last Frontier baseball cap and walks back through the station house, leaving this busy Fire Chief to his work.

EXT. COULTER RESIDENCE, EAGLE RIVER, ALASKA - EVENING

Julia turns onto Dawn Street and soon pulls into the Coulters' driveway. Toting a gift bag up the front steps, she rings the doorbell.

STEPHANIE

That must be Julia! Gracie, quick, get the door!

Gracie rolls off the couch and onto the floor before getting up and opening the door. There, she finds Aunt Julia waiting on the porch.

GRACIE

Aunt Julia?

JULIA

You must be Gracie. I hardly recognize you, you're getting so old. Why, the last time I saw you, you were just a toddler.

She bends and gently kisses Gracie's cheek. Stephanie now arrives at the door.

STEPHANIE

Julia. Come in. Let me get a look at you. Still the prettiest nurse in California! Joe! Julia's here.

JOE
 (bellowing)
 I'll be right in! I'm lighting the grill.

Under his breath and out of earshot.
 These things don't happen all by themselves...

STEPHANIE
 And this is Gracie.

JULIA
 I told her when she answered the door that I hadn't seen her since she was a toddler.

STEPHANIE
 I know, at your wedding! She's grown into quite the young lady.

GRACIE
 (embarrassed)
 Oh, Mom!

JULIA
 Where are the boys?

STEPHANIE
 They left for scouting camp on Monday, for two weeks on Mirror Lake.

Julia holds up the gift bag.

JULIA
 Something for the house.

Stephanie pulls a bottle out of the bag.

STEPHANIE
 Cabernet Sauvignon.

JULIA
 From Napa.

STEPHANIE
 So I see.

JULIA
 Oh, and I stuck a fine white in there just in case you're having fish.

STEPHANIE

Salmon, in fact. Cohos are in season.

JULIA

I know! I saw so many people casting their lines into Bird Creek today on my way up. That water looked incredibly cold.

STEPHANIE

Freezing. It comes off the melting snows in the Chugach.

JULIA

I'm learning fast for a California girl!

(humorously)

STEPHANIE

Come on into the kitchen with me. I have to check the rice. Gracie, can you set the table?

GRACIE

On the patio?

STEPHANIE

That's the plan if the weather holds. Thank you.

Gracie passes her father as he walks into the kitchen.

JOE

Julia!

JULIA

Joe.

Kissing him.

Your kitchen is lovely. So sensible - and spacious.

STEPHANIE

Joe added it onto the old house right after we were married. Do you like it?

JULIA

It's beautiful...

Admiring the provincial cupboards, handsome appliances, burnished pots and pans, and tall casement windows.

Absolutely wonderful!

JOE
How much longer on the rice?

STEPHANIE
Oh, you can put the salmon on now.
I'll keep it warm on the stove.
That reminds me...

Opening the double-wide refrigerator and removing the spinach salad and coleslaw she prepared earlier in the afternoon.
What would you like to drink, Julia?

JULIA
I'll have some wine. Anything red.

JOE
I already have some bottles opened up. I'll pour you a glass. Then, I'll put on the salmon steaks.

He now stops himself before departing the kitchen.
You look great, Julia...

JULIA
Why, thank you, Joe.

Batting her eyes before catching sight of Stephanie.

EXT. PATIO, COULTER RESIDENCE, EAGLE RIVER, ALASKA - MOMENTS LATER

Joe slides the salmon steaks off the platter and onto the grill, just as Julia leaves the house and steps out onto the patio. She now visit with Joe.

JULIA
The steaks look wonderful! I told Stephanie earlier, that I saw so many people casting lines into Bird Creek on my way up here.

JOE
We're in full season now...

JULIA
They had better save some for the bears!

JOE
Oh, they get their share, believe me!

Applying some seasoning to the steaks.

JULIA
(earnestly)
How are you, Joe?

JOE
I'm the happiest I've ever been,
really... And you?

JULIA
You know me...
(grinning)
After losing Tim in Iraq, I'm still
playing hard to get...!

JOE
How long has it been, Julia?

JULIA
Five years.

Casting her eyes to the blue stone beneath her sandals.

JOE
God, it's been that long?

JULIA
Um hmm... You look good, Joe!

JOE
I try.

JULIA
Are you still working the same job?

JOE
Oh, yeah! Still on the processing
line. But I've put in for a
supervisory position.

JULIA
Nice! Better pay, I'll bet!

JOE
You got it. Substantially more...

JULIA
And Stephanie?

JOE
Still teaching at Eagle River
Elementary. Fourth grade this year,
I believe.

An awkward pause comes between them before Joe continues.
Do you ever think of Abby?

JULIA
Joe, there isn't a day that goes by
when I don't.

JOE
You were good friends.

Extending his hand.

JULIA
The best...!

Biting her lower lip.

JOE
Until I came into the picture and
took her away.

JULIA
She loved you, Joe, and would do
anything for you... Hey, remember
when you came to visit LSU for the
first time and got a speeding
ticket on campus?

JOE
I was in a hurry!
(laughing)

JULIA
You certainly were.
(blushing)
We had good times. It's hard to
believe it's been twenty-five
years.

JOE
(chuckling)
And the time Abby got her nose
stuck in a soda can.

JULIA
And you had to squeeze the can to
get it out!
(laughing)

JOE
Gently, oh so gently.

JULIA

Indeed! Now that would have left a scar...

They suddenly fall silent.

JOE

(soberly)

Not that it would've mattered. She was gone within the year... When I arrived in Missouri for her funeral, it was as though all eyes were directed at me. It was agonizing!

JULIA

I remember, I was there.

JOE

That's right. You were a lifesaver that day, Julia. I remember skipping dinner at the Gladstones after the wake and going to that bistro with you.

JULIA

Hmm. And you insisted I stay in your hotel room that night! You were so despondent, Joe. And, I must say, a gentleman, given all the pressure you were under.

JOE

Of course!

JULIA

I considered comforting you that night...but, you had such a faraway look!

JOE

Really?
(astonished)

JULIA

Yes. We were close friends, why not...? You were beside yourself!

JOE

I'm shocked.

JULIA
Don't flatter yourself, Joe
Coulter! It was one night, that's
all.

Batting her eyes.

JOE
Oh, right!
(flustered)

Just then, Gracie returns to the patio with the wine glasses,
causing them to end their adult conversation.

EXT. COULTER RESIDENCE, EAGLE RIVER, ALASKA - LATER

With various prepared dishes spread out on the patio table,
Joe, Stephanie, Gracie, and Julia enjoy a delightful dinner
under the midnight sun.

JOE
How's your salmon, Julia?

JULIA
Fabulous, Joe! Fresh is so much
better.

Pointing with her fork.
And the coleslaw goes perfectly
with the salmon.

STEPHANIE
Thank you, Julia. It's Gracie's
favorite. You can pack some in your
lunch tomorrow if there's any left,
honey. Joe, pour around some of
that Zinfandel.

Joe sets his napkin down and begins to pour around the table.

GRACIE
May I have a little, Mom?

STEPHANIE
Just a splash.

JULIA
Where are you working this summer,
Gracie? I've forgotten...

Gracie watches as her father pours her half a glass.

STEPHANIE

Oh, Joe, that's too much!

JOE

Don't be silly, it's fine. Just sip it, honey.

GRACIE

Thanks, Dad! I work at Turner Park, tending flower beds and, occasionally, hanging plants. It's part of the Youth Employment Program, here in Alaska.

JULIA

That's great. And what are your hours?

GRACIE

Eight to four-thirty, Monday through Friday. I work for them as a lifeguard at the Chugiak Pool during the school year.

JULIA

A lifeguard! When did you get certified?

GRACIE

Last summer.

JULIA

And you like it?

GRACIE

I do. The long hours can be monotonous.

JULIA

I know! But you must concentrate on keeping alert. Events can change in an instant.

GRACIE

Do you still have your certification?

JULIA

I do. As part of the Emergency Water Response Team at Long Beach Medical Center, I'm required to.

GRACIE

Hey! Maybe you can join me working
at the pool!

STEPHANIE

Gracie, allow Julia to enjoy her
meal. You can talk later.

GRACIE

(sighing)
Okay, but I might be too tired
after dinner.

JOE

Let me guess, all that watering
under the hot sun?

GRACIE

You know it!

Taking up her fork and beginning to eat.
Hmm, this is good...

JOE

I'm glad you like it.

Moments pass. The group finishes up dessert just as Gracie
announces she's retiring for the evening.

GRACIE

I'm going to leave you adults
alone. I have another day of
watering to do tomorrow. Anyway, it
was nice meeting you, Aunt Julia.
(grinning widely)
Goodnight!

Gracie stands and gives her aunt a peck on the cheek, then
departs the patio.

JOE

(concerned)
She's, she's...

Drawing a sharp look from Stephanie.

STEPHANIE

She's, uh, tired is all...and needs
her sleep.

JOE

(sarcastically)
Uh, I was just about to say that!

Stephanie turns to Julia.

STEPHANIE

So, Girdwood...!

JULIA

Yes. Can you believe it? After Tim died, I became so wrapped up in my work that I forgot about the world entirely. And I realized that, other than his gravesite, Long Beach has no hold on me.

Taking another sip of wine.

So, I went to see my Human Resources Officer at the medical center, and at first, I wanted to take a year off and join Mercy Ships or Doctors Without Borders. But, Roger, that's my HR person, steered me towards HHS at an HPSA. Oh, sorry, a Health Professional Shortage Area.

JOE

(somewhat threatened)

And Alaska just happened to come to mind?

JULIA

Sort of...

STEPHANIE

Well, Girdwood, in fact, most all of Alaska fits the bill where lack of healthcare professionals is concerned.

JULIA

Though I must confess...and please forgive me, Stephanie, that while I indeed wanted to get away, I've always had a keen interest in learning more about how Abby died. So...

Julia suddenly stops talking while studying Joe carefully.

JOE

(defensively)

Whatever do you mean?

STEPHANIE

Now, Joe, don't be that way. She and Julia were best friends!

JOE

I realize that, but what else is there to know?

Getting up from the table, he bristles at Julia's intent.
I believe I've told you everything!
I was there, remember?

STEPHANIE

Joe, maybe you need to step away for a minute.

JOE

Why, I have nothing to hide!

JULIA

I'm not saying that you do. Oh, Joe! You shared the most intimate details with me, and I'll forever be grateful to you for that. But I need to find out for myself.

