

THE TRAIL HOME

Written by

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INT. CAFE - DAY

In a small cafe, an elderly lady, MARGE, sits in a rocking chair, behind a counter. A menu hangs on the wall behind her proclaiming "Eat at Flo's".

IRENEA, a Yup'ik woman in her 30's, cleans tables after the lunch rush. Picking up money and a ticket at a table piled with dirty plates, she walks to the register to speak to Marge. Resignation and despair flash across her face yet she still manages to compose herself before reaching Marge.

IRENEA

Another one stiffed me again,
Marge. What are they thinking? That
I don't need the money?

A chair scrapes in the back of the cafe. Irene goes back to the floor passing the customers on her way to their recently vacated table.

IRENEA (CONT'D)

Have a good day!

CUSTOMER I

Thank you.

CUSTOMER II

You, too!

Arriving at the table Irene counts the money and rushes out the cafe door after the customers. She yells down the street.

IRENEA (CONT'D)

Sir! Sir! You're 10 dollars short,
sir!

Irene comes back in dejected.

MARGE

It'll have to come out of your
paycheck.

IRENEA

That's 50 bucks this week, Marge! I
can't keep working here if I have
to keep paying you at the end of
the week...

MARGE

Fine.

IRENEA

Wha...?

Marge pulls out a piece of paper, writes on it and hands it to Irene

MARGE
Here's your check.

IRENEA
But... But...

MARGE
I'm sorry Irene. I 'ave to cut
back.
(Beat)

INT. BACK ROOM STORAGE AT THE CAFE - DAY

Irenea, hanging up her apron, gathers her things, quietly sobbing. She bolsters herself and wipes her tears before leaving out the door.

IRENEA
Aanaka, you taught me: it's just
beaded water on a ducks bill,
but...but this? This is insane.
Kass'at are *all* insane!

EXT/INT. ON THE BUS - DAY

Standing tired and dejected at the bus stop, the weight of the world rests on Irene's shoulders as she waits. It arrives shortly. She puts the money in the receptacle and the bus driver, FRANK, a chunky white man in his 40's, sighs loudly. Looking through his rearview mirror he watches as Irene sits in the middle of an almost empty bus. Frank clears his throat and raises an eyebrow.

Frank only puts the bus in gear when she finally moves farther back.

At the next stop passengers file on. Most of them sit in the front. None are handicap or elderly.

PASSENGER 1
Good afternoon, Frank. How was your
day?

FRANK
Good, good. Keeping the bus...
clean... and on time.

The passenger looks for a reason the bus would not be on time.

PASSENGER 1

Oh? Something happen again?
Inebriated p-

FRANK

No. Nothing like that!
(Frank chuckles)
Just keeping the bus clean. Keeping
it *real* clean.

They both laugh at the joke, though the passenger seems more uncomfortable, as Frank pointedly makes eye contact with Irene through the rearview mirror.

Irenea lets out a heavy sigh and leans her head against the window.

IRENEA

Insane.

INT. MS. MATTHEWS' CAR - DAY

MS YVETTE MATTHEWS, a mid-thirties tall blonde Caucasian woman, driving an immaculate high end car, cruises the streets of the town, looking as if she has a permanent bad taste in her mouth. Prim and very proper, strict and austere and she still manages to look like she's hunting.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Children of mixed age and ethnicity, play on the street and yards lining the street. Upon crossing railroad tracks to the dilapidated part of town, she watches the Native children playing in their yards and close to their housing doors.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Parking her car, Ms. Matthews starts down the sidewalk. Almost marching.

An older child spots her and nudges one of their buddies and points toward her. They all turn and run toward home.

WOMAN 1

Ben! Susie! Bethany! Time to come
in! She's here! Come on!

CHILD 1

She's here!

CHILD 2
Get inside!

CHILD 3
Mama!

WOMAN 2
Quick get inside! Umpi! Umpi! Now!
She's here!

EXT. JOCUM'S DOOR - DAY

Approaching the low-income housing units with a firm sense of rightness and not a little bit of glee, Ms. Matthews marches down the sidewalk. She sees JOCUM, a young Native boy child. He turns to run into an entryway a few doors down from Irene's door.

MS. MATTHEWS
Jocum! Is that you, sweety?

Running after Jocum, she grabs him through the doorway and keeps struggling with him and MS. TERRY, his mother of Native descent, in a tug of war. The interior of the house is run down and dingy looking but immaculately clean.

MS. MATTHEWS (CONT'D)
I also heard you were not at school, Jocum. I *told* your mama.

JOCUM
I was at school. They sent us home early.

MISS. TERRY
No! He's my baby!

MS. MATTHEWS
We spoke about this, Miss Terry. If you wanted your child to live with you then you must keep his hands and face clean and send him to school clean.

MISS. TERRY
...but he's just coming home. He's playing out like any norma-

JOCUM
Mama, I don't want to go...

MS. MATTHEWS
You want to be safe and eat sweets... Your Mama does not feed you on time.

JOCUM
 (all beaming and proud)
 Every night at 6 o'clock!

Ms. Matthews is dismissive.

MS. MATTHEWS
 That's late for a boy your age.

MISS. TERRY
 But I feed him four times a day...

MS. MATTHEWS
 If I make an exception for you then
 I'll have make an exception for
 everyone.
 (pause, firmly)
 He comes with me.

Ms. Matthews gave a large jerk and pulls the child out through the door way just as she sees Ireneas's Yup'ik kids.

Marie ALICE WASSALIE - A 17 yo. Ireneas's cousin's daughter. She is quiet, watchful, thoughtful.

STEVEN NICKOLAI - a 14 yo the oldest of the boys. Ireneas's nephew who always has a smile.

WASSALIE GEORGE - Ireneas's 12 yo son, lean and lanky - full of energy and mischievousness.

BAILEY GEORGE - Ireneas's 11 yo daughter, happy but always carrying her stuffed chicken.

ANASTASIA ALOYSIUS - Ireneas's 11 yo niece, seemingly mute, shy, quiet. Stuck to Bailey like glue.

Ireneas's children laugh and play, except Anastasia who is quite subdued in public. Having a good time as they arrive home from school, oblivious to the sudden emptying of the street or of Ms. Matthews. A door slams shut. Anastasia jumps.

MS. MATTHEWS (CONT'D)
 (with contempt)
 'Nother Native family. I better make a note to see them. Maybe we can save those children before they become... too contaminated - like I'm trying to save you.

Ms. Matthews gives Jocum another shake for good measure as she moves toward The George's door.

INT. CITY HOME - DAY

Smiling, Marie Alice hangs up their discarded and dropped coats while the others make themselves comfortable on the living room floor, sitting in a circle, Steven Nickolai at it's helm.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

Where did we leave off yesterday?

BAILEY

The boy was caught by the whale!

Steven Nickolai, ever the storyteller, sits Eskimo style and tells the story with his hands....

STEVEN NICKOLAI

The boy, he knew he had to act quickly. His knife. He touched the handle in the sheath, making sure it was there still.

EXT. JOCUM'S DOOR TO IRENEA'S DOOR - DAY

Stepping to Irene's door, Jocum in tow, Ms. Matthews makes a note on her clipboard. Jocum's Mother, Miss Terry, is stoically distraught, pain momentarily flashing across her face.

Irene's door has an eviction notice tacked to it. Ms. Matthews adds her business card to the crack of the door. Ms. Matthews and Jocum walk down the sidewalk as she asks him:

MS. MATTHEWS

Jocum, does your mother drink?

INT. CITY HOME - DAY

STEVEN NICKOLAI

He listened. Hoping the whale would not need another meal.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Hesitant...

JOCUM

Yes-

MS. MATTHEWS

How do you get to school?

INT. CITY HOME - DAY

STEVEN NICKOLAI
As he listened to the breathing
through the membrane at the top of
the mouth, the boy thought
frantically -

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

JOCUM
I walk-

MS. MATTHEWS
Where do you sleep?

INT. CITY HOME - DAY

STEVEN NICKOLAI
The whale must be rushing out to
sea getting farther and farther
from land.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

JOCUM
At home-

MS. MATTHEWS
Does your mother drink?

JOCUM
-in my bed.

INT. CITY HOME - DAY

STEVEN NICKOLAI
Would he make it out? Would he be
too far from land? Would the whale
swallow him again? Would he see his
family ever?

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Jocum is incredulous that anyone could do without liquid.

JOCUM
Um, yeah. When she's thirsty.
Everybo-

MS. MATTHEWS

No matter - she drinks in front of you.

They cross the street to walk to Ms. Matthews car. Ms. Matthews buckles Jocum in. As Ms. Matthews buckles herself in she watches the George's front door. This situation is getting on her last nerve.

INT. CITY HOME - DAY

WASSALIE

Well! What happens next?

STEVEN NICKOLAI

He tied the teeth closed. The whale wouldn't drown him, now. He made a small hole in the top of the mouth to where the breathing was loudest. Just a small hole big enough for his hand to fit through.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Irenea steps off the bus, tired, glad to be home. Frank eyes her in his rearview passenger mirror. He slams the door shut almost before she is off and drives off before she really has a chance to be on the sidewalk. The closer she gets to home the more resolved and happy she gets. She quickens her pace, unknowingly passing Ms Matthews in her car parked on the opposite side of the street.

INT. CITY HOME - DAY

STEVEN NICKOLAI

He started a tinder fire, blew on it just enough so it would smolder and stuffed it in the hole.

EXT. IRENEA'S APARTMENT DOOR - DAY

Walking to her front door, Irenea pulls off the piece of paper off.

IRENEA

Eviction? Ellma Egalekun Anernema (Perfect Window to My Soul or "My Soul's Perfect Window"), what are we doing here?

Irenea takes the Department of Children and Youth Services business card out of the door, looks at it in confusion and subsequently dismisses it. Ms. Matthews, in her car, becomes incensed at Irenea when she doesn't display the proper fear at seeing the card.

INT. CITY HOME - DAY

STEVEN NICKOLAI

As the whale surfaced he quickly cut the hole larger - big enough for him to fit in and crawled up into the space.

Steven Nickolai jumps up actually riding the whale in his mind, completely immersed in the moment.

STEVEN NICKOLAI (CONT'D)

...and when the whale surfaced, fwahoo! He blew the boy right out the blow hole!

Irenea enters the residence and gives smile of relief at the deluge of sound.

BAILEY
Mama! Mama!

STEVEN NICKOLAI
Auntie!

WASSALIE
Mama's home!

EXT. MS. MATTHEWS CAR - DAY

MS. MATTHEWS
Stay!

Ms. Matthews gives Jocum a withering look that strikes fear in his heart. He gasps and shrinks back. Assured he won't move she exits the car.

MS. MATTHEWS (CONT'D)
(as an afterthought)
I'll be back.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

IRENEA
Hello, Sweeties. Goodness, I've missed you so. Work's no fun without you.

BAILEY

Wassalie fell and hurt himself but it's only a small cut. I put honey on it myself.

Irenea bends down to inspect Bailey's job on her brother.

IRENEA

Wow, you did a good job, Bailey!

MARIE ALICE

I made saddle packs for the dogs in Home Ec. All green and brown - I used the broken backpack from camping last year. That way we can still bring Uncle Charlie's dogs to Neqlilleq (summer fishcamp).

Anastasia climbs into Irenea lap/arms even though she doesn't quite fit anymore. Irenea indulges her willingly.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

I got an A in astronomy. Me and Anastasia were talking. We wish we could learn more practical things - like how to use the stars to get home. Isn't that right Anastasia?

Anastasia nods vigorously with a great big smile on her face.

IRENEA

Did she really say that or did you, Steven Nickolai?

STEVEN NICKOLAI

Well, I did...but I know that's what she would have said.

IRENEA

Probably...
(to Marie Alice)
get them dressed for this afternoon...

Standing up, Irenea gently displaces Anastasia.

MARIE ALICE

Yes, Ma'am. We set up the living room 'n' kitchen for... afterwards.

Moving through the livingroom toward the cramped kitchen, Irenea hear's a knock at the front door.

MS. MATTHEWS

(O.S.)

Hello? Hello?

The children look at the door, frozen. Wryly, Irene makes her way back to the door, opening it. The children stand up quiet and watchful.

IRENEA

Yes?

Ms. Matthews shoulders her way in, pushing Irene aside, making notes on her clipboard. They move out of her way as she bustles around the apartment, picking up and putting down random objects as she "inspects."

MS. MATTHEWS

I am here from social services to make sure you are getting the services you need. Do you have a job?

IRENEA

Ye...no.

MS. MATTHEWS

Here, you'll need to fill this out... and this. Mail it to this address. Where is their father? Do you have another source of income or are you the sole provider?

IRENEA

I am the sole provider... Now, but we don't need much. We make what we need.

MS. MATTHEWS

Where'd they go to school?
Who 'r' their teachers?

IRENEA

They go to... what--?

MS. MATTHEWS

Do you use corporal
punishment?

IRENEA

What does that have to do
with--?

MS. MATTHEWS

How much money do you have in
the bank? Do you have all
their birth certificates?

IRENEA

Why do you need to--?

Irenea ushers Ms. Matthews out the door.

IRENEA
(CONT'D)

(firmly)

We have an appointment to go to right now. I'll come down to the office - if I need your help. Thank you for stopping by and I'll be sure and call the office when I need to.

MS. MATTHEWS

You call us within the week.

IRENEA

If I need your help, I will certainly give you a call.

MS. MATTHEWS

You *will* call.... Or I'll be forced to start an investigation.

Closing the door, Ireneas leans on it in relief and respite. There is a moment of ominous silence.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

Gahll-lee!

WASSALIE

Gahll-lee!

MARIE ALICE

Really?

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

ERIC RANDALL, a clean shaven tall man in Trooper dress blues, fiddles with a homemade button the size of a sliver dollar with a single hole. On one side, the story knife Yup'ik symbol for a man and the letter 'E' are arranged to look like the name MOE. The Yup'ik circle and dot motif with four cuts equidistant on the circle's edge completes the carving. On the opposite side an Eskimo yelling with the hole as their mouth.

Ireneas, the children and mourners, dressed in regalia, look somberly at the coffin as it is lowered into the ground. An Alaska Native dressed in regalia is concluding the graveside service.

CASUAL NATIVE PRIEST

Lord, as we gather to commit Albert John George to the ground, we ask that you, Lord, comfort those who are bereaved.

(MORE)

CASUAL NATIVE PRIEST

Father, as we commit his body to the earth, please, Lord, sustain, and comfort Albert's friends and family. May the Lord bless you and keep you; May He make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; May the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. And let us say: Amen

Eric grabs a handful of dirt and drops both the button and the dirt into the grave.

Bailey buries her head in Irene's skirt, sobbing.

Eric approaches Irene somberly as Wassalie, Steven Nickolai and other mourners man shovels to fill in the grave.

ERIC

He was a good man.

IRENEA

Thank you. You coming?

ERIC

Yup.

IRENEA

Bring your girlfriend.

ERIC

I don't... Yes, ma'am.

Irene gives a tight smile. Eric moves off as a little old Native grandma takes his place.

GRANDMA GEORGE

My Albert, he was a good boy.

IRENEA

Yes, Ma'am.

GRANDMA GEORGE

Never thought he'd make it afore me.

IRENEA

No, Ma'am.

Grandma George moves off as another takes her place. Later, Irene takes a turn at the shovels.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

A wake in full swing. Laughter and the clank of glassware. 2 liter soda pop bottles grace the tables with chips, casserole dishes and bowls filled with Native food like frozen whale cubes, dried fish, blueberries, savory and sweet akutaq (Eskimo Ice creams), fry bread, etc.

Empty plates, cups and party litter seem to be stuck in every nook and cranny of the living room.

UNCLE CHARLIE, an older Alaska Native man, talks Irene in the kitchen. She stands where she can still see the children.

UNCLE CHARLIE

Coming out to Neqlilleq this summer?

IRENEA

If we can get there.

UNCLE CHARLIE

You know, our doors are always open for mikelngut-llu.

IRENEA

All of them?

UNCLE CHARLIE

Even Marie Alice. Just try not to pick any more up on the way out.

