

BRAVO

Written by

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Based on actual events in the life of Mary Helwig

C O N T A C T S

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"Bravo"

FADE IN:

EXT. UNALAKLEET DOG KENNEL - NIGHT

SUPER: "Outside a dog kennel, Unalakleet, Alaska, January 2012, Temperature -65 degrees F"

Dark, windy, below-freezing cold. We see a rusty cargo sled against an old shipping container. There's blowing snow and we can barely see a pile of hay beneath the sled.

We zoom in to see a young mother Husky, and four puppies cuddled together, battling the cold.

The dogs' eyes are shut, except for one frightened puppy, BRAVO, with white patches above his eyes.

Bravo's eyes look left and right with each howl of the wind.

Bravo's eyes are too tired to stay open. They finally close.

TITLE: "Bravo"

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. UNALAKLEET DOG KENNEL - DAWN

The day is clear, the sky is blue, but it's still freezing cold.

Bravo is alone beneath the pile of hay and wide-eyed, sniffing and looking around in perplexed despair.

He sneaks out of the pile of hay and turns around, ready to pounce on the hay and wake up his mother and three siblings.

His tail wags.

He leaps on the pile of hay and falls flat.

Bravo's eyes open widely, before he panics -- looking everywhere for his mom and siblings.

Bravo looks out around the sled to see large, dangerous-looking paw-prints in the snow.

BRAVO
Not mommy's!

Bravo leaps under the pile of hay in fright.

Bravo's ears perk up from the pile of hay when he hears the start of the morning dog chorus of barks and happy yelps.

Bravo slowly crawls out of from under the pile of hay and shakes straw off his nose.

His eyes (POV) look behind a fence with a sign that reads, "Middy's Racing Dog Kennel."

Bravo is happy and excited.

BRAVO (CONT'D)

Dogs!

(beat)

Maybe they know where my family is!

Bravo sees 20 Huskies barking and yapping in a cheerful way.

Bravo turns his head and creeps forward just enough to see the cyclone-wire fence, and beyond that, a not-a-dog (human)!

BRAVO (CONT'D)

A not-a-dog!

MARY (25), is bundled up in winter gear with only her soft blue eyes, ever-present smile, and flowing blonde hair showing. She lugs around a heavy 3-gallon bucket of food for the dogs.

The dogs LOVE Mary!

BRAVO (CONT'D)

They like the not-a-dog?

Bravo sees Mary give a dog a scoop of food.

He sniffs the air, and his head perks up as Mary walks to another dog (on 6-foot chains, 12-feet apart).

BRAVO (CONT'D)

It's food! The not-a-dog brings them food!

Bravo watches and listens intently as Mary approaches a female 2-year-old Husky named NATASHA (on a shiny name tag).

MARY

Good morning, Natasha. Today's selection from our private cellar has a bold broth base, with hints of rice and high-protein kibble, with an ever-so-slight moose-stew finish.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

(laughs)

They say it has legs. Or had legs.

Bravo's head turns sideways, perplexed.

BRAVO

Huh?

Mary pets Natasha.

MARY

Have I told you that my parents own
a winery in California where it's
65 degrees there and minus-thirty
here?

Natasha speaks but Mary can't hear her.

NATASHA

Told us all a million times.

Mary walks on to feed TUCKER, a seasoned male Husky with a debonair look of experience and wisdom. Tucker is the closest dog to Bravo, who is licking his chops on the other side of the fence. Tucker's name tag is rusty, but readable.

Natasha glares at Bravo through the fence, and yells at Bravo.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

Beat it, ya little trash mutt!

Bravo looks perplexed at Mary.

BRAVO

Poor thing can't hear.

Mary happily spins in a circle without spilling a drop from her bucket, before reaching Tucker.

MARY

But I love it here. Don't you,
Tucker? Clean air, no hustle and
bustle, wide-open spaces.

(fills Tucker's bowl)

This is God's country!

Bravo tries to get Mary and Tucker's attention by jumping up and down.

BRAVO

Tucker, over here! Over here!

Tucker turns to see Bravo, while Mary pets Tucker.

BRAVO (CONT'D)
My mommy's lost! Family too!

TUCKER
Hold on, little fella. These are
precious moments with friend, Mary.
Kindest not-a-dog I ever met!
You'll understand how precious life
is when you get real old like me!

Tucker wags his tail and whimpers for Mary as she hugs him
again before moving on.

BRAVO
But my mommy's lost and...

Tucker interrupts and comforts Bravo.

TUCKER
Mary will know what to do. She's
smart!

Bravo looks around.

BRAVO
What's smart, Tucker?

TUCKER
I see you gotta lot to learn, kid.

Bravo sneaks a peek at Natasha.

BRAVO
Natasha can be mean.

TUCKER
Lead dog is strict. Never mean.

BRAVO
Lead dog?

TUCKER
On a sled-dog team! Smart,
fearless, obeys verbal commands,
endless view. They deserve the
utmost respect on a sled-dog team.

BRAVO
Sled-dog team?

TUCKER
Never mess with the lead dog! I
remember back in aught-four, or was
it aught-three...?

BRAVO
 (interrupts)
 Is that not-a-dog... what's her
 name? Mary? Is she deaf?

Tucker laughs.

TUCKER
 Ain't been around not-a-dogs much,
 hey kid? Not-a-dogs can hear and
 understand other not-a-dogs, and
 they can hear and partly understand
 dogs, but they don't speak our
 language, kid. Understand?

Bravo turns his head, like he doesn't understand.

BRAVO
 Huh?

TUCKER
 You're just a pup! But like all
 dogs, you're gonna want only three
 things out of life: to prove
 loyalty, to be loved, and to run.
 (beat)
 With your mom gone, you're gonna
 need a not-a-dog.

Tucker HOWLS.

Mary comes running.

MARY
 What is it, Tucker? Not one of your
 Call of the Wild stunts again, is
 it?

NATASHA
 She's heard that tale a million
 times! Knock it off, old-timer!

TUCKER
 Stay out of this, Natasha.

Tucker whimpers and motions to the fence toward Bravo.

MARY
 What is it, boy?

NATASHA
 Old man is more like it.

Mary spots Bravo cowering under the cargo sled.

Bravo gives Mary his best puppy-dog look. They share a moment.

Mary spins and points a finger while scolding Tucker.

MARY

You know I can't take in a puppy,
Tucker. I got work, volunteering in
the village, I can't be...

Bravo lets out a small SQUEAL.

Mary turns slowly with a puppy-dog look of her own.

MARY (CONT'D)

But we can't leave the little guy
out there in the cold, can we,
Tucker?

Bravo looks sad and alone.

Mary opens the gate and slowly approaches Bravo, scanning the area around the cargo sled like a crime scene.

She freezes when she sees the wolf prints in the snow.

MARY (CONT'D)

Wolves!

Mary scoops the puppy up into her arms, and Bravo feels Mary's warmth and compassion immediately.

Bravo is covered in slobber.

MARY (CONT'D)

Less than a month old, covered in
slobber, cold and hungry.

Mary and Bravo look around.

MARY (CONT'D)

Mom may come back for you.

Mary looks back at the wolf prints.

MARY (CONT'D)

But I doubt it.

Mary turns to scold Tucker inside the fence.

MARY (CONT'D)

Tucker, I told you, I'm in no
position to...

Bravo whimpers again.

Bravo's eyes meet Mary's and they share a moment.

MARY (CONT'D)

You survived one of the coldest nights we had, minus 65! And by the looks of these tracks, you survived dangerous wolves.

(gazes closer)

Bravo!

Bravo's tail wags.

BRAVO

Bravo?

NATASHA

That's no name for a sled dog! Most important job in the world. We not only pull the musher; we push the musher to win, win, win!

Tucker spins, angry at Natasha.

TUCKER

Life isn't always about winning the race. It's about loyalty, compassion, and winning friends for life!

Natasha rolls her eyes at Tucker with disgust.

NATASHA

Spoken like a washed-up old wheel-dog!

Tucker turns to Bravo and Mary who are still hugging.

TUCKER

I like the name!

(loudly)

Bravo!

MARY

I'll get you fed and warm.

Bravo wags his tail.

MARY (CONT'D)

But I'm still not taking you in!

Bravo whimpers.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Don't look like much of a runner.
 I'll have to find you a home.

Mary carries Bravo back to the kennel.

Natasha scowls.

NATASHA
 He's a trash mutt 'til he gets a
 name tag!

Bravo follows Mary all around the kennel as she does daily chores. He watches Mary's every move.

Mary puts new straw in the dog beds (raised boxes by each pole and chain). Bravo plays in the straw.

MARY
 You don't have to follow me
 everywhere I go!

BRAVO
 Yes, I do.

Mary scoops up dog poop with a shovel and puts it in a bucket. She pets each dog as she goes around.

MARY
 Poop-cycles anyone?

BRAVO
 Ewe!

Mary explains dog sledding to Bravo as she works.

MARY
 See, a sled is pulled by about
 sixteen dogs.

BRAVO
 Huh.

MARY
 You probably can't count yet.

BRAVO
 Nope.

MARY
 Lead dogs are smart, fearless, obey
 verbal commands, and get an endless
 view.

Bravo glances at Natasha who glares back at him.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Swing dogs are next. They have
 leader potential.

Bravo looks perplexed.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Team dogs are cheerleaders,
 playful, and goofy, but they work
 hard for the team. They're followed
 by wheel dogs that are very strong
 but might not be the sharpest tool
 in the shed. Know what I mean?

Bravo gives Mary a dumb look.

MARY (CONT'D)
 You know exactly what I mean!

LATER

Bravo continues to follow Mary around as she feeds the dogs
 dinner.

MARY (CONT'D)
 This is our most sought-after blend
 with a dark, rich color, a delicate
 bouquet of fish heads, hints of
 chicken fat and rice, and the
 pleasant infusion of moose stew
 again.

NATASHA
 We know. It had legs.

TUCKER
 I like the neck and the back.

NATASHA
 You would!

Mary gives Bravo a small bowl at the end of her rounds.

Bravo devours his meal. Mary smiles.

MARY
 I refuse to get attached to you!

INT. UNALAKLEET HOUSE - EVENING

Bravo's eyes are wide open as Mary carries him into her small house.

Mary is exhausted, as is Bravo.

Mary puts Bravo on the floor and makes herself a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and a glass of water.

Mary turns off the light and collapses on her small bed with a half-eaten sandwich in her hand.

She points to Bravo.

MARY

My bed! Not yours! Understand?

Bravo curls up on the floor next to the bed.

A minute later, Mary is fast asleep, and Bravo is curled up on Mary's pillow, right next to Mary's face. Both have smiles.

EXT. UNALAKLEET HOUSE - DAY

Mary sits on the front steps of her little house, staring down the road, waiting.

SUPER: "Three Months Later"

From behind the house, like a bolt of lightning, Bravo (4 months old) runs at full speed before crashing into Mary's arms.

Bravo licks Mary profusely.

MARY

What was it this time? A raven
flying overhead?

(no response)

A marten in a tree?

(no response)

A lynx on a snowbank?

Mary feels Bravo's wet fur.

MARY (CONT'D)

A beaver in the creek?

Bravo's tail wags wildly.

BRAVO
How did you guess?

MARY
You are most easily distracted
puppy I've ever known!
(beat)
I'll get you a towel! My parents
are flying in any minute!

Mary grabs a towel and dries Bravo for a few seconds.

MARY (CONT'D)
Time to go pick up Mom and Dad.

EXT. UNALAKLEET AIRFIELD - DAY

Mary drives up to the airfield with her ATV, just as a tiny old airplane lands.

DAD (55), a handsome and rugged businessman in BRAND winter clothing and boots, steps out the plane first, but MOM (54) beautiful and equally rugged leaps out of the plane and races DAD to hug Mary.

MARY
So happy you made it. How were your
flights?

MOM
Worth every bump.

They see the luggage carried from the plane in the bucket of a large bulldozer to the side of the airport.

They load the luggage in the back of Mary's ATV, and ride off.

EXT. UNALAKLEET HOUSE - DAY

Bravo sees that Mary arrives, and joins in a group hug.

Mom gazes at Bravo who is wagging his tail and begging for attention.

MOM
This must be Bravo.

MOM bends down to hug Bravo.

BRAVO
Another nice not-a-dog!

Bravo sniffs the air.

DAD

All you've talked about for three months. Every email, every photo, every phone call.

MARY

Not my fault! He follows me around all day long.

MOM

Like a puppy?

MARY

You know what I mean.

Mary stares sadly at Bravo, who senses a mood change.

MARY (CONT'D)

I get less done, not more.

DAD

Demands attention?

MARY

And a lot of playtime. I can never wear him out.

Bravo sniffs Mom.

BRAVO

Smells like Mary.

Dad takes over petting Bravo.

DAD

Oh, not that much attention, I bet!

Bravo sniffs Dad.

BRAVO

Must be from the same pack.

MOM

Is he much of a runner?

MARY

Find out today!

Bravo turns his head sideways, perplexed.

EXT. SNOW-COVERED ROAD - DAY

Mary has a dog team ready to run. Mary sits in the sled with Dad as musher. Mom is behind the sled on the snow machine with two dog crates.

MARY

I'll give the commands. Dad, keep your feet on the foot boards, and hands on the handlebar.

DAD

Got it.

MARY

Hang on tight, and don't use the claw brake!

DAD

Got it. What about Mom?

MARY

Mom follows twenty feet back to avoid sudden stops or spills by Dad.

DAD

There won't be spills!

MARY

Remember, when I say Gee, turn to the right. Haw, turn to the left. Straight ahead is obvious, as is whoa!

DAD

No problem.

MARY

If I yell, line out, it means I'm telling my lead dog, Natasha, to tighten the line, pull ahead, so we don't tangle the line.

Dad points to Tucker.

DAD

What about the old dog?

MARY

Tucker had a tough day yesterday. Middy says if he can't make these five miles, it might be retirement for ol' Tucker!

DAD
 Hope not. You've spoken highly of
 him.

MARY
 Love ol' Tucker.

MOM
 What about Bravo?

MARY
 He follows you. Don't think he's
 much of a runner. Probably won't
 make it a mile, so you got a dog
 crate to put him in when he tires.

DAD
 How far we going?

MARY
 Five miles. Short haul today. Just
 exercising Middy's B-team. They ran
 sixty miles yesterday. This is just
 to stretch out their legs before
 bedtime.

