

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

MAURICE and CORK, dressed warmly in a small bubble-front WHIRLYBIRD swoop low over the snow-capped peak of a high MOUNTAIN. Maurice pilots the 'copter.

Cork is Murphy Corcoran, male, 40, Canadian, a geological engineer who was once a Winter Olympics giant slalom contender. In 1972 he got a silver medal, just edged out by Ingemar Stenmark. He's built thickly but he's quite fit and he has a slight Australian accent. Cork carries an elaborate photo CAMERA around his neck which he snaps liberally over the countryside.

It's a loud, rough ride: the former owing to the ROTORS and the WIND, the latter because of the TURBULENCE whipping up from the mountain peak. Cork is unfazed by this.

CORK

That's the one.

MAURICE

This mountain right below us, Cork?

CORK

Yeah. See the way the face widens right below the peak? Can you get us down any closer?

EXT. HELICOPTER - DAY

The craft is THRASHED in the wind.

MAURICE

Not unless you want this clear air turbulence to turn us into some kind of purée I can't.

**Northern Exposure / "Mountains to Move"**

2.

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

Cork merrily snaps the mountainside, whipping around with the turbulence. Boxes of CARGO and ski EQUIPMENT clatter behind him.

CORK

I thought you were a space pilot, Maurice.

MAURICE

We're all just spam in a can, Cork.

The 'copter bucks and whines. Maurice fights it. Cork looks absently out the windshield at SOMETHING BELOW.

CORK

Did you see someone down there?

MAURICE

Down there? You're crazy.

CORK

Are we actually in some trouble here?

Maurice glances at him, continues to fight it. They seem to be going down. Then Maurice looks down at what Cork is staring at.

MAURICE

Will you look at that.

CORK

I told you I saw someone.

MAURICE

Well I'll be a blue-nosed gopher.

EXT. HELICOPTER - DAY

The craft AUTOROTATES downward. We don't see what they see.

Quick - maybe subliminal: A rope-thin BOLT OF FIRE streams from the GROUND to the ROTORS, then vanishes.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - DAY

JOEL in his JOGGING SUIT and a light BACKPACK, trots up Maurice's DECK to his front DOOR. He knocks. Pauses. Knocks again.

JOEL  
Maurice? Maurice, you in there?

Joel pushes on the door, finds it open. Looks in. Walks in.

INT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - DAY

THE ENTRYWAY

Joel yanks a MANILA ENVELOPE from his backpack and leaves it on a piece of FURNITURE. He looks through a door at Maurice's DEN.

JOEL  
Maurice?

Joel peeks around the doorway into

INT. MAURICE'S HOUSE

THE DEN

Tacked up on the walls are a dozen big Geological Survey MAPS of topographical areas in the region.

JOEL  
What on Earth?

Joel looks over the maps curiously and shrugs.

JOEL  
Nice wallpaper.

EXT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - DAY

Joel jogs away from the house.

EXT. CICELY - DAY

**Northern Exposure / "Mountains to Move"**

4.

JOEL'S OFFICE

ED leads GINGER, who wears only a rope TETHER and HALTER, toward Joel's office. RUTH ANN, springy and sprightly, walks toward them in the opposite direction.

Ginger, 30-ish, is a Morgan mare, about fifteen hands tall, slow-moving and quite overweight.

RUTH ANN

Well Ginger honey, I haven't seen you for a long time. This is Ginger, isn't she, Ed?

ED

Yeah, Ruth Ann. She's pretty sick.

RUTH ANN

Oh that's too bad. She's getting on, though. What's wrong?

ED

Well she's been sleeping lying down. Real bad for her circulation.

Ruth Ann strokes Ginger on the snout. JOEL, still in his jogging suit, trots into frame, winded.

RUTH ANN

That's not a good sign at all. Morning, Joel.

JOEL

Hi Ruth Ann, Ed.

ED

Dr. Fleischman, I wonder if I could talk to you about Ginger here.

JOEL

By Ginger I take it you're referring to this large quadruped.

ED

This horse. I'm worried about her, Dr. Fleischman.

JOEL

I keep telling people I'm not a veterinarian.

RUTH ANN

Oh Joel, take a look at the horse. She was Ed's babysitter.

JOEL

Your babysitter?

ED

Sort of. Whatever family I got passed around to I was always her kid.

Joel takes a long look at the horse, then at himself.

JOEL

Well, only because I haven't showered yet. Take her around back and I'll be right there.

ED

(clucks)

Come on, Ginge.

Ruth Ann looks off in the distance, squints as Ed leads Ginger away.

RUTH ANN

Is that Maurice's car, Joel?

JOEL

No it's - it's not.

RUTH ANN

(walking off)

Wonder where he's off to. He has a package from Juneau he was anxious about yesterday.

Joel looks after her, pursed forehead, wondering too.

INT. THE BRICK - NIGHT

CHRIS sits opposite HOLLING at the bar with a BEER and a plate of FOOD.

PAN TO

Ed sits at a TABLE, huddling with Joel.

JOEL

Horses are so big they've got a kind of supplemental circulatory mechanism.

ED

Like dinosaurs' tail brains.

JOEL

Tail brains?

ED

Yeah, the extra little brain in a dinosaur's tail. So if something fell on their tail their tail brain would know it before the sensation could reach the head.

JOEL

I don't know about that. Listen.

ED

Okay.

JOEL

The horse's palmar artery runs through its hooves, see. By putting its weight on one side a horse blocks the flow of blood. Causes a bottleneck in the artery.

ED

And that's bad.

JOEL

No, that's what's supposed to happen.

ED

Oh.

JOEL

When it shifts its weight all the backed-up blood pounds through its legs and the heart gets a kick-start.

ED

I see.

JOEL

So when Ginger spends all her time off her feet she lets all her fluids just drift through this huge circulatory system.

ED

Uh-huh.

JOEL

It's just a matter of time before a blood clot stops her short.

ED

Well, isn't there some kind of medical solution?

JOEL

There's treatment. Look ...

Joel whips out a small NOTEPAD. He scribbles something, hands a SHEET to Ed.

JOEL

... here's a prescription for an anti-coagulant to dissolve clots. It'll thin her blood, make her a little sluggish.