IRENEA

What about Agnes? How does she feel about adding another five to your cabin?

UNCLE CHARLIE

Six.

IRENEA

Six.

UNCLE CHARLIE

But I won't tell her, if you won't!

IRENEA

Uncle Charlie!

UNCLE CHARLIE

She won't mind. There's just the floor so you might want to bring sleeping bags or something.

IRENEA
No- You don't-

UNCLE CHARLIE
But we *do* have lots of Moose
meat and salmon - that and a
roof over your head beats...
Well, it beats anything you
could have in this town.

IRENEA
I'll think about it.

In the living room, the crowd bursts out laughing and they
both move to the livingroom to listen.

A more relaxed Eric, though still in his dress blues,
continues speaking while he fiddles with another wooden
button.

ERIC
So there he is holding the wrong
end of the rifle and this bear is
charging and the moose is just
downed! Good old Albert thinks
quick! He uses the gun to *pole*
vault over the moose and takes the
rifle and...WHAM! Smack that bear
right across the jaw with the rifle
butt! Knocks the bear clean out!

Laughter again. The whole crowd can't stop laughing and
giggling at the image.

The door bell rings. Reluctantly Ireneia walks toward it.
Still smiling and laughing, she pauses at the door to listen
to Eric.

ERIC (CONT'D)
He just nonchalantly turned toward
me and says, "Nobody eats ma moose
'lessen I invite them to it. He *is*
welcome to my dinner table,
though."

Two guys, one Native and one Caucasian, buzzed, carrying a
six pack each. A flash of displeasure across her face, Ireneia
looks warily and wearily at them.

MOURNER 1
Ireneia!! We came aasons we heard.

MOURNER 2
Yep! Soooons we heard. We brought
something to help the party along.

IRENEA

Sorry guys. You know how he was.

MOURNER 2

Aah, come on! He's dead he won't mind if we drink to him!

IRENEA

We are. With soda pop.

Irenea starts to close the door. Mourner 1 slams his hand on the door as they both loom into the doorway.

MOURNER 1

Come on, Irenea, You know you want me... here. Albert won't... mind...

Eric comes to the door. Irenea, speechless, horrified and disgusted chokes back her words.

ERIC

Is there a problem, guys?

IRENEA

(tightly)

They were just leaving.

MOURNER 1

Nah, Officer. Nothin' doin'.

MOURNER 2

We just want to be part of the paartee!

ERIC

Albert wanted a wake where everyone could remember him. Come back when you're are sober. Right guys?

MOURNER 1

Hey, come on, we's just playin'. Nobody know how to have fun 'round here no more.

MOURNER 2

Yeah, this party sucks anyways.

Leaving, they stumbling over themselves.

MOURNER 1

Hey, I know a girl...

Closing the door, Irenea and Eric join the others in the middle of a new story about Albert.

WAKE ATTENDEE 1

And, and, and when he tipped the canoe!

WAKE ATTENDEE 2

Ahh, he was an expert qayaker roller!

WAKE ATTENDEE 1

'Member that time he try a roll a canoe and dump everythin' in the lake!!

WAKE ATTENDEE 2

All your huntin'. Sploosh! In the lake.

Laughter erupts again. A moment of reflective silence ensues.

ERIC

Well, I oughta get back to the house. Goin' out to the Kuskokwim again. Think I'll be out in the pass for a while b'fore I come in the Valley.

Irenea gets up to walk Eric out.

IRENEA

Thank you for comin'. I 'preciate it. Sorry that Lilly couldn't make it.

ERIC

She's not--
(pause)
Too many campin' trips fer her. She said it wa'nt her life.

IRENEA

Oh, Eric. I'm sorry. You'll find The One, someday... and she'll love campin' and huntin'.

ERIC

Yep. Someday.
(pause - he pulls the button out from his pocket)
Here.

He hands her the button of the same handmade carving he put in Albert's grave.

ERIC (CONT'D)

I put one in Albert's grave. He'll
be able to find you easier.

Irenea, unaware that tears silently trail down her cheeks,
answers in a whisper as the other attendees prepare to leave.

IRENEA

Quyana, Eric. So thoughtful.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Marie Alice picks the dirty dishes and trash up in the living
room. Speaking from the kitchen, Irenea watches her sadly.

IRENEA

We'll have to go grocery shoppin'
again real soon. At least we got
food for a few days.

MARIE ALICE

I already have a list started.

Bailey enters.

MARIE ALICE (CONT'D)

I just want to thank you again for
taking me in, even though I know
you already have Uncle Wassalie's
boy and the Aloysius' girl.

BAILEY

You're family. We do for family.
I'n't that right, Mama?

IRENEA

Proper English and yes, it is, my
sweet Bailey. Where's your brother?

BAILEY

Wassalie is with Steven Nickolai
tryin' to teach Anastasia to kick
higher.

IRENEA

Go play with them, please.
(beat)
Marie Alice?

MARIE ALICE

Yes, Ma'am?

IRENEA
They have names.

MARIE ALICE
Yes, Ma'am.

Irenea raises her eyebrows to her.

MARIE ALICE (CONT'D)
(sullenly)
Anastasia and Steven Nickolai.

She sits down to do bills as Marie Alice exits to the living room where the children have started another story.

STEVEN NICKOLAI
It was a dark and stormy night...

MARIE ALICE
No, not that one! We already heard that one and who ever heard of starting a story off with "it was a dark and stormy night"? Try "When the snows covered the earth and lean times were on us..."

STEVEN NICKOLAI
Okay, you tell it!

WASSALIE
Anastasia you do it! You act it!

MARIE ALICE
It is said that when the snows covered the earth and lean times were on us, a lone woman yearned for her son...

INT. IRENEA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A few nights later. Sitting at her bedroom dresser, Irenea kicks off her shoes, while looking at a picture of her late husband. She strokes his picture wistfully. There is also a graveside picture of all the people that helped put him in the ground in the winter. A rifle leans against the dresser.

IRENEA
Well, Ellma Egalekun Anernemta,
where do we go from here?

She fiddles with her wedding ring she has on her finger.

IRENEA (CONT'D)

Steven cannot go back to my
brother's house - they don't have
enough as it is. ...and Anastasia -
I don't think I could put her
through another move, another
family? And what if they don't
leave her be in her new family?
...or protect her?

She strokes his picture and sighs wistfully.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

A few days later, a knock at the door. No evidence of the
wake is visible except for a Ziploc bag of dry fish. Irene, *weary*,
opens the door to Ms. Matthews.

MS. MATTHEWS

I didn't hear from you.

IRENEA

It's only been a few days.

MS. MATTHEWS

It been over a week! You *will* be
coming into the office.

IRENEA

What? What do you mean?

MS. MATTHEWS

What time will you be coming into
the office tomorrow to sign up for
services?

IRENEA

What?

Ms. Matthews speaks slowly as if Irene has a low I. Q.

MS. MATTHEWS

What time will you be coming into
the office tomorrow? I have an
opening at 10 am.

IRENEA

Excuse me?

MS. MATTHEWS

10 am. or 2? At my office. 1102
North 3rd, suite 457.

With no input, Ms. Matthews decides the time and writes on the back of a business card

MS. MATTHEWS (CONT'D)

Here.

She hands Irene a the card. Ms. Matthews looks pointedly at her.

MS. MATTHEWS (CONT'D)

You will be there or I'll be *here!*
With the Troopers. Or the local PD.

INT. BOY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

That night, Wassalie and Steven are cracking jokes in their beds and it looks like they are making a lot of noise. Irene enters the room. Irene smiles at them, being indulgent, sharing in the joke.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

A mouse-

WASSALIE

-ran up the clock, though I am not sure why they'd want to do that. There's nothing up there to eat or even hide behind!

STEVEN NICKOLAI

There are no clocks here - A mouse looked for grain in the late fall.

WASSALIE

Mama. Can I have dry fish? There is some in the kitchen.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

Are you listening!? I not talkin' for my breath.

IRENEA

No, sweetie. We have to save it for lunches tomorrow.

Irene gives Steven Nickolai a look that says it all: Don't interrupt me/you'd better not be talking to me in that tone of voice. Chagrined Steven Nickolai continues.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

It looked high and low but all the mouse brothers had eaten all the caches. Finally, it found a small cache. Just enough for the mouse family back at the den. It started stuffing it's mouth full of seeds when-

Wassalie speaks as quickly and as animated as he can, taking over the story.

WASSALIE

A little person swooped down and caught the mouse by the ear and whispered of all the big people's special shamans - who don't quite know that they are special yet - He said to draw them toward the special mouse caches so they can plunge their hands in the mass of maggots who collect around pockets of energies in the earth and become real shamans!

STEVEN NICKOLAI

Wassalie!

WASSALIE

What? You too slow! Besides I like my ending better!

STEVEN NICKOLAI

You don't even know what I was gonna say! Or how I was gonna end it!

IRENEA

That's quite enough. Wassalie - you can stop now. It's time for bed. Lights out. Eyes closed, mouths shut. Voice off. Body off.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

Ahhh

WASSALIE

Mama! Just a-

IRENEA (CONT'D)

Not now...

WASSALIE

Little while longer-

STEVEN NICKOLAI

Auntie-

IRENEA (CONT'D)

No. Bedtime. Eyes close't mouths shut. Voice off. Body off. We have a big day tomorrow.

Leaving Irene, turns off the light.

INT. MS. MATTHEW'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Ms. Matthews sits staring off into space. Sad and a little lost and fear cross her face.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Irene dials Uncle Charlie again.

UNCLE CHARLIE

Hello?

IRENEA

Hey, Uncle Charlie! Which yer doin'?

UNCLE CHARLIE

Hey! Doin' guut!

IRENEA

Have you told Agnes yet?

UNCLE CHARLIE

No. Not yet.

IRENEA

Then... we'll use other avenues.
(beat)

UNCLE CHARLIE

You could give them back...

IRENEA

No, They're all my children. I'm responsible. I'll think of something. Piurra.

UNCLE CHARLIE

Piurra.

They hang up.

EXT. IRENEA'S NEIGHBORHOOD SIDEWALK - DAY

Tiredly, Ireneia walks down the sidewalk after a day of paperwork as evidenced by the bundle of papers she carries. She has been crying and is barely holding it together when, suddenly, Ms. Matthews drives by, does an illegal U-turn and pulls along side Ireneia.

MS. MATTHEWS

You didn't come in today.

Under her breath she mumbles

IRENEA

Not now. Gah-lly.

Ms. Matthews raises her voice a little.

MS. MATTHEWS

You didn't come in today.

IRENEA

No. I didn't. I have had some business to take care of.

MS. MATTHEWS

Really like what?

IRENEA

Private business.

MS. MATTHEWS

And?

IRENEA

And? What do you mean "And?" What is your deal? Would you leave us alone!?! We are not hurting anyone!

MS. MATTHEWS

You need to come to my office. You Need. To listen.

IRENEA

What do you mean "listen"?

MS. MATTHEWS

(brightly)

Children need safe, stable homes with rules that teach them about the real world. Not-

Ms. Matthews gives a slight sneer. It looks like she stepped in something distasteful.

INT. IRENEA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sitting at her desk again, Irene and Uncle Charlie speak on the phone in broken English and Yup'ik.

IRENEA

She's been hounding me to come in to sign papers-ag. Today she threatened to take away the mikelngut.... Una-huh.... I know.... Good night.

INT. IRENEA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

That same night, Irene paces as she unsuccessfully gets ready for bed. Muttering under her breath.

IRENEA

Gah! Why would she be so...
difficult? Doesn't she have any way
to pass time? No wonder she wants
the kids! She doan have nothin'
better to do. She's worse than the
little people. Perhaps she is one
of those tomuaq (evil spirit). Or
she has tonrat (evil spirit man),
that bugs her. How can kass'at
be... because kass'at are crazy....

A very sleepy Bailey appears in the doorway.

BAILEY

Mama. Who're you talkin' to?

Irenea looks at the clock which reads 11:40.

IRENEA

What're ya doing up?

BAILEY

I have to go potty.

IRENEA

And?

BAILEY

You were talking. I thought Aataka
was here.

IRENEA

No, baby. Go to the bathroom.

BAILEY

Mama?

IRENEA

Go to the bathroom.

Bailey turns to go and trips over a toy. She mutters:

BAILEY

Lot to learn just looking at your
feet.

(in a louder sing song
voice)

'venture, 'venture, adventure goin'
to da potty, potty pot pot.

INT. MS. MATTHEWS BATHROOM - NIGHT

Ms. Matthews, in her bathrobe brushing her teeth, pauses for a moment, throws her toothbrush down and rinses her mouth. Hurriedly, she dresses as she calls Trooper Dalton.

MS. MATTHEWS

Trooper Dalton, please. Thank you.
Hello, Jacob....

INT. IRENEA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Irenea freezes as an epiphany flashes across her face.

IRENEA

I'll take 'em out. I'll take 'em out. No one will know. Tundra babies. Not babies but "of the tundra." Bailey! When you get done, come here, sweetie.

Irenea gets dressed again and starts pulling things out of the closet. A much more awake and cognizant Bailey comes back to the door.

BAILEY

Yes. Mama? What're you-

IRENEA

Go wake your brother and cousins.

Irenea pulls the rifle our of the closet.

IRENEA (CONT'D)

Still here?

BAILEY

No, Ma'am-

Soon the rest show up at her door looking bleary eyed and a little apprehensive. They watch her for a moment. Has she lost her mind? Irenea gives her instructions while she searches for a backpack in the dark of the closet.

IRENEA

Go get dressed in your sturdiest clothes. Neqlilleq clothes. Pack. Essentials. In a back pack. That Social worker lady is gonna take... unless I.... Got it! We are going on an adventure. A field trip. A camping field trip. Go! Go! Go!

Irenea quickly pens a letter.

INT. IRENEA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Irenea has moved to the bed and purposefully packs. Sounds of hustle and bustle, of packing in a hurry, in the background. The rifle lays on her bed. Arrayed on the bed are various articles that she needs to pack in addition to Bailey's stuffed animal Chickie: Ammunition for the rifle, a roll of string, a carved story knife.... She hollers out of the room to the children.

IRENEA

Make sure you pack well. We are not coming back for anything. Three pairs of clothing including underwear. Steven, do you have enough socks?

STEVEN NICKOLAI (O.C.)

Yes, ma'am

IRENEA

Bring yer favorite doll or book or something. Bailey, are ya gonna take Chickie? Anastasia, you foun' a way to take your bunny blanket?

BAILEY (O.C.)

Nah, I'm a big girl...I don't need it.

IRENEA

Alright.

Irenea starts packing and after a moment puts Chickie in her bag. She pauses as she packs...

IRENEA (CONT'D)

Make sure you complete your chores before we go!

WASSALIE (O.C.)

Ah, man how come? We're not comin' back! Why do we need to do chores!
(groans)

IRENEA

Because we don't want the land lord to think we are dirty people. He'll 'ave t' clean up after us as if we're children.

BAILEY (O.C.)

When Papa was here we'd everything
we needed... wish Papa'd come
back...

STEVEN NICKOLAI

He's in the ground! You don't come
back from that!

MARIE ALICE

Steven!

IRENEA

Steven! Come here!

Steven appears in the hallway outside her bedroom door.

IRENEA (CONT'D)

Don't say that to her. She's
already sad.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

Yes, ma'am. I'm sorry.

IRENEA

Here. You carry the drum skin,
maybe we can make a drum again out
there.

(sternly)

You'll be in charge of makin' that
happen.

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Later that night Irenea speaks on the phone with Uncle
Charlie.

IRENEA

Yeah, we are leavin' in a few
minutes.

UNCLE CHARLIE

Tonight?

IRENEA

Asoons we get the bathroom clean.

UNCLE CHARLIE

Flying out? I'll Pick you up a-

IRENEA

Nah. Can't afford it. I'm... takin' us out to the bush. North then west.

UNCLE CHARLIE

There's a cabin. More west of you. Pac'am. Given to me by his family. If it-

IRENEA

I don't know. Directly west? Pac'ag enamek?? Is it even standing?