JOE

Find out what?

STEPHANIE

Joe, please, let her finish.

JULIA

(now confessing)

You see, ever since that fateful day, I've...I've been punishing myself for not saving Abby...!

JOE

Saving her from what exactly?

JULIA

From leaving college, marrying so young, and following you up here to Alaska.

Joe sits back down.

JOE

Why, Julia, I never knew. Why didn't you say something? Why? Why!

STEPHANIE

Joe, please...!

JULIA
(overcome)
Because I was too young!

Rapping the glass tabletop, while choking back her tears.
Eighteen, to be exact, just like
Abby! And three years older than
Gracie! Think about it, Joe...!

Stephanie now cuts in to referee.

STEPHANIE
Hear her out, is all, honey. This
has evidently been on Julia's mind
for some time.

JOE
Is that true?

JULIA
(sincerely)
Yes, what your wife is saying is
true.

JOE
Well, what more do you want to know
about that...about that day?
(flustered)

JULIA
Do you have the police report?

JOE
(distraught)
Police report!

JULIA
And the coroner's report?

Joe gets up to escape the discussion.

JOE
I'm afraid I'll have to leave you
two for now! Goodnight, Julia.
Goodnight, dear. I'm out of here...

Joe leaves his thoroughly bewildered friend alone with
Stephanie and ducks into the house.

JULIA
I'm sorry, Stephanie, I honestly
never thought Joe would react this
way!

STEPHANIE

(whispering)

I'm sorry, too! He's had to field the very same line of questioning from Gracie lately...

She begins to gather the dishes on the table.

JULIA

Here, let me help!

Julia begins collecting the silverware.

I would've hoped Gracie didn't learn about Abby until she was at least eighteen. Still, it wouldn't be easy at any age. Especially for a young girl... Come on, I'll help you with the dishes.

STEPHANIE

Thanks, Julia. You're a dear...

Later on, a calculating Julia drives by Turnagain Arm, glimmering in the evening light, while on her way home to Girdwood.

INTERMISSION

EXT. SPEEDWAY GAS STATION, SEWARD HIGHWAY, GIRDWOOD, ALASKA - AFTERNOON

Julia tops off the tank of her Land Rover on a fine Tuesday afternoon while stopping at the Speedway Gas Station on the corner of Seward and Alyeska Highways. A Girdwood Fire Department vehicle soon pulls up to the pump opposite her. Chief Will Greer gets out of the truck and begins to pump, just as Julia is about to drive away. She now powers down the window.

JULIA

Are you the Fire Chief here in Girdwood?

Will peeks around the side of the pump.

WILL

Why, yes. Yes, I am. Will Greer.

Offering his hand. Julia quickly notices that his ring finger is vacant.

Oh, sorry for the gas smell.

JULIA
That's alright. It's a gas station,
isn't it?

WILL
Right.
(chuckling)

JULIA
I've been meaning to speak with
you.

WILL
You have?

JULIA
Yes, I'm the new nurse practitioner-

WILL
I've heard...

JULIA
I'm the new nurse practitioner in
town from Long Beach, California,
and I was wondering if your
department could use another member
on your Emergency Water Response
Team?

WILL
Oh...?

Will finishes filling his gas tank before fastening the cap.
Uh, we're planning on having
another training class in...

JULIA
Oh, I don't need any training per
se. I head up the Long Beach
Medical Center Water Rescue Team.

WILL
I see...Miss?

JULIA
It's Ms. Julia Buranich.

WILL
I'm pleased to meet you. Uh, tell
you what. Stop by the fire station
tomorrow, and we'll talk. We could
certainly use someone with your
experience and medical know-how.
That goes without saying!

JULIA

This is a bad week for me. We're conducting a vaccination campaign at the clinic every day. However, anytime next week would be fine.

WILL

How about Tuesday?

JULIA

Tuesday would be great! I get out of work at four, and I'll drive right over.

WILL

We're located on the other side of Alyeska Highway, on Egloff Drive. You can't miss it!

JULIA

I'll do that, Chief.

WILL

Please, until you're on the job, it's Will.

JULIA

Okay. Thanks, Will.

They both get in their vehicles and head up Alyeska Highway in the direction of its namesake mountain.

INT. GIRDWOOD HEALTH CLINIC, GIRDWOOD, ALASKA - THE NEXT DAY

JULIA

This won't hurt a bit.

Administering yet another shot to an Alaska Native who was waiting in line with other members of his Dena'ina Athabascan village.

No, no, please wait, I have to place a band-aid on that arm. Thank you.

Finished for the day, Julia washes up in the back, just as Iris enters the work area.

IRIS

(sighing)

How is our vaccine supply?

JULIA

We're down to two. I'm told that a new shipment will arrive by air early tomorrow morning.

IRIS

We'll use them up, that much I do know. By my count, we vaccinated fifty-five today alone.

Julia pulls some paper towels from the dispenser to dry her hands.

JULIA

Hmm. That sounds about right. It astonishes me, Iris, that native populations living so close to this clinic need a campaign to get their MMR shots!

IRIS

Well, it works, doesn't it?

JULIA

I'll say, my feet are killing me. These floors are simply unforgiving. Is there any talk of building a new facility?

IRIS

Sure, there's plenty of talk, but just that, talk.

JULIA

I know how that goes!

Gathering her effects while Iris follows close by. Goodnight, Iris. Say, I've been meaning to ask you, is there a library in town? I need a place with adequate research materials.

Iris studies her new nurse practitioner carefully.

IRIS

Research?

JULIA

Yes, research! You never know when it might come in handy.

IRIS

Well, the Gerrish Library here in Girdwood is known for its excellent resource materials.

JULIA

And where is that located?

IRIS

On Egloff Drive, in the Fire Department Complex.

JULIA

(timidly)

I see...

Considering the location.

IRIS

And there's the Roundhouse Museum.

Julia looks at her vacantly.

It's located at the top of Mount Alyeska, but you'll have to take the tram.

JULIA

The tram?

IRIS

Yes. The wheelhouse is located just outside the Alyeska Resort, where you can buy a ticket to take you three thousand some-odd feet to the top. From there, it's just inside the restaurant.

JULIA

There's a restaurant all the way up there at three thousand feet?

IRIS

Uh, hmm! With a full bar and a spectacular view of the seven glaciers in the vicinity. You absolutely have to see it!

JULIA

I believe I will, after visiting that library you mentioned across the way. The...

IRIS

The Gerrish.

JULIA
 Yes, the Gerrish... Alright then!
 Goodnight, Iris.

IRIS
 Goodnight. See you in the morning.

Julia exits the clinic and unlocks the door of her Land Rover, but not before stopping to spot the lofty alpine restaurant perched high on Mount Alyeska, just beneath its snowcapped, majestic summit.

INT. GERRISH LIBRARY, GIRDWOOD, ALASKA - AFTERNOON

A few days later, Julia approaches the Gerrish Library on a drizzly Saturday afternoon. She soon passes under a chalet-style roof leading to the entrance. Inside, she locates the librarian, who is busy putting books away.

MILLIE
 May I help you?

JULIA
 You can. My name is Julia Buranich
 from the Girdwood Clinic.

MILLIE
 Oh! I've heard so much about you,
 Julia.

Taking her hand.

JULIA
 (grinning)
 All good, I hope.

MILLIE
 (whimsically)
 Of course, of course. What can I do
 for you?

JULIA
 Well, I'm interested if you have
 any archive material regarding a
 drowning incident that occurred on
 Turnagain Arm in 1986?

MILLIE
 Abby Gladstone?

JULIA
 Yes. You seem...familiar with her
 accident.

MILLIE

Well, it was a big story then. The newspapers around the state covered it extensively, not to mention the greater Northwest. Poor thing, and only married one month! Did you know her?

Putting away the last book on the cart.

JULIA

Why, yes, I did. We swam together at LSU and were roommates there.

MILLIE

How wonderful...

JULIA

Can you...point me to any materials you have regarding the incident? Anything at all.

MILLIE

Follow me.

Julia follows the librarian to the back of the facility. Opening up a tall cabinet, Millie removes a red-well-marked Newlywed Drowning 1986. She hands the file over to Julia.

JULIA

Thank you. You've been most helpful.

MILLIE

You'll find a fresh pair of gloves on the bottom shelf. Help yourself!

Stopping momentarily before leaving Julia alone.
That's funny...

JULIA

What?

MILLIE

There was a young lady here just the other day who asked to see the same file.

Running her hand along the edge of the red-well.
Take your time, we close at six.

JULIA

Thank you.

MILLIE

And call me if you have any questions.

Julia studies the receptacle before finally removing its contents.

JULIA

(voiceover)

So, I approached this Holy Grail of archives before me, unsure about what I might find. Sure, Joe had told me everything he possibly could, but there are always important details to any story that you simply can't uncover without plain old, painstaking research.

She removes a legal pad and a bottle of water from her bag and takes a swig before setting the bottle down on a nearby table, safely away from the documents.

Let's see. Here's an article from the Anchorage Daily News, dated July 16, 1986.

Reading it over carefully.

Nothing new here. Oh, wait! Here's a photo of... Is that Chief Greer? It is! He's the Alaska State Trooper in the article who was in the water with Abby, desperately trying to save her moments before she died. He looks to be thirty pounds lighter. Trooper weight, I guess! Here's a series of other articles at the time.

Julia now comes across the Alaska State Police Report issued the day after the accident. Next, she finds an additional police report filed by the Whittier Police Department, which, given the arrival time printed on the document, was the first to reach the scene. She lays both reports side-by-side and makes a crucial discovery.

Look at this. In the Whittier Police report, Joe said he and Abby arrived on the flats only an hour beforehand.

Moving her forefinger over to the State Police report.

In the Alaska State Police Report, Joe claims the very same thing, even though eyewitnesses interviewed later by law enforcement place the couple on the flats three hours earlier. Hmm...

After noting this on her pad, she continues with the next item.

A photo of Joe's Jeep Cherokee taken on shore and...what's that? A trailer of tools hitched to the vehicle? I didn't know that. Look at those tires, they're caked in mud...! Here's a picture taken after the tide retreated of the spot where Abby struggled so desperately.

Turning to the next photo.

(astonished)

Oh my God, here's a picture taken of her lifeless body after it was dragged from the water by authorities. Joe was right, Abby's face and arms are as white as snow, and her clothes covered in mud, especially around the cuffs of her jeans!

