[Snap Judgment]

**Glynn:** Hey, Snappers. We're in a bit of shock. Recently, audio storytellers from Vice, Gimlet, even NPR were laid off. These are amazing, talented people. Friends of ours, some featured on Snap and it's scary. The truth is, we're not immune. That's why I'm coming to you today, right now, to ask for your support of Snap Judgment storytelling at *snapjudgment.org*. If you've ever sat in your car, in your office, in your kitchen, on your treadmill, unable to move until you heard the end of the story, please support the people that make it happen right now at *snapjudgment.org*. This amazing crew makes it look easy. It is not. We need them to keep making magic storytelling that matters. So, please stop the podcast, stop the podcast for just a moment. Head over to *snapjudgment.org* and give whatever makes sense to you. Please do it right now. I swear it only takes a minute. Snappers, thank you, thank you, thank you.

What comes to your mind when you think Alaska? The word "Denali," one of the tallest mountains in the world, cuts through the clouds? Or maybe your folks went on a cruise and saw the whales. Perhaps, you even read those Jack London *Adventure* stories in high school. Call it a wild, deadliest catch. Did you ever want to see Russia from your house? You see, Alaska is still a very wild place. America's last frontier. But now, we know that frontier was built on top of someone else.

Today on Snap Judgment, we're going to a place where taxpaying Americans, they don't have paved roads, they don't have running water. A lot of the times, 911 is not a thing. We're calling it Watching Over Mountain Village. And fair warning, it is cold outside. My name is Glynn Washington. Time to put on your coat, over your coat, over your coat because you're listening to Snap Judgment.

[upbeat music]

We began by meeting one of the many people fighting the good fight at the edge of the world. A quick note, today's story is all kinds of real life. It contains strong language and involves suicide and violence. Sensitive listeners, please be advised. Reporter Teresa Cotsirilos has a story.

**Anna:** Those close calls will probably forever haunt me. All the sober calls that involve guns or weapons like that is dangerous. At that exact moment, they're sober enough to take their own life, then they're sober enough to endanger yours at the same time.

Mountain Village Police Department, VPO Bill. Hi.

You've got to really let them understand deeply that you care for them and that they're valued as a human.

[pensive music]

**Teresa:** I'm in Mountain Village, a Yupik town of 864 people. It's at the edge of a wide river in the far west of Alaska, hundreds of miles away from Anchorage. Right now, Anna Bill is pretty much the only person policing it. She's a village police officer, and last night she responded to 39 calls in about four hours.

**Anna:** Back on the clock I go.

**Teresa:** Just now, were having dinner at Anna's dad's house when she got a call about a fight. So, we're careening across town with a paper plate of green beans for the road.

**Anna:** And it's only starting. And I'm on one hour's sleep.

**Teresa:** She's chain smoking right now. Anna said I could follow her around for a night if I bought her an avocado and an extra-large pizza, neither of which are easy to get here.

**Anna:** Sometimes, I would wonder, "Is this it? Is this the last time that I left my house and see my kids?"

**Teresa:** Anna, how do you prepare for a call like this?

**Anna:** You pray.

**Teresa:** Anna was born in Mountain Village. The village is off the road system. It's only connected to the outside world by this airstrip at the top of a hill. A little Cessna plane brings people bulk orders of toilet paper and bunches of green bananas, along with their Amazon orders, prescription medications, and the occasional public health nurse. But the Arctic's brutal storms can shut that airstrip down for days.

**Anna:** So, we basically live off the land and the river. We go harvest fresh fish during the summers, go pick berries, go moose hunting, bear hunting.

**Teresa:** Anna's dad taught her how to track a wolf across the tundra.

**Anna:** It's very interesting how smart the wolves and their packs are. It's just like a chess game. I remember this one time, there were wolves in the community, and I was fairly young at the time. It was pitch blackout that we all followed our parents with them when they went up on top of the hill to go look for the wolves that were invading the village. I think that was the first time that I was actually scared on a wolf hunt. I was just really paranoid that the wolf would lunge out right in front of me and I wouldn't see it.

**Teresa:** Anna is raising her four children here. Her daughter is nine years old. She's this hardcore Steph Curry fan who everyone calls Princess. When I met her, she was dribbling a green basketball and rocking hot pink shoes.

**Anna:** Hey, [unintelligible [00:06:43] get your ball and go home.

**Princess:** It's not 11:00.

**Anna:** It's okay.

**Princess:** I want to still play.

**Teresa:** There's an 11:00 PM curfew here because on bad days, Mountain Village gets really violent. This is one of the poorest parts of the country. Some people don't have running water or can't afford heating fuel. It's been that way for decades. That kind of poverty feeds other problems.