UNCLE CHARLIE

I don't know. Has a grave with the name of Bo. Pac'am qimugta. Cabin has Pac'ag personal sign. Tuntumek-llu qimugtamek running together.

IRENEA

I'll bring the tent then until we can be sure- if we fin' it.

UNCLE CHARLIE

I am sure you'll do fine. Do you have Albert's rifle?

IRENEA

Of course I have the rifle! We'll be huntin' asoons possible.

INT. TROOPER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Ms. Matthews and TROOPER Dalton, a portly Caucasian Trooper, discuss the case in his office.

MS. MATTHEWS

I know what you're thinking, Jacob Dalton. I just want you there to make sure things go alright.

TROOPER DALTON

Don't you need the court order?

MS. MATTHEWS

No. We don't need it. It's all above board.

TROOPER DALTON

ICWA? Doesn't that apply?

MS. MATTHEWS

Indian Child Welfare Act? No.
Doesn't. No Indian Land in Alaska,
Well, Annette Island, maybe but
that doesn't apply. Besides most
all of their relatives live on the
river and that's just too far away

(Pause)

"Travel prohibits communication."
What they don't know won't kill
them and I'm not about to tell
them.

TROOPER DALTON

Yeah, but...

MS. MATTHEWS

All I need is to think something is
wrong. I don't even need a report.
I've done this a thousand times.

(Beat)

Well, anyway... They'll never know
what happened until it is too
late.... You'll be there, right?
You are my "go to" guy with irate
parents.

TROOPER DALTON

That's why I have a gun...

(chuckles at his own
cleverness)

"no problems, no fear, when I got
my gun and my beer."

MS. MATTHEWS

I heard you had some trouble last
month.

Matter of factly:

TROOPER DALTON

Nah.... Not much. These natives
don't feel pain so we just have to
be extra all over them. They
eventually understand or they get
knocked out. Psh.

Ms. Matthews picks up an ornate ivory and metal Ulu to look
at the sculpture and scenes depicted on it. She puts it down
and picks up an equally ornate story knife.

MS. MATTHEWS

She has two children: Bailey and Wassalie, 11 and 12, from her recently late husband. She takes care of three others. Marie Alice, 17, her mother is a strung out alcoholic... no father. Mother lives in Western Alaska. Between several villages.

TROOPER DALTON

Criminal record?

Ms Matthews shakes her head "no."

MS. MATTHEWS

We won't need her. She is past saving anyway. She can get a job anywhere.

TROOPER DALTON

You said there were three?

MS. MATTHEWS

Steven Nickolai, 14. A nephew. Used to live in a small village. Kwin no huck or Igiggy it. Whatever. Trouble maker. Criminal delinquent, possible alcoholic. He can go to juvenile hall.

Ms. Matthews digs in her purse for the three children's school pictures. She shows them to Trooper Dalton pointing at Anastasia.

MS. MATTHEWS (CONT'D)

And Anastasia, 14 approximately. She had some trouble with a man. Several men in fact. Doesn't speak of it... or anything else for that matter. She's mute.

(beat)

We could send her to the lower 48 to a special school. They'll teach her how to clean houses. No need to contact a family - they will be wanting to be rid of her anyway.

TROOPER DALTON

Hmmph... When do you want to do this?

MS. MATTHEWS

Now?

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

A hand reaches to the dashboard and turns on the lights as the patrol car rounds a corner.

MS. MATTHEWS

What? What's that for?

TROOPER DALTON

Just gonna give them a little scare.

(beat)

Just a little...

They pull up to Irene's apartment.

INT. IRENEA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The reds and blues illuminate the interior of the apartment. Trooper Dalton uses his night stick to tap on the door as Irene and the kids are leaving out the back.

TROOPER DALTON

Mrs. George. Mrs. George. Police.
Open up.

Irene pauses at the back door as she hears her married name. The pain still apparent on her face. Resolute she hurries the children down the back of the housing development and through brush at the end of the alley.

EXT. CITY EDGE - NIGHT

Children and Irene walk down the sidewalk, chatting, out of ear shot, heading out of town. They look like a normal family walking down the block to go camping, except Irene carries the rifle across her back and it's night. She drops an envelope in a Postal mailbox.

EXT. A HILL OVERLOOKING TOWN - NIGHT

Bailey spontaneously stops, turns toward town and sings Yup'ik short song of leaving complete with hand gestures. It is not sorrowful but happy and jokingly.

BAILEY

ung-ai iiyaa iiyaa yungaa,
ung-ai iiyaa iiyaa yungaa
Piuraa, piuraa. quyana-vaa
assilirqullruukut.

(Goodbye. Goodbye.)

(MORE)

BAILEY (CONT'D)
 Thank you for the good
 times we had))

Others join in as they exit.

BAILEY, STEVEN NICKOLAI, IRENEA,
 WASSALIE, MARIE ALICE
 ung-ai iiyaa iiyaa yungaa,
 ung-ai iiyaa iiyaa yungaa

BAILEY
 Atsat Tuntu-llu gayagpagarpenga
 wangnek Yugtua Ellavigni. Piuraa
 wall'u piurnritaa
 (Berries and Caribou, you
 call me to my place in
 the Universe (You call to
 me myself, my real
 person, to my place in my
 Universe. I will see you
 later or not.)

BAILEY, STEVEN NICKOLAI, IRENEA,
 WASSALIE, MARIE ALICE
 ung-ai iiyaa iiyaa yungaa,
 ung-ai iiyaa iiyaa yungaa

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Irenea sings a bluesy walking song. They all look dog tired.
 Coming to a perfect camping site, Irenea puts her rifle down.

IRENEA
 Look water and we can see all
 around us! Wassalie, Steven
 Nickolai get a fire started. Ladies
 lets teach you basket weaving!

INT. MS. MATTHEWS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sitting, staring out the window, Ms. Matthews cries
 wretchedly. A man, her husband, MIKE, enters to stand at the
 door frame, watching her. Ms. Matthews turns to him.

MS. MATTHEWS
 I can't save them all. I just
 can't...

Mike moves to embrace her.

MIKE

I know, Sweetie. Just save the ones
you can.

MS. MATTHEWS

I can try.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

A fire rages. Rocks glow a faint red. A small basket with water sits beside the fire. Irene drops hot rocks into the basket. Laughing when she misses - jumping out of the way to avoid any that roll toward her and the splash of water.

EXT. DIFFERENT CAMPSITE NIGHT

Irene sets up the small tent, humming Bailey's Song of Leaving under her breath.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

They look down the mountain. Rolling green covers the terrain. A dull roar is heard in the distance.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Walking through underbrush with no trail in sight, the branches pick and pull at their clothing. The dull roar is closer.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

They burst out of the underbrush finally, relieved.

IRENEA

See I told it you it was a stream.

WASSALIE

Yeah, but did we have to take the
direct way?

Marie Alice uses the spring water to clean her face.

INT. TO EXT TENT - NIGHT

They huddle in the tent, shivering, as it pours outside. A branch falls and rips the side of the tent. They scramble to get out to safety and look at the damage. Bailey cries.

Steven Nickolai is crestfallen at the site of the destroyed tent.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Irenea hunts a rabbit but there isn't a clear shot.

IRENEA
No luck today, Ellam Yua.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The boys snare a rabbit. Later they cook it on a flat rock beside a river.

STEVEN NICKOLAI
We're gonna need bigger game.

A look of resignation crosses Irenea's face.

IRENEA
Yup.

EXT. GAME TRAIL - DAY

The children keep to a small game trail in the deep bush, walking by themselves, Irenea not in sight. They are tired and bedraggled, ready to call it a day. Their clothing is a little worse for wear, though now Bailey has a fur clutch bag with a very dirty Chickie head peeking out and Anastasia has a skin knapsack.

A shot rings out. They pause, breath held. Another shot rings out and then two in rapid fire. The children tense, frozen.

WASSALIE
(whispers)
It's close. Think it's her?

STEVEN NICKOLAI
I don't know.

INT. VILLAGE POST OFFICE - DAY

Uncle Charlie picks up his mail from a clerk at the rural mail post office.

UNCLE CHARLIE
How is that grandbaby of yours,
Stella?

MAIL CLERK

Good, good.

UNCLE CHARLIE

Got anything for us?

MAIL CLERK

Yes. Got something from the city.

She hands him the letter Irene sent.

EXT. GAME TRAIL - DAY

Steven Nickolai pulls out a knife... Takes a step forward when he hears an angry voice. He hesitates.

EXT. UNCLE CHARLIE'S TRUCK - DAY

Uncle Charlie opens the beat up truck's door. Inside Agnes sits, knitting. Her eyes slightly raise as she sees Uncle Charlie's glee at receiving a letter from Irene.

AGNES

Well. Open it. What does she have to say?

UNCLE CHARLIE

Just a minute!

He hops up into the truck, tears open the envelope and reads the letter:

UNCLE CHARLIE (V.O.)

Dear Uncle Charlie and Aunt Agnes,

IRENEA (V.O.)

Yes, Agnes, I realize you are part of the family, now. I hope this letter finds you well. I have set up my unemployment to go in a joint bank account with you at Local Credit Union. All you have to do is go in and sign. You can use it to put an extra wing on that house of yours! We'll head toward the mountains and possibly try the passes to you in the next year or two. Yep, them's some mountains but, we can do it.... Quyana, Uncle Charlie and Agnes, you have been real Elders to us. Quyana-vaa.

EXT. GAME TRAIL - DAY

Steven Nickolai takes another step and the voice becomes intelligible.

IRENEA
Just lay down and die! No. No. No!
NO!

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Irenea POV: A black bear roars, advancing.

EXT. GAME TRAIL - DAY

The bear roar reverberates through the dense underbrush. The children hesitantly walk down the path toward the sound. Marie Alice takes her scarf off and loads it with small pebbles. Her make shift slingshot ready. A single shot rings out.

IRENEA
It's MINE!!

Another growl, the sounds of a scuffle and tearing underbrush close by.

IRENEA (CONT'D)
I said NO!
(Irenea slips)
Whuup!

The children run in the direction of the scuffle now off path and tearing through the brush. Wassalie has acquired a club.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

They burst into a clearing. Anastasia and Bailey pick up a big rock each. In the clearing a moose is downed and a dark furry mass moves back and forth to one side of the moose carcass. The kids advance on it, ready to kill or save.

The dark mass is large black bear still moving. All raise their weapons when Irenea pushes the head to one side.

IRENEA
What? I told him... er, her she
couldn't have it. I guess she was
good with that but still needed a
snack. When Ellam Yua provides,
they really provide!

STEVEN NICKOLAI

One. Two. Three. Push. Umpi! One.
Two. Three. Umpi!

They roll the bear off of her. Her knife is stuck in the bear's chest. She is covered in blood.

IRENEA

Don't worry it's mostly the bear's
blood. Mostly...

Irenea passes out as they pull her the rest of the way out from under the bear. Wounds wind across her clavicle and down her arm.

MARIE ALICE

Get the water, Anastasia. Bailey
can you get Aunties needles?

She looks at the boys who stand dumbfounded. A fierce look in her eye.

MARIE ALICE (CONT'D)

Get a fire started!

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT (LATER)

Marie Alice sews a fitful Irenea's wounds with a long black hair plucked from her head and a needle. Meat is smoking over the fire. A newly made birch basket rests beside the fire. Anastasia drops red hot rocks into it and the water boils. Bailey tends the fire. Irenea barely lucid, wakes for a moment.

IRENEA

Who is- What? Did you render the
fat... We need oil-

And she passes out. Steven Nickolai field dresses the moose. He has a hide splayed out for a table. The bear is on it's hide laid out next to the moose.

WASSALIE

(worried)
Good thing she's out.

MARIE ALICE

Shhh.

Marie Alice points with her eyebrows to the girls across the fire.

STEVEN NICKOLAI
Wassalie, Give me a hand.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT (LATER)

They place the meat up in a tree. Tiredly, Wassalie and Steven Nickolai continue preparing the moose. Marie Alice, almost in tears, continues sewing a fitful Ireneia.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT (LATER)

Steven Nickolai and Wassalie come from the woods, wet and cleaner, and approach the girls and Ireneia, who is still out but with a poultice on her arm.

STEVEN NICKOLAI
How is she?

BAILEY
She was awake earlier but she's sleeping now.

Marie Alice sings low and slow in Yup'ik.

MARIE ALICE
Qavarten. Mam'ten Aanaka, Ellam
Yua caqullrugaatgen tuknimek
tallig.
Pindirten. Tan'gerlimek tuyuutaaten
pinimek. Pindirten. Tuntuvagmek
Tuyuutaaten pinimek.
Qavarten. Mam'ten. Qavarten.
Mam'ten Aanaka. Qavarten.
Mam'ten, Aanaka. Taiqaa
tum'artegan atukun
(Rest, heal, Mother, Ellam
Yua holds you now. You
are strong. Bear gave you
her strength. You are
strong. Moose gave you
her strength. Rest Heal.
Rest. Heal. Follow the
single trail to us.)

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

The three girls sit around the fire pit. Bailey feeds the fire while Anastasia chops meat to be put in a birch basket. Marie Alice finds rocks to bake on the fire.

Wassalie, Steven Nickolai are cutting the moose into dryable strips. The bear skin is scraped and staked out. The meat is being smoked by the fire. Irene is trying to break the skull with a rock, her arm in a sling. She winces every time she picks it up. Marie Alice finishes what she is doing and picks up the rock Irene has dropped.

MARIE ALICE

Tell me how.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

Wassalie carries his newly made bow and a clutch of arrows. Steven Nickolai a slingshot held at the ready in his hands. His eyes constantly searching for game. Each of the boys wear mukluks, now. Their city wear discarded or in great disrepair. Irene's arm is in a sling. She winces upon hitting it on a bush.

Marie Alice and Anastasia have bear skin jackets and backpacks.

EXT. CABIN YARD - DAY

Coming to an overgrown clearing with a small rundown cabin nestled in the middle of it like an egg in a nest, an almost indiscernible carving of a caribou and dogs running together!

IRENEA

(hopeful)

The cabin? I think it is!

She runs forward toward the carving and caresses it as she removes some brush.

IRENEA (CONT'D)

I think it is! Yes!

She pumps with her fist and does a little dance as speaks in sing song style:

IRENEA (CONT'D)

We found it! We found it! We found it!

Their demeanor changes from one of almost depression to jubilation. She runs back to the girls and picks up Anastasia and swings her around. She does the same to Bailey.

IRENEA (CONT'D)

Quyana, Uncle Charlie!!

WASSALIE

I tol' you I saw a building.

BAILEY

I believed you, Wassalie

WASSALIE

Yeah but Steven Nickolai didn't.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

(rolls his eyes)

Well, I could think of a house this far into the woods. It's made of candy and this old witch lives there. She keeps her oven nice and hot!

MARIE ALICE

Not really a house. Not big enough.

WASSALIE

Kinna run down.

BAILEY

We could fix it up!

STEVEN NICKOLAI

Let's knock first and see if anyone is home before we claim it. Hate to be in the middle of a somethin' that ain' ours.

WASSALIE

If they was here they'd be squatters.

All are hesitant to be the first to step toward the cabin though no movement or sound has come from it since the arrived. Finally, Irene gives Anastasia one last squeeze and resolutely steps to the front door. She knocks, there is no answer. She knocks again and the door falls in, a cloud of dust enveloping her. Irene jumps back in surprise amidst the laughter of her children.

IRENEA

I guess that settles that.

EXT. CABIN YARD - DAY (LATER)

IRENEA

I think that it's the one we are looking for.

(MORE)

IRENEA (CONT'D)

There is a grave here somewhere. I think it's labelled "Bo".

WASSALIE

Eeeewwww!

IRENEA

Your great Granddad would have built this cabin.

WASSALIE

Still eew. Who wants a dead body hanging around.

BAILEY

Who was Bo?

IRENEA

It was his dog. And it would be just the marker by now. We'd have to find it. To make double sure this is the right cabin. It's been more than 30 years since someone used it full time.

(beat)

I didn't even know it was here.