In an instant, she reaches for her water bottle and begins to swallow frantically. Calming herself, Julia soon returns to her work.

What are these? Hmm...permits issued by the EPA, the Army Corps of Engineers, and...the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, evidently required for dredging stream beds in the Municipality of Anchorage. And this, uh...a Placer Mining Claim, issued by the State of Alaska, describing the specific dimensions of Joe's claim, extending from the mouth of Seattle Creek.

She takes down this information, including the complex coordinates.

Next, are a series of what look to be documents regarding the funeral home, who prepared her body, as well as an airline transport invoice. And this... Yes, I was hoping I'd find this!

(MORE)

JULIA (CONT'D)

A Certificate of Death issued by the State of Alaska. Let's see, the Coroner's Cause of Death reads: acute hypothermia morbidity accompanied by myocardial infarction. Glory be! Abby died before she went under! Meaning, she didn't die from drowning after all! She died of heart failure before the water even covered her head! Well, what do ya know...

Jotting this information on her pad, she now gets up from the table and follows the signs to the restroom. Millie looks up from her reception desk as Julia passes by.

MILLIE

Finding everything alright?

JULIA

I'd say!

MILLIE

Glad to be of service! When you're finished, just leave the documents on the table and I'll put them back in order before returning the file to the cabinet...

Moments pass. Julia is now back at the table. Attached to the Certificate of Death is the Autopsy Report. While scanning one of its narratives, she locks in on the following text:

JULIA

(voiceover)

The victim was between twelve and fourteen weeks pregnant at the time of death.

Julia leans back in her chair, trying to wrap her head around this bombshell.

It all makes sense now: Abby leaving LSU, getting married to Joe on such short notice, and moving away to distant Alaska.

She stops while trying to associate with Abby's plight.

(reminiscent)

(MORE)

JULIA (CONT'D)

At eighteen, it had to be
devastating for her, let alone
being trapped on the bottom of
Turnagain Arm just weeks later,
when ice-cold, thirty-eight-degree
water approached her waist, then
shoulders, nose, forehead...ugh!

She now departs the library with newfound insight concerning
the calamity that befell her best friend, Abby, so many years
ago.

EXT. COULTER RESIDENCE, EAGLE RIVER, ALASKA - NIGHT

A campfire burning in the Coulter's backyard lights up the
eastern sky on this mid-summer night, while a patchwork of
snowfields on not-so-distant Eagle Peak, evident to the naked
eye, appears just above the fallen scree. Gracie stokes the
coals with a long poker while seated next to her father at
the edge of the simmering logs.

GRACIE

The Youth Employment Program bused
a bunch of us summer workers to
Girdwood the other day to help set
up for their field days this
weekend.

JOE

That's a nice town, and resort
too...

GRACIE

Anyway, the town provided us with
free lunches at the fire
department. I had some time to
myself afterward before returning
to work, so...I wandered over to
the library located next door.

JOE

Oh?

GRACIE

They have a great resource section
dedicated to local history.

JOE

Do they now?
(smiling)

GRACIE

Uh hmm. I asked the librarian...her name is Millie, I believe. I asked her if they had any material on the Turnagain Arm drowning accident in 1986.

Stirring the glowing coals while Joe stays silent.

She said they did and walked me to the back, where she pulled out a folder labeled Newlywed Drowning 1986. In it were two police reports. One by the Alaska State Police and the other by the Whittier Police Department.

Joe suddenly stands up and tosses more logs on the fire while Gracie continues.

In both reports, Dad, you claim to have been on the mud flats for about an hour, whereas witnesses interviewed by police that day place you at the scene three hours earlier. It can't be both! Which is it?

Joe now returns to his chair.

JOE

I was afraid the authorities would arrest me for criminally negligent homicide.

GRACIE

Criminal what?

JOE

Negligent homicide, since I waited far too long to call for help. You know, emergency services. If I told them that we had arrived at the accident site only an hour ago, I might be able to escape prosecution. I, uh, had to think fast!

GRACIE

But...

JOE

In the end, police determined from eyewitness accounts that Abby and I had arrived three hours earlier, not one.

GRACIE

I see...

Stirring up more embers.

JOE

But the police never charged me,
nor did the district attorney. I
sweated out the likelihood of
criminal charges for a month, at
least, following my return here
from the funeral.

GRACIE

That's it?

Joe leans back.

JOE

(exhaling)
That's it!

GRACIE

I didn't have time to review all
the documents because I had to
return to work...

Studying her father carefully.

Is there any reason for me to
return there to read the rest of
the file?

JOE

Absolutely none...!

Looking Gracie straight in the eye.

GRACIE

Thanks, Dad.
(smiling)

JOE

Don't mention it. Say, are you up
for some popcorn inside?

GRACIE

Sure! But we had better extinguish
the fire first.

JOE

Go on now and get into your
pajamas. I'll handle this!

Gracie returns to the house while Joe douses the fire with water, sending the resulting cloud of steam skyward, concealing the dimly lit stars.

EXT. TIDEWATER SLOUGH, GIRDWOOD, ALASKA - AFTERNOON

The Girdwood Fire Department Emergency Water Response Team is responding to reports of a stranded hiker mired in the muddy waters of Tidewater Slough outside of town, where Alyeska and Seward Highways meet. In charge of the five-man crew is a diminutive female decked out in hip waders, standing along the road toting a bullhorn.

JULIA

You there, remain where you are!
We're coming in to get you out of there. Any further steps will cause you to sink deeper, making it more difficult to rescue you! Nod your head if you understand.

The middle-aged hiker does as he's told.

Alright, team, get out the support boards and lay them out towards the hiker without entering the water.

The team of rescuers carries out the command just as Chief Greer arrives on the scene.

WILL

How are we doing, Julia? The ambulance is on its way.

JULIA

Good. I've instructed the hiker to remain in place and avoid any movement. He seems to be cooperating.

Will quickly removes a pair of binoculars from the front seat of his truck and returns to Julia's side. The team secures the support boards around the hiker before a highly-pressurized hose connected to a pump is slid out onto the boards.

Alright, if everyone is secure, I'll start the pump.

All four team members give a thumbs-up. The pump is started, and the five-foot wand, now in the hands of its operator, penetrates the surface of the water down to the hiker's boots.

The pressurized mechanism soon displaces the surrounding mud along the bottom, ultimately freeing him to climb onto the support boards, where he crawls his way to safety with the assistance of rescue personnel.

Alright, then! Fine job! Let's collect those boards and return them to the truck along with the hose. I'll keep the pump running just in case.

Stripped of his outer clothes and boots, the hiker is set on a gurney where medical technicians examine him. Julia soon appears to provide critical warming therapy using Mylar blankets before accompanying the patient on the forty-minute ambulance ride to Providence Medical Center in Anchorage. Hours later, after arriving back at the fire station, Julia finds a tiny envelope affixed to her windshield marked-Julia. She soon starts the Land Rover, keeping the vehicle in park, before opening the correspondence. Inside, she finds an invitation.

WILL

(voiceover)

Have dinner with me! As your chief, this is not an order. I repeat, not an order. - Will

Julia softly bites her lower lip, and before long returns to her rental house beside celestial Moose Meadow.

INT. HOTEL ALYESKA, GIRWOOD, ALASKA - EVENING

Will enters the Hotel Alyeska, waves hello to the front desk, and climbs the broad staircase to the spacious lobby. There, he finds Julia seated on a leather couch facing a roaring fire. He approaches her from behind.

WILL

Julia?

JULIA

Will.

WILL

Have you been waiting long?

JULIA

A few minutes is all.

Standing up to greet him.

I'm thrilled about the restaurant you've selected. I've never ridden on an aerial tram before.

WILL

The ride never ceases to amaze me.
You'll love it! Ready?

JULIA

Yes. I just need to grab my purse.
This is an amazing hotel!

Looking around.

WILL

Isn't it? The Japanese owned this
place for many years after
inaugurating it in the nineteen
nineties.

JULIA

It's stunning.

She follows Will's lead as they walk down a broad hallway toward the Tramway, located just beyond the sliding back doors. Will waves to the person behind the ticket booth glass, who nods in acknowledgement. Outside, a small object halfway up the mountain soon comes into view, while an enormous wheel next to them pulls a heavy cable, inching the transport ever closer.

WILL

The gondola will be arriving here
in another five minutes or so. I
don't see any passengers waiting
here, so maybe we'll have the car
all to ourselves.

JULIA

Hmm...

WILL

And, no, I didn't arrange for it
that way!

JULIA

(laughing)

Did I say anything?

The tram now glides into the wheelhouse to let the returning passengers out. It then takes a sharp turn in the direction of the mountain to prepare for its next birth. The gondola soon stops and opens its doors for Julia and Will, before finally departing. Pine trees on the ground below now begin to drift silently by.

It's surprising how quiet the ride
is.

WILL

Right? I'm always astonished by the tranquility it provides.

JULIA

Hmm... How high is the mountaintop?

WILL

The restaurant is twenty-three hundred feet above sea level, but the overall height of the mountain is just under four thousand feet.

Traces of snow begin to appear on the mountainside as they approach midway.

JULIA

(overcome)

Such an amazing view!

WILL

Just wait until you get up there. The panorama never ceases to excite me.

JULIA

How long has this tramway been here?

WILL

Since the early nineties, about a year or so before the hotel opened. Turn around, you can see the resort getting smaller and smaller.

Julia turns and walks to the rear of the tram.

JULIA

Wow!

(gratified)

Thank you, Will.

WILL

You haven't seen anything yet. I want to warn you, though. The air will be pretty thin once we get up there. I always feel like somebody's standing on my chest.

JULIA

You're kidding?

WILL

You'll see...

The restaurant now comes into view as they approach the end of the ride. Julia returns to the head of the car.

We're almost there.

JULIA

What a lovely chalet!

WILL

Do you like it?

JULIA

Oh, yes! Seeing it up close is quite different than viewing it from the ground.

WILL

Hmm...

The tram arrives at the top, stopping with a slight jerk. Julia and Will step out of the car and take the stairs leading up to the restaurant. Once on the establishment's observation deck, they turn to take in the scene below, including breathtaking views of Turnagain Arm.

JULIA

Will...!

WILL

What?

JULIA

(inhaling)

What a view...!

Will laughs, enjoying Julia's delight and satisfied with the date so far.

Such beauty. Oh, I think I'm going to cry...

Scanning the distant valley beneath them.

