

TOTEM

"Pure as Ice"

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FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

A primeval winter forest. AURORA BOREALIS shimmers up above, tinting the snow green. A FULL MOON hangs low in the trees.

ALTONA (V.O.)

In the Distant Time, all animals were man. All could talk and understand each other.

(beat)

Now, most have lost their speaking power and their ability to change shapes. Only the Horned Owl warns the shaman of the impending catastrophe... Only the shaman can understand her... And save us...

Sound of a WOLF HOWLING. Joined by another, and one more. The howls seem to harmonize into a HAUNTING MELODY.

SUPER: "INTERIOR ALASKA, 1975"

We MOVE with CAMERA deeper into the forest until we FIND a ramshackle--

GOLD RUSH LOG CABIN. Despite being on the verge of collapse, it's not abandoned... Faint light escapes from cracks between the logs. A thin trail of smoke coils from an iron chimney.

INT. GOLD RUSH CABIN - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON a fire burning in a crude rusted iron wood stove.

GIRL (O.S.)

For the pain...

A small trembling HAND with chipped red nail polish reaches into the fire and picks up a small, smooth STONE.

We PULL BACK to reveal--

A GIRL, 17, Athabaskan, sitting on the floor next to the stove. She's dressed in a shearling parka with bead and shell decorations. Behind her is a semi-circle of BURNING CANDLES and a BOTTLE OF VODKA. She's clearly DRUNK.

The Girl looks at her reddening fingers with awe, but doesn't drop the stone.

MAN (O.S.)

Go on now. This is the next step...
For the pain...

The Girl gathers her courage, then--

GIRL

I willingly eat the pain...

She puts the stone in her mouth, swallows, starts COUGHING.

We PULL BACK FURTHER to reveal that cracked wooden floor is covered with snow blown in through the broken windows.

There's a rough-hewn table with rusted cans and dusty glass bottles. Corroded pots and pans hang on the wall.

The Girl keeps COUGHING, panic in her eyes.

We REVERSE on a brightly painted wooden RAVEN MASK.

Suddenly, the Mask moves toward us. PULL BACK to behold--

RAVEN MAN

He wears a jumpsuit made of long, curly musk-ox hair and sleeves adorned with LONG, black feathers.

The Girl is still CHOKING.

Raven Man picks up a tin cup off the table and walks toward a metal bucket. He fills the cup with water, gives it to the Girl.

She drinks, heaving. DENSE WHITE SMOKE pours out of her mouth. Raven Man sits down next to her.

RAVEN MAN

You are a very brave girl.

GIRL

I'm not a girl... I'm a woman.

(takes a swig of vodka)

I'm ready.

The Girl plucks another stone out of the fire, stoicism and determination wrought on her face.

RAVEN MAN

Now, for the nightmares.

GIRL

I willingly eat the nightmares.

She pushes the stone down her throat. Takes a sip of water. Emits white smoke. Reaches for the vodka--

RAVEN MAN
You've had enough of that.

The Girl halts.

RAVEN MAN (CONT'D)
Last one is for his sins. The
heaviest of all.

The Girl plucks a bigger stone out of the fire.

GIRL
I take on the weight of his sins.

She swallows the stone with difficulty. Breathes roughly.
Looks up at Raven Man with expectation.

RAVEN MAN
You've done it. He is free now.

The Girl smiles through tears. Overwhelmed. Happy.

GIRL
Thank you. Thank you so much. I
brought the payment.

The Girl roots in the coat's pocket.

RAVEN MAN
You will repay me in a another way.

Raven Man gets up, unscrews the lid off a GASOLINE CONTAINER
and dips his finger into it. It comes up RED.

RAVEN MAN (CONT'D)
I've been searching long and hard
for a girl like you.

The Girl stands up, tipsy, getting nervous now.

GIRL
You have?

Raven Man comes toward her, his bloody finger outstretched.

RAVEN MAN
Now it's your turn to help me.

GIRL
I thought we were done.

RAVEN MAN
We are not done, my darling. Our
work is only beginning.

He draws a line with BLOOD on the now truly frightened Girl's forehead, starting with the left temple.

A bone-chilling CACKLE O.S. startles Raven Man and the Girl.

EXT. ALASKA FOREST - NIGHT

Raven Man lumbers out of the cabin. We hear his scared, ragged breaths.

RAVEN MAN'S POV through the masks's eye slits - A WHITE PTARMIGAN pecks something on the snow, takes off into the timber when suddenly we glimpse a--

LARGE ANIMAL FORM among the trees. It quickly disappears.

We hear a FAR-AWAY ROAR as a dark cloud blots out the moon.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

FULL MOON rolls out from behind a cloud to illuminate the snowy peaks of the Chugach Range. PULL BACK to--

DOWNTOWN ANCHORAGE as seen from Cook Inlet. Reflections of yellow and red lights shimmer in the water.

SUPER: "ANCHORAGE, ALASKA"

EXT. RUBY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

A sleek apartment building. SOUNDS of SHOWER RUNNING.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

A nicely-renovated bathroom. A curling iron sits warming on the sink. The SHOWER SHUTS OFF.

RUBY TAMBLYN-STEERWORTH steps out of the shower and wraps herself in a towel. She's mid-30s, Athabaskan Indian, long, black hair pinned up in a bun. A vulnerable beauty, she carries the weight of the world on her shoulders.

She clears the mist off the mirror, leans in to examine her face. Runs her finger over a small SCAR on her left temple. Notice a "tribal" TATTOO RING poking from under her wedding band.

She loosens a strand of heavy, straight hair from her bun and wraps it around the curling iron. She holds and waits.

MICHAEL STEERWORTH, mid-30s, white, peeks in. Ruby jumps, almost burning her cheek. Michael's clean-cut in a dress shirt and slacks.

MICHAEL

We gotta to leave in twenty minutes, hon.

RUBY

Almost ready.

Michael kisses her carefully on the other cheek, leaves. Ruby unclasps the curling iron. The curl now masks the scar.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ruby, dressed in jeans and a plaid shirt, her hair in bouncy curls now, throws the last of her clothes into a suitcase opened on the bed. The PHONE RINGS on the nightstand.

RUBY

(yells into another room)
Don't pick it up. I'm off duty.

She keeps packing hurriedly. The phone STOPS RINGING. Michael comes into the bedroom. Ruby clocks his concerned expression.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Your mother coming for a visit?

MICHAEL

It's Doctor Sizemore.

Ruby freezes. Hesitates. Goes to the nightstand and picks up the receiver. Michael watches her every move.

RUBY (ON THE PHONE)

Good morning, Doctor. Ruby speaking... Okay. That was quick.

Ruby's face falls. Her whole body slouches as it reacts to the bad news. Michael mirrors her. He knows what this means.

RUBY (ON THE PHONE) (CONT'D)

I see... Michael and I will have to talk about it... Yes. Thank you. Thank you for calling. Good-bye.

Ruby hangs up. Just stands there, staring into her suitcase.

Michael rushes to enclose Ruby in a desperately protective hug. She buries her face in his chest.

RUBY (CONT'D)

He said we should start talking about treatments.

MICHAEL

Okay. Then we'll make an appointment as soon as you're back.

RUBY

(after a pause)

Maybe I deserve this... for leaving my father all alone.

MICHAEL

Hon, this is not about who deserves what. Sometimes things just happen. It's life. You did what you thought was right...

RUBY

Michael, don't repeat the excuses I've told you over the years, okay? What do you think? Am I a monster?

MICHAEL

Of course no. I love you.

Ruby turns away from him.

RUBY

I don't think things just happen. Not the big things.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The Girl, her face streaked with blood, flees through the forest. Her unbuttoned shearling parka is also covered in blood. She looks back, stumbles, picks herself up. Keeps running.

She sees BRIGHT LIGHTS in the distance. Filled with hope, she pushes herself to run faster. Reaching the edge of the meadow, when--

BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG -- GUNSHOTS RING OUT

The Girl stops, her face frozen in terror.

INT. JEEP CHEROKEE - DARK MORNING - [DRIVING]

Michael drives his spanking-new JEEP CHEROKEE down an Anchorage street. He wears a spiffy peacoat over his business suit. Ruby's in the passenger seat, in a synthetic parka.

Michael takes her hand.

MICHAEL

I would love to see where you grew up. And isn't it about time I met your... extended family? I could fly in tomorrow--

RUBY

I won't be socializing. I even have a bad excuse for why I missed the funeral... I'll just clean out Dad's house, put it up for sale--

MICHAEL

I could help you with that, but you really should rent it out to the pipeliners. It'll go for four, five grand a month. By the time the pipeline's built, you'll have your retirement...

RUBY

Thanks for the numbers there. But I want to be done with that place, for good.

They pull up at the Anchorage airport.

EXT. ANCHORAGE AIRPORT - OUTSIDE JEEP - DARK MORNING

Michael pulls Ruby's suitcase out of the trunk. They hug.

MICHAEL

Hurry back home, hon.

Ruby nods and rushes off to the terminal.

EXT. INTERIOR ALASKA - AERIAL SHOT - MORNING

As we FLY OVER, a sliver of sunrise casts pink light over the dark snowy peaks of Denali.

INT. FAIRBANKS AIRPORT - MORNING

Ruby rolls her suitcase through the airport, mobbed with people wearing cowboy clothes or business suits. Suddenly--

Her vision blurs for a moment. Her ears begin to ring. She puts her hand to her temple -- a strange headache. But it passes quickly.

EXT. FAIRBANKS AIRPORT - DAY

Ruby comes out of the airport. It's so cold we can see her breath. She pulls her scarf up to cover her face and drags her suitcase to an IDLING CAB, tailpipe steaming.

INT. CAB - DAY

Ruby climbs in. A RADIO PRATTLES in the b.g.

CABBIE

Where to?

RUBY

State Troopers.

CABBIE

In trouble already?

RUBY

Can't seem to stay out of it.

Cabbie GUNS the MOTOR and peels away from the airport.

EXT. FAIRBANKS SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

We FOLLOW the CAB as it drives down a snowy suburban street lined with spruce trees. Tail lights of other cars flicker in and out of the dense ice fog ahead. And then our cab DISAPPEARS COMPLETELY into the white.

INT. CAB - DAY - [DRIVING]

The cab drives as if in a cloud. Ruby endures a bumpy ride.

SAM ROOKS (ON THE RADIO)

*--my favorite bunion woke me up
this morning, throbbing and cursing
like a Texan. We're in for a long
winter, Sourdoughs and Cheechakos.
And everyone's sure keeping
themselves busy despite hibernation
temperatures...*

Ruby takes off her parka hood and rubs away the vestiges of the headache. Red blotches have appeared on her hands. She itches her skin hard, examines her rash with curiosity.

