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Brown Condor

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The Windigo

A Screenplay

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Film & Television,
Loyola Marymount University of Los Angeles, California

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Fine Arts

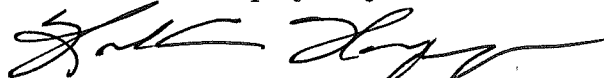
By


Amanda Prentiss

This feature length screenplay written by
Amanda Prentiss

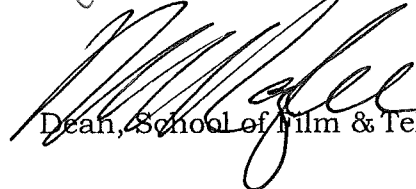
under the guidance of a faculty committee
from the School of Film & Television at
Loyola Marymount University, and approved
by the members of the committee, has been
presented to and accepted by the Graduate
School in partial fulfillment of the thesis
requirements for the degree of Master of
Fine Arts in Screenwriting.

Advanced Screenplay Project Committee:


Committee Chair: SCWR 690


Committee Member: SCWR 691


Director of Graduate Screenwriting


Dean, School of Film & Television

Date 5/9/2019

THE WINDIGO

by

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OVER BLACK:

KEME (V.O.)
Among the forest's many creatures,
there's only one whom all living
things fear ...

FADE IN:

EXT. CANADIAN WILDERNESS - NIGHT (1638)

Winter ravages the mountainous landscape as howling winds carry a blizzard of epic proportions, encasing the world in flurries of white.

KEME (V.O.)
... When winter is at its peak and
the land refuses to sustain life,
many find themselves in the great
struggle for survival ...

Barely visible through the arctic assault, a ramshackle --

FUR-TRAPPING CABIN

-- sits at the edge of a small forest clearing, its moss roof barely peeking through the snow drifts.

A thin trail of smoke spirals from the chimney, quickly dissipating into the swirling deluge.

INT. FUR-TRAPPING CABIN - NIGHT

Three miserable fur-trappers - OLD, SHIFTY, and GAUNT - huddle around a measly fire.

Old adds a single chair leg onto the pitiful flames, desperately prodding it to catch.

The cabin around them lies decimated - food tins scraped bare and the splinters of furniture all that remain.

KEME (V.O.)
... Once the food is gone, and all
seems hopeless, a great evil sees
its chance to enter the world ...

Shifty glances at his companions; neither pays him any attention, each lost in their own quiet suffering.

He covertly eases his knife from his belt, managing to remain unnoticed by both Old and Gaunt.

Shifty seizes his opportunity - moving with lightning-fast speed as he drives his blade deep into Gaunt's back.

Gaunt screams, frantically twisting to reach the knife.

Shifty frees it, stabbing Gaunt again and again.

Silence.

Gaunt sprawls dead across the floor, blood trickling from his wounds and pooling around him.

Old averts his gaze from the gruesome sight.

Shifty rips Gaunt's clothes away, tossing them onto the fire where they crackle, filling the cabin with blazing light.

KEME (V.O.)

... It plays on its victim's
suffering, filling them with a
hunger that defies nature ...

Shifty hacks an arm from its socket and greedily sinks his teeth into Gaunt's raw flesh.

Blood seeps from the corners of his mouth as he feeds.

Old resignedly redirects his attention to the walls, where the fire's shadows clearly outline the scene behind him.

He freezes, unable to comprehend what he's seeing:

Shifty's shadow contorts - limbs twisting at unnatural angles as he writhes, shrieking in pain.

Old can't tear his eyes away.

KEME (V.O.)

... Once it finds a willing vessel,
it completely consumes them, and
from then on, there's no stopping
the demon ...

The SHADOW grows taller and leaner - its back arching as its arms stretch to monstrous proportions and a pair of gruesome antlers sprout from its head.

The Shadow WAILS - low, melancholy, and full of anguish.

Distinctly human.

Old cowers in a darkened corner, defenseless and with nowhere to run, as the Shadow stalks toward him.

He squints up at the pair of dull yellow eyes, devoid of life, boring down on him.

KEME (V.O.)

... Its insatiable thirst for flesh
forces it to hunt and destroy
anything it comes across, without
conscience or reason.

A three-pronged claw reaches for him.

Old screeches as the claws scrape across his cheek, slicing through bone and tissue as if both were butter.

He falls backward, blood spurting from his mangled face.

The Shadow WAILS again and lunges for Old, teeth bared.

INT. MISSION ST. JOSEPH - GREAT HALL - NIGHT

KEME (30s, half-French, half-Algonquin, with the build of a warrior) bites into a duck leg, its juices dripping down his chin as he grins at his audience:

A dozen Jesuit MONKS grouped around the cavernous hall's roaring fireplace, engrossed by Keme's tale.

SUPER: KÉBEC (QUEBEC)

SUPER: 1638

All the Monks match in their somber priestly attire, with the exception of a single novice wearing a lighter shade:

LAURENS (late teens, curious and exuberant as a puppy) leans forward, a whittling knife and half-finished wooden rabbit toy dangling from his hands.

LAURENS

What is it?

KEME

The Evil That Devours.

Laurens blinks in wonder.

The Monk next to him, DENIS (50s, a miserable and self-important hypochondriac) scoffs.

DENIS
What a load of rubbish.

KEME
(feigning aghast)
It is the truth.

Denis shakes his head at Keme's perceived ignorance, refocusing on Laurens, who seems convinced.

DENIS
Listen here - these tales are
nothing more than superstition.

KEME
The same might be said of your god.

DENIS
You blasphemous half-breed --

KEME
(evenly)
That your stories are written down
does not make them any more real.

Denis blusters, too offended to answer, as Keme smirks with pleasure at his lack of response.

Laurens glances between them, uncomfortable with the tension.

LAURENS
Have any men seen this ... demon?

Keme grins, ready to oblige Laurens's imagination.

KEME
Few have survived to tell of it.

COUGH.

Keme's smile fades and turns to find ABBOT FIRMIN (60s, the ailing remnant of a once-sturdy man) standing in the doorway.

Firmin takes a tottering step toward the Monks, where Keme jumps to assist him.

KEME (CONT'D)
You should be asleep.

FIRMIN
As should you all.

The Monks silently take their cue, except for Laurens.

LAURENS

Keme was telling us about The Evil
That Devours!

Firmin recoils at Laurens's words, but quickly collects himself - his eyes darting to Keme in disapproval.

KEME

(apologetically)
A story for another time.

Laurens deflates as Keme directs Firmin from the room.

INT. ABBOT'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

The simple room contains few belongings beyond a half-dozen unopened chests and newly-constructed pine furniture.

FIRMIN (O.S.)

You shouldn't tell them such
things.

KEME (O.S.)

There's no harm in it.

A personal prayer altar along one wall serves as the room's sole embellishment. Candles cast shadows over its shrine portraits - a host of saints and icons of the faith.

A small crucifix sits regulated to a corner, giving precedence to the altar's main adornment:

An oversized, jewel-crusted statue of the Archangel Michael:

- Michael's wings flourish behind him, mid-flight, as he brandishes the Sword of Salvation;
- under his feet, spewing fire, struggles the mighty Dragon of Lucifer.

A knife - carved from a single elk antler - rests prominently at the statue's base.

FIRMIN (O.S.)

Every tale has its root in truth.

KEME (O.S.)

(harshly)
Is there one you wish to share?

Keme directs Firmin to bed, patient with his slow movements.

Firmin clutches Keme's hand as he tucks him in.

FIRMIN

The past is best left forgotten.

(beat)

I would not have you leave me, *ni-gwisis*.

KEME

Someone must guide them.

Firmin reluctantly nods his agreement.

FIRMIN

The Feast of St. Joseph is a vital opportunity to share our goodwill with the tribe.

(beat)

Make sure the invitation is properly extended.

KEME

I do not think Denis a good choice for such a task.

FIRMIN

Brother Denis is the senior priest under me. That honor - and responsibility - must go to him.

KEME

And if he offends them?

FIRMIN

See to it he doesn't.

(drifting off)

I pray they welcome your return ...

Keme opens his mouth with a ready retort, but Firmin's already fast asleep.

Keme gazes down at the sleeping man's withered face, gently kissing him on the forehead.

INT. SLEEPING CHAMBER - NIGHT

Laurens shifts onto his back, unable to sleep. While he's regulated to a thin floor mat, Denis peacefully snores next to him, occupying the bed.

Laurens examines their cell-like room in boredom - empty, except for the bed and two packed bundles by the door.

He throws his head back in frustration and closes his eyes.

Denis's deafening rumbles reverberate off the log walls.

Laurens's eyes snap back open. He glances over at the smallest sliver of a window - pitch black outside.

Laurens sighs, dragging himself off his mat. He grabs the smaller of the two bundles, silently inching the door open.

INT. GREAT HALL - NIGHT

Keme stares into the quickly fading flames, eyes vacant and mind clearly elsewhere.

A HOWL echoes into the room, jerking Keme from his reverie.

He cocks his head, listening carefully as his hand instinctively moves for the knife at his belt.

More HOWLS erupt into a chorus - a pack of wolves.

Keme relaxes, returning his attention to the fireplace, unaware of the hand behind him reaching for his shoulder.

It touches him.

Keme whirls around in panic.

Laurens involuntarily jumps at Keme's reaction.

LAURENS

I didn't mean ...

Keme gruffly motions for Laurens to join him.

KEME

We have a long journey ahead of us
to reach the village.

Laurens reaches into his bundle, enthusiastically showing off its contents - carved wood toys of various animals.

LAURENS

I made them for the children.

KEME

Your gifts will be appreciated.

Laurens beams at Keme's encouragement. He digs into his bag, retrieving his carving knife and the unfinished rabbit.

Keme holds out his hand and Laurens eagerly passes the rabbit over to him for inspection.

KEME (CONT'D)
Mishàbòz, the Great Hare.

Keme examines the woodwork closely - even incomplete, its skill is evident.

LAURENS
 Who is he? Another demon?

KEME
 A guardian spirit - protector of warriors and guide to travelers.

Keme relinquishes the rabbit to Laurens, who quickly sets it and the knife down, far more interested in Keme's words.

LAURENS
 Will he travel with us?

KEME
 (bemused)
 They are but fables. Useful for teaching, but not of this world.

Laurens can't mask his disappointment.

KEME (CONT'D)
 In the wild, the best protection is to go unnoticed.

LAURENS
 But surely God will watch over us.

KEME
 What god?
 (beat)
 No, we are on our own.

Keme rises to his feet, stretching as he retreats.

LAURENS
 Where are you going?

KEME
 (over his shoulder)
 To sleep. You should do the same.

Laurens watches Keme disappear from view before turning back to the fire, now little more than dying embers.

INT. MISSION ST. JOSEPH - CHAPEL - NIGHT

Prayer candles flicker, their faint light the barest of reprieves from the night's darkness.

Keme hovers at the sanctuary steps, fixated on the crucifix.

It's a graphic depiction of the passion - Jesus hangs from his nailed limbs, with wounds that seem to actively bleed as his face contorts in agony.

Keme breaks his gaze to the altar and its contents:

- a gilded goblet and plate for the Host;
- an ornate Latin Bible;
- and an Algonquin Wampum sash, its black and white beads embroidered in a ceremonial pattern.

Keme hesitantly reaches out, running his fingers along the Wampum with surprising tenderness.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. ALGONQUIN VILLAGE - DAY (7 MONTHS EARLIER)

The Algonquin village sits at the base of a low hill - birchbark wigwams fan out around a central gathering square, all enclosed by a wall of staked Aspen shoots.

The ground lays thick with bright fall leaves. They crunch underfoot as the ALGONQUINS busily prepare for winter.

Keme stands - loaded down with packed bags - in front of a wigwam. His mother, NUTTAH (50s, hardened by experience she wears like armor) faces him, arms crossed.

KEME

(subtitled; in Algonquin)
I gave my word to help them.

NUTTAH

(subtitled; in Algonquin)
Words are meaningless to white men.

KEME

*No more meaningless than the ones
spoken here.*

Nuttah sighs, retrieving a beaded medicine pouch from around her neck and holding it out to Keme.

NUTTAH

Carry the ancestors' protection.

Keme makes no moves toward the necklace.

NUTTAH (CONT'D)

(encouragingly)

With faith, the ordinary becomes extraordinary.

KEME

Then it will be of no use to me.

Nuttah cringes.

NUTTAH

A foot in two worlds can never merge, but only split further.

KEME

Yet a forked road offers many possibilities.

NUTTAH

As long as one doesn't stay at the crossroads.

(beat)

You must choose your path.

Keme pulls Nuttah to his chest as she fights to blink back the tears from her eyes.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. MISSION ST. JOSEPH - CHAPEL - DAY

Keme's breath catches in his throat. He exhales slowly, fighting to keep his emotions in check.

He withdraws from the Wampum, returning to the crucifix.

The first glint of sunlight crests the window behind it - almost appearing to radiate from the cross itself.

Keme glances between the crucifix and Wampum, despondent at the silent mystery hidden within each of them.

EXT. RIVER VALLEY - DAY

The sun rises in brilliant ribbons of color - reds and oranges flame across the sky.

Its light spills over the forested wilderness, bringing with it the first signs of spring.

Birds chirp their joy as icicles drip from the trees into water puddles on the ground.

A wide river bends through the valley, separating the soaring mountain ranges that rise on either side.

The newly-erected Mission St. Joseph stands on the edge of a meadow bluff overlooking the river's shimmering expanse.