You're right, my chest feels a little tight.

WILL

Told you! Come on, the restaurant is right indoors. Our reservation is for seven, and we're several minutes late.

JULIA

I don't want to leave this deck!

WILL
I know the feeling, but you'll have
just as good a view from the
comfort of our table.

JULIA
Very well...

Julia follows her date into the unique atmosphere of Seven
Glaciers Restaurant, nestled several thousand feet above sea
level.

INT. SEVEN GLACIERS RESTAURANT, MOUNT ALYESKA, GIRDWOOD,
ALASKA - MOMENTS LATER

Inside, a hostess greets the pair and shows them to their
table overlooking Turnagain Arm in the distance. A waiter
soon appears.

WAITER
Chief Greer.
(nodding)
What can I get you, madame?

JULIA
Do you carry Blue Moon?

WAITER
Why, yes, we do!

JULIA
I'll have one. Will?

WILL
I'll have the usual...

WAITER
Very good. Your menus will be right
out.

WILL
Thank you, Phil.

Julia looks over at Will.

JULIA
The usual? Do you come up here
often?

WILL
(chuckling)
I'm afraid my usual isn't so
unusual.

JULIA
Oh?

WILL
Scotch on the rocks!

JULIA
What kind?

The waiter arrives with the drinks, setting them down in front of the couple.

WAITER
Your menus.

Passing them out.

The special tonight is a pan-seared Halibut encrusted with almonds, in a beurre Blanc sauce with sautéed shallots and mushrooms, served with rice pilaf and steamed cherry tomatoes.

JULIA
That sounds wonderful!

WAITER
I'll leave you to your drinks and be back for your order.

WILL
Thanks, Phil!

Julia keeps the orange slice in place as she tips the glass to her mouth.

JULIA
Hmm. This is good!

WILL
When I was a kid, oranges were considered a premium in Alaska...

Julia takes another sip of her Blue Moon while taking note of Will's drink. He now leans back in his chair.

Johnny Walker Gold. You likely never heard of it.

JULIA
I've heard of Johnny Walker Black and Red, and even Blue, but never Gold.

WILL
Julia, you're in Alaska! We have
plenty of gold up here...

JULIA
No, really!

Will takes a deep pull on his scotch.

WILL
Alright. For some odd reason,
Johnny Walker Distilleries only
markets this in Alaska, Canada, and
likely Japan. The Japanese love
their scotch!

JULIA
You seem to know your liquor up
here. How about the cuisine? Shall
we order?

WILL
Sure thing!

JULIA
What's good here?

WILL
Oh, just about everything! This
restaurant is highly rated in Wine
Spectator.

JULIA
Really...?

WILL
In Girdwood, of all places.

Taking another swig of his drink while looking over the menu.
I, uh, happen to be a turf man, so
I'm a bit partial. But I could go
for the halibut special.

JULIA
Hmm, me too...

They both close their menus. Phil soon returns to the table.

WAITER
Have you decided?

WILL
We'll both have the halibut
special.

WAITER

Excellent. It comes with a house salad. And your dressing? We offer a wonderful homemade orange balsamic!

JULIA

Ah! I'll try it! It will go perfectly with my Blue Moon.

Displaying her winning smile.

WAITER

And you, Will?

WILL

The usual.

WAITER

(patronizing)

Ranch... I'll be back with your salads.

WILL

Thanks.

Over the next hour, the two enjoy their dinners in the company of seven snow-peaked glaciers. Phil soon approaches them afterward.

WAITER

May I interest you in dessert?

JULIA

None for me, thank you. Will?

WILL

None for me either, but I'll have another scotch.

WAITER

Very good.

Phil clears away the dishes and leaves.

WILL

I limit my drinks up here to two since high elevation increases the effect of alcohol.

JULIA

No kidding?

The waiter sets the Johnny Walker in front of Will, then turns to Julia.

WAITER

May I interest you in coffee or tea?

JULIA

Nothing for me, thank you. Can you show me to the restrooms? I wouldn't want to take a wrong step up here.

WAITER

Of course, follow me.

Moments pass before Julia returns to the table.

JULIA

Say, I passed by the Roundhouse Museum on my way back here. Iris Stebbins told me about the many historical items contained there.

WILL

She's right, there are many articles crammed within that modest space. Care to see it?

JULIA

Tonight?

WILL

Sure. I'll ask Phil.

He points to Phil, who soon steps over to the table. Any chance we can look through the Roundabout Museum tonight?

WAITER

Of course. I'll bring the key right over.

JULIA

I could easily come back another day...

WILL

Nonsense. We're only feet away.

Phil soon places the key on the edge of the table and settles the tab with Will. Taking one last sip of his drink, Will gets up.

Shall we?

JULIA
Certainly. Lead the way...

They arrive outside the tiny museum while Will slips the key into the lock.

WILL
The light switch is over here
somewhere...

JULIA
You've been here before?

WILL
For fire inspections.

Will flips on the lights.

JULIA
Wow! Look at all these artifacts!
And photos!

She makes her way over to the Twentieth Century section to browse through the collection and notices one photo in particular of two young men on the southerly shore of Turnagain Arm sitting in a mud-caked Jeep, while a woman in the distance stands all alone in waist-deep water. Julia points out the picture to Will.

May I?

WILL
I see no harm. Wait a second, is
that who I think it is...?
(astonished)

Looking over Julia's shoulder.

It is! It's a photo of Joe Coulter
taken on the day of, of your
friend's drowning! But who is the
guy sitting next to him, and why
aren't they in the water trying to
save Abby?

JULIA
(flustered)
I was hoping you could answer that!

WILL
I'm afraid I can't at the moment,
but I know some folks who can
identify the other individual!

He picks the object up and removes the picture, setting the orphaned frame on the curator's desk with a sticky note attached, explaining the photo's absence.

I'll contact Anne in the morning.
Anything else?

Julia carefully scans the remaining items in the exhibit.

JULIA

I don't see anything of value.

WILL

Come on.

He returns the key to Phil before leaving the restaurant with Julia. They now enter an empty tram to take them back to the hotel, this time in the glow of a forgone sunset.

EXT. ALYESKA RESORT, PARKING LOT, GIRDWOOD, ALASKA - LATER

Will walks Julia to her vehicle, just as a loud noise is heard.

JULIA

What's that?

WILL

It's probably a bear trying to get into somebody's car. They only do that at night if there's food left inside. It happens all the time, unfortunately!

JULIA

Sounds like it's coming from over there!

Pointing in the direction of the commotion.

WILL

Hmm. The back lot. It's very popular among our four-legged friends...

JULIA

Where are you parked?

WILL

Two vehicles down.

Julia stands back to observe his pickup, where she spots an army decal affixed to the back glass.

JULIA

You were in the Tenth Mountain
Division?

WILL

You know of it?

JULIA

Why, yes. I became an expert in
various sections of the army while
working at the Long Beach Medical
Center. We saw a great many
patients who were in the military
wearing armed forces hats and
bearing those sizable insignia
tattoos.

Revealing her pure, vacant forearms.

WILL

Oh, yes. Lots of those, I'll bet!

JULIA

Let's see, the largest ones
appeared on the biceps and forearms
of members of the Big Red One, 1st
Army Division out of Fort Riley...

WILL

Kansas!

JULIA

That's right! Uh, the Screaming
Eagles of the 101st Airborne
Division and the...the 75th Ranger
Regiment out of Fort Benning. There
are so many emblems on display in
the Army alone, not to mention the
Navy and Marines. Let's not forget
about them!

(hushed)

Quiet. I don't hear that noise
anymore...

WILL

You seem to know a lot about the
military!

JULIA

I do.

(soberly)

My husband, Tim, was a First
Lieutenant in the U.S.

(MORE)

JULIA (CONT'D)
 Army, stationed at the Presidio in
 San Francisco. He was killed in
 action during the Battle of
 Fallujah in early 2004.

WILL
 I'm sorry...

JULIA
 Thank you...

Now, fixing her eyes on the ground and speaking in a subdued
 tone.

He was a good man, I loved him very
 much, and he loved me. We had many
 happy times together, until,
 well...

(exhaling)

Anyway, that was then. The question
 before me now is, will I ever fall
 in love again? And, is it possible
 for anyone...to truly love twice in
 a lifetime?

Suddenly cutting herself short and talking more brightly.
 And here I am, in Girdwood, Alaska,
 of all places...

WILL
 It's a good place to...to get away.

At once self-effacing.

But what do I know? I've lived here
 all my life, except for those four
 years at Camp Drum. I'll have you
 know that the winters down there
 are far worse than they are up
 here.

JULIA
 What would I know? I'm from
 California, though Squaw Valley
 does get its fair share of snow...

She now proceeds to lean her shoulder against the side of the
 Land Rover.

Were you married at one time, Will?

WILL
 Yes. Sharon and I were married for
 over thirty years.

JULIA
 Did you have children together?

WILL

We did! Two boys and one girl.
They're all grown now with families
of their own. None of them live
around here, though!

JULIA

And where is your ex-wife, if I may
ask...?

WILL

You may. She died about six years
ago in 2004. The same year as your
soldier husband. Sharon fought a
valiant battle before succumbing to
cancer of the cervix.

JULIA

I'm terribly sorry! I honestly
didn't know.

WILL

But how could you? Why, you've only
been up here a few months.

JULIA

All the same, I'm sorry...

Will quickly reverses course.

WILL

Did you and Tim have any children
together?

JULIA

No. Tim and I had our careers, and,
you know...

WILL

I do. Sharon and I were lucky, I
guess.

JULIA

Yes! Children are wonderful.

Pausing before saying goodnight.

Well, I must be going. God, I could
walk home from here!

WILL

That's right, you're on the other
side of Moose Meadow.

(MORE)

WILL (CONT'D)
Though I wouldn't advise walking at
night in these parts!

JULIA
Bears?

WILL
(grinning)
And moose! Thus the name of the
meadow!

JULIA
Anyway, I had a great time tonight,
and so appreciate you asking me
out. I don't have many friends up
here, so...

WILL
We should do it again!

JULIA
(appealingly)
Yes, I'd like that. But next time
we go Dutch. Alright?

Lightly tapping his hand.

WILL
Alright. I'll consider it... And
I'll get in touch with my State
Police friends to see if they can
positively identify that individual
in the photo sitting next to Joe
Coulter.

JULIA
Thank you. I'd appreciate that.
Goodnight.