She pulls on one of her hair strands. It's back to its natural stick straight condition.

SAM ROOKS (ON THE RADIO) (CONT'D)

*Ladies of the night're soliciting
union representation.*

(MORE)

SAM ROOKS (ON THE RADIO) (CONT'D)
*We got a car unplugged on the
 loose... riots on Two Street...
 rapes at gunpoint. And a frozen
 puddle of vomit on--*

Off Ruby: things have changed at home...

EXT. TROOPERS STATION - DAY

Ruby gets out of the cab, drags her suitcase toward the entrance. Behind her, something small FALLS from the sky.

CLOSE ON A CHICKADEE on the ground, FROZEN TO DEATH.

INT. TROOPERS STATION - RECEPTION - DAY

Ruby comes up to the UNIFORMED TROOPER at the reception desk, flashes him her badge.

RUBY
 Sergeant Donovan's expecting me.

TROOPER
 He's in his office. Wait, let me see that again.

Ruby gives him her badge.

TROOPER (CONT'D)
 Tamblyn, Tamblyn... the name sounds familiar.

RUBY
 My dad used to be a Trooper here. A long time ago.

TROOPER
 Oh yes.
 (realizes...)
 Oh... My condolences. Awful the way he died.

RUBY
 There a good way go to?

TROOPER
 (taken aback a bit)
 No, m'am.

He gives her back the badge and waves her in.

INT. TROOPERS STATION - BULLPEN - DAY

Ruby walks through a busy bullpen. UNIFORMED TROOPERS are answering phones, handling DRUNKS, PROSTITUTES, PIMPS.

CHUBBY TROOPER
Ruby Tamblyn, that you?

RUBY
Hey, Frank.

DORIS CALLAHAN, 70s, the station's ancient secretary, rises slowly from her desk next to the corner office. The plaque on the slightly ajar door reads: "SERGEANT LOUIS DONOVAN."

RUBY (CONT'D)
Hello, Doris.

DORIS
Goodness, Ruby. All grown up.

RUBY
(endeared)
I've been grown up for a while now.

DORIS
No, dear... No, little soul, you haven't... And neither was your little sister. Come'ere.

Doris hobbles out from behind the desk. They hug.

Ruby glances through the opened door into the office--

LOUIS DONOVAN is instructing a YOUNG TROOPER, who looks barely out of high school.

DORIS (CONT'D)
Go on in. He's been waiting for you.

INT. TROOPERS STATION - DONOVAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ruby walks in, pauses at the door.

Donovan looks away from the Young Trooper, his face brightens. He's 60s, lean, head of Major Crimes Unit, a weary face creased by laughter lines. And weary laughter is his attitude toward life, generally.

DONOVAN
Ruby.
(to Young Trooper)
Let me know as soon as you bring him in.

YOUNG TROOPER

Yes, sir.

The Young Trooper tips his hat to Ruby and leaves.

DONOVAN

I'm so sorry...

Donovan encloses Ruby in a bear hug.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

When I heard what happened, I told
the boys to impound it right here.

(difficult beat)

He was found by your sister's
grave. Fifty below that day.

Ruby takes this in painfully.

RUBY

I couldn't make the funeral, was
taking a criminal psychology
workshop in Quantico.

DONOVAN

Sherrod tells me you're quite the
rising star down in sunny
Anchorage. We're all very proud of
you.

RUBY

Thanks.

The TELEPHONE RINGS. Donovan ignores it.

DONOVAN

How are things otherwise? How's the
husband?

RUBY

Good. I'm very lucky. He's a good
man. Very reliable.

DONOVAN

That's very important. In a man...
and a truck in Alaska.

The TELEPHONE KEEPS RINGING. Then STOPS.

RUBY

Jeez, Louis, I didn't know that.

Doris pops her head into the office.

DORIS
It's Jensen.

DONOVAN
I'll call him in ten.

Doris nods, disappears.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)
Speaking of reliable trucks. Let's
go, I'll get you the Ole Faithful.

EXT. LOT BEHIND TROOPERS STATION - DAY

Ruby and Donovan, carrying Ruby's suitcase, walk out the station's back door.

They walk up to a beat-up CHEVY PICK-UP TRUCK parked next to several police vehicles.

DONOVAN
How long you around for? Bev would
love to cook you a nice meal.

RUBY
Got just a couple of days off work.
It's better if I don't linger...

DONOVAN
(hands her the keys)
I understand.

Ruby opens the truck's door, leans in. She closes her eyes and inhales the scent of the steering wheel -- place her father's hands last touched.

A small plastic PICTURE FRAME hangs off the rearview mirror. Inside is a photo of two girls: Ruby and her sister. Feelings of grief and anger flood Ruby's face. She shuts the door.

RUBY
Did your boys clean the bottles out
of the truck, too?

Donovan's silence means yes. A beat.

DONOVAN
I'm so sorry, Ruby. About
everything. He's at peace now.

RUBY
Doubt it.

DONOVAN

Come back and see me before you
skip town.

RUBY

I will. Say hello to Bev for me.

Ruby watches Donovan walk back to the office, then gets into the truck and starts it up.

INT. RUBY'S TRUCK - DAY

Ruby rounds the station, drives through the parking lot on her way to the exit when--

THONK THONK THONK! A frazzled Athabaskan WOMAN bangs on the window, running alongside the truck.

A HEADACHE, this time more violent, blurs Ruby's vision. Her EARS RING again.

Ruby brakes, struggles to regain composure. Rolls down her window.

It's LAEL ATORUK, Ruby's former best friend. Mid-30s, Lael wears her middle-class status like an ill-fitting garment.

LAEL

It's you... When I saw the truck moving, thought a ghost must be driving it. Why weren't you at the funeral?

RUBY

I had to go down to the FBI academy--

LAEL

Right. You're a big shot detective now... We heard.

RUBY

I was gonna call you, Lael, to catch up. As soon as I finished some things...

Lael RUNS around Ruby's truck and gets in.

LAEL

Sylvie's missing.

RUBY

What?

LAEL

She was studying in her room when I went to bed last night. This morning she's gone. I found a note on her desk, went straight to Roger. That's her boyfriend... ex-boyfriend. He said they broke up. He's older, a Vietnam vet. He swears he didn't see her last night. Nobody's heard from her...

RUBY

It's only been a few hours, right? What did the note say?

LAEL

Not to worry. But I can't. Troopers said to come tomorrow if she doesn't show. They're up to their necks in bar fights and shoot-outs.

Ruby watches as Lael palms the photograph hanging off the rearview mirror, not sure what to say.

LAEL (CONT'D)

Let's go get some coffee. Catch up, I'll show you the note. If you're not too busy with the FBI, of course.

(beat)

Please.

Off Ruby: can't say no.

INT. DINER - DAY

Ruby and Lael sit at the table of a crowded diner. Lots of YOUNG MEN swaggering in shiny RED JACKETS with yellow "ALYESKA OIL CO." lettering on the back. Ruby holds SYLVIE'S NOTE, still wearing gloves.

RUBY

"Mom and dad, don't worry. I will be back soon. It's for true love."

LAEL

She could've frozen to death, or been run over. Or what if she--

Ruby flinches, knowing what Lael's hinting at.

RUBY

No. No. Sylvie's note doesn't sound like that at all.

Lael nods.

LAEL

You're right. If it's for true love, then Roger must know something.

RUBY

There's nothing about him in the note. If they broke up, maybe she ran off with someone new?

LAEL

A total stranger? She wouldn't do this to me.

RUBY

So then she'll come back, like her note says. What does Steve say?

LAEL

(shaking her head)
Steve doesn't even know she's missing. He left in the morning to go hunting.

A VERY YOUNG WAITRESS brings them coffee.

WAITRESS

Ya know, ya coulda got that to go.

The Waitress hurries off.

LAEL

(re: waitress)
We have a child labor force now. Adults're all gone pipelining.

RUBY

I can talk to Sergeant Donovan, but she wouldn't be considered a missing person yet. She's not a kid.

LAEL

Considered? Don't go white on me, Ruby. I've had enough of rules and regulations to last a lifetime.

Ruby takes off her gloves, wraps her blotchy hands around the cup. Lael notices the rash and the wedding ring. Pulls an OINTMENT TUBE from her bag, gives it to Ruby.

LAEL (CONT'D)

Looks like your hands forgot what
real winters are like. Use this.
For dry skin.

(beat)

So you finally got married?

RUBY

(rubbing in the cream)

Yes.

LAEL

You have children?

RUBY

No yet.

LAEL

A mother always has a gut feeling.
And my gut tells me there's
something wrong with Sylvie. Help
me, please. Like only you can.

RUBY

They have great detectives here.

Lael takes out a FIGURINE of a woolly mammoth made of ivory
and gold. Gives it to Ruby.

LAEL

Barry Aroyans made this for
Sylvie's birthday last year. She
works part-time at Aurora. And
together they made a little baby
mammoth to go with it. It was her
most treasured thing. It's gone
now. She must've taken it. Maybe
you could...

RUBY

What?

LAEL

Use your powers...

RUBY

What powers?

LAEL

(hesitating)

You could see things other people
couldn't. You found Uncle Moses'
stolen canoe. It called you, you
told me yourself.

RUBY

I was a child. My imagination ran wild.

Ruby scratches her rash again.

LAEL

I believed you. Was jealous even. She's gonna be something special, I thought, something more than all of us.

RUBY

I have a good husband. A good job where I am respected. I have more than I ever dreamed of.

LAEL

How many drunk Natives did you have to arrest before they promoted you? Maybe it's good you weren't here for your dad...

Ruby looks away, hurt.

RUBY

You have a strange way of asking for help, Lael...

LAEL

She's seventeen, like Amanda was. She is a kid.

(beat)

Don't you wish someone would've looked for your sister right away?

Lael takes a PHOTO out of her bag. A handsome COUPLE pose prom-style at a military ball. The man is in full parade uniform. We recognize the Girl from the teaser. She wears a long formal dress, her hair in an elaborate updo.

Ruby looks at the photo.

LAEL (CONT'D)

That's Roger.

Lael nods. Ruby gives back the photo to Lael, along with the mammoth figurine and gets up. Lael thrusts the photo back into Ruby's hands.

LAEL (CONT'D)

Take the photo, please.

RUBY

You know, my dad just died and you haven't even offered me condolences. I'm here to deal with his house and go home. I'll see you at the potlatch if you're coming.

On Lael. *Fuck.*

EXT. FORESTED ROAD - DAY

Ruby's truck drives down a narrow forested road.