MOM
 Got it. I put Bravo in the crate
 after a mile.

MARY
 If he makes it that far.

Bravo turns his head sideways at Mary.

MARY (CONT'D)
 And I'll keep an eye on Tucker.

DAD
 Got it.

MARY
 Here goes nothin'!
 (yells)
 Straight ahead! Let's go!

The dog team pulls out.

Mom pauses for the sled to get a head, then starts the engine
 and takes off.

Bravo (POV) takes off running right behind Mom.

Everyone starts off slowly.

Tucker turns and yells back to Bravo.

TUCKER
You got this, kid!

BRAVO
Thanks, Tucker.

MARY
How's Bravo doing, Mom?

Mary turns to see Bravo running great despite short legs.

We see that Mary has a trip odometer on her snow machine. It reads "0.2"

MOM
Great at two-tenths of a mile!

Mary sees a right-turn ahead. She yells!

MARY
Gee!

NATASHA
No problem!

Natasha leads the team into the right turn like a pro.

Tucker has a bit of trouble navigating the turn.

BRAVO
You got this, Tucker!

The team hits a straight-away. Mary yells.

MARY
Straight ahead!

Natasha airs it out and the team is flying.

MARY (CONT'D)
Easy! Slow down, Natasha!

Natasha snarls, but slows down just before a hard-left turn.

MARY (CONT'D)
Haw! Easy, I said!

The sled lifts on one runner to make the turn, and almost throws Dad off!

MARY (CONT'D)

Easy, I said, Natasha, or you'll be running wheel!

TUCKER

Don't want her next to me!

MARY

Dad, you okay?

DAD

I'm fine, did we lose Bravo?

MOM

Almost a mile and he's keeping up with a smile!

Mary leans up and turns around to watch Bravo run like the wind.

MARY

Huh!

Natasha looks back and snarls at Bravo. She turns and pours on the speed.

Mary gets flung back in the basket.

MARY (CONT'D)

Easy, I said!

Natasha, grumbling, slows down.

NATASHA

Those little legs on that trash mutt won't last long. We'll wait him out.

Mary commands the team through two more turns, and two alternate straightaways. Mom yells.

MOM

Two miles and still going strong!

Tucker is huffing and puffing.

TUCKER

Way to go, kid!

Mary turns to see Bravo running well.

MARY

I don't believe it!

BRAVO

I think I can. I think I can.

Dad looks back.

DAD

Persistence. I'll give him that.

Natasha looks back and snarls.

NATASHA

He'll never make three miles!

The sled moves on, but Mom and Bravo fall behind a bit.

Dad looks back, worried.

DAD

We're in no hurry if you want to ease up a little, Mary.

MARY

The pace is natural and good for the dogs. Well keep a close eye on the puppy. Might not make it much further.

Mom and Bravo fall slightly further behind, but Bravo won't give up.

TUCKER

Keep it up, kid?

Bravo is tiring, but not giving up.

BRAVO

I will if you will, Tucker!

Tucker is almost out of breath but gets a second wind.

Natasha turns to glare at Tucker and Bravo and is furious.

MOM

Three miles!

The team runs on... Mom and Bravo fall further behind, but they're still in the race.

MOM (CONT'D)

Four miles! Should we stop?

MARY

Middy wants five miles out of them.

DAD

I thought you said Bravo wasn't a runner.

MARY

Didn't think he was until today.

BRAVO

I am a runner. I am a runner.

Suddenly, Bravo starts running faster.

Bravo passes Mary.

Tucker turns, almost out of breadth again, back to see Bravo.

TUCKER

Will ya look at that?!

Mom now matches Bravo speed and makes up half the distance to the sled.

MOM

Half-mile to go!

Bravo runs faster.

Mom catches up.

Dad and Mary turn in disbelief!

MARY

You can do it, Bravo!

Tucker coughs and wheezes.

TUCKER

To the finish line! Let's go, team!

Everyone pulls, and soon Mom yells out.

MOM

Five miles!

MARY

Whoa! Whoa!

The dogs slow to a stop. They are back where they started.

MARY (CONT'D)

He did it!

Mary hops out of the sled to hug Bravo.

MARY (CONT'D)
Bravo! You did it!

DAD
Amazing!

MOM
I'm so impressed.

Natasha is bitter.

NATASHA
I was the lead dog! Not the trash
mutt!

Mary then congratulates each of the dogs.

When Mary reaches Natasha, she is still bitter.

MARY
Good job, Natasha. Few times you
didn't listen, but you did what was
expected, and you should be very
proud!

Mary works her way back down the line to see Tucker laying on
his side, too exhausted to respond.

MARY (CONT'D)
Tucker? You okay?

Bravo runs up to Tucker to snuggle.

BRAVO
Thanks, Tucker! Thanks for cheering
me on. Thanks for believing in me.

A moment later, Tucker and Bravo are sound asleep.

Dad carries Tucker to a crate.

Mary cuddles Bravo in her arms, and whispers to Mom and Dad.

MARY
I'm getting too attached to Bravo.

DAD
How is that?

MARY
Still not at a point in my life to
take on a pet.

MOM

Looks like a runner to me.

MARY

Five miles isn't like the 300-mile
Yukon Quest: Spirit of the North!

(sheepishly)

I bought the dog transport crate
thinking you might...

DAD

We can't keep a wild dog at the
winery, jumping on wine tasters,
and scaring field crews and the
delivery folks.

(beat)

Besides, Bravo didn't pick us, he
picked you.

Mary is unsettled.

MARY

He can't go to just anyone's house.
He needs a good home!

They all look sadly at Bravo who remains asleep.

INT. UNALAKLEET HOUSE - NIGHT

Mary, Mom, and Dad enjoy a hot coffee (or tea) in celebration
of a great day.

Bravo is fast asleep on Mary's bed.

Mary sets a small table for four people.

Mom smiles at Bravo.

MOM

Slept all the way home.

MARY

So proud of him today.

When no one is looking, Bravo lifts his tired eyes for a
moment to glance at Mary and sigh happily.

DAD

We're anxious to meet your boss.

MARY

Middy is much more than my boss.
He's my mentor.

Mary continues to set the table.

MOM
Mentor? Really?

MARY
Taught me everything I know about
dogs.

Dad chuckles.

DAD
You mean, how to feed them and
clean up after them?

Mary scoffs, knowing Dad is joking.

MARY
Middy taught me to care for dogs as
best friends. The right foods and
nutrition, medical care, and most
importantly, compassion, respect,
and love!

Bravo opens his eyes briefly again, with another happy sigh,
which no one sees.

MOM
All that and more I suspect.

MARY
He taught me everything I know
about mushing from a dog's
perspective.

DAD
And you taught us. We saw that
today.

MOM
We're very proud of you, dear.

Mom hugs Mary.

MOM (CONT'D)
But wouldn't life at a California
winery be more...
(looks around)
Comfortable?

There's a loud KNOCK on the door.

Mary answers the door. Bravo is right behind her.

MIDDY JOHNSON (40), a rugged Native Alaskan (Iñupiaq), enters. He's intimidating to look at, but a gentle soul, full of wisdom and kindness. He carries a large box of frozen moose meat.

MIDDY
Must be your folks.

Middy greets Bravo excitedly, and vice-versa.

MIDDY (CONT'D)
Good to see my little friend.

BRAVO
Good not-a-dog, member of our pack.

MARY
Middy Johnson, this is my dad, Dave Helwig, and my Mom, Nancy.

MIDDY
Mary has told me much about you,
but I know you already by how smart
Mary is, how hard she works, and
how she treats dogs with much love.
(beat)
Children are windows to their
parents' souls.

Mom, Dad, and Mary pause.

DAD
Thank you for watching over our
daughter up here.

Mary blushes.

MOM
We're so far away.

MIDDY
(to Dad)
I can assure you; your daughter
knows how to watch out for herself,
and...
(to Mom)
She keeps you very close to her
heart at all times.

Mary looks at Middy's large box.

MARY
You weren't supposed to bring
anything.

MIDDY

Our ancient customs demand a guest
never enters empty-handed.

MOM

What is it?

MIDDY

Thirty pounds of frozen moose meat.

Bravo's eyes open widely, and his tail wags wildly.

MARY

Food for a month!

DAD

Join us with a cup of coffee.

Dad fetches the coffee for Middy, who examines the color.

Middy holds it up to the light.

He takes a small sip, letting it float on his tongue.

Middy looks serious.

MIDDY

I sense a bold broth base, with
hints of rice and high-protein
kibble, with an ever-so-slight
moose-stew finish.

Mary playfully slaps Middy's arm. Everyone laughs.

MARY

Middy!

MIDDY

I learned this from Mary.

They sit before a nice dinner of moose meat and potatoes, but
first they join hands and say Grace.

EXT. UNALAKLEET HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Middy, Mary, and Bravo stare up to stars in the sky.

MIDDY

Your parents are nice.

MARY
(chuckles)
Nice of them to volunteer to do the
dishes.

BRAVO
They're in the pack.

They all see the Northern Lights.

Bravo's eyes open widely.

BRAVO (CONT'D)
Night rainbows!

MIDDY
They miss you and worry about you
every day.

Mary and Bravo look sad.

MARY
Hard to know what's in my future.

MIDDY
What do the lights tell you?

Mary and Bravo look up the Northern Lights.

Pause.

Mary holds a hand up to the left of the lights.

MARY
On one side of the lights, I see my
mom, dad, and family.

White stick figures of her mom and dad are drawn appear in
the sky.

Bravo looks up and left to the drawing, perplexed.

MIDDY
What else?

Mary holds up her right hand to the right of the lights.

MARY
I see Bravo and a small house.

BRAVO
Good Mary. Good Mary.

White stick figures of Bravo and a house are drawn to the right of the lights.

Bravo looks up to the right and wags his tail.

MIDDY

What is in the middle? Your core?

Mary pauses, and Bravo looks perplexed.

Mary forms a frame with her two index fingers and thumbs in the middle of the sky.

MARY

I see a sled, pulled by my own team of dogs.

A white drawing of a sled appears in the sky, with a team of dogs and Mary as the musher.

Bravo looks perplexed.

MIDDY

Anything else?

MARY

I see a struggle to get to the finish line.

A drawing of a finish line banner appears to the left of the dog team. The finish line banner is white with red writing.

MARY (CONT'D)

Do we finish?

Bravo sees that the drawing of the dog is separated from the sled, and Bravo looks worried.

The white drawings in sky disappear.

Middy looks into Mary's eyes.

MIDDY

We draw our own future.
(looks at Bravo)
Each of us draws our own future.

They all look to the heavens in wonder.

EXT. UNALAKLEET HOUSE - MORNING

Mary and Bravo hug Dad and Mom on a blistering cold morning.

DAD
Minus-thirty for the high today?

MOM
Sure you won't come home to
California for a little while?

Mary smiles, but turns to see Bravo who shivers.

MARY
We'll be fine.

Bravo is optimistic, but cold.

BRAVO
Fine. Two coats of fur. Made for
this!

Mom and Dad hug Bravo one more time before getting in Mary's
ATV for the ride back to the airfield.

Bravo watches Mary, Mom, and Dad turn back to wave good-bye
one last time.

BRAVO (CONT'D)
Where are they going? They're part
of the pack.

Bravo is immediately sad.

INT. UNALAKLEET HOUSE - NIGHT

A chilling, foreboding North Wind howls outside, as Bravo
lays lifeless with tiny slits for eyes.

SUPER: "One Month Later."

Mary comforts Bravo.

MARY
Hang on, boy. Army vet comes to the
village in the morning.

Mary sits by Bravo's side all night.

EXT. UNALAKLEET DOG KENNEL - MORNING

U.S. Army doctors and nurses make house calls throughout the
village.

Two dogs and owners are lined up to see one female Veterinarian (30s) standing in front of an Army van with a red cross on it. Her uniform is under a blue doctor's gown tied in the back. Tucker is the second dog in line, with Middy.

Mary pulls up in her ATV with Bravo's head peeking out of a blanket on the passenger's seat.

Mary picks up Bravo and stands third in line. There's a tear in Mary's eye.

The Veterinarian reads the dog's tag and speaks to the first dog.

VETERINARIAN

What's your primary complaint,
Miska? Never mind. I see it. Let me
guess? Vomiting, diarrhea, weight
loss and lack of appetite.

The dog and owner nod 'yes.'

The owner of the sick dog is handed a pill bottle, and the dog and owner move on. Middy talks to Mary while Bravo talks to Tucker.

MIDDY

Mary, what's the matter with
Bravo?

BRAVO

Tucker, you okay.

MARY

Not sure? How's Tucker?

TUCKER

I'm fine. Doc, forget me!
Take care of my little buddy,
Bravo, will ya?

MIDDY

Same as the dog in front of
him, I bet.

BRAVO

I'll be fine, once the hot
season gets here.

The vet turns her attention to Tucker, as she checks his name tag.

VETERINARIAN

Tucker. Looks like you have Parvo,
too. Highly contagious virus.

(to Middy)

I can give him antibiotics. No
guarantees at his age.

MARY

Tucker too?

The Vet hands Middy a pill bottle.

VETERINARIAN

Next.

MIDDY

Thanks, Doc.

VETERINARIAN

Last village was worse.

Mary looks sadly at Bravo, as the Vet looks for a name tag.

MARY

Oh, sorry. No name tag.

Bravo looks sad.

BRAVO

No name tag?

VETERINARIAN

(to Bravo)

Maybe someday.

(to Mary)

Good news is, it's not Parvo.

MARY

That's good.

VETERINARIAN

Bad news is, I feel an obstruction.

MARY

Obstruction?

VETERINARIAN

I've got to open him up! And we've no time to lose!

BRAVO

Open?

Mary reluctantly hands Bravo to the vet.

MARY

Will he be okay?

BRAVO

Where am I going?

VETERINARIAN

Can't say.

BRAVO

I want to be with Mary.

VETERINARIAN

(softly to Bravo)

Let's find out what's not working
so well so we can fix it.

MARY

Thanks, Doc.

(to Bravo)

I'll be here for you, Bravo. Trust
me.

Mary watches sadly as the Vet leads Bravo into the van.

EXT. UNALAKLEET HOUSE - DAY

Bravo is in Mary's arms wearing a body bandage and sweater to
hold the bandage in place. His tail wags.

