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Julie of the Wolves

adapted for the stage by **Brian Guehring**
based on the Newberry Award winning novel by **Jean Craighead George**

a play for 3 women/3 men

CHARACTERS:

JULIE a 13 year old Inupiat Eskimo

AMAROQ*	alpha male wolf	KAPUGEN	Julie's Father
SILVER*	alpha female mother wolf	MARTHA	Julie's Aunt
NAILS*	beta male wolf	NAKA	Kapugen's friend
KAPU*	playful male wolf pup	PEARL	Julie's Friend
JELLO*	omega male wolf	DANIEL	Naka's son & Julie's husband
	AMY°		Julie's Pen Pal
	ATIK and UMA		a hunter and wife from Kangik
	CARIBOU		animal of Alaska

°Amy's Letters are envisioned to be videotaped or recorded narrations with projected slides

*The wolves are envisioned to be actors wearing masks similar to the wooden masks
Inupiat Eskimos make (with flexible ears?). The caribou also would be masked.

SETTINGS

the frozen tundra and frost heaves of Northern Alaska
Kapugen's house in the town of Kangik

in her memory:

the seal camp on Nunivak Island on the Bering Sea
the town of Mekoryuk on the Bearing Sea
the town of Barrow on the Arctic Ocean

TIME

late 1960's, early 1970's

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scene 1: the frozen tundra of northern Alaska.
The sun is a yellow disc in a summer lime
green sky.

(JULIE is wandering walking alone. She is lost, hungry, confused, and scared. JULIE stops, takes a deep breath, and pulls out a letter to read again.

Lights shift from tundra lighting to memory lights. As JULIE hears AMY read the letter, beautiful images of San Francisco and a modern American, technology filled lifestyle are rear projected onto a screen {possible images: Golden Gate bridge, television, roller coasters, summer dresses, curling irons, blue jeans, airplanes, etc.}

AMY (voice over)

Dear Julie,

You are the best pen-pal! Next month I will turn twelve years old. For my party, my mother is taking my friends and me to the carnival. I wish you could go. We're going to ride the ferris wheel and the roller coasters and eat lots of cotton candy and hot dogs.

Last month at school we saw your state on a television show. It was so beautiful with the birds flying over it and the flowers blooming on its hills. I'm glad I have a friend now who lives in Alaska. I wish I could get on a plane and come visit you.

Here is a picture of my house. That is me standing on one foot on the patio wall. Mom says you can have the pink bedroom that looks over the garder and down on the Golden Gate Bridge. Your room is next to mine. When you get here, we will buy you summer dresses and blue jeans and curl your hair. Then we'll ride the trolley to the San Francisco Opera House and sit on velvet seats.

When are you coming to San Francisco? Please come soon!

Your Pen Pal,
Amy

Lights return to frozen tundra lighting.

JULIE

Soon, Amy, I will be there soon. I hope.

(JULIE crosses a tall frost heave and finds SILVER and KAPU. SILVER sniffs the air smelling JULIE and stands ready to defend her pup. JULIE moves slowly and quietly. KAPU looks at JULIE and wags his tail. JULIE slowly drops to the ground and holds out a pleading hand to KAPU. KAPU wags his tail furiously, flattens his ears, grunts, and moves closer. SILVER snaps at the pup, and KAPU scrambles back to her side.

SILVER sniffs the air again and JULIE turns her head. AMAROQ, NAILS, and JELLO have returned from an unsuccessful hunt. The three male wolves surround JULIE to investigate. JULIE stands up. AMAROQ's ears go forward aggressively. JULIE starts to back up. The WOLVES move in closer and snarl. This isn't working, so JULIE stops. The WOLVES stop. JULIE slowly drops to the ground on all fours. The WOLVES pull their ears back. AMAROQ wags his tail once.

JULIE moves slightly towards them. AMAROQ backs up and avoids her eyes. AMAROQ returns to his den with SILVER and KAPU. NAILS and JELLO follow. When the wolves have turned their attention away from her, JULIE slowly crawls back to the other side of the frost heave and out of sight. JULIE begins to build a sod house)

scene 2: a simple, poor quality sod house is now on JULIE's side of the frost heave.

(JULIE finishes building her sod house and then watches the wolves from the top of the frost heave. They are still asleep. JULIE gathers some moss and lichen and eats them. They taste bad and barely help her hunger pains.)

JULIE

This moss won't keep me alive. I need real food.

(JULIE returns to watch the wolves. KAPU tries to suckle from SILVER, but SHE growls until KAPU goes away. AMAROQ wakes. AMAROQ sits and surveys the land. HE looks at a bird stretching, a flower twisting. AMAROQ glances at his paw and licks a shoulder. AMAROQ's ears cup forward and tune in. JULIE looks nervously in that direction. AMAROQ's ears relax and he rolls to his side.)

JULIE

Amaroq, ilaya! Wolf, my friend! I am lost and the sun will not set for a month. There is no North Star to guide me. Nor are there berry bushes or flying birds to help wanderers. I will surely die if you don't help me. Please, gentle brother, just look at me. You will see I am gentle.

(AMAROQ looks at her.)

JULIE

Ee-lie!

(JULIE scrambles to her feet. AMAROQ arches his neck and presses his ears forward. JULIE waves. AMAROQ shows his teeth. JULIE lies down again. AMAROQ flattens his ears and wags his tail once. AMAROQ tosses his head and looks away. JULIE is disappointed.)