ED

She's pretty sluggish now.

JOEL

She might live longer with it. But it treats the symptom rather than the problem.

ED

The problem?

JOEL

She's what? Ten years older than you?

ED

Almost.

JOEL

She's ancient, Ed. That's the problem.

Ed looks at the prescription, then hands it back to Joel.

ED

I guess not, Dr. Fleischman. I guess the thing is just to keep her on her feet.

JOEL

If you can.

MAGGIE, grinning and bubbly, sits down to join them.

MAGGIE

Hey guys. Maurice hasn't been here, has he?

JOEL

Not while we've been here. Why?

Maggie picks from Joel's food.

MAGGIE

Oh no reason. Just thought he was up to something mysterious is all.

JOEL

Hey you know, O'Connell, I thought so too. What'd he tell you?

MAGGIE

He just asked me if I could pilot a helicopter.

JOEL

And?

MAGGIE

And I said I could, but I hadn't qualified the past few years.

JOEL

Eyesight going?

MAGGIE

No, Fleischman, my eyesight's fine. I just let it lapse.

JOEL

All right, don't have a canary, O'Connell. Why did he need a helicopter?

MAGGIE

He didn't say. He seemed evasive about it.

SHELLEY

Who, Maurice? Chris was just asking about him.

JOEL

Ruth Ann was waiting for him too. What did Chris say?

SHELLEY

They were supposed to go over some programming notes at lunch is all. He's never late.

JOEL

Really. You know, I was just at his house to drop off some reports. He wasn't there.

MAGGIE

So?

JOEL

So, I noticed his den is papered with geodetic survey maps.

HOLLING walks into frame.

HOLLING

Maurice broke an appointment with somebody?

JOEL

With half a dozen people it seems. Maybe something's up.

HOLLING

That's odd.

INT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

THE DEN

Ambient light. No sign of life here. PAN the room.

All available eye-level wall space is covered with geodetic survey MAPS, all marked with ARROWS and parallel LINES as though someone were charting something on them with a marker.

**Northern Exposure / "Mountains to Move"**

10.

The PHONE rings and the ANSWERING MACHINE gets it.

MAURICE  
(answering machine)  
Minnifield ranch. This is the machine. You  
know the drill.

It beeps.

HOLLING  
(phone)  
Maurice, you there? This is Holling. Pick  
up, Maurice, will you? Some of us were  
comparing notes and getting a little  
concerned. But you are home, aren't you?  
Maurice?

CUT TO

EXT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is dark.

A dozen CARS, TRUCKS, JEEPS, VANS — all stuffed with PEOPLE  
including all the PRINCIPALS other than Maurice — rumble with  
headlights blazing up to the dooryard and begin to park.

People begin to unpile from the vehicles and onto the DECK.

PEOPLE  
(ad lib chatter)

HOLLING raises his arms on the deck, signaling he wants to  
speak. JOEL is visible among the crowd.

HOLLING  
All right, I'm going to go inside and see  
what gives here. Joel, you want to come too?

JOEL  
Sure.

Holling opens the door and he and Joel go into

Joel makes spooky WAILING noises before he turns on the LIGHT.

Holling looks at him like he's from Pluto.

JOEL  
Sorry. Just thought we might lighten up.

HOLLING  
Lighten up?

JOEL  
Well, yeah. I mean he's a grown man. He's got a right to disappear once in awhile.

HOLLING  
He's got a right, but this is the North Country. Folks have to look after each other.

INT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

THE DEN

They turn on the LIGHT in here too.

JOEL  
Look. Survey maps all over the walls.

HOLLING  
I see what you mean. Could be he's interested in buying a piece of land.

Holling looks closer at the maps.

HOLLING  
These are all of Sugar Mountain.

JOEL  
Sugar Mountain?

HOLLING  
Yeah. Little one. About seven thousand feet.

Holling points out a WINDOW.

HOLLING  
You could see it about there if it were daylight. Haunted place.

JOEL  
Haunted?

HOLLING  
What they say.

THROUGH THE WINDOW

A big UTILITY VEHICLE, headlights blazing, approaches the house.

HOLLING  
That'll be Maurice's car, thank heavens.

EXT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

MAURICE and CORK get out of the stopped car among the mess of VEHICLES and PEOPLE in the dooryard. Cork's ARM hangs from a CLOTH around his neck.

MAURICE  
A party I wasn't invited to, eh?

Holling stands on the deck with Joel.

HOLLING  
You got us worried, you horse's ass.  
Where've you been?

MAURICE  
I've been to the mountaintop. Then we had  
some minor repairs to make on the 'copter.

Maurice and Cork walk onto the deck.

MAURICE  
And you might as well all come in. I've got  
something to tell you.

The crowd, with mixed skeptical/quizzical looks, begin to jam into the big house.

Maurice, with Cork, catches Joel on the deck.

MAURICE  
Cork, this is Dr. Fleischman I was telling  
you about. Joel, my friend Murphy Corcoran.

CORK

Cork.

JOEL

Murph the Cork? The skier?

CORK

The engineer now.

JOEL

You took the silver for Canada in the Giant Slalom in what was it? Sixty-eight?

CORK

Seventy-two and that's bad enough. Look doc I wonder if you'd take a look at my wrist. Kind of hurts.

JOEL

Come on inside.

INT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

THE DEN

The GROUP all find SEATS. Joel, Maggie and Cork sit near each other. Joel looks over Cork's WRIST, rotating it. Maurice stands in front of his DESK doing his medicine show.

MAURICE

I just want to let you all know that I've taken the first steps toward building a major ski resort here in Cicely. This is our big play, folks.

People around the room look at each other, some skeptically, some excitedly.

MAURICE

Soon we'll be the leading tourist destination on the whole Pacific Rim.

CHRIS

Why would people ski here when they could go to Vail or Steamboat?

MAURICE

The winter season in the lower forty-eight is getting shorter every year. Global warming, Chris. Global warming's going to make us all a fortune.

SHELLEY

Well, how are people going to ski when it's night-time through the winter?

MAURICE

Night skiing. It's all the rage. You put up floodlights down the length of the runs. It's very romantic, actually.

Maggie smiles dubiously.