MARY

You see, that nice doctor fixed you
up.

BRAVO

She was nice, I think. I don't
remember.

MARY

Doc says you can't run for few
months, so we can't stay here. You
couldn't follow me around the
kennel, and I can't leave you here.

BRAVO

Where are we going?

MARY

Brutal winter just beginning, so
we're going on a little trip to
California.

BRAVO & MARY

Mom and Dad's!

MARY

Middy gave me the winter off! Let's
pack.

Mary looks at her thick winter jackets, gloves, and boots.

MARY (CONT'D)

I've got nothing to wear for
California!

BRAVO
Want my sweater?

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

SUPER: "Sacramento, California, March 2013, 70 degrees F"

It's blistering hot for Mary pulling a suitcase and carrying Bravo in a dog crate.

Mom and Dad meet Mary outside the terminal with big hugs.

Bravo, inside the crate, gets lots of attention, just not hugs.

MOM
Oh, poor Bravo.

BRAVO
It's the sweater, isn't it?

DAD
We'll take care of you.

BRAVO
How's the moose stew here? Can you make it colder here?

MARY
He can't run for a few weeks, so we'll keep him calm so he can rest.

MOM
Your room is ready for you.

DAD
It always is, ya know.

MARY
Don't get too attached. Middy is keeping the job open for me.

Bravo looks perplexed.

BRAVO
What about me?

MARY
You'll have a wonderful time at the winery, Bravo.

Bravo's tongue hangs out.

BRAVO
Will it always be this hot!

They load up in a Brand SUV and pulls away.

EXT. CALIFORNIA COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Bravo's eyes are wide open and his tail wags on the drive through the gold-country wineries in the Shenandoah Valley of California.

MOM
Good to have our baby home!

EXT. HELWIG'S WINERY HOUSE - DAY

Dad passes a sign that reads "Helwig Winery."

Dad pulls up to a beautiful, productive winery. Flowers are blooming in an early spring.

Field crews are trimming grape vines.

Oak wine barrels are unloaded from a truck.

Cases of wine are loaded on a delivery truck.

DAD
We're home.

Mary hops out of the SUV holding Bravo in her arms.

Bravo's eyes study the green landscape.

MARY
Think you'll love it here.

BRAVO
It's so non-snowy.

The sun beats down on Bravo's coat.

BRAVO (CONT'D)
And hot.

MOM
Beautiful spring day. Seventy degrees. Predicting a hot summer!

BRAVO
Hotter than this?!

A rabbit hops in the vineyard nearby.

Bravo's head spins, pulling at Mary's arms, and his eyes target the rabbit.

Bravo gets excited wanting to break loose of Mary's grip and tear after the rabbit.

Mary scolds Bravo.

MARY

Bravo! You can't be so easily distracted. Sled dogs have to control themselves.

DAD

He's still a puppy.

MARY

Some dogs remain puppies!

MOM

(laughs)

We call them pets!

Mom and Dad put their arms around Mary and lead Mary and Bravo inside.

BEGIN MONTAGE - Bravo's wild days at the winery, which always begin on a shady porch under a giant thermometer and a wall calendar. Mary works in the vineyard keeping an eye on Bravo. She is stern each time Bravo chases wildlife.

-- Thermometer reads "80." Calendar reads "June." Bravo is bigger and no longer wears a bandage. He is well enough to walk around the vineyard. He's not fast enough to catch rabbits.

MARY

Bravo, get back there! You'll hurt yourself!

BRAVO

Little fun.

-- Thermometer reads "90." Calendar reads "July." Bravo is bigger still. He chases after a rabbit, and runs a lot faster, but he overheats before he can catch the rabbit, and mopes back to the shady porch.

MARY

Bravo, get back there! You'll hurt yourself!

-- Thermometer reads "100." Calendar reads "August." Bravo is bigger still, and much faster. He darts after a rabbit, and the chase is on.

MARY (CONT'D)
Bravo, get back there! You'll hurt
yourself!

After a long chase, he traps the rabbit under his giant paws. After tense moments, he lets the rabbit go. He saunters back to the porch, and lays down, uncomfortable in the heat.

END MONTAGE

MARY (CONT'D)
Come on, Bravo. Let's go for a ride
in the truck!

Mary takes Bravo to a Brand Truck nearby. Bravo sits in the passenger seat with the window down.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Mary cruises down a country road. Bravo's head is out the window, enjoying life.

MARY
It's important to obey commands,
and to know why they are given.

Mary sees a hard right turn up ahead. She yells.

MARY (CONT'D)
Gee!

She skids and turns right, and Bravo wildly skids across the seat into Mary's lap.

Bravo recovers, moves over, and stares out the window.

Mary sees a hard left turn up ahead. She yells.

MARY (CONT'D)
Haw!

She skids and turns left and Bravo and almost flies out the window.

Bravo recovers and stares out the window.

Bravo sees a squirrel. His ears perk up. His eyes target the squirrel.

Bravo leaps from the truck and the chase is on.

Mary slams on the brakes.

MARY (CONT'D)
Whoa! Bravo, get back here!

EXT. CALIFORNIA COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Mary hops out of the truck to see the squirrel running under a barbed-wire fence.

Bravo is so focused on the squirrel, he doesn't see the strands of barbed wire.

In slow motion, we see Bravo's open mouth catch the top strand of barbed wire as he leaps over the fence.

Bravo tumbles to the ground with a bleeding, broken jaw.

Mary picks up and carries the injured Bravo back to the truck.

MARY
There's a lesson here somewhere.
(compassionate)
Poor Bravo. Let's go get you
patched up.

INT. HELWIG'S WINERY HOUSE - NIGHT

Bravo has a bandaged jaw and lays in a dog bed in the corner of the kitchen as Mom, Dad, and Mary sip coffee.

MARY
He's just so easily distracted. Not
a lead dog, for sure. Maybe not
even a sled dog.

Bravo whimpers in a mix of pain and sadness.

MOM
Why would you say that?

Mary looks sadly at Bravo.

MARY
Sled dogs need to scoop up snow
with their jaws while they run.

DAD
To get water? Stay hydrated?

MARY

Exactly, but that jaw can break
again easily, the vet said.

Dad and Mom pat Mary's shoulder and glance sadly at Bravo.

EXT. HELWIG'S WINERY HOUSE - NIGHT

Mary and Bravo sit on the porch looking up at the stars in
the sky.

They pause to gaze into each other's eyes.

BRAVO & MARY

I'm sorry for getting you into this
mess.

They look up to the bright stars against a black sky.

Mary sees the white sticks figures of her parents appear on
the left side of the sky.

She and Bravo look puzzled.

Mary sees the white sticks figures of Bravo appear on the
right side of the sky.

Again, she and Bravo looks puzzled.

Mary sees white drawing of a dog sled and team appear, then
the Finish Line of a race (white banner with red writing).

Mary and Bravo look into each other's eyes again.

They look back to the sky to see Bravo sitting in the basket
of the dog sled.

Bravo wags his tail.

MARY

Oh no you don't! If I take you back
to Alaska...

The stick figure of Bravo magically moves to the middle of
the sled dog team.

MARY (CONT'D)

You'll have to earn it!

Bravo jumps for joy and hops up and down around Mary.

Mom and Dad join them on the porch and look up. The drawing
is gone.

DAD
We got you something.

MOM
We know what you see up there.

Mom hands Mary a white jewelry box.

Mary bends down and opens the box. Inside is a shiny silver name tag that reads, "Bravo."

BRAVO
My own name tag? I'm somebody now!

Everyone smiles.

MARY
Better pack, Bravo. We have a mission to accomplish!

Hugs all around. Bravo's tail wags wildly!

EXT. MARY'S HOME/BRAVO'S KENNEL - DAY

We see a new, fenced dog kennel with a sign that reads, "Bravo Dog Kennel" with 16 racing dogs, including Bravo.

Behind the kennel, nestled in the trees is Mary's home.

SUPER: "September, Three Years Later, Willow, Alaska, (an hour north of Anchorage)"

We zoom in on Bravo in the kennel, happy as can be. He's on a six-foot chain like the other dogs.

The dog closest to Bravo is Tucker, who is a bit older and grayer, and happy to be next to Bravo.

Mary exits the back of the house with a bucket of food, and all dogs stand at attention.

Mary feeds her lead dog, AJAX, a powerful male Husky first. We see his name tag and blue collar.

MARY
Ajax, my lead dog. You don't think I'm crazy, do you?

AJAX
Glad you picked me, and not that lunatic, Natasha, to lead the team.

Mary feeds Ajax.

MARY

Glad Middy sold Natasha to someone else. None of us are crying about that move.

(beat)

I almost forgot.

Mary makes an announcement to all the dogs as she holds the ladle up to the sunshine.

MARY (CONT'D)

Today's selection is a bold red, with earthy celebrations of kibble and zesty rice, delicate caribou byproducts, and whimsical undertones of multiple vitamins frosted with pig fat.

She smells the ladle of food.

MARY (CONT'D)

Some would say it's oaky, and yet obtuse.

The dogs cheer wildly with yelps of happiness.

Bravo is overcome with pride!

BRAVO

That's my Mary!

LATER

Mary finishes feeding the dogs, and she disappears in the house.

The dogs talk among themselves. Bravo is elated.

BRAVO (CONT'D)

I made it! I made it! In the kennel with the runners. My own doghouse filled with straw. My own bowl of food, and my own dog tag!

AJAX

That was a runner's meal. Bet we do ten today!

Bravo turns his head to Tucker, stunned.

BRAVO

Ten miles? I never ran more than five!

TUCKER

You'll get used to it, kid.

Two sisters, NADALIE and ALLIER, who are small, mighty and smart huskies, are separated by Tucker and Bravo.

NADALIE

Twenty tomorrow, I'll wager.

ALLIER

I'll take that bet, Nadalie.

NADALIE

You would, Allier.

The sisters strain their chains to bark at each other.

BRAVO

What's the matter with them?

TUCKER

Those two are sisters. They love each other but bicker a bit.

Bravo nods like he understands.

BRAVO

My sisters were like that!

TUCKER

Both are swing dogs, but Mary has to keep them separated on the line. Don't know why Mary kept an old dog like me.

BRAVO

She knows you're the smartest dog of all of us.

Ajax growls at Bravo.

Bravo sees Tucker nod to him to appease Ajax.

BRAVO (CONT'D)

'Cept the lead dog, of course!

Bravo sees that Ajax is appeased. Bravo whispers to Tucker.

BRAVO (CONT'D)

Thanks, Tucker.

Tucker whispers back.

TUCKER

Best to keep on the good side of everyone on a team. Working together keeps everyone alive.

(beat)

There are two eyes in the word 'team.' We use our two eyes to watch out for each other!

Tucker winks at Bravo.

BRAVO

Good advice, Tucker.

EXT. MUDDY ROAD - DAY

Mary leashes the dogs to the line connected to Mary's ATV. Bravo watches and reports every move.

BRAVO

Ajax is the lead dog. Got it.

Bravo looks down the line to see sisters, Allier and Nadalie, separated by a few dogs.

BRAVO (CONT'D)

I see Mary has to separate Allier and Nadalie, the bickering sisters.

Bravo sees Tucker behind him.

BRAVO (CONT'D)

Tucker, what's your job?

TUCKER

I'm running wheel today. Way in the back with strong dogs.

BRAVO

Am I a strong wheel dog too?

TUCKER

One up. A team dog. Cheerleaders, playful, goofy, maybe not the...

BRAVO

(interrupts)

Not the what?

TUCKER

Focused. Dogs that are easily distracted. Here's your first chance to prove Mary wrong.

Ajax turns around to single-out Bravo.

AJAX

This is no time to chase a rabbit
or a squirrel!

All the dogs chuckle.

Bravo cowers.

Mary starts her ATV.

MARY

Stay focused! Everyone! Show us
what you're capable of!
(yells)
Straight ahead. Let's go!

Bravo sees and feels all the dogs pulling hard. It's
difficult at first.

BRAVO

(grunts)
I got this!

It becomes easier surprisingly quickly.

TUCKER

We got this!

MARY

Good job. Line out!

Ajax pulls the line tight to avoid tangles and the speed
picks up.

Bravo is running along happily.

BRAVO

We got this! We're a team!

TUCKER

Atta boy, Bravo. Always remember,
'Many paws make light the work.'
(beat)
Old sled dog saying!

Ajax leads the dogs straight through mud and puddles.

Bravo is reluctant at first, and tries to go around the
puddles, but he begins to enjoy it ALL!

BRAVO

Yahoo! Let's go, team!

Tucker turns to Mary in the ATV.

TUCKER
Kid's a perfect cheerleader.

Mary smiles at Tucker and Bravo, and mumbles.

MARY
Put you two in the right spots,
didn't I?

BEGIN MONTAGE

-- Mary takes the dogs through many turns with 'Gee' and 'Haw.' Bravo begins to catch on.

-- Mary takes the dogs through more mud and puddles. Bravo loves it all.

-- Mary takes the dogs up hills. Bravo learns to dig deep.

-- Mary guides the dogs down hills on the way home. Bravo has the time of his life!

-- Mary leads the team back to the kennels.

END MONTAGE

EXT. MARY'S HOME/BRAVO'S KENNEL - AFTERNOON

Mary and the team arrive, tired but happy.

MARY
Whoa!

Mary shuts off the ATV.

MARY (CONT'D)
Good work, team. Thirty miles! Rest
up! We do forty miles tomorrow!

Mary works her way down unhooking the dogs. Tucker, extremely exhausted, is first.

MARY (CONT'D)
Good work, Tucker. Thanks for
pumping up Bravo.

Ajax spins with a snarl.

AJAX
I think he could have pulled more.

Mary pets Tucker, while smiling at Bravo.

MARY
Some lead the line. Some lead by
example.

Bravo smiles at Tucker.

BRAVO
Thanks for your help today, Tucker.

Bravo turns to smile at Ajax.

BRAVO (CONT'D)
And thanks for teaching me how to
go through puddles and turns.
You're a good leader, Ajax.

Ajax is taken back by the compliment.

AJAX
Um. Sure, kid. Don't mention it.

Both sisters, Allier and Nadalie, smile at Bravo.

Mary finishes hooking Tucker to his chain, and she fetches
Bravo.