EXT. MISSION ST. JOSEPH - DAY

Thickly-hewn log walls, topped by viewing platforms, surround the mission. Within the enclosure:

- a courtyard fronted a main building that contains the living and work quarters;
- and a freshly-planted vegetable garden to the right of it, hugging the entire length of one wall.

To the left stands the chapel. Roughly constructed wooden crosses dot its already well-populated graveyard.

Over by the --

FRONT GATES

-- the Monks fan out behind Firmin as he ceremonially signs the cross over Denis and Laurens.

Keme idles by the gates, uninterested in the proceedings.

FIRMIN

(to Denis)

We mean to make the Algonquin our brethren. Show them they have no reason to fear our arrival. The Feast of St. Joseph will be a celebration of peace between us.

DENIS

(unenthused)

As you wish, Abbot.

FIRMIN

(to Laurens)

Assist your Brother in his tasks. Assume Christ's humility and prove yourself worthy of your final vows.

LAURENS
 (fervent)
 Yes, Abbot.

Firmin motions the Monks forward to circle Denis and Laurens.

Firmin side-eyes Keme, who remains unmoved.

FIRMIN
 (praying)
 God Almighty, protect your servants
 as they journey into the
 wilderness, and grace their efforts
 with fruitfulness as they make our
 first contact with the inhabitants
 of this land. Let this mark the
 start of friendly relations and a
 means to welcome the Algonquin into
 the fold of your Holy Church.
 Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

MONKS
 Amen.

The Monks make brief farewells to Denis and Laurens before scattering to their daily tasks.

Denis sullenly picks up his bundle, shoving it at Laurens.

Laurens blinks in surprise, resignedly throwing it over his shoulder along with his own bag.

They approach the gates - Denis with the solemnity of a funeral procession, and Laurens bursting with excitement.

Firmin pulls Keme aside, revealing the elk antler knife from within the fold of his robe.

He presents it to Keme, who views it blankly.

KEME
 I've no need for your protections.

FIRMIN
 I would be reassured--

KEME
 It is many years too late for you
 to worry over me.

Keme turns to leave. Firmin grabs his arm, but Keme brusquely keeps his back to him.

FIRMIN
Come back to me, *ni-gwìsis*.

KEME
(avoiding eye contact)
As you say, it is in God's hands.

Firmin grimaces.

FIRMIN
(voice low)
Give my greetings to your mother.

Keme marches through the gates without a backward glance.

Firmin's shoulders slump, but he makes no move to stop Keme.

KEME
(to Laurens and Denis)
Come, we have much ground to cover
before nightfall.

Laurens doesn't need to be told twice, leaving Denis to woefully trudge behind them.

He can't help but gaze longingly back at the mission gates, only for them to slam shut in his face.

EXT. ALGONQUIN TRAIL - DAY

The spring sun shines down over nature's unspoiled majesty.

Black and yellow CAPE MAY WARBLERS flutter in the canopy overhead, their songs echoing across the forest.

Laurens welcomes every new sight with equal wonder, barely paying attention to their steps as Keme leads them down a well-worn hunting trail.

Denis huffs from the rear, emitting loud sighs at regular intervals. His hunched shoulders and downcast face blind him to the beauty around them.

The trail crests a --

HILL

-- where Keme and Laurens pause for Denis to catch up.

Laurens drinks in the view below:

- a wide valley, spotted with patches of fertile plains;

- and a thin river winding from a far-off lake, its calm waters mirroring the sky above.

Laurens unabashedly gapes.

DENIS (O.S.)

No need to be waiting on me, I'm right behind you.

Denis ushers Keme and Laurens forward without even the slightest scan of the panorama.

Laurens notices a barren ridge-line of soaring peaks jutting out from one side of the valley - a striking contrast to the otherwise gentle slopes.

LAURENS

What's that way?

KEME

Ishpà - the mountain pass.

Laurens studies the trail leading down into the valley, looking back to inspect their previous steps.

LAURENS

It seems a more direct route.

DENIS

I've no intention to go up there!

KEME

The route is quicker, yes, but the air is thin and the terrain harsh. No one goes that way unless they have no other choice.

Keme begins the descent into the valley.

Laurens hovers, disinclined, as he scrutinizes the desolate mountains overhead until Denis pushes past him.

DENIS

Keep moving, boy. The sooner we get there, the sooner we return home.

Laurens offers a final glimpse at the imposing summit before rushing to catch up with Keme.

EXT. FOREST - SHADOW'S POV - DAY

Dense treetops block the sunlight from reaching the forest floor, emanating gloom across the foliage.

Ominous silence hangs heavy on the air.

CRUNCH.

A twig snaps underfoot.

Its soft noise seems thunderous in the suffocating quiet.

The Shadow glides through the underbrush, intoxicatingly phantasmic in its swift movements through the trees.

Bugs and worms scurry to avoid its approaching steps.

The Shadow pauses.

SNIFF.

It whirls around, catching a scent.

The Shadow lifts its head and WAILS - a cry of rage and pain.

INT. MISSION ST. JOSEPH - ABBOT'S CHAMBERS - DAY

The altar candles waver, as if the WAIL's echo threatens to snuff them out.

Firmin kneels before the statue of Michael - elk antler knife returned to its position at the base.

He stares, unblinking, as his lips move in silent prayer.

Firmin crosses himself and shuffles to his washbasin, where he splashes his face with water.

He examines his face in a hammered tin mirror, blankly watching the water drip from it onto his robe.

Firmin reaches for his collar with shaking hands.

He opens his robe - a jagged scar comprised of three claw marks extends across his chest.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

The sun sinks into the horizon as the watercolors of sunset spread across a cloudless blue sky.

A RABBIT hops across a small clearing, directly in front of the trio as they emerge from the trees.

Denis hangs back, disdainfully regarding the creature.

Keme jokingly motions to Laurens.

KEME

Mishàbòz.

Laurens ogles at the Rabbit innocently munching on grass.

Keme sneaks up on the unsuspecting Rabbit, snatching it and snapping its neck in one swift motion.

LAURENS

(indignant)

But he might've been our guide!

KEME

Tonight, he is our dinner.

(beat)

We camp here.

Denis plops to the ground in relief.

DENIS

Laurens, see to my pack.

Laurens drops his bundles and pulls a sleeping mat from Denis's bag, dutifully rolling it out for him.

Keme prepares a fire with effortless efficiency.

Denis scoots close to the growing flames, removing his mud-crusting shoes and flexing his toes.

Keme turns his attention toward prepping the rabbit.

Laurens glances between the two men, one occupied and the other content to remain by the fire.

LAURENS

I think I'll have a look around.

KEME

The night falls quickly.

LAURENS

I won't be gone long.

DENIS

Oh, let him go. There won't be a moment's peace otherwise.

Keme shrugs at Laurens, who dashes off into the trees.

KEME (O.S.)

Stay on the path!

EXT. ALGONQUIN TRAIL - DAY

Laurens tramps through the woods, stopping at anything and everything that catches his eye:

- bryoria lichen hanging in hairlike wisps from tree branches;
- the flowery leaves of the wolf willow surrounding their four-pointed yellow blooms;
- and a DARKLING BEETLE crawling up a tree, its rough brown armor mimicking the bark.

Laurens grins with childlike joy.

RUSTLE.

He looks down - a RED-BELLIED SNAKE, its scales deep bronze with a bright orange belly, slithers past him.

Laurens marvels at its unique coloring.

The Snake disappears into the foliage.

Laurens hesitates, but his curiosity is too great to resist, and he follows after it.

The snake leads him deeper into the --

FOREST

-- and off the trail.

Laurens pauses.

He removes his rosary from his belt and ties it to a tree branch as a marker before continuing his pursuit.

Laurens doesn't watch where he's going, eyes peeled on the Snake as he tails it.

It's a winding chase - over and under fallen trees - as Laurens struggles to keep up.

The Snake slithers into its hole, leaving Laurens at a loss.

He examines his surroundings for the first time:

- trees grow close together, their branches meshing into a single, continuous growth;

- the light quickly fades, already filling the air with the purple of twilight;
- and sounds of night creatures rise as they awake from their daytime slumber.

Laurens stumbles backward, unsure of the direction to take.

SCREECH.

An EASTERN SCREECH-OWL swoops above him.

The noise terrifies Laurens, who crashes through the trees with aimless panic.

LAURENS

Keme! Brother Denis!

(beat)

Can anyone hear me?

Silence.

Laurens trips over a fallen branch, landing on his face.

He winces and gingerly reaches for his cheek, where a small gash trickles blood. Laurens rubs the thick liquid between his fingers, torn between shock and pain.

He pushes himself up onto his hands and knees.

And freezes.

On the ground in front of him ...

A paw-print.

But no ordinary paw-print:

- similar in shape to a wolf, with distinct palm and toe pads;
- but spanning nearly half a foot;
- with deep punctures in front of each toe, indicating massive claws, three in total.

Laurens presses his bloodied hand into the center of the print, unable to reconcile its enormous size.

GROWL.

Laurens's head snaps up.

In front of him - barely visible through the trees - Laurens sees a pair of yellow EYES watching him.

GROWL.

Laurens scrambles to his feet, slowly backing away as he keeps his gaze fixed on the Eyes.

CRUNCH.

The Eyes move closer.

Laurens stumbles backwards into a bush.

CRUNCH.

And closer still.

SNIFF.

The Eyes pause their advance.

SNARL.

And dash away.

Laurens trembles, unable to move.

CRASH.

Loud movements rise through the trees - something approaches.

Laurens fearfully turns his head toward the sound, nearly fainting in relief when Keme appears.

Keme, knife drawn, cautiously scans their surroundings.

KEME

You were to stay on the path.

Keme grabs Laurens by the scruff, quickly examining his cut before roughly releasing him.

Keme tosses Laurens's rosary on the ground in front of him.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

The waxing moon illuminates the clearing, causing the shadows of the forest around it to seem all the more menacing.

Laurens, ashamed, avoids eye contact as Keme applies a poultice to his wound.

KEME

The village healer can look at it --

DENIS

God is the greatest healer. This
mark is penance for your frivolity.

Keme glares at Denis, who merrily chomps on a rabbit rump.

The remainder of the Rabbit - mostly bones and sinew - rests
spiked over the fire.

Keme turns back to Laurens with a sigh, pressing a pad of
moss over the mixture to seal it to his cheek.

LAURENS

(sheepishly)

Thank you.

Keme gruffly nods his acknowledgement.

KEME

You should be more careful.

Laurens morosely curls up on his sleeping mat, arms hugging
his legs to his chest.

Keme heads for the tree-line, meticulously selecting a fallen
tree branch, and using it to draw a circle around the camp.

His movements attract Laurens's attention and he sits up for
a better look.

Keme plants an upright twig along the line at each of the
four compass points.

He pauses, sensing Laurens's eyes upon him.

KEME (CONT'D)

For protection.

LAURENS

How does it work?

Keme finishes his circle around the camp and returns to his
mat across from Laurens.

KEME

The boundary discourages any evils
from crossing - as long as we all
remain inside.

Laurens inspects the circle with new appreciation.

DENIS (O.S.)
 Don't put any stock in that
 devilish nonsense. I've got the
 best protection there is.

Denis rummages in his rucksack and retrieves an overly
 decorative crucifix, ridiculously out of place.

Denis plants it into the ground by his head.

DENIS (CONT'D)
 Nothing can touch me now.

Keme purses his lips in distaste.

KEME
 Tell me, priest - what makes your
 God any better?

DENIS
 That he is real! Only through him
 is there life and salvation.

KEME
 Do you mean to tell the Algonquin
 that their ancestors and rituals
 are nothing but lies?

LAURENS
 (attempting to diffuse the
 situation)
 They're simply misguided; they
 haven't heard the truth.

DENIS
 And they will burn in hell if they
 don't repent.
 (to Laurens)
 But God reserves special reward for
 those who increase his flock.

Keme shakes his head in bitter amusement.

KEME
 If there were only one truth, would
 not all men eventually find
 themselves in agreement?

LAURENS
 God has placed himself in every
 man's heart.

Denis nods his encouragement to Laurens.

DENIS

And if they do not hear him, it's
because they've already given
themselves over to the Devil.

Laurens shifts, not entirely comfortable with Denis's
emphatic conclusion.

KEME

You should have a better argument
ready when you meet the elders.

Keme lays down and pulls his blanket over him. He closes his
eyes, ending the conversation.

DENIS

(intent on getting the
last word)
God's judgment is on all mankind,
whether they recognize him or not.

Denis crosses himself and joins Keme in sleep. The placement
of the crucifix above him evokes a headstone over a grave.

Laurens reluctantly lowers himself onto his mat, staring up
at the stars - the white band of the Milky Way stark against
the sky, its glowing orbs twinkling with mysterious power.

Laurens's eyes waver, slowly blinking shut.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

SOMETHING stalks through the darkened forest, intently
sniffing out its prey.

It reaches a tree line, peering through its branches at the --

FOREST CLEARING

-- where Keme, Laurens, and Denis all sleep around the dying
fire, smoke rising from the crisped Rabbit.

SNIFF.

It takes in their scents.

GROWL.

And creeps forward.

Laurens's eyes snap open.

He doesn't move, terror immobilizing him.

CRUNCH.

Something's moving.

Laurens hears wheezing breaths.

It's very close.

Laurens slowly turns his head, trying to catch a glimpse of whatever is out there.

The clouds of a nighttime overcast mute the moon's rays, impeding Laurens's vision.

It's too dark for him to make out the details, but he sees large figure just beyond the boundary circle.