MAURICE

I've initiated negotiations with the tribal elders for a long-term lease on Sugar Mountain. I've retained Murphy Corcoran

Quick shot of Cork, wincing and looking up to smile as Joel looks over his wrist.

MAURICE

(out of frame)

... of Corcoran Associates Engineering who've designed and built ski areas all over the world.

CORK

Ouch.

Cork and Joel look around, embarrassed.

CORK

Sorry.

Back on Maurice, selling snake oil now.

MAURICE

And I've consulted with the EPA and the Sierra Club as to environmental impact. They say it can be done with minimum dislocation of indigenous wildlife.

Several cutaways in the course of Maurice's spiel. Include MARILYN and another TRIBE MEMBER (impassive), ED (curious), JOEL (intrigued) and CHRIS (eagerly buying in).

MAURICE

Some'll even benefit. The bankers say we can do it. Cork here says we can do it. Soon as the tribe says we can do it we're going to go ahead and do it.

ED

Did you see anything unusual up there?

MAURICE

Unusual?

CORK

Saw some long-haired guy on the peak.

MAURICE

Oh that was nothing. Hell I thought I saw a UFO up in orbit a couple of times too.

Non-verbal reaction among the crowd. Generally positive this time. Ed, however, exchanges an inscrutable glance with Marilyn.

MAURICE

So happens Cork is also a world-class skier. Tomorrow he takes his first run down the mountain to make sure it's navigable.

JOEL

Not tomorrow.

MAURICE

What's that?

JOEL

I'm pretty sure he's got a broken wrist.

MAURICE

How do you know that without an x-ray?

JOEL

I don't but I'm pretty sure.

Maurice scratches his head. Cork shrugs.

MAURICE

Well, now I've got you all here, anybody  
ever done much downhill skiing?

Joel and Maggie raise their hands.

JOEL

My Uncle Max has a condo at Butternut Basin.  
We used to go all the time.

MAGGIE

I was the Michigan girls' NASTAR downhill  
champion for my age group when I was fifteen.

JOEL

Skiing in Michigan?

MAGGIE

There's skiing in Michigan.

MAURICE

So, how would you two like to perform a  
service for your community?

EVERYONE looks at JOEL and MAGGIE expectantly and we

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. CICELY - DAY

MAIN STREET

JOEL and MAGGIE load SKIS and POLES, packed in polyester ZIP CASES, onto the bed of Maggie's PICKUP TRUCK.

Chris is a voice-over.

CHRIS  
(out of frame)  
Think of it. Cicely, the ski resort. The international destination. The vacation Valhalla ...

INT. KBHR - DAY

BROADCAST BOOTH

CHRIS speaks into the MICROPHONE.

CHRIS  
...where the twenty-first century's idle rich and working proletariat alike gather over mulled wine and hot chocolate after a strenuous day of wrestling with the wilderness. And right out my window here at K-Bear are our own wilderness wrestlers, Maggie O'Connell and Dr. Joel Fleischman ...

EXT. CICELY - DAY

MAIN STREET

Maggie is at the wheel of her now loaded pickup truck with the engine running and the RADIO on, broadcasting Chris. Joel loads himself into the passenger seat.

CHRIS

(radio)

... off to ski where no one has skied before. We wish them both well. Make us all proud and while you're at it, make us all rich. Don't fall into any crevasses.

INT. MAGGIE'S PICKUP - DAY

She GUNS the engine and drives off. Joel sits by, staring at the RADIO.

CHRIS

(radio)

Mind the hibernating wildlife. Keep your two-way radio charged up and your first-aid kit at the ready, and -

Maggie CLICKS off the radio.

Joel and Maggie smile rather sickly at each other: feigned bravado.

JOEL

You'd think we're crossing the continent with Lewis and Clark here.

MAGGIE

We'll probably be down the mountain before the helicopter. No big deal.

JOEL

What could go wrong?

EXT. CICELY - DAY

MAIN STREET

Maggie's PICKUP rumbles out of town.

CHRIS (O.C.)

We'll see you trailblazers off in the words of Robert Service:

I wanted the gold and I sought it;  
I scrabbled and mucked like a slave ...

INT. KBHR - DAY

BROADCAST BOOTH

Chris reads from a BOOK as he sees Maggie's TRUCK drive off.

CHRIS

... Was it famine or scurvy - I fought it;  
I hurled my youth into a grave.  
I wanted the gold and I got it -  
Came out with a fortune last fall,-

EXT. SUGAR MOUNTAIN - DAY

BASE CAMP

Start with a big view of SUGAR MOUNTAIN in the distance

CHRIS (O.C.)

Yet somehow life's not what I thought it,  
And somehow the gold isn't all.  
No! There's the land. (Have you seen it?)  
It's the cussedest land that I know,

SLOW ZOOM

to MAURICE and CORK and the HELICOPTER parked at the end of a DIRT ROAD among the foothills and snowdrifts. Cork's RIGHT ARM is in a CAST and a SLING. Maurice pours himself a cup of COFFEE from a PERCOLATOR on a gas GRILL and Cork checks the 'copter fluid levels with a DIP STICK.

Maurice takes a deep breath, doing a Robert Duvall impression which zooms right over Cork's head.

MAURICE

I love the smell of 'copter fuel in the morning. It smells like revenue.

EXT. SUGAR MOUNTAIN - DAY

DIRT ROAD

leading to the base camp. Maggie's TRUCK navigates among SNOWDRIFTS. It stops at the end of the road near the BASE CAMP.

CHRIS (O.C.)

From the big, dizzy mountains that screen it

EXT. SUGAR MOUNTAIN - DAY

BASE CAMP

Joel and Maggie unload themselves from the truck. Joel goes to the rear to start unloading the EQUIPMENT.

MAURICE

Morning, you intrepid explorers. Coffee?

MAGGIE

Yes, thanks.

JOEL

None for me.

CHRIS (O.C.)

Some say it's a fine land to shun;

CUT TO

EXT. SUGAR MOUNTAIN - DAY

MOUNTAINTOP

THE HELICOPTER

beats its ROTORS in the camera's face and recedes toward the mountaintop.

The 'copter buffets a little as it comes down and LANDS softly on a FROZEN FLAT AREA.

THE HELICOPTER

on the flat ICE; engine running, rotors winding down.