**Reporter 1:** Violence in rural Alaska has reached a boiling point.

**Reporter 2:** Western Alaska has some of the highest rates of domestic violence and sexual assault in the nation.

**Reporter 1:** Suicide rate six times higher.

**Reporter 3:** One in three communities in Alaska has no local police protection of any kind.

**Anna:** For me, it feels like our houses are our jail cells. We're all stuck within this radius and it's just like we can't get out even if we wanted to, but it feels so good to be home.

**Teresa:** A lot of native villages don't have any cops at all. Mountain Village has Anna, and she isn't just its go-to police officer. She's also its only 911 dispatcher. When she gets a call, she dispatches herself, because a lot of the time, she's her village's only first responder, period.

The town keeps hiring police officers, but they generally quit after a few weeks. Anna spent most of the past six months working alone.

What kind of training did you get, Anna?

**Anna:** None. [laughs] I didn't even know what the hell a discovery packet was, to be honest. I had no idea I was supposed to do them. Thank God for watching a lot of *Forensic Files* on TV and watching *Matlock* when I was a kid. [laughs]

**Teresa:** Mountain Village didn't have the money to send Anna to any kind of police academy or, it turns out, for anything else.

**Anna:** I didn't even have mace or handcuffs at one point.

**Teresa:** Another time, her truck broke down for a few weeks and Anna had to run from call to call. And because Anna isn't a trained police officer, she's not certified to carry a gun. This was not a job she ever thought she'd have.

**Anna:** I just thought it was the most hilarious thing ever to be asked.

**Teresa:** I mean, why would you be a bad candidate though?

**Anna:** Because I'm short and rolly. Everybody else in town's like big and muscular. The men get logs and moose hunt, and here I am, just a little old rolly woman.

**Teresa:** Anna also has asthma, which she says makes running after perps a challenge.

**Anna:** In my mind, they're going to hear me wheezing, so they'll know exactly how far behind I am from them. When they quit hearing the wheezing, they know they got away.

**Teresa:** But the man who was policing Mountain Village at the time insisted she'd be good at it. So, Anna decided to go fishing and pray on it.

**Anna:** I'll be on my knees on the ground, holding the [unintelligible [00:09:43] stick steady as if I'm in tune with nature. Looking up at the sky with the sun breeze coming down on me as I inhale a deep breath [sighs] and let it go with the wind and pray for everything that's bothering me. I was telling God, "If I should do something like this, I want three signs."

**Teresa:** The first sign came from Mountain Village's current police officer.

**Anna:** He gave me the application and really encouraged me to apply. The second one was this little kid, I don't even know who that little kid was, came and they were like, "Hi, officer." I was like, "I'm not an officer." They're like, "Not yet," and ran off. I've never seen that kid to this day. I don't even know where that kid went or if it was just angel.

**Teresa:** The third sign came from a village elder.

**Anna:** She came and she said that I would make a really good police officer. I kind of smiled and I said, "Well, I'm putting my application in today." The day I turned in my application, at 05:00 that evening, I got sworn in and my shift started that midnight.

**Teresa:** Then, the same cop who recommended that Anna join the force promptly quit the force. Anna was on her own.

It takes Anna about a minute to respond to the call about that fight. We stash the paper plate of green beans on a backseat and pull up in front of a dusty house near the top of a hill. [front door opens] The front door is open, and I watch Anna walk briskly inside. Then, she ducks out and gets on her phone.

**Anna:** Come to [beep] house.

**Teresa:** The woman inside has tried to kill herself. Anna removes a rope and a knife out of the house and throws them in the back of the car.

**Anna:** She'll be okay. We'll get her to the clinic, okay? She's going to be okay.

**Teresa:** A group of city employees veer into the front yard on ATVs. Mountain Village's city manager pushes her way into the house at a full run. It looks like someone just woke her up. They need help carrying the woman out. She's fighting them. Anna catches her breath and grabs a cigarette.

[beeping sounds]

**Anna:** We need to just drag her out.

**Teresa:** Okay. Do you need me to turn this off and come in?

**Anna:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Anna:** Be careful.

**Teresa:** At some point, I realize that Anna's daughter, Princess, is here too. She's dribbling her green basketball in front of the house, pretending to play, but really just watching us. "I'm responding to a call, Princess," Anna shouts in this forced cheerful voice, and her daughter runs away. A few guys from Mountain Village's water and sewer department show up, and they haul the woman into the back of a pickup with a broken door, the closest thing Mountain Village has to an ambulance. Anna is the one who's going to drive the truck, so we have to switch cars. She asks me to grab the evidence out of the old one.