Laurens inhales sharply - he recognizes those same Eyes from his venture in the woods.

The Eyes inch toward the dirt-drawn line.

SNIFF.

They reach the boundary.

Laurens holds his breath, frozen in fear.

The faint moonlight gives off just enough light for Laurens to identify the creature as a giant GRIZZLY BEAR.

Laurens glances at Keme and Denis - both sound asleep.

Laurens returns his attention to the Grizzly, only to find it within a foot of him.

It sniffs around the boundary.

LAURENS
(whispering)
Keme.

Keme stirs, rolling onto his side, but doesn't wake up.

Laurens's eyes dart back to the Grizzly - they openly stare each other down.

Laurens trembles.

The Grizzly lowers its gaze, scrutinizing the protective circle's boundary line.

Laurens squeezes his eyes shut, as if he could wish it away.

He slowly brings his hand to his chest, feeling for his rosary. He finds it and clutches it in his fist.

LAURENS (CONT'D)
 (under his breath)
 From the evil one, protect me. At
 the hour of my death, call me. Into
 your presence lead me ...

The Grizzly encroaches the boundary line near the fire, where logs sizzle in the lingering flames, emitting sparks.

A stray spark pops out, landing on the Grizzly's nose.

SNARL.

The Grizzly dashes back into the forest.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - CAMPSITE - DAY

Keme kneels next to the boundary circle, observing the Grizzly's paw prints just outside its border.

Laurens hovers over him, nervously anticipating any signs of movement in the surrounding trees.

Denis ignores them in his struggle pack his belongings.

KEME
 It must've followed our scent.

LAURENS
 The prints yesterday were bigger.

Keme glances up at Laurens in annoyance.

KEME
 None is bigger than *Makwa*.

Laurens deflates, knowing better than to press the issue.

Keme abandons his examination to gathers his belongings.

Denis gives up on his paltry attempts, shoving his overflowing bag aside.

DENIS
 Laurens, see to my things.

Laurens dutifully, if not a bit begrudgingly, obeys.

Denis sits back, satisfied to watch Laurens work.

DENIS (CONT'D)

The Lord honored your prayers to
him. His protections held fast.

LAURENS

Or perhaps it was Keme's boundary
line that saved us.

Denis glares at Laurens who innocently shrugs.

EXT. ALGONQUIN TRAIL - DAY

The forest sits in eerie, stifling silence.

Keme keeps his eyes peeled. His brow furrows in concern as he
takes in the unusual absence of noise.

Laurens marches along behind him, Denis taking up the rear.

Laurens's steps betray his own worries as he compulsively
checks over his shoulder.

A SILVERY BLUE BUTTERFLY flutters past him.

Laurens's eyes follow it, transfixed.

They turn a bend, and Keme abruptly stops, causing Laurens to
bump straight into his back.

Keme squats down, squinting at the ground.

Loose beads sit scattered along the trail.

Keme motions for Laurens and Denis to remain in place as he
follows the fallen beads.

They lead off the trail, disappearing into the forest in a
frenzy evidenced by the ravaged underbrush.

A dark streak along the leaves of bush catches Keme's eye.

He rubs his fingers along the leaves.

Blood.

Keme's head snaps up, hand instantly moving to his knife as
he peers into the trees.

Silence.

Keme circles on a confused Laurens and Denis.

KEME
(voice low)
Stay close and keep quiet.

Laurens nods fearfully. Denis looks ready to throw a fit, but he, too, does as he's told.

Keme motions them off the trail into the --

FOREST

-- in a laborious trek through the dense growth along a fresh and frantically-made path.

Keme leads them with a hunter's practiced patience, alert and poised for an altercation.

Laurens and Denis toil behind him, unsure what's happening.

Keme pushes aside a low hanging tree bough, unprepared for the sight that greets him:

Sitting against a tree, a dead Algonquin WARRIOR:

- chest and abdomen shredded to ribbons;
- entrails spilling out in a pulpy mess;
- and sheer terror etched across his face.

The Warrior's spear rests discarded a few feet away, snapped in half and its stone head covered in a thick, black sludge.

Even in death, the Warrior's open hand still reaches for it.

EXT. GREAT LAKE - DAY

The afternoon sun glints off the lake, its crisp blue matched only by the cloudless sky, as far as the eye can see.

Keme stands waist deep in the water, his face smeared black with mud in a gesture of mourning.

He gently washes the Warrior's corpse as it floats before him - innards returned and wounds sewn shut.

Denis and Laurens sit along the --

SHORE

-- watching the somber process with apprehension.

Laurens holds the freshly-cleaned spear in his hands, piecing the broken halves back together.

Keme drags the Warrior back toward them, where a pile of birchbark strips sit waiting.

Keme presses the Warrior's knees to his chest, maneuvering him into the fetal position and binding him with the bark.

DENIS

He ought to be baptized.

KEME

His spirit will return to the earth
in the custom of his people.

DENIS

(under his breath)
And from thence, descend to hell.

Keme doesn't hear him, but Laurens does and shoots Denis an incredulous look.

Denis huffs, crossing himself as he stands, and retreats to the tree-line.

DENIS (CONT'D)

Come, Laurens, we will pray for
this sinner's soul. Perhaps God
will take pity on him.

Denis waits for Laurens to join him, but he remains seated. Denis scowls, making a show of getting down onto his knees.

Laurens hesitantly approaches Keme.

LAURENS

Is there anything I can do?

Keme dolefully observes the corpse.

KEME

He would've had a feast for his
family to celebrate. Then he would
be buried with his belongings.

(beat)
Warriors deserve better than this.

Laurens hands Keme the spear, which he places atop the Warrior's chest.

Keme removes the spearhead, tucking it into his belt.

Laurens eyes him in confusion.

KEME (CONT'D)

So his family can identify him.

Laurens forlornly gazes at the broken spear - its scant presentation seems lacking.

Laurens retreats to his bundle, where he pulls out his carved rabbit, now artfully finished.

Keme crosses the Warrior's arms, pulling his shoulders in and tucking the head, to better wrap him.

Laurens comes up from behind and kneels next to Keme, who doesn't bother to look up from his task.

Laurens thrusts the rabbit in front of Keme.

Keme nods, accepting it appreciatively and placing it between the Warrior's hands.

KEME (CONT'D)

He will guide him along the Pathway
of the Dead.

LAURENS

The Pathway of the Dead?

Keme points up at the sky - nothing but blue and sunshine.

KEME

The stars descend and form a bridge
to the Land of the Ancestors. That
is where he will find peace.

LAURENS

Will you walk across them one day?

Keme avoids eye contact, focusing on preparing the Warrior.

KEME

(bitterly)

That journey is reserved for those
who believe.

Laurens notes the sadness in Keme's voice, but is at a loss as to how to console him.

Keme ties off the wrappings and props the bound Warrior into a sitting position.

He breaks a large branch off a nearby tree to dig the grave.

Denis, making a show of prayerful piety, glares at the close proximity of Keme's chosen spot.

Laurens grabs a branch of his own and joins in the digging, not without considerable difficulty.

Denis drops his pious act and sits back on his heels, watching them - under no feelings of obligation to help.

DENIS

We should return to the mission.

KEME

This man's family deserves to know of his fate.

DENIS

That is not our responsibility!

KEME

No, but reaching the village is. We continue forward on our task.

DENIS

Whatever's out there could easily get us!

KEME

We are two days to the mission and half a day to the village. It is safer to go on.

DENIS

As the Abbot's representative, I demand we go back.

Keme pauses his work to stare Denis down.

KEME

Go then. I will not stop you.

DENIS

Not by myself!

KEME

You know your choices.

DENIS

Laurens, you will accompany me back to the mission.

Laurens freezes, struggling to find the best response.

LAURENS

I think we ought to keep going ... fulfill our obligation.

DENIS

(livid)

The Abbot will hear of this!

KEME

(weighing Denis's words)

Only if you make it back.

Keme smiles mischievously at an unamused Denis before resuming his digging.

Laurens glances between them, uncertain who will prevail.

Denis doesn't appreciate his gaze.

DENIS

Keep working, boy. We've got a lot of ground to cover.

Keme motions Laurens out of the hole. He picks up the Warrior and places him - sitting upright - within it.

Laurens helps Keme fill the hole back up with sand.

LAURENS

Who did this? An enemy tribe?

KEME

A man would not rip apart a corpse.

LAURENS

(pressing)

An animal, then?

KEME

One who snaps a spear in half?
That's no animal I've ever seen.

LAURENS

(with concern)

Then what?

KEME

(an admission)

I don't know.

(beat)

The Elders may have more insight.

Keme stops Laurens when the hole is nearly level with the ground, smoothing the final layer of earth before crisscrossing branches and twigs over the grave.

DENIS

You might at least mark it with a cross.

KEME

(ignoring Dennis)
Come, we should reach the village before nightfall.

Keme grabs his deerskin pack, quickly walking away.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY (OVER 20 YEARS EARLIER)

YOUNG KEME (pre-pubescent and scrawny) stalks through the underbrush with disciplined precision older than his years.

His full-sized hunting bow dwarfs him.

Young Keme follows his French fur-trapper FATHER as they weave between the trees.

The foliage thins.

Young Keme peers through the bushes into a --

MEADOW

-- where a DOE lazily grazes.

Father waves Young Keme forward and helps him notch his bow.

Young Keme takes a steadying breath and pulls back the arrow, however it promptly flops away from the bow limb.

Young Keme peeks up at his Father in embarrassment.

It's Firmin.

Younger - strong and formidable - but unmistakably him.

Firmin smiles reassuringly down at Young Keme, adeptly positioning him to reset his stance.

GROWL.

Keme releases the arrow at the sound - too quickly.

The arrow flies wide, missing the Doe completely.

Firmin and Young Keme turn around to investigate the noise.

Ten feet away, a BOREAL WOLF crouches, ready to pounce.

Firmin pulls Young Keme close against him, simultaneously pulling out his hunting knife - that familiar elk antler weapon - and brandishing it toward the Wolf.

FIRMIN
(voice low)
Stare it in the eye.

Young Keme fearfully does as he's told.

The Wolf WHINES.

FIRMIN (CONT'D)
Don't look away.

Young Keme and Firmin maintain eye contact with the Wolf, neither man nor beast moving a muscle.

The Wolf SNARLS and dashes off into the woods.

Young Keme leans against his father in relief.

Firmin kneels down, grabbing Young Keme by the scruff and bringing them eye to eye, to impress upon him the importance of this lesson.

FIRMIN (CONT'D)
Why did he run?

YOUNG KEME
(shaken)
I don't know.

FIRMIN
We were not afraid. We saw it, yet
stood our ground.
(beat)
Once you know a thing, you know how
to fight it.

YOUNG KEME
But what if you don't know it?

FIRMIN
Then you must learn. The unknown is
never so frightening once you've
seen its face.

Firmin picks up the bow and returns it to Young Keme.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. ALGONQUIN TRAIL - DAY

Shadows loom as the sun dips lower in the sky, readying itself for a dazzling sunset.

The trail widens and the forest gives way to grassy knolls.

Keme marches into view, Laurens and Denis nowhere to be seen.

He turns back, calling out:

KEME

Come, we are nearly there.

Laurens and Denis trudge forward, visibly exhausted.

DENIS

It would be nice to stop for a bit.

KEME

You can rest once we arrive.

Keme presses up a small hill, Laurens and Denis slowly plodding after him.

They reach the --

HILL CREST

-- and all three look down at the --

ALGONQUIN VILLAGE

-- nestled below.

Something's wrong ...

Very, very wrong.

Eerie silence - the kind only brought by death - pervades the air, and there's not a living soul to be seen.

The village sits not just abandoned, but utterly obliterated:

- wigwams savagely torn apart;
- utensils, tools, and personal belongings scattered;
- and dozens of ALGONQUIN CORPSES horrifically mutilated.

It's a tableau of horror, clearly visible from the --

HILL CREST

-- where Keme stares down at the village in shock.

Laurens and Denis freeze, neither sure what to do.

Laurens reaches forward to touch Keme's shoulder, but before he can, Keme breaks into a dead sprint into the --

ALGONQUIN VILLAGE

-- Laurens and Denis nervously hurrying behind him.

Keme dashes through the carnage, searching among the dead.

He pays particular attention to the female victims, turning over their bodies and scanning their faces.

One body.

Another.

And yet another.

All wear nearly identical expressions - eyes wide in terror, mouths twisted in pain.

Long gashes crisscross their bodies, with ravaged entrails and huge chunks torn from their flesh.

Keme's desperation increases with each body.

He drops to his knees in despair.

KEME

Djódjó! Djódjó!?

(subtitled; in Algonquin)

Mother, do you hear me?

Laurens and Denis pick their way through the slaughter.

Denis keeps his head high, ignoring their surroundings.

Laurens glances at the ground in fear and apprehension - among the corpses, countless more limbs and body parts viciously ripped apart and strewn around.

LAURENS

We ought to bury them.

Denis nods solemnly, crossing himself.

DENIS

First we'll attend to their souls.

Keme whirls on Denis with open rage. He breathes heavily, struggling to hold himself back from physical confrontation.

RUSTLE.

Faint sounds of scratching waft from one of the few wigwams that remain standing.

The men freeze, their attention focused on the noise.

RUSTLE.

Keme slinks toward the doorway, swiftly pulling his knife from his belt as he moves with artful silence.

Keme yanks aside the deerskin flap, peering into the --

WIGWAM

-- where he finds himself face-to-face with a RACCOON scavenging among the upended interior.

