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Mko

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Mko

by

Simon Luedtke

A thesis presented to the

Faculty of the Department of
Writing for the Screen
Loyola Marymount University

In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts in Writing for the Screen

April 30, 2024

FINAL THESIS
FEATURE SCREENPLAY PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Student Name: Simon Luedtke

Thesis Logline: Seeking vengeance for his mother's murder, a young Native man becomes corrupted by a pelt that turns him into a bear at night.

Mko

Title

A screenplay written and produced and presented to the faculty of
the Writing for the Screen MFA Program in the School of Film &
Television at Loyola Marymount University of
Los Angeles, California

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Fine Arts

Writing for the Screen

By

Simon Luedtke

Student Name

APPROVAL TO ADVANCE TO CANDIDACY

The following student has met all the criteria to advance to candidacy for an M.F.A. in Fine Arts with an emphasis in Writing for the Screen:

Simon Luedtke

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04/30/24

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MKO

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DIALOGUE NOTE:

Bodwéwadmimwen is unformatted.

French is italicized.

English is bold.

EXT. WOODED RIVERSIDE - GREEN BAY, 1766 - DAY

A rushing river slices a gash in the earth, bleeding blue.

A small BLACK BEAR stares at fish swimming upstream. Nothing but the sound of running water and the occasional bear grunt.

Across the river, KEE (16, chubby boy, hungry for manhood) crouches in a bush. He notches an arrow in a bow, aiming straight at the bear.

IDA (38, stern and maternal) sits calmly at his side. She places a hand on Kee's shoulder, which has started to shake.

IDA

Breathe.

Kee fires the arrow. It doesn't even make it half way across the river.

The bear snatches a fish from the water and lumbers off.

Kee hangs his head.

KEE

I've lost the village a week of food. Father will be furious.

IDA

There is venison aplenty at home. You are only practicing. Can you keep a secret?

Kee nods.

IDA (CONT'D)

I don't much like bear. All that muscle. Too tough. I like a little fat on my meat, like you.

She pinches Kee's leg, they both laugh.

EXT. POTAWATOMI VILLAGE - EVENING

A few dozen wigwams sitting in a cedar grove clearing. MEN, WOMEN, and CHILDREN bustle about.

Construction of a large lodge is underway. High log walls and half a thatched roof. Men drag felled cedar trees toward it.

Kee grapples with a log twice his size. MICAH (19, muscular and knows it) claps Kee on the back.

MICAH

You are too small for this one,
Kee. Let me try.

Kee swats at him.

KEE

No! I am able. Worry about your own
load.

MICAH

(snickering)
I could throw your log like snow
snake.

Micah mimics hurling the log underhanded.

Kee pushes him.

MICAH (CONT'D)

You are lucky men do not hit boys.

KEE

I am not a boy!

Kee jumps at him, Micah holds Kee back with ease.

Ida rushes to Kee's side, pulling him away.

IDA

Calm yourself Kee! Come inside, you
do not need to concern yourself
with this work.

She TUTS at Micah, who shrugs and drags Kee's log off. Kee is mortified.

KEE

Mother! I can handle him on my own.

IDA

Come. Eat with your father and I.
Then we must finish your lessons
before bed.

She takes his hand and pulls him toward their wigwam.

INT. WIGWAM - NIGHT

Kee and Ida eat rice, squash, and rabbit with OLIVER (40, proud, commands respect) on the floor. Oliver's prized musket leans on the wall, a gunpowder sack on the shoulder strap.

Ida grabs a leg of rabbit, waves it in front of Kee.

IDA
What is this?

KEE
Rabbit.

IDA
No...

KEE
Lapine.

IDA
Good, and how many bones?

She points at four clean bones on Oliver's plate.

KEE
Quatre. That is easy.

Ida nods.

OLIVER
Enough.

Ida and Kee go quiet. Ida slowly places a hand on Oliver's knee.

IDA
He should continue his studies--

OLIVER
They are gone now.

Kee
I heard there are more to the North
of *Michi gami.*

OLIVER
They will be gone in weeks. The
British have taken everything. I
have spoken to them, there is no
reasoning. We should press south--

IDA
I will not leave my valley.

A WARNING CRY calls out from somewhere in the woods. Oliver snatches his musket and ducks outside. Kee follows.

EXT. POTAWATOMI VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Oliver scans the tree-line for the source of the cry, Kee at his side.