INT. RUBY'S TRUCK - DAY [DRIVING]

Ruby steers. Three bouquets of fresh flowers lie on the passenger seat.

Suddenly an ANIMAL dashes out of the trees, right in front of the truck. THUMP. Ruby hits the brakes.

RUBY

Shit.

EXT. FORESTED ROAD / OUTSIDE TRUCK - DAY

Ruby runs out of the truck. On the side of the road is a--

FOX, bleeding from its mouth. Ruby crouches next to it, distraught. The Fox stares at Ruby with its fearful eye, twitches one last time. Dies.

Ruby pats the Fox's matted fur, wrecked by this senseless death.

RUBY

I'm so sorry...

She pushes the Fox gently off the road, heads to the truck.

Changes her mind. Returns to the Fox. Gingerly lifts it and puts it in the bed of her truck.

EXT. NATIVE CEMETERY - DAY

Ruby's truck pulls up next to a snowed over cemetery. Ruby gets out the car, takes the flowers.

She walks between the low, brightly-colored boxes in the shapes of houses with peaked roofs and intricately-cut boards poking through the snow. These are spirit houses. Christian crosses are attached to the tops.

She stops by a WHITE-AND-YELLOW SPIRIT HOUSE, surrounded by fresh dirt. The plaque reads: "JOHN TAMBLYN, 1912-1975. WAIT IN PEACE."

Ruby stares at it, full of grief.

Next to it is a SPIRIT HOUSE resembling a sleeping beauty castle, its blue paint chipped. Ruby squats, brushes the snow off a metal plaque on the ground which reads: "AMANDA TAMBLYN, 1945-1962. COME BACK SOON." And next to this one is an even older, pale red SPIRIT HOUSE, its plaque reading: "ROSE TAMBLYN, 1920-1950."

Ruby puts a bouquet on each grave. Then she lies down between her sister and her dad, closes her eyes. Listens to the wind in the trees, the sounds of the forest...

FLASHBACK - EXT. NATIVE CEMETERY - DAY

Young John Tamblyn, 38, Ruby, 10, and Amanda, 5, stand in front of Rose Tamblyn's freshly-painted red spirit house.

YOUNG AMANDA

*Where do people go when they die,
papa?*

YOUNG JOHN TAMBLYN

*If they were good, they go to
heaven, Amanda. Like mamma.*

YOUNG RUBY

*That's not what Grandma said. If
you die peacefully, she said, your
first soul goes up the Yukon River
to good Land of the Dead. There it
will wait to be born again as a
little baby. But if you die in big
pain, then it goes to bad Land of
the Dead and your shadow soul will
fight to avenge your death...*

YOUNG AMANDA

*(worried)
So where will mamma go?*

John Tamblyn shoots Ruby an accusatory look.

YOUNG JOHN TAMBLYN

*(to Amanda)
Mamma will go to heaven, Amanda.
Don't you worry.*

EXT. NATIVE CEMETERY - DAY

A strange WHISPER IN THE WIND. Ruby opens her eyes.

A FOX stands next to Amanda's grave, staring straight at Ruby. Beat. The Fox runs off into the forest. Ruby looks after it with curiosity.

EXT. CEMETERY / OUTSIDE TRUCK - DAY

Ruby comes up to her truck and starts to get in. But something stops her. She gets out and comes up to the truck's bed. Looks in: the Fox has DISAPPEARED.

RUBY

What the hell...

Ruby looks back at the cemetery. No fox there either. Just silent graves covered in snow.

EXT. TAMBLYN HOUSE - DAY

Ruby pulls up to her father's house, a one-story clapboard cabin. Gets out, drags her suitcase toward the door.

She clocks an OLD SNOWMACHINE under a pile of snow, comes up to it, brushes off some snow. A sad smile.

INT. TAMBLYN HOUSE - VARIOUS - DAY

Ruby enters the **HALLWAY**, shivering, tries the lights. They don't work. She takes a few steps and stumbles into a **COLUMN** of newspapers, which crashes down like an avalanche. Smile's gone now.

In the **LIVING ROOM**, Ruby manages to pull up one blind. The rest are stuck down. Dust swirls in the twilight like snow.

We FOLLOW Ruby as she examines the house's damage and desperation. Empty liquor bottles and beer cans everywhere, fast food containers, more newspapers, clothes...

She pauses in front of a shelf overstuffed with books, journals, encyclopedias, board games. Pulls out a **BOOK OF ATHABASKAN MYTHS**, leafs through the dog-eared pages.

FLASHBACK - INT. TAMBLYN HOUSE - NIGHT

John Tamblyn reads from the same book to Ruby, 10, and Amanda, 5, in front of the roaring fireplace.

YOUNG AMANDA

*But if Raven made women out of men,
who made men?*

YOUNG JOHN TAMBLYN
*These are just stories, daughter.
 God made men.*

YOUNG RUBY
*Some stories are true. I saw the
 Foggy Man myself. Near the school.*

INT. TAMBLYN HOUSE - VARIOUS - DAY

Ruby closes the book, walks to the fireplace and examines the DUSTY PHOTOS: two girls bundled up in furs in a dog sled; young Rose Tamblyn in an Alaska Territorial Guard uniform; young John Tamblyn and Louis Donovan in front of a patrol car, next to which a BULL MOOSE stands nonchalantly...

She stops by a closed door with a PAPER SIGN still taped to it that reads: "AMANDA'S ROOM. ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK."

Ruby puts her hand on the handle... then takes it away. Instead, she goes to the--

HALLWAY, picks up the handset of a PHONE on the wall. Dials.

RUBY (ON THE PHONE)
 Lael. It's Ruby. Anything from
 Sylvie?

LAEL (O.S.) (ON THE PHONE)
 No. I called all the hospitals,
 shelters, motels. Canadian border
 patrol. Course they can't tell one
 Native girl from another...

RUBY (ON THE PHONE)
 Where does this ex-boyfriend of
 hers live in case I wanted to pay a
 visit? Roger--

LAEL
 Roger Silvers. Chalet Apartments. A
 new building downtown. Does this
 mean you'll help me?

Off Ruby--

INT. TROOPERS STATION - DONOVAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Ruby knocks on the door, cracks it open. Donovan's on the phone, motions for her to come in.

DONOVAN (ON THE PHONE)
 Can't the crew work on something
 else for now... Alright, I'll see
 what I can do.

Donovan hangs up.

RUBY
 My friend Lael Atoruk tried to file
 a missing person's report this
 morning for her daughter. Anyone
 looking into?

Ruby tears at the rash on her hands.

DONOVAN
 I saw Lael. I don't have manpower
 to go chasing after every runaway
 girl who had a fight with mom. And
 we've got a pipeline shooter now.
 If she isn't back within a couple
 of days--

RUBY
 You know it could be too late
 then... You know it, Louis.
 (beat)
 By the way, found this at Dad's.
 You should have it.

Ruby gives Louis the photo of him and John Tambllyn with the
 moose. Donovan stares at the photo, smiles.

DONOVAN
 Before Statehood. We were
 Territorial Police then, chasing
 bootleggers and illegal trappers.

RUBY
 I've heard those stories. Dad
 always said you were the most
 honorable white man he'd met.

Donovan chuckles.

DONOVAN
 That's high praise indeed.
 (beat)
 I'll make you a deal. If you go
 check out the pipeline vandalism,
 I'll put out an APB on Sylvie.

RUBY

Louis, I told you, I only have a couple of days to take care of everything--

DONOVAN

I'll get you a temporary transfer. Look, I could really use some help here, and if, God forbid, anything develops with Sylvie, you'd be the first to know.

A long moment as Ruby considers.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

That reliable husband of yours can miss you for a few extra days, can't he? It's good for a husband from time to time.

Ruby smiles.

RUBY

Suppose it can't hurt for a wife either.

DONOVAN

Great. I want you to ride out with someone very special.

INT. TROOPERS STATION - BULLPEN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Donovan and Ruby walk out of the office.

DONOVAN

Doris, issue Ruby a parka please.

Donovan and Ruby continue through the busy bullpen.

RUBY

Why can't I go alone? You said you don't have anyone.

They stop at a desk where NANCY BUCK is buried in paperwork. She's in her early 40s; her Southern Belle looks mask her toughness. But only at first. She's fire to Ruby's ice.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Oh, I see--

DONOVAN

Trust me. It's safer that way. Those boys can get a little wild out there.

Nancy looks up.

NANCY

Howdy, boss. And who's this? Tall as a totem pole.

Ruby cringes at this.

DONOVAN

Investigator Ruby Tamblyn, second female trooper in all Alaska. On loan from Anchorage.

(to Ruby)

Nancy Buck, first female trooper in the Union. She went first and she went biggest. Chose Alaska over her native Texas. Been with us for eight years.

Ruby and Nancy shake hands, sizing each other up.

NANCY

Thas right. You can drive a girl outta Texas, but her Pointy-Toed compatriots just follow her right up north.

DONOVAN

Speaking of. Someone shot up a section of the pipe at a work site twenty miles up Elliot Highway. I want you two to check it out.

NANCY

We have the oxy task force meeting in half hour--

DONOVAN

I'll catch you up. Just do a quick run while it's light out. For now you're all the bullets I got in the chamber.

RUBY

(joking)

You sure it's wise to send even more bullets pipeline's way?

Donovan stares, then gets it. Chuckles.

DONOVAN

You two will get along, I think.

Doris arrives with an Alaska State Troopers (AST) parka.

DORIS

Try this on for a size, honey.

INT. CRUISER - DAY [DRIVING]

Nancy drives the cruiser through traffic-jammed downtown. Ruby's in the passenger seat, her straight hair in a tight bun, her TEMPLE SCAR showing. Both wear parkas, badges on chains. Visibility close to nil due to ice fog. SOUNDS OF SIRENS.

Ruby stares out the window. As the curtain of fog lifts, she sees in SLOW-MO:

An EVANGELIST preaching next to WORKING GIRLS... Two PEOPLE drinking out of a wine bottle... A CHILD spits and watches his saliva turn into an icicle and SHATTER on the ground. TWO GIRLS -- one taller, one shorter -- WITH LONG RAVEN BRAIDS walk down the street, holding hands...

NANCY (O.S.)

So, you from Anchorage?

Ruby jolts back to reality, and to Nancy's appraising gaze.

RUBY

I grew up here. Majored in engineering at UAF before the Academy. Five years in patrol. Two in major crime.

Nancy nods, impressed.

NANCY

What brings you back?

RUBY

Filling in a personnel shortage.

NANCY

That's nice of ya. We're certainly strapped for bodies here.