EXT. CABIN YARD - DAY (LATER)

BAILEY (O.C.)

I found it!!

Both Steven Nickolai and Anastasia rush toward her.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

What? Found What?

Bailey, appearing triumphant, pops out from behind a sticker bush patch.

BAILEY

Bo, silly! I found Bo's marker!

Anastasia dances in joy with her, giggling softly amid Bailey's peals of laughter.

EXT. BO'S GRAVE - DAY

As Anastasia clears the weeds from Bo's grave marker, Marie Alice adds a helping hand. Steven Nickolai clears the yard of debris. Behind them Wassalie approaches with wood for a fire. Irene and Bailey appear at the door of the cabin.

IRENEA

Time to eat!

They all stop and tiredly make their way to the cabin.

INT. MS. MATTHEWS OFFICE - DAY

Ms. Matthews shuffles papers at her desk. She picks up a folder.

MS. MATTHEWS

Let's see: Sarah August. Wassalie.
Charlie Andrews. Contacted. Wait.
No. Last known address was... Mrs.
Mitchell? Mrs. Mitchell?

MRS. MITCHELL

Yes?

MS. MATTHEWS

Can you do some research on this
Irenea George. She's gone missing
and appropriated some children.

Mrs. Mitchell gives her a questioning look as Ms. Matthews
shoves the paperwork in Mrs. Mitchell's hands.

MS. MATTHEWS (CONT'D)

Children that weren't hers to take.
She has some family in the
villages, I think. Start there.

*

INT. RUN DOWN RAILROAD STORE - DAY

*

Irenea puts her items onto the front counter in a store that
was an old cabin.

CLERK

Will that be all?

IRENEA

Yes

CLERK

Fishhooks, waxed string, flour,
sugar and jerky, 2 boxes of ammo -
what no granola? You goin' on a
camping trip?

IRENEA

Unnna-huh

CLERK

You know... you look just like that woman in the picture.

IRENEA

Picture?

CLERK

There on the wall. Troopers brought it in on the train last week. Kidnapped children or something. Wow, I just can't get over it. You look just like her.... Your total comes to \$37.28. That'll be in cash.

Irenea counts out the crumpled dollars and change. As she turns to go the clerk dials the phone...

CLERK (CONT'D)

Yeah, um, I have this woman here, um, she looks like the picture you guys brought in last week? Um, yeah. Irene Jerg, um, I mean George. Well whatever. There's a lady in my store that looks just like her. Nah, she already paid for her stuff. No, I am not gonna be tryin to detain her! Are you nuts!?!?

An Alaska Native woman pulls her to the side as they are walking to the door.

Their exchange is in Yup'ik.

NATIVE GRANDMA

Yugtun?

IRENEA

Ii-i.

Native Grandma walks with Irenea outside.

EXT. STORE DIRT PARKING LOT - DAY

The dilapidated store sits in a wide spot on the path. There is no discernible road though railroad tracks cross the path. The brush is overgrown and thick around the "store." The clerk looks hard for Irenea through his window, though not moving from his station. Native Grandma and Irenea speak in Yup'ik:

NATIVE GRANDMA

Ms. Matthews was here with them.

IRENEA

Them?

NATIVE GRANDMA

Troopers. Got off the train here. And back on for the next stop I'm guessin'.

(beat)

It's not a wanted poster but it's mighty close... Sarah's son, Anders, must have drawn it...it looks just like you.

(beat)

Ms. Matthews is a very bad spirit.

(beat in English)

She took my Ruby's kids. Put them in the Kass'at houses, in those Kass'at schools in that big city there. They don't come back right. Not right at all.

(Beat. back to Yup'ik)

One, she got the drink, all the time, and the other just cries for days. Still does. He come back with scars in places there should be none. His spirit...broken. He cries still. The last one she, I dunno know, just stares at the wall. She is somewheres else. Maybe she'll come back - it's been months though. We'll wait.

The native grandma's eyes bore into Ireneia. She grips Ireneia's arms in a vise-like grip.

NATIVE GRANDMA (CONT'D IN YUP'IK)

(CONT'D)

Don't let Ms. Matthews get her hands on your children for nuttin. Not for nuttin'.

IRENEA

Quyana-vaa

As Ireneia turns to hurry back to the woods the Native Grandma calls after her...

NATIVE GRANDMA

...and teach those children our ways!

EXT. CABIN YARD - DAY

Irenea bursts from the tree line startling the children who look at her with concern. A helicopter in the distance. The whop whop of the blades grows louder. The cabin and yard cleaned and fixed as well as they could without paint. New chinking/moss. Neat and tidy.

IRENEA

Pikacualik comes. Umpi! Pikacualik
comes. Hide! Hide! Now!

Running! Hidden under the trees the listen. The helicopter searches. Hovering and ominous.

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

A Bell 204 holds 5 troopers including troopers Dalton and Eric in his Fish and Wildlife work uniform.

TROOPER DALTON

Can we land in that clearing?

PILOT

No. Too tight, trees too high.
We'll have to put you down
elsewhere but we'll get as close as
possible.

ERIC

I think I saw a good clearing back
over there.

EXT. SKY - DAY

The helicopter banks and disappears from view.

EXT. CABIN YARD - DAY

After it leaves, Irenea and the children run inside the cabin.

INT. INSIDE CABIN - DAY

The cabin is a large room with bedrolls and furs on the floor. Warm homemade biscuits sit on the table. A single wood stove has a kettle of water on it. Irenea mobilizes the children into action.

IRENEA

Umpi, Get your stuff. They'll be here soon. We'dnt go through all this for Tegusta (Policeman or One Who Takes You Away) to take you away. Happened to my auntie. Bailey, Anastasia, umpi get your papers, your projects and clothing. Pack quickly. Charlie, blank out any carvings. Marie Alice get the food, I'll put out the fire.

Marie Alice grabs as many biscuits as she can without burning her hands and stuffs them into her bag. Two biscuits still sit in the pan.

EXT. CABIN YARD - DAY

Packed and ready to go. They assemble in the yard.

WASSALIE

I really liked this place

BAILEY

Yeah.

MARIE ALICE

Things happen.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

I hate moving.

Anastasia is crying. With great resignation Irene shoos the children.

IRENEA

No use puttin' it off. Come on...
Pugna (up the hill)

She gestures with her eyebrows. Steven Nickolai shoulders the rifle. One by one they lift their overburdened packs to their shoulders and walk up the hill.

EXT. UP THE HILL - DAY

BAILEY

I can see our house from here!

WASSALIE

Hey, there's people there...

STEVEN NICKOLAI
Tegusta. Troopers probably. PD doan
come out here.

EXT. CABIN YARD - DAY

Troopers crouch at ready.

TROOPER DALTON
We're moving in, Trooper Randall.
Weapons check?

ERIC
Roger and check, Sergeant Dalton.

EXT. FURTHER UP THE HILL - DAY

Troopers can be discerned with guns drawn down at the cabin.

MARIE ALICE
(sobs) With guns?

WASSALIE
Yeah, what did we ever do to
deserve...?

IRENEA
I don' know....

EXT. INSIDE CABIN - DAY

ERIC
Clear!

TROOPER DALTON
Clear. No one here. We had good
reports though...

ERIC
Looks like they just left a bit
ago...

Trooper Dalton ransacks the cabin looking for something of
value as Eric looks on in disbelief and shock.

TROOPER DALTON
Yeah, nothing here worth taking
in... for evidence. Ooh, look.
Biscuits!

Trooper Dalton picks up a biscuit and starts eating it and makes a mess as he walks around the cabin.

TROOPER DALTON (CONT'D)
Cold though. Man, this Irene must be a good cook.

ERIC
Irenea. I'll look around outside maybe there will be tracks.

TROOPER DALTON
What!? I'm hungry! Lunch is hours away.

Eric exits the cabin, shaking his head as Trooper Dalton pockets the second biscuit..

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Outside the cabin, Eric wanders to the side of the cabin, looks up the hill and sees Irene and the children. He salutes her. Wassalie throws a rock in a gesture of defiance - knowing they are too far away for it to even be heard. Eric drops something and kicks it under the cabin. Irene with sad determination flashing across her face turns and gestures with her head.

IRENEA
Yaatmun. (Toward over there - restricted.)

She points. They disappear up into the mountains. Anastasia's tears roll down her face.

EXT. STREAMSIDE - NIGHT

Dusk. They speak in Broken Yup'ik.

They drop down next to a stream, exhausted.

WASSALIE
This was a long unuamek!

BAILEY
Yeah, but you got to pi kiartun yaagun-llu avani!

WASSALIE
Cacetuunga! Winga am Cacetuunga not 'explorer'.

BAILEY
Cacetuten. Whatever.

Marie Alice rubs her feet.

MARIE ALICE
It'gagma hurt. I can't wait to prop
them up tonight.

IRENEA
Unuaqu will be better.

MARIE ALICE
Tomorrow. Always tomorrow.

EXT. SMALL CLEARING - DAY

Irenea and the children come to a small clearing and they set
up camp. They seem well practiced at the routine.

IRENEA
(in Yup'ik)
Remember do not make a mark in
nature. Use what you need, not what
you want. Do not offend the area.
Cover your tracks and make sure you
take all of your garbage.

BAILEY
Ah, maan-

IRENEA
(Makes the cut off sound mothers
make when they don't want to hear
complaints)

Marie Alice motions where Irenea's wound would be on herself.

MARIE ALICE
How's kilinerpeci?

IRENEA
Assirtut. Think I could leave off
this tomorrow.

MARIE ALICE
Can I check.

IRENEA
In a moment...

EXT. POLICE STATION STEPS - DAY

Ms. Matthews with a determined look on her face marches up the steps into the police station.

INT. SITUATION ROOM - DAY

Trooper Johns escorts Ms. Matthews into a large situation room at the police station.

TROOPER JOHNS

Randall. Randall! She said she knew Dalton but he's not here. You working with him?

ERIC

Not really. What's up?

MS. MATTHEWS

Any news on the George case?

ERIC

George case?

MS. MATTHEWS

Yes, Irene George! Did you get her?

ERIC

Hang on, Ms. Matthews, let me get the case file. I can check if there are any new developments.

Ms. Matthews watches as Eric enters Dalton's office rummages in the desk and the metal drawers against the wall.

INT. TROOPER DALTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Eric reads a few words of the file and mumbles to himself

ERIC

Doesn't even seem like a case...

INT. SITUATION ROOM - DAY

ERIC

Doesn't seem to be anything new.

MS. MATTHEWS

Nothing at all?

ERIC

Well there was a sighting some weeks ago at a trading cabin but nothing since.

MS. MATTHEWS

Ah, yes. I was apprised of the situation but you guys missed her. Those poor children. They must be so hungry by now.

Eric looks at her with a puzzled look on his face.

ERIC

Why? They've been going to Fishcamp since they were babies. They won't starve.

Ms. Matthews is unconvinced.

MS. MATTHEWS

Still. They should be in school

EXT. CAMPFIRE II - NIGHT (DUSK)

A man, HUNTER ALLEN, a poacher, dressed in camouflage has a backpack and a high powered hunting rifle.

Suddenly he hears voices. He is hunting where he is not supposed to be and crouches so they don't see them. Irene and the children slowly come into view. They are laughing and joking as they walk.

Hunter Allen, pulling out binoculars, places himself where he can watch. He eventually moves off through the following exchange.

WASSALIE

Oh, man! That was funny, Bailey! Did you see that, Steven? She slipped and the log disinner... disinner...

IRENEA

Disintegrated.

WASSALIE

Disintegrated! It was so funny we should call her "falling into something icky"

Steven Nickolai laughs so hard he almost can't breathe.

STEVEN NICKOLAI
No worse than you ... Bee Wrangler!

WASSALIE
Hey, how was I supposed to know
they was hanging out, just waiting
for poor, little unsuspecting me to
come along and liberate them from
such po' cramp't housin'?

They all laugh, even Anastasia gives a little impish smile.

IRENEA
This looks like assirteni to stop.

BAILEY
Yeah, Kaitua.

IRENEA
Nice to meet you, Hungry. You can
start by getting meq and gathering
wood with the boys.

EXT. CAMPFIRE II - NIGHT (LATER)

Water boils. The fire quietly pops. Wassalie chuckles and
pulls something out of Marie Alice's hands. Steven Nickolai
smiles impishly.

INT. MS. MATTHEWS OFFICE - DAY

MS. MATTHEWS
May I speak to Trooper Dalton?
Yes. Yes I'll hold. Dalt-. Why,
yes it is. I am calling about
Irenea George. Did you make any
progress? A new lead? Good! Where
is she? Are the kids alright?
(pause)
You don't have them!? Well, where
are they!?!?

EXT. CAMPFIRE III - NIGHT

Different campsite. The younger girls are quietly sewing by
firelight with sinew and skins while watching the sky as
Wassalie and Steven Nickolai skin and dress two rabbits. The
boys hand it off to Irenea who cuts it and pops it into the
boiling water. Marie Alice comes back from the stream that is
bubbling in the distance. She carries a skin bag full of
water and her hair is wet as if she had just taken a bath.

MARIE ALICE

Did you see that Tuluqaruk (raven),
today? It was huge!

Anastasia nods with a smile. Marie Alice sets the bag down as she sits next to Anastasia and starts brushing her hair with a homemade comb of wood.

BAILEY

Am I doing this right?

Bailey shows Marie Alice and Anastasia her work.

MARIE ALICE

Hmmm, yes tuaten. You just need
more practice.

Irenea stirs the stew.

IRENEA

Yes, more practice. More time.
More skins. More love. More of
everything.

Marie Alice finishes brushing her hair and pulls out her sewing.

WASSALIE

What do you mean, Mama?

IRENEA

Only that I started your education
late.

(Beat)

Make sure you fit it to your self
to so you don't under cut it.

All of the girls wrap it around their legs to see it fits them.

IRENEA (CONT'D)

Steven Nickolai did you complete
the drum yet?

Irenea pointedly looks at him.

EXT. CAMPFIRE III - NIGHT (LATER)

STEVEN NICKOLAI

That was really assirtuq!

WASSALIE

Maqaruaq! Rabbit stew! My favorite!

BAILEY
No. No. No. Tuntu stew!

MARIE ALICE
Roast duck...

STEVEN NICKOLAI
Tuntuvak!

MARIE ALICE, WASSALIE AND BAILEY
NO! No more Moose!

They all push him, laughing! Even Anastasia joins in.

IRENEA
Too much.

She gives them an indulgent smile, as she shakes her head.

Anastasia pulls out a caribou coat to think in. She hides her head in it for a bit. After a moment she pulls it off, puts it back in her knapsack and stands up. Walking over to Irene, Anastasia crouches beside her and quietly speaks in Yup'ik...

ANASTASIA
I want to dance.

Everyone looks at her in astonishment!

IRENEA
Anastasia! You speak!

They all gather around her excited and ecstatic about her found voice. Anastasia is a still little shy.

STEVEN NICKOLAI
Anastasia. I thought I'd never hear your aturuuten erinamek ataam!

WASSALIE
WHOOhoo!

BAILEY
Oh, Anastasia! Sweet Anelgutka! (my same age sister)

IRENEA
Ata! Ata, she has a request.

ANASTASIA
(quietly)
I want to dance.
(MORE)

ANASTASIA (CONT'D)

(Pause)

I've been thinking it long time...

Anastasia sings and dances a dance of thanksgiving, of being together of good times. The others join in, keeping the beat on the ground, rock and wood pieces they find on the ground nearby. She sings in Yup'ik.

ANASTASIA (CONT'D)

My feet are tired, my heart may be
sore but it is also happy.

How do I know this?

My family is around me, The Spirit
of the Universe surrounds us.

So get up, feet, sing the happy
song and join us in this dance of
grace.

Where ever we are we are together
near or far.

So get up, feet, sing the happy
song and join us in this dance of
grace.

Crackling branches, voices, dog barking and movement are heard in the far distance.

IRENEA

What is that...? Anastasia get your
stuff! Bailey, Steven, now! We have
to go. Marie Alice,

(in Yup'ik)

put out the fire! Run and hide.