Keme sighs, quickly sheathing his weapon.

The Raccoon blinks innocently up at Keme before scuttling through a jagged tear in the far birchbark wall.

Keme follows the Raccoon's hasty retreat when an object on the ground catches his eye:

A wolf-skin cloak.

Keme lunges for it, examining it closely.

He runs his fingers over the intricate beadwork embroidery around the clasp.

He scans it for blood - relieved upon finding none.

Keme raises the cloak to his nose and sniffs it.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. WIGWAM - DAY (OVER 20 YEARS EARLIER)

Young Keme sits on the dirt floor as he nestles his face into the cloak, rubbing his cheek against its soft fur.

The cloak wraps around Nuttah (now 30s, softer in both appearance and attitude) as she stokes the central fire, manning thick slices of meat curing over its flames.

Young Keme watches her, mesmerized.

Nuttah offers Young Keme a warm smile, pulling him in for a quick hug before returning to her task.

The deerskin door whips open - a flurry of white snow whirls into the room as a bundled FIGURE looms in the doorway.

The Figure collapses on its face into the wigwam, passed out.

Nuttah rushes toward it, kneeling as she turns the body over.

It's Firmin, covered in blood from gashes across his chest - three deep wounds, their blood frozen stiff into Firmin's thick winter garments.

NUTTAH
(subtitled; in Algonquin)
Get the healer! Go now!

Keme doesn't move - transfixed by the gore.

Nuttah meticulously attempts to peel Firmin's clothing away from his wounds, but it only causes the blood to flow anew.

NUTTAH (CONT'D)
*Stay with me, my love. You'll be
alright. Just keep breathing.*
(to Keme)
Keme, go! Bring the Elders, too!

Keme nods catatonically, dashing past her into the storm.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. WIGWAM - DAY

Keme clutches the cloak and edges toward the slit in the wall to examine it - hurried and uneven, but unquestionably made by human hands.

Keme peers through the opening; no evidence of violence, but he notices a series of barefoot footprints all leading in the same direction away from the village.

Keme considers them closely.

He throws the cloak around his shoulders before heading back out the wigwam's front into the --

ALGONQUIN VILLAGE

-- where he finds Denis systematically sprinkling water over the corpses and body parts in a makeshift baptism.

DENIS

(praying)

Make holy this water which you have created, so all who are baptized in it may be washed clean of sin and born again as your children.

Laurens unenthusiastically assists him, holding a shallow bowl of holy water.

LAURENS

(reluctantly)

Hear us, Lord.

Denis moves on to his next victim.

DENIS

Make this water holy --

KEME

Have you no respect!?

DENIS

(evenly)

We did this during the plagues - our Lord is very accepting of the sanctified dead.

Keme snatches the bowl from Laurens, smashing it.

Denis ignores Keme, inspecting his work with satisfaction.

DENIS (CONT'D)

Their spirits will welcome me at St. Peter's Gate.

KEME

We're leaving.

LAURENS

Shouldn't we at least bury them?

(beat)

For their dignity.

Keme roughly grabs Laurens by the collar, unleashing his anger on him.

KEME

Whatever did this could come back.
It's not safe to remain.

Keme releases his grip on Laurens, tossing him backwards.

KEME (CONT'D)

We must go.

Denis accepts Keme's words with pleasure.

DENIS

Yes, the Abbot will be keen to hear
our report.

KEME

We must find the survivors.

DENIS

(blustering)

We've done as much as we can. I
demand we return to the mission.

KEME

There are people out there, my
mother among them!

DENIS

No one could survive this! Look
around you, man!

KEME

(adamant)

Some have got away.

Denis looks to Laurens to back him up.

LAURENS

If anyone's out there, they'll be
in need of help.

Denis opens his mouth to protest when ...

A faint WAIL echoes in the distance.

Keme freezes, trying to place the sound.

KEME

We go now.

Laurens stays close to Keme as Denis reluctantly follows,
exiting in the direction of the footprints, opposite the way
they entered the village.

EXT. MISSION ST. JOSEPH - WALLS - DAY

The sun sets in a foreboding, blood-red haze.

The WAIL rises - reverberating through the valley.

Firmin stands on the edge of the walls' viewing platform, staring into the wilderness.

He clutches the elk antler knife in his hand, his eyes scanning the trees for any signs of life.

WAIL.

Still distant, but growing closer.

Firmin closes his eyes, taking in the sound - he's not just listening, he understands it.

He moves toward the edge of the platform, as if he might throw himself off it.

Firmin's eyes snap open in panic.

EXT. RIVERSIDE CAMP - NIGHT

The meager crescent moon casts the dimmest of lights.

Keme, Laurens, and Denis huddle together within a freshly-drawn boundary circle as they somberly eat their cold dinner, intentionally going without a fire.

Denis shivers as he glares at Keme, determined to make his displeasure known.

Laurens leans forward, hunching his shoulders as if sharing some deep secret.

LAURENS

(hesitant)

Could it be The Evil that Devours?

KEME

(too quickly)

It's just a story.

DENIS

Your damned heathens and their rituals - those people likely called up the Devil himself.

Keme makes no attempt to mask the disdain in his eyes.

LAURENS

The paw print I saw --

KEME

The Windigo isn't real, and no man's ever seen it, understand?!

LAURENS

(awed)

The Windigo.

Keme sighs in frustration. He looks off into the trees, his mind churning and his furrowed brow betraying his worry.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. WIGWAM - NIGHT (OVER 20 YEARS EARLIER)

Young Keme blinks through the smoky darkness of the wigwam to where Firmin lays on a bed of furs.

The HEALER kneels over Firmin, applying a poultice to his wounds as Nuttah holds him down by the shoulders.

Firmin raves, feverish and nearly incoherent.

FIRMIN

(subtitled; in Algonquin)

I saw it ... It called to me ...

Young Keme's gaze turns to the ELDERS congregated along the far wall, whispering indiscernibly amongst themselves.

They fearfully glance between Firmin and his elk antler knife - covered in oozing black gunk - they pass around.

A FEMALE ELDER notices Young Keme's attention on them. She grants him what she hopes to be a reassuring smile.

It isn't.

Young Keme sinks further into the corner, pulling his fur pelt blankets up around him.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. RIVERSIDE CAMP - NIGHT

Keme blinks, forcing his attention back to the group, only to find Laurens's eyes pleading with him.

DENIS

The Lord is our sword and shield.
Were we on consecrated ground --

Keme can't take it anymore. He abruptly stands, cutting Denis's ramblings short.

KEME

I will be back soon.

Laurens gawks - both terrified and impressed - as Keme disappears into the darkness.

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

Keme hovers by the elevated riverbank, staring out over the shimmering waters.

The night is quiet.

Suffocatingly so.

Unbearable.

Keme sinks down into a squat, placing his head between his hands. He breathes heavily, trying to make sense of it all.

He focuses in on the river's gentle lapping.

The current moves in intricate ripples, almost too beautiful to be by chance, in the sandy shoreline.

Keme closes his eyes, taking in its beating rhythm.

He absentmindedly chants to its drum-like sounds - a memorized recitation, slow and deliberate, as he struggles to remember the words.

KEME

(subtitled; in Algonquin)
*The Great Spirit is in all things,
the air we breathe. Great Spirit is
our Father, but Earth is our
Mother. That which we put into the
ground, she returns to us --*

CRUNCH.

Keme pauses, pinpointing the sound to the trees at his back.

He remains looking forward, his hand secretively inching toward his knife as the sound of footsteps grows closer.

Directly behind him.

Keme draws his knife, whirling around ready to strike.

He stops short.

It's Laurens - wide-eyed and frozen in fear.

Keme quickly returns his knife to its sheath.

KEME (CONT'D)

(fuming)

You were to stay put.

LAURENS

I'm sorry, I just --

KEME

I could've killed you. Something else could've killed you. Have you no sense?

LAURENS

I'm safer with you. The circle only works if we're all in it - isn't that what you said?

Keme winces guiltily. He opens his mouth to respond, but thinks better of it, instead facing out toward the water.

Laurens joins Keme's side, drinking in the night.

LAURENS (CONT'D)

How could a place with so much beauty contain such evil?

KEME

It is beauty the evil seeks.

(beat)

The stories say it is our job to stand at the crossroads of the eternal battle.

LAURENS

Where do you stand?

KEME

A lack of faith does not negate the recognition of right and wrong.

Laurens doesn't quite seem convinced.

KEME (CONT'D)

We will find whoever remains, and
bring them back to the mission.
That purpose we can agree on.

Laurens glumly nods.

Keme pats his shoulder in consolation.

KEME (CONT'D)

And now it's time for sleep.

Laurens follows behind Keme toward the trees.

EXT. RIVERSIDE CAMP - NIGHT

Denis hunkers down, wrapping his sleeping mat tight around
him for additional warmth.

RUSTLE.

A movement in the trees.

DENIS

About time. I don't appreciate you
both wandering off like that.

RUSTLE.

Denis sits up in annoyance.

DENIS (CONT'D)

Enough of that, come out.

SHADOW'S POV:

An unseen Shadow watches through the foliage as Denis squints
into the darkness.

DENIS (CONT'D)

This isn't funny, boy. Get out here
now and go to bed!

A breeze picks up, carrying Denis's scent toward the Shadow.

SNIFF.

The Shadow approaches the campsite.

END POV.

Denis blinks, laboring to see in the feeble light.

He gasps.

Yellow eyes - different than the Grizzly's, but Denis wouldn't know it - return his gaze.

These unblinking eyes, dull and devoid of life, seems to pierce straight into his soul.

Denis freezes, unable to move as the Shadow creeps closer.

The Shadow emerges from the tree line - it's too dark to make anything out except its monstrous size.

The Shadow steps forward, across the boundary circle without any difficulty or resistance.

Denis scrambles for his bag, retrieving his crucifix and waving it wildly in front of him.

DENIS (CONT'D)

The cross of Christ be with me;
everywhere and before my enemies,
which flee before me --

SNARL.

The Shadow lunges for Denis.

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

A horrific shriek punctures the night.

Keme and Laurens exchange an apprehensive glance.

It's coming from the camp.

Keme dashes toward the sound, Laurens close behind him.

EXT. RIVERSIDE CAMP - NIGHT

Keme's the first to reach the camp.

Muffled SNARLS mixed with screams of pain stop him short.

Laurens reaches his side, and together they inch forward.

Keme's foot connects with something, nearly tripping him:

- Denis's forearm, roughly bitten off, still clutching his crucifix.

Keme looks to Laurens, who pales at the sight.

SNARL.

Keme and Laurens glance over to the far side of the camp:

The Shadow hunches over Denis's body, insatiably ripping into him and eating his organs, as Denis shrieks in agony.

Laurens gasps.

The Shadow freezes, sensing their presence. It turns toward them with its dead, yellow stare.

Denis moans his death-rattle.

SNARL.

The Shadow stands on its back legs - nearly nine feet tall.

The limited light masks the details of its features, but the Shadow's outline proves terrifying enough, with:

- oversized arms nearly reaching the ground, ending in three-pronged claws larger than a man's head;
- and a head topped with a cluster of antlers.

The WINDIGO.

Keme and Laurens can't move - transfixed by the sight.

The Windigo WAILS - that tragic, familiar cry.

It lunges for them.

Keme and Laurens do what anyone would do - they run.

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

Keme dashes along the riverbank, his typically measured movements set aside in favor of speed.

Laurens nearly trips over his own feet as he struggles to keep pace - propelled forward by sheer adrenaline.

The Windigo WAILS behind them, crashing through the trees.

Keme pauses for a split-second, weighing their options, as the sounds of their pursuer grow closer.

They can't outrun the Windigo, and Keme knows it.

That leaves only one option ...

Keme yanks Laurens into the --

RIVER

-- slowing their pace along its slippery bottom.

KEME
(voice low)
We have to mask our scent.

The current pulls at their clothes, threatening to sweep them off their feet.

LAURENS
It's too strong.

KEME
We've no choice.

Keme wades deeper, until the water reaches mid-chest.

Laurens hesitates.

WAIL.

Laurens plunges in after Keme.

The river rages against them - swirling with the promise of a watery grave - but they keep their course, pushing through the murky waves.

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

The Windigo emerges from the tree line, SNARLING in rage.

It sniffs, following Keme and Laurens's path.

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

Keme and Laurens barely manage to reach the --

OPPOSITE RIVERBANK

-- the weight of their soaked clothes pulling them down, when Keme spots their salvation:

- a small overhang, concealed by vines, jutting out from the shore.

Keme motions for Laurens to stay low.

They crawl through the shallows, quietly as possible.

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

The Windigo reaches the edge of the water, where it loses their scent.

SNARL.

The Windigo swings around in a fury, searching for any sign of Keme and Laurens.

EXT. OPPOSITE RIVERBANK - NIGHT

Keme pushes himself against the sandy riverbed, sliding through the vines.

Laurens follows behind him into the --

RIVERBED OVERHANG

-- where they crouch against the mud, shivering from the wet cold and gasping to control their heavy breathing.

There's barely enough room for the two of them, but they cram together as best they can.

Through the vines' leaves, they see the Windigo pacing, unwilling to give up on its prey.

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

The Windigo throws its head back in frustration and WAILS - a long, anguished cry that seems as though it will never end.

EXT. RIVERBED OVERHANG - NIGHT

The WAIL spills into the overhang, magnifying within the enclosed space.

Keme leans forward, unable to comprehend what he's hearing.

He pales.

The Windigo's WAILING transforms in his head - a seductive voice, soft and cooing, that speaks directly to him.