WILL
Goodnight!

Will sees Julia into her Land Rover and safely out of the parking lot before walking to his truck. Prior to entering the cab, he stops to study Mount Alyeska, site of his date tonight with young, beautiful Ms. Buranich, while beaming stars above bathe its northern slope in light.

INT. ALASKA STATE POLICE HEADQUARTERS, ANCHORAGE, ALASKA -
THE NEXT DAY

Chief Greer arrives at State Police Headquarters in downtown Anchorage.

A guard manning the parking booth immediately waves him into the lot. He enters the building through the employee entrance and is buzzed into the facility. Will takes an elevator to the top floor and soon arrives outside the Superintendent's office, where a uniformed Lieutenant is there to greet him.

MARGE

The Superintendent is in with someone right now, Chief. I'll let him know you're here once he's free.

WILL

Thanks, Marge.

MARGE

Have a seat. May I get you anything?

WILL

Sure. Coffee, black.

MARGE

Be right back...

Will sits down on the couch and picks through the magazines displayed on the coffee table, settling for a current issue of FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin. The Lieutenant now returns with his coffee.

How are things in Girdwood?

WILL

It's been quiet, thankfully...

Superintendent Rogers soon shows his guest out to the foyer and nods in Will's direction. With his visitor gone, he approaches Chief Greer and the two shake hands.

ROGERS

Will. I got your message. Come on in...

WILL

Thanks, Lieutenant.

Handing his cup over before entering the Superintendent's office.

ROGERS

You need more coffee?

WILL

No thanks.

ROGERS
Sit down, Will.

They sit across from each other in a less formal area of the room.

How's the family?

WILL
They're good. I'm a new grandfather!

ROGERS
Who?

WILL
Greg and his wife, Rhonda. They had a baby boy last week.

ROGERS
You don't say! Congratulations. This makes how many now?

WILL
Seven!

Shifting on the couch.

ROGERS
Now, what brings you here?

WILL
Well, I have a photo I'd like one of your detectives to look at.

Rogers reaches for his iPhone in his suit pocket.

ROGERS
I'll get our ABI supervisor on the phone right now. What should I say this is about?

WILL
Do you recall the drowning in Turnagain Arm in 1986?

ROGERS
The newlywed?

WILL
Yes.

ROGERS
What about it?

Will removes the photo from his jacket and hands it to Superintendent Rogers.

WILL
This is a picture I borrowed from
the Roundabout Museum.

ROGERS
On Alyeska?

WILL
Yes.

Rogers studies the photo.
I'm interested in the person on the
left.

ROGERS
Is that the victim in the
background standing in the water?

WILL
Abby.

ROGERS
That's Abby Coulter?

Will nods affirmatively.
What's your theory?

WILL
Abby's waist-deep in water, and
those two, her husband and
whomever, are just camped out in
the Jeep! What are they waiting
for? Why aren't they out there
trying to get her out?

Getting up to pace the floor.

ROGERS
Hmm...

WILL
It's as if those two are waiting
for her to...to drown. How else do
you explain this picture?

Stopping his movement.

ROGERS
Do we know who took it?

WILL
No. All I know is this photo was in
the Roundabout Museum last night
when...

ROGERS
When what?

Will begins to pace again.

WILL
When I was on a date, already! Are
you happy now?

ROGERS
A date? Will, that's marvelous!

WILL
Yeah, yeah...

ROGERS
Who is she?

WILL
(somewhat embarrassed)
Her name is Julia Buranich. She's a
nurse on our water response team
who's doing a two-year hitch with
HHS at the Girdwood Health Clinic.

Returning to the couch.

ROGERS
Where's she from?

WILL
Long Beach, California.

ROGERS
I see... And how old is she?

WILL
Pete!

ROGERS
Come on, how old is she?

WILL
Oh, alright! She's forty-two.

ROGERS
Damn!

Slapping his knee.

WILL
It was only one date...

ROGERS
With more to come, I'll bet!

WILL
We'll see. Now, how about that supervisor?

ROGERS
I'll get him on the line right now. Aren't these things great?

Holding up his iPhone.

WILL
I still rely on my good old beeper!

ROGERS
Say, set the photo down, and I'll snap a picture of it and send it to my ABI guy ahead of time. That way, his staff can get to work on it before you arrive downstairs.

WILL
Good idea!

ROGERS
And, Will...

WILL
Hmm?

ROGERS
Be careful out there among those eligible women!

WILL
Yeah, yeah...

INT. GIRDWOOD HEALTH CLINIC, GIRDWOOD, ALASKA - MOMENTS LATER

Julia enters the side door of the clinic and checks in with Iris before prepping the examination room.

JULIA

Sorry, I'm late. There was a big black bear in my driveway this morning. I tried to shoo him away, but he wouldn't budge.

IRIS

How do you know it was a he...?
(laughing)
Speaking of the male species, how was your date with Chief Greer last night?

JULIA

How did you find out?

IRIS

I have my spies...

JULIA

Well, he took me to Seven Glaciers Restaurant.

IRIS

He did?

Clasping her hands together.
Oh! How was it?

JULIA

Great. The tram ride was a first for me.

IRIS

It's always a thrill. And the food?

JULIA

We both had the halibut special.

IRIS

I'll bet it was wonderful; it always is up there. And the view!

JULIA

Absolutely stunning... We visited the museum.

IRIS

Let me guess, Will let you in with the key?

JULIA

Um hmm. There are so many artifacts in there.

IRIS

Indeed!

Tossing her head back.

So, how soon before your next
rendezvous?

JULIA

Very funny! What's on tap today?

IRIS

No scheduled appointments. It's
drop in day, remember?

Julia now moves to the rear of the clinic to await her first
patient. Moments pass.

IRIS (CONT'D)

(shouting)

Julia. Julia!

JULIA

Yes!

IRIS

There's a young Dena'ina girl
insisting that she be allowed to
enter the clinic through the side
door.

JULIA

Send her around, and I'll see what
she needs.

She opens the door and finds a hysterical young woman wearing
a native ch'da, made of caribou hides, adorned with shells
and long ermine tails.

May I help you?

ELEANA

Can we talk inside?

Darting her eyes each way.

I have something very important to
tell you. In secret...

JULIA

Come in.

Closing the door after the visitor.

Follow me. We can talk in the
examination room. Right this way!

ELEANA

Thank you.

JULIA

Can I get you anything?

ELEANA

Oh, no.

JULIA

Please sit down.

Studying this young girl closely before closing the door.
You're Dena'ina Athabascan, is that
right?

ELEANA

Yes.

JULIA

We treat many of your people here.
What village are you from?

ELEANA

Idlughet, up north, but my family's
ancestral home is on Pedro Bay in
the south. I'm, uh...I'm not
feeling very well.

Wiping her brow.

JULIA

I can see that. Let me get you a
cool glass of water, and you can
tell me why you're here.

She steps into the hallway, heads to the water cooler, fills
up a glass, and returns to the treatment room.
There you go...!

Eleana proceeds to drink vigorously.
Better now?

ELEANA

Oh, yes, much better, thank you.

JULIA

So, what brings you in here today?
Let's start with your name.

ELEANA

My name is Eleana Balluta.

JULIA
I'm familiar with that last name.

ELEANA
Oh, my family must never know
about...

JULIA
Rest assured! Whatever you tell me
is strictly confidential.

ELEANA
I'm afraid I don't understand,
confid...

JULIA
It means secret. Not even your
family can learn of this visit if
you don't want them to.

ELEANA
Oh, I don't...!

Shaking her head as Julia inches the clinical stool closer.

JULIA
(whispering)
So, why are you here today? You can
tell me. No one will know. You have
my word...
(imploring)
What is it?

ELEANA
Well, there's this man. Dave
Kimball is his name...

JULIA
Go on.

ELEANA
(sobbing)
He tried to kill me last night!

JULIA
(dumbstruck)
Where? When!

Reaching for some nearby tissues.

ELEANA
On the mudflats of Knik Arm! Across
from Eagle River! It was just past
dusk.

(MORE)

ELEANA (CONT'D)

He asked me if I wanted to take a ride across the arm. So, I agreed...

JULIA

Do you know this man, or is he a stranger?

ELEANA

Oh, no! I know him. We began...seeing each other over the summer.

JULIA

I'm afraid I don't understand. You said he tried to kill you, how?

ELEANA

Well, about halfway across Knik Arm, he told me to get out of his vehicle. He said he was going to leave me here alone. I explained to him that the tide would be on its way soon and that the water would be high, due to the new moon the night before. He said he didn't care, and if I screamed, there wasn't a soul around who would hear me.

JULIA

Wait a minute.

Julia gets up to use the intercom.

Iris, hold my calls and tell any patients that show up in the waiting room that I'll be with them shortly. Thank you.

She sits back down and leans into Eleana.

So he said he didn't care, and if you screamed, no one would hear you. Is that right?

ELEANA

Yes!

JULIA

Then what?

ELEANA

He drove back in the direction of Eagle River. I know that much!

(MORE)

ELEANA (CONT'D)
I watched his taillights disappear
in the early evening light.

JULIA
But how did you make it out of Knik
Arm alive?

ELEANA
Why, I walked!

JULIA
Didn't the mud ensnare your feet?

ELEANA
If I were wearing hiking shoes,
sure! But what Dave failed to
notice was that I was wearing
moccasins, made of caribou skin. In
moccasins, you can walk clear
across the arm without getting
mired in the mud. This made it
possible for me to escape the tide
with plenty of time to spare...

JULIA
But why would you wear moccasins in
Knik Arm?

ELEANA
How was I to know he would kick me
out of his Jeep halfway across the
flats? I only wore them to impress
him!

Helping herself to a tissue to dab her eyes.

JULIA
How long have you been seeing this
man?

Eleana gets up, walks over to the examination table, and with
both hands on the sanitary paper braces herself.

ELEANA
(disgraced)
Long enough to be carrying his
child!

A shiver goes up Julia's spine.

JULIA
How long have you known?

ELEANA

For a couple of months. I told Mr. Kimball only last week.

JULIA

Mr. Kimball! How old is this man?

ELEANA

He's forty-five. I bought him a birthday present yesterday and gave it to him last night. A fine thank you, I got!

Turning around to face Julia.

What am I going to do? My father will surely banish me from the house!

JULIA

Take off your shawl so I can see how far along you are.