Hastily, they pack and put out the fire. Rushing to the woods. The campsite is desolate and barren. No trace of them remains. Not even a wisp of smoke.

EXT. THE STREAM - NIGHT

The dogs bark. Men speaking indistinctively and crashing through the underbrush. Still far off. The outside world is coming and it's loud and obnoxious.

Irenea whispers to the children.

IRENEA

Now! This way! Go. Find a place. Go
through the water! Down the stream
now.

They rush down the stream overburdened by what they carry - it wasn't packed correctly. Quickly Irenea sees the problem.

IRENEA (CONT'D)

We can't carry it all. Hide it.

Putting most of the food into a large bag, Ireneia hesitates and changes her mind about a small packet of meat. She puts it in her own clothing. Then stuffs the food under a brush pile hanging over an embankment.

EXT. CAMPFIRE II - NIGHT

Hunter Allen, Troopers Randall, Dalton, Johns and a Canine Trooper pair enter a campsite with guns drawn. Eric, still like the very air, scrutinizes everything including his companions. The others are loud and walk with loud scraping footsteps. They are unaware of all the noise they make as they move through the world. The dog barks. Excitement permeates the air.

HUNTER ALLEN

Just up here! Yep, this is it.
Right here.

Hunter Allen leads them to campsite II, sure of himself

HUNTER ALLEN (CONT'D)

They were here last week. A woman and a couple of young bucks...some children. They were here, I swear.

TROOPER DALTON

There is no one here now and it looks like no one has been here for weeks. This is a waste of time.

Eric is more optimistic. He squats to scrape the ground looking for clues.

ERIC

No, maybe days. Who ever was here, they really knew how to disguise a campsite. It is returned almost to what it was.

EXT. FURTHER DOWN THE STREAM - NIGHT

Ireneia and the children hide under an embankment, the willows thick over head and draping over enough to hide them as they catch their breath. The dog can still be heard barking in the distance.

MARIE ALICE

What do they want with us?

IRENEA

Why would they bring dogs for a lone woman with children? Will children fight back that hard?

ANASTASIA

We must go.

IRENEA

We should have moved farther down the trail.

Bailey tugs on Ireneas clothing

BAILEY

Now, mama...now.

Ireneas turns toward the voices. Everyone holds their breath. Turning themselves in crosses Ireneas mind but the safety of the children come first.

IRENEA

Oh, Alright. Get your stuff. Wassalie take the lead. Steven clear our trail.

Moving away, Wassalie in the front. Steven, in the rear, hides their trail.

EXT. CAMPFIRE II - NIGHT

Guns holstered, Eric looks about the campsite. Trooper Dalton is again sceptical that this will lead to anything. Eric points with his knife.

ERIC

Yep, they were here. Just recently even. See there. A scuff mark on that log and this might be an impression of a shoe.

TROOPER DALTON

Where? I don't see nothin'. Shoot, yer making stuff up. You don't get extra pay for being out here longer!

ERIC

No. Right here...and here.

TROOPER DALTON

Uhhh.... Maybe.

HUNTER ALLEN

I doan see nuttin.

Trooper Dalton muses into the night sky. Eric drops another button wedges it underneath the log. He makes a straight line down on the log pointing to the button with his knife as Dalton speaks. Dalton does not see.

TROOPER DALTON

The question is...are they near or far? When did they leave and how far are they now. Will it be economically feasible to bring searchers out here or not....

ERIC

Why do we need them, again?

EXT. DOWN THE STREAM - DAY

The voices of the other troopers can just be heard as Eric searches for any sign of Irene and the children. He happens on the stowed food cache and leaves another button in it and a hand drawn map of his MOE mark, a winding river and aircraft landing strip, a pail, and the words "Neqlilleqa" (my fish camp) "Atsat" (berries) and "iraluq" (moon) with corresponding pictures.

EXT. CAMPFIRE III - DAY

Trooper Johns hollers to Eric, who is up around the bend in the stream.

TROOPER JOHNS

You find anything, Randall?

Eric walks into view walking in the stream. His hands trail in the water - washing the scent of Irene and the food off so the dog won't alarm on him.

ERIC

No. Nothin' this way. Have the dogs picked up any scent?

TROOPER JOHNS

Nah, He says it's been too long. Rained since.

EXT. SOD HOUSE - DAY

Some weeks later Irenea and older children, dressed in traditional clothing, put the last finishing touches on the outside of a sod house, almost hidden in the tundra.

Bailey, Wassalie and Anastasia are playing tag - laughing and giggling.

Irenea is weary. She broods as she gives them direction in Yup'ik (English subtitles).

IRENEA

Come on Let's start dinner. Bailey can you and Anastasia go pick those berries we saw yesterday? Steven, see if you can't get another fish so we can have something in the morning. Wassalie, Marie Alice come help me inside.

Marie Alice and Wassalie, along with Irenea, enter the sod house.

INT. INSIDE SOD HOUSE - NIGHT

Inside the sod house benches line the edges. A fire pit with a fire pot hanging from an apparatus. A little hole at the apex of the house lets in light. It's cozy yet desolate. Speaking in Yup'ik. English subtitles:

*

MARIE ALICE

I can go get water.

IRENEA

No. Wassalie you get the water. Marie Alice you can help me in here. Bring the wood here.

Irenea hands Wassalie the skin container for water and he leaves to go get water.

MARIE ALICE

What can I do?

IRENEA

Bring in some wood.

Irenea smiles after her, the love, angst and determination apparent in her expression. Marie Alice comes back in with wood. Irenea helps her stack it and several times attempt to start a conversation, failing. In Yup'ik:

MARIE ALICE

What is it?

IRENEA

I have to go. We cannot continue on like this. We need our stores of food or we won't make it through the lean times. Someone has to go back and get it. Come snow fall, we won't have building materials to build yet again. Not extensively, anyways.

MARIE ALICE

(in English)

Ii-i? ...Do you want me to go back?

IRENEA

No. I'll send one of the boys. I need you to continue the lessons with the youngers. Speak Yup'ik to them everyday.

Wassalie walks in with the water. He knows right away he has interrupted something important. He looks at each quizzically.

Later the rest of the children come back and dinner is made. It is eaten with a belching contest between the boys - the girls look on giggling. Irene is looking indulgent.

IRENEA (CONT'D)

Winter is coming. We'll need all hands to put up stores.

Steven Nickolai answers in English.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

I don't want to be in here cramped up with all of you, not for no 6 months.

IRENEA

Proper English Steven...or Yup'ik, if you please.

Steven Nickolai replies in Yup'ik.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

I don't wanna be cramped in here for six months with all of you.

The conversation is continued in Yup'ik.

ANASTASIA

Where is the cramped place in here?

Marie Alice is more upbeat.

MARIE ALICE

It'll go quick! Stories, school,
chores and food! It will be over so
quick and then I'll have to leave!

The others look quizzically at her.

ANASTASIA

Why?

MARIE ALICE

(in English)
Because I'm old.

IRENEA

(in Yup'ik)
Leave when you are ready. You will
NOT be thrown out! You are family!

Marie Alice clearly does not believe her. They continue in English.

MARIE ALICE

Yes, Ma'am

IRENEA

Look, Marie Alice, you are of age.
You can go or stay here. Whatever
you want but it will be whenever
and whatever you want!

Marie Alice looks quite relieved.

MARIE ALICE

Yes, Ma'am

IRENEA

Ellma Egalekun Anernemta, what'll
we do? What'll I do?

WASSALIE

You could talk to the judge.

BAILEY

What judge?

WASSALIE

The one that sends everyone out
here after us.

(MORE)

WASSALIE (CONT'D)

There has to be a judge somewheres
that knows about us. Somewheres....

ANASTASIA

...and the Troopers want us
because...?

Irenea makes a decision right then and there.

IRENEA

We'll need to get that food we
stashed.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

I'll go!

WASSALIE

No! Me! Let me go!

IRENEA

You're too young!

WASSALIE

But I can do it!!

IRENEA

Really? And not get caught? I know
it's been weeks but we need that
food.

WASSALIE

Yes, ma'am, I could. With the ease
of the breeze!

IRENEA

Okay. Try it.

He puts on Irenea's caribou coat, and her knife.

EXT. TUNDRA - DAY

Wassalie runs through the tundra.

EXT. BRUSH - DAY

Wassalie runs through brush.

EXT. ROCK FACE - DAY

Wassalie climbing a rock face to a small ledge to get away from a bear in a forested area. It shuffles and snuffles at the bottom.

EXT. ROCK LEDGE - NIGHT

Wassalie shivering at night on the small ledge, watchful, hearing coyotes yip and wolves bay. He looks over the edge.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Wassalie finds the food and shoulders it. He repack it for carrying. In the process, he finds Eric's map. He sits back to reflect what it actually says. He wanders back to the Campfire III and finds the button peeking out from a rock around the camp fire. Puzzled, he pulls it out. Making a decision, he repacks the food properly and stows it in a tree. Instead of going back, he races toward the other old camp site.

*
*
*

EXT. CAMPFIRE II

Wassalie finds the old camp site with the log. It is overgrown and it takes him a while to find the button.

WASSALIE

Yes!

EXT. SOD HOUSE - DAY

A very worn but somehow older Wassalie approaches the sod house with the food and a new spear. It is quiet and not a soul can be seen. He croaks out from a voice long in disuse:

WASSALIE

Hello? Cama-i 'Na! (Hello, the house, long time no see!)

Anastasia runs from the behind the house.

ANASTASIA

Wassalie! Wassalie wani!

Anastasia and Irene file into view. They reach him and hugs and greetings of Cama-i ensue. They speak in rapid fire Yup'ik.

WASSALIE

I am so glad to be home! and I got the food.

BAILEY

You took a long time! We were just putting up some fish. Trying our hand at smokin' caribou like fish.

IRENEA

Here, try one.

WASSALIE

Oh, here. I found this in the pack and these at our old camps.

Wassalie hands her the map and buttons. Recognition at the button comes quickly to Irene.

IRENEA

(in English)

It's Eric.

She smiles and begins to study the map. Conversation continues in Yup'ik.

IRENEA (CONT'D)

He's trying to say something.

BAILEY

What does he say?

IRENEA

Wait a minute. Let me think.

ANASTASIA

What does he say?

IRENEA

This here is the symbol for a man. Maybe him. This is the circle and dot. And this is his initial. So it's him.

MARIE ALICE

What does the map say?

IRENEA

Him again. Fishcamp and berries. What does the moon have to do with it?

STEVEN NICKOLAI

Maybe he is saying "Kiss my ass"?

They all burst out laughing!

IRENEA

I don't think he'd do that! His fishcamp beside the berries. And the moon? I'll have to think on that one.

INT. SOD HOUSE - NIGHT

The moss burns low in the Yup'ik oil lamp. Irene awakens from a sound sleep.

IRENEA

The Month of Berry Picking!

Steven Nickolai opens his eyes as Irene goes outside to check the stars.

INT. SOD HOUSE - DAY

Irene puts her caribou coat on and checks the rifle.

BAILEY

Aanaka, where are you going?

IRENEA

I'm gonna go find Eric. It might be too late but (I got to try)....

She shrugged the unsaid thought. This may be the last time she'll see them and the pain shows on her face as she speaks her last words of wisdom. Her voice chokes.

IRENEA (CONT'D)

I need to get to him before Berry Picking month is over.

(pause)

I don't know if I'll be back. You'll need to get over the mountains in the spring to Uncle Charlie if I don't come back. He will know what to do.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

I think we're good here.

IRENEA

You'll need someone to look up to. Someone to look in on you. It can be hard out here...

Irenea waves her hand vaguely up at the smoke hole. He is unconvinced.

Beat.

She looks at the horizon as if to discern the weather in the future. She continues absentmindedly:

IRENEA (CONT'D)

Start when the storms have stopped
and it's warmed up some. When you
have a good days worth of day
light. If you start early enough
you should reach him before break
up.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

Only if we have to?

IRENEA

Only if you have to.

She looks sternly at each child.

IRENEA (CONT'D)

Remember to love one another, stick
together, help one another, divide
labors up fairly and treat each
other with respect.

Marie Alice presses dried meat into Irenea's hands. Irenea takes half and hands the rest back to Marie Alice.

IRENEA (CONT'D)

You'll need this more than I.

One last touch and Irenea leaves the hut. They all file out to watch her go.

EXT. SOD HOUSE YARD - DAY

Bailey drops a tear. As Irenea walks down the trail away from the house, Anastasia breaks into a run after her for one last hug. The other girls break and join in.

ANASTASIA

I don't want you to go.

IRENEA

I have to, Honey. If we want to
live....

IRENEA (CONT'D)
...free.

BAILEY
Come home quickly.

EXT. TUNDRA/BRUSH - DAY

Irenea hunts a rabbit. Misses the shot. Irenea's POV: Blurry eyes. Irenea stumbles.

IRENEA
Ellama Egalekun Anernemta. Give me strength.

Another shot. Defeathering a grouse. Fire. Eating. Leaning back in a contented sigh. Irenea hiking again. Snow flurries. She sighs.

IRENEA (CONT'D)
(hopeful conviction)
It won't stick. Too early.

Hiking again, a brace of ptarmigan tied to her belt. She hears a plane engine and ducks down into nearby brush. It fades in the distance.

EXT. STREAM BANK - DAY

She comes to a lone cabin. Long unused.

IRENEA
(in English)
Hello? Hello the house?

She knocks and after a moment she enters.

IRENEA (CONT'D)
At least I'll have a stove.

She makes a fire. Cooks the Ptarmigan, eats and falls into a deep slumber on a cot next to the stove.

EXT. TUNDRA - DAY

Hiking again. She drinks from a small creek. Crosses it but stumbles into the water. A mitten floats down the stream. Her mitten. Too tired to notice.

IRENEA
Crap-tastic!

EXT. TUNDRA CAMPSITE - DAY

Irenea stripping before a fire. Digs in her bag for another set of leggings and a set of mittens. She finds just one mitten and shakes her head.

IRENEA

(in Yup'ik)

Ella, what would you have me do now? How is this helping?

(she starts yelling and throws the mitten)

What is it you want from me!?! How does this help us!?!?

(English)

What the hell do you think this is? A summer hike? I don't have time for this. I don't have time for this! I don't have time for this!!

Irenea lets out a long scream of frustration.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

A much composed and dry Irenea on the trail again when she hears an airplane taking off - the loud drone of the engine getting louder with a slight cough. She throws herself down on top of a small rise. In the distance, on a small dirt runway, a small Cessna, turns away and fades into the distance. Eric's Trooper Cessna lands shortly thereafter.

EXT. SMALL RISE - DAY

Irenea turns over and looks up at the sky and gives a slight smile, chagrined.

IRENEA

Oh.

She falls asleep right there, a slight smile of relief flashing briefly on her face.

EXT. SMALL RISE - NIGHT

She wakes up feeling stiff, in the dark. Stiffly she searches the darkness. Finding a small point in the distance, a grand smile spreads across her face but she stumbles from exhaustion and lack of food. Resignation flashes across her face before the smile is back and she takes out a small piece of precious dried meat to eat.

She shakes the bag and measures the amount left - which isn't much. She sets off after stashing her extra gear.

EXT. FISH AND GAME CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Eric, in his Fish and Game Uniform, putters about his campsite. The fire rages and coffee percolates. A dutch oven rests near the fire. Three biscuits rest next to the pot. It's dark out. Stepping to the edge of the firelight, he pulls his zipper down as he waters the trees and sings a tuneless/wordless song.

Irenea enters the campsite wary. Irenea her rifle on her hip and hunting knife strapped to her leg. She shakes her head to clear it. She clears her throat. Eric freezes as he becomes aware of her behind him.

ERIC
Who's that!?!!

IRENEA
I need to send word.

He starts to zip up and turn - Irenea throws her knife to stop him with an audible 'thunk'.

He freezes. He looks at the knife still whipping back and forth from the strength of her conviction/throw and exclaims:

ERIC
aaah! W...w...word?

IRENEA
It's Irenea George. I want to speak to the Judge in charge of my case.