RUBY

Let's hope that's not true.

Off Nancy, piqued by this new person.

EXT. NORTH SLOPE HAUL ROAD - A BIT LATER

The Cruiser drives on a highway, framed by endless forest. This winterscape would be tranquility epitomized if it wasn't for the NONSTOP TRAFFIC of giant multi-trailer RIGS loaded with 80-foot lengths of pipe.

INT. CRUISER - SAME TIME

Nancy steers like a badass. She turns on the RADIO.

SAM ROOKS (ON THE RADIO)
*--in other Texan news, a welder
 from Oklahoma had himself a little
 heart attack after a Polar
 Plunge... his cowboy hat also
 suffered frostbite--*

RUBY
 This the only show on the radio?

NANCY
 I enjoy Mr. Sam Rooks' entertaining
 dispatches throughout the day. He's
 new and courtin' the town like a
 boy in love.

SAM ROOKS (ON THE RADIO)
*--and now a message from Kristy and
 Rob Hendricks, 12 and 8, to their
 parents on the Slope. 'We're
 running out of food, plumbing is
 frozen. Please contact us'--*

NANCY
 And not so entertaining... Whatta
 mess. Ya'd think we're under siege.

Nancy turns down the radio.

RUBY
 Children should be taught to fend
 for themselves.

NANCY
 Agreed.

RUBY
 And by the way, haven't you been
 here long enough to know that
 Athabaskans don't make totem poles?

NANCY
 The poles're down south. On the
 panhandle, right?

RUBY
 Exactly.

NANCY

When I was just a piddlee' o thang
my daddy and I used to drive out to
the Apache Reservation over in New
Mexico. He started selling 'em
liquor during Prohibition. Was
fluent in Mescalero, which, if I
ain't mistaken, is Athabaskan?

Ruby nods.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Can you speak yer dialect?

RUBY

A few words... And what dialect are
you speaking?

NANCY

That would be pure Texarcana, m'am.
Long story... But I got a
dictionary if you require.

RUBY

I'll take it.

EXT. PIPELINE CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

A chaos of metal against pristine wilderness: A double row of
VERTICAL STEEL BEAMS snakes into the distance. 10-foot high
PILES of 48-INCH PIPE are stacked to the side. Longer
sections of pipe welded together lie nearby, some parts
covered by aluminum weather protection cabs.

Several SIDEBOOM TRACTORS, TRUCKS, other large equipment are
parked nearby. A YELLOW SCHOOL BUS IDLES a bit further off.

Nancy and Ruby pull in from an access road, leave the cruiser
running.

WITH NANCY AND RUBY as they get out and orient themselves.
Ruby's got a black, marbled notebook and a 35 mm camera.

NANCY

The moment Army hears of this,
they'll start readying to defend us
'gainst the Soviets. Or the A-rabs.
They'll take either.

Ruby and Nancy walk over to the school bus. Men's excited
faces grin at them through the frosted windows.

NANCY (CONT'D)

This should be fun.

The BUS DOOR PUFFS OPEN and out lumbers foreman PETER KANE, a burly man in a parka and a hard hat worn over a woolen hood. Nancy and Ruby show their badges. Kane bows to them as if they're guests of honor at a cotillion.

HECKLING SOUNDS from the bus until the DOOR HISSES closed.

KANE

(southern accent)

Welcome, ladies. Foreman Kane at yer service.

NANCY

Howdy. I'm Investigator Buck, this here's Investigator Tamblyn. We heard you got yourselves some holes in the pipe.

KANE

We sure do. Let me show you.

Kane leads Nancy and Ruby toward a welded pipe section laid out by the woods.

RUBY

When did crew start their shift?

KANE

Eight a.m. But the welders didn't move to that section until a couple of hours ago. We had ourselves some downtime due to mechanic fixin' a broke-down crane.

NANCY

And no one's here at night?

KANE

Can't station security on the eight-hundred-mile construction zone.

Ruby, Nancy, and Kane stop at the shot-up section of the pipe and examine the damage.

CLOSE ON SEVEN BULLET HOLES close to the top.

RUBY

The bullets must've gone through the pipe and lodged in the ground... Call us if you find any fragments once you move the pipe.

KANE

Yes, m'am.

Ruby takes several photos of the bullet holes.

NANCY

You mind looking for casings while
I talk to the crew?

RUBY

Go ahead.

Nancy and Kane walk towards the bus. Ruby examines the bullet holes once again, trying to estimate the direction of the shots, then walks to a HILLY OUTCROPPING about 400 yards away covered by trees.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Nancy's at the front of the bus, facing a rowdy group of pipeliners, who are predominantly from the south. The heater's going full-force. Some wear parkas, some have stripped down to flannel shirts or tees, but still have their woolen hats on.

Two are differentiated: FINLEY JONES, 40s, lean, face unnaturally lined, a mean glint in his eyes; and RON GARFIELD, 50s, affable, huge belly.

KANE

This here's Investigator Buck. Give
'er your ears.

RON GARFIELD

I'd gladly give 'er my ears and
something else too...

The bus EXPLODES in LEWD LAUGHTER.

NANCY

Settle down, gentlemen. You're not
on Two Street. Yet. Now, have any
of you heard of anyone making
threats against the pipeline?

FINLEY JONES

Alaskan longhairs at every camp I'd
been to. Some of them talked about
stockpiling dynamite.

RON GARFIELD

I heard that, too. Hard to tell who
was just funnin' and who's serious.

NANCY
Who mentioned dynamite?

KANE
(to Nancy)
Assure you dynamite is
secured.

RON GARFIELD
All of 'em longhairs did. At one
time or another.

NANCY
Do you remember any names?

RON GARFIELD
No, m'am. Can't remember every kite-
high crazy from thirty different
crews I worked already.

EXT. PIPELINE CONSTRUCTION SITE - OUTCROPPING - SAME TIME

Ruby climbs up on the rocky hill and finds TRACKS. Notices that snow's packed by a particular tree, like someone's been crouching there. She squats to examine the ground--

A BROKEN BRANCH. She picks it up--its stem is freshly severed.

Ruby searches around and finds SEVEN SPENT CASINGS. She takes photos, bags them. She's about to follow the tracks when a SOUND of distant CROAKING catches her attention.

RUBY'S POV -- beyond the construction site and the haul road is a snowy field, almost black now in the falling darkness.

And against the greenish sky is -- a FLOCK OF RAVENS swirling round and round like a small black tornado. It's an eerie sight. Ravens certainly don't fly in this formation.

RUBY watches for a while, disturbed. Then begins to follow the shooter's tracks. We can barely distinguish TWO LINES that sometimes cross each other.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - SAME TIME

NANCY
Has anyone seen any unauthorized
persons around the site?

RON GARFIELD
I seen a tall man and a buncha kids
hangin' round by the meadows
eastward. Coupla days back.

PIPELINER 1
Thas right. He came up to me, was
asking if we'd seen any caribou.

FINLEY JONES
 A commie environmentalist
 professor. Funny name, too.
 Foreign. Liquid... No, that's not
 it.

EXT. PIPELINE CONSTRUCTION SITE - FOREST - SAME TIME

Ruby has followed the foot tracks to a clearing where a car had been parked and then maneuvered out.

She follows the car tracks. A few hundred yards down, they join the haul road and get lost. Suddenly, Ruby sees the--

Red Fox, sitting across the road. Ruby's eyes narrow. Is this the same fox? It takes a few steps into the forest, then turns and looks at Ruby, as if beckoning her to follow.

On Ruby: that's stupid. She shakes it off, walks back to--

EXT. PIPELINE CONSTRUCTION SITE - A BIT LATER

Ruby walks up to Nancy, who's talking to a newly arrived Alyeska Private Security Investigator, JONATHAN STARK, 40s.

NANCY
 Jonathan Stark from Alyeska. And this is Investigator Tamblyn.

RUBY
 I found seven casings. In the outcropping there. The perp's a pretty good shot.

STARK
 Could be military. Plenty of disgruntled boys after 'Nam...

RUBY
 There were two pairs of tracks leading from where he shot. On the second line the fronts were deeper than backs, almost no imprint of the heel. He was sprinting back. I followed the tracks to where he parked his vehicle. He drove back to the haul road and turned toward Fairbanks.

NANCY
 That doesn't give us much...

STARK

We try and try to make Alaska a better place... Nothing's too good or expensive for the hard working pipelining citizen. And that's how we're treated.

(beat)

Let me know what you gather from this Lindquist.

Stark walks off toward the school bus.

NANCY

I radioed Sergeant Donovan. We're going to your alma mater.

As they head toward the cruiser, Ruby scans the sky. The tornado of ravens is now gone.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF FAIRBANKS - ESTABLISHING - EVENING

Modern white buildings populate university hill, behind which green AURORA BOREALIS has already begun its light show.

INT. UNIVERSITY OF FAIRBANKS - LINDQUIST'S OFFICE - EVENING

ASMUND LINDQUIST, a tall, spindly Swede in his mid-40s with yellow Einstein hair, sits at his desk opposite Nancy. Bit of a Cheshire cat air about him. Ruby examines his bookshelves.

LINDQUIST

I took my environmental biology class on a field trip there. We looked for signs of caribou crossings and moose foraging.

NANCY

Do you belong to any environmental groups?

LINDQUIST

The Wilderness Society. That a crime?

NANCY

The Wilderness Society opposed the pipeline in court.

LINDQUIST

If it wasn't for the environmental groups, the pipeline would end up a 800-mile trench filled with oil.

NANCY

Do you own a rifle?

LINDQUIST

Of course. Why exactly are you asking?

NANCY

Someone shot up a piece of pipe.

LINDQUIST

I've got better things to do.

WITH RUBY as she's browsing a stack of student papers. She finds one with Sylvie Atoruk's name typed in the corner. "A" and "BRAVA! COME TALK TO ME AFTER CLASS" is written in loopy handwriting in red ink. Ruby reacts with some alarm.

NANCY (O.S.)

Any bleedin'-hearts who hold an especially passionate grudge?

LINDQUIST (O.S.)

A lot of Alaskans consider that pipeline a foreign invasion.

Ruby joins the conversation.

RUBY

But it's not just about the caribou and moose, is it? It's about disturbing the moss, which means disturbing the permafrost, which means turning Alaska into one giant swamp. And I hear their oil leak detection system's a farce...

(beat)

By definition, it's impossible to build a clean pipeline, isn't it?

LINDQUIST

Those goons threatened to run my friend over with a Cat if he was caught cleaning up a spill. But at this point sabotage is not in our interests. We want the pipeline to work. Besides, a few holes would be a stupidly inefficient method to stop that monster.