Joel and Maggie stand under the ROTORS pulling out SKI GEAR and BACKPACKS. Maurice sits in the CAB barking directions.

Maggie does some stretching exercises.

MAURICE

All right, got everything?

JOEL

Skis, check. Poles, check. Backpacks.

MAURICE

Got the radio? The survey map?

MAGGIE

Right here.

MAURICE

Okay. No fancy stuff yet. Just down to base camp and I'll be there. Take your time.

JOEL

Jawöhl.

LS. Joel and Maggie stand in their SKIS on the mountaintop, waving as the 'COPTER lifts off.

Joel and Maggie caper around on their skis, enjoying themselves as the 'copter flies out of frame.

ZOOM IN

on them SKIING. Maggie cups her hands over her mouth and lets out a WHOOP.

Joel follows suit, letting out a STACCATO SERIES in kind.

They ski down toward the TREE LINE. Maggie pulls out the MAP and points at a likely path. All very silent and bucolic until

CS. THE RADIO

in Maggie's pocket speaks.

MAURICE

(radio)

You two hear me all right?

Maggie pulls out the radio to speak into it. Both stand at the top edge of the tree line.

MAGGIE

Yes, Maurice. Loud and staticky.

**Northern Exposure / "Mountains to Move"**

22.

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

Maurice pilots toward the BASE CAMP.

MAURICE

It'll get clearer once I'm landed. Keep  
this channel open. Over.

MAGGIE

Will do.

JOEL

(interrupts)  
Over and out.  
(to Maggie)  
I always wanted to say that.

MAGGIE

Beat you to the tree line.

She leaves the RADIO in Joel's hands and lights out. Joel LOOPS  
the radio over his WRIST; it dangles as he skis.

Joel and Maggie continue, approaching the

TREE LINE

She stops here, looking back for Joel who lags. He skis/slogs  
toward her, then on a steep grade he TAKES OFF past her.  
Mock-angrily she gives CHASE through the WOODS.

QUICK CUTS

through a succession of skiing scenes. They kick up lots of  
POWDER, dive and weave. Both are pretty good at this.

EXT. SUGAR MOUNTAIN - DAY

THE GLADE

Maggie passes Joel by, skiing among TREES and ROCK outcroppings.  
Joel pushes off with his POLES to try and catch up.

Focus on a slick of BOILERPLATE ICE. Maggie skis straight over  
it, wobbling but keeping her balance until the SKI'S EDGES can  
grab the snow again. She skis further down the hill, skids to a  
stop, turns around.

MAGGIE  
(hollers)  
Watch out for that slick of ice.

JOEL approaches the same point, looking ahead at Maggie and yelling back

JOEL  
What?

and skids across the SLICK, loses control and CRACKS HIS KNEE hard and flat against a BOULDER.

Joel tumbles over the BOULDER, letting go his POLES and the RADIO goes flying off his wrist. Follow

THE RADIO

as it tumbles through the air, across a brief CREVASSE and smashes into a TREE, falling in a disheveled heap.

Maggie looks up in alarm.

MAGGIE  
Fleischman?

Joel also lies in a disheveled heap: soundless, motionless.

Maggie begins to TRAVERSE up the incline. That is, she awkwardly walks sideways in her skis, grabbing a chunk of snow with the edge of her uphill ski, moving up to it with her downhill ski and repeating the process. It's going to be about ten thousand years, give-or-take, before she reaches Joel.

MAGGIE  
Fleischman!

EXT. SUGAR MOUNTAIN - DAY

BASE CAMP

CS. Maurice, speaking into a HAND MIKE.

MAURICE  
You guys making progress up there?

He listens for a reply. Just STATIC.

PULL BACK to show that Maurice stands outside the HELICOPTER, and that the microphone is attached to its DASHBOARD.

Cork scribbles on a CLIPBOARD with the hand of his broken arm as he looks through a SEXTANT.

MAURICE

Hey come on in, Joel. Maggie?

Maurice puts down the mike in the 'copter and walks toward Cork.

CORK

How're they doing?

MAURICE

They're probably in a dip or something.  
Couldn't raise them.

CORK

Give them two points for silence.

MAURICE

I'll try in a minute again. Where do you  
think we can sink a well?

Cork points off in the distance as we go to

INT. STABLE - DAY

ED walks in holding a BOUQUET in a bowl of composed of HAY, OATS, APPLES, CARROTS and a bottle of BEER.

ED

Hey Ginge, got a - Ginger!

ED runs over to GINGER'S STALL where she lies on her side. She wears only a HALTER.

ED

Hey get on up, girl. Look what I brought  
you.

Ed works hard to get Ginger to her feet, pushing, prodding, shoving. He tempts her with small BITS OF FOOD from his "bouquet."

ED

Come on, Ginge.

Get up, girl.  
You can do it.  
Come on.  
That's it.

Slowly, the horse gets up.

Ed takes her by the halter and leads her toward the STABLE DOOR.

ED  
Now walk.  
Good girl.

EXT. SUGAR MOUNTAIN - DAY

MOUNTAINTOP

We hear the sound of the HELICOPTER which beats into frame and circles the PEAK.

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

Maurice pilots. Cork looks out.

CORK  
Both sets of ski tracks going into the trees.

MAURICE  
Yeah, I see it too.

EXT. SUGAR MOUNTAIN - DAY

MOUNTAINTOP

The helicopter makes a sharp turn around in the direction it came to go back down to the BASE CAMP.

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

Maurice, Cork.

MAURICE  
No need to worry. We'll go back to base camp and wait for them to come out on their own.

CORK  
Good plan.

EXT. SUGAR MOUNTAIN - DAY

THE GLADE

MAGGIE, traversing up the hill, reaches JOEL who is unconscious. She slaps his FACE. She looks under his EYELIDS.

MAGGIE  
Fleischman. Wake up. No blood. Good.  
Geez, what did he hit?

Joel stirs. He moves his head, then throws it back, turning it out of frame to groan loudly. He is in intense pain. He's shattered his right KNEECAP and had a CONCUSSION.

JOEL  
(groans)

MAGGIE  
Fleischman, you're -

JOEL  
Nauseous. Where are we?

