

Eclipse

On that night of the lunar eclipse, they'd driven out to Eyak Lake in separate cars and parked behind a screen of trees. Now she stood beside him, watching the earth's red shadow eat the moon.

Of course they were not touching. After all his confessions of longing, Wyatt still hadn't touched her. Wanting him was an ache in her—he made sure of that, always half-promising, then pulling away, only to return once he sensed her learning to live without him. He'd reel Diane back into his life and make her need him again, then take off. When he slid back into town, he wouldn't call but let her run into him on the street, a jolt to the heart.

He was in a reeling-in phase, she guessed, the nearness of his body pulling at her like the moon pulls the sea. He'd called and said there were snow geese on the lake tonight, and would she like to go out and watch the eclipse? He was right about the geese, of course. Wyatt was always right about these things. He knew tides and weather, where salmon were running, how to catch king crabs. No matter how long Diane lived here at the edge of Prince William Sound, she knew she would always be an Outsider. That's what drew her to him from the first: his intimate knowledge of this place.

The road they'd taken to Eyak was her favorite. Farther out from town, the highway balanced on a knife edge between the Chugach Mountains and the ocean, running between black spruce and across salmon rivers before ending suddenly, deep in the wilderness. Driving the long highway only to arrive nowhere didn't trouble her. She believed the road was its own reward, and drove it as often as she could.

They were the only ones watching the eclipse at Eyak that night. She listened to the geese honking to each other, the neighborly sounds of creatures bedding down. But when the moon faded all the way into shadow, the geese ceased to call. A shiver passed through her, but not of fear. She stood next to Wyatt, waiting for something to happen. It was a night of mysteries: the eclipse, the silent geese. Surely tonight, he could reach for her hand, and mean it; he could pull her close and not let go.

That was back when she still thought he loved her, but wasn't brave enough to say so; before she figured out she'd been fooled. Back when she believed she could never know such secrets as when snow geese were passing by, except through him.