Eleana removes her ch'da and drapes it across the table. She now raises the bottom of her blouse as high as the midsection.

Oh, Eleana, you won't be showing for another couple of months. I suggest you go home, and I'll see you a week from today. We open first thing each morning, Monday through Saturday. Alright?

Squeezing her shoulder.

ELEANA

Alright...
(exhaling)

JULIA

(earnestly)
Do you trust me, Eleana? Hmm...?

Eleana nods her head in the affirmative.

Eat plenty of fish! Fish is good for you as well as the baby...

ELEANA

Okay.
(resigned)
By the way, what's your name?

JULIA

My name is Julia.

ELEANA

Can I get a ride home from you,
Julia? I'm very tired.

JULIA

Of course. And drink plenty of
water! Do you have running water in
your house?

ELEANA

No, but there's a community pump in
our village. The glacier water is
very clean...

JULIA

And cold! Come on...

Entering the hallway, she raises her voice.
Iris, I'm going to take Eleana
home. Are there any patients in the
waiting room?

IRIS

Not at present!

JULIA

I'll be back early this afternoon
if any do show up.

A muffled response is heard as Julia and Eleana step
outdoors. They now get into the Land Rover for the hour-long
drive to Idlughet.

INT. ALASKA BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, ALASKA STATE POLICE
HEADQUARTERS, ANCHORAGE, ALASKA - SAME TIME

Will enters the glass doors of the Alaska Bureau of
Investigation, located on the fourth floor of state police
headquarters, where a Sergeant mans the front desk.

WILL

I'm Will Greer. Superintendent
Rogers sent me...

The Sergeant's phone begins to ring.

SERGEANT

Chief Greer, Superintendent Rogers
is on the line...

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. JULIA'S RENTAL HOUSE, MOOSE MEADOW, GIRDWOOD, ALASKA -
DUSK

Will pulls into a gravel driveway off Aspen Mountain Road,
exits his truck, and rings the front doorbell. Julia soon
appears at the door.

JULIA

Will.

WILL

It's a perfect match!

JULIA

Come in, come in!

They walk to the rear of the house and enter the kitchen.

I've poured some chardonnay. Would
you like some? Sorry, I'm clean out
of scotch.

(smiling)

WILL

Sure, I'll have a glass. But just
one.

Julia retrieves a crystal-stemmed glass from the cupboard and
fills it halfway.

JULIA

To your health.

Raising her glass, while Will follows suit.

WILL

Likewise!

(smiling)

Now on to business. Through
forensic photo analysis, the Alaska
Bureau of Investigation confirmed
today that the individual shown in
the photo borrowed from the
Roundabout Museum last night is
that of David L. Kimball. Further,
according to Alaska Driver's
License records containing his
exact likeness, his birthday was
yesterday!

Will now props his boot up on the rear dowel of a kitchen
chair.

And, witnesses on shore identify
him as leaving a young woman in the
middle of Knik Arm last night.

(MORE)

WILL (CONT'D)

An FBI tactical team is at this hour surrounding his house to arrest and take him into custody.

Julia pulls out a chair and sits down at the table.

JULIA

(stunned)

I don't believe it! So, Eleana won't have to pick him out of a lineup?

WILL

Not for the arrest anyway. But, she will be called to testify before a Federal Grand Jury, and later, after a True Bill is handed down, the ensuing trial.

JULIA

Why federal?

WILL

Because the attempted murder took place in Native Alaskan Territory against a member of the Dena'ina Athabascan tribe. Moreover, Eleana Balluta is a minor.

JULIA

(steamed)

Statutory rape! I thought she looked young...

WILL

Fifteen, to be exact. And she won't be sixteen for another four months. Not that it matters, she's still underage! Anyway, the Feds are going to rely on eyewitnesses who were on shore. One of whom had binoculars that he passed to others around him after observing the incident for himself. These witnesses will negate you being involved, at least for now.

JULIA

Me?

Julia gets up from the table.

What do I have to do with it?

(MORE)

JULIA (CONT'D)

I only contacted the state police to report the incident because I am bound by law to report it.

WILL

Hey, the underage girl provided you with her account of the crime, or crimes as it were. So, your name will most certainly make it onto the witness list.

JULIA

(reflecting)

That may be the case...but I was told about David Kimball's conduct in confidence. I'm duty-bound under HIPAA, especially as an HHS clinician, to, you know, strictly maintain provider-patient confidentiality.

WILL

Still, you may be compelled to testify, either secretly before a federal grand jury or at trial, if it comes to that. You know, he just might plead guilty, letting you off the hook entirely.

Taking one last sip from his wine glass.

JULIA

But how?

WILL

(teasing)

A little thing called a grand jury subpoena...

JULIA

I'll defy it!

WILL

(laughing)

Relax. A federal judge will be on hand to decide the matter.

JULIA

Woo, that's a relief! By the way, did the curator at the museum ever contact you?

WILL

Actually, I got back to her first!

JULIA

Come again?

WILL

I advised Anne this afternoon that the photo we took out of the museum last night is now material evidence.

Julia swirls her glass to take in another mouthful while Will peeks at his watch.

I have to be at FBI Headquarters before they begin questioning Kimball. We have a trooper detective joining them, so they asked me if I wanted to look on. Through a two-way mirror, of course! Gotta run.

JULIA

Goodnight Will. And keep me informed!

WILL

As much as I'm able! But after tonight, the lid goes on regarding information associated with this case. Tightly, I might add! It's a federal investigation now...

INT. FBI FIELD OFFICE, SIXTH AVENUE, ANCHORAGE, ALASKA -
LATER

Chief Greer stands in front of a two-way mirror looking into an interview room at the FBI Field Office in Anchorage. Holding a cup of steaming decaf, he watches as two FBI agents and a state police detective begin to question David Kimball. The suspect had already been read his rights by the time of Greer's arrival. An assistant U.S. Attorney and his investigator now enter the observation booth.

WILL

Hi. Will Greer, Girdwood Fire Chief.

Shaking hands with both visitors.

AUSA KEMP

Brian Kemp, assistant U.S. attorney, here in Anchorage. This is my top investigator, Greg Mitchell.

Investigator Mitchell nods.

MITCHELL
Chief!

AUSA KEMP
If this is our guy, he's in a
boatload of trouble.

WILL
It's him, alright...

Taking another sip of coffee while leaning against the
reinforced glass.

MITCHELL
Our Victim Witness Specialist may
be joining us. She specializes in
crimes involving Native Americans.

WILL
I look forward to meeting her.

AUSA KEMP
What's he saying?

They all stop talking to listen in.

FBI AGENT 1
Dave, we have witnesses on shore
who place you and your vehicle at
the scene, so quit the BS.

DAVE
Even if I was in Knik Arm last
night, which I wasn't, how could
these witnesses be so sure it was
me?

The Alaska Bureau of Investigation detective now stands and
walks over to a table containing evidentiary items. He
selects a clear plastic bag containing a dark object. The ABI
detective now returns to his seat and holds up the bag.

ABI DETECTIVE
Do you know what this is?

DAVE
I'm at a loss...

ABI DETECTIVE
It's a pair of binoculars!

DAVE

Oh? So?

ABI DETECTIVE

They belong to one of the witnesses who positively identified you out of a dozen driver's license photos.

DAVE

One witness, one...

ABI DETECTIVE

This witness passed these binoculars to the other witnesses on shore.

DAVE

Big deal. You got nothing!

Folding his arms defiantly.

FBI AGENT 1

They each pointed out your driver's license photo using the very same lineup. Separately, I might add, and at entirely different times. These witnesses were unanimous in their determination, every single one of them! How do you explain that? And, they all described your Jeep in detail...

DAVE

There are literally thousands of vehicles like mine in Alaska!

FBI AGENT 1

But how many with a vanity license plate?

Dave mops his forehead with the sleeve of his hoodie. Does HOT POPPY ring a bell, hotshot? Isn't that your license plate?

DAVE

Yes, but I wasn't...

A knock is heard on the door, and a lanky individual enters the room. He now hands the lead FBI Agent two sheets of paper.

FBI AGENT 1

Thanks, Mike.

The agent quickly reads its contents and shows it to his fellow agent as well as the ABI detective, who both nod their heads affirmatively.

See that guy who just left the room? He's a forensic wiz with obtaining incriminating telecommunication records. Phone calls, emails, and, are you ready for this, text messages, identified as SMSs. Do you know what SMS stands for, dummy? Hmm? It stands for Short Message Service.

DAVE

You have no right to be looking through my phone!

FBI AGENT 2

We didn't! Your text messages and phone calls were obtained through a search warrant issued upon your iPhone provider. It was signed by a federal judge last night here in Anchorage. Sure, we had to get Judge McLennan out of bed for it, but once we provided her with the truckload of probable cause we assembled against you, why, she was more than happy to sign it.

Dave remains silent.

FBI AGENT 1

Okay, Hot Poppy, explain this SMS!

Sliding it across the table.

Go ahead, read it...

Dave shudders, flips over the paper, and drops his head.

Just wait until the jury sees this flashed across a giant monitor at your trial! We'll refer to it as Government Exhibit Number 1.

Drawing quiet laughter from those in the room.

FBI AGENT 2

To put it into plain English - the smoking gun!

ABI DETECTIVE

More like a smoking canon!

FBI AGENT 1

Yeah! So, you don't want to read the text out loud? Allow me! My technical wiz, Mike, decoded it for me: HP, that's you, yesterday, 8:42 pm.

Looking over his reading glasses.

Help! Feds at my door!!! Must be about dropping off my pregnant girlfriend in Knick Arm last night. If I'm jammed, so are you!!! Remember that! Sound about right, there, Dave?

ABI DETECTIVE

If I'm jammed, so are you!!! Remember that! Who exactly are you referring to? Come on, you gotta know that we'll eventually determine this person's identity. We refer to it as subscriber information. Name, address, and other spicy details...

DAVE

(coaxingly)

Wouldn't you all want to know! This conversation is over! I want a lawyer and no longer wish to waive my rights. The next time I open my mouth, it'll be in the presence of a highly-paid defense attorney.

The occupants in the room sit silently before investigators begin to gather their materials to leave this not-so-confident attempted murder suspect alone with his thoughts. A U.S. Marshal soon arrives to handcuff Dave and later transport him to the Anchorage Correctional Complex, located only a few avenues away.