Anna, the rope.

**Anna:** Oh, there we go. And my sweater. I think it's in the very back seat.

**Teresa:** Okay. I can go get that. One sec.

[beeping continues]

**Teresa:** Anna, do you need the knife?

**Anna:** Oh, yeah, the knife too, please.

**Teresa:** Okay. I'll have to get in the other door.

A few men jump in the back of the pickup to restrain the woman.

**Anna:** Are you guys ready?

**Teresa:** Anna swerves down the hill towards Mountain Village's small health clinic.

**Anna:** This makes 54 different people.

**Teresa:** 54 different people who've attempted suicide in about six months.

**Anna:** And if we count the repeats, I'm at 67.

**Teresa:** And have you been the first responder to all of them?

**Anna:** Yes.

**Teresa:** According to Anna's police records, between 5% and 7% of the town's entire population attempted suicide in a six-month period. Anna has helped save them all. She's responded to up to three suicide attempts in a day. She's cut down people who've tried to hang themselves. She hasn't lost anyone.

[pensive music]

**Glynn:** That's right. Anna just saved a woman's life. And her night is just getting started. Snap Judgment. Stay tuned.

[pensive music]

Welcome back to Snap Judgment, the Watching Over Mountain Village episode. When last we left, Anna had just helped save a woman's life. It is not the first time, and it will not be the last. Snap Judgment.

**Teresa:** We drop off the woman who attempted suicide at the clinic.

**Anna:** But we both have to get out of our bloody clothes. We can't be in bloody clothes no more.

**Teresa:** She didn't wear gloves during the suicide attempt. The city of Mountain Village sometimes runs out of them.

**Anna:** Who likes to walk around with bloody clothes all day? [laughs] Like, if I show up on a call and I'm bloody, they're going to look at me and wonder, "What the hell?"

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Anna:** I might scare them. [laughs]

**Teresa:** Anna says gallows humor keeps you going in this job. I'm not really sure how to react, to be honest. So pretty soon, I'm laughing too.

**Anna:** They're like, "Oh, God. She's on one-hour sleep. She's [beep] bloody."

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Anna:** If you want to go [unintelligible [00:15:44], you can.

**Teresa:** Sure, yeah.

[car door opens and shut]

**Teresa:** Right now, Anna and her kids are living in a two-room house that doesn't have plumbing. She only makes $13 an hour. An old friend of hers is over there taking care of things while Anna's at work. He's watching *Rogue One* on Anna's sunken couch.

**Anna's Friend:** Hello.

**Anna:** Hey, how are you?

**Teresa:** He's a former Mountain Village police officer himself, and he's also made dinner for us. Pork chops and mashed potatoes.

**Anna's Friend:** What do you think of Mountain Village so far?

**Teresa:** Is it like this every Friday?

**Anna's Friend:** Every other day. Seriously.

**Teresa:** Geez. Anna sinks into the couch. It's around 7 o'clock, and she's helped save one person. This night's not over yet. The job is relentless, but Anna is too. She has this ability to talk to absolutely anyone about pretty much anything. That comes in handy when you're trying to deescalate a situation or talk someone down from suicide. That was clear from Anna's very first call. It came in around 2:00 in the morning.

**Anna:** Yeah, it was a loaded gun call.

**Teresa:** A man in the village was threatening to shoot himself. Anna responded to the call alone. And when she got to his house, he was standing on the porch with a shotgun under his chin.

**Anna:** I told him about my personal tragedies, trying to see if I connect in a way to let them feel that they weren't alone.

**Teresa:** She talked to him for about 45 minutes about how she could understand what he was going through.

**Anna:** I know how it feels to be neglected and unloved.

**Teresa:** He surrendered the gun reluctantly.

**Anna:** I said, "Hey, can I take a look at it?" I started looking at it and telling him I was admiring it. I unloaded the shell and put it in my pocket and that was that. I still have that bullet in my office, by the way. It's always a reminder of how close that was.

**Teresa:** Was this the first person whose life you saved?

**Anna:** Yes. And it doesn't get any easier.

**Teresa:** Whenever Anna responds to a suicide, she has to fill out this form called a Title 47, if she needs to send the survivor away to the hospital. The nearest one is 100 miles away.