Mary hugs him exactly like Tucker (no favorites).

MARY
Proud of you today, Bravo. You
should be proud of yourself!

Bravo smiles.

BRAVO
Tucker taught me that many paws
make light the sled!

All the dogs smile.

Mary yells out to the team.

MARY
Got a long way to go get ready for
the Yukon Quest 300!

All the dogs except Ajax turn their heads, bewildered by
Mary's last statement.

The dogs turn to see Ajax's eyes are wide open in fright.

BEGIN MONTAGE - Training intensifies, days apart.

-- Mary follows the team in her ATV and logs 40 miles.

The line is less scattered and Bravo keeps smiling and cheerleading.

At the end, all the dogs are tired.

-- Mary follows the team in her ATV and logs 45 miles.

The line is less scattered and the team pulls together more.

At the end, Bravo is a bit tired, but Tucker is exhausted.

-- Mary follows the team in her ATV and logs 50 miles.

The line is less scattered, and the team is looking better.

At the end, Bravo is more tired, and Tucker is super exhausted.

END MONTAGE

EXT. MARY'S HOME/BRAVO'S KENNEL - LATER AFTERNOON

Mary and the team arrive, very tired.

MARY

Whoa!

Mary shuts off the ATV. She checks her smartphone for the time and distance statistics.

She looks briefly disappointed.

BRAVO

We can do better!

Bravo turns suddenly and sniffs the air.

Mary watches Bravo intently.

MARY

What is it, boy?

Mary slowly raises her eyes and sees smoke in the distance.

MARY (CONT'D)

Fire!

Mary looks back her house, then at the dogs.

MARY (CONT'D)

We outta get outta here! Give me a minute to grab your ownership papers, vet reports, and a few family photos and mushing gear.

Mary races in the house.

The dogs see flames and hear the crackling of a wildfire.

Smoke gets thicker.

Mary races out of the house and tosses two boxes into the cargo bed (basket) of the sled.

The flames grow nearer.

Mary tries to start the ATV, but it doesn't start.

The crackling grows louder.

Mary looks up to heaven, says a short prayer, and tries to start the ATV again. This time it starts.

Mary and the dogs escape.

EXT. MARY'S HOME/BRAVO'S KENNEL - MORNING

Mary drives ups slowly on her ATV, with tears in her eyes. Bravo is in the passenger seat, sniffing the air.

Mary's house is gone, burned to the ground.

MARY

It's gone.

Bravo looks to the kennel which looks untouched by the fire.

BRAVO

How can it be gone? Our homes are okay?

Mary walks around the burn site.

MARY

Over 7,000 acres burned. Over 50 homes destroyed. Mine was one of them. Why?

Mary collapses to the ashy ground, and she sobs.

Bravo moves in to comfort Mary.

BRAVO
You can move in with me.

Mary in full tears now, looks over at the unburned kennel.

MARY
This is a test of faith and
resilience!

Bravo turns his head at the last big word.

BRAVO
Huh?

MARY
Resilience. How fast we get up
after being knocked down.

Mary looks up to the heavens, then down at Bravo.

MARY (CONT'D)
I refuse to stay down, and I won't
lose my faith. We'll never give up!
Never!

Bravo wags his tail.

MARY (CONT'D)
Life is like a long-distance race,
Bravo. Ups and downs. A whole lot
of heaven mixed with a whole lot of
hell.
(looks up to heaven)
We've just got a bit more work to
do.

EXT. MARY'S HOME/BRAVO'S KENNEL - AFTERNOON.

Bravo peeks out from the kennel, while the other dogs rest.

He sees an RV is parked where Mary's house used to stand.
Mary is hooking up a propane tank.

BRAVO
A house on wheels?

SUPER: "Two months later."

Mary races around to get food cooking for the dogs.

Suddenly, Mary's feels one snowflake. Then another.

Mary smiles!

MARY

Get ready, team. This is just what we needed!

All the dogs look up with childlike happiness.

BRAVO & MARY

Snow!

There are happy yelps from all the dogs. Bravo waves his tail wildly!

Mary's smartphone rings. She sees it's Middy. Mary addresses the dogs.

MARY

I gotta a take this team.

(answers)

Hi, Middy. So great to hear from you. How are things in Unalakleet?

Mary hugs the phone to her ear under her wool cap, so we can't hear Middy.

Bravo intently watches Mary.

MARY (CONT'D)

Good, Good. But I miss your daily wonderful advice and encouragement.

(pause)

Yes, it will take more than a fire to stop us!

(pause)

But I still don't know if we'll be ready. Lotta rookies on this team, and we're just getting our first big snowfall now.

(pause)

I agree, we'll know a lot more when they're pulling a sled!

(pause)

I can't commit to the Yukon until I see 'em in the snow and on ice.

Whole new ball game!

(pause)

Who's entered in the Yukon, and who is leading his team?

(pause)

Natasha? Meanest lead dog on the face of the planet!

The dogs hear Natasha's name and are agitated; pacing and growling.

BRAVO
Natasha was mean to me!

TUCKER
Mean to everyone!

Ajax is more aggravated than the other dogs. He cowers.

AJAX
I... I... I'm scared of Natasha.

Mary sees Ajax having a panic attack.

MARY
One mean dog and one even meaner
musher can't get us to quit.
(pause)
What was that? Poor connection.

Mary smiles at Bravo, while listening to Middy.

MARY (CONT'D)
Bravo? He's surprising everyone
with his skills and attitude.

Mary blushes like a teenager.

MARY (CONT'D)
Like me? Thanks, Middy. I owe it
all to you, my folks, and the man
upstairs.

Mary turns as if to provide more privacy, and whispers.

MARY (CONT'D)
Broken jaw hasn't been tested yet.
I worry about him.

Bravo turns to Mary with puppy-dog eyes.

Mary looks at Tucker.

MARY (CONT'D)
Tucker? Tucker's a great ol' guy,
but he's pushing it age-wise.

Tucker looks at Mary, and slumps down, tired and sad.

Mary turns to all the dogs, then up to the heavens.

MARY (CONT'D)
That's right! Don't count us out.
We're on a mission.
(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

(pause)

I will. I promise! Thanks, Middy!

EXT. MARY'S HOME/BRAVO'S KENNEL - NIGHT

Bravo's nose is sticking out of his doghouse.

His ears stick up as he hears Mary's door open. He sticks his head out. A light snow is falling.

He sees Mary exit the house with a flashlight and a colorful brochure on the Yukon Quest 300 sled race.

All the dogs are asleep in their doghouses.

Bravo lets out a little yelp of happiness as Mary makes her way to him.

MARY

Bravo, gotta show you something,
but first I want to see if you're
happy.

Bravo lets out a little yelp of happiness, and Mary smiles.

BRAVO

Couldn't be happier. Thanks to you!

Mary shines her flashlight on the color brochure and shows it to Bravo.

MARY

The Yukon Quest 300!

Bravo's eyes follow Mary eyes as she looks off in the distance, as if in a trance.

BEGIN FLASHBACK (in a Montage)

-- We see a CRUDE MAP of the Yukon trail from the gold fields of the Klondike to those in the Alaska interior.

MARY (V.O) (CONT'D)

The Yukon Quest gets its name from the "highway of the north," which follows the Yukon River and the only historical winter land route traveled by prospectors and adventurers during the 1898 Gold Rush.

(beat)

That's more than 120 years ago!

-- We see prospectors hiking in deep snow.

MARY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It was the only way between the gold fields of the Klondike and those in the Alaska interior.

-- We see over-stuffed, old-fashioned dog sleds being pulled by teams of dogs in snowstorms over rough terrain.

MARY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It wasn't long before prospectors, and mail and supply carriers began using sled dogs to get them all the way from Whitehorse to Fairbanks.

END FLASHBACK

MARY (CONT'D)

Tomorrow is the last day to enter the race. Our team hasn't been tested enough in snowy conditions.

(beat)

And we haven't been tested at all against other mushers and dog teams! What are we going to do, Bravo?

Bravo wags his tail. His answer is crystal clear.

INT. SNOW-COVERED ROAD - DAY

Bravo hops and yelps with excitement and determination, in his regular "team" spot on the line, in front of Tucker.

BRAVO

We're going to be great! We're going to be great!

Bravo turns to see Mary checking out the sled.

MARY

Looking good! Now, one last check of the line and a pep talk.

Bravo watches as Mary paces the line and encourages the sled team. She stops at Tucker.

MARY (CONT'D)

You're at wheel because of your experience and knowledge.

TUCKER
Count on me, Coach!

MARY
Need you to keep an eye on Bravo.
Young and inexperienced, but I know
there's the heart of a champion in
there!

Bravo blushes, then yelps happily.

BRAVO
Won't let you down, Mary.

Mary points at Bravo's jaw.

MARY
Scoop snow only from fluffy
snowbanks. Protect that jaw of
yours.

Bravo salutes.

BRAVO
Yes, Sir. I mean, yes Ma'am.

Mary addresses the sisters, Allier and Nadalie, separated on
the line.

MARY
I want no arguing from you too
today.

Bravo chimes in.

BRAVO & MARY
Cooperation is the key.

BRAVO
We got this, Mary!

ALLIER
We'll be good.

NADALIE
We're in it to win it, Mary!

Mary makes it down to her lead dog, Ajax, who looks proud,
disciplined, and eager, pawing at the snow eager to lead.

MARY

Ajax, I heard a quote that said,
 "True leaders don't create
 followers, they create more
 leaders."

All the dogs are inspired, but especially Bravo, who repeats
 the quote in his mind.

BRAVO (V.O.)

True leaders don't create
 followers, they create more
 leaders.

Bravo holds his head high, as Mary walks slowly back to the
 sled.

MARY

The fire set our training schedule
 way behind the other teams, but I
 have my faith, and faith in you!
 Work your smartest, not your
 hardest. Watch your turns. Look for
 danger.

Mary stops and warns the dogs.

BRAVO

What? What is it, Mary?

Mary turns to Ajax!

MARY

We'll stay off the ponds! Not
 completely frozen over. One falls
 in, and we all fall in! Got it?

BRAVO

We got it, Mary.

TUCKER

See, even rookies know that!

Mary takes her spot on the sled.

MARY

Okay then, Get ready.

(beat)

Do well today, and I'll enter us
 into the Yukon Quest 300!

The dogs cheer with yelps and jumps, eager to start.

Bravo turns to see Mary getting ready to yell. He turns back like a runner in a 100-yard dash.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Stay focused! Everyone! Show us
 what you're capable of!
 (yells)
 Straight ahead. Let's go!

Bravo and the team pull out.

Mary smiles. The team is pulling well before coming up to a right turn, so Mary yells.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Easy! Slow down!

They slow a little, but maybe not enough given the icy conditions.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Easy! Slow down!
 (beat)
 Gee!

Ajax leads the team into the turn a little too fast, and the team, sled, and Mary scrape a snowbank, but keep going strong.

Bravo turns to see Mary shaking off the snow.

BRAVO
 Oops.

MARY
 We'll do better next time.

Mary smiles. The team is pulling well again before coming up to a left turn, so Mary yells.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Easy! Slow down! Easy! Slow down!

They slow only a little.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Easy! Slow down, I said!
 (beat)
 Haw!

Ajax leads the team into the turn a little too fast, and again, the team, sled, and Mary scrape a snowbank, but keep going strong.

Bravo turns to see Mary shaking off the snow, again.

BRAVO
Oops, again.

MARY
Line out, Ajax!

Mary looks ahead to see frozen ponds, and yells.

MARY (CONT'D)
Whoa! Stay off the ponds! Whoa!

It's too late. Ajax tries to stop, and just skids.

The rest of the team, the sled, and Mary skid across the frozen pond, and barely make it to the other side.

Silence. Bravo turns and looks back at the pond.

They hear cracking sounds for the pond, and it cracks like an earthquake followed them.

Mary turns with a sad face.

EXT. MARY'S HOME/BRAVO'S KENNEL - NIGHT

The dogs are asleep in their doghouses.

Bravo watches the door of Mary's RV.

He sees Mary come out with a cup of steaming hot tea, and the color brochure for the Yukon Quest 300.

Bravo sees a twinkle in Mary's eyes, as she glances at Bravo, before looking up to the sky.

Mary turns and whispers to Bravo so as not to wake the other dogs, while she points to the star-filled sky.

MARY
We can't cross the finish line from here, can we, Bravo?!

Bravo wags his tail.

BRAVO
We got this, Mary!
(beat)
We got this!

EXT. MARY'S HOME/BRAVO'S KENNEL - DAY

Mary stuffs four "food drop bags" all labeled "YQ300, Helwig" then either "Two Rivers, Mile 101, Central, or Circle City."

Bravo and the team watch closely, talking among themselves.

BRAVO

What's Mary doing?

TUCKER

Preparing well! Those bags will be mailed ahead so we have food and supplies at each of the stops along the 300-mile trail.

BRAVO

Supplies?

ALLIER

Lotions for our tired paws.

NADALIE

We'll get nice warm straw to sleep in.

AJAX

Mary takes good care of us.

Bravo gets excited.

BRAVO

Then we'll take good care of her!

TUCKER

You're learning, kid!

Tucker and Bravo wag their tails, sharing a moment.

INT. YUKON QUEST STARTING POINT - DAY

SUPER: "Fairbanks, Alaska, February 6, 2016."

Mary wears bib marked "#59" among 22 other mushers and sled dog teams, and she is scheduled to depart ninth. [The teams start at 3-minute intervals].

Several race officials and a hundred spectators cheer on the teams.

Ajax is concerned to the point of being frightened at the sight of all the humans.

AJAX

How many not-a-dogs are there in this world? Never seen so many!

BRAVO

Relax, there are many more where Mom and Dad live.

Ajax is only moderately relieved.

AJAX

Really?

BRAVO

Sometimes it takes three or four of them to handle every one of us dogs? Mary must be truly amazing!

Ajax feels better.

AJAX

Thanks, kid!

The dogs are in the regular spots, and Bravo "counts" them as he paws the snow 12 times.

Bravo watches as Mary marches up and down the line.

MARY

One day at a time. We have 73 miles to do today, team!

BRAVO

We got this, Mary.

The dogs cheer, yelp, and hop around.

MARY

We have a gradual elevation gain of 310 feet. Not much today, and I'm not gonna tell you about tomorrow!