The WOLVES begin to wake and greet each other by wagging their tails. AMAROQ paces restlessly along the crest of their frost heave. HE shoots his eyes toward SILVER and NAILS. SILVER and NAILS approach him, spank the ground with their forepaws and bite him gently under the chin. AMAROQ wags his tail furiously and takes SILVER's nose in his mouth. SILVER crouches before him, licks his cheek and lovingly bites his lower jaw. AMAROQ's tail flashes higher. AMAROQ noses her affectionately. NAILS takes AMAROQ's jaw in his mouth and the leader bites the top of his nose.)

JULIE

They are paying respect to their leader.

(JELLO slinks up to AMAROQ, rolls trembling to his back and wriggles. JULIE giggles at him. KAPU lies down, wags his tail vigorously and gazes at AMAROQ.)

AMAROQ bays a wild note into the wind. The others join in the song as KAPU yips and bounces around. The song ends abruptly. AMAROQ rises and trots down the slope. NAILS follows, then SILVER and JELLO. SILVER turns and looks at JELLO. She presses her ears forward and lifts her tail. JELLO shrinks and goes back to babysit KAPU. KAPU starts to play with JELLO.)

JULIE

I know how wolf speak “to make friends.”

(JULIE puts her hands on her head for ears and flattens them.)

JULIE

To wolf speak “fear”

(JULIE pulls them together and back.)

JULIE

“Aggression”

(JULIE shoots them forward.)

JULIE

I know how to pay tribute to Amaroq, the leader.

(JULIE gets down low, spansks the ground with her hands and pretends to bite AMAROQ under the chin.)

JULIE

I even know how to tell the wolf who shakes like Jello how to babysit.

(JULIE presses her ears forward and raises her back end high.)

JULIE

How do you say, give me food?

(JELLO has settled down for a nap. KAPU is staring at her with his head cocked in curiosity. KAPU boldly comes toward.)

JULIE

You are fearless and smart. I shall call you Kapu. Will you be my joking partner?

(KAPU wags his tail and yips excitedly at JULIE)

JULIE

Joking partners laugh and play games together and always help each other.

(KAPU jumps up and grabs JULIE’s mitten. JULIE and KAPU play tug of war. JULIE wins and chases KAPU around in a circle.)

JULIE

Kapu, you will make a good joking partner. Back in the village, Pearl was my joking partner. She was very helpful.

(lights change to pink memory lights. KAPU slowly and ritualistically takes off mask and becomes PEARL)

Julie, what's wrong? PEARL

Daniel. JULIE

(JULIE and PEARL hug)

Don't worry about it. I know how you feel. I was married last year. No one pays attention to an arranged marriage. PEARL

I've got to get away. Now. JULIE

Slow down. Let's think about it. PEARL

I can't go back. JULIE

You can always get a divorce. PEARL

Naka would never allow that. He believes in the old ways. JULIE

Even in the old days, they didn't make kids stick with these marriages. They just drifted apart. PEARL

I'm afraid of Daniel. He'll hurt me. I have to run away. Please help me. I have nobody else. I just need enough food for a week. JULIE

Julie, where are you going? PEARL

San Francisco. JULIE

California? PEARL

I want a new life. I want to be American with short hair and money and freedom. I can't live like this anymore. I hate the old ways. I don't want to be an Inupiat Eskimo anymore. JULIE

But you are Inupiat. You don't have to forget your history to have some of those things. The old ways aren't all bad. PEARL

I have to start over. JULIE

PEARL

You're going to walk from Alaska to California in a week?

JULIE

No. I will walk to Point Hope. I'll meet the supply ship there. It always needs dishwashers or laundresses. I'll work my way to San Francisco.

PEARL

What if you get lost? The tundra all looks the same.

JULIE

The plants and birds will point the way.

PEARL

What about the bears?

JULIE

My father was a great hunter. He taught me how to deal with bears.

PEARL

But what if it takes longer than a week? The tundra is dangerous.

JULIE

I can survive. I will. I have to.

PEARL

The summer is almost over. You'll never survive if you don't get to Point Hope before the sun sets for the winter. Julie, stay here with me.

JULIE

No, Daniel would find me. I am going.

(PEARL gets some food and needles.)

PEARL

Here are some needles and some food, its not much.

(PEARL hands JULIE needles and food.)

JULIE

That's fine. I only need enough for a week or so.

PEARL

Here's a sleeping skin and ground cloth.

(PEARL hands JULIE sleeping skin and ground cloth.)

JULIE

I'll mail them back to you as soon as I arrive.

PEARL

They were a wedding present. You can keep them.

Thank you. JULIE

At least stay the night here. PEARL

I must leave now. Thank you for your help, Pearl. JULIE

Good luck! PEARL

(PEARL and JULIE hug.)

(Pink lights fade as PEARL ritualistically puts the wolf mask back on and the scene returns to the tundra.)

(KAPU spans the ground with his front paws and wags his tail.)

You are my new joking partner, Kapu? JULIE

(JULIE takes her ears and flattens them. KAPU does the same and wags his tail.)

Lie down. JULIE

(JULIE presses her “ears” forward, narrows her eyes, and shows her teeth. KAPU lies down.)

Ee-lie! You understand me! JULIE

(JELLO whines an undulating note and KAPU returns toward the den. JULIE imitates the call and KAPU looks back in surprise. JULIE giggles as KAPU wags his tail and jumps on JELLO)

I’m talking wolf! I’m talking wolf! But will Amaroq understand? JULIE