This is just this year?

**Anna:** This is just the last couple of months. And it's a [unintelligible 00:18:21].

**Teresa:** Oh, my God. Oh, I just found a repeat.

**Anna:** Mm-hmm. You're going to see repeats. This is another repeat from-- [paper rustling] See, this is number four on her. Four repeats so far on just one person. Five.

**Teresa:** She's 15 years old.

**Anna:** Mm-hmm. A 15-year-old girl tried five times to commit suicide. Doesn't that scream more than help?

**Teresa:** She doesn't think they're getting the care they need. That nearby hospital is understaffed, and Alaska's state hospitals routinely run out of beds for people. We eat a few bites of the pork chops, Anna pours us both some Tang.

**Anna:** [unintelligible [00:19:29] nausea is coming down and I'm getting shaky. And then watch, I'll get really nauseous. Suicide attempts, those make me feel really sick. I attempted suicide when I was young at one point. I tried to take a handful of pills and survived.

**Teresa:** Anna's family kept running out of clothes and heating fuel when she was a kid. When she got together with her first boyfriend, she felt like she was transitioning away from them, becoming a different person.

**Anna:** I think it was because he used to always make me laugh. We were both really young. He was already really abusive.

**Teresa:** She got pregnant and had her first child, a little boy named Raymond.

**Anna:** I was 16, a newly-- Raymond was just a baby. I was going through a really bad phase with the boyfriend at the time and I got really depressed and I couldn't take it anymore. I felt like I had nobody to turn to, nobody to talk to. When I did, it was shoved off and brushed off. So, I said [beep] I took how many handfuls of pills, and I was so done.

**Teresa:** Her cousin found her and ran to get help. Anna was flown to the nearby hospital like everyone else.

**Anna:** I remember waking up and seeing the hospital lights, looking over and seeing my uncle's really weird face. He seemed anxious or nervous and got me some water. And I remember thinking about Raymond. Then, it really hit me of exactly how stupid I was and how selfish I was being.

**Teresa:** Did you think anything specific about Raymond in that moment?

**Anna:** Yeah, I wanted to be there for him and his future. I was wondering, nobody else can provide for your kids better than their mom or their dad. So, I wanted to be there to watch him grow. I had to learn how to live from there on out as a mother and as a person. How to live, how to break the cycle of abuse and alcohol, the destruction.

**Teresa:** Anna and her kids rely on each other. Sometimes, her kids just show up when she's responding to calls, the way Princess did in the middle of that suicide attempt. Anna says they like to check and see if she's okay.

**Anna:** Yes. Okay. I have to sanitize my cuffs. Even my cuffs are all bloody. So nasty. Oh, can I get my wallet really quick?

[phone ringing]

Mountain Village Police Department, VPO Bill. Yeah, I'm going to go do that as soon as I deal with one more call.

[phone ringing]

**Teresa:** Breathe.

**Anna:** Tomorrow [laughs]

[phone ringing]

Hi, dad. I'm really slammed. I had one hanging. I got one in custody. I'm on my way to another call. Yeah, they're okay. Yeah, we got them down in time. All right, dad. Bye.

I thought it was bad when I was a kid. Growing up, we didn't have these opioids and these pills that's making them do things that they normally wouldn't do, enhanced with the brew.

**Teresa:** Brew's short for homebrew. Mountain Village is a dry town, but local dealers make alcohol of their own and it's a lot stronger than whatever you're thinking of.

**Anna:** Some of the brew dealers here put in rubbing alcohol or pills so people would go back for more. I've had some stabbings. I thought I was going to lose one once because they were pretty blocking out, in and out. And all that was pretty hard to do on a four-wheeler. I just literally threw his body down on the seat and sat on him. Like, not on him on him, but held him and place on the four-wheeler and drove to the clinic. I just kept telling him, "We're almost there. Hang in there, listen to my voice. Don't close your eyes. Keep trying to talk to me." I had nine active shootings. You have somebody ring the village siren. When you hear the siren go off, it's a lockdown.

**Teresa:** Anna's talking about local people, usually men who've been drinking, who get into fights and start shooting off guns. Sometimes in the air, sometimes at their neighbors. Because Anna's not allowed to carry a gun herself, locking down the village is usually the safest thing to do.

Some of these violent calls, Anna, I don't know if you've been following some of the controversies going on with cops or police officers in the Lower 48. But where I'm living right now, if a guy is armed and threatens a cop, he usually gets killed.