MAGGIE  
On the mountain. You lost control for a second.

JOEL  
(slowly)  
Pain. Great pain.

MAGGIE  
Where? Where's the pain?

JOEL  
Leg. Knee. How'd this happen?

Maggie unbuckles and roughly, then carefully, takes the BOOT off Joel's RIGHT LEG. Joel bites his lip with pain. Maggie pulls out a SWISS ARMY KNIFE and clips the bottom of Joel's PANTS, then rips the pant leg open to the KNEE, which is swollen.

JOEL  
O'Connell, don't touch anything.

MAGGIE

Your leg's swelling up like a blimp. I can see it swelling.

JOEL

I probably broke my patella. Head hurts too. Listen, I could go into shock.

MAGGIE

What do I do then?

JOEL

Keep my leg extended. Immobile. Like in a cast.

MAGGIE

A splint.

JOEL

Oww.

Joel passes out again. Maggie looks at his GUMS.

MAGGIE

Fleischman? Fleischman, if we're here past nightfall I'm breaking your lease.

She slaps him, pats SNOW on his face. He doesn't come to.

MAGGIE

Damn.

EXT. CICELY - DUSK

Ed walks Ginger by a TETHER clipped to her HALTER. He lures her around with a few TIDBITS from her "bouquet."

The STREET is fairly deserted as he approaches

EXT. RUTH ANN'S STORE - DUSK

Ed and Ginger stop as a PICKUP TRUCK rumbles to a stop in front. HOLLING, SHELLEY and RUTH ANN tumble out toward the store. Ruth Ann fumbles for her key.

ED

What're you so in a hurry?

HOLLING

We've got a problem.

Ruth Ann opens the DOOR and Holling brusquely disappears inside. The women stay to talk to Ed as OTHER MEN from all directions rumble into frame by car and on foot. These include CHRIS.

SHELLEY

Maurice called on the radio. He lost Joel and Maggie. We're starting a search party.

RUTH ANN

Have to break out the supplies of batteries and propane.

Ruth Ann vanishes inside as well, with Chris and several other guys behind her. Holling returns with SUPPLIES and rushes off.

CHRIS

Get out your foulest-weather clothes, Ed. We're going up the hill. Hey Ginger.

ED

Well, somebody's got to walk Ginger. She has to keep her blood running.

HOLLING

Grab a ride, Ed. We need you.

SHELLEY

I'd volunteer, but I already said I'd ride the helicopter up and do torch duty.

Ruth Ann comes back out with an armload of BOXES of propane tanks. General HUB-BUB in and out of the shop.

RUTH ANN

What's wrong?

SHELLEY

Ginger's got slow blood.

RUTH ANN

I sympathize. Leave us girls and go along, Ed.

Ruth Ann takes Ginger's TETHER and pats her nose.

ED  
Thanks, Ruth Ann.

EXT. SUGAR MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

THE GLADE

Now it's cold. Really cold.

JOEL lies in the snow, unconscious, all bundled up in Maggie's COAT and OVERCLOTHES. There is a crude SPLINT on Joel's right leg made out of a straight BRANCH and wrapped tightly with RAGS. The SKI EQUIPMENT leans against a TREE. A pile of WET KINDLING lies near Joel's head.

MAGGIE roots around among the trees and bushes for more KINDLING. She wears a SWEATER, GLOVES and LEGGINGS and she moves in the agitated manner of someone fighting the cold.

MAGGIE  
Wet. Wet. It's all wet. Nothing to ignite  
it with anyway.

She drops some more DAMP TWIGS on her pile, kneels next to Joel.

MAGGIE  
You know I hate you, Fleischman. You're  
going to kill us.

Maggie STRIPS to the waist. She stands and drops off her SWEATER and TOP. Then she kneels and undoes JOEL'S CLOTHING, wrapping them together in them, body-to-body to conserve heat.

MAGGIE  
And I hate you for making me do this.

PASSAGE OF TIME

A series of SUCCESSIVE SHOTS of Maggie and Joel lying together, slowly freezing. Sometimes Joel stirs. Sometimes Maggie stirs.

Finally, with both unconscious, we hear

FOOTSTEPS

padding through the snow and into frame come only the LEGS of

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KENIREKA

His name is Inuit for "To Make Fire." His LEGGINGS and BOOTS are those of the traditional Inuit. From out of frame above he drops a pile of dry

FIREWOOD

on Maggie's wet kindling. His open HAND faces the wood pile and a tiny thin BOLT shoots from the hand to the woodpile, which

Kenireka walks on, out of frame.

ZOOM IN

on Joel and Maggie's cold FACES, light and heat from the flames dancing across them.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. SUGAR MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

THE MOUNTAINTOP

A bundled SHELLEY lights a PROPANE LANTERN with a butane LIGHTER.

PULL BACK to show the scene above the tree line. Shelley hands out lanterns to three or four GUYS on SNOWSHOES, among whom are ED and CORK. Beyond them, on the clearing is the HELICOPTER about to take off.

ED

Thanks Shelley.

SHELLEY

Be careful, Ed.

EXT. SUGAR MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

THE GLADE

Joel and Maggie are bundled up naked together with CLOTHING wrapped around them.

Joel's HEAD moves. He opens his EYES to see the burning CAMPFIRE. It's been going for hours now, so it's getting low. There's a pile of dry FIREWOOD in sight. Then he realizes he's cheek-to-cheek with Maggie. He wiggles his SHOULDERS a little bit and is mildly startled. He's hoarse.

JOEL

O'Connell? Your campfire's burning out.

No response.

He tries to reach for the FIREWOOD, notices he's in pain and closes his eyes again.

EXT. CICELY - NIGHT

RUTH ANN walks GINGER by her TETHER through deserted streets, talking to her.

RUTH ANN

You're lucky to have a boy like Ed, Ginger.  
If you left us I'd have to adopt him.

THE SKY

The AURORA flashes faintly.

RUTH ANN

I'm sure he'll be all right.

Ruth Ann and Ginger.

RUTH ANN

They'll all be fine. What do your people  
say? "It's not a good day to die."

Ginger stops walking. Ruth Ann tugs on her.

RUTH ANN

Oh please come on, girl. I'm tired too.

Ginger sits down, then ROLLS OVER on her side in the street.