ERIC
Irenea. We've been looking for you.
(beat)
I've been looking for you.
(beat)
There is no judge involved... There isn't even a case-

IRENEA
Get one, Eric. Save my family. Let us be... ourselves.

Eric sputters and thinks better of it.

IRENEA (CONT'D)
I'll be back in 3 weeks. He is here or not.

(MORE)

IRENEA (CONT'D)

No judge, I'll move to the Way Back where no one will find us. Ever. ...and especially that Ms. Matthews...and you'll be a hero or not. Do not condemn us to the margins, Tegusta.

Irenea melts back into the night after snagging a biscuit and a pair of binoculars. After a moment Eric realizes she is gone and simultaneously tries to zip up and pull the knife out of the tree.

EXT. IRENEA'S PERCH - DAY

Irenea, perched upon a hill hidden amongst the tundra tufts, blending in so perfectly that it is only when she moves she can be seen. She brings the binoculars to her eyes and glasses the landscape. Down below her, as she watches, Eric packs his camp and starts off toward the nearby village. She watches as the Trooper aircraft takes off, and follows it with her eyes as it disappears into the distance.

INT. ERIC'S HOME - DAY

Eric walks through his arctic entryway to arrive at home and immediately drops his gear. He checks for the courthouse number near the phone where numbers are written in varying sizes and inks directly on exposed drywall. Finding one labelled "courthouse" he calls.

ERIC

Malachai Yahgen, please? Yes. Judge Yahgen. Thank you.

INT. OUTSIDE JUDGE YAHGEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Judge Yahgen's Assistant answers the phone.

ASSISTANT

Judge Yahgen's Office. May I help you?

She writes something down, checks her computer and exits to the judge's office.

INT. JUDGE YAHGEN'S OFFICE - DAY

A grizzled older man with scraggly hair, in his late 40's to 50's better suited to a trapline than an office, sits behind a desk labelled "HONORABLE JUDGE MALACHAI YAHGEN".

Various Alaskan objects, paintings and photographs hang on his walls and throughout his office. A small bookcase sits within reach of his feet. The finish is worn where his footprints are clearly outlined on the side of it as if he had repeatedly kicked the bookcase.

His desk is also cluttered with files. He is looking through the files as the Assistant enters with another file.

ASSISTANT

You heard of this Irene George? A Fish and Game Trooper called and said it would be right up your alley.

JUDGE YAHGEN

No, haven't heard. Nothing in the press lately?

ASSISTANT

I think this is a child custody case.

JUDGE YAHGEN

Think?

ASSISTANT

There isn't really a record of them being in the system. I did put a call into social services... Maybe it's the one a Ms. Matthews is, um, "chasing".

Assistant hands the judge the file. The judge looks through the file.

JUDGE YAHGEN

And why would a trooper want to call me about it?

ASSISTANT

He says that the mother contacted him.

JUDGE YAHGEN

Well, I'd like to meet her. See what she has to say. Did he leave her address? We'll need to speak to her.

ASSISTANT

Her last known address was at the Barrow street housing complex.

(MORE)

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

He says she will arrive back at his camp in... two weeks. He hasn't gone to his superiors yet. I think they mounted a search and rescue effort last spring.

JUDGE YAHGEN

Come again?

ASSISTANT

Something about children being in danger. The mother is wanted for questioning.

JUDGE YAHGEN

Why? Is she charged with a crime? That's not the way things are handled around here.

ASSISTANT

No. No crime. Welfare check, maybe....

EXT. IRENEA'S 2ND PERCH - DAY

Irenea, perched upon a hill on the opposite side of the airport, glasses the airport again, watching a small plane land. She is disappointed that it is not the Trooper's aircraft. She looks gaunt and shakes a little from hunger as she eats the last of a piece of fish and picks a handful of berries from the tundra. It starts to snow. She is crestfallen. The weather is not cooperating.

INT. JUDGE YAHGEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Eric in his uniform bursts into the Judge's office with the assistant trailing directly after.

ERIC

I am sure he has vacation time saved up!

ASSISTANT

But that isn't the way things are done! Judges don't leave the court building! It's unseemly!

JUDGE YAHGEN

What's unseemly? I leave if I need to.

ERIC
Then what's the hold up?

JUDGE YAHGEN
The hold up?

ERIC
Irenea needs your help!

JUDGE YAHGEN
Who's Irenea?

ERIC
I called your office 2 weeks ago
about her! And I have been leaving
messages almost daily! Don't you
read your messages?

Judge Yahgen raises his eyebrows at his assistant.

ASSISTANT
I was told by the Troopers that it
was a non-issue and Senator Jack
said it wasn't worth your time.

TROOPER ERIC
What officer told you?

JUDGE YAHGEN
You arrange my schedule
according to some politician
from downtown!?!!

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)
If you want to keep your bench-!

JUDGE YAHGEN
No Fat Cat is going to tell me how
to run my bench! I was elected by
the people, not them. Leave.

ASSISTANT
From...? From...? The roo-

JUDGE YAHGEN
(dismissive)
Yes. Yes, the room but we are going
to have a talk with personnel
before the day is out.

TROOPER ERIC
What about Irenea?!

ASSISTANT
Yes, sir.

The assistant leaves.

ERIC
She needs your help.

JUDGE YAHGEN

And why are you here and not her?

ERIC

She has a family to think of. She just lost her husband earlier this year.

JUDGE YAHGEN

How? Alcohol? How do you fit in?

ERIC

No. And yes. Albert was my friend. Took me in when no one would. He's why I'm a Trooper.

JUDGE YAHGEN

I am still waiting to hear why he died.

ERIC

Meanness. Just pure meanness. Cody Daniels and his buddies ran up on him after a night of drinking. Got a little slap happy with him. He put up a good fight but nobody can beat that many loggers.

JUDGE YAHGEN

He didn't run? Could of saved himself, 'lessin he was inebriated, too.

ERIC

That wasn't his way. He doesn't run and he doesn't drink. Didn't.

INT. DALTON KITCHEN - NIGHT

MS. MATTHEWS

What do you mean spotted her!?!
You lost a woman in the woods? You can't find *my* children! It's almost winter! What kind of cop are you?

(more to herself)

Can't find five children and a woman in the bush. It's not like there are a lot of places they can be.

He fills a glass from the sink. He hands her the glass of water.

TROOPER DALTON
Just calm down...

MS. MATTHEWS
CALM DOWN! That's what you have to
say!?!?
(she slams it down as...)

TROOPER DALTON
We know kind of where she is.

MS. MATTHEWS
Kind of? What good is that? Kind
of? How can you...!

TROOPER DALTON
(yells)
Do my job on top of yours?

Trooper Dalton grits his teeth and flares his nostrils.

MS. MATTHEWS
What? You are supposed to help
families in need!

TROOPER DALTON
I got enough on my plate!

MS. MATTHEWS
Okay. Okay. I am sorry. Where did
you spot her?

Trooper Dalton pulls out a map.

TROOPER DALTON
This Irene is crafty AND
resourceful! She showed up at a
campsite, here in this area. The
judge is headed out there now.

MS. MATTHEWS
Judge? Which judge?

TROOPER DALTON
Yahgen. Malachai Yahgen.

MS. MATTHEWS
A little unconventional though. He
might find something...
unconventional.

EXT. IRENEA'S 1ST PERCH - DAY

Watching as a plane lands, Irene looks through her binoculars. Very stoically she packs her binoculars and walks back off behind the hill, almost falling a few times.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

Ms. Matthews, in white faux fur high heel boots and a white fur coat from a catalog more befitting New York than Alaska, approaches the ticket counter, dropping her two matching luggage and overloaded purse on the floor next to the baggage scale. She leans over the tall counter to talk to TICKET AGENT I.

MS. MATTHEWS

I need to get to...

Flustered, Ms. Matthews pulls out a map from her purse with difficulty. Papers, receipts and wrappers in her purse also fly out of her purse with the map. Picking them up she pushes them haphazardly back into her purse.

MS. MATTHEWS (CONT'D)

I need to get to here!

She points to a village on the map.

TICKET AGENT I

I am sorry, Ma'am. We don't go there.

MS. MATTHEWS

Well who does?

The ticket agent points to a small carrier at the other end of the long hall.

TICKET AGENT I

Puddle Jumpers do.

Ms. Matthews picks up her bag and marches smartly over to the smaller carrier. The ticket agent is glad to be rid of her.

INT. AIRPORT SMALL CARRIER - DAY

Ms. Matthews argues with a very patient TICKET AGENT II.

TICKET AGENT II

No, Ma'am. We need to be able to carry a certain amount and that means you can send it as cargo or pay extra to get it on the plane.

MS. MATTHEWS

Fine! Just get me on the next flight.

TICKET AGENT II

Yes, Ma'am.

MS. MATTHEWS

When is it?

TICKET AGENT II

Just a moment, Ma'am. Tomorrow morning at 7:15 am.

MS. MATTHEWS

Really? Tomorrow?

TICKET AGENT II

Yes, Ma'am.

MS. MATTHEWS

Fine! How much?

TICKET AGENT II

\$300.

MS. MATTHEWS

Wow. Charge much do you?

TICKET AGENT II

It's what's listed, Ma'am. I don't set the prices. Will you be taking your extra luggage or sending it as cargo?

INT. CESSNA - DAY

Ms. Matthews in her white fur attire struggles to make her way to the back of the 6 seat aircraft. The pilot looks on in disbelief. Other passengers get on. Ms. Matthews wrinkles her nose in disgust at sitting so close to Alaska Natives and rural folk.

INT. CESSNA - DAY

Turbulence. A green Ms. Matthews gets tossed around. Her largish stature makes it hard for her to be sick and not touch anyone. She holds a kerchief to her nose.

EXT. FISH AND GAME CAMPSITE - DAY

Judge Yahgen is dressed warm and seems at ease with the bush life, he sits at a campsite with Eric, who is off peeing again as Irene enters, looking more gaunt, unbeknownst to Judge Yahgen or Eric.

IRENEA

(laughing)

Well, Trooper, I hear you again. We should name you Kuililarai - River Maker. You have so much you could start your own river.

TROOPER ERIC

Whoa! Where jeoo come from!?!!

IRENEA

I am of the Yup'iit. I move through Ella as my skills allow me.

Turning to the Judge who is chuckling at the exchange between Irene and Eric.

IRENEA (CONT'D)

Shall we go? Time passes.

ERIC

Wait! Wait! Have a little something to eat.

He hands her a plate. She wolfs down the first two bites and then decidedly eats slower with her eyes closed savoring each bite. Rifle at the ready.

JUDGE YAHGEN

Where is your campsite? Your children? What's the deal with the troopers and you?

Irenea just shakes her head refusing to answer and keeps eating.

ERIC

Irenea, you need to let us know. We can help you.

IRENEA

And where were you when they hunted
us like animals!? When we had to
run or die?

One last bite to go and she falls asleep, her hand still on her rifle. Eric slowly moves behind her taking out his cuffs, a quick glance at the perplexed Judge - who gives a quick shake of his head. Eric relaxes, glad he doesn't have to arrest a friend.

EXT. FISH AND GAME CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Later.

Eric banks the fire as the Judge drapes a blanket over Irene's shoulders before rolling into his sleeping gear.

EXT. DAY (MORNING)

Irenea wakes with a start. She scans the horizon and sighs at the impending weather. Gathering what little equipment she has, she leaves the camp. The Judge sees her leave and sits up to watch her disappear and lies back to continue his slumber.

EXT. DAY (MORNING)

Later. Irene comes back with small game which she prepares, borrowing Eric's frying pan. The men wake up as meat slaps the pan and sizzles.

Eric makes coffee and they eat in silence for a few moments.

ERIC

Irenea.

(pause)

Irenea, where are the kids? Are
they okay?

IRENEA

They are fine. Thriving.

ERIC

They have to go to school.

IRENEA

They are. Everyday.

JUDGE YAHGEN

You need to bring them to the court house so we can ascertain those facts.

IRENEA

You don't need a building to know.

JUDGE YAHGEN

I need to-

IRENEA

Aren't you a judge? Doesn't the courthouse move with you?

JUDGE YAHGEN

Well- Yes.

IRENEA

Then come. I'll show you.

JUDGE YAHGEN

How far is it?

IRENEA

Not far....

ERIC

Irenea can't you come with us?

IRENEA

No. I can't-

JUDGE YAHGEN

I can't go with you.

IRENEA

Yes, you can. You have to!

ERIC

Think about it, Irenea. You're armed and-

IRENEA

And what? Destroy our only chance, Eric?! I am trying to save family!

JUDGE YAHGEN

Eric. Eric. I'll-

IRENEA

Shall we go? Time passes.

JUDGE YAHGEN

Yup. Lets get a move on.

ERIC

At least tell me where you'll be.

She gives a vague wave.

IRENEA

Over by the mountains...

The Judge lifts his eyebrows and then lifts his pack to his shoulder. He grabs his own rifle and they move out of camp.

EXT. SOD HOUSE - DAY

Gathering outside their sod house entrance, the children search for Irena and instead see wolves on the horizon.

EXT. TARMAC - DAY

The small six seater aircraft lands on a deserted runway and Ms. Matthews disembarks. It leaves her on the side of the runway. A hint of buildings hang like a faint smudge in the distance. She looks around with an air of superiority. Seeing no one around she bursts into tears. As she composes herself, she flicks imaginary dirt from her coat.

MS. MATTHEWS

See why we need to civilize these savages? They can't even build an airport for their travelers! What's next? Outhouses?

She pulls her coat tighter around her.

EXT. TARMAC - DAY (LATER)

A small plane, a Cessna 172, lands and pulls alongside Ms. Matthews. The pilot empties some cargo and places it on the side of the runway. Grateful to leave the deserted runway, Ms. Matthews, struggles to board the Cessna 172 plane as quickly as possible.

EXT. VILLAGE RUNWAY - DAY

Ms. Matthews, fighting with the seats to get off of the plane, she hurries to the small building that passes as an airport.

On the way, she sees His and Hers outhouses complete with Styrofoam seats and toilet paper in old hinged coffee cans. She gives a little shiver of disgust.

INT. VILLAGE AIRPORT - DAY

Inside the small airport - if it can even be called anything more than a small house. Dismayed at first, Ms. Matthews stops the first white person she can find, HUNTER. He sits with Yup'ik hunters dressed in traditional and contemporary garb. They all stare at this vision that they see before them in incredulous wonderment.

MS. MATTHEWS

Who can get me out to the trooper's camp? Can you take me to the Judge?

The men burst out laughing as they look at her high fashion heels! HUNTER I, the white man, speaks in a thick Native Yup'ik accent.

HUNTER

Lady, you ain't goin' nowhere's in shoes like that!

The men laugh again. Disappointed and more than a little annoyed Ms. Matthews turns away.

EXT. VILLAGE RUNWAY - DAY

A much bedraggled Ms. Matthews walks across the dirt runway to another Cessna 172 and boards the flight back to the city.

MS. MATTHEWS

I can't believe they have an airport but no hotel. Worse day of my life! No wonder they need to be "relocated". Miserable, miserable people.

CESSNA PILOT

Did you say something, Ma'am?

MS. MATTHEWS

No. No, nothing. Just glad to see you.

The Cessna Pilot looks askance at her, starts his small single engine plane and taxi's down the runway for take off.

EXT. SOD HOUSE - DAY

The children wait again. Looking for Irene, Steven Nickolai stands on the roof. The wolves? Closer. Bolder.

EXT. FOGGY PASS - DAY

Irenea and Judge Yahgen walk through a foggy pass. They both are dog tired. Irene takes dried meat from her pocket, breaks it and passes half to the Judge.

IRENEA
(quietly)
Not far, now.

The Judge raises his eyebrows (a "Yes" in Yup'ik body language).

EXT. FISH AND GAME CAMPSITE - DAY

A tired and much worried Eric packs his Camp up.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Trooper aircraft takes off with Eric at the controls.

EXT. SOD HOUSE - DAY

Anastasia sits on the roof. Wassalie speaks to her in Yup'ik.