BRAVO

No problem!

(whispers to Tucker)

Even for Tucker, but I'll be pulling for you, buddy, 'cause you're my hero.

Tucker whispers back, keeping a low profile.

TUCKER

Thanks, kid. Always remember,
"Strength wins today, but attitude
wins forever."

MARY

It won't be easy. We're expecting
snow and wind, sometimes right in
the face.

NADALIE

We don't care!

ALLIER

We'll get you there!

The dogs cheer, yelp, and hop around.

MARY

The mushers ahead of us don't mean
to, but sometimes they knock down
the trail markers.

AJAX

I've never lost a trail yet!

The dogs cheer, yelp, and hop around.

Mary gets ready on the sled, as the team at the eighth
staring spot just took off.

MARY

No matter what happens today, or
over the next days, remember, we
gave it our all!

The dogs are anxious to begin.

Mary is waved forward by a Regal Man (60) in winter gear.

Bravo turns to see Mary smile. He digs in his paws like a
track star.

MARY (CONT'D)

Stay focused! Everyone! Show us
what you're capable of!

(yells)

Straight ahead. Let's go!

The team takes off.

EXT. YUKON QUEST TRAIL - DAY

BEGIN MONTAGE

- Bravo and the team race like never before.
- They make perfect right turns.
- They pass a dogsled team.
- They make perfect left turns.
- They race ahead and blinding snow.
- They pass a dogsled team in the dark.
- They pull into the first checkpoint at Two Rivers.

END MONTAGE

EXT. TWO RIVERS CHECKPOINT - NIGHT

Mary and her team are met by a male Race Official #1 (40) in full winter gear. Everyone is exhausted. It's bleak, snowy, windy, and cold.

RACE OFFICIAL #1
Mary Helwig?

MARY
Yes, Bib #59. Where can I rest my dogs?

RACE OFFICIAL #1
Right here! Your food bag and straw are here. I suggest you use it all and get a six-hours rest. Tomorrow won't be as easy!

INT. HELWIG'S WINERY HOUSE - NIGHT

Dad and Mom's computer buzzes. They raise sleepy eyes to look at a clock that reads, "12:20."

They race over to the computer to check the map and race results.

MOM
It's 11:20 at night there, but she made it into Two Rivers! Thank God!

DAD

I do. And, amazing for a rookie!
She's in third place after the
first 73 miles, against some of the
top mushers in the world!

MOM

She's feeding and caring for her
dogs right now; she doesn't care
about that.

Mom and Dad hug.

DAD

I know. Isn't it wonderful! I just
pray that she's safe, warm, and
healthy. Tomorrow they have Rosebud
Summit - a gain of almost 3,000
feet elevation!

They look up to the heavens.

EXT. TWO RIVERS CHECKPOINT - NIGHT

Bravo sleeps under straw, poking his head out to smile at
Mary. Bravo whispers to Tucker.

BRAVO

Tucker? Mary's my hero.

Bravo waits for a response, but hears Tucker SNORING.

EXT. YUKON QUEST TRAIL - BEFORE DAWN

It's dark out when Mary and the team head out. Bravo is as
excited as ever.

BRAVO

We got this, team. Let's go!

The team runs like never before, despite the steep uphill
terrain, blinding snow, and lack of visibility.

MARY

Straight ahead, team! Let's go.
Line out, Ajax.

Ajax can barely hear Mary, so Bravo helps by relaying the
command.

BRAVO
She said Line Out, Ajax. You got
this!

AJAX
Thanks, kid!

Bravo smiles and pulls with gusto.

INT. HELWIG'S WINERY HOUSE - DAWN

Dad and Mom drink coffee and see the GPS pin move on the race
map.

DAD
Not even dawn there yet!

MOM
Must be freezing!

DAD
Well below freezing! But they have
to get over the summit by noon or
the trail freezes over in afternoon
winds! Can't see the trail markers
after that!

MOM
Oh my!

They hug and worry.

EXT. YUKON QUEST TRAIL - DAWN

Bravo and the team pull straight up the side of a snowy
mountain.

Bravo hears that Tucker has a difficulty breathing.

He turns to see his mentor struggling.

BRAVO
Tucker? You okay?

TUCKER
(coughing)
Fine. Don't worry about... me.

EXT. YUKON QUEST TRAIL - NOON

Mary and the team struggle in the steepest part of the trail up to Rosebud Summit.

One musher passes them, then another. That second musher drives carelessly and knocks over a trail marker in front of her.

Bravo motions to Mary to repair the marker.

Mary agrees.

MARY

Whoa!

AJAX

But we're almost to the summit!

MARY

Bravo sensed it too. The mushers behind us could be in terrible danger.

Tucker stops too.

BRAVO

It's the right thing to do. Tucker agrees. He's just too tired to talk.

Ajax reluctantly stops.

AJAX

Then how do you know?

BRAVO

'Cause Tucker always says, "Knowing the right thing to do is easy, even when it's hard to do!"

Mary gets off the sled and fixes the trail marker, and another team passes them.

Tucker nods and smiles at Bravo, but he's too tired to speak.

Ajax turns and growls at Bravo.

EXT. YUKON QUEST TRAIL - DUSK

Mary and the team head to a sign that reads, "Mile 101 Checkpoint" with Bravo motivating Tucker all the way.

They are met by a female Race Official #2 (40) in full winter gear. Everyone is exhausted. It's bleak, snowy, windy, and cold.

RACE OFFICIAL #2

We heard what you did back there at the summit.

MARY

Right thing to do. Where can my dogs rest?

(whispers)

Do you have a vet here?

Mary nods to Tucker.

RACE OFFICIAL #2

Yes, we do. Take a number. Four dogs younger than that ol' fella have already been scratched, and three entire mushing teams.

Mary looks sadly at Bravo who looks sadder than Tucker.

Bravo looks up to Mary. She understands his yelp.

BRAVO

Tucker gonna be okay?

A tear forms in Mary's eyes, before she unleashes Tucker and carries him to the vet's tent (with a red cross on it).

LATER

Mary feeds and provides straw to her 11 remaining dogs, and there's a chilling hush over the camp.

INT. HELWIG'S WINERY HOUSE - DUSK

Dad and Mom drink coffee and see race update on the Internet.

DAD

Something's wrong!

MOM

What!

DAD

Mary lost a lot of time, and one of her dogs...

MOM
(interrupting)
One of her dogs?

DAD
Was scratched.

MOM
Which one?

DAD
Doesn't say. Bet she's devastated.
They still have 28 miles to reach
Central to get her food supplies!

MOM
And they've got to get over Eagle
Summit first! An even higher peak
than the last one.

DAD
(sadly)
With one less dog.

They hug and worry.

EXT. YUKON QUEST TRAIL - NIGHT

Mary and the dog team trudge over Eagle Summit in a
snowstorm.

Bravo constantly looks back to where Tucker would be running.

Bravo glances sadly to Mary, only to see that her tears are
frozen on her cheeks.

Mary and team round a corner, then sudden drop off a steep
section of the trail with another sharp turn at the bottom.

Mary loses her balance and she and the sled tip over and get
caught in a snowbank and Mary hits her head.

She is a little woozy when getting back on her sled to
continue on.

The dogs finally make it to the checkpoint at Central.

EXT. CENTRAL CHECKPOINT - NIGHT

Mary and her team are met by a male Race Official #3 (40) in full winter gear. Everyone is exhausted. It's bleak, snowy, windy, and cold, and it's bleak in mood also.

RACE OFFICIAL #3
Mary Helwig?

Her bib is covered with ice. We can't see the number, as Bravo looks back.

BRAVO
She's frozen!

MARY
Yes, Bib #59. Where can I rest my dogs? And I took a spill and hit my head on the way here. Where can I rest?

RACE OFFICIAL #3
I'll fetch the vet, maybe she can help. Do you want to take your mandatory six-hours rest at this checkpoint. Long day tomorrow!

The Race Official runs off to fetch the doctor, as Mary consoles her team.

MARY
I know it's tough without Old Man Tucker. I miss him too, but I'm very proud of each of you.

Bravo looks saddest of all. Mary is weak, but feeds the dogs.

MARY (CONT'D)
Looks like we need a little pep...

Mary collapses in the snow, exhausted.

The DOCTOR (Female; 40) races to Mary to check her pulse and breathing.

DOCTOR
Thank God. Let's get you into a tent and under a warm blanket.

Mary struggles to speak.

MARY
After my dogs...

DOCTOR

Your fellow mushers are stepping up
to get your dogs a warm meal and
new straw.

The Doctor helps Mary to a warm tent.

Bravo is watching every move.

BRAVO

First, Mary carried Tucker away.
(sadder)
Then, another not-a-dog took Mary
away.

All the dogs are sad and worried. They lay down.

The snow and wind suddenly stop.

The stars come out.

Then the Northern Lights appear.

Bravo stands and paces as he gives the dog team a pep talk.

BRAVO (CONT'D)

It was right there in the sky! I
saw it!

ALLIER

You saw what, dear?

BRAVO

Our sled and the finish line!

NADALIE

You're tired. Delirious.

BRAVO

No! I saw it. This isn't how it
ends for us!

AJAX

(scoffs)
How does it end, cheerleader?

BRAVO

I don't know how, but I know I'm
going to cross that finish line!

Ajax chuckles, but Allier, Nadalie, and the other dogs come
to Bravo's defense. Allier stands proudly.

ALLIER

Maybe our lead dog should take a lesson from the kid.

Ajax looks away as Nadalie stands.

NADALIE

Maybe we should all take a lesson from the kid.

One by one, the other dogs stand.

Ajax finally stands.

BRAVO

Mary will be back. I promise!

Allier responds softly and meekly.

ALLIER

How... How can you be so sure?

Bravo pauses and looks to the sky.

BRAVO

When I was just a puppy, Tucker taught me that dogs measure time only by the length of time that members of their pack are gone.

NADALIE

That Old Tucker is a smart dog.

Bravo glances at each of the dogs.

BRAVO

Mary is as much a part of our pack as any of us. She's been gone a long time.

The dogs look worried.

BRAVO (CONT'D)

But she will be back!

Ajax nods 'yes,' which Bravo sees.

AJAX

You're right. She's the real lead dog, even if she's a not-a-dog.

Bravo looks up to the stars with a hopeful sigh.

BRAVO

Exactly! And she has to lead us to
that thing called a finish line.
I'm sure of it!

The dogs turn to Bravo with cheers, and yelps of happiness
and hope.

They look to the Doctor's tent with hope.

Silence!

Mary appears and the dogs sigh and yelp for joy, as she walks
back to her team from the Doctor's tent.

She sees her dogs standing to greet her, despite being
exhausted.

MARY

I can't cry again or my eyelids
will freeze, but you are the best
friends anyone could ever have!

Mary especially hugs Bravo because all the dogs were proudly
facing him.

MARY (CONT'D)

Must have done something pretty
special, Bravo.

Two competing Musher's bring fresh straw for Mary's dogs.

Another brings over Mary's bag of food and supplies.

Lots of hugs all around!

EXT. YUKON QUEST TRAIL - DAY

It's a sunny day. The dogs and Mary have renewed strength as
they race.

MARY

Straight ahead, team!
(beat)
Let's do this for Tucker!

Suddenly, Bravo lunges forward with a burst of speed and
strength that Mary and the other dogs hadn't seen before.

One by one, Allier, Nadalie, and the other dogs gain speed.

MARY (CONT'D)

Line out, Ajax! Let's do this!

Mary has to hang on tightly as the dogs race like never before.

The team races all the way to the next checkpoint.

EXT. CIRCLE CITY CHECKPOINT - DUSK

Mary bursts with pride as they reach the checkpoint. A sign reads "Circle City Checkpoint, 80 miles to the Finish Line"

Mary and her team are met by a female Race Official #4 (40) in full winter gear. Everyone is exhausted. The skies are clear, but the North Wind picks up as they speak.

RACE OFFICIAL #4

Mary Helwig, #59. Still doing okay with 11 dogs?

Bravo and Mary look at the team with pride.

MARY

Today's 74 miles went the best ever. Lucky us.

RACE OFFICIAL #4

Luck's about to change. Report is the old North Wind is picking up, and the trail doesn't just follow the icy Yukon River; the Yukon River is the trail! Gotta watch for open water! Be extra careful!

MARY

Tough at night?

RACE OFFICIAL #4

Tougher as the night goes on. Suggest feeding and resting the dogs for a couple hours and hope that wind dies down. Trail markers are tough enough to see as it is.

Mary is so exhausted, she's falling asleep while talking.

Brave yelps to keep her awake.

MARY

Okay.

Another Musher stops only long enough to sign in at the checkpoint.

The Race Official points at the Musher.

RACE OFFICIAL #4
 Duggan, #66, Got 'em!
 (to Mary)
 Tough break. Duggan is famous for
 knocking over trail markers!

Mary is too tired to care, but Ajax, Allier, and Nadalie turn to sneer at Duggan.

EXT. YUKON QUEST TRAIL - NIGHT

SUPER: "Three hours later."

Mary looks like she didn't sleep a wink, but Bravo and the team are ready to go.

MARY
 Stay focused! Everyone! Show us
 what you're capable of!
 (yells)
 Straight ahead. Let's go!

The team takes off, jerking Mary's head back.

The team races through the night.

SUPER: "Seven hours later"

The Yukon River is two miles wide, slick, and the Old North Wind swirls snow, so Mary's headlamp is unhelpful.

The team passes several trail markers that were knocked over.

Mary looks worried as she can't see the next trail marker.

The wind increases, as if to prevent the team from finishing!

Mary drifts off to sleep -- just for a few seconds.

Ajax sees open water, and stops without warning just feet from open water, and the team plows into him. The dogs yelp.

Mary hears the commotion and wakes up quickly.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Whoa!

Mary panics looking for the trail.

Mary looks at her handheld GPS with sleepy eyes.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Six miles to the finish line!
 (sadly)
 Can't see the trail!
 (beat)
 Been following scratch marks on the
 ice and snow for the past 40 miles.

Mary slumps to the ground.

Behind Mary, another Musher and dog team approaches with the
 dogs running in wide-S turns.

Mary and her team see the headlamp of the other Musher is
 bobbing like he's asleep.

Mary stands and yells.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Stay left. Haw! Open water. Stay
 left! Haw!