RUTH ANN

Fine.

Ruth Ann sits down with Ginger, leaning against her.

RUTH ANN

It's much too cold and we're much too old  
for this.

Ruth Ann gets up and pulls Ginger's tether in the direction  
opposite that which they were walking.

RUTH ANN

Let's go home.

The horse gets up and follows her.

EXT. SUGAR MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

THE WOODS

CS. ED, sniffing the air suspiciously.

ED

Cork, do you smell something?

Pull back to show ED and CORK snowshoeing together through the woods with their LANTERNS and FLASHLIGHTS.

CORK

I don't think so.

ED

I smell something. Embers. Kenireka.

CORK

What?

ED

Kenireka. The Firemaker. This is his mountain.

Ed tromps off excitedly downhill through the trees. Cork follows.

EXT. SUGAR MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

THE GLADE

THE CAMPFIRE is just a mess of glowing EMBERS shining over Maggie and Joel's unconscious FACES.

Suddenly a FLASHLIGHT shines from out of frame.

ED

(out of frame)

I found them!

Pull back to show Ed setting his lantern down next to their faces. Ed pulls off his GLOVES to warm their faces with his hands. He blows on the EMBERS of the fire to make them redden.

CORK hurries into frame. The snowshoes are clunky and slow.

CORK

You sure as hell did, didn't you?

ED

I'm going to make a big fire. Can you find your way back here without me?

PASSAGE OF TIME

CS. a big CAMPFIRE

CORK (O.C.)

I can try.

Pull back to show a dozen SNOWSHOERS, some of whom are members of the regular company, setting JOEL and MAGGIE on STRETCHERS set up to drag in the snow like travois. Among them are MAURICE, SHELLEY and HOLLING.

Also among them, CHRIS slaps ED on the back.

CHRIS

Good work, Ed my man.

ED

They haven't said a word yet. It's spooky.

CHRIS

They're fine. I can tell. And you did it.

ED

Kenireka did it. He kept them from freezing.

CHRIS

Who?

ED

The Firemaker. Kenireka. He walks this mountain.

CHRIS

Really? Wow.

INT. KBHR - DAY

CHRIS sits at the MICROPHONE.

CHRIS

Our own Joel and Maggie come home today, winging their way north from Fairbanks Community Medical Center.

INT. MEETING HALL - DAY

MAIN ROOM

RUTH ANN, MARILYN and several other WOMEN, notably including several Inuit women, set up DECORATIONS and a tableful of FINGER FOODS, a PUNCH BOWL and BOTTLES of drink. It's a party.

CHRIS (O.C.)

Appropriate festivities will take place at the Cicely meeting hall at seven tonight.

RUTH ANN

Why wouldn't the tribe want to lease Sugar Mountain for a ski area?

MARILYN

Most would. Lots of money.

RUTH ANN

So why the long negotiations?

Move around the room so that we see a BACK ROOM with an OPEN DOOR whence we hear Maurice's thundering voice.

MARILYN

Reserved.

RUTH ANN

But nobody uses it for hunting. Does anybody ever go up there any more?

MARILYN

Maurice saw him.

RUTH ANN

Saw whom, Marilyn?

MARILYN

Him. Maurice knows who.

MAURICE

(out of frame)

Well I call foul. If you go back on what we agreed to ...

INT. MEETING HALL - DAY

BACK ROOM

MAURICE sits on one side of a TABLE, with three MIDDLE AGED INUITS sitting opposite him. Sitting in the middle is GABEL.

Gabel, 60, is one of the tribal elders and the spokesman among the three Inuit NEGOTIATORS dealing with Maurice's proposition.

MAURICE

... then your honor's not worth spit, Gabel.

GABEL

Maurice, we just want a postponement. New information has come up.

MAURICE

What new information? About the mountain? Why don't I have this information?

GABEL

You said you and your engineer friend saw someone on the mountaintop.

MAURICE

Yeah. I think some loon was up there when we got caught in an updraft.

GABEL

What did he look like?

MAURICE

Long braided hair. Wearing old-fashioned buckskins I think. Why?

GABEL

The tribal elders haven't yet authorized me to discuss it.

MAURICE

We're not talking mineral reserves or something.

GABEL

No, no. Nothing like that. Something spiritual.

INT. THE MEETING HALL - DAY

Marilyn, Ruth Ann and a few others set up as we hear the tail end of the negotiating scene.

MAURICE  
(out of frame)  
Yeah. Right. An Indian thing.

GABEL  
(out of frame)  
I guess. An Indian thing.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. THE MEETING HALL - NIGHT

MAIN ROOM

The room is crowded with partying folk including MAURICE, CHRIS, ED and RUTH ANN. Also here are many of the TRIBE MEMBERS, including GABEL. HOLLING comes into frame balancing a large SERVING TRAY full of BEERS on his arm and shoulder.

HOLLING  
Liquid nourishment for our returning heroes.

FOLLOW

Holling until we see JOEL sitting with his leg up, wearing a CAST from ankle to thigh. MAGGIE gets up to hand Joel a BEER and take one for herself. CHRIS walks into frame to take one. Chris turns to address the room.

CHRIS  
I'd like to offer a toast.

RUTH ANN  
Surprise, surprise.

CHRIS  
I just want first to thank Maggie O'Connell on behalf of the town of Cicely for putting her own body on the line, so to speak ...

Suitable SNIGGERS around the room. Joel motions to her with his hand waving at his mouth as if he were Groucho wagging a cigar. Maggie swats him on the CAST.

JOEL

How an elephant got in her nightgown I'll never know.

CHRIS

... to save the life of our resident healer.

Applause and cheers. Maggie smiles, puzzled.

CHRIS

And Dr. Joel Fleischman for being responsible enough not to die and leave us three hundred miles from the nearest M.D.

Joel smiles and nods. MAURICE sits down next to him and swats him on the back.

CHRIS

And especially Ed Chigliak whose Native American instincts and keen sense of survival brought our friends back to us.

MAURICE

And earned him a lifetime lift pass on Sugar Mountain.

ED

Thanks guys, but I just found them. The fire saved them. Kept them from becoming hypothermic.

MAGGIE

But you lit the fire, didn't you?