**Anna:** Shoot first, ask questions later. It's just stupid. I was like, if we did that here, imagine how many people would be going into the grave? It's just like I can't imagine you're trained in so many different techniques and they got the proper training, they got the tools they need. What the hell are they carrying around their mason baton for? Just because we're minorities and our skin is brown, that they think we're stupid most of the time. They don't understand that we know our rights. A lot of us know we're being screwed.

**Teresa:** Do you ever think about what Mountain Village would have been like if the state of Alaska wasn't imposed on top of it?

**Anna:** It destroyed our communities. We didn't even know what alcohol was until it was introduced to our people. Now, alcohol was foreign and not being able to speak our tongue. We can't even understand the elders. Now most of our elders are gone. It's just sad.

**Teresa:** Anna's developed her own way of policing Mountain Village. She doesn't really judge anyone for what she catches them doing.

**Anna:** They're a person, they have feelings. I never had time to think of the person if they were good or bad, because it's not my place to judge.

**Teresa:** This one time, I saw Anna talk to this shaggy-haired guy for about 10 minutes. She gave him a hug. He told her he was doing better, and I assumed they were old friends. When the guy walked away, Anna told me she'd arrested him the week before. He'd resisted and busted her knee. Her doctor said she might need surgery.

The people Anna's helped tend to thank her quietly. They text her late at night or awkwardly wave at her when they're waiting in line at the grocery store.

**Anna:** I had one that attempted when I first started, and they came back, and she said, "You know what? All these months, I've been meaning to tell you thank you." It's a bond that a normal person wouldn't be able to see. An invisible connection, I should say, to the next person and the next person. It's like a chain reaction. I'll look at them, and they'll look at me, and they'll know. They'll just nod, and I'll know that they're okay.

**Teresa:** In these first six months, had you also not lost anyone to violent crime?

**Anna:** I didn't lose anybody. There's times when I have to go arrest somebody, and I'll just cry because I don't want to take them, but I have to. When I signed on, I told them even though if it's my family, my siblings, my brothers, my sisters, I didn't expect it to be my kids.

[pensive music]

**Glynn:** It is not over. After this short break, Anna responds to one of the hardest calls she has ever received. Stay tuned.

[upbeat music]

From Snap Judgment's underground lair, welcome back to Snap Judgment, the Watching Over Mountain Village episode. My name is Glynn Washington. When last we left, Anna has been responding to emergency calls for six months with zero training, and she hasn't lost a single person. But that might be about to change.

**Teresa:** Anna didn't lose anyone for six months. Then, she got another call.

**Anna:** There was a possible suicide at the residence of Eunice and Jim Bryan, and they needed police assistance right away.

**Teresa:** The Bryans' son, Coy, was a little older than Anna's son Raymond, who was the high school salutatorian. Earlier that day, he had just put his cap and gown on for his graduation picture. When she got there, the front window was broken, and the school principal was standing helplessly by the front porch. Anna found Coy's body inside.

**Anna:** It's not every day that you see a scene like that and it's very hard on mind.

**Teresa:** It was the first suicide Anna hadn't been able to stop in her six months as a Mountain Village police officer. She called the Alaska State Troopers for backup. They're required to respond when there's a death in the community. Then, she sat heavily on Coy Bryan's front porch and waited.

**Anna:** It's always hard when somebody tries to take their life before their time is over because they're robbing themselves of their potential of why they're here.

**Teresa:** The troopers showed up about two hours later.

**Anna:** They asked me to not let anybody in or around on the house, tape off the building, keep it secure.

**Teresa:** She stood watch outside the dead boy's house for another 18 hours until 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning. At one point, Anna overheard one of the troopers directing his team into the house.

**Anna:** He said, "Let's start examining and take pictures," and stuff like that.

**Teresa:** That's when it hit her. There wasn't a gun at the scene of this suicide which meant that Coy Bryan hadn't killed himself at all.

News of the murder traveled fast over the next few days. School was canceled. The local pastor organized a memorial service in the school gym which the whole town attended. The Alaska State Troopers mobilized a team of officers from at least six different state agencies. Investigators flew into Mountain Village from Palmer, Fairbanks, and Soldotna and they wanted Anna's help.

**Anna:** They were asking who's all involved, like what do I know?

**Teresa:** The troopers said that Coy had been shot at close range in a robbery gone wrong and they thought the assailant might be someone his age. Mountain Village's high school is small. If Coy was shot by one of his classmates, Anna thought there was a good chance her son, Raymond, knew who did it. She had him when she was 16 and they've always been close.