WINDIGO (V.O.)
 (subtitled; in Algonquin)
*Come, my son. See my face and
 become one with me ...*

Keme shakes his head in an attempt to dislodge the sound, but the Windigo's voice only grows louder amid the WAIL.

WINDIGO (V.O.)
*You're trapped between two worlds,
 rejecting both in choosing neither.
 I can show you where you belong.*

Laurens shifts, edging toward the vines. He also hears words within the WAIL - specific to himself.

WINDIGO (V.O.)
*Pale one, you seek to spread the
 word, but feel insignificant. Once
 you and I become one, I can give
 you the power you desire.*

Laurens reaches for the vines, as if in a trance.

Keme notices at the last moment.

He grabs Laurens, jerking him back against the overhang wall.

Keme trembles, fighting the Windigo's enticements as he also holds Laurens back from giving in.

WINDIGO (V.O.)
*Outsider, half-breed. They will
 never recognize your value. I can
 make none dare spurn you ...*

Laurens violently resists Keme's grasp on him.

WINDIGO (V.O.)
*Join me and we will eat
 together. I am the answer to
 all you desire.*

WINDIGO (V.O.)
*Join me and we will eat
 together. I am the answer to
 all you desire.*

Laurens thrashes, his movements threatening to betray their hiding place.

His eyes roll back as the Windigo's words wash over him.

WINDIGO (V.O.)
*You could change everything. Show
 the world how it ought to live, as
 one. Come to me, pale one, and
 fulfill all you were meant to be.*

Keme clamps his hands over Laurens's ears.

Laurens convulses, slowly regaining control of himself.

WINDIGO (V.O.)
*Show them how wrong they've been
 about you - prove to them the
 respect you deserve. Your proper
 place has always been with me ...*

Keme's hands slide off Laurens's ears.

Laurens realizes what's happening.

He shoves his palms on either side of Keme's head, blocking out the sound for him.

Laurens's muffling hands allow Keme to maintain awareness.

Keme's hands return to Laurens's ears.

They exchange looks of silent panic, each protecting the other, as the Windigo's WAIL echoes around them.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. WIGWAM - DAY (20 YEARS EARLIER)

The winter wind whips against the wigwam, rattling its interwoven branch walls.

Young Keme snuggles down against a pile of blankets.

He peers past the fire's weak flames to where Firmin lays on his back, bandaged and eyes vacant.

The wind rises, creating a piercing whistle that wafts through the room.

Firmin sits up with a start and glances around in terror.

His eyes eventually land on Young Keme.

FIRMIN
 (feverish)
Ni-gwìsis, do you hear it?

Young Keme doesn't know how to respond.

FIRMIN (CONT'D)
 (more insistent)
 Do you hear it?

YOUNG KEME

It was the wind.

Firmin coughs - his breath haggard as his agitation rises.

Young Keme watches in horror as Firmin wipes bloody spittle from his mouth with the edge of a blanket.

Firmin moans, placing his head between his hands. He rocks back and forth, his willpower breaking.

FIRMIN

It is out there. It calls to me ...

The door flap jerks open.

Firmin recoils in fear.

It's Nuttah, carrying in a fresh bundle of firewood.

She drops the logs at the sight of Firmin and rushes to his side, cradling him in her arms.

He presses against her, vulnerable and scared.

NUTTAH

(subtitled; in Algonquin)
Shh, you are safe, my love.

FIRMIN

(subtitled; in Algonquin)
It will find me. It won't stop.

Firmin openly weeps, unable to hide his agony.

Nuttah turns to Young Keme, unsure what explanation to give.

NUTTAH

(softly)
Go to sleep, my son. Your father is sick, that is all.

Young Keme dutifully lays down, but can't close his eyes.

Firmin's sobs echo around him.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. OPPOSITE BANK - DAY

The sun rises in all its usual radiance, spreading its warmth across the new day.

The overhang's vines rustle from within.

Keme emerges, pale and disheveled, clearly sleepless. He systematically scanning the surroundings.

Everything seems as it should.

Keme takes a deep breath, inhaling courage as well as air.

He sits along the bank, staring at the nature around him.

His glazed-over eyes wander, their uncertainty matching the thoughts flooding his mind.

His vision moves to the horizon, where the sun glints off the Ishpà mountains in the distance:

- snow covers only the highest peaks, the rest of the mountaintop comprised of barren rocks.

Something catches Keme's eye - the faintest hint of movement.

He squints, peering across the expanse:

- barely visible, it could almost be an illusion, a tail of smoke flutters up above the ridge-line.

A fire.

Keme's face dawns with realization.

KEME
(voice low)
Come, it's safe.

Laurens pushes through the vines, pitifully bedraggled.

Laurens lugs himself to Keme's side, leaning against a tree in overwhelming exhaustion and dejection.

LAURENS
It's all our fault.

Keme looks at Laurens in confusion.

LAURENS (CONT'D)
We're why Brother Denis is dead.

KEME
There's nothing we could've done.

LAURENS
If we'd remained in the circle, the Windigo couldn't have crossed it.

Keme guiltily avoids his gaze.

LAURENS (CONT'D)
 (pressing)
 If we had stayed with him, he
 would've been safe.

KEME
 The boundary is not real.

Laurens doesn't understand.

KEME (CONT'D)
 (struggling to explain)
 It is just a line, drawn in dirt.
 (beat)
 I made it up so you would not
 wander off in the night.

LAURENS
 But the bear!?

KEME
 The circle has no power. I don't
 know why *Makwa* fled.

Laurens reddens in a mixture of anger and shame.

LAURENS
 You tricked us!

KEME
 I meant no harm by it.

LAURENS
 You led us out here, knowing --

KEME
 I told you a story, only that. I
 did not know it was real.
 (unconvincingly)
 We still do not know.

LAURENS
 It spoke to us! What else could it
 be, if not the Windigo?

At a loss for a good response, Keme turns his back and
 marches down the riverbank.

KEME
 We must be on our way.

Laurens finds himself with no choice but to follow.

EXT. FOREST - WINDIGO'S POV - DAY

The Windigo rages through the woods.

It SNARLS, searching everywhere for signs of its prey.

With no avail.

The Windigo pauses, listening for any movement.

Silence.

It seems as if the whole world around it is dead.

The Windigo WAILS.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Keme and Laurens slink between trees, compromising speed in favor of stealth.

The WAIL bellows behind them.

Laurens turns to Keme in terror, but Keme merely shakes his head - they must keep moving.

They press forward, weaving through the foliage.

Laurens jumps, clasping a muffling hand over his mouth.

Keme glances over.

A salmon-colored RUBBER BOA slithers over Laurens's foot.

The underbrush behind Laurens rustles.

Keme's eyes widen as he reaches for his knife.

Small RODENTS of all kinds scurry past them.

Keme and Laurens exchange a look of panic.

EXT. ISHPÀ MOUNTAINS - DAY

The jagged rocks rise like a wall against the blue sky.

The Windigo's WAIL reverberates off the cliff face.

EXT. ISHPÀ MOUNTAINS - ASCENDING PATH - DAY

Keme and Laurens reach the base of the mountains where a small path, worn and treacherous, winds above them.

Only wide enough for one at a time, it's barely more than an indent in the stone to mark the climb up.

Laurens examines it with apprehension.

KEME

There's no other way.

Keme throws himself up the mountainside - crawling and clawing up the faded grooves.

Laurens takes a deep breath, steadying his nerves as he does his best to follow after him.

It's a perilous ascent, with no room for missteps.

They press upward, forcing themselves past the boundaries of human strength as they rise inch by inch.

The Windigo's WAIL escalates, enveloping them as if coming from all directions.

Keme peers over his shoulder - in the trees, a flock of PEREGRINE FALCONS flee into the sky, too close for comfort.

KEME (CONT'D)

We must keep moving!

WAIL.

Laurens squeezes his eyes shut, fighting to resist the call.

KEME (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You can't give in!

WAIL.

Laurens's face relaxes into peaceful surrender.

He loosens his grip and pushes his weight back.

He's going to throw himself off the cliff.

Keme grabs Laurens by the back of his collar, shoving him ahead of him.

Laurens opens his eyes, a mix of dread and gratitude.

LAURENS
You should leave me.

KEME
We will make it together.

LAURENS
But it wants me.

KEME
It wants us all.

Keme urges Laurens forward and they continue their ascent.

A bitter wind rails down the mountainside, its force threatening to yank them from the cliff face.

Keme and Laurens flatten themselves against the rocks, grappling to avoid the certain death of a fall.

EXT. FOREST - WINDIGO'S POV - DAY

The Windigo thrashes through the trees with rising wrath.

The wind murmurs through the leaves.

The Windigo freezes.

It slowly turns in the direction of the oncoming breeze.

SNIFF.

The Windigo dashes toward the mountains.

EXT. ISHPÀ MOUNTAINS - RIDGE-LINE - DAY

The sun descends, basking the world in a golden glow - almost otherworldly in contrast to the mountaintop's dull grey.

Keme and Laurens stumble onto the peak - clothes torn, smeared with dirt and blood from various gashes.

They collapse on the rocky ground, gasping for breath.

Laurens coughs, inhaling in rapid spurts until Keme claps him on the back, clearing his airway.

Laurens rolls onto his side, unable to go any further.

Keme pushes himself onto his hands and knees, desperately struggling - and failing - to stand.

He abruptly stops - suddenly conscious of the flint spike pressed hard against his back.

Keme slowly turns his face to find a small Algonquin BOY (8, caked with dirt, hair wild, and clothes torn) standing behind him, armed with a spear.

The Boy prods Keme.

BOY
(subtitled; in Algonquin)
Don't move.

Laurens glances over, too feeble to offer any help.

Keme raises a hand in a calming gesture. His voice cracks as he forces his bone-dry tongue to form the words.

KEME
(subtitled; in Algonquin)
We're here to help.

The Boy eyes Keme suspiciously.

He pokes him harder.

Keme winces, but makes no move to stop the Boy.

BOY
Stand up.

Keme futilely attempts to rise, crashing hard on his knees.

The Boy moves to stick Keme again, but Keme grabs the spear shaft before it can make contact.

The Boy yanks the spear from Keme's grasp, tightening his grip as he brandishes it in front of him.

BOY (CONT'D)
I said, stand.

Keme staggers to his feet.

BOY (CONT'D)
(motioning to Laurens)
Him, too.

Keme pulls Laurens up. They grab each other for support, fighting to stay upright.

The Boy waves them forward with his spear.

Keme and Laurens meekly follow his directions.

The Boy directs them along the ridge-line, herding them towards a soaring crag.

They reach the base.

Laurens slips, sprawling onto the ground face first. He nearly brings Keme down with him.

KEME
(to the Boy)
We must rest.

The Boy points toward a pile of boulders below the pinnacle.

BOY
You go, or you die.

Keme hauls Laurens back up, placing an arm around him.

They stumble toward the boulders, where they discover a --

CAVE ENTRANCE

-- its crevice opening barely large enough for a man to fit.

BOY
In there.

Keme pauses, disinclined to continue.

The Boy pokes him in the leg with the spear.

Keme grimaces, but lacks the strength to resist.

BOY (CONT'D)
Go inside.

Keme leans Laurens against an adjoining rock.

KEME
He wants us to go inside. I will go
first, you follow slowly.

Laurens nods weakly in response.

Keme approaches the crevice, unable to make anything out in the darkness. He reluctantly wriggles inside.

The Boy turns his spear on Laurens, who gets the hint.

INT. CAVE - DAY

Keme feels his way along the tight passage, stopping as it widens into a large cavern.

Laurens bumps into him from behind.

The Boy prods them further into the darkness.

At the far end of the cave, a low fire's dancing flames illuminate a collection of huddled shadows.

Keme blinks, his eyes struggling to adjust.

The shadows move - it's the Algonquin SURVIVORS.

They eye Keme and Laurens warily.

One of the Survivors stands in shock.

She rushes toward Keme, sobbing.

It's Nuttah - filthy and gaunt, but unharmed.

Keme pulls her tight against his chest as they embrace.

INT. CAVE - LATER

Lauren presses against the meager fire, unable to get warm.

Keme sits by his side, a comforting arm around Nuttah, as he takes stock of the situation.

The Survivors - comprised of only WOMEN and CHILDREN - exude silent defeat, their collective misery palpable.

Keme's face softens at the sight of the Boy - listlessly clutching the Warrior's spearhead as his MOTHER hugs him from behind, crying silent tears.

Keme looks away, unable to bear their grief.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. ALGONQUIN VILLAGE - DAY (20 YEARS EARLIER)

The sun sets over the wintry landscape - a pale, cold light quickly fading into the blues of twilight.

Young Keme peers out from the wigwam doorway, watching as Firmin - movements stiff, but mostly recovered - piles his belongings on a handheld travois sled.

He coolly ignores Nuttah as she hovers around him.

NUTTAH
(subtitled; in Algonquin)
It is dead. The elders saw to it.

FIRMIN
I can't stay.

NUTTAH
*Our life, you would throw it all
away like that?*

FIRMIN
This land is cursed.

NUTTAH
*You cannot run; you must stand and
fight for the life you want.*

FIRMIN
I need answers.

NUTTAH
*You've heard the stories, sought
every tale. What more do you need?*

FIRMIN
It's time I return home.

NUTTAH
*This is your home! With your wife
and son! You took me into your arms
with promises of a life together.*

FIRMIN
That was before --

NUTTAH
*There is evil everywhere; you
yourself have spoken of the pale
men in your land who --*

FIRMIN
I have met the Devil. If he exists,
so too must God.