EXT. TRIDENT SEAFOOD, ANCHORAGE, ALASKA - MORNING

Joe pulls into his reserved parking space at the Trident Seafood parking lot in downtown Anchorage. He slides his iPhone off the dashboard to check his texts before entering the plant. Scrolling past insignificant messages, he stops to read one from his friend, Dave Kimball:

HP

Yesterday 8:42 pm

hlp! feds @ m dor!!!

(MORE)

DAVE (CONT'D)
 mst b abt drppng o/f m pg gf in
 knik lst n8. if im jmd, sry!!!
 R.T.!

Joe places the phone in his shirt pocket and immediately slumps back in the seat. Beginning to sweat profusely, he studies his reddening face in the review mirror before exiting the vehicle to start his shift, this time with a rapidly beating heart.

INT. FBI FIELD OFFICE, SIXTH AVENUE, ANCHORAGE, ALASKA - THE NEXT DAY

Back inside the FBI Field Office, this time with retained counsel, Dave Kimball sits down in the same room with the very same group of investigators. Chief Greer is already in the observation booth behind a two-way mirror. He is suddenly joined by Assistant United States Attorney Brian Kemp, Investigator Gregory Mitchell, and Victim Witness Coordinator Monica Kupiak. The time is 8:15 am.

AUSA KEMP
 We meet again!

WILL
 Good morning.

MITCHELL
 Chief, this is the Victim Witness Coordinator I told you about.

MONICA
 Hi, my name is Monica Kupiak.

Reaching across the others to shake Will's hand.

WILL
 It's a pleasure to meet you. I have some questions I'd like to ask you afterward, if that's alright.

MONICA
 Sure. I'd be happy to field any questions you have.

Investigator Mitchell smiles.

WILL
 Greg says that you're an expert in handling Native Alaskan victims.

MONICA

I am. Let's talk later. The suspect's lawyer is speaking right now.

WILL

(whispering)

Of course...

Turning to AUSA Kemp.

Who's this guy?

AUSA KEMP

He's a local attorney. His name is Stewart Long. He's very accomplished and a real straight shooter.

Will nods and focuses in on the interview.

ATTORNEY LONG

My client is willing to share vital information with you in exchange for his...

Turning to his client.

His signed confession, which I have here in my briefcase. This will be turned over to you, if, and only if, he's credited with certain information he's about to share with you this morning, if that's agreeable?

FBI AGENT 1

All I can promise you, Mr. Long, is that we will verify the information he provides us first, before bringing any confession to AUSA...

ATTORNEY LONG

Please, call me Stewart.

FBI AGENT 1

Very well, Stewart...

ATTORNEY LONG

It concerns a murder that took place not far from here, twenty-four years ago...

FBI AGENT 1

I understand, Stewart, but...

ATTORNEY LONG

Of a young newlywed named Abby, who drowned in Turnagain Arm in July of 1986!

Will is visibly stunned.
Agreed?

FBI AGENT 1

Only as far as verifying and bringing this information to my prosecutor, yes, we're agreed.

ATTORNEY LONG

Go ahead, Dave, tell them...

FBI AGENT 2

Wait a minute, just so we're clear, your client is waiving his right to remain silent as well as his right against self-incrimination.

ATTORNEY LONG

That's correct. Go ahead, Dave, tell them...

David Kimball proceeds to tell investigators assembled in the room his up-close, eyewitness account of the murder of Abby Gladstone Coulter.

DAVE

On July 15, 1986, I happened to be riding with my friend Joe Coulter and his wife, Abby, along Turnagain Arm. It was early in the morning when we took a shortcut just before Twentymile River and drove across the mudflats in the direction of Seattle Creek, where Joe's dredging site is located. Can I have some water? I've got a lot to say and am going to need something to soothe my throat. I asked a guard for a drink last night, but he proceeded to ignore me.

FBI AGENT 2

We have some bottled water in the refrigerator. I'll be right back!

Dave resumes his statement.

DAVE

So, we get about three-quarters of the way across the arm, and Joe puts the Jeep in neutral and starts revving the engine, and I'm like, What are you doing? Then, Joe tells Abby to get out and push.

The FBI Agent arrives with the water and sets it down in front of Dave, who opens the bottle and takes a gulp.

Thank you. So, she does what Joe says, gets out of the Jeep, and begins to push. Then...

FBI AGENT 1

Wait a minute, why didn't you get out and help her push?

DAVE

Because Joe turned around in his seat and put his hand on my knee, stopping me. He looked at me, like, I only want her to push.

Taking another swig of water.

After about ten minutes, Joe puts the Jeep in drive and begins to move forward. Abby walks out from behind the vehicle and swings back into the front seat. I could sense she was miffed that I failed to get out and help her, but, hey...

We moved across the mudflats until we hit a kind of deep gully. You know how the flats are when the tide is out, how it looks like the surface of the moon? Then, Joe flips the transmission into neutral again without Abby noticing and asks her to get out and push one more time.

I distinctly remember because she turned around and gave me a look I swear I'll never forget...

Dave stops momentarily and slides his finger down the side of the cool water bottle.

ATTORNEY LONG

Do you need a minute, Dave?

DAVE

I just want to get this over with!

ATTORNEY LONG

Go ahead, and when you're done,
we'll have something to negotiate
with...

DAVE

(grinning)

But she gets out of the Jeep anyway
and begins pushing, while Joe revs
the engine, faking exertion and
swearing away, saying Come on, come
on!

That must have been about the time
Abby's boot got lodged in a really
bad fissure. In fact, she told Joe
that her foot was stuck. So, what
does Joe do? He places the Jeep in
drive and guns it all the way to
shore!

ABI DETECTIVE

Leaving Abby behind?

DAVE

(nodding)

Leaving Abby behind, yeah...

ABI DETECTIVE

Alright, then what?

DAVE

We drove up the gravel embankment
and parked the Jeep, while Abby was
stuck, pleading with Joe to come
back and help her. I felt terrible,
but Joe looked at me, like, You're
in this too! In fact, Joe said if
police ever determined that Abby's
drowning was intentional, and not
an accident, I'd go to prison right
along with him, as an accessory to
the crime.

FBI AGENT 1

And you bought that bull? Is that
the reason you didn't run for the
police?

Dave leans in toward the FBI Agent.

DAVE

(determined)

You'd have to meet Joe Coulter.

(MORE)

DAVE (CONT'D)
He can be very, what's the word I'm
looking for, manipulative...! I
could kick myself now.

FBI AGENT 2
Save it! Continue.

DAVE
Mathematically, Joe had everything
worked out ahead of time.

Counting on his fingers.

The bore tides, the fact that they
would be considerably greater after
a new moon, which occurred the
night before, at times rushing in
at twenty-five miles per hour,
reaching a height of some thirty
feet or more. Like I said, he had
it all figured out, including
exactly how long it would take for
the water to reach Abby's chest,
before running for help.

ABI DETECTIVE
Let's stop right here for a minute.
I'm going to show you a picture
taken by a passerby on the day
you're describing. Can you identify
the individuals contained in this
photo?

Sliding the picture across the table. Attorney Long quietly
consults with his client before allowing him to identify the
parties contained in the photo.

ATTORNEY LONG
Where did you obtain this?

ABI DETECTIVE
We have our sources...

Attorney Long motions for his client to proceed.

DAVE
Well, this is Dave and me, sitting
in the Jeep. God, it was muddy
there!

ABI DETECTIVE
Okay...

DAVE

And, uh, that's Abby in the distance, unable to move.

Pointing to the woman in the background.

ABI DETECTIVE

Proceed!

DAVE

So, once the water was up to her chest, Joe makes a beeline for the road and hoofs it to a local tavern, where he calls the state police station in nearby Girdwood. The Whittier Police Department must have received a distress call, since they were the first to arrive at the scene. As planned, I had already hidden in the alder bushes around Ingram Creek, but still had a pretty good view of Abby's imminent drowning!

Finishing his water bottle and putting on the cap. I remember thinking, if she wasn't killed by the rising tide, she'd soon be dead from the thirty-eight-degree water...

FBI AGENT 1

Dave, that trailer being towed by the Jeep, what did it contain?

DAVE

Dredging equipment! You know, Joe had a motorized mechanism we often used to disperse underwater flour. We used it all the time when dredging along the shore.

FBI AGENT 2

Flour?

ABI DETECTIVE

The locals call the muddy substance flour. The granular muck is actually comprised of tiny shards of pulverized granite, produced when massive glaciers, some three-stories high or more, grind their way over the surrounding mountain range.

(MORE)

ABI DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
The flour is eventually carried
below by streams of melting ice,
where it eventually makes its way
into Turnagain Arm.

Dave nods his head in approval.

DAVE
That's right!

FBI AGENT 1
So he failed to use the very
mechanism that could've proved
instrumental in saving Abby's life!

DAVE
He never gave it a thought...

FBI AGENT 1
And neither did you, you...! You
make me sick!

ATTORNEY LONG
That's enough!

Shielding his client.

FBI AGENT 2
Anything else?

DAVE
Yeah, when Joe came back to wait
for police and emergency services
to arrive, he waded into the icy
water, pretending to be helping
her. But by that time, Abby
appeared listless, buoyed only by
the rising tide. You all know what
transpired from there...

After a brief lull, the ABI detective jumps in.

ABI DETECTIVE
I have a question. How did Joe
explain why the Jeep was already on
shore when police arrived?

DAVE
I don't know, he never said. My
personal view is...

ABI DETECTIVE
Go ahead, Dave.

DAVE

My personal view is, knowing Joe, he probably told them something like, Hey, I had to get that rig out of the water, so when I finally freed up Abby's foot, I'd be able to quickly get her home or to a hospital.

ABI DETECTIVE

I see...

FBI AGENT 2

Okay, Dave, after the ambulance left for the hospital and the police drove away, did you ride home with Joe?

DAVE

No! He insisted that we leave separately, so as not to draw any attention. So, I thumbed a ride home. That's it!

ATTORNEY LONG

Anything else?

ABI DETECTIVE

Yes. Based on your knowledge, Dave, what caused Joe to murder his wife?

DAVE

(shocked)

You don't know? Joe left Alaska for Carson City, Nevada, a few days before his and Abby's wedding. She had just finished up her spring semester and he hadn't seen her in over five months. When they arrived in Eagle River after the reception, he discovered that Abby was three months pregnant by another guy, who turned out to be a member of the LSU Men's Swim Team. So, he...

FBI AGENT 1

So, he had her killed by the bore tide in Turnagain Arm!