The other Musher (WALT; 40; wearing Bib #72) wakes up, but
 it's too late. He turns right, and misses the open water, but
 crashes his sled into a tree, snapping both runners.

Mary mushes over to help.

Walt is banged up, but he's okay.

WALT
 Finish line's thirty minutes away,
 and I fell asleep! I'm Walt. Dogs
 ran off up the hill.

MARY
 I fell asleep too. Glad you're
 okay.

Another MUSHER is passing by offering advice to Mary.

MUSHER
 Don't help him, Helwig! You'll only
 tire your dogs more!

The Musher races past.

WALT
 You're Mary Helwig. Been beating me
 for three days! Quite a legend
 growing about you already.

MARY

Let's get your sled up that hill to
your dogs.

Mary attached Walt's sled to hers, and the team struggles up
the hill to Walt's dogs.

Walt hugs Mary and is on his way.

Less than 6 miles from the finish line, the dogs stop and
don't want to keep going.

Mary tries to console the dogs but drops in tears as she is
so close to finishing the race.

Another team goes by, and Bravo perks up.

Mary hugs Bravo and he licks the tears off her cheek.

Another team goes by and Bravo again jumps up, so Mary
decides that maybe Bravo's enthusiasm could lead the team
home.

She switches Ajax and Bravo.

Immediately the whole team perks up and Bravo leads them
toward the finish line.

EXT. YUKON QUEST FINISH LINE - MORNING

A hundred spectators cheer, and they see Mary's team, led by
Bravo.

Walt points to Mary, thanking her as his team crosses the
Finish Line.

The crowd sees what happened immediately, and cheers wildly
for Mary as they mush into town.

ALL

Helwig, Helwig, Helwig.

Bravo and Mary are equally proud.

Bravo looks up at the blurry (to dogs) yellow finish line
banner with white writing which reads "Yukon Quest Finish
Line."

Bravo ignores the sign and keeps pulling.

As Bravo leads the team across the finish line, he sees a
bowl of dog food at the edge of the street, and beelines to
it.

Mary laughs heartily.

MARY

Whoa! Bravo, get back here and pull us across the finish line!

Bravo slumps as he returns.

BRAVO

I get distracted a little.

AJAX & ALLIER & NADALIE

A little?!

The other dogs appear to be laughing along with Mary.

Race Official (#1) greets Mary and the team with a certificate.

RACE OFFICIAL #1

300 miles! Congratulations. You qualified!

MARY

Qualified?

While Race Official #1 speaks to Mary, Bravo starts to pull the sled forward (like he doesn't know they passed the finish line).

RACE OFFICIAL #1

For the biggest race of them all!
The Iditarod -- 1,000 miles. Starts in six weeks.

Bravo listens, but keeps pulling.

Many of the other dogs look worried.

BRAVO

We got this, team. Right, Mary? We can do this!

MARY

Whoa, Bravo! Race is over!

Mary puts on the claw brake, but Bravo keeps trying to pull forward.

Walt hugs and thanks Mary and her dog team.

Many photos are taken by spectators and Race Officials (#1-#4).

Bravo sniffs the air and looks down the street. He sees the Veterinarian walking a tired, but happy looking friend of his, Tucker.

Bravo yelps for joy. Everyone turns to see Tucker, and either yelps or smiles.

Mary runs to fetch Tucker, and hugs the Vet, who follows Mary.

Mary walks Tucker to see his best friend first, Bravo!

Mary laughs to the Vet.

MARY (CONT'D)

It's like Bravo couldn't see the finish line banner.

VETERINARIAN

Probably because of the colors. Dogs have difficulty distinguishing yellow and white. Our eyes are different.

Mary pauses and looks up to the sky.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

-- EXT. UNALAKLEET HOUSE - NIGHT

Mary looks up to the sky with Middy to see the white sketches in the sky. Clearly, the Finish Line banner is white with red lettering (dark-brown to Bravo) and easily seen.

END FLASHBACK

MARY

Bravo saw a different Finish Line!
(euphoric)
We saw the Finish Line for the
Iditarod! In the sky!

VETERINARIAN

What?

MARY

We're not done! We have to cross
the Finish Line for the Iditarod!

Mary hears Middy's voice while the Veterinarian tries to dissuade her. Bravo hears Middy too.

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>VETERINARIAN</p> <p>Don't be ridiculous! It's more than three times longer and far more dangerous. Are you crazy? That's nuts for a rookie!</p> | <p>MIDDY (V.O.)</p> <p>(to Mary)</p> <p>We draw our own future.</p> <p>(to Bravo)</p> <p>Each of us draws our own future.</p> |
|--|---|

Bravo's ears perk up. He stares at Mary.

MARY

Let's get home. We have to get ready for the Iditarod!

EXT. MARY'S HOME/BRAVO'S KENNEL - DAY

Bravo and Tucker watch Mary intently as the other dogs rest, still exhausted.

Mary fills 19 large bags of food and supplies.

She's on the speakerphone with Middy, who is worried.

MIDDY (O.S.)

What do you mean, it was the wrong finish line?

MARY

Wasn't the one in the night sky!

(laughs)

It's your fault!

MIDDY (O.S.)

My fault.

MARY

You said we each write our own future!

MIDDY (O.S.)

This is your call.

Mary glances at Bravo.

MARY

Bravo's call too.

Bravo perks up.

MIDDY (O.S.) & BRAVO

What?

MARY

You didn't tell me dogs were colorblind! Not blind really. They don't see colors like we do.

TUCKER

I knew that!

MIDDY (O.S.)

Thought you knew that? We don't speak their language, and they don't see our same colors.

BRAVO & MARY

But we love and trust each other!

MIDDY (O.S.) & TUCKER

Exactly.

Middy (O.S.) and Tucker laugh.

MIDDY (CONT'D)

It's 718 miles to Unalakleet, and another 261 miles to the Finish Line in Nome.

Mary has a sad, worrisome voice.

MARY

Think we'll make it?

MIDDY (O.S.)

(laughs)

We draw our own future, Mary.

(beat)

But when you make it to Unalakleet, I'll have my sourdough pancakes, bacon, eggs, and king-crab legs waiting!

MARY

Glad to hear you say that, Middy.

MIDDY (V.O.)

About the sourdough pancakes...?

MARY

(interrupts)

No. You said when we make it Unalakleet, not if we make it to Unalakleet.

Mary winks at Bravo and Tucker.

BRAVO
I heard him!

TUCKER
Me too!

MIDDY (V.O.)
Watch out for that Old North Wind.
He'll do anything to try to stop
you from succeeding.

MARY
Thanks, Middy. See you in
Unalakleet!

Mary gets back to work.

Bravo and Tucker talk among themselves.

BRAVO
Did the not-a-dog Doctor okay you
to run with us?

TUCKER
(laughs)
Define run?

BRAVO
You know what I mean.

TUCKER
Doc said to leave it up to me. If I
don't run well in practice, I'll
pull myself from the race, but...

Tucker looks sad.

BRAVO
But what?

TUCKER
It's my last chance to run the big
race. Life is short, even if we get
seven years for every one year a
not-a-dog gets!

BRAVO
Uhm. Not sure it works like...

TUCKER
(interrupts)
Either way, I'd rather go out
running, than sitting in a kennel.
Know what I mean, kid?

Bravo smiles at his old friend.

BRAVO

I know what ya mean, my friend.

BEGIN MONTAGE

-- EXT. SNOWY ROAD - DAY

Mary and the team take several practice runs. Each time Bravo looks much stronger, and Tucker keeps up, and never complains.

-- EXT. MARY'S HOME/BRAVO'S KENNEL - NIGHT

Each night, Tucker goes to sleep like the other dogs; tired but happy, and Mary sees him as a true champion.

END MONTAGE

EXT. MARY'S HOME/BRAVO'S KENNEL - NIGHT

Mary feeds Bravo (standing) and Tucker (laying down) last.

MARY

(smiling)

You two ran well today. I think you help each other.

Bravo and Tucker glance at each other. Mary turns serious.

MARY (CONT'D)

I'm not blind. I may have even noticed how Bravo seems to pull harder to ease the strain on his good friend.

Mary nods to Bravo.

MARY (CONT'D)

May be able to keep that up for a hundred miles.

(beat)

But it will kill you to do it for the whole race.

SILENCE

Mary turns to Tucker.

MARY (CONT'D)

What's your dream, Tucker?

Tucker struggles to stand. He's exhausted. It takes longer than anyone imagined, but he succeeds in standing.

Bravo smiles.

BRAVO
Atta boy, Tucker!

Mary smiles at Tucker, and pets him profusely.

MARY
Same as our dream, isn't it?

Mary looks up the stars in the sky, then down to Bravo and Tucker.

MARY (CONT'D)
Eat up and get some rest, you two.
We leave bright and early for
Anchorage!

Bravo leaps with joy. Tucker tries to leap, but he's too tired.

Mary walks slowly back to her RV, smiling.

MARY (CONT'D)
I must be crazy!

She pulls out her phone and makes a call before reaching her door.

MARY (CONT'D)
Mom? Dad? Heading to Anchorage
tomorrow. Wish us luck.

Mary looks back at Tucker and Bravo.

MARY (CONT'D)
Change that! Pray for us!

She opens the door to the RV and enters.

EXT. IDITAROD STARTING LINE - DAY

The snow-covered streets of Anchorage, Alaska, are lined with sled dog teams and spectators. Signs over the street read, "Iditarod" and "The Last Great Race on Earth."

Near the back, we see Mary (Bib #49), and her team with heads held high, including Ajax as lead dog, the battling sisters, Allier and Nadalie, and Bravo with Tucker behind him.

Mom and Dad are there to cheer Mary on.

Speakers on streetlights blare a male SPORTS ANNOUNCER (50).

SPORTS ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen, mushers and dogs, welcome to the Last Great Race on Earth, the 2016 Iditarod, the death-defying sled dog race over 1,000 of the most treacherous terrain in the great state of Alaska.

The spectators cheer.

SPORTS ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

About 70 teams are expected, including 55 veterans and brave 15 rookies vying for the \$800,000 dollars in prize money!

The crowd cheers and Mary waves as her team marches by.

SPORTS ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Only 6% of the mushers since 1973 have been women.

Tucker has a mini-panic attack.

TUCKER

Never seen so many not-a-dogs!

BRAVO

Relax, Tucker, you're with your friends.

The crowd cheers again.

SPORTS ANNOUNCER

While we love the pageantry and the interaction of the mushers and fans during the Ceremonial start today, the grueling race actually begins tomorrow up the road in Willow. It's a race where heroes are born, and legends live on forever!

Tension builds.

EXT. IDITAROD TRAIL - DAY

SUPER: "Actual Iditarod starting line, Willow, Alaska"

Mary and her team are eager to get the starting signal for the RACE OFFICIAL #5.

Bravo yelps with anticipation, then turns to Tucker.

BRAVO

We're gonna get Mary to the real finish line! The one in the night sky. The one in her dreams.

TUCKER

In your dreams too. It's all you yap about!

Mary hears "yapping" from Bravo and Tucker.

MARY

Stay focused, you two. Gotta a long way to go, and I have Middy's instructions in my head.

Mary closes her eyes to concentrate while Bravo and Tucker yap.

MIDDY (V.O.)

Pace yourself, my friend. You'll have to cross North America's largest mountain range, the Alaska Range, and run along the Yukon River and over the frozen Norton Sound, but the first 200 miles are the hardest of all, and the Old North Wind will do everything in its power to stop you!

Mary gets slapped on the back by Race Official #5.

RACE OFFICIAL #5

Go!

Mary's eyes open in shock and she instinctively yells.

MARY

Straight ahead. Let's go!

The spectators cheer!

Mary and the team almost fly under the sign that reads, "Iditarod Starting Line, 1,000 miles to Nome!"

One minute later, Mary and the team are crossing desolate frozen lakes and swamps.

Bravo cheers on his team.

BRAVO

Like Tucker says, "The whole is
more than the sum of the paws."
Pull together, team! Let's go!

Tucker beams with pride, but feels Bravo is pulling more than
his weight!

INT. MARY'S RV - DAY

Dad and Mom track Mary's team on the computer (GPS
technology), now aided by video from low-flying planes and
drones.

DAD

She's off and running.

MOM

Never been so worried. It's so
dangerous.

DAD

Something she had to do!

MOM

(worried)
I know. I know.

DAD

First forty miles aren't bad,
but...

MOM

(interrupts)
But what?

DAD

The Skwentna River, the next thirty
miles, are loaded with hazards,
rough ice, and water on top of ice.
Some mushers quit right there!

MOM

(very worried)
Less than a hundred miles out?

DAD

Bravo will protect her.
(looks away)
She's trying to make it to
Skwentna, 72 miles on the first
day. Get the dogs used to the
trail.

(MORE)

DAD (CONT'D)
 (looks back worried)
 One day at a time.

EXT. IDITAROD TRAIL - NIGHT

Mary and the dogs sleep.

We always follow their daily progress on a MAP.

SUPER: "Day 1 Progress: 72 miles from Willow to Skwentna (922 miles to Nome)"

EXT. IDITAROD TRAIL - DAY

The Old North Wind makes the mushing nearly impossible.

Bravo continually turns to check on Mary as she struggles to sled over rough ice. She almost bounces off several times.

BRAVO
 Hang on, Mary!

Ajax looks worried and unsure of himself. Bravo sees this.

BRAVO (CONT'D)
 You got this, Ajax! Bit of ice, is all!

TUCKER
 I don't feel so good.

BRAVO
 Come on, Tucker! You got this! You told me a hundred times, "The strength of the dog team is in each dog. The strength of each dog is in the dog team."

Tucker grunts and pulls.

BRAVO (CONT'D)
 (laughs)
 Whatever that means!

Bravo pulls harder to help Tucker, but everyone is slipping on the rough ice.

EXT. RAINY PASS LODGE CHECKPOINT - NIGHT

All the dogs are exhausted, but Bravo is still weakly cheering them on as Mary pulls them into the "RAINY PASS LODGE CHECKPOINT."

RACE OFFICIAL #6 (a burly male; 50) greets them warmly.

RACE OFFICIAL #6

2:12 AM. Mary Helwig, Bib #49, all dogs accounted for?

MARY

All here, where can I feed and...

RACE OFFICIAL #6

Rest your dogs. Up and to the right. Food and straw are waiting. You made good time for a rookie, but tomorrow you got the gorge!