NIMEDI-MEK (40, burly huntsman) waves a torch on a near hillside. He SIGNS an urgent gesture and points behind him.

OLIVER
British across the river, heading south.

Oliver calls to the rest of camp.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Men! Gather.

Other MEN begin to emerge from their wigwams.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Arm yourselves. We will intercept them before they arrive.

The men leap to action, including Micah. Kee snatches his bow leaning on his wigwam.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
No. Protect your mother.

Oliver slings his musket over his shoulder. He trudges off, leaving Kee with balled fists.

EXT. VALLEY - NIGHT

The Potawatomi men file away toward Nimedi-Mek's torchlight.

On the other side of the valley, a group of BRITISH SOLDIERS (scraggly beards, weathered uniforms, muskets) peek over the horizon, leering down at the now unprotected village.

INT. WIGWAM - NIGHT

Ida holds Kee's head in her lap, braiding his hair and pointing at various objects around the wigwam. She points at Kee's boots.

IDA
There?

Kee
Bottes.

IDA
 (pointing at a pelt)
 That?

KEE
Peau. I speak enough, mother.

IDA
 You are remembering well, my sweet.

Kee sits up.

KEE
 Will the French really return?

IDA
 I am sure of it.

KEE
 But if they do not where will we
 go? The British move closer.

IDA
 This is our home, Kee. We will not
 leave it easy. Remember the fourth
 fire. What did the prophet say?

KEE
 "You will know the face of
 brotherhood if the light skinned
 race comes carrying no weapons. If
 they come bearing only their
 knowledge and a handshake."

IDA
 We have seen as much.

KEE
 But what of the second prophet?
 "Beware if the light skinned race
 comes wearing the face of death.
 You shall know if the rivers run
 with poison and fish become unfit
 to eat."

Ida smiles, hugs Kee closer.

IDA
 Our bear liked the river's fish.
 You are too young for such worries.

BANG! BANG! Two shots ring out, followed by screams.

Kee springs up.

KEE

Wait here.

IDA

No! Stay with me, it is not safe.

KEE

I will defend you. Just stay hidden.

Kee darts outside before his mother can stop him.

EXT. WIGWAM - NIGHT

The British have descended on the village, attacking from all sides, scattering torches on every home. Women and children burst outside.

Kee sees one wigwam go up in flames. A CHILD is screams from inside. He dashes to the rescue, pulling the child out.

IDA

KEE!

He looks back to see flame spreading across the thatched dome of his own wigwam.

Ida stands outside, arms held over her head by a BLOND SOLDIER (25).

KEE

NO!

Kee charges at the man. He is immediately shoved to the ground by the LIEUTENANT (30, tall, sharp-featured, beady eyes, wielding a sword).

The Lieutenant drags Kee by his braid toward the lodge building site. Kee writhes.

KEE (CONT'D)

Let me go!

The Lieutenant slugs Kee in the face. Kee's head spins.

The Lieutenant hoists a massive log and DROPS IT ON KEE.

Kee tries to scream but the air escapes him, his ribs broken.

Kee pushes with all his might, tears streaming down his face but can't get the log off him.

IDA

KEE!

Ida claws at her captor, scratching his left eye. The blond soldier clutches his face, one hand still closed on Ida's wrist.

BLOND SOLDIER

AGH! LIEUTENANT!

The Lieutenant marches toward Ida, laughing. He pushes the blond soldier aside and begins tearing at her clothes. He drags her into the lodge.

Kee

(mouthing)

MOTHER!

The village burns as Kee watches in horror. The blond soldier dresses his eye as Ida screams from inside the lodge.

The moment seems to go on forever.

Then an arrow buries itself in the blond soldier's neck. He sinks to the ground, gurgling blood.

MICAH

COME ON!

Micah barrels out of the woods with a few other men, bows drawn.

Nimedi-Mek shoots an arrow into one soldier's leg, then catches a bullet in the chest, pitching into the dirt.

Micah is at Kee's side in a flash. He heaves the log off and helps Kee to his feet.

MICAH (CONT'D)

(shaking Kee's shoulders)

Run to the river!

Kee clutches his torso, still breathless.

KEE

I... cannot...

Micah scoops Kee up and dashes back toward the trees.

Kee's eyes glued to the lodge. He points toward it.

KEE (CONT'D)

S-save her.

Micah props Kee against a tree at the edge of the forest.

MICAH

Keep out of sight.

Micah pulls an axe from his belt and rushes toward the lodge.