(beat)

You should look to your own people, Officer Tamblyn. Cash economy's killing them, the land settlement won't save them--

RUBY
 (sarcastic)
 That's really the main problem--

NANCY
 We appreciate yer insights,
 Professor--

Ruby picks up Sylvie's STUDENT PAPER, shows it to Lindquist.

RUBY
 Do you have a special relationship
 with Sylvie Atoruk?

Lindquist's caught off guard, quickly composes himself. Nancy raises her brows at Ruby, but holds her tongue.

LINDQUIST
 Sylvie Atoruk is a student in my
 class. Why?

RUBY
 She's been reported missing this
 morning by her mother. When did you
 last see her?

LINDQUIST
 (worried)
 She missed class today. It's never
 happened before. She's one of my
 most talented and driven students.

INT. UNIVERSITY OF FAIRBANKS - HALLWAY [CONTINUOUS]

Ruby and Nancy walk down the hallway.

NANCY
 You didn't tell me about this case.

RUBY
 She's only been missing since this
 morning. Her mother has a bad
 premonition. Donovan promised to
 put out an APB if I help him out.

NANCY
 A premonition? This a new type of
 lead we now follow?
 (beat)
 The mother a relative of yours?

RUBY
 A friend. And now we know Sylvie
 missed class.

NANCY
You never skipped a class?

RUBY
No.

NANCY
Look, I don't care what sort of favors you work out with Donovan or your friends here. But as long as we ride together, keep me appraised, will ya?

RUBY
I told you, she's not official.

INT. GLACIER CAVE - NIGHT

A sudden flash of white. Then darkness. The SOUND of SOMEONE MURMURING.

Another blink of light as we slowly FOCUS on a battery of icicles that hang above us like sharp, sparkling daggers.

This is Sylvie's POV. We REVERSE to reveal that she's just regained consciousness in an ice cave. Her hands and feet are tied.

As she turns her head right, her eyes grow big with horror.

SYLVIE
What are you doing?! Stop! Stop!

INT. TROOPERS STATION - DONOVAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Nancy and Ruby are done reporting to Donovan. The evidence bag with the casings is on the table.

DONOVAN
Alright. Nancy, write it up. If Stark ferrets out any leads, we'll follow up. For now, that's it.

NANCY
Righto. Good night ya'll.

Nancy solutes teasingly at Ruby, then leaves.

RUBY
Turns out the professor's Sylvie Atoruk's biology teacher. Said she missed class today, which is unusual. And Lael still hasn't heard from her.

Donovan nods, concerned.

DONOVAN

It's a strange coincidence.

RUBY

Sylvie has a part-time job at Barry Aroyans'. I'm gonna check in with them.

DONOVAN

Lael's lucky to have you here.

RUBY

Yeah, well, she'd be luckier if she didn't need me at all.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - 4TH AVE - NIGHT

Ruby parks. There are yellow trucks and school busses with ALYESKA INSIGNIA everywhere. YOUNG WOMEN, defying cold in parkas and miniskirts, flirt with the PIPELINERS.

Ruby gets out, walks up to the quaint AURORA JEWELRY STORE. Looks inside, smiles.

INT. AURORA JEWELRY STORE - NIGHT

We are in a prosperous, cluttered jewelry shop after closing.

At the workbench is master goldsmith BARRY AROYANS, a stocky, bald man in his 70s, of Armenian extraction. Has lived many lives. His wife, ELIZABETH WALTHAM, 60s, slender, with aristocratic air, dusts the display case.

SAM ROOKS, 40s, the radio host, sits behind the counter. He's a youthful, coiled-spring of a man.

ELIZABETH

Sam, you're on my side, right?
Whatever the sins of the Catholic Church, Father Charmand's done a lot of good work around here.

SAM ROOKS

Some folk may disagree...

BARRY

(thick Russian accent)
I like Father Charmand. But cross he wants is too big, too gaudy. Church has too much money.

Sam Rooks pours himself a shot of ice-cold vodka, drinks.

SAM ROOKS

Oooh eehh. At least there're as many bars here as churches. That's what I call healthy living.

Sam pours for Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

Cheers!

Drinks her vodka.

SAM ROOKS

Barry, I want to interview you about your childhood friendship with Stalin.

A BANGING NOISE. Elizabeth whips a GUN out of a drawer. Then series of BIRD CALLS SOUND from the back.

ELIZABETH

It can't be...

Ruby comes in from the back door.

RUBY

(smiling)

Cold enough for ya?

ELIZABETH

Ruby, you scared us like the second coming of Jesus!

BARRY

Another point against the cross.

Ruby runs to kiss Barry on his bald head, then envelops Elizabeth in a hug. Sam Rooks observes the reunion with curiosity, his reporter's ears pricked.

ELIZABETH

It's been too long, darling--

SAM ROOKS

Well hello there.

RUBY

Wait, I recognize your voice...

ELIZABETH

This is our one and only Sam Rooks. The wily voice of Fairbanks.

SAM ROOKS
 (extends hand to Ruby)
 Samuel F. Rooks, investigative
 journalist.

RUBY
 (shakes his hand)
 Ruby Tamblyn, detective with the
 Alaska State Troopers, based in
 Anchorage. Nice to meet you.

SAM ROOKS
 Any friend of Barry and Elizabeth's
 is an extra special friend of mine.
 Maybe I could interview you--

ELIZABETH
 There you go again, Sam. Harassing
 peaceful citizens. Why don't you go
 undercover on the pipeline or some
 such? I'm tired of reading
 regurgitated party line in the
 papers.

Ruby nods, with a small smile.

SAM ROOKS
 Don't you worry, I'm chasing
 something quite explosive now.
 (to Ruby)
 Miss Tamblyn, can I interest you in
 Russian vodka, to warm your soul?

RUBY
 No thanks. I'm of the belief that a
 soul keeps better cold.
 (to Elizabeth)
 Could we talk in private for a
 minute?

ELIZABETH
 Sure. Let's go in the back.

Sam Rooks pours vodka and takes another shot.

SAM ROOKS
 Nice meeting you. Think about that
 interview. And "Ruby, don't take
 your love to town--"

RUBY
 What?

SAM ROOKS

It's a song, Ruby. Just a song.

INT. AURORA JEWELRY STORE - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Ruby and Elizabeth drink tea at a small table.

ELIZABETH

I'm so very sorry about your father, Ruby.

RUBY

We've become such an awful cliché.

ELIZABETH

Doesn't make it any less tragic. God... I remember when I first met him. His back straight as a blade. Like he's gonna cut through all the injustice. Save the world. And your mama, the bravest girl I ever knew.

RUBY

(after a pause)

All that feels like another life. And now it's all finally over.

ELIZABETH

Now you have to build your own family.

Ruby scratches her rash. It's gotten much worse--red and raw.

RUBY

I'm trying. Listen, I ran into Lael. She can't find Sylvie. She's convinced something bad happened.

ELIZABETH

My goodness.

RUBY

She could be overreacting, but I have to look into it... Has Sylvie been acting strange lately?

ELIZABETH

Little Sylvie. Her boyfriend broke up with her a couple of weeks ago. She was so heartbroken.

RUBY

Did she talk about running away with someone new? Or was she depressed...

ELIZABETH

No. She was energized. Manic even. She was set on winning Roger back, by any means necessary.

Off Ruby: she knows what to do next.

INT. CHALET APARTMENTS - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ruby knocks on an apartment door. ELGIN STONE, mid-20s, African-American, opens the door. His professorial glasses clash with his military crew-cut in an intriguing way. A mellow JAZZ STANDARD PLAYS in the b.g.

RUBY

Sorry to disturb you. A fellow down the hall told me this is Lieutenant Silvers's apartment.

ELGIN

That's right. Lieutenant Stone at your service.

RUBY

Is he here? I need to ask him a few questions.

ELGIN

He's not home.

Ruby peers into the apartment: it's neat, lots of books stacked over the fireplace. Elgin's demeanor is polite, but he resists further entry with body language.

RUBY

Do you know where he is?

ELGIN

He went out with friends. They'll probably end up at Cherry Top.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - 2ND AVE - CHERRY TOP - NIGHT

Ruby, changed out of her AST parka, walks down 2nd Ave. This section's even busier with DRUG DEALERS, PIMPS, PROSTITUTES propositioning every passerby. Including Ruby, who walks into-

INT. CHERRY TOP - NIGHT

Music blares. Smoke hangs thick. Half-naked GIRLS spin around poles, off-duty SOLDIERS let loose. Also in attendance are a few NATIVES, bearded OLD-TIMERS, and, of course, PIPELINERS.

Ruby sits down at the bar, looking uncomfortable. Scratches her irritated hands. Looks around.

She notices ROGER SILVERS, mid-20s, arrive at the bar with his tipsy BUDDIES. Roger's handsome, grave, dressed more formally than others. Thinks he's got his PTSD under control.

The group takes up a big table and immediately flags a Waitress. Raucous laughter erupts, soldiers bang on the table. Ruby waits as Roger keeps up with his buddies' drinking but remains in his own world.

EXT. ATORUK TRAILER - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

A trailer with a several additions and a carport nestled on the edge of a sprawling trailer park.

INT. ATORUK TRAILER - SYLVIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

An OCD-ishly organized room. The walls are plastered with PHOTOS of Sylvie and Roger; the shelves laden with books and geological curiosities: lava rocks, quartz, petrified wood.

Lael searches Sylvie's room for any clues.

WALKIE ATORUK, 10, Sylvie's brother, sensitive and quick, plays on the floor with a tank, military binoculars on a string around his neck.

Some NOISE COMES FROM OUTSIDE. Lael startles.

WALKIE

Dad's home!

Walkie jumps up and runs to the carport.

EXT. ATORUK TRAILER - CARPORT - NIGHT

STEVE ATORUK, 40, lays out several white PTARMIGAN at the entryway when Walkie bursts out. Steve's a man who'd love to be the jokester, but some wound inside just doesn't let him.

WALKIE

Dad! Dad!

STEVE

Son, quiet. The ptarmigans' spirits still linger close to their bodies.

(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

If they report to their kind that we treated their sacrifices with respect, more food will enter our house.

WALKIE

Dad. I know. You tell me every time. Dad... Evil Spirit stole Sylvie.

Off Steve: fear and confusion flash on his face.

INT. CHERRY TOP - NIGHT

Roger heads to the bathroom. Ruby follows him, stalks outside the door. Drunk PATRONS pass by, ogling her.

A beat. Roger comes out, wiping his hands on his pants. Ruby grabs his arm. Pulls her BADGE from her pocket, flashes it.