WASSALIE
See anything

ANASTASIA
Qaang. Nothing yet. Just wolves.

STEVEN NICKOLAI
She'll be here. Soon.
(under his breath in
English)
Hopefully.

EXT. TUNDRA - DAY

Irenea scans the horizon. They walk on tundra.

JUDGE YAHGEN
I thought you said it wasn't far...
How far is it?

IRENEA
 (in Yup'ik)
 Not far.
 (repeats in English)
 Not far, now.

INT. TROOPER STATION - DAY

Eric speaks on the phone at his desk. Trooper Johns walks by on his way to Trooper Dalton Office.

ERIC
 Yeah, He went with her. What am I supposed to do? He's a Judge! Look, Irene-

INT. SOD HOUSE - NIGHT

The Yup'ik oil lamp illuminates some of the sleeping area. Outside wolves howl at the wind. Scrabbling, scratching on the walls.

STEVEN NICKOLAI
 That's enough!

He grabs the his bow and arrows before exiting the sod house.

INT. DALTON OFFICE - NIGHT

Johns enters Dalton office:

TROOPER JOHNS
 Here's the paperwork you requested.

TROOPER DALTON
 Did you find anything on the whereabouts o' that Judge?

TROOPER JOHNS
 I didn't find anything, though Eric might have something.

TROOPER DALTON
 Oh?

TROOPER JOHNS
 Heard him on the phone earlier today. Something about an Irene and a Judge.

Trooper Johns leaves.

INT. TROOPER STATION - NIGHT

Eric sees Trooper Dalton lean out of his office.

TROOPER DALTON

Eric!

ERIC

Yo!

He waves Eric over.

INT. DALTON OFFICE - NIGHT

Dalton berates Eric in his office, Eric stands quiet. He is more at home in the woods and obviously does not want to be there.

TROOPER DALTON

Dammit, Man! Was she armed?

ERIC

It's bear country. Of course she's armed!

TROOPER DALTON

You let a Circuit Court Judge go off with an *ARMED SUSPECT!?!?*

Tired and worried Eric loses his composure.

ERIC

He's a Judge! And he was armed! I'm not his mother and Mrs. George is not a suspect, wouldn't even hurt him!

TROOPER DALTON

If you want to keep going out to the field, you'd better be careful about your tone.

EXT. SOD HOUSE - NIGHT

Glowing eyes stare back at Steven Nickolai. Carefully he aims and shoots into the night. One, two, a third yelp is heard. The wolves fade into the night. After a moment, Steven Nickolai turns back into the sod house.

EXT. TUNDRA CAMP - DAY

Low bushes dot the area as Irenea snares a rabbit. She and Judge Yahgen eat it over a campfire before packing up for the day's hike. INSET: Trooper Dalton on the phone

TROOPER DALTON

Yeah. Left with Irenea George.

Another INSET appears with Ms. Matthews as she answers him.

MS. MATTHEWS

You mean she kidnapped a Judge!?!
She is armed and dangerous with a
history of kidnapping!

TROOPER DALTON

We don't have jurisdiction until
someone files a missing person's
report.

MS. MATTHEWS

I'll do it! I'll be there in the
morning!

INT. SOD HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Wassalie comes into the living area with blood and fur on his hands and speaks in Yup'ik.

WASSALIE

They must have been real hungry to
come this close.

Steven Nickolai nods his assent.

WASSALIE (CONT'D)

I found a fourth one on this side,
down by the stream. Looks like you
got four with three arrows. My
brother The Esteemed Hunter!

EXT. SMALL PASS - DAY

An exhausted Judge Yahgen and Irenea walk through another smaller pass.

JUDGE YAHGEN

How many more days?

IRENEA

Not far-

EXT. VILLAGE AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

A large contingent of hunters and police force converge on the village. Eric protests with Trooper Dalton.

ERIC

This is not necessary! All of this isn't-! We could just wa-

TROOPER DALTON

Yeah. Wait's your plan? How long has he been gone, now? Three weeks? Yeah, "wait's" a good plan.

EXT. TUNDRA - DAY

Judge Yahgen is angry. Cold and tired.

JUDGE YAHGEN

How far is this place? And don't tell me "Not far!" You said that yesterday and the day before and last week! When do we arrive!?!!

IRENEA

Not far... Just over the hills.

EXT. SOD HOUSE - DAY

Late in the day. The sod house is adorned by drying wolf skins. Steven Nickolai, on the roof, climbs down excited.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

(in Yup'ik)

I see her! She's here!

Irenea approaches with the Judge.

INT. MS. MATTHEWS LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

On the TV an anchor speaks beside first a vanity picture of Judge Yahgen and then a black and white security camera photo of Irenea George walking down the street:

TV. ANNOUNCER

In other news, Judge Malachai Yahgen has been kidnapped by fugitive Irenea George. Wanted for questioning in the kidnapping of three children, Anastasia Aloysius, Wassalie-

News fades out. Ms. Matthews, a smug satisfied look on her face, drinks from a hot mug on her couch.

EXT. SOD HOUSE - DAY

The children stand together with Steven Nickolai and Marie Alice, shielding the youngers. Bailey and Wassalie try to comfort Anastasia (who is disconcerted by this stranger) and look at the same time. They speak in Yup'ik to Ireneia.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

This is the man who has made our
life so difficult?

MARIE ALICE

This is the man who comes to
make our life more difficult.

IRENEA

No. This is the man who has
come to observe.

BAILEY

(in English)
Who is he?

JUDGE YAHGEN

I am the judge.

The kids look at each other to this ominous sounding statement, trying to figure out whether to trust him or not.

JUDGE YAHGEN (CONT'D)

I thought I'd come visit for a
while. Perhaps you can show me what
you do in your daily life?

WASSALIE

And then what? You haul us off at
gun point?

The judge looks angry briefly. He closes his eyes to compose himself.

JUDGE YAHGEN

No.

Beat. The judge is momentarily forgotten.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

Well, welcome back, Auntie! We
missed you! Now we don't have to go
in the spring!

All gather around her to welcome her back as the Judge is pushed to the side. Bailey leads everyone inside the sod house.

INT. SOD HOUSE - DAY

The Judge is the last in. He blinks to clear his eyes and watches the family tableau. The children whisper conspiratory. Finally Wassalie speaks up in broken English.

WASSALIE

Do you have gun? 'Cause last
Tegustat tried to shoot my family.

Judge Yahgen looks to Ireneia in confusion for translation but it is Anastasia who translates accusingly.

ANASTASIA

You brought guns to shoot us.

JUDGE YAHGEN

That shouldn't a happened the way
it did. I'm just here to make sure
you're safe.

BAILEY

Oh. We are.

A deep pause as children come to terms with this invader in their house. The Judge looks angry for a second. The children move away from him thinking he might blow-up. He stays quiet, choosing to look around first.

All around them, on the walls and in the corners, are implements of their living. Harpoons with three pointed barbs, arrows, an unfinished fish trap leans up against the sod house. Caribou furs line the outside of fire pit area. In Yup'ik-

MARIE ALICE

Well, lets get dinner on. We can
still have story time like we
planned. We'll just have an extra
guests.

Anastasia is brave enough to speak up. She looks up at Ireneia, sliding her eyes away from Judge Yahgen out of fear and quietly says in Yup'ik:

ANASTASIA

I made masks for us. Steven
Nickolai fixed the drum-

IRENEA

-We can have a proper dance!

BAILEY

He also got some wolves last week!

STEVEN NICKOLAI
 Ii-i, they were stalking us and
 trying to get into the house.

WASSALIE
 He used his arrows and got four!

MARIE ALICE
 Scaar-ry!

Marie Alice gives a delicious shiver.

IRENEA
 Did you pick up the four shafts?

STEVEN NICKOLAI
 I only used three. I saved all
 three heads but lost a shaft. It
 broke-

WASSALIE
 I'm hungry. We should eat.
 (in English)
 To the FOOD!!

Judge Yahgen pulls out powder drink packets and offers it as
 him contribution to the meal. No one takes it. After a
 moment, Irene takes it and gives it to Bailey. She is
 reluctant. They mix it in the water skin.

The judge watches.

EXT. SOD HOUSE - DAY

Outside of the sod house, Steven Nickolai ready's himself for
 a hunting trip.

IRENEA
 Take Wassalie with you.

STEVEN NICKOLAI
 But, I...

IRENEA
 The wolves.... And you are supposed
 to be guiding.

STEVEN NICKOLAI
 Yes, Ma'am.

JUDGE YAHGEN
 Isn't he a little young to be--

IRENEA

And what age were you when you went off by yourself?

JUDGE YAHGEN

Well, I was in the big city.

IRENEA

My point. Less trouble here.

JUDGE YAHGEN

(under his breath)

Well spoken.

IRENEA

Anastasia what other species could we eat out here? Bailey help her think up some. Marie Alice? How is your mingquq coming?

Wassalie and Steven Nickolai walk down the trail with their hunting implements.

INT. SOD HOUSE - DAY

MARIE ALICE

Oh I am making beads. I have this and this to drill the holes *and* we made extra baskets!

She brings them out and they ooo and ahh over them as Irene inspects them for flaws. Anastasia and Bailey play hard running and generally making noise. It's almost too difficult to talk around them.

IRENEA

Anastasia! Bailey! Here. Go find frozen berries by the river.

Judge Yahgen raises his eyebrows and purses his lips as the young girls leave.

JUDGE YAHGEN

Is it wise to send them alone?

IRENEA

They are not alone.

(beat)

They have each other.

Marie Alice comes in to get a bucket as well as a jigging stick (very short fishing stick).

MARIE ALICE

The youngsters are going berry picking. I'll tag a long and maybe get some fish if there's any left in the river.

Irenea nods her assent. Malachai gives a little smile of comprehension

INT. SOD HOUSE - NIGHT

The Judge sits off to one side as the girls make dinner for the night and cut a fish for dinner. Each drops a little in the pot as they cut it up. Steven Nickolai is carving another shaft for an arrow while Wassalie makes a spear point.

INT. ERIC'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eric in civilian clothes watches the evening news on his couch. A picture of Judge Yahgen flashes on the screen.

TV. ANNOUNCER

The search area for Malachai Yahgen has been broadened to encompass another 400 miles east of Bethel but there is little hope of finding his body. An unnamed Trooper has been suspended for interfering with the search and rescue, now termed a search and recovery....

INT. SOD HOUSE - NIGHT

Sitting on the benches and the floor, they eat. The slurping of fingers, bones and the appreciative murmurs of good food and full bellies the only sounds. Watchful eyes are on the Judge as he chews his last bite - he burps - LOUD! They laugh and the tension breaks.

Anastasia pulls out four masks, and hands three of them to the rest of her siblings, each representing: the Moon (which Anastasia keeps), the Wind (to Wassalie), a Woman/Mother (to Marie Alice) and a Son (to Steven Nickolai).

Steven Nickolai puts his jacket and boots on backwards.

Each child acts out the portion of story that holds their representative mask. Steven Nickolai and Marie Alice drum the songs. The story is told in Yup'ik with English subtitles.

BAILEY

It is said, when the snows covered the earth and lean times were on us, a lone woman yearned for her son. He had grown older and went out to explore the land. When he did not come back for 2 turns of the seasons the woman yearned for his company. She sang a song of sorrow twice each morning, just as the Moon was setting, waiting for the Wind to carry it to her son's ears.

Marie Alice sings the song. Steven Nickolai plays the drum he has made whole again. Marie Alice starts with plaintive hand motions.

MARIE ALICE

(sings in Yup'ik)

"I am waiting, waiting for word from my dearest little son. I am waiting for word of how he is. Who cooks for him? Who cuts the fish just right? How does his clothing get mended? Who makes him fish head soup? Does he have a nice girl to do these things for him? Wind please let my son know that I am thinking of him. I am waiting, waiting for word from my dearest little son. I am waiting for word of how he is."

WASSALIE

He was away for so long that he also longed for his mother and her fish head soup. He sang every night just as the Moon was rising.

Steven Nickolai begins to sing. His movements are muted as if he is surrounded by a blanket of sorrow.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

(sings in Yup'ik)

"My heart is longing for the woman who birthed me. My heart is longing for her fish head soup. My feet point away but my heart points to the woman who birthed me. Wind bring me word of my mother so that I may stop this crying. This heart pain. My heart is longing for the woman who birthed me."

BAILEY

The Wind, stole both songs.... From their very mouths! It is said the Moon cried out to the Wind:

ANASTASIA

"Wind, why haven't you brought the song to her son and her son's song to her? How can you be so cruel, always."

BAILEY

But the Wind skipped and jumped and laughed - sometimes it even ran at full force across the tundra. Soon the Moon became angry and told the Wind that if it did not give the songs back the Moon would go away and then there would be no light to see the Wind's power at night. No way to see the snow move across the land, no way to see the trees rock back and forth from the force of the wind. The Moon said:

ANASTASIA

"I will go away and stay away and the only time anyone will know about your power is when the sun comes out to show it. You will never see how you have shaped the lands until daylight - even if you blow all night. You will never see!"

Steven Nickolai takes up the story, he has taken off his backward boots but still has his jacket on.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

The Wind was still stubborn - did not believe the Moon could do anything. Wind continued to blow and keep those songs on it's person. Wind listened to them off and on never giving them up to the rightful owners.

Marie Alice/Woman and Steven Nickolai/Son both move to the center of the sod house and use the movements from their songs without singing it.

BAILEY

Still, the woman and her son would go out every day and sing their songs of sorrow and longing. Soon the Moon devised a plan to show the Wind that Moon was not kidding.

ANASTASIA

"WIND, Wind! Look at me! If you do not give the songs back then you shall have no light!"

They all turn to look at Moon. Wind crouches down in astonishment. Anastasia, making herself look big and imposing, turns bit by bit.

MARIE ALICE

It is said that the Wind turned to look and laugh but NO! There it was. The Moon being eaten bite by little bite until a quarter of the Moon was gone and then giant bites until half of the Moon was gone. Soon the whole moon was gone and where it used to be hung, a black space of nothing. The Wind shook and cried and pleaded with the Moon:

WASSALIE

"I will give their songs back! I'll even give them back exactly how I found them! Oh, please, Moon. Please come back! I'll be good! I want to see my handiwork at night. I'll sing their songs to them as they sang them to me each morning and night. Moon! MOON! Moon? I'll go right now! Just come back please... I'll even promise to bring others songs to them from across the lands and back"

BAILEY

And Wind did... and the Mama and her son heard of each other, from each other, through the Wind. Mother and Son embrace like long lost relatives. The Moon after seeing what the Wind did, came back slowly a little bit at a time.

Anastasia turns around slowly as the next portion of dialogue is spoken.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

And that is the reason that the Moon disappears every month. It is to make sure that the songs on the Wind's person are carried back to the rightful owners. You can still hear some of the songs, sometimes, on lonely moonless nights. That is what they say.

Marie Alice and Nickolai sing in Yup'ik with smiles and exaggerated happy and upbeat movements.

MARIE ALICE AND STEVEN NICKOLAI

(they sing in Yup'ik)

We are happy like children. Our hearts jump with gladness. We are happy like a hunter providing for their family. Our hearts jump with gladness. We are happy like a mother giving gifts. We are happy together again!

Everyone laughs and applauds.

JUDGE YAHGEN

I didn't understand a word you said but I understood... everything!

EXT. SIDE WALK CAFE - DAY

Eric sits, in civilian dress, with Trooper Johns, drinking coffee.

ERIC

Yep! Suspended.

TROOPER JOHNS

(teasing)

Could never leave well enough alone, ay, Eric?

ERIC

I'm still going out.

TROOPER JOHNS

What?! How? Can't take the Trooper's Cessna.

ERIC

Nah. Don't need to. I fly my own Supercub.

TROOPER JOHNS
Don't tell me anything!

ERIC
I don't know anything! I don't know
where he is. I don't know where she
is. I just camp out and hope she
brings him back.

EXT. SOD HOUSE YARD - DAY

Judge and Irene squat at the edge of the sod house yard
looking out across the snowy tundra.