Kee watches Micah slip into the lodge.

Kee stays frozen in fear, reeling at the carnage.

SCREAMING, SHOTS, HORSES ABLAZE.

Micah staggers out, clutching his chest. He turns to Kee, sorrow in his eyes and a gaping gash across his chest. He falls.

The Lieutenant emerges from the lodge, bloody, naked and snarling.

He sheaths his bloody sword and throws down Ida's body, throat slit.

He catches Kee's eye and smiles.

THE LIEUTENANT

I see you.

Kee runs as fast as his legs will carry him.

EXT. forest - NIGHT

Kee stumbles into the woods, wet breath hitching.

He coughs up blood and collapses behind a tree.

Oliver and a group of other TERRIFIED MEN scramble to Kee, pulling him by his clothes deeper into the woods.

KEE

(barely a whisper)

Where were you?

Oliver cannot meet his son's eyes. Kee coughs and says again, louder.

KEE (CONT'D)

WHERE WERE YOU?

He loses consciousness.

EXT. DENSE WOODS - GREEN BAY, 1767 - DAY

SUPER: ONE YEAR LATER

Two BRITISH SOLDIERS (one tall, one short) march through thick foliage. Mud cakes their boots, bristles snag their trousers. Their gait is awkward, labored.

The short soldier swats at a bush in frustration.

SHORT SOLDIER
Nothing but swamp for miles.

The tall soldier shakes his head.

TALL SOLDIER
Keep your voice low, man. There are savages about.

SHORT SOLDIER
(hoisting his musket)
Bah! I'll send them all to their heathen maker.

The two men pass a large cedar tree.

They don't see Kee crouched in wait behind it. He's shed weight, gained muscle. He's no Micah but a budding warrior nonetheless. His face is painted in red ochre.

The soldiers lumber on. Kee slips behind them and raises his bow. He notches an arrow, lets one loose.

It catches the tall soldier in the neck. He falls.

SHORT SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Lord in heaven--

The short soldier swirls around, ready to fire, but Kee is already on him. He pounces on the man, knocking him to the ground.

Kee draws a dagger from his belt and holds it to the soldier's throat.

KEE
(thick accent)
Lieutenant?

SHORT SOLDIER
What?! Who--

KEE
LIEUTENANT!

SHORT SOLDIER
**Lieutenant Parkman he- he's at Fort
La Baye.**

KEE
Which house?

SHORT SOLDIER
I don't understand--

Movement. Kee looks left just in time to see the tall man raise his musket, blood flowing down his chest. Kee dives to one side, his arrows spill out of his quiver.

CRACK! The tall soldier fires. Miss. Kee leaps to his feet, swipes an arrow from the ground and fires it into the tall soldier, right between the eyes.

The short soldier scrambles to his feet and takes off.

SHORT SOLDIER (CONT'D)
AAAAGHHH!

Kee darts after him, closing the gap fast.

He's ready to pounce when the short soldier pivots, swinging his musket at Kee's ribs.

WHAM! Kee crumples, moaning.

The short soldier sprints away.

Kee's ears are ringing. He takes short, painful breaths.

KEE
Shit. Shit.

He lurches to his knees, vomits into the mud.

OLIVER (O.S.)
What have you done?

Oliver, DEBID (30s, Oliver's gruff lackey) and ANABET (20s, gaunt and meek) appear from the trees. Oliver stoops beside Kee and grabs his face, shaking him.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
I heard gunfire. Are you hurt?

Kee pushes him away, stands.

Debid and Anabet turn the tall soldier over.

DEBID

Sir.

Oliver sees the dead soldier and smacks Kee on the head.

OLIVER

Idiot! We cannot remain hidden when you attack their scouts!

KEE

At least I am fighting back.

OLIVER

You are too weak to fight. They will enslave you if you give them the chance.

Oliver spots the soldiers' tracks. He sees two pair.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Where is the other?

Kee does not respond.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Where, Kee?

Kee points a weak hand to the short soldier's escape route.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Debid, do not let him get back to the fort.

Debid nods and sprints after the soldier.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Anabet, bury this one. Deep. He cannot be found.

They nod and set to work. Oliver grabs his son's arm and hauls him off.

EXT. SMALL ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Oliver pushes Kee into a sad circle of tents around an empty fire pit. A half dozen men sit around skinning rabbits, cleaning boots, and smoking.

The most senior man, ZHAMYEN (60s, worried Wabunowin visionary) stands.