ED

No. You didn't either, did you?

MAGGIE

I tried. I couldn't find a single dry stick.

They both look at Joel.

JOEL

Don't look at me. I was out cold.

Ed looks across the room to see GABEL, and shrugs. Gabel NODS approvingly at him with hands clasped together. Gabel strides

to the EXIT, followed by several other INUIT MEN who come out of the crowd to join him.

Ruth Ann with a PLATE of food and a GLASSful of something sits down next to Ed.

SHELLEY approaches; hears a bit of the conversation.

RUTH ANN

So how's Ginger doing, Ed?

ED

Better thanks, Ruth Ann. She slept on her feet last night.

JOEL

Did she? That's great.

RUTH ANN

Ed's been spending his nights with her.

SHELLEY

Who's the lucky girl?

JOEL

Lucky mare's more like it.

ED

Excuse me, guys.

Ed goes over to the EXIT where several of the tribal men have left the room.

As he gets there a collection of MEN come back in, in a cluster. Several of them clear to either side revealing LITTLE KENIREKA entering the room with a WALKER.

Little Kenireka, 90-95, is a wizened Inuit man in long white braids and buckskins.

On Joel for a moment, asking Maggie

JOEL

Who's that?

Maggie shrugs.

HOLLING comes into frame to sit down hard on a SEAT near Maurice, saying as if to himself

HOLLING  
Lord o' Mercy, he's still alive.

MAURICE  
Who?

HOLLING  
An unfinished legend.

Little Kenireka walks through the HUSHED PARTY in Joel and Maggie's direction. Solicitous TRIBESMEN close ranks behind him.

Little Kenireka sets aside the WALKER and reaches forward unsteadily as TWO TRIBESMEN grab his arms to help him walk.

Little Kenireka pushes away one of the men who first took an arm and reaches for ED, almost falling down as he does so. Ed catches his arm, and they make their way to Joel and Maggie that way.

Maggie gets to her feet. Joel looks up, grabs for a CRUTCH beside him and does the same.

LITTLE KENIREKA  
You were with Kenireka the Firemaker.

MAGGIE  
Excuse me?

LITTLE KENIREKA  
Someone laid a campfire to protect you from the cold.

JOEL  
Yeah, I guess.

MAGGIE  
Someone must have.

LITTLE KENIREKA  
It was the Firemaker. I am Little Kenireka, his grandson. He said he would never leave without me. Will you take me to him?

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FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. KBHR - DAY

BROADCAST BOOTH

CHRIS speaks into the MICROPHONE.

CHRIS

The way I heard it was that one January around the turn of the century there was a big thaw in these parts in what ought to have been the dead of winter. For the tribe it was disastrous.

EXT. CICELY - DAY

A collage of WINTRY SCENES:

ED walks GINGER through the streets, both breathing steam.

A TRUCK goes by them carrying LITTLE KENIREKA, GABEL and the other two Inuit NEGOTIATORS.

JOEL makes his way on CRUTCHES between snow drifts to his OFFICE.

A fat BEAR fishes in a river whose banks are beginning to freeze.

MAGGIE lands her PLANE on a long field in an icy skid.

CHRIS (O.C.)

Ice packs melted. Rivers broke. Birds flew north. Bears scavenged for food. It seemed the laws of nature were repealed.

INT. KBHR - DAY

BROADCAST BOOTH

Chris and his microphone.

CHRIS

The ancient rhythms that the people of the North Country had come to take for granted were canceled just for that year. It was the year without a winter.

INT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - DAY

THE DEN

MAURICE and CORK - still with a hand in a cast - look over one of the SURVEY MAPS on the wall. It's all marked up like a weather map. Cork uses it for an animated presentation. Maurice is taciturn. There is a RADIO on in the room.

CHRIS

Kenireka - the original big Kenireka - had a special talent for making fire. Word was he could set up a pile of logs - no twigs, no dried leaves, no kindling at all - blow off the tip of a smoldering ember and the logs would catch the flame. Some guys just have the knack. I've seen it.

CORK

That's the intermediate run where the lift lets out. But over here to the side is the stiffest expert run. Narrow, full of moguls.

MAURICE

Just a second.

Maurice flips off the RADIO.

CORK

The main lift lets off right here and we run a string of floodlights to either side, engineered to throw clear shadows on the bumps.

MAURICE

Cork, my man, I'm not sure there's going to be a Sugar Mountain ski resort now.

CORK

You really think so?

MAURICE

It's the only mountain around here the tribe didn't give to the feds for wilderness preserve. Now we know why.

CORK

What, that Firemaker guy?

MAURICE

It's a sacred spot to them. A lot of them think the ghost of this Inuit hero walks there.

CORK

Well remember when the 'copter engine started failing up top and we saw a guy below us?

MAURICE

Thought we saw him.

CORK

Well I thought I saw something else.

MAURICE

What?

CORK

There was like this bolt of fire that shot up to the hub of the rotors.

MAURICE

You mean from this guy?

CORK

I saw something.

MAURICE

What do you think he fired up a spark plug from the ground?

Cork shrugs. Maurice thinks about this.

There is a KNOCK on the door.

EXT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - DAY

THE DECK

Maurice — with Cork behind him — opens the door to find GABEL, the other two NEGOTIATORS and LITTLE KENIREKA with his WALKER standing there.

MAURICE

Gentlemen. Mr. Kenireka sir, to what do I owe the honor?

GABEL

We would like to reopen negotiations now.

MAURICE

Now?

GABEL

Whenever you like, that is, Maurice. We feel we know at this point what we are dealing with.

MAURICE

We'll take a load off and let's talk about it, old Gabel.

They go inside. Maurice goes to help the old man but the others beat him to it.

INT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - DAY

THE DEN

Maurice helps Little Kenireka to a SEAT. The others find their own.

CORK

(to Maurice)

Can I get you guys something to drink?

MAURICE

That's all right, Cork. I'll do it.

LITTLE KENIREKA

No. Please. We will not be long.

MAURICE

Fine, sir. What'll it be then?

LITTLE KENIREKA

The tribal elders have agreed that as part of the lease arrangement for the sacred mountain you must agree to take me to my grandfather.

CORK

The ghost?