The kids, behind them, tell another story with big actions in
it. Anastasia and Bailey act it out. All of them laugh and
giggle, generally having a good time.

JUDGE YAHGEN
I've enough information to make my
decision.

IRENEA
Will I have to go in with you?

JUDGE YAHGEN
I think I have enough information.

IRENEA
When do you want to leave?

EXT. SMALL RISE - DAY

Late in the day, Irene shakes the judge's hand with one
pump.

JUDGE YAHGEN
You didn't have to come all this
way.

IRENEA
If I didn't and something happened
to you...

JUDGE YAHGEN
Aahh! I hadn't thought of that.
(pause)
I...
(softly, resolute)
I see you. I see you.
(MORE)

JUDGE YAHGEN (CONT'D)

(beat)
Send word.

IRENEA

(a slight smile graces her
face)
Piurraa. (goodbye)

She watches as the Judge makes the last leg of their winter journey to Eric's campsite by himself.

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

A press conference is in full swing. Trooper Dalton, Ms. Matthews and several other officials answer questions at a bank of microphones.... The questions come rapid fire.

TROOPER DALTON

-been unable to locate the body of
Judge Malachai James Yahgen.
Kidnapped by one Irene George.

PRESS 1

Is it true that she is also wanted
in the kidnapping of local
children.

TROOPER DALTON

Yes. She is wanted in connection
with the willful endangerment and
unlawful imprisonment of 5 local
children

PRESS 2

Is this now a murder investigation?

TROOPER DALTON

Yes-

PRESS 3

How did she kidnap him?

TROOPER DALTON

She lured him to a campsite and-

PRESS 2

Is it true that there was an
officer suspended in connection to
the investigation.

TROOPER DALTON

Yes.

PRESS 4
Will they be charged?

TROOPER DALTON
No comment.

PRESS 1
How come you couldn't find them?

Judge Yahgen and Eric walk into the press conference still dressed in their hunting garb, disheveled for lack of shower facilities at a hunting camp. A pistol strapped to each of their sides.

JUDGE YAHGEN
Because Western Alaska is the size
of everything west of Mississippi
on a good day.

The press corp. gives a collective gasp and murmurs. Three reporters leave in a hurry. The rest stick microphones in Judge Yahgen's face and rapid fire questions ensue.

PRESS 3
How did you escape?

PRESS 4
Is Mrs. George dead?

PRESS 1
How did you survive?

PRESS 2
Are our children in danger?

The judge tries to smooth down his terrible bed head and glances at Eric who has a silly grin on his face as he fades back into the crowd. Ms. Matthews and Trooper Dalton look at one another, apprehensive.

JUDGE YAHGEN
Officer Eric Randall was kind
enough to give me a lift in his
puddle jumper.

The gaggle of reporters try to continue to ask questions as the Judge turns to go.

Cries of "Here!", "Give us a statement!" and "Judge Yahgen!"
Come from the press corp.

Ms. Matthews and Trooper Dalton begin to skulk out of the room but seeing no prey in the judge the reporters turn to them.

PRESS 2

Will this change the nature of your investigation?-

PRESS 4

What will Yvette Matthews be charged with?-

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Court in full session. For the State, Ms. Matthews, MR. WHITZEL, a short but shrewd lawyer in an expensive suit - he sits apart from the two women not wanting to get burned - and MRS. MITCHELL, Ms. Matthews youngish nervous female trainee, She takes a set of papers from Ms. Matthews and places it in a file stacked upon other files. She gives a look of relief when Ms. Matthews stands. Ms. Matthews is dismissive-

MS. MATTHEWS

Look. She went missing. She stole children. She has no paperwork. Your. Honor.

Judge Yahgen brings himself under control before he speaks.

JUDGE YAHGEN

Family is important, Ms Matthews.

MS. MATTHEWS

But she had no papers. No authority to have those children.

JUDGE YAHGEN

They were entrusted to her by their respective families.

Ms. Matthews turns to Mr. Whitzel.

MS. MATTHEWS

Will you try and talk some sense into him?

Looking smug, MR. WHITZEL is glad, finally able to turn the tables on her.

MR. WHITZEL

I have no authority here. I am just here to make sure the law is upheld. You, yourself, tell me this every time we walk into court.

JUDGE YAHGEN

Ms. Matthews, Do you have anything pertinent to add? Any facts?

MS. MATTHEWS

Weelllll. I checked her relatives. I have found great homes for the-

JUDGE YAHGEN

Homes?

MS. MATTHEWS

Yes. Good, well vetted, American homes.

JUDGE YAHGEN

American homes? I guess I did assume you wouldn't be selling them overseas.

MS. MATTHEWS

Eh? Excuse me? They are going to Americans.

JUDGE YAHGEN

Are they immediate family?

MS. MATTHEWS

No.

JUDGE YAHGEN

Extended family?

MS. MATTHEWS

No

JUDGE YAHGEN

Tribal members?

MS. MATTHEWS

What? No, they are good American citizens-

JUDGE YAHGEN

Who have some sort of affiliation with the George family?

MS. MATTHEWS

Well, no. They don't need-

JUDGE YAHGEN

Did you look at her residence?

The Judge looks over at Mrs. Mitchell.

JUDGE YAHGEN (CONT'D)

Did she, Ms.?

MRS. MITCHELL

Mrs. Mitchell. Looked to have adequate food, room, even toys. All very clean, which Ms. Matthews says is unusual.

Ms. Matthews gives her a withering look.

MS. MATTHEWS

We have homes for them. As soon as the court awards them to me - To social services - we can get them into loving homes. They might have to work for their upkeep but they'll have food and shelter.

JUDGE YAHGEN

Ms. Matthews, you are trying my patience. Mr. Whitzel? Have you talked to the children, yourself?

MR. WHITZEL

No, sir. I read Ms. Matthew's report.

JUDGE YAHGEN

Does the State have facilities available?

MR. WHITZEL

A foster home for the young girl, um, Bailey. Youth Correction Center for the boys. A group facility for the other young girl... In, um... Compton, California.

JUDGE YAHGEN

And the oldest?

MR. WHITZEL

The oldest? She is none of our concern. She is of age.

JUDGE YAHGEN

Oh?

(pause)

Has anyone seen the family?

Ms. Matthews begins to speak.

JUDGE YAHGEN (CONT'D)

After they moved?

MS. MATTHEWS

Well, no-

(beat)

Excuse me, Your Honor, I tried-

JUDGE YAHGEN

I must've walked through all of Alaska to get to her house.

MS. MATTHEWS

SEE! If she's hiding, she's a crimina-!

EXT. SOD HOUSE/CAMPFIRE - DAY

Gathering around the campfire in the morning, they sit the Native way, on their butts with their shoes off. Class is in session. They count the Yup'ik way - from their left pinky fingers to their right pinky fingers, crossing at the thumbs and then down to their right pinky toes and across both feet.

IRENEA

Say the numbers in sing song...

(these are the numbers 1-20)

MARIE ALICE, WASSALIE, STEVEN

NICKOLAI, ANASTASIA AND BAILEY

Atauciq, malruk, pingayun, cetaman,
talliman, arvinlegen, malrunlegen,
pingayunlegen, qulngunritaraan,
qula, qula atauciq, qula malruk,
qula pingayun, akmiarunritaraan,
akimiaz, akimiaz atauciq, akimiaz
malruk, akimiaz pingayun,
yuinaunritaraan. Yuinaq

IRENEA

Steven, quickly, 32 X 100!

Wassalie, 15 X 30!

STEVEN NICKOLAI

3200

WASSALIE

460

IRENEA

(to Wassalie)

No can't be...must end in a 5 or zero before the tens are used. Count again.

MARIE ALICE, WASSALIE, STEVEN

NICKOLAI, ANASTASIA AND BAILEY

Atauciq, malruk, pingayun, cetaman, talliman, arvinlegen, malrunlegen, pingayunlegen....

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JUDGE YAHGEN

Children need their parents, Ms. Matthews, and in these hard times Native children *need* their Native parents. What are the Reunification plans?

MS. MATTHEWS

I tried to get her signed up for services. Your Honor, without services how can she start the process of getting her children back? She's refused food stamps and the Quest Card-!

EXT. TUNDRA - DAY

Irenea and the kids are gathered around a caribou kill. She field dresses the caribou as she teaches the science of the body.

IRENEA

There is the liver and kidneys. Be careful not to cut the bladder, the spirit resides there. And if we cut here... and here... there's a sciatic nerve. All living beings that have legs have two. Next time we catch a fish we'll see if it has one also.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JUDGE YAHGEN

Ms. Matthews? What are your reunification and foster care reentry rates?

MS. MATTHEWS

Oh, They are very good, Your Honor! Family reunification is at 73% and my foster care reentry rates are below 20%

JUDGE YAHGEN

Are these rates across the board? What are your First Nations rates?

MS. MATTHEWS

I don't have those numbers, Your Honor.

JUDGE YAHGEN

Mrs. Mitchell? Mr. Whitzel? Do you have those numbers?

MRS. MITCHELL

Yes, Your Honor. Reunification for Alaska Native families is close to 15%.

MS. MATTHEWS

That's not true!

Judge Yahgen slams his gavel down.

JUDGE YAHGEN

No more outbursts Ms. Matthews! Do you know your rates or not?

MS. MATTHEWS

I'd rather not say....

JUDGE YAHGEN

Mr. Whitzel?

MR. WHITZEL

Yes, that's sounds about right.
(to Judge Yahgen)
Reentry rates are 80%.

JUDGE YAHGEN

Do you know why there is such a disparity?

MR. WHITZEL

Mostly because of the lack of services and the lack of collaboration with families, Your Honor.

MS. MATTHEWS

You are mistaken-

INT. SOD HOUSE - NIGHT

The girls show their beading to one another. The boys sew boots.

IRENEA

Marie Alice? Do you have the beading completed?

MARIE ALICE

Yes, Ma'am

IRENEA

ooh and it came out real good! Bailey are you finished with your boots? Can you show Steven how to make the waterproof stitch again.

WASSALIE

And why do we have to learn to sew? We're men! Men don't sew.

IRENEA

Says who? What happens when you don't have a wife? Who does the sewing for you then? What if your wife dies? How will your children learn these skills? Who will teach them if you don't know how? It's better that you know.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JUDGE YAHGEN

You are hereby ordered to cease and desist contact with this family. You are further ordered to remove any Indigenous Peoples from your case load. Compliance is to be immediate and this court will check that you have complied in...

Looks at his schedule

EXT. SOD HOUSE YARD - DAY

Bailey and Steven Nickolai sit alone while the others work and converse quietly in the background.

BAILEY

Over and... under and... through
this right here and then repeat.
Got it?

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JUDGE YAHGEN

...in 10 business days. If you
refuse to comply you will be
subject to jail time as you have
subjected your clients to unlawful
kidnapping and subsequent failure
to reunify indigenous families.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

The stars light up the night. As they lay on their backs looking up at the sky. Irene points up toward the sky.

IRENEA

That one, the North Star, we call
it Agyarllak. When you look up you
see Tanglurallret or "Those Made
With Snowshoes". When Raven brought
light to the first people, he wore
snowshoes and walked across there.
Westerners call it the Milky Way.

Beat

IRENEA (CONT'D)

That one over there they call The
Big Dipper. We call it Tunturyuk
because it is just like a tuntu - a
caribou cavorting around the sky.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JUDGE YAHGEN

Moreover, all of your case files
will be reviewed by an independent
impartial lawyer firm of this
courts choosing. So Ordered!

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY

Irenea and the children squat at a river bank looking at the many rocks that are on the ground. In Yup'ik:

IRENEA

These are igneous rock. I do not know their names. They haven't told me but know that everything has it's place and every place has it's thing. Perhaps this is the 'where' it needs be. The place they need to be.

STEVEN NICKOLAI

Why?

IRENEA

Why are you here? To learn... about yourself, your world, your ancestors, your ancestor worlds....

INT. SOD HOUSE - DAY

Irenea and the children sit mending/making a fish net and/or trap.

IRENEA

Wassalie, tell us how to do this.

WASSALIE

Place the cigyak (wood strips for fish trap) this way and then you put the egluq (sinew) through here and tighten it like this.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Judge Yahgen slams his gavel down.

INT. SOD HOUSE - DAY

Irenea and children are assembled to dance and drum with Steven Nickolai's drum. Steven drums softly. Marie Alice leads Anastasia, Bailey and Wassalie in a short invigorating Salmon Dance while Irenea sings the song. They laugh as it ends!

MARIE ALICE

My children are *so* going to learn this dance!

INT. COMMUNITY HOUSE - DAY

Inside a community house, 20 years later, a middle-aged Steven Nickolai drums with great gusto, having a grand time. Gathered around him are his wife and his children, as well as Bailey, Anastasia, Marie Alice and Wassalie, now adults, with their husbands, wives and children.

EXT. COMMUNITY HOUSE - DAY

Irenea is old. She sits on the porch of the community building in a homemade chair with ornate sewing in her lap. Benches line the front of the building on both sides of the door.

Eric sits in his chair whittling a small beaver toy. His polished and well-used walking stick with his mark on the rounded top, leans against the chair. They look up as an airplane takes off from the dirt runway beside the community house, the sound drowning out Steven Nickolai.

A moment later, Judge Yahgen walks up the path from the airstrip to the porch. He is definitely elderly. A young lady follows behind him with two backpacks. He shuffles over to Irenea and sits on the bench. She speaks to him in a heavy Alaska Native accent.

IRENEA

You made it.

JUDGE YAHGEN

If the world were ending, I'd still be here.

(He waves the woman behind him up)

Elsa. Elsa, come here. This is Irenea George. She's the reason I disappear.

ELSA

Nice to meet you, Mrs. George. He always comes back so rejuvenated.

IRENEA

He brings news of relatives from across the way.

JUDGE YAHGEN

Speaking of which: your Uncle Charlie's land went to Perry.

IRENEA

Perry? Which one.

JUDGE YAHGEN

On your mother's side. Alice's son.
He just got married to a girl from
Tanana. Baby girl on the way.

IRENEA

Ahhh. Tha's why I've been makin'
these.

Irenea gives a smug smile and hands the Judge a small pair of booties and an ornate hair barrette as Eric, knowing he has lost the "bet", laughs and puts away his whittling and stands up.

ERIC

I know I should never doubt your
intuition, Little Avelngaga (My
Little Mouse).

He bends down to kiss her.

IRENEA

Bailey, Bailey!

Bailey turns around with a giant smile. She is a beautiful young woman with a baby on her back, in her gaspeq. In Yup'ik:

BAILEY

Yes, Mama?

IRENEA

Bring me that paltuuk.

All giddy, Bailey replies.

BAILEY

(in accented English)
Oooo! Coming right up!

Bailey leaves to get the paltuuk (zippered coat), while the Judge and Irenea enter the community house to watch the festivities.

INT. COMMUNITY HOUSE - DAY

Bailey arrives with the ornate fur parka for Irenea.

Steven Nickolai stops his drumming and hands his drum to his son. Steven Nickolai, Marie Alice, Wassalie and Anastasia join Bailey and Irenea to gift the parka to the judge. It is white fur with an outline of a lightening bolt on the back.

IRENEA

For you. A lightning bolt that will match your personality when you get riled up. Everybody better just get back! Here come duh Judge!

They all break into laughter.

INT. COMMUNITY HOUSE - NIGHT

Participants dance the story of the children's and Irene's journey in a large multi-purpose room decorated with objects of Yup'ik life and spirituality - masks, the Circle and Dot motif and drums are most prominent - with Yup'ik song as words flash on the screen.

"Despite the Indian Child Welfare Act or ICWA passing Congress in 1978, problems persisted in Alaska from non-compliance, to not understanding or unwillingness to understand the cultures of the 5 major groups of Alaska Natives.

Some states were paid up to \$8,000 per adopted child - Law Offices of Michael H. Agranoff, Connecticut (2009)

About 800-1000 children entered foster care each year in Alaska from 2002-2010. - Children's Bureau (2010)

On average, more than 60% of Alaska children in state custody are Alaska Native - kidsthesedays.org (2010)"