ZHAMYEN

Who fired?

OLIVER

Ask him.

Kee scowls.

KEE

I killed a Brit. His friend fled.

Murmurs among the group.

OLIVER

Debid will catch him, but that gives us only hours before they are noticed. We must follow the river south, away from Fort *La Baye*.

WIYAM (30s, trapper) scoffs in protest.

WIYAM

But the south is hunted barren. Our traps will be empty.

OLIVER

We must make do.

KEE

You would leave your families behind?

OLIVER

There is no helping them.

KEE

Weaklings. All of you. My mother's murderer sleeps soundly in his bed--

OLIVER

(with venom)

Then kill him yourself, if you are so strong.

Oliver stuffs a tin pot into a knapsack.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Pack. We leave at nightfall.

Oliver stomps off, leaving Kee fuming.

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

The eight Potawatomi men file across a hillside, moonlight on their backs.

Kee looks down the hill into the valley below. Where once his humble village stood there is now a sprawling British fort, surrounded by cabins and illuminated with torches.

Kee spits on the ground and presses on.

EXT. ROCKY CLEARING - DAY

The exhausted men drag their feet into an outcrop of bedrock.

Anabet unloads his burden and sinks to the ground. Kee grabs his arm and hoists him upright.

ANABET

I am weary.

Oliver surveys the area. It's flat, raised, and in view of the river. He drops his pack.

OLIVER

Zhamyen, smudge the perimeter. We will make camp here.

Zhamyen nods, produces a bundle of sage from his belt and ambles away.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Debid, prepare my wigwam on that crest. I want full view of the river should the British pursue us.

Debid obeys. Kee releases Anabet.

KEE

So you can run again?

OLIVER

So we can keep our family safe.

KEE

Now that is your concern. We will be without food in days, thanks to you.

Oliver shrugs Kee off and marches toward the other settling men. He jerks a thumb toward Kee.

OLIVER

Toma, give him something to do.

TOMA (30s, portly cook) tosses a skinned rabbit carcass at Kee and grins.

TOMA
My pleasure.

EXT. FOREST TREELINE - DUSK

Zhamyen paces the perimeter with the smoldering sage, washing smoke over his head and MUTTERING a prayer.

A cold wind rustles trees to his left and WHOOSHES past him, extinguishing the sage.

Zhamyen stops, his eyes widen. He looks toward the direction of the gust, squints his eyes in the growing gloom.

Nestled in the woods some hundred paces away, a lean-to.

Zhamyen pivots and tiptoes toward camp.

ZHAMYEN
(under his breath)
Quiet. Quiet. Quiet.

EXT. WOODS - DUSK - MOMENTS LATER

Oliver, Kee, Debid, and NEWI (30s, huntsman) stalk toward the lean-to at a snail's pace, listening for any sign of life.

Zhamyen holds back, hands shaking.

The lean-to's opening faces away from them. A small pile of bones lies nearby.

Oliver stops, gestures for he and Debid to round one side, Kee and Newi, the other.

The three younger men pull out daggers as Oliver aims his musket.

OLIVER
(whisper)
Now.

They leap around the lean-to, weapons raised.

TWO MEN lie in the lean-to, tangled in an embrace. They rest on a matted BEAR PELT.

PIERRE (45, pale, long oily hair, glint of madness in his eyes) looks up, eerily serene.

PIERRE
 (in broken Bodwéwadmimwen)
 Hello, everyone.

The Potawatomi are at a loss for words.

JONAS (17, timid, thin, patchy beard, haunted eyes) awakens with a start, sees the weapons, buries his face in his father's chest.

KEE
 W—who are you?

PIERRE
 My name is Pierre. This is Jonas
 my...

He hugs Jonas closer.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
 (in French)
 Son.

KEE
 You are French?

Pierre nods slowly.

PIERRE
*I am not your enemy, Potawatomi.
 Nor you mine. That musket is French-
 made.*

He nods at Oliver's gun. Oliver aims it away, waves at Zhamyen to approach. The other men sheath their knives.

OLIVER
*Why are you here? Where are your
 kin?*

Pierre sits up, Jonas continues to cower.

PIERRE
*Passed on, I am afraid. Lost in
 battle along the river. We have
 fled for months.*

Zhamyen joins Oliver at his side, eyebrows knitted. Pierre bows his head.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
 (in Bodwéwadmimwen)
 Hello, elder.

Zhamyen stays silent. Kee points at the pile of bones.