MAURICE

Sir, the first dry day after the spring thaw you and I go right up there in the 'copter and I won't leave until you're satisfied you've found him or we both drop.

GABEL

No you don't understand. Little Kenireka wishes to go to his grandfather alone. Now.

MAURICE

Sir, if you don't mind my saying so, a man your age shouldn't even be out here in weather like this, let alone on an exposed predeveloped mountaintop.

GABEL

Am I to understand that you are declining on this point?

MAURICE

To take a man in his - what, nineties? - up there now is murder. I can't be a party to such a thing.

GABEL

There are factors to which you are not privy, Maurice.

MAURICE

Look, I'm sure there's some compromise that -

On Little Kenireka, ZOOMing in as at great pain he speaks.

LITTLE KENIREKA

Mr. Minnifield. The tribal elders and I have considered the matter at length. We have decided that this point is a deal buster.

INT. THE BRICK - DAY

CS. the RADIO on the SHELF behind the bar.

CHRIS

(radio)

All through this long muddy winter old Kenireka would take it upon himself to visit the families whose home fires had gone out and whose woodpiles were drenched in the mudflows and he'd get their fires cooking again. Just like that. Kind of an early TV repairman, I guess.

PULL BACK to show mild lunchtime commerce. Joel sits with Ed at the BAR. They both eat something; doesn't matter what as long as whatever is on Joel's plate involves some FRENCH FRIES.

Shelley waits on them. We don't hear them, but we hear CHRIS clearly ...

CHRIS

(radio)

Kenireka had an orphan grandson they called Little Fire who tagged along with him all the time. "I'm never going anywhere without you," the big guy would say. Today that grandson's name is Little Kenireka.

... until MAURICE walks in, UNGLOVES his hands and sits next to Joel.

ED

Hi Maurice.

JOEL

Watch the cast.

MAURICE

Oh sorry Joel. Afternoon Ed. Joel, I wonder if I can get a medical judgment from you.

JOEL

Judgment is my business.

MAURICE

Are there any special precautions you could prescribe for a man, say, in his nineties who has to expose himself to inclement weather. Special clothing or diet or -

JOEL

Wait. Wait. You're talking about that old Indian Little Kenireka.

MAURICE

Yeah, as it happens.

JOEL

He tried for an hour last night to persuade O'Connell to fly him up to the summit. When she refused he started on me.

MAURICE

What'd you tell him?

JOEL

I told him I'd take him up there when the place had a lift and clearly lighted groomed trails and when he learned to ski.

MAURICE

You know Sherman Adams skied three days a week every winter well into his eighties.

JOEL

Thank you. I didn't know that about old Sherm. Are you really contemplating this thing?

MAURICE

If I can be reasonably sure the old guy won't die in the process.

JOEL

You can't be reasonably sure that guy's not going to die on his way to the john, Maurice.

ED

Shelley, doesn't Holling have an uncle  
twenty years older than Little Kenireka?

SHELLEY

Yeah, a couple of them I think. His Uncle  
Moose Dujardin owned the first Peugeot  
dealership in Sherbrooke.

JOEL

That's nice.

ED

I've got to go take Ginger for a walk.

MAURICE

Give her a hug for me, Ed.

Ed leaves.

JOEL

He wants to see his dead grandfather. I  
wouldn't do it, Maurice.

MAURICE

They've sort of got me over a barrel here  
Joel.

JOEL

So no ski resort after all?

MAURICE

Oh I'll build the ski resort, you can put  
your firstborn on that.

JOEL

I'll let him know when I see him.

MAURICE

But it's going to cost me.

Maurice absently takes and chomps down a FRENCH FRY from Joel's  
plate. Joel shoots him a glare he doesn't notice.

MAURICE

He says he wants to set a fitful spirit to  
rest.

Joel reaches for a KETCHUP bottle but for his casted LEG he can't bend that far. Maurice hands it to him.

JOEL

I'm a fitful spirit too. I can't reach the ketchup. Would you mind?

MAURICE

Yeah sure.

EXT. CICELY - DAY

At the edge of the MAIN DRAG Ed walks out of town with Ginger on a tether clipped to her halter. He's got a rope BRIDLE and REIN draped over his shoulder.

EXT. THE COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Ed walks Ginger to the side of a small LAKE where they stop. SUGAR MOUNTAIN is visible in the distance.

ED

Here you go, girl.

Ed removes the HALTER and puts the BRIDLE on her. It's rope rather than leather and hasn't got a bit. It's got a REIN made out of CLOTHESLINE.

ED

Been a long time since you wore one of these, eh Ginge? Don't worry, your load'll be light.

Ed looks off in the distance and sees GABEL'S PICKUP approaching. It's a King Cab type with two seats.

EXT GABEL'S PICKUP - DAY

It's getting toward dusk, actually. There are FOUR MEN in the truck and we begin to hear, on its RADIO ...

CHRIS

(radio)

Well, when the spring that followed the winter that wasn't finally came and the land dried, there wasn't much of a snow pack to run off into the lakes and streams.

INT. GABEL'S PICKUP - DAY

It's getting toward dusk, actually, and GABEL and LITTLE KENIREKA sit in the front seat with the other NEGOTIATORS in the back.

Little Kenireka points toward ED as they approach.

LITTLE KENIREKA  
There he is.

CHRIS

Water got polluted. People and animals  
picked up diseases.

EXT. THE COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The PICKUP is stopped beside the lake as Ed holds Ginger, petting her face. She's got a thin BLANKET over her back now. The MEN help LITTLE KENIREKA out of the truck.

The three Indian men help Little Kenireka onto GINGER'S BACK.

CHRIS (O.C.)  
Kenireka lay on his pallet awash in cholera,  
and the last thing he told his grandson  
before he closed his eyes for the last time  
was, "I'm never going anywhere without you."

Ed kisses Ginger on the nose.

INT. KBHR - NIGHT

BROADCAST BOOTH

Chris speaks into the microphone.

CHRIS  
I guess something like that will do things  
to a boy.

EXT. SUGAR MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

THE WOODS

Huddling against the cold, LITTLE KENIREKA and GINGER make their way slowly UPHILL.

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CHRIS (O.C.)  
Sleep easy, Cicely.

FINAL FADE OUT.