NUTTAH
*Is God not here also? Must you go
back to France to find him?*

Firmin turns his back on Nuttah, returning to his work.

NUTTAH (CONT'D)

*Seek the healer, she can commune
with Gitchi Manitou.*

(desperate)

*I will do whatever you ask, just
stay. Stay with me.*

Nuttah watches helplessly as Firmin ignores her, tying down his belongings with thick deerskin straps.

NUTTAH (CONT'D)

(desperate)

*It is not good to start a journey
in darkness.*

FIRMIN

The darkness is nothing to fear
compared to what else exists.

Firmin lifts the travois arms over his shoulders, dragging the sled behind him.

Nuttah falls to her knees in anguish.

Young Keme watches - his mother weeping on the ground as his father walks away.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

An ELDERLY WOMAN passes around a loaf of bread - it appears to be the last of their food.

Everyone shares, taking the smallest portion possible.

They raise their crumbs in obedient ceremony.

ELDERLY WOMAN

(subtitled; in Algonquin)

*May there be beauty above me, below
me, all around me, and may the
world be filled with it.*

They somberly eat their meal in silence.

Laurens glances at the Boy seated next to him, spearhead cast aside as he inhales his minuscule crust.

Laurens looks down at the chunk in his own hand.

He wets his lips with his tongue, desperate to eat it, but something inside stops him.

He looks back at the Boy and offers over his portion.

The Boy's eyes widen and he turns to his Mother, who nods at Laurens in gratitude.

The Boy snatches the bread, eagerly wolfing it down.

Keme notices, but says nothing, slowly eating his own piece.

KEME
(to Nuttah)
What happened?

NUTTAH
(subtitled; in Algonquin)
The Windigo, it came in the night --

Keme pales at the name.

NUTTAH (CONT'D)
*We were not prepared. By the time
it was upon us, it was over.*

Keme notices Laurens, listening intently despite not understanding a word.

He gently taps Nuttah's shoulder, motioning toward Laurens.

KEME
(subtitled; in Algonquin)
He cannot understand.

Nuttah acquiesces, switching over without missing a beat.

NUTTAH
The warriors and Elders fought so
we could escape, but it was no use.
(beat)
We've waited, but none have come.

Keme stoically takes in the information. Nuttah notes her son's lack of reaction.

NUTTAH (CONT'D)
You've seen it?

KEME
It took one we were traveling with.

NUTTAH
The Windigo will come for us all.

Nuttah squeezes Keme's hand, but he doesn't notice as he stares numbly into the fire, trying to process it all.

EXT. ISHPÀ MOUNTAINS- CAVE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Twilight blankets the mountaintop in a sinister haze as steam rises from the rocks, dissipating into the night air.

Keme leans against the edge of the crevice, peering across the lifeless terrain - simultaneously peaceful and ominous.

Nuttah slinks out behind him, wrapping her arms around his waist and leaning her head against his shoulder.

Keme doesn't look over, keeping his eyes peeled for trouble.

KEME

(subtitled; in Algonquin)
It called for me to join it.

NUTTAH

(subtitled; in Algonquin)
*The Windigo is a wily spirit, as
are all messengers of Madji-manidò.*

KEME

It remains in my head.
(beat)
Father heard things in the wind.

NUTTAH

*Once it calls to you, you will
never stop hearing its voice.*

Nuttah grabs Keme's face between her hands, examining his features carefully.

NUTTAH (CONT'D)

*You have the strength of two
peoples within you. Draw from them
both for what you need.*

KEME

And what of choosing a path?

NUTTAH

Make your own trail.

Keme smiles appreciatively at Nuttah's wisdom.

Together they gaze out over rocky landscape - little more than outlines in the ebbing light.

KEME (V.O.)

How does one kill the Windigo?

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

The Survivors clump along the back of the cave, keeping close together for warmth as they sleep.

Nuttah sits across from Keme and Laurens, the hungry flames of the small fire fluttering between them.

NUTTAH

The Windigo waits in the darkness for a body to inhabit. Its spirit is eternal, even while dormant. It remembers its enemies, and studies their weaknesses ...

INT. MISSION ST. JOSEPH - ABBOT'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Firmin kneels in front of the statue of Michael and the Dragon, blankly staring up at their frozen conflict.

He clasps the elk antler knife in front of him.

NUTTAH (V.O.)

... It is bound by two things - endless hunger and awareness of its own anguish. It yearns for others to join it that it might no longer be alone ...

EXT. ISHPÀ MOUNTAINS - ASCENDING PATH - WINDIGO'S POV - NIGHT

The Windigo crashes through the trees, reaching the base of the mountain ridge.

It sniffs along the rocks, searching for Keme and Laurens's scent, following it straight to the upward path.

NUTTAH (V.O.)

... But the moment one gives into its plea, the Windigo cannot help but destroy in its drive to eat ...

SNAP.

The Windigo whirls around at the noise behind it.

It's the Grizzly, covertly attempting to guide its two CUBS into the safety of the forest.

The Grizzly and the Windigo eye each other.

GROWL.

The Grizzly raises onto its hind legs in a show of strength.

NUTTAH (V.O.)
 ... Even the most formidable of
 animals cannot stand against it,
 for since its spirit is eternal, it
 will not be defeated ...

The Grizzly ushers its Cubs into the underbrush, keeping wary eyes on the Windigo as it backs away.

The Windigo SNARLS - glancing between the mountain path and the trees where the Grizzly disappeared.

NUTTAH (V.O.)
 ... Any wound will heal, every blow
 meaningless. No death stroke will
 stop it in its hunt ...

The Windigo WAILS - torn between its choice of prey.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

The SNARLS, HOWLS, and GROWLS of a vicious battle ring off the walls of the cave, jerking the Survivors awake.

Children whimper, pressing close against their Mothers who collectively watch the crevice entrance in open distress.

A SHADOW appears, invoking cries of horror from the Women.

Keme rises from his fireside seat, pulling his knife from its sheath as he inches toward the opening.

He lunges forward, stopping at the last minute upon realizing it's the Boy.

Keme grabs the Boy by the scruff and yanks him into the cave.

KEME
 (subtitled; in Algonquin)
What were you doing?

BOY
 (subtitled; in Algonquin)
Keeping watch.

The Boy defiantly stares at Keme.

KEME
Did you see anything?

BOY
 (shaking his head)
The noises are from below.

Keme releases his grip on the Boy.

KEME
Stay inside for the night.

Keme returns to the fire.

KEME (CONT'D)
 (to Nuttah and Laurens)
 It is at the base of the mountain.

NUTTAH
 Another has crossed its path.

Nuttah interprets the SCREAMS of the raging struggle as they bounce off the cave walls.

NUTTAH (CONT'D)
 The great *Makwa* stands its ground well. But it cannot prevail.

KEME
 We must move.

NUTTAH
 In the dark it is too dangerous - the Windigo will pick us off one by one. Wait until it's light.

Keme defers to Nuttah's judgement. He sits back down next to Laurens, who remains silently aware.

Nuttah returns to her tale, waving her hands over the fire's flames. They magically come alive, illustrating her story.

NUTTAH (CONT'D)
 The Windigo's power lies in its spirit, contained in a heart of ice and stone ...

The outline of the Windigo rises in the flames, along with two HUMANS, futilely battling the Windigo with spears.

NUTTAH (CONT'D)
 ... That is its weakness, the only way to subdue it ...

One of the Humans stabs the Windigo in the leg, bringing it down, as the other drives his spear into the Windigo's chest.

NUTTAH (CONT'D)

... Once the heart is removed, its corpse must be burnt, and the ashes scattered on the wind to the four directions ...

The Humans reach into the Windigo's chest, pulling out the blob of heart as its body gives way to smoke.

NUTTAH (CONT'D)

... All the while, the heart can never touch the earth, or its body will repair itself ...

Nuttah brings her hands together, cupping them as if holding the Windigo's heart herself.

NUTTAH (CONT'D)

... The heart must then be buried on sacred ground, with ceremony for the Earth Mother to receive it ...

Nuttah's hands open, and the flames return to normal.

NUTTAH (CONT'D)

... Only then will the Windigo remain in the ground, powerless but ever-ready to rise again.

Laurens's forehead wrinkles in confusion.

LAURENS

Then it's not really dead?

NUTTAH

The evils of man will never let it be so. The Windigo can only be restrained, and its story passed down as warning.

A DEEP GROAN pierces the night - the Grizzly's death cry.

NUTTAH (CONT'D)

(sadly)
Makwa has fallen.

Nuttah bows her head in prayer.

KEME

We move for the mission at first light. It's our only chance.

Keme and Laurens exchange glances, both daunted by the risky prospect of their upcoming task.

EXT. ISHPÀ MOUNTAINS - RIDGE-LINE - DAY

The sun has barely begun to rise - its light cold and pale.

Laurens leads the Survivors along the narrow peaks, the fog of their breath rising above them.

It's slow going, and a joint effort to navigate the boulders and steep inclines - many just inches away from a sheer drop.

The Elderly Woman slips, nearly falling to her death.

Those around her jump into action, pulling her to safety.

Keme watches from the rear, where he continually scans the ridge-line behind them for any signs of movement.

EXT. ISHPÀ MOUNTAINS - CAVE ENTRANCE - WINDIGO'S POV - DAY

The Windigo scrambles up the rocks with surprising swiftness.

It whips its head back and forth, studying the ridge.

SNIFF.

The Windigo follows the scent to the crevice where it tears at the opening, too large to enter - SCREECHING in rage as its claws rip through the rock like butter.

EXT. ISHPÀ MOUNTAINS - SUMMIT - DAY

The death march continues as they reach the summit.

The Elderly Woman flounders, sitting down repeatedly, but the Survivors won't abandon her, patiently aiding her each time.

Nuttah places a steadying arm around the Elderly Woman.

NUTTAH
(subtitled; in Algonquin)
Come, Grandmother, a little longer.

ELDERLY WOMAN
(subtitled; in Algonquin)
You must leave me.

NUTTAH
No, we will reach safety together.

The Windigo's WAIL reaches them.

Too close for comfort.

ELDERLY WOMAN
 (resigned)
We won't make it.

WAIL.

Laurens hears the voice within the cry.

WINDIGO (V.O.)
 Come ... Join me ...

Laurens shakes it off, setting his eyes in front of him as he presses onward, forcing himself to keep moving.

Keme weaves his way through the Survivors, joining Laurens.

KEME
 We're too slow.

Laurens looks at the ragged group behind him.

LAURENS
 They can't go any faster.

KEME
 Then we must buy time.

LAURENS
 (realization dawning)
 You can't.

KEME
 Someone has to face it.

LAURENS
 They need you! I need you!

Keme places a comforting hand on Laurens's shoulder.

KEME
 Get them to the mission. Keep along
 the summit until the descent.

Laurens balks.

Keme grabs his neck, bringing their foreheads together.

KEME (CONT'D)
 Be their shepherd, as the Christ
 you serve.

The two men briefly embrace before Keme breaks away.

KEME (CONT'D)
 (subtitled; in Algonquin)
Follow him! He will lead the way.

Laurens mournfully watches as Keme makes his way to the rear.

Nuttah face pales at Keme's determined expression. She clutches his arm as he passes her.

NUTTAH
 (subtitled; in Algonquin)
You are going to your death.

KEME
 (subtitled; in Algonquin)
I am making my trail.

Nuttah reaches around her neck, removing her medicine pouch.

She earnestly offers it to Keme, who accepts - much to her relief - quickly putting the necklace under his shirt.

Nuttah pulls Keme into a hug, her body shaking as she attempts to control her emotions.

NUTTAH
 (reciting)
*Move in safety with all living
 things. Stand between the evil and
 the beauty, joining the host of the
 ancestors before us as their
 spirits watch over us ...*

Keme joins in.

NUTTAH / KEME
 (in unison)
*... And may the Holy One, called by
 a thousand names to speak and act
 through us, guide us in all we do.*

Nuttah struggles to let Keme go as he pulls away.

NUTTAH
Walk in beauty, my son.

Keme turns to leave when a small hand tugs at his sleeve - it's the Boy, who hands Keme his spear.

Keme tousles the Boy's hair, accepting the weapon. He watches as the Survivors continue along the summit.

At the front, Laurens reaches a --

CREST

-- where he waves to Keme before disappearing from view.

Keme shifts his attention to the path behind them, gravely heading back the way they came.

INT. CAVE - WINDIGO'S POV - DAY

The Windigo SNARLS at the remnants of the Survivor's camp.

It SNIFFS, trying to isolate the scents.

EXT. ISHPÀ MOUNTAINS - SUMMIT - DAY

Keme bounds over the rocks, moving with increased speed as he successfully gauges the terrain.

He arrives at a small flat patch, flanked on either side by sheer cliff drops.

He studies his surroundings, memorizing every detail.

This is the spot he will make his stand.

EXT. CAVE ENTRANCE - WINDIGO'S POV - DAY

The Windigo emerges from the cave, blinking as it readjusts to the harsh sunlight.

It GROWLS in frustration, dashing along the ridge-line.

EXT. ISHPÀ MOUNTAINS - DESCENDING PATH - DAY

Laurens reaches the edge of the summit.

He sees the vast river valley spread below them - the winding waterway and the Mission St. Joseph sitting proudly over it.

Laurens breathes a much-needed sigh of relief. He turns, pointing out the mission to the Survivors.

Nuttah steps forward, scanning the downward path.

LAURENS

We're nearly there.