KEE

You hunt?

Pierre grins.

PIERRE

I do.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Back at camp, everyone sits in a circle around a large fire.

Kee roasts rabbits with Toma, outside a talking circle. The other Potawatomi listen to Pierre, the silent Jonas still glued to his side.

Pierre sits erect, his eyes flit between each man. A smirk simmers just below the surface.

PIERRE

*You must forgive us for dozing.
We've grown accustomed to sleeping
during the day.*

NEWI

You hunt at night?

PIERRE

*Always. I was no hunter, but now...
You would think me a true man of
this wood.*

WIYAM

*For years we trapped here with your
kin. The creatures grew wise to our
traps. How have you not starved?*

Pierre pats the pelt he and Jonas sit on.

PIERRE

*I would not have seen the snow
without this pelt. Its power
astonishes me still. I will show
you. But daylight still lingers on
the horizon. Give me time.*

Oliver frowns.

OLIVER

Did you fell that bear yourself?

PIERRE

Goodness, no! I was an estate developer by trade, before the war, of course. Never was one to get my hands dirty.

OLIVER

How did it find its way into your possession, then?

PIERRE

I bought it from a trapper my first year on Michi gami. It was just a pelt, then. It had not revealed itself to me.

Kee pipes up from beyond the circle.

KEE

Why you?

The men go silent. Pierre looks to Kee.

KEE (CONT'D)

If it is powerful as you say, why choose you?

Pierre smiles.

PIERRE

I'll not burden you with that story now. Best you see for yourself.

Jonas speaks up, his voice a mere squeak.

JONAS

Papa, I am thirsty.

PIERRE

The river is near, yes? I can hear it close by.

JONAS

Join me?

Pierre gestures at his rapt audience.

PIERRE

I have stories yet for our hosts.

OLIVER

My son will escort him. Kee.

Oliver snaps his fingers. Kee sighs and rises.

EXT. RIVERSIDE - NIGHT

Kee leads Jonas down to the river. The river is wide and calm. Kee stops at a shallow inlet.

Jonas stoops down at a stagnant puddle, sinks a cupped hand into the water.

KEE

Wait.

He catches Jonas' hand. Jonas recoils.

KEE (CONT'D)

(gently)

Still water has... sickness.

Jonas softens. His eyes remain downcast.

JONAS

(in Bodwéwadmimwen)

Thank you.

KEE

You speak my language!

JONAS

Only some. You speak mine better.

KEE

*I have not in some time. My mother
and father taught me. My father
speaks English too.*

Kee wades knee-deep into the shallows and drinks from moving water. Jonas hesitates, Kee notices.

KEE (CONT'D)

Do you want to drink?

JONAS

I cannot swim.

Kee offers his hand. Jonas takes it gingerly, scoots further.

KEE

How long have you been alone?

JONAS

Perhaps eight months now.

Kee throws water over his face, hair. Jonas watches, drinks.

JONAS (CONT'D)
Where is your mother?

Kee pauses, taken aback.

JONAS (CONT'D)
I am sorry--

KEE
She died a year ago.

JONAS
British?

Kee nods. Throws more water on his face.

JONAS (CONT'D)
I never knew my mother. She got sick when I was little.

KEE
It is good you have your father, then.

JONAS
Yes. I am glad of that.

Jonas grabs a lock of Kee's hair and twists it in his fingers. Kee pulls back.

KEE
Hey--

JONAS
Your hair is long as Papa's hair.

Kee frowns and heads back to camp.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

When Kee and Jonas return, the men are devouring their small rations of rabbit.

Pierre watches, bemused. Jonas sits at his side.

KEE
You will not eat?

Pierre locks eyes with Kee. He pats his belly.

PIERRE
There is a hunt ahead. It is best I stay hungry.

Oliver wipes his face and rights himself.

OLIVER
Night has fallen.

Pierre smiles and stands. He gathers the pelts in his arms and marches toward the treeline.

PIERRE
Follow me.

Jonas scrambles to his feet and follows his father. Kee takes a few steps forward. The other Potawatomi men look to Oliver.

OLIVER
Hold.
(to Pierre)
Show us here.

Pierre chuckles, points at Kee.

PIERRE
Your son is eager to learn. Why not you?

OLIVER
What lies in those woods that we cannot see here?

PIERRE
A finer feast than you have made.

OLIVER
My men are weary, they will go no further.

Pierre saunters up to Oliver.