RUBY

Lieutenant Silvers, I'm Investigator Tamblyn. Do you know where Sylvie Atoruk is?

Roger appraises Ruby with calm curiosity.

ROGER

(Louisiana twang)
Sylvie broke up with me. We're not in touch. Sorry I can't help you, ma'am.

Roger's drunk friend, JAKE, stops on the way to the restroom.

JAKE

She bothering you?

ROGER

Keep walkin', Jake.

JAKE

(up in Ruby's grill)
Negotiating then... What she asking? I'll tell you if it's a fair deal for a thawed out little piece of Eskimo.

Ruby steps away from him, but Jake seizes her.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Where you think you going? I'm the defender of your country. You're supposed to salute me.

Ruby grips Jake's wrist and twists hard, pins it against Jake's back at a painful angle.

RUBY
 (to Roger)
 Sylvie's been missing since this morning.

Ruby releases Jake, who slinks away.

ROGER
 Are you accusing me of something?

RUBY
 When did you last see her?

ROGER
 A few days ago. She picked up some of her belongings from my apartment.

Roger looks at Ruby like he wants to say something more.

RUBY
 Did she say she was planning to travel somewhere?

ROGER
 No. Should I be worried?

RUBY
 I don't know. Should you be? Call her mother if you hear from her, and don't leave town.

Off Roger, more than a little concerned--

EXT. DOWNTOWN - BRIDGE/INT. RUBY'S CHEVY - NIGHT [DRIVING]

Ruby's drives on the bridge over Chena River, looks out at the Power Plant SMOKESTACK rising above the ice-fogged downtown. It emits a thick gray plume of smoke. A RED LIGHT shines ominously at the chimney's top against the green aurora. There's something unnerving about it.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - BRIDGE - NIGHT

We LEAVE Ruby's Chevy and fly toward the chimney, then PAN DOWN to a thawed-out channel formed in Chena River's sooty ice. A GRAYLING jumps out of the channel. It has THREE EYES.

CLOSE ON the fish as it writhes in silent agony. Dies.

INT. TAMBLYN HOUSE - VARIOUS - NIGHT

The KITCHEN is illuminated by the lights of an emergency lantern. Ruby pours out alcohol dregs from bottles and cans, throws them into a trash bag. Her movements become jerkier. She tosses the bottles so hard they SHATTER inside the bag.

She stumbles on a HALF-FULL BOTTLE. Hesitates. Takes a sip.

INT. TAMBLYN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

The wood stove is burning. Ruby's cleared some space on the tattered couch. She sits with the vodka bottle propped against her thigh. She's clearly been sipping some more.

Ruby itches the rash on her hands, her legs. She looks around the crumbling house, all but crushed under the weight of regrettable past.

After a bit, she gets up, taking the vodka, stumbles to the--

HALLWAY, dials the phone.

RUBY (ON THE PHONE)

Steve? Hi. It's Ruby. Anything from Sylvie?

STEVE (V.O.) (ON THE PHONE)

No.

RUBY (ON THE PHONE)

Tell Lael we've put out a search bulletin on her.

STEVE (V.O.) (ON THE PHONE)

I'm sorry about your father, Ruby. I hope his spirit has a safe journey and returns soon.

RUBY

Yeah...

Ruby hangs up the phone and walks to Amanda's room.

INT. AMANDA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT [CONTINUOUS]

Ruby enters the frozen-in-time room. An old WALL CALENDAR reads: JUNE, 1962; days are filled with sports and volunteering activities that stop abruptly on the 23rd.

Ruby puts down the bottle on the desk and picks up an old SAT STUDY GUIDE. Her hands trembling, she opens it to a page filled with copious notes in pen. Tears run down her face.

She lies down on Amanda's bed and closes her eyes.

INT. ATORUK TRAILER - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Steve smokes in the dark kitchen, cradling a PHONE with his neck. A KNIFE glints in his hand as a passing car's lights sweep across. He's nervous.

STEVE

You think they'd stoop to kidnapping? How do they even know?

VOICE (ON THE PHONE)

They're capable of anything. Did you share the list with anyone besides the journo?

STEVE

Course not.

VOICE (ON THE PHONE)

Don't go running to the police yet.

Steve hangs up, turns on the lights. He's covered with small FLECKS OF BLOOD and WHITE FEATHERS from the plucked PTARMIGAN on the cutting board.

THWACK! He DECAPITATES one with the knife, then another, and another. His face is pinched with anguish.

EXT. UNKNOWN - NIGHT (SNOWING)

Ruby wakes up in the middle of a DEAD FOREST, wrapped in DENSE FOG. SOMETHING very much like snow falls from the gray sky. Ruby puts out her palm and catches a handful of--

BLACK SNOWFLAKES

They melt quickly on her skin and disappear. Ruby looks around, confused...

A RED FOX appears yet again among the trees.

Ruby gets up. Slowly follows the Fox deeper into the foggy forest. She sees a NATIVE WOMAN sitting in a tree, NOOSE around her neck, rope tied to a branch. The woman jumps down, and, after a small flight, HANGS.

Ruby rushes to help her, but the fog has already enveloped the tree. Ruby searches, can't find the woman, or that tree... She's lost among the trees now... which start to WALK towards her... or seem to.

She trips over the snake-like tree roots, her vision blurs.

A FLASH OF RED. There's the Fox again.

Suddenly, an ARROW WHEEZES by, barely missing Ruby's cheek. She turns to face a--

GHOST WARRIOR in bloodied, broken wooden armor and wooden helmet with feathers moving jerkily toward her. We realize that he has a BOW FOR AN ARM. In another he holds a DAGGER with which he attacks Ruby.

Ruby and Ghost Warrior fight on the ground. He's about to stick the dagger into her neck, when, in a blur of red--

the Fox lunges at Ghost Warrior and knocks him off Ruby. Then silence.

Ruby lies on her back, breathing jaggedly, her chest bloodied. She turns her head and momentarily figures of TWO GIRLS dressed in white gowns appear between the trees. We can't tell their identities.

We PAN UP to the strange GRAY SKY. The BLACK SNOWFALL intensifies as we--

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. SKY - DAWN

REGULAR WHITE SNOW streams from the GRAY SKY. We PAN DOWN to--

EXT. TAMBLYN HOUSE - DAWN

The house strains from the night's heavy snowfall.

NANCY (PRE-LAP)

Ruby! Ruby! Wake up! Jesus Lord.
Can you hear me?

INT. TAMBLYN HOUSE - AMANDA'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Ruby comes to as Nancy, in AST parka, tears open her bloody shirt to examine her WOUNDS. Ruby, disheveled and soaked in sweat, looks at her bloody chest.

NANCY

Don't move.

Nancy rushes to the bathroom, returns with wet towels. Starts to clean the blood off Ruby's chest.

RUBY
 (embarrassed)
 I must've scratched myself in my
 sleep. I had a terrible nightmare.
 How did you find me?

Nancy concentrates on the wounds, seemingly ignoring Ruby's explanation. If Nancy's noticed the overturned vodka bottle on the floor, she doesn't show it.

NANCY
 These are superficial.

RUBY
 Told you. Just scratches.

NANCY
 Do you have a first aid kit?

Ruby shakes her head.

NANCY (CONT'D)
 I'll get mine from the car. Don't
 wiggle.

Nancy leaves. Ruby holds her head, winces. Hungover.

RUBY
 Shit.

She notices the SAT book lying open next to her, several bloody FINGERPRINTS on its pages, hurries to shut it.

Nancy returns with the kit, starts putting bandages on Ruby's chest. She's exceedingly gentle.

NANCY
 From Donovan. A skier found a
 shearling coat by the pipeline.
 Might be of interest to you. On the
 account of the missing girl...

RUBY
 (hangover gone)
 Let's go!

NANCY
 Stay still... We need to talk about
 this. Did someone do this to you?
 Or did you do this to yerself?

RUBY
 I told you, I had a nightmare.

NANCY

Listen, demons from the past have a way of crawlin' into the present. You gotta give me somethin', just so that I know what I'm dealin' with here.

(beat)

Do you have problems? The government has resources. They can help you.

Ruby stares at Amanda's wall calendar, agonizing as to how much truth to tell.

RUBY

(sarcastic)

They've helped enough already.

(beat)

I'm not an alcoholic if that's what you're driving at. My family is cursed. Everybody has died. Mom from cancer. My sister... when she was seventeen. My father, just last week... And I will too, if I stay here...

Nancy takes in the horror of it all.

NANCY

Donovan did tell me about your father... I'm so sorry.

RUBY

But I'm not planning to stay here. So don't worry. I'm not some unstable person who will put you in danger. I just want to help my friend find her daughter. Then I'm leaving. I have a life in Anchorage, a husband...

NANCY

I'm all supportive, but you're not gonna like this shearling coat is bloody--

EXT. PIPELINE CONSTRUCTION SITE/SNOWY FIELD - DAY

Nancy and Ruby, carrying a CAMERA, walk across the snowy meadow toward the treeline, where TROOPER 1 is waving to them. It's approximately the spot above which we'd seen "the tornado of ravens" the previous day.

The three walk further into the woods to something that at first looks like a dead animal. It's marked with POLICE TAPE and an EVIDENCE TENT.

TROOPER 1

The skier was smart not to move it.

Ruby puts on rubber gloves, squats next to it: the coat with a wolverine fur trim is covered in BLOOD.

She examines it, checks the pockets. Inside one she finds a BABY WOOLLY MAMMOTH FIGURINE.

RUBY

(to Nancy, terrified)

This is Sylvie Atoruk's.

Nancy and Ruby look at SEVERAL PAIRS OF TRACKS partially concealed by the night's snow leading into the woods.

Nancy walks INSIDE THE TRACKS deeper into the forest, when--

RUBY (CONT'D)

Oh my god...

Nancy stops, looks back. She cleared away some snow and now--

THE TRACKS ARE BLOOD-RED.

TROOPER 1

There's a cabin about three quarters of a mile down... That's where she ran from.

Ruby looks at him with alarm.

NANCY

Is there a--

TROOPER 1

No body... But it looks like one might've been hurt very badly in there...

EXT. ALASKA FOREST - A LITTLE LATER

Ruby and Nancy follow the tracks.

NANCY

Don't you think it's a peculiar coincidence that we'd just been here yesterday?

RUBY

You think the shooting and this --
whatever this is -- are connected?

NANCY

All I'm saying is that it's
strange.

They come upon the abandoned gold rush cabin from the teaser that is now circled by POLICE TAPE. A shivering TROOPER 2 is posted outside.