NUTTAH

But we must keep moving.

They share a bittersweet smile.

Laurens and Nuttah help the Women and Children to the entrance of the steep descending path.

EXT. ISHPÀ MOUNTAINS - SUMMIT - DAY

Keme stands in his chosen place, making no attempt to hide.

He wields his knife in one hand, spear in the other.

He stares - unblinking - ahead of him.

Waiting.

He hears the Windigo before he sees it:

- the GRATING of claw against rock as it nears him;
- its HEAVY BREATH rising over the silent mountaintop.

And suddenly, it appears ...

Keme can't believe his eyes, finally seeing the Windigo clearly for the first time.

This legendary demon:

- stands upright at nearly 9-feet tall;
- its lower body resembles a wolf with large haunches and back paws;
- an exposed abdominal cavity underneath the ribbons of rotting flesh hanging over its organs and ribcage;
- and long, sinewy arms culminating in massive three-pronged claws that scrape the ground.

Its monstrous head, resembling the shape of a deer, houses:

- rows of razor-sharp, carnivorous fangs;
- glazed yellow eyes, dull and devoid of life;
- and its crown of antlers, their many-pointed tips sharp enough to easily skewer flesh.

The Windigo is nothing short of a zombified killing machine, and a sight that's beyond terrifying.

And yet, Keme stands his ground.

The Windigo stops upon seeing Keme.

It SNIFFS, thoughtfully considering his scent.

Keme doesn't move, taking in the Windigo's movements.

The two opponents size each other up.

The Windigo SCREECHES, lunging for him.

Keme stumbles backward, maintaining distance between them, thrusting his knife and spear to keep the monster at bay.

The Windigo stalks around Keme, seeking an advantage.

It WAILS.

WINDIGO (V.O.)
(subtitled; in Algonquin)
*You need not fight, little warrior.
Turn yourself over to me; let me
give you my power.*

The Windigo inches closer.

Keme waves his spear, pushing it away.

KEME
(subtitled; in Algonquin)
*Stay back, demon. You cannot have
me!*

The Windigo lunges for Keme, teeth bared.

Keme sidesteps it, but not quickly enough - its claws graze the side of his leg. He stumbles at the impact, but manages to stay on his feet.

The Windigo flips around, SNARLING.

Keme crouches, prepared to move in any direction.

The Windigo searches for an opening in Keme's defenses.

WINDIGO (V.O.)
*Your friends all left you ... Are
you that worthless to them?*

KEME
It was my choice to face you.

WINDIGO (V.O.)
*Then you are a fool - none can
stand against me.*

KEME

That doesn't mean I won't try.

Keme and the Windigo face off - Keme's skill as a warrior against the Windigo's vicious, demonic strength.

The Windigo advances - one continuous assault after another.

Keme's speed and agility are all that keep him alive.

Keme successfully fends off the Windigo, pushing it closer to the cliff's edge as he corners it.

Left with no other choice, the Windigo snatches the spear by its head, allowing it to stab into its paw.

The Windigo SNARLS in pain as it closes its fist over the blade and yanks it from Keme's grasp, flinging it aside.

Keme moves his knife into his dominant hand and waits for the Windigo to attack.

The Windigo doesn't disappoint - diving for Keme and pinning him to the ground.

Keme looks up at the Windigo's chest - there, within the gruesome cavity, sits its heart:

- a blackened mass of tissue;
- un-beating and rock-like in texture;
- and oozing black slime from its core.

Keme stabs the heart with all his strength.

The Windigo lurches backward, knife protruding.

It swipes with one claw, catching Keme brutally across the chest as the other claw clutches to free the knife.

Keme gasps - blood coursing from his chest - the force of the blow knocking the wind out of him and rendering him immobile.

The Windigo pulls the knife out with some difficulty - SCREECHING - and tosses it over the summit's edge.

The Windigo leans over Keme, its heart's viscous liquid dripping onto his open wounds.

The Windigo unhinges its jaw, preparing to feast, and lowers its mouth over Keme's chest.

And stops.

Through Keme's torn shirt, the Windigo sees the medicine pouch and its protective-design beaded embroidery.

The Windigo reels, careening backward in amusement.

WINDIGO (V.O.)
(laughing)
*Do not think your charms hold any
power over me ...*

It crawls back toward Keme, saliva trickling from its fangs in anticipation of its feast.

WINDIGO (V.O.)
*... for I know you, I have seen
your heart.*

The Windigo bats with its claw, severing the medicine pouch from Keme's neck and flinging it away.

Keme helplessly watches the pouch land a few feet away.

The Windigo crouches over him and spreads its teeth, desperate to take a bite.

Keme seizes the moment for a final, desperate act ...

He grabs the Windigo and rolls, holding their bodies together, all the way to the edge of the cliffs.

The Windigo struggles to elude Keme's grasp, but he holds the Windigo in a death grip it can't break.

They're going over the drop together.

As they roll off the summit, Keme lets go at the last moment, clinging to the rocks as the Windigo crashes through the air.

The stones cut into Keme's fingers, compromising his grip.

He can't hold on much longer.

Keme uses the last of his strength to clamber back to safety, pulling himself along on his belly, unable to rise.

His gaze turns toward the medicine pouch in a feeble attempt to draw strength from it.

Keme closes his eyes, willing himself to rise.

But he can't.

Keme barely manages to push himself onto his elbows when he collapses backwards and promptly loses consciousness.

EXT. RIVER VALLEY - DAY

Laurens reaches the end of the mountain path where a short drop, about chest-high, leads into the valley.

Laurens scoots to the edge and jumps, nearly losing his balance upon landing.

He quickly regains his footing and turns back to the Survivors behind him, assisting them.

Many of the Children leap down on their own, but it's more of an ordeal for some of the Elderly.

EXT. ISHPÀ MOUNTAINS - MOUNTAINSIDE LEDGE - DAY

The Windigo's body smashes against a rocky outcropping.

It's a hard hit, but the ledge manages to halt its fall.

The Windigo lays motionless, jaw nearly torn from its face and limbs splayed at awkwardly broken angles.

It appears to be dead.

If only that were possible.

Joints snap and tendons stretch as the Windigo's body contorts, fusing itself back together.

The Windigo writhes throughout the excruciating process, SCREECHING in agony.

It's the unearthly BELLOWS of rebirth - a demonic symphony of discord consuming the air around it.

Silence.

The repair is complete.

The Windigo GASPS for breath as it rises onto its hind legs, seemingly no worse for wear.

It glares up at the mountain summit, a good fifty feet above.

The Windigo SNARLS.

It SNIFFS the wind for direction and its eyes move down the summit - toward the path of Laurens and the Survivors.

The Windigo dashes along the mountainside after them.

EXT. RIVER VALLEY - DAY

Nuttah is the last to descend.

Laurens offers his hand - Nuttah smiles at him, but declines as she handles the ledge with impressive agility.

Nuttah glances across the valley.

Laurens follows her gaze to where the Mission St. Lawrence rises proudly from a hilltop.

LAURENS

It will keep us safe.

NUTTAH

We cannot hope to hide forever. The Windigo was created by men, and so by men it must be put down.

Nuttah gently squeezes Laurens's shoulder as she examines the motley Survivors trudging along the valley.

Laurens swallows his fear, dutifully following Nuttah to the front of the pack.

INT. ABBOT'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Firmin digs through his trunks, casting aside personal papers and religious artifacts with equal irreverence.

He pauses at a leather-bound journal, yellow with age, when another item catches his eye - a child's medicine pouch, worn and threadbare.

Firmin trembles at the sight.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. FOREST MEADOW - DAY (20 YEARS EARLIER)

Firmin pours water over a small campfire, kicking dirt over it with his foot to snuff out lingering embers.

He double-checks the knots and bindings securing his belongings to the travois sled.

CRUNCH.

A noise in the trees behind him.

Firmin struggles to keep calm despite rising panic.

His hand moves to his belt for his elk antler knife.
Firmin warily turns toward the sound where a bush rustles.
Firmin freezes in terror and anticipation.
Young Keme stumbles through, weighed down by a heavy pack.
Firmin exhales, a mixture of relief and fury.
He slaps Young Keme across the face, instantly regretting it.
Young Keme reels backward, stunned by the blow.

FIRMIN
What were you thinking?

Tears well up in Young Keme's eyes. He bites his lip in an effort to hold them back.

YOUNG KEME
(defiantly)
I want to come with you.

Firmin softens, holding his arms out for his son.

FIRMIN
You must return to your mother.

YOUNG KEME
Please don't leave me.

Firmin kneels down, bringing them face to face.

FIRMIN
I can't stay. But your mother needs you. You'll protect her, won't you?

Young Keme sullenly nods his head.

Firmin ruefully tousles Young Keme's hair.

YOUNG KEME
What happened ... in the forest?

Firmin breaks his gaze, considering his words carefully.

FIRMIN
A man has two options - to stand by
or step forward.
(beat)
Once he chooses one, it's hard to
ever do the other.

Firmin rises.

FIRMIN (CONT'D)

Go home.

Young Keme reaches for his neck, untying his medicine pouch.

He holds it out to Firmin.

YOUNG KEME

So you don't forget me.

Firmin winces, mechanically accepting the gift.

FIRMIN

(unconvincingly)

I will come back for you. We'll
hunt again together.

Young Keme swells at his words.

Firmin can't bear it any longer. He turns his back on his son, grabbing his travois.

Young Keme closes his eyes so he doesn't have to watch his father walk away.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. ISHPÀ MOUNTAINS - SUMMIT - DAY

Keme lays on his back, motionless and not breathing.

The claw marks puncture deep into his chest muscles, but the bleeding seems to have stopped.

He looks dead.

Keme's eyes snap open, but he still doesn't inhale or exhale.

He blinks at the sky above him.

The sun presides from its solitary position, not a single cloud to mask its view.

And then it changes.

The atmosphere darkens and the sun fades, leaving only shadow and gloom in its wake.

Its deep blue aura transforms into an array of vivid color as the sky seems to descend on top of him.

The stars emerge, slowly increasing in brilliance, until the full radiance of the Milky Way appears.

The twinkling orbs morph, forming a bridge - anchored at the summit and leading out into the vast unknown.

Keme rises to his feet and glides forward in a trance.

He extends a foot - about to step onto the starry platform - when he hears the Windigo's WAIL.

It's faint and distant, as if belonging to another world.

Keme hesitates, eyeing the bridge with longing.

Another WAIL, even further away.

Desire fills Keme's features as he yearns to take the path before him, yet something keeps him back.

KEME
(subtitled; in Algonquin)
I will not stand by.

The star-bridge disintegrates in front of him, showers of sparks falling to the earth.

His decision has been made, and his chance is now gone.

Keme collapses onto his hands and knees, unable to contain the tears streaming down his face.

WAIL.

The Windigo is still out there, calling to him.

EXT. ISHPÀ MOUNTAINS - DESCENDING PATH - DAY

The Windigo careens down the path, its quick movements leaving a cascade of tumbling rocks behind it.

The Windigo pauses, scaling a large boulder.

Its claws grate against the stone, gouging into it like clay.

The Windigo peers out over the valley below.

In the distance, it sees the small black dots of the Survivors hurrying across the plain toward the mission.

The Windigo throws its head back and WAILS.

EXT. PLAIN OUTSIDE THE MISSION ST. JOSEPH - DAY

Storm clouds gather on the horizon as the sun descends.

The mission gates swing open as Laurens, Nuttah, and the Survivors approach.

EXT. MISSION ST. JOSEPH - FRONT GATES - DAY

The Monks pour out to greet the Survivors - quickly halting at their disheveled appearance.

Firmin brings up the rear, searching the Survivors' faces until his gaze lands on Laurens and he beelines for him.

FIRMIN

What's happened? Where's Keme?

Laurens can't find the words to respond.

Nuttah steps forward, and Firmin freezes at the sight of her.

They stare at each other, neither sure what to say.

Nuttah finds her courage first.

NUTTAH

He turned back so we would have time to reach you.

Firmin takes in the fear written across the Survivor's faces.

FIRMIN

I heard its call.

NUTTAH

And it will follow shortly.

Firmin hesitantly places a comforting hand on Nuttah's arm.

They awkwardly embrace - tied together by their grief, but unable to mend the distance between them.

FIRMIN

(to the Survivors)

Come, we must get you all inside.
Brothers, gather blankets and bring food for our guests.

The Monks usher the Survivors forward, followed by Laurens.

Nuttah pulls away from Firmin's arms. He reaches once more for her, but Nuttah ignores his paltry attempt.

INT. GREAT HALL - NIGHT

The Survivors line the long tables, inhaling the food placed before them by the Monks.

The Elderly Woman sits covered in blankets by the fire as a Monk tends to her torn feet.

Laurens stands in the doorway, silently watching as he struggles to comprehend all that has happened.

He jumps in surprise as a hand lands on his shoulder.

Firmin smiles apologetically.

It's simultaneously too much, yet not enough.

LAURENS

(enraged)

You let us go out there, knowing
the Windigo was real.

FIRMIN

This is not the place ...

LAURENS

Everyone must know ...

(raising his voice)

The Windigo is real, and it's
coming for all of us!

The room falls silent and all eyes turn to Laurens in a shared look of resignation.

Laurens can't stand it. He whirls on Firmin - on the verge of attacking him.

Firmin lowers his head in surrender.

Laurens freezes.

A WAIL spills into the room.

EXT. MISSION ST. JOSEPH - COURTYARD - NIGHT

The courtyard is eerily silent and devoid of all life.