**Anna:** I mean, I know his looks and I know when he's hiding something from me. And that's when I knew. I was like, "He knows something."

**Teresa:** Then, a few days into the investigation, Anna received a flurry of texts from a close friend. "Don't ask me how I know this," he said, "But Raymond knows something about what happened." It started to seem to Anna Raymond might know who did this.

**Anna:** So, I called Todd, Trooper Morning and informed him, "I think you might want to talk to my son again."

**Teresa:** The troopers asked Anna to drive Raymond to one of the school district's buildings where they had set up a makeshift headquarters.

**Anna:** I wasn't going to bug him to tell me what he knew. I really wanted to. I had to fight myself so hard not to do it. As his mother, I wanted him to tell me everything. But as a police officer, I couldn't because I am not professionally trained enough to handle situations like this. So, I did not want to hinder any evidence. I just told Raymond to always tell the truth, no matter what it is, and I'll always love him no matter what, and that I'm always going to be his mother. And he walked in.

**Teresa:** Raymond was 16. In Alaska, that's old enough to waive the right to be questioned with a parent present. He asked Anna to wait outside and walked into his interrogation alone.

**Anna:** I was just thinking about, "What the heck's going on in there? What are they talking about? What are they saying to him? What is he saying to them?" I was worried about, "Should I go home and get him some food?"

**Teresa:** She kept herself busy by thinking about the sandwich she wanted to make him, something with ham and lettuce, but no tomatoes.

**Anna:** Then, they finally came and said, "We're holding him. He's being charged." I had no sense of smell, my head was spinning. It felt so unreal. I was walking, but I didn't realize I was walking or I couldn't cry anymore. Like when you hit a wall, it's just like you just hit a wall. I brought him an extra pair of clothes and extra pair of shoes [pause] and hugged him and talked to him. And he just cried a lot. Told me to make sure that his brothers and sisters don't get in trouble.

**Teresa:** Did you see them take Raymond away?

**Anna:** Yeah, I was right there. It was really hard knowing that I had to let them take him. At the same time, I had a job to do too. They told me he was being charged for a couple assaults, but they didn't tell me anything about charging him for murder.

**Teresa:** They charged Raymond with first-degree murder. He's being tried as an adult. The troopers say that Anna's son confessed to killing Coy Bryan in a haphazard robbery. They claim that he shot Coy twice with one of his own guns. Once in the back as he tried to run, and once at point blank range. Anna didn't leave her house for days.

**Anna:** Why didn't I see it or why didn't I know or maybe I'm just working too much that I don't realize what they're doing when I'm not there.

**Teresa:** Raymond was the one who made sure her other kids ate lunch. He's chided her daughter, Princess, about cavities. But she's also caught him drinking with some kids by the dump. He and some other teenagers had broken into a storage unit by the gas station. At one point, he was suicidal, just like Anna had been when she was 16.

Were you worried about him?

**Anna:** I was at that point where I was getting really frustrated with him. I knew he was starting to make choices that he shouldn't be doing. Hanging out with the wrong type of friends and being influenced in the wrong way.

**Teresa:** Some people in Mountain Village think Raymond did this. Other people don't. They think he might have been involved in some way, but that he's actually the fall guy for someone else. This case hasn't gone to trial yet, and we really don't know what happened here. Raymond wrote Anna a letter from jail. He told her she was the toughest, bravest woman he knew. He also wrote that her work as a police officer terrified him.

**Anna:** I neglected to ask them questions about how they actually felt about seeing me with bruises or on crutches, and he was wondering if I got severely hurt, like what would happen to them.

**Teresa:** Can you hear me?

**Anna:** Yes.

**Teresa:** A few months after I met Anna, she texted me late at night and I called her right away.

**Anna:** Let me read to you the letter I turned in when I resigned. It says, "To Mountain Village City Council."

**Teresa:** She resigned on Raymond's 17th birthday.

**Anna:** [exhales] I could finally breathe, but at the same time, I'm going to really miss what I did because I was really good at it.

**Teresa:** After Raymond's arrest, Anna was afraid of what some people in the community might do. The family members of people she'd arrested gloated about her misfortunes on Facebook. She remembers this one guy in particular.

**Anna:** Talking about how I was a mother of murderer and really putting me down. I was really, really mad because he was like, one of the ones that I had to help before. I was like, "How did he not realize that?"