Mary and Bravo see Ajax shake with fear (and cold).

AJAX

Gorge!

BRAVO & MARY

You got this, Ajax.

SUPER: "Day 2 Progress: 70 miles to Rainy Pass Lodge (822 miles from Nome)"

INT. MARY'S RV - NIGHT

The clock on the wall reads, 3:50 AM. Dad and Mom are tired but happy as Mary's GPS point finally stops moving on the computer.

MOM

She made it to Rainy Pass.

DAD

Fed the dogs, got them straw, and now she'll eat and get four hours sleep.

MOM

Oh my! And that dreadful gorge in the morning!

EXT. IDITAROD TRAIL - MORNING

Ajax is particularly nervous leading the team as they head down into a narrow V-shaped canyon known as "The Gorge."

MARY
Easy! Slow down!

But the steep slope makes it impossible for the dogs to slow down.

Ajax tries to shake out of her harness. He's having a panic attack.

MARY (CONT'D)
Easy! Slow down!

BRAVO
Easy, Ajax. Relax. You got this!

Ajax turns back and snarls at Mary and the entire team of dogs.

AJAX
I don't got this, okay?

Ajax looks ahead at the narrow gorge, and a narrow ice bridge at the end it with sure death on either side.

MARY
Easy, Ajax. Relax. Slow down. You got this!

AJAX
I can't... I cant...

Ajax can't slow down and Mary and the team go barreling through the narrow gorge with the sled banging into snowbanks on either side of it.

Ajax keeps running full speed, and practically drags the team across the narrow ice bridge.

Ajax looks down from the ice bridge on both sides, and now really panics.

Once across the ice bridge, Ajax skids to a stop when he sees a shallow river crossing ahead. Ajax doesn't like open water.

The dogs pile up (except Bravo and Tucker), leaving Mary and the sled on top of the ice bridge.

Bravo sees Mary is stuck.

BRAVO

Tucker, we have to pull Mary to safety.

Bravo and Tucker pull Mary to safety.

Meanwhile, Ajax shakes free from his harness and races off into the forest.

MARY

Ajax, come back here!

Mary hops off the sled and gives chase.

MARY (CONT'D)

We'd all be sad if we lost you!

TUCKER

And get disqualified, but that's not important to any of us!

BRAVO

We can't bear to lose a dear friend!

The dogs hear Ajax's voice echo in the distance.

AJAX (O.S.)

Can't do it. Can't do it.

Mary races up the hill a ways, but soon realizes Ajax is gone.

She trudges back to her team, and puts Allier as lead dog, and pets and reassures all the dogs. Mary is sad.

MARY

Nothing we can do here. We'll report Ajax missing at the next checkpoint. They'll send out a search team.

Bravo turns to Mary sadly as the dogs await Mary's sad call.

MARY (CONT'D)

Straight ahead! Let's go!

The dogs pull, but nobody's heart is in it. They each look back and around for Ajax.

EXT. IDITAROD TRAIL AT ROHN - AFTERNOON

Mary sees RACE OFFICIAL #7 (40s; Native Alaskan female) on the side of the trail waving Mary through. The Race Official has a radio for emergencies.

MARY

Whoa.

RACE OFFICIAL #7

Welcome to the Rohn checkpoint. You made it through the most dangerous part! Are you going through?

MARY

Can't. Lost a dog. My lead dog, Ajax.

RACE OFFICIAL #7

Gotta get him back before you check in or you'll be disqualified.

MARY

More important that we find our dog.

Mary looks at Bravo and the team, sadly.

MARY (CONT'D)

Our dog. Our friend.

The Race Official pulls out a radio and looks back down the trail.

RACE OFFICIAL #7

(to Mary using finger quotes)

My "boys," husband and son, that is, might be able to help, if they're still alive!

(into her radio)

Jasper, Jake? You still fooling around on those snowmobiles? Over?

EXT. IDITAROD TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

JASPER (40s) and JAKE (13), wild Native Alaskans, race down the same steep gorge on snowmobiles. They wear helmets and snow gear, but their jacket sleeves are cut off at the elbows for flare.

Jasper hears his wife on his radio, but can't stop until they navigate the treacherous gorge and ice bridge.

JAKE
Fly, like an eagle!

JASPER
Sore, on my butt!

They laugh as they narrowly escape death on crossing the ice bridge.

RACE OFFICIAL #7 (O.S.)
Today, Jasper! Today, Jake!

Jasper and Jake skid to a stop.

Jasper responds on his radio, calmly.

JASPER
Hello, my dear, my precious. How
may we assist you?

Jasper and Jake snicker.

RACE OFFICIAL #7 (O.S.)
Lost sled dog in your area. Answers
to Ajax.

JAKE
Like the sink cleaner.

RACE OFFICIAL #7 (O.S.)
Like the Greek God in Homer's
Trojan War stories!

JASPER
(to Jake)
Our reward will be reuniting the
lost dog with the pack.

RACE OFFICIAL #7 (O.S.)
Hell to pay if you don't.

EXT. IDITAROD TRAIL AT ROHN - CONTINUOUS

Back with the Race Official, Mary and the team rest and wait.

Several mushers and teams pass them, including a lead dog they all recognize, Natasha, who glares at Bravo.

NATASHA
Take a good look, team! This is
what happens to trash mutts?

The Race Official checks them in and they pick up supplies and move on without resting.

Tucker yells to Natasha.

TUCKER

Dogs that find pleasure in the misery of others, gives me paws to seek forgiveness. Get it? Paws?

BRAVO

(sarcastic)
Good one, Tuck!

INT. MARY'S RV - DAY

Dad and Mom stare curiously at the computer and Mary's stationary dot.

DAD

She's been in Rohn for a while, but they haven't indicated that she's checked in.

MOM

Something must be wrong.

EXT. IDITAROD TRAIL AT ROHN- AFTERNOON

Back with the Race Official, Mary and the team wait nervously.

Another musher and team pass them, as the Race Official waves them on.

They hear the growing roar of two snowmobiles.

Jake and Jasper lead the way on snowmobiles, without a dog, and everyone's hearts sink.

Then LARRY (30s), a musher, pulls up with Ajax in his sled.

BRAVO

The not-a-dogs found Ajax!

Tucker is philosophical.

TUCKER

Not until we are lost, do we begin to understand our pals!

Mary races to greet Ajax, and thank the rescuers.

LARRY

These two gentlemen rounded up
Ajax. I just brought him in. I'm
Larry.

MARY

Thank you all so much!

RACE OFFICIAL #7

Thank you, Jasper, Jake, and Larry!
Lotta paperwork for me if someone
loses a dog!

MARY

Thank you so much!

Mary kisses each of the "boys" and Larry on the cheek, hugs
the Race Official, then carries Ajax to Bravo and the team.

RACE OFFICIAL #7

Everybody's passed you up. Better
get going.

BRAVO

Welcome home, Ajax!

MARY

I think a celebration is in order!

Mary reaches into her supply bag, and gives each of her dogs
a snack of snack of frozen salmon.

RACE OFFICIAL #7

And rest the dogs for another
twenty minutes?

MARY

But they're all here. My dearest
friends.

(looks around)

And three new ones.

She pulls out a small camping stove and a frying pan, and
cooks up four salmon steaks.

Jasper and Jake are especially happy!

JASPER

Salmon!

JAKE

Best day ever!

RACE OFFICIAL #6

They act like I never feed them.

They all laugh! Bravo sees how Mary treats others.

Ajax looks apologetically at the dog team and Mary.

AJAX

Sorry. Got scared.

BRAVO & MARY

That's okay, Ajax.

BRAVO

Main thing is, the pack is back!

Bravo sees the not-a-dogs gather for a meal. Mary says Grace.

SUPER: "Day 3 Progress: 35 miles to Rohn (787 miles from Nome)"

BEGIN MONTAGE -- Several days of Iditarod racing.

-- The trail crosses the South Fork of the Kuskokwim River and then up to Farewell Lake crossing steep hills, up and down.

At Tin Creek, the team struggles on a steep hill with a long drop to the canyon floor, before climbing up the other side.

The trail crosses several "wallows" which are very rough. This is bison (buffalo) country!

SUPER: "Day 4 Progress: 75 miles from Rohn to Nikolai (712 miles to Nome)"

-- The terrain is mostly flat, but passes through open swamps, small stands of spruce and alder and runs on the river.

Deep fresh snow makes the trail is very soft and slow.

SUPER: "Day 5 Progress: 89 miles from Nikolai to Ophir (623 miles to Nome)"

-- The trail crosses the river again. Large spruce, birch and cottonwood finally provide a good camping spot for the night.

SUPER: "Day 6 Progress: 73 miles from Ophir to Cripple (550 miles to Nome)"

-- The trail winds through Spruce covered hills before dropping into the lower Innoko River Valley at Shageluk.

The trail crosses swamps and a slick icy lake before turning to a more southwesterly direction and passes through heavy stands of cottonwood, spruce, birch, and lots of brush (nearly a tunnel in some spots).

SUPER: "Day 7 Progress: 70 miles from Cripple to Ruby (480 miles to Nome)"

END MONTAGE

EXT. IDITAROD TRAIL - MORNING

Mary has the dogs leashed up and ready to go. She pets them, while giving the dogs a pep talk, which Bravo echoes.

MARY

We're halfway home.

BRAVO

We're in this together!

MARY

I know this is tough on all us, and that darn Old North Wind is gonna try to get us to quit!

BRAVO

I'll never quit! That's what Tucker said at dinner last night, but I think he was talking about eating.

The dogs chuckle, but Mary goes on with her pep talk.

MARY

"Age wrinkles the body; quitting wrinkles the soul," Douglas MacArthur once said.

Mary walks back to take her place on the sled.

BRAVO

And, we don't want wrinkles, do we, Tucker?

Tucker smiles at Bravo, as Mary looks perplexed.

MARY

Why's everyone so cheerful?

The dogs chuckle and await Mary's command. She yells.

MARY (CONT'D)

Straight ahead! Let's go!

They race off. Tucker shows more signs of exhaustion.
 The trail goes north along the west shore of the Yukon River.
 The trail is fast, and the team covers many miles.
 The trail runs on islands to avoid thin river ice, but previous dogsled teams have knocked down trail markers.
 Mary's right runner finds a crack in the ice, and her right foot dips into the water. The dogs pull her out.
 It's dark when Mary pulls into the "Nulato Checkpoint."

EXT. NULATO CHECKPOINT - NIGHT

Mary unleashes Bravo and takes him with her as she has to wake the RACE OFFICIAL #8 (60, a proud Athabaskan male, and blind) from sound asleep. He wears a tattered, unzipped, U.S. Army jacket over his parka.

RACE OFFICIAL #8
 (scary)
 Halt, who goes there?

Bravo backs up and stares at the man.

MARY
 Mary Helwig. Bib #49.

Mary and Bravo realize the Race Official is blind.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Can I help you check me in?

RACE OFFICIAL #8
 No, no. Got a radio. I'll call ahead to Kaltag. Tell 'em to expect you tomorrow.

Mary looks away.

MARY
 Was hoping to get to Unalakleet tomorrow night. Lots of friends waiting for me.

The Race Official laughs while trying to pat Mary's back.
 Mary has to move to be under the old man's hand.

RACE OFFICIAL #8
 Be happy if you make it to Kaltag.
 Four teams scratched just between
 here and there!

Bravo's eyes open widely.

BRAVO
 What is it?

The old man looks into Bravo's eyes like he heard him.

RACE OFFICIAL #8
 Old North Wind.

Mary looks into the old man's non-working eyes, puzzled.

BRAVO
 Worse in the morning or afternoon?

RACE OFFICIAL #8
 Good question. A wise one here.

Mary looks more puzzled as Bravo and the Race Official talk.

RACE OFFICIAL #8 (CONT'D)
 Ya see, most mushers are in a
 hurry. Win big prize money. Leave
 the checkpoint way too early.
 (looks at Mary)
 Powerful, relentless winds down
 canyon, every morning. You are wise
 to go in the afternoon.

MARY
 Thanks for the tip.

The Race Official looks in Bravo's direction.

RACE OFFICIAL #8
 A gentle wind at your back awaits
 those who are patient.

Mary hugs the Race Official.

RACE OFFICIAL #8 (CONT'D)
 What is the wise dog's name?

MARY
 Bravo.

Mary turns to head back to the other dogs.

RACE OFFICIAL #8

Bravo! You are welcome around my fire anytime. Good luck to you all.

BRAVO

Can't wait to tell Tucker. Imagine a not-a-dog that speaks our language! Nobody's ever going to believe that!

She finds a wooded area and makes a campfire to thaw out.

SUPER: "Day 8 Progress 87 miles Ruby to Nulato (393 miles to Nome)"

INT. MARY'S RV - NIGHT

Dad and Mom stare curiously at the computer and smile.

DAD

Wow! Long day tomorrow, but if they hit the trail early, they should make it all the way to Unalakleet!

MOM

She'll be treated like the Queen when she gets there.

EXT. NULATO CHECKPOINT - MORNING

No sign of the old man.

Mary checks her watch for the time. It reads, "9:35 AM."

Most of the dogs are restless to run. Bravo and Tucker are not.

MARY

Old Race Official is gone.

Mary looks to the trees for signs of wind. They are still.

Mary paces, glancing at Bravo and Tucker.

MARY (CONT'D)

I know he warned us about wind. But we've been up since 6 AM, and not a gust of wind in sight.

Bravo paces with his head hung low.

AJAX
I'm ready to run!

BRAVO
I don't think it's a good...

AJAX
(interrupts)
When have I ever been wrong?

Many dogs look eager to run.

TUCKER
Let me count the ways...

BRAVO
I just don't know! The old not-a-dog spoke our language.

ALLIER
Now that's crazy!

NADALIE
We finally agree on something.

Mary senses that the dogs want to run. She hops on the sled.

MARY
Unalakleet, here we come.
(yells)
Straight ahead! Let's go!

EXT. IDITAROD TRAIL - DAY

The day's ride begins fine along the Yukon River, but slowly the wind builds from the north (in their faces).

The wind builds, and it's far worse behind them.

It's a torturous, gruelingly slow pace with Bravo pulling much of Tucker's load. Hours pass like days.