The night sits dark and heavy, rainclouds overhead blocking out the moon with the promise of an imminent storm.

A burst of lightning flashes through the sky, followed by the ominous crash of thunder.

The front gates creak.

They push inward against the heavy beams barring them shut, groaning under an unseen outside force.

SNARL.

The Windigo.

Clawing and ramming against the gates.

And yet the gates hold fast.

The Windigo WAILS again.

EXT. ISHPÀ MOUNTAINS - SUMMIT - NIGHT

Keme raises his eyes to the sky, full of certainty.

He pushes his hands and feet against the rocky earth, fighting for the will to stand.

But he can't get himself off his knees.

Keme lowers his face, laboring to catch his breath, when he notices his wounds - as if for the first time.

He examines the claw marks across his chest - the blood has clotted, leaving a thin gel over the jagged wounds.

Keme touches it, nearly fainting from the pain.

He painstakingly pushes one foot out, planting it ahead of his as he shifts his weight to his other knee.

It takes nearly all his strength to get him to his feet.

He totters - sheer determination all that keeps him upright.

Keme stumbles across the summit, first to the medicine pouch, where he knots the sliced cord and returns it to his neck, then to his discarded spear.

INT. ABBOT'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Firmin sits on his bed, a broken man, as Laurens rages in front of him.

LAURENS

It's your fault - Brother Denis,
Keme, they're dead because of you!

FIRMIN
I didn't know it had awoken.

LAURENS
You heard its call! You knew what
that meant.

Firmin looks down at his feet, unable to find a response.

LAURENS (CONT'D)
You sent us, despite what was out
there - you didn't even tell us
Keme was your son!

FIRMIN
I was trying to protect you.

LAURENS
You were protecting yourself!

A WAIL echoes into the room.

FIRMIN
It won't stop until it has us all.

LAURENS
Then we must face it! What is our
purpose, unless to stand at the
crossroads and fight?

FIRMIN
There's no hope for deliverance.

LAURENS
Except to fight!
(beat)
It will break through the walls and
slaughter all of us anyway!

Firmin's silent cowardice speaks for itself.

LAURENS (CONT'D)
Keme sacrificed himself for us.
(beat)
Don't let that be in vain.

Firmin's head sinks into his hands in shame.

KNOCK.

Laurens crosses to the door and opens it.

Nuttah hovers in the doorway, but doesn't enter. She glances
around the room, avoiding eye contact with Firmin.

NUTTAH

The gates won't hold much longer.

Laurens turns back to Firmin.

LAURENS

I may not stand a chance, but I'll
do the best I can to fight it.

Laurens pushes past Nuttah, who remains behind. She appraises
Firmin until he slowly lifts his face, contorted with grief.

FIRMIN

I shouldn't have come back.

NUTTAH

(subtitled; in Algonquin)
You should have never left.

Firmin nods reluctantly, recognizing the truth of her words.

NUTTAH (CONT'D)

Did you find what you were seeking?

FIRMIN

I found a truth and a purpose.
(beat)
But no answers.

NUTTAH

The answer was here the whole time.

Nuttah crosses to the bed and gingerly lowers herself next to
Firmin, keeping a distance between them.

NUTTAH (CONT'D)

Our son suffered without you.
(beat)
*When I heard you were back, I
thought you might come to us --*

FIRMIN

I couldn't face you.

NUTTAH

No, you run. You always run.

Nuttah stands.

NUTTAH (CONT'D)

*Laurens would give his life, but it
isn't enough. You must stand with
him - face your demon.*

Firmin opens his mouth to speak, but Nuttah leaves without giving him a chance.

Firmin gazes forlornly around him, his eyes falling on his shrine to the Archangel Michael. The candles around it flicker, breathing life into it.

Firmin slowly rises, approaching the statue.

He scrutinizes the details of the battle - the Dragon of Lucifer twisting under the angel's foot, eyeing his brandished sword with loathing.

Firmin's hand reaches forward. He doesn't bother to look down - he knows exactly what he's grasping for.

The elk antler knife.

Firmin's withered hand closes around the handle.

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

Rain falls in heavy sheets, drowning out all other noise except the booming thunder directly overhead.

Lightning shoots across the sky, blinding flashes that pierce through the nighttime gloom.

The Monks guard the walls above, armed with kitchen knives and other makeshift weapons.

Laurens stands in front of the gates, breathing through his nerves - armed with Algonquin weapons, a dagger and a spear.

Laurens nods at two Monks who move to open the gates.

They remove the heavy wooden beam securing its splintered remains and quickly pull them open the slightest crack.

Laurens steps forward when a figure appears next to him.

Firmin.

Laurens glances at him in surprise - Abbot's robes set aside in favor of a fur-trapper's deerskin garb.

The decades-old clothes fit him loosely, nearly hanging off his now feeble frame.

Firmin clutches the elk antler knife in his hand.

FIRMIN
(reciting)
The Son of Man will send out his
angels ...

FIRMIN / LAURENS
(in unison)
... and they will weed out of his
kingdom everything that causes sin
and all who do evil.

LAURENS
Matthew 13:41.

FIRMIN
You've learned your lessons well.

Firmin nods toward the Monks at the gates.

FIRMIN (CONT'D)
Close them up behind us, and don't
open them again unless, with God's
grace, we meet with success.

Firmin steps forward, his brave front masking inner terror.

EXT. PLAIN OUTSIDE THE MISSION ST. JOSEPH - NIGHT

The Windigo stalks the plain in front of the mission -
undeterred by the downpour.

It seethes with rage, determined to get inside.

A bolt of lightning bursts behind it, illuminating its frame.

The Windigo throws its head back and WAILS - a brutally
pained cry that seems like it will never end.

Silence.

It cocks its head.

Through the thunder and rain, a small sound catches its ear.

CREAK.

The Windigo whirls toward the gates, eyeing them hungrily,
right as Firmin and Laurens march out.

EXT. ISHPÀ MOUNTAINS - DESCENDING PATH - NIGHT

Keme forces his feet forward - faltering, then more assuredly, until he pushes himself into a full sprint.

He dashes down the path without concern for his safety as he expertly navigates the steep descent.

EXT. PLAIN OUTSIDE THE MISSION ST. JOSEPH - NIGHT

Firmin pales at the sight of the Windigo, visibly shaking as he fights the urge to flee.

Laurens dashes past him, intent on striking the first blow.

He barrels toward the Windigo at full speed, but it quickly sidesteps, backhanding Laurens and sending him flying.

Laurens crashes to the ground, his head slamming against a rock - knocked out cold.

This minor threat subdued, the Windigo turns his attentions to the more intriguing prey.

Firmin's eyes helplessly dart between Laurens's incapacitated form and the approaching Windigo.

It stops within ten feet of him, sinking down onto all four limbs - bringing it to eye level with Firmin.

Firmin doesn't move a muscle.

The Windigo opens its mouth, revealing its razor-like fangs.

It breathes heavily, steam rising from its gaping jaws.

Firmin stares it down - more resolute than brave.

The Windigo WAILS.

Firmin stiffens as he hears the words within its cry.

WINDIGO (V.O.)
Hello, old man.

FIRMIN
It's not you. It can't be.

The Windigo SNARLS.

WINDIGO (V.O.)
There are always those who welcome
me in from the darkness.

FIRMIN

You will find none here.

The Windigo seems to be laughing at him.

WINDIGO (V.O.)

And what of you?

(beat)

Join me and we can hunt together. I
will give you another chance.

The Windigo eyes Laurens's body with longing.

WINDIGO (V.O.)

(to Firmin)

His flesh would taste so good.

(screeching)

Feed me! I am ravenous with hunger.

The Windigo inches closer, struggling to decipher Firmin's
blank facial expression.

WINDIGO (V.O.)

I can make you forget all those
mistakes, my friend. You can be rid
of them if only you'd feed with me.

Firmin pushes back his shoulders, trying to reach his full
height that the decades have stolen from him.

FIRMIN

I've atoned for my sins. The Blood
of the Lamb has washed me clean.

The Windigo SHRIEKS - an unearthly, demonic shriek.

Its true voice.

It rises onto its hind legs, towering over Firmin.

WINDIGO (V.O.)

Then you will die.

FIRMIN

(unshaken)

Even if you kill me, my soul will
yet live.

Firmin and the Windigo face off.

The Windigo lunges for Firmin, whose instincts kick in - age
has slowed him, but he knows how to fight.

Firmin leads the Windigo in a defensive dance, staying just out of range as he looks for an opening to attack.

Off to the side, Laurens slowly comes to - dazed, with a trickle of blood seeping from his hairline.

The Windigo SCREECHES - no longer remotely resembling a human cry, fully given over to its hellish nature.

Firmin avoids confrontation, but it's only a matter of time.

The Windigo charges, too swift for Firmin to avoid.

It swipes, its claws colliding with Firmin's chest.

WINDIGO (V.O.)
(taunting)
You remember how that feels?

Firmin totters beneath the powerful blow.

He drops his elk antler knife, hands clutching his chest.

The Windigo SNARLS as it advances, kicking the weapon aside.

Laurens pushes himself to his feet, too stunned and far away to intervene as the duel plays out before him.

Firmin stumbles, landing heavily on his knees.

The Windigo pushes him onto his back, instantly snapping its jaws around Firmin's neck - breaking it in a single motion.

Laurens screams, jerking out of his terror and into action.

He lunges for the Windigo, shoving it off Firmin's corpse.

He plunges his dagger into the Windigo over and over, unable to make contact with its heart.

The Windigo flips Laurens over, quickly subduing him.

It crouches over him, Firmin's blood dripping from its fangs onto Laurens's face.

The Windigo unhinges its jaw to take a bite.

Laurens grapples ferociously, but the Windigo has him pinned.

There's nothing he can do, despite his dagger still in hand.

The Windigo's open mouth moves closer to Laurens's face.

And freezes.

A spear protrudes through its open mouth from the back.

The Windigo SCREAMS, fighting to shake it loose, but it won't budge - held firmly in place by none other than Keme.

Keme grasps the spear with all his might, using the spear's barbed head to yank the Windigo's jaws away from Laurens.

Laurens takes advantage of the moment - wresting his arm from the Windigo's loosened grasp.

He stabs the dagger straight into the Windigo's eye.

The Windigo convulses in pain, SHRIEKING as he jerks himself free of Laurens.

But Keme's still there behind him.

Keme reaches forward and clamps his hand around the Windigo's heart, ripping it out through the back of the Windigo's rotting ribcage.

The Windigo collapses onto the ground, inanimate.

Keme squeezes the heart in his hand, its rocky exterior crumbling as a thick black sludge of blood drips down, intermingling with the rain.

EXT. COURTYARD - SUNRISE

The sun rises on a new day, glistening wet and washed clean.

The Monks hover back as Nuttah stands in the middle of the courtyard, surrounded by the Survivors.

They circle a bonfire built up around the Windigo's corpse.

Its heart sits staked on a spear off to the side, blood oozing down onto the ground.

Nuttah leads the Survivors in a CHANT and RITUALIZED DANCE around the fire as the flames hungrily lick up the Windigo, spewing thick black smoke into the sky.

Keme slouches against a wall next to Firmin's body.

He grasps Firmin's hand, sadly examining his face - it's surprisingly peaceful, as if he were sleeping.

Keme glances up as Laurens approaches and kneels by his side.

Laurens places the elk antler knife on Firmin's chest.

Keme and Laurens gaze at each other - a moment of somber silence - until Laurens breaks away to watch the ritual.

LAURENS
Will it suffice?

KEME
They know what to do.

LAURENS
The heart must be buried on sacred ground.

Keme doesn't understand.

LAURENS (CONT'D)
Is a mission truly sacred to an Algonquin demon?

Keme takes a moment to consider the question.

KEME
All that is evil comes from *Madji-manidò*, in the same way that all good is from *Gitchi Manitou* ... from God, regardless of what name He's called by.

The answer satisfies Laurens.

Together they watch as the bonfire quickly reduces the Windigo's body to ash, which Nuttah meticulously collects.

EXT. MISSION ST. JOSEPH - FRONT GATES - DAY (8 MONTHS LATER)

The mission stands strong, its gates fully repaired.

A soft breeze whispers over the plains, carrying with it the first stray snowflakes of winter.

SUPER: 8 MONTHS LATER

Laurens, wearing the full adornments of a monk, hovers at the open gates, taking in the scene:

- Nuttah oversees a group of Monks and Survivors preparing the vegetable garden for harvest;
- Algonquin Children happily play in the courtyard;
- and outside the mission, three figures emerge from the tree line.

Laurens steps forward to greet them - it's Keme, along with a Monk and the Boy, loaded down by the evidence of a successful hunt: deer, partridges, and rabbits.

Keme waves the Monk and Boy forward into the mission.

LAURENS

Your efforts have borne fruit.

KEME

As have yours.

Laurens smiles, surveying it all with pleasure.

LAURENS

We'll be well-stocked this winter.

KEME

Let us hope any others out there
are equally prepared.

Laurens acknowledges his words with a grimace.

Keme shifts under the weight of the deer tossed over his shoulders. He nods at Laurens and carries it inside.

Laurens examines the plain - the increasing snowfall quickly covers the world in a thin layer of white.

He turns to enter the gates when the wind picks up, whipping at the hem of his robes.

Laurens pauses.

The wind seems to carry the faintest echo of a WAIL.

Laurens inhales sharply.

He listens again.

Just the wind.

It has to be.

Laurens throws a final glance at the wintery landscape before stepping into the mission as the gates close behind him.

FADE OUT.

THE END