**Teresa:** Did you save his life?

**Anna:** Yeah, I did. It was wintertime. He was behind a hill, frozen, drunk. He would have froze to death if I didn't climb back there, crawl back there and pull him out and bring him back to town. That happened twice. I stayed inside my four walls. I didn't go anywhere. I got a knock at the door.

**Teresa:** It was a woman from the village who she'd never really talked to before.

**Anna:** I was kind of hesitant. I opened the door and put on a fresh pot of coffee. We started drinking coffee and we started smoking. Then they started telling me that they really appreciated everything that I was doing for the community, that I made everybody feel safe, made everybody feel valued, and that I was there. She put her hand on my back and she was like, "I really, really want you to know that we really appreciate you and you're very cherished. And don't ever, ever, ever think that you're alone." And I broke down crying. And she left. Then, like an hour or two later, another person showed up, asked if I wanted to smoke with them.

**Teresa:** It was one of Mountain Village's elders. A few months earlier, Anna had chased her all over town on a DUI charge.

**Anna:** And she said the same thing. She was like, "I'm really sorry for all the stuff that I did to you, for injuring you, to taunting you, to bashing you in public." I was really weak at the knees. I was just in awe. Some of those people are like one of the ones that are in pretty big poverty at home. They're poor like me. I was really shocked that the people that I didn't think would be there were there.

**Teresa:** The most surprising two people who were there for Anna, Jim and Eunice Bryan, the parents of the boy who Raymond's accused of killing.

[automated voice] This call is now being recorded.

Jim?

**Jim:** Yes. Hi, Teresa.

**Teresa:** When Jim Bryan called me, he told me he wanted to share his story with as many people as possible in case it helped someone else. His wife didn't want to talk on the record, but she did listen to our interview on the other line.

**Jim:** I'm getting a note from my wife. She said--

**Teresa:** Oh.

**Jim:** Yeah, my wife said that--

**Teresa:** Hi, Eunice.

Jim is one of the few non-native people who lives in Mountain Village. His wife, Eunice, was born and raised here. They teach at the village school, and Coy was their only child together.

**Jim:** We did almost everything together. When he'd smile, he'd try not to smile with his mouth. It was really kind of funny. Ever since he was born, I always would touch my forehead against his forehead, even if he was sleeping. So, when I woke up to go to work, I am thankful that I woke up and touched my forehead before I left. It's hard for me in the mornings. That's my worst time. So, I try to just get out of bed right away. It's a sickness that I can't explain.

Raymond's innocent until proven guilty in court. But I knew Raymond. I talked to him. I wanted to add too, right away from the beginning, a sense of total forgiveness. And that's hard to explain to people.

**Teresa:** He ran into Anna a few weeks after Raymond's arrest.

**Jim:** She was going to church, and I was just leaving. And then, we hugged. It gets to your heart. There's some welding up in there. The pastor gave me a moose tongue to give to my wife, and so I gave it to Anna. I go, "Here, you guys." She said she'll cook it. " "Go home. Oh, good. We'll cook it for dinner."

**Anna:** We had no words. We looked at each other and our eyes said it all. We just started crying. When he hugged me, you could feel God's love.

**Teresa:** She still didn't feel like she could be the town's police officer again. But Mountain Village couldn't replace Anna. No one else could keep up with the police department's call volume, let alone manage the stress of the job. So, the community went weeks without any local law enforcement at all.

**Anna:** After I quit, I was already really missing it. Some of the elders would tell me that they didn't feel as safe anymore because I wasn't working, and that they felt very valued when I was working because I would answer and respond to the calls unlike the other officers, who don't even show up or don't even answer.

**Teresa:** Anna decided to go back to work. A man died of suicide the night before she went back on the clock. And it wasn't just anyone. It was actually a relative of the woman who attempted when Anna showed me around town.

**Anna:** I was sitting at home, and I got a call from a friend. They told me what had happened. When I heard that they were gone, I was wondering to myself, I wonder if they were trying to call for help or if there was somebody that was there for them, or what if I didn't quit? When I went back, I returned back with a sense of urgency.

**Teresa:** Anna, how many attempts do you think you've responded to since going back to work?

**Anna:** I lost count. I quit counting, and I started counting on-- Just counting on another day.

**Teresa:** Towards the end of my ride along with Anna, we take a drive to the school playground. Middle schoolers are chasing each other on bikes around the swing set. This pack of kids is swarming the basketball courts, watching the high schoolers show off. Anna's daughter, Princess, is there too.