DAVE

That's correct.

Attorney Long now addresses the lead agent.

ATTORNEY LONG

If there's nothing else, I'll wait to hear from you after the details of my client's account this morning are fully vetted. If everything checks out, you'll receive his written confession and we'll take it from there with AUSA Kemp.

FBI AGENT 1

Alright then!

(exhaling)

I'll call the deputy marshal to take Dave back to the lockup. Thank you, Stewart.

Attorney Long and the investigators zip up their portfolios while Will Greer stands motionless behind the two-way mirror, where he is soon seen addressing Monica Kupiak.

INT. COULTER RESIDENCE, EAGLE RIVER, ALASKA - MORNING

The kitchen phone rings in the Coulter residence, where Gracie picks up the receiver.

GRACIE

Hello?

JOE

Gracie.

GRACIE

Oh, hi, Dad.

JOE

Hi, honey. Can you put your mother on the phone?

GRACIE

Sure. I'll yell to her. She's upstairs vacuuming.

Gracie goes to the staircase and calls to her mother.

Mom!

(louder)

Mom...! Dad's on the phone!

STEPHANIE

I'll pick it up in my bedroom, honey!

Turning off the vacuum, she now reaches the phone.

Joe?

JOE
We need to talk...

STEPHANIE
Joe, it's 8:45 in the morning!

JOE
I know, I know...

STEPHANIE
What is it...? Joe, I don't like
the sound in your voice. You sound
shaky.

Switching the receiver to the other shoulder.

JOE
Because I am shaky! I should be
shaky... My heart is pounding a
mile a minute!

STEPHANIE
Why? What happened? Is it
management?

JOE
Dave was arrested last night!

STEPHANIE
Dave Kimball? Why, I just saw his
wife last week in Carr's
supermarket... I'm afraid I don't
understand, where, and for what?

JOE
I should have shared the
information I'm about to admit to
you a long time ago.

STEPHANIE
Now you're scaring me. Why was Dave
arrested?

JOE
He was arrested by the FBI at his
home in Eagle Ridge for attempted
murder...

Stephanie plops down hard on the unmade bed, steadying
herself.

STEPHANIE
What?

JOE

You heard me right... Look, this is probably going to hit the newspapers, so I might as well get out in front of the story. Dave was in the jeep with Abby and me when we drove across Turnagain Arm the day she died.

STEPHANIE

I'm glad you got that off your chest, but what does Dave Kimball's arrest have to do with who else was in your Jeep that day? I don't...

Joe turns around in the breakroom to ensure there's no one else around.

JOE

Because he tried to drown his pregnant girlfriend in Knik Arm the night before, in circumstances very similar to how Abby died. Hold on, someone's coming into the break room...

Joe waits for the individual to finish using the vending machine.

Okay, I'm back.

STEPHANIE

Dave has a girlfriend? How old is she?

JOE

She's fifteen and Native Alaskan!

STEPHANIE

Statutory rape...

JOE

What?

Covering his ear to hear.

STEPHANIE

You said fifteen. If a girl is under sixteen years of age in Alaska, it's considered rape. A felony!

JOE
 (grimacing)
 Ugh. Statutory rape. I hadn't considered that...

STEPHANIE
 I'm still unclear how Dave's conduct involves you!

JOE
 He could talk...!

STEPHANIE
 Talk about what? Nothing's going to happen to you, Joe. You're a good man, and don't forget it! Alright?

JOE
 (now calmer)
 Alright... I've got to get back to the line.

STEPHANIE
 You do that, Joe! I believe in you, you know that!

JOE
 Gotta go, babe. Love you!

Joe leaves the break room and returns to supervise his line, just as Gracie quits her eavesdropping and cautiously sets the receiver back down on the phone.

I/E. GERRISH LIBRARY, GIRLWOOD, ALASKA - LATER

Stephanie pulls into a parking space at the Gerrish Library and addresses her daughter.

STEPHANIE
 I'm still not clear why you made me drive down here.

GRACIE
 I told you. I may have left something in there last week. Either that, or I left it at the fire department next door. I won't be long!

Gracie gets out of the vehicle and heads right for the front door. Entering the library, she greets Millie, who is once again seated at the front desk.

Hello again.

MILLIE

Why hello there, young lady!

GRACIE

I didn't have time last week to finish going through the file I was researching...about the newlywed drowning. May I look through it again?

MILLIE

I remember. This way.

Leading Gracie to the rear of the library. Millie opens the doors of the upright file cabinet and retrieves the requested red well.

Here you go. The gloves are on the bottom shelf.

GRACIE

Yes, I remember, thank you.

MILLIE

Tell me, why is someone your age so interested in this file?

GRACIE

I may be writing a book someday.

MILLIE

I see... Holler if you have any questions.

GRACIE

I certainly will. Thanks again.

With the librarian back at the front desk, Gracie picks up where she left off. Thumbing through more documents, she soon discovers glossy eight-by-ten photos of her father's muddy Jeep, the spot where Abby struggled on the floor of Turnagain Arm, taken after the icy waters had receded, and her lifeless body when authorities brought it up on shore.

(voiceover)

Ew! Disgusting... I'd like to study this picture more closely, but I'm going to pass! Alright, these are official permits for dredging along the shore, and what's this, a Certificate of Death with an attached copy of the autopsy. Let's see, where's the cause of death? Oh, here it is: acute hypothermia morbidity accompanied by myocardial infarction. Whatever that is!

Gracie browses through the remaining documents. Upon reaching the final item, she returns to the autopsy for one last look. Seconds pass before she spots something wonderful that went unnoticed the first time around. There, in black and white, the final narrative of the report, just above the coroner's signature, reads as follows:

The victim was between twelve and fourteen weeks pregnant at the time of death!

(overjoyed)

Yippie! So, she couldn't have been my mother had she lived, Abby was already pregnant with an entirely different baby!

She leaves the records on the table along with her gloves and skips out of the library.

MILLIE

Did you find what you came here for?

GRACIE

Oh, yes, thank you, Millie. I left everything on the table, just the way you like it. Bye-bye...

Back in the car, Stephanie notices a great change in Gracie's demeanor.

STEPHANIE

Did you find what you were looking for?

GRACIE

Yes, Mom. And I couldn't be happier!

For the first time in weeks, Gracie enjoys taking in the extraordinary scenery of Turnagain Arm at high tide.

INT. FBI FIELD OFFICE, SIXTH AVENUE, ANCHORAGE, ALASKA -
MOMENTS LATER

Will comes out of the FBI observation room with a grim look on his face. He says goodbye to the investigators and locates a payphone in the lobby, where he calls Julia. Finding her unavailable, he leaves the following voicemail message on her iPhone.

WILL

(voiceover)

Julia, it's Will.

(MORE)

WILL (CONT'D)
If you're available, meet me at
Chair 5 Restaurant tonight @ 7:00.
I have some rather important news
to share with you. Thanks.

Greer heads out of the building, enters his vehicle, and drives the forty miles home to Girdwood.

EXT. COULTER RESIDENCE, EAGLE RIVER, ALASKA - AFTERNOON

Soon after his shift, Joe pulls onto Dawn Street and into the driveway, only to be met by two Alaska Bureau of Investigation detectives and a state police car easing up behind him. It is here, he is read his Miranda rights, handcuffed, and placed into the backseat of the detectives' car, while a stunned Gracie and inconsolable Stephanie look on through the tall casement windows inside the kitchen.

SEQUENCE

INT. SEC CHAMPIONSHIPS, ARKANSAS NATATORIUM, FAYETTEVILLE, ARKANSAS - EVENING

Abby takes the last crawl to the touchpad in the championship round of the 400-meter medley relay at the 1986 SEC Swimming and Diving Championships in Fayetteville, Arkansas. As anchor, she remains in the pool while fellow relay members gather around the starting block to congratulate each other. Looking up at the scoreboard, realizing they have come in first, Abby Gladstone splashes the water with both palms in jubilant celebration. Their first SEC women's swimming title in school history, LSU will not win another such title until 2003.

SEQUENCE ENDED

EXT. BELUGA POINT, OUTSIDE GIRDWOOD, ALASKA - DUSK

After dinner at Chair 5, Will takes Julia to Beluga Point, overlooking Turnagain Arm, where they both try to make sense of Joe's shocking arrest. With the evening chill coming on, he places his fire chief jacket around her shoulders as she slowly leans her head against his thickly-set silhouette. All this, while the bore tide swirls about the jagged rocks below.

I/E. GIRDWOOD AND VICINITY, ALASKA - DAY

Photos of Julia and Will, taken in breathtaking Southeastern Alaska, move across the screen during summer, winter, spring, and fall. One picture in particular has Chief Greer down on one knee while on the observation deck outside Seven Glaciers Restaurant after yet another thrilling tram ride up the face of Mount Alyeska.

INT. CHAPEL OF OUR LADY OF THE SNOWS, GIRDWOOD, ALASKA - MORNING

After a yearlong engagement, Will Greer and Julia Arden Buranich are married during a private ceremony at the Chapel of Our Lady of the Snows in Girdwood. The bride's wedding ring is adorned with Opals from the Nelchina Mines of Alaska. As for the groom, a simple gold band will do. After a two-week honeymoon in Guadalajara, the couple returns to the chapel, where a miniature guardian angel, purchased in Mexico, is placed on the broad wooden trim running beneath an upper window. This golden-winged beauty watches over Turnagain Arm to this very day.

EPILOGUE

Ten years later, in the comfort of her study, Julia Greer posts a heart-warming memory on the website *Ancestry*, marking the 35th anniversary of Abby's death.

JULIA

(voiceover)

It is mind blowing to think it has been 36 years since we met in an extremely hot laundry room in college. As teammate and soulmate, you were my first and last Best Friend! Still miss you every day - JABG.

Joseph Michael Coulter was sentenced to 20 years and is currently serving time at the Goose Creek Correctional Center in Wasilla, Alaska.

David Leonard Kimball was sentenced to 96 months and was remanded to the Federal Correctional Institution in Sheridan, Oregon. He was released in 2018 and completed his term of supervised release in 2023.

Eleana Balluta gave birth to a healthy baby boy in 2011 and currently resides with her husband in the tribal Village of Idlughet.

As for Gracie, she left Eagle River at the tender age of 18 to attend the University of Alaska at Fairbanks, where she majored in English. Four years later, this cherished daughter, like her mother, graduated with full honors.

THE END