PIERRE
It would be more fun in the forest.

Oliver blinks, holds firm.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
Very well.

Before Oliver can blink, Pierre swipes his prized musket and charges into the woods.

OLIVER
Stop!

JONAS
Papa!

PIERRE
So long!

He skips into the woods at a feverish pace, Jonas tearing after him. Oliver seethes.

OLIVER
CATCH HIM!

All eight Potawatomi men leap to their feet and dive into the woods.

EXT. DENSE WOODS - NIGHT

Kee is the fastest of the group. Oliver and Debid are at his heels, both wielding torches plucked from the fire.

KEE
There!

A flicker of motion, Pierre's pelt darts behind a tree.

Kee dashes to the tree. Peeks. Nothing.

JONAS
Papa! PAPA!

A distraught Jonas stumbles through the brush close by. Oliver nods at Debid.

OLIVER
Grab him.

Debid rushes at Jonas. Jonas SQUEALS as Debid pulls his arms back and hauls him to Oliver.

Oliver holds the torch close to Jonas' face.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Where has he gone?

JONAS
Y-you won't catch him. He- He put on the pelt.

More men catch up, firelight flickers through the trees.

Kee peers at the ground where Pierre vanished: footprints in the mud.

KEE
Father! Tracks. He cannot be far.

Oliver shoves Jonas toward Kee.

OLIVER

Lead us.

Jonas SHUDDERS and shuffles to Kee.

EXT. HEART OF THE FOREST - NIGHT

The dark is suffocating. No moonlight here.

Kee wields a torch, following the tracks. Jonas is at his side, jumping at every sound. The others follow.

KEE

Why did he put it on?

Jonas shakes his head vigorously.

KEE (CONT'D)

Why, Jonas?

JONAS

To be strong.

A INHUMAN MOAN from ahead. Kee lifts his torch, whispers back to the others.

KEE

Stay close.

The tracks lead to a downed animal twenty paces away. Kee approaches, dagger drawn.

A DYING DOE lies gasping in the mud. Its throat is ripped, claw marks running down its neck to its stomach.

Lain neatly beside it: Oliver's musket.

KEE (CONT'D)

Shit.

Kee kneels down, muzzles the doe and slits its throat fully. It subsides.

The rest of the party gathers around the carcass.

Kee scans the surrounding mud. The tracks have stopped. Jonas twitches.

JONAS

He's here.

Everyone tenses. Torches up, weapons raised.

Kee steps forward.

KEE
Reveal yourself!

A hulking mass drops from the trees overhead, beady eyes gleaming in the torch light. It ROARS.

KEE (CONT'D)
BEAR!!!

Arrows whistle past Kee's head as he dives for his father's musket. He grabs it and takes aim at the shadowy creature. CRACK!

The mass jerks away, twisting its massive limbs. Debid pulls another arrow.

JONAS
DON'T HURT HIM!

Jonas throws himself in front of Debid's bow. Oliver growls and seizes the boy.

OLIVER
(to his men)
Kill the thing!

He drags Jonas back, kicking and screaming.

Debid fires the arrow but the bear leaps onto a nearby tree, scuttling up it.

Wiyam staggers back, dropping his torch. It IGNITES a nearby bush.

The forest is flooded with light for a moment. Kee clocks the monster. It clings to tree trunk, a bear but not a bear. Eight feet tall, skin sagging, joints jutting at impossible angles. It is as if a man puppets the bear's skeleton from inside.

DEBID
KEE! GET DOWN!

Kee hits the deck. Debid fires an arrow up at the beast.

The beast vaults from its perch to a tree beside Anabet. The tree SNAPS, coming down hard on Anabet.

KEE
ANABET!

Kee rushes to Anabet's side. The tree has fallen on one of his legs. He starts to dig him out, frantic.

Wiyam whips off his tunic and beats the bushfire out.

The bear terrorizes the other Potawatomi. It swipes at torches, bites at anyone that gets close.

Oliver scurries back, terrified.

OLIVER
RETREAT!

The men fall over themselves to retreat, slipping in the mud. Kee drags Anabet from beneath the tree.

The bear pulls back, satisfied.

It vanishes behind a rock, its roars receding into blackness.

They are replaced by Pierre's MANIACAL LAUGHTER.

PIERRE
*HEE HEE- I TOLD YOU- HEE- IT WOULD
BE MORE FUN.*

Pierre lurches out into the open, caked in mud, his bear pelt pulled over his shoulders like a cape.