**Anna:** Alicia, Alicia, you guys got to go home. It's curfew. All you little kids, it's curfew. Haji, time to go home.

**Teresa:** It looks like they made a show of running away from you.

**Anna:** And then, they came back.

**Teresa:** And then, they came [chuckles] right back. [laughs]

**Anna:** Because they're little.

**Teresa:** Why are they still out?

**Anna:** Their parents are not keeping track of them or the time or they don't even care. That little girl is only four years old.

**Teresa:** The one in the pink?

**Anna:** Yeah. Let alone-- there's been a bull moose coming into town the last couple of days, so they can get easily injured. There's times where I catch some kids foraging at the dump for food, and I'll ask them, "How come you're not at home?" They'll say, "My parents are drunk," or, "The door is locked," or something's going on and they have nowhere else to go.

**Teresa:** When there's a lull in her call volume, Anna likes to let her daughter, Princess, ride along with her.

**Princess:** [unintelligible [00:45:42]

**Teresa:** We're driving down Mountain Village's main road, and Princess is pointing to the houses and calling out who lives in them.

**Anna:** I can just drive past something, and I'll just see all these different calls replaying in my head. I know exactly the kind of struggles that our people are facing, the reality that's going on behind everybody's doors, and it's mind boggling.

**Teresa:** Anna sinks into her gray couch, and we start watching movies. We're about halfway through *Transformers* when someone texts Anna. A woman's boyfriend just threatened to kill himself. Anna knows him pretty well by now and gives him a call.

**Anna:** Do you have any plans to harm yourself?

**Boyfriend:** No.

**Anna:** Do you have any plans to harm others?

**Boyfriend:** No, no others.

**Anna:** So, what's your safety plan then?

**Boyfriend:** [unintelligible [00:46:40]

**Anna:** And can you tell me why?

[pensive music]

**Glynn:** Thank you, thank you, thank you, Anna Bill, for sharing your story with Snap. Reporter Teresa Cotsirilos rode along with Anna back in the summer of 2018, and they've been chatting with each other ever since. Anna is still a police officer in Mountain Village. She's working for a tribe now and getting better compensation. She even has some gear and a new partner on the police force. Her son, Raymond, is awaiting trial. Anna also says Mountain Village's suicide rate seems to be getting better, which she attributes to grassroots programs that the community started themselves.

We also want to thank Jim and Eunice Bryan for sharing their story with us. And we want to thank Cathy Moses and Mountain Village's Tribal Council for all their time and patience.

If you or a loved one is struggling with suicidal thoughts, help is available 24 hours a day. Please call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1800-273-8255.

A version of this story was first reported by the NPR station, KYUK, in Bethel, Alaska, and aired by Alaska Public Media. Additional thanks to Francine Chiklak, Johanna Eurich, Steve Hiemel, Shane Iverson, Anna Rose MacArthur, Lori Townsend, and Anna Walters. The original score for that story was by Renzo Gorrio. It was produced by Teresa Cotsirilos.

[upbeat music]

It happened again. I know, magic, space, time story. If you missed even a moment, get the amazing Snap Judgment podcast. Wherever you get your podcast, get this one. Do me a favor, if you will. If you dig the Snap, let somebody know. You asked, we listen. It's a Snap merch alert. Sound the alarms. We have limited-edition Snap stickers and mugs available right now. Let the world know you Snap. If you want to witness our funky, fabulous friendship circle, follow Snap on Instagram *@snapjudgmentradio*.

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This is not the news. No way is this the news. In fact, you could hike through the frigid wilderness looking for a place to relieve yourself, discover an outhouse where everything is frozen over, only to return three months later and wish desperately that things were still frozen over. And you would still, still not be as far away from the news as this is. But this is PRX.

[upbeat music]

Hey, Snappers. We're in a bit of shock. Recently, audio storytellers from Vice, Gimlet, even NPR were laid off. These are amazing, talented people. Friends of ours, some featured on Snap and it's scary. The truth is, we're not immune. That's why I'm coming to you today, right now, to ask for your support of Snap Judgment storytelling at *snapjudgment.org*. If you've ever sat in your car, in your office, in your kitchen, on your treadmill, unable to move until you heard the end of the story, please support the people that make it happen right now at *snapjudgment.org*. This amazing crew makes it look easy. It is not. We need them to keep making magic storytelling that matters. So, please stop the podcast, stop the podcast for just a moment. Head over to *snapjudgment.org* and give whatever makes sense to you. Please do it right now. I swear it only takes a minute. Snappers, thank you, thank you, thank you.

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