INT. GOLD RUSH CABIN - DAY

Ruby and Nancy look around in shock. A large area of the mud floor is covered in--

BLOOD, some of it pooled, most of it smeared all over.

Ruby covers her mouth with her hand, her imagination running to the most horrific things possible.

Nancy puts on rubber gloves, and eventually Ruby pulls herself together and starts taking photos.

Everything's strewn about, including the candles and the vodka bottle. We recognize the gasoline can that contained the blood, the evidence tent next to it. Nancy peers inside.

NANCY

(she could be alive)
Looks like at least some of the
blood came from the can here.

RUBY

(she's likely dead)
She lost her coat...

Ruby snaps a photo, continues to look around. There's another evidence tent in the corner. She walks toward it.

WITH NANCY, as she sifts through the debris on the floor, which includes several large RAVEN FEATHERS. She finds a CRUMPLED PIECE OF PAPER, gently unwraps it--

It's PHOTOGRAPH OF ROGER SILVERS in military uniform. The spot where his heart would be is BURNED THROUGH.

NANCY

Ruby, check this out.

She shows it to Ruby.

RUBY

That's Roger Silvers. Sylvie's ex-boyfriend.

Nancy walks over to Ruby and looks at the floor--

It's a crude drawing of FIVE STICK FIGURES AND A BIRD WITH A BIG BEAK HOVERING ABOVE THEM.

NANCY

What in the world is that?

INT. TROOPERS STATION - DONOVAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Plastic bags with Sylvie's COAT, the baby mammoth FIGURINE, Roger's PHOTO, and a SKETCH of the stick-figure drawing from the cabin floor are on the desk in front of Donovan.

RUBY

(freaking out)

She's an official case now...

DONOVAN

And you're on it. As promised. And you, Nancy.

NANCY

Let's try to find the little girl. Troopers will have to be pulled off something to check shelters, hospitals, airport, bus and train stations. Right away.

RUBY

I have Sylvie's photo.

DONOVAN

Good. I'll organize air search and send up K-9, have someone search for burial sites up there. You two check out Sylvie's room. Call the ex in for questioning. And figure out what the hell that drawing's supposed to mean?

NANCY

(points at the sketch)

Well, for one, the bird there looks like a raven... And we did find raven feathers inside the cabin.

DONOVAN

Go, find out why.

RUBY

Yes, sir.

Ruby gets up, takes the sketch, and heads for the door.

DONOVAN

Take care of her, Nance, would you?

Nancy nods.

INT. ATORUK TRAILER - SYLVIE'S ROOM - DAY

Lael and Steve sit on Sylvie's bed as Nancy and Ruby, both wearing rubber gloves, look around Sylvie's room. Walkie stands in the doorway, sensing that something's very wrong.

LAEL

Walkie, go play in the living room.

He leaves, reluctantly.

STEVE

(staring into space)

I should be out there looking.

RUBY

We got it covered, Steve. You must be home if Sylvie tries to get in touch.

LAEL

Are you getting any visions, Ruby?

Nancy turns from a drawer she'd just pulled out, curious.

LAEL (CONT'D)

Or did you find something?!

RUBY

We're doing everything we can.

Lael gives Ruby a small, opened DAY PLANNER.

LAEL

I found this in her backpack.

CLOSE on the week of FEBRUARY 10TH. Among notes relating to school and work, February 13th is marked with a RED HEART circled several times.

RUBY

Something planned for the night she disappeared. The eve of Valentine's Day. Any idea?

LAEL

(shakes her head)
 She used to tell me everything...
 It's Roger. Once they got together,
 he became her priority. Why aren't
 you questioning him?

NANCY

We will.

LAEL

We had a fight last week. I just
 wanted to introduce her to the son
 of a friend. A boy her age. She got
 so mad at me. Said I didn't
 understand her...

In the back of a desk drawer, Nancy finds an almost empty box
 of LAXATIVES.

NANCY

Sylvie have digestive problems?

LAEL

(breaking down)
 Not that I know of.

RUBY

Lael, it's okay. You couldn't know
 everything about her. Both of you,
 just think of any changes in her
 behavior.

Steve remains sitting almost motionless.

LAEL

She didn't eat dinner at home the
 last few days. I thought she picked
 up McDonalds... We work hard so
 that she could go to college, but
 still something was wrong. She
 wasn't happy...

RUBY

This is not your fault.

NANCY

Any friends we could talk to?

LAEL

I've already called or visited them
 all. She hasn't hung out with them
 lately. It was all Roger, Roger,
 Roger. Talk to him, for God's sake.

Ruby scans the books on the shelf. Something makes her pull out a BOOK OF ATHABASKAN MYTHS, the same edition she has at home. She leafs through: we pause briefly at the illustration of a Fat Raven crouching over several pregnant women.

NANCY

Are there arms in the house?

LAEL

Of course. Steve's hunting rifles.

NANCY

(to Steve)

Can someone vouch for your whereabouts yesterday?

LAEL

The spirits of dead ptarmigans.

STEVE

(flat)

I left at five a.m. to go hunting. Alone. I came back at five, and was home. Ruby talked to me later in the evening.

Ruby closes the book, puts it back.

RUBY

We'll post up a Trooper to wait with you.

Lael knows full well it's surveillance.

LAEL

Great.

INT. CRUISER - DAY [DRIVING]

Nancy and Ruby drive. Ruby stares at the RAVEN SKETCH in her hands.

RUBY

Looks like a pictograph. I feel like I've seen it somewhere before.

NANCY

A pictograph? Maybe our perp's some kind of archeologist... The girl sure kept secrets from her mama. And the father doesn't have an alibi for Friday before he came back. He was awful quiet.

RUBY
He was in shock.

NANCY
Parents kill their kids all the time, just sayin'. Add guns and alcohol to a little family spat--

RUBY
(through her teeth)
You're making a whole lotta assumptions here.

NANCY
And so are you. Your childhood friends, Lael and Steve, you must bury and forget them now, if you want to help their daughter.

A long, icy beat. Ruby takes a deep breath, slathers the rash ointment on her trembling hands.

RUBY
The candles at the cabin, the can with the blood, the burned hole through the photograph... It could've been a part of some ritual to get Roger back. Which means she might've come to the cabin willingly. She might've known her assailant...

NANCY
Like voodoo? That still done 'round these parts?

RUBY
I'm sure it's still done everywhere. If you're desperate enough...

NANCY
She coulda burned that hole angry it didn't work out between 'em.

RUBY
Roger told me Sylvie broke up with him. But then why's her room wallpapered with photos of the two of them? That's someone who's obsessive, who's still in denial. Elizabeth Waltham from Aurora Jewelry where Sylvie works told me he broke up with her. So he lied.

NANCY
Why am learning this only now?

INT. TROOPERS STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Nancy, at the desk, and Ruby, standing, face Roger.

ROGER
(to Ruby)
I apologize for my manners the other night, m'am. I was out of sorts.

Suddenly, Ruby hears EARSPLITTING RINGING. She's crushed by a MIGRAINE ATTACK. She grabs her head, doubles over... falls to the floor, about to pass out, when Roger darts up to her--

ROGER (CONT'D)
Are you okay?

He and Nancy help Ruby get back up.

RUBY
I'm fine. I'm fine.

NANCY
Ruby, I can handle this.

RUBY
I'm fine. Mr. Silvers, please sit down and answer the question.

ROGER
(sits down)
Sylvie showed up at my place three days ago. We'd been split for about a month.

NANCY
What did she want?

ROGER
A recent photo of me.

NANCY
Why?

ROGER
Said she met some raven shaman, and they were going to do a divination.

RUBY
A divination? For what? Didn't you say she broke up with you?

ON ROGER: a hurricane rages inside him. Beat.

RUBY (CONT'D)
So, you broke up with her?

Roger nods curtly.

RUBY (CONT'D)
Why did you lie? What else are you lying about?

Ruby scratches the rash, now bloody, on her hands.

ROGER
She should've broke up with me, concentrated on her studying. She's too young to be with someone like me.

NANCY
And what are you like?

ROGER
Things I've seen, things I've done, the darkness of it all, it was rubbin' off on her.

NANCY
In what way?

ROGER
She was getting so sad. She kept telling me I needed to see a healer to drive out the old war ghosts. One night I was so fed up with her tryin' to fix me, I hit her. That scared the livin' spirit out of me... what I was capable of...
(beat)
I threw her out. Told her I didn't love her anymore... which ain't true. I've never met a person with such a pure soul before...

Beat. Ruby and Nancy are both affected, try to keep formal.

ROGER (CONT'D)
That last time, she was calm, no longer upset with me. Said she would take on my sins, my pain, and cleanse us of it once and for all. Then we could be together again. I didn't want to argue with her anymore. I just gave her the photo.

RUBY
 WHY DID YOU NOT TELL THIS TO ME AT
 THE BAR? You of all people should
 know that each hour is precious--

Beat.

ROGER
 I was ashamed.

Nancy shows Roger the photo of him with the "burned heart."

NANCY
 This the photo you gave her?

ROGER
 Yes.

RUBY
 Did she tell you who this raven
 shaman was? Where she met him?

ROGER
 (breaks down)
 No... God, I should've asked. Why
 didn't I ask...

INT. NATIVE CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT

A BLUR of WOLF FUR and FEATHERS. The SOUNDS of loud DRUMMING,
 SINGING and HOOTING.

We PULL BACK to reveal a WARRIOR in caribou skin coat
 charging toward ANOTHER WARRIOR, who jumps back. LAUGHTER.

Now the second warrior "attacks." They lock in a ceremonial
 dance dramatizing the ancient battle of Athabaskans and the
 Inupiaq, spinning, spinning... The cheering grows wild.

The SONG ENDS. The warriors fall on the floor and HOLLER with
 LAUGHTER. They embrace. The AUDIENCE CHEERS and CLAPS.

CAMERA WIDENS TO REVEAL that we are at a potlatch to honor
 John Tamblyn, Ruby's father. His portrait rests on a music
 stand in the corner.

People eat, drink, play cards. One table is laden with GIFTS.
 For now the mood is jovial, not funerary.

MOSES CHARLIE, 50s, a lithe, meticulously groomed man, makes
 his way to the podium. His eyes radiate authority and pain.

Everyone quiets down.

MOSES

Dear friends, thank you for coming out on this chilly night from the villages and across town. God knows, with this traffic it's faster to mush from Barrow.

LAUGHTER from the tables.

MOSES (CONT'D)

Today we honor John Tamblyn. He was loved and will be missed by all.

EVERYONE CLAPS.

MOSES (CONT'D)

We also gather as a family to pray for the safe return of Lael and Steve Atoruk's daughter, Sylvie. Let her guardian spirit guide her home swiftly.