EXT. KALTAG CHECKPOINT - NIGHT

Mary and her exhausted team pull into the checkpoint signed, "Kaltag." The mood is sullen.

MARY
Whoa! My fault. I'm so sorry.

Bravo turns, sadly to Mary, and yelps.

BRAVO

My fault too. I should have said something.

Mary looks perplexed at Bravo, like she almost understands him.

SUPER: "Day 9 Progress 47 miles Nulato to Kaltag (85 miles to Unalakleet; 346 miles to Nome)"

EXT. IDITAROD TRAIL - DAY

Smiles return to everyone's faces as they mush to Unalakleet.

Bravo turns to see Tucker pulling hard and smiling.

BRAVO

Way to go, Tucker.

TUCKER

The trail to a friend's doghouse is never long!

Bravo thinks as he pulls harder and smiles bigger.

EXT. UNALAKLEET CHECKPOINT - AFTERNOON

Mary is treated like a Rock Star. There is a wonderful reception of six Native Women singing hymns in their Iñupiaq language. The song is "Praise the Lord."

Middy greets Mary and the team like they had won the race.

Bravo and Tucker are overjoyed to see Middy, and they lay at his feet to honor him.

Middy serves Mary sourdough pancakes, bacon, eggs, and king-crab legs.

Mary's dear friends from town bring her pizza with her initials (MH) spelled out in olives.

Mary laughs and gets hugs all around.

MARY

Expected to be here yesterday.

Middy compassionately looks to Mary.

MIDDY

The Old North Wind and I expected you today.

Mary has tears of happiness forming as she hugs Middy.

MARY

This is everything I dreamed of.

Middy looks up to the sky.

MIDDY

Not quite.

Mary looks up to the sky.

Bravo wags his tail and whispers to Mary.

BRAVO

The finish line. The finish line.

Mary looks down at Bravo.

MARY

I know.

(beat)

The finish line!

SUPER: "Day 10 Progress: 85 miles from Kaltag to Unalakleet (261 miles to Nome)"

EXT. UNALAKLEET CHECKPOINT - DAWN

Middy, Mary's friends, and the Native Women singers wave and cheer as Mary and her team leave the checkpoint.

EXT. IDITAROD TRAIL - DAY

The dogs race hard, but Tucker begins to tire.

Bravo picks up the slack but looks worried for his friend.

EXT. KOYUK CHECKPOINT - NIGHT

The dogs sleep in fresh straw. Bravo and Mary worry about Tucker.

SUPER: "Day 11 Progress: 90 miles from Unalakleet to Koyuk (171 miles to Nome)"

EXT. IDITAROD TRAIL - NIGHT

The dogs sleep in fresh straw. Again, Bravo and Mary worry about Tucker.

SUPER: "Day 12 Progress: 76 miles from Koyuk to Golovin (95 miles to Nome)"

EXT. IDITAROD TRAIL - DAY

SUPER: "Just past White Mountain Checkpoint 77 miles to Nome."

Mary's dogs stop, too tired to go on.

Mary can't encourage them, and the Old North Wind is in their faces, and Mary is depressed.

She looks up to the heavens.

MARY
I need a sign!

A raven swoops down, pointing the way forward.

Bravo and Mary are excited by the sign (the other dogs, not so much).

Mary hooks Bravo to the lead, as the Raven swoops down again in approval. Bravo's enthusiasm ignites the team for Mary.

The dogs cheer madly as Mary goes back to the sled.

Along the trail each time the team tires, the raven swoops down energizing Bravo and the team.

EXT. IDITAROD TRAIL - AFTERNOON

Mary and the team are mushing on a beach pebbles, while dodging driftwood. It's difficult for Mary to steer the sled as Ajax leads the team around driftwood, pebbles and ice.

Bravo is cheerleading from his team spot, mostly for Tucker's benefit.

BRAVO
We got this, team! Almost to
Safety.

Bravo turns to Tucker who's looking more tired.

BRAVO (CONT'D)
Isn't it weird having the last
checkpoint named Safety, Tucker?

Ajax looks up and sees the sign for the "Safety Checkpoint." They are entering the infamous blowhole where the contours of the hills create strong winds off the Norton Sound. Just then a huge gust blows into Ajax. He tumbles into driftwood and injures his leg.

MARY

Whoa! Whoa!

The dogs pile up as Mary applies the claw brake.

She races to Ajax who is in pain.

Mary unleashes him and comforts Ajax as she carries him to the sled.

BRAVO

We're so sorry you're hurt, Ajax,
but we're pulling for you. Really!

TUCKER

Ajax, if I could take the injury
for you, I would. Honest!

Mary puts Allier as the lead dog paired with her sister, Nadalie. Mary smiles at the sisters.

MARY

No bickering here. We need you to
act as one!

BRAVO

You can do it, Allier and Nadalie!
(turns to Ajax in the
basket of the sled)
As Tucker always says, "If you want
to pull yourself up, pull for
someone else."

Mary sees Bravo comforting Ajax as she returns.

Ajax turns to Mary.

AJAX

You never lost faith in me.

MARY

Everyone deserves a second chance.
You led this team for almost 1,000
miles, Ajax. You should be as proud
of yourself as we are with you.

Mary covers Ajax with her parka.

MARY (CONT'D)
For Ajax! Straight ahead! Let's go!

The team races to the checkpoint.

EXT. SAFETY CHECKPOINT - NIGHT

Mary and team are met by Race Official #9 (21, female), with a radio in her hand.

RACE OFFICIAL #9
Mary Helwig! Been expecting you.

MARY
We need a vet! Ajax here. Leg injury.

RACE OFFICIAL #9
I'll call the vet.

Mary and the team comfort Ajax, as the Veterinarian carries Ajax away.

MARY
They'll take care of you, Ajax.
I'll pick you up. I promise.
(beat)
And I know how dogs tell time!

ALLIER & NADALIE
You'll be okay, Ajax!

BRAVO
We're with you in spirit, Ajax.

Mary turns to see Bravo looking down at Tucker, who is laying down and already snoring.

Mary already has tears for Ajax, as she collapses to the ground next to Tucker.

Mary and Bravo now comfort Tucker.

MARY
Two hours from the finish line,
Tucker.

BRAVO
Almost there, Tucker!

The dogs gather around Mary and Bravo.

MARY

Two choices, Tucker. One is to have them take you by snowmobile to Nome...

BRAVO
She'd never do that!

MARY (CONT'D)
I'd never do that!

BRAVO & MARY

You'd never do that.

The other dogs stare in silence.

MARY

Two, we eat and sleep here until Tucker regains his strength, and we finish the race tomorrow.

(beat)
Together!

RACE OFFICIAL #9

You'd be assured of the last-place finish if you wait! The Red Lantern Award.

Bravo, Tucker, and the team stare at the Race Official with perplexed looks.

Mary stands with a smile.

MARY

Let's get you all fed and in warm straw, and I'll tell you a bedtime story.

EXT./INT. NOME HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Mom and Dad stare curiously at the computer.

MOM

Two hours to go! Why are they stopping? We were supposed to meet her tonight!

DAD

(smiles, hugs Mom)
I'm sure she has her reasons.

EXT. SAFETY CHECKPOINT - NIGHT

The dogs each lay under a pile of hay, with their heads sticking out to hear Mary tell a story by the campfire. Mary sits between Bravo and Tucker.

The Race Official listens in with a smile, as a musher and dog team race by the checkpoint.

MARY

The Red Lantern is known as the
"persistence" award.

(pets Tucker)

Not giving up.

RACE OFFICIAL #9

Lot of teams never finish this
race! The winner usually completes
the race in eight to ten days,
though the longest any team took to
finish the race was 32 days. This
is your...

The Race Official pulls out her clipboard, and checks it.

MARY

Thirteenth day.

BRAVO

(smiles)

And night!

MARY

When the Iditarod Race started in
1973 it adopted the practice of
giving a Red Lantern to the musher
who finishes last. It is a symbol
of perseverance and mushers feel a
sense of accomplishment and pride
when receiving it.

Another musher and team of dogs races by, as the Race
Official waves them on.

Mary pets Bravo and Tucker.

MARY (CONT'D)

We're choosing to finish this race
together!

TUCKER

Thanks, guys.

BRAVO

We're a team. Tucker says, "There's
two eyes in team. We use our two
eyes to watch out for each other!"

Tucker smiles at Bravo.

MARY

Nobody quit! Proud of all of you.

The dogs' eyes stare at the red lantern as they close their eyes to sleep.

SUPER: "Day 13 Progress: 73 miles from Golovin to Safety (22 miles to Nome)"

EXT. IDITAROD TRAIL - DAY

Allier and Nadalie lead the quietest dog team in history.

The Old North Wind is hitting them in the face, slowing progress.

Bravo is in his "team" spot, but Tucker is not behind him.

Bravo turns to Mary, and she takes a glove off to hold her finger to her lips for "silence."

SUPER: "5 miles from the Finish Line!"

Mary commands the team quietly.

MARY

Whoa.

The dogs stop as quietly as they can.

Mary sees a crowd gathering on both sides of the trail.

She peeks under a blanket in the basket to see Tucker sound asleep. Mary whispers to the team.

MARY (CONT'D)

Think we should wake him up.

The dogs begin yapping with joy.

BRAVO

Time to wake up, Tucker! We gotta race to finish!

Tucker stirs awake, totally surprised that he's in the basket.

TUCKER

What? ... Where? ... Who?

MARY

You were passed out!

ALLIER & NADALIE
 Needed the rest.

BRAVO
 Five miles to go!

BRAVO & MARY
 Can you do it, Tucker?

Tucker is fully awake, and he tries to act strong.

TUCKER
 Like all dogs, I only want three
 things out of life: to prove
 loyalty, to be loved, and to run.
 (beat)
 Let's finish this race!

Bravo cheers first and loudest, but Mary and the others
 continue to cheer as Mary leashes Tucker to the line.

But a mile later, Mary's dogs are too tired to go on, Mary
 can't encourage them, and the Old North Wind is still in
 their faces.

Mary looks up to the heavens.

MARY
 I need another sign!

Suddenly, the Old North Wind switches directions and begins
 to almost push them from behind.

Bravo and Mary are excited by the sign, so Mary moves Bravo
 to the lead dog spot.

Mary smiles at Allier and Nadalie.

MARY (CONT'D)
 This is okay with you ladies, isn't
 it? You are all going to have to
 pull for Tucker.

ALLIER & NADALIE
 Bravo always reminds us of
 something Tucker always says...

Bravo turns to Tucker.

BRAVO
 "If you want to pull yourself up,
 pull for someone else."

The dogs cheer madly as Mary goes back to the sled.

Bravo's enthusiasm ignites the team for Mary.

The North Wind continues pushing from behind, and Mary turns and nods at the Old North Wind, before looking up to heaven and smiling. They come off the Norton Sound and as they reach the street an official hands Mary the Red Lantern.

Mary proudly holds up the red lantern!

MARY

Let's finish this thing! Straight ahead! Come on. Let's go. Please!

Everyone is happy.

Bravo, the team, and Mary hold their heads high as they mush the last mile, being cheered by people and dogs on both sides of the road and pushed by the Old North Wind.

EXT. IDITAROD FINISH LINE - DAY

They see the "Iditarod Finish Line Banner," and hear hundreds of people cheering.

It's everything that Bravo and Mary imagined.

Mary sees that the banner is white with red writing.

Bravo sees it as white with dark-brown writing.

They both see it as Mary and Bravo imagined it in the night sky with Middy.

Mary sees Mom and Dad at the finish line.

She waves the Red Lantern proudly, as Bravo and the team cross the finish line.

The Old North Wind quietly disappears.

Tucker coughs and wheezes across the line with a smile.

Mom and Dad are the first to get hugs and kisses from Mary and Bravo.

DAD

You did it!

Mary smiles at Bravo, Tucker, and the team.

BRAVO & MARY

We did it!

Bravo's eyes and Mary's eyes open widely as they share a moment.

BRAVO
You speak dog?

MARY
I'm learning to.

Photographers and film crews take photos of Mary and Bravo kneeling by Tucker, and with Mom and Dad and the team surrounding them.

A moment later, Tucker slumps slowly into a happy, but near-lifeless state with Mary holding him, and Bravo sadly by his side.

EXT. HELWIG'S WINERY HOUSE - NIGHT

SUPER: "Six months later, Helwig Winery."

Mary, Mom, Dad, and Bravo tell Tucker stories around a patio fireplace on a beautiful summer night. They share a bottle of Helwig wine, cheese, crackers, and dog biscuits for Bravo.

DAD
I'm glad Middy said Ajax was recovering nicely.

MOM
That was great news.
(to Mary and Bravo)
But you moving home was the best news of all.

Mary looks to a lit red lantern hanging on a post behind them. She has a tear in her eye.

MARY
I miss Old Tucker on the team.
(looks at Bravo)
Bravo told me that the greatest gift in the world is friendship.

Mom and Dad look curiously at Mary, but they all raise their glasses and eyes to the sky.

DAD & MOM & MARY
Cheers!

Bravo yaps to Mary, and she repeats the story to Mom and Dad.

MARY

One night, Old Tucker was really eating a lot, and Bravo called him on it. Tucker turned to him and said, "If they wanted me to eat less, they wouldn't have called me a Husky!"

MOM

We love telling Tucker stories.

DAD

Sure taught Bravo a lot.

Bravo yaps to Mary, and Mary translates.

MARY

He's say, "All a sled dog wants out of life is three things: to prove loyalty, to be loved, and to run."

Bravo yaps to Mary again, and snuggles with her.

MARY (CONT'D)

Bravo says that he has a lot in common with certain not-a-dogs!

Suddenly, from the far side of the vineyard, they all see a shadowy figure of an old dog coming into focus, strolling toward them. It's Tucker! Tucker wears a bandana around his neck that reads, "Retired."

Mom, Dad and Mary laugh as Bravo and Tucker wag their tails.

They all look up to the stars in the sky and smile.

FADE OUT.

ROLL CREDITS

We see photos of Bravo as a puppy.

We see photos of Tucker.

We see Mary's name of the Yukon Quest 300 Race Results.

We see screenshots of Mary's name on Iditarod Race Results.

We see photos of Mom and Dad at the Helwig Winery.

We see photos of Mary and Bravo, relaxing! Finally!

SUPER: "In loving memory of Middy Johnson."

THE END