(beat)

But because this is a potlatch and no potlatch is complete without gifts, please help yourself to the gift table, one for each family--

Suddenly people begin to MURMUR.

REVERSE as Ruby walks in, still wearing her Troopers parka.

MOSES (CONT'D)

Ruby... Welcome. Welcome back home.

He goes to hug Ruby. Other guests join, all happy to see her.

RUBY

Hi, Uncle Moses...

SAME PLACE - A LITTLE LATER

A group of WOMEN sing a traditional "sorry song," while the dancers, with feathers in their hands, move slowly in a clockwise circle.

Ruby sits down next to ALTONA HUGHES, 70s. She's dressed in jeans and a jean shirt, her short white hair almost glowing.

RUBY

Altona, is there a Raven Shaman in the community?

ALTONA

There was one who called himself
Raven when I was a little girl in
Minto. Shamans can return...

RUBY

Return from the dead? No, no. I'm
looking for a normal living person.

Altona nods, then takes Ruby's hand, examines the bloody
patches on her skin.

ALTONA

The store-bought stuff won't help.
I'll give you Hotzeklahna salve for
itching. But it's a temporary
solution. It has begun.

RUBY

What has begun?

ALTONA

Have you been feeling unwell since
you got here? Hearing or seeing
anything strange?

RUBY

I've had a couple of migraines. I'm
under huge stress...

ALTONA

What about your dreams?

RUBY

I had a nightmare.

Altona nods significantly.

RUBY (CONT'D)

What are you saying?

ALTONA

You grandmother was a healer, you
know this. But your father refused
the call and eventually it killed
him. You have been marked as the
next inheritor.

RUBY

Because of the rash? It's just the
dry air--

ALTONA

Because of what happened to you in childhood. The rash is just a sign.

RUBY

Okay... this all sounds a bit ... much. I mean, I enjoyed reading all the tales when I was a child. And I respect the traditions of our people. But shamans, evil spirits, herbs... I don't believe in the superstitions of the past.

ALTONA

The past throws a harness over the future's back, Ruby, for without it, it will fall off the cliff to its death... If the power goes unused again, it will leave your lineage and go to another, who may be a bad shaman.

(beat)

And we need a good shaman now more than ever.

Ruby's not happy to hear this. She takes out the PHOTO of the pictograph from the gold rush cabin, shows it to Altona.

RUBY

Do you recognize this?

Altona looks at the photograph. It's now clear that the stick figures are wearing something like coats or skirts.

ALTONA

I've seen something like this as an illustration to the tale *Raven Makes Women*... What is it?

RUBY

Raven Makes Women...

Moses comes up to Ruby.

MOSES

Ruby, would you like to represent your father in his last rites?

RUBY

Yes. Thank you.

CUT TO:

An ELDERLY MAN helps Ruby take off her coat and put on her FATHER'S ATHABASKAN PARKA. She goes to the music stand, takes her father's portrait, then goes to the podium. She pulls the parka's hood over her face so that only her mouth is visible and holds the portrait against her chest.

Ruby hesitates as the guests grow uneasy. Then--

RUBY (CONT'D)

Welcome to my potlatch, dear family and friends. I am John Tamblyn. I prided myself on being a brave and dedicated Trooper... I was not afraid of the cold, of the dark, of wolves and bears, of guns and knives... I had a wife who was strong and beautiful, who fished and hunted with me... My daughters were proud of me. Until--

TEARS run down Ruby's face, from under her father's portrait.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Until--
(beat, can't say it)
Our ancestors would say that my soul is now on the journey up the Yukon River...

Ruby slowly lowers the portrait, takes off the hood.

RUBY (CONT'D)

(realizing something)
...to the Land of the Dead--

She runs up to Altona.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Raven Makes Women... Isn't this transformation supposed to have taken place somewhere north of Fairbanks? That pictograph... I saw a copy of it at the university...

ALTONA

Yes. Near where Moose Creek enters a slough of the Tanana River. There was a cliff, but--

RUBY

The pictograph is from the cliff!

Ruby rushes out--

ALTONA
 (yells after Ruby)
 --it's been blasted away by the
 army engineers in '41. And you--

But Ruby's already gone.

EXT. OUTSIDE TAMBLYN HOUSE - NIGHT

ALTONA (V.O.)
 --mustn't go upriver now. Your
 father's soul might drag you to the
 Land of the Dead with him.

Ruby's dusted the snow off her father's old SNOWMACHINE and is filling it up with gas. Tries to start it. It makes a RASPY COUGH. Dies down. She tries again. TWO COUGHS.

RUBY
 C'mon, old man. C'mon, please! I
 really need you right now.

She tries one more time. Finally, the ENGINE ROARS to life. Ruby all but hugs it.

RUBY (CONT'D)
 Thank you... Thank you!

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

Ruby's truck -- with the snowmachine wedged in the bed -- speeds along the road, its headlights cutting through miles of darkness. Aurora Borealis is gone.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Ruby, wearing vintage goggles, races on the snowmachine through a narrow channel -- frozen Moose Creek-- in the woods, barely missing the scraggly branches reaching for her like fingers. A pair of snowshoes is strapped to her back.

She stops, consults a map. Keeps going.

EXT. TANANA RIVER SLOUGH - NIGHT

Ruby's flies out onto a snowy plane. This is where the creek enters the frozen river slough. She stops, surveys the pristine, silent snow illuminated by the snowmachine headlight. Just beyond is TOTAL BLACKNESS.

RUBY'S POV - THROUGH GOGGLES: a flash of RED FUR among the trees on the other side of the river.

Ruby takes off the goggles, strains to look. Nothing.

She gets back on the snowmobile, guns the engine. Rides a few yards when the front runners DIVE under the snow.

Seconds later the snowmachine's halfway in the FROZEN WATER. Ruby jumps off and struggles to get it out.

We CHANGE THE ANGLE to reveal a THAWED CHANNEL covered by a snowdrift. What the fuck? It's the frigid middle of winter.

Ruby manages to pull the snowmachine onto the ice, her boots and pants completely wet. And now--

The snowmachine DIES. The world goes BLACK.

RUBY

Fuck!

Ruby fumbles for the flashlight and the radio in her pocket. Neither turns on. We HEAR Ruby's PANICKED BREATHING.

RUBY (CONT'D)

I am an idiot. A fucking idiot...

Ruby looks at the moon in the sky. It seems as though the river valley has gotten lighter... The trees on the other side of the frozen river throw moon shadows on the snow. And now visible beyond the treeline is a MOUNTAIN OF ROCKS from the blasted cliff. And at the foot of it, unmistakably, stands --

that same RED FOX.

The Fox jumps up the rocks, then turns and looks at Ruby, as though, yet again, beckoning her to follow.

And something tells Ruby she must. She puts on her snowshoes and gingerly walks over the thin ice covered by snowdrift.

When Ruby finally crosses to the other bank, she sees that the Fox HAS LEFT NO TRACKS. She throws off her snowshoes and runs after the Fox up the rocks. The Fox moves at a supernatural speed -- almost impossible to keep up with.

Ruby slips up, tumbles down, banging up her leg.

That STRANGE WHISPER IN THE WIND again. She looks down. For a moment, it looks like the snow-capped trees are CLIMBING TOWARD HER...

Ruby drags herself up, but now the FOX HAS DISAPPEARED. No tracks to follow.

CLOSE ON Ruby's numb face, her frozen lashes. She falls to her knees. Out of breath, out of strength, out of hope.

RUBY (CONT'D)
 Dad, is that you? Amanda? Mama?
 Please help me! Please!

There's the Fox again, farther away on the rocks. Ruby pushes forth, limping.

Finally, the Fox jumps over the edge of the rock slide. Ruby climbs after it and sees--

At the foot of the mountain on the other side is a snowed-in, barely-visible ENTRANCE into--

INT. GLACIER CAVE - [CONTINUOUS]

Ruby enters the glacier cave. Long sparkling icicles hang from the ceiling -- nature's ballroom chandeliers. Under her feet are ridges of clear ice. The cave glows ethereal blue.

The deeper Ruby walks into the cave, the darker it gets. To her right runs a deep subterranean river. Faint flickering LIGHT emanates from an unknown source ahead. Shadows dance over the ice walls.

Ruby turns the bend. Utter horror registers on her face.

REVERSE as we see what she sees:

On an icy pedestal surrounded by CANDLES lies Sylvie Atoruk in a white nightgown under a bearskin. There's a necklace made of TEETH AND CLAWS around her neck and beaded bracelets on her wrists. She holds something in her hands.

SIGNS are written on the ice around her, (but we don't focus on it all right away). Her face is covered with a white veil.

Ruby runs up to her, lifts the veil. Sylvie's eyes are closed. Her hair is matted with blood, but her face's been cleaned. It's so lovely, so peaceful, so alive-looking...

Ruby touches the girl's neck, which is covered in bruises. Ruby's expression changes...

RUBY
 Oh god.

Sylvie IS ALIVE, but barely...

Ruby throws off her parka, her sweater, her pants... The radio falls out of the pocket and CRACKLES TO LIFE. She dives for it, and sees behind the pedestal--

ANOTHER GIRL on a BEARSKIN.

Ruby rushes to her. She's also wearing beaded bracelets, a TEETH AND CLAWS necklace. She's about Sylvie's age, white, and definitely dead.

RUBY (INTO THE RADIO) (CONT'D)
 This is Investigator Ruby Tamblyn.
 I need emergency medical
 assistance. Come in? Come in!

The RADIO SPUTTERS with STATIC.

DISPATCHER (O.S.)
 Alaska State Troopers. What's your
 emergency?

And with that, the SOUND disappears and time SLOWS.

We PULL AWAY as Ruby covers Sylvie with her clothes and climbs onto the icy pedestal next to her for body heat, all the while talking MOS into the radio.

We STOP by an ICY WALL, PAUSE, TURN, and BURROW IN at a great speed...

Until we STOP AGAIN. There's SOMETHING FROZEN in there. A HAND. A HUMAN-LIKE hand. But there's something off about it.

It's too big, too hairy... Suddenly--the FINGERS MAKE A FIST.

And then we BLAST BACK through the ice and FLY OUT--

EXT. TANANA RIVER SLOUGH - NIGHT

of the cave, over the rock mountain, gaining altitude, higher and higher...

Now we SOAR along the frozen river until we catch up to a--

GREAT HORNED OWL, flying toward the moon.

She HOOTS with human-like worry. A warning for the shaman, if only she'll hear it.

The Owl flaps her majestic wings, taking us--

TO BLACK