The Potawatomi shrink in fear. Jonas wriggles free of Oliver's grasp and runs into his father's arms.

Pierre pets Jonah's hair.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
Hush my boy, it is over now.

He releases Jonah and approaches the deer carcass.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
*I have no fight with you. We share
a common enemy, after all.*

He places one boot on the doe's neck.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
*You know my gift, now. I lay my
services at your feet.*

The men lie panting. Kee looks at Pierre, then at the felled tree, awestruck.

EXT. OPEN FOREST - sunrise

Oliver and Kee prepare a rabbit snare, an air of tension between them.

Kee leaps into the air and grabs the branch of a sapling.

Oliver produces a knife, carves a notch in the branch, and bends the sapling toward the ground.

It creaks under the strain.

KEE

Careful.

OLIVER

I have made hundreds more snares than you, Kee.

KEE

Broken more, too.

Oliver holds knife in his mouth and produces a coil of rope.

OLIVER

Is there nothing I can do right in your eyes?

KEE

You can permit Pierre to join us.

He ties a noose, fastens it to the branch, and locks the branch to the ground with a stone.

OLIVER

I will have none of it. It is demented, evil.

KEE

We could avenge mother. Push back.

OLIVER

We will do no such thing.

KEE

There would be no need for traps with his help. Besides, Wiyam said they will turn up empty.

OLIVER

It has been many seasons since we hunted here. Life has returned.

KEE

With Pierre's pelt--

OLIVER

This is sinister magic, Kee. He did not come by it through virtue.

KEE

I do not care how he came by it! With Pierre in our ranks we would not need to flee further.

OLIVER

Do you think Ida would want this?

Kee goes cold.

KEE

Do not say her name.

Oliver holds Kee's stare for a moment, then shrugs.

OLIVER

We have survived this long on our skills and the gifts of the Creator.

KEE

I do not call this surviving. With you as our lead we are only dying slowly.

Kee kicks stone holding the snare. The sapling SNAPS up, nearly slashing Oliver.

Oliver whirls around and grabs Kee's face.

OLIVER

Think of your family. Your ignorance will cost more than your own neck.

Oliver pushes Kee back and marches off.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

(over his shoulder)

Reset the snare. I am hunting.

Kee huffs. He spots a crop of YELLOW POPPIES growing in the brush. He picks a few.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

Kee pokes at coals. Sparks float up to an empty spit.

Newi, Anabet, and Zhamyen sit up on their sleeping mats, exhausted.

Oliver, Debid, and Wiyam are not present.

NEWI

Have they awoken yet?

ZHAMYEN

No.

Kee peers into the woods at Pierre and Jonah's lean-to. A fire pit smolders there, too.

NEWI

What should we do if they come to us?

ZHAMYEN

Do not speak to them. Oliver will return soon.

ANABET

I have not slept. This is an omen for us all.

KEE

They could be our allies.

ANABET

And if we refuse? What stops him from using his powers against us?

KEE

(laughs)

You quiver before him like you would a real bear.

Footsteps from the treeline. Toma drags the slaughtered doe toward camp. It has started to bloat.

Zhamyen rises.

ZHAMYEN

STOP! Do not bring that animal into our midst.

TOMA

It will rot.

ZHAMYEN

So be it.

TOMA

Zhamyen, there is no more food. I need only smoke it for some hours and we will have meat for a week.

ZHAMYEN

It is tainted, I can see. Better we burn the meat than eat it.

Kee strides to Toma's side. He grabs the doe's back legs and drags it to the fire pit with Toma.

ZHAMYEN (CONT'D)

Stop!

KEE

I will not starve.

Anabet rises, puts a tentative hand on Kee's chest.

ANABET

The elder has spoken.

KEE

You are free to eat what you like, Anabet. I see no use wasting a deer.

Toma and Kee heave the carcass onto the spit over the coals, sending up a plume of sparks.

Toma shaves a branch for kindling. He lights a fire in seconds.

ZHAMYEN

You have been warned, Kee. Your father would not approve of this trusting a white man.

KEE

I have no fear of the Frenchman. He is light-skin of the fourth prophet and bears us gifts.

Kee plops down beside Toma, tending to the fire.

ZHAMYEN

Even after Ida's death, you listen to the wrong prophet.

Kee snatches a flaming branch and sticks it in Zhamyen's face, eyes wild.

KEE
DO NOT SAY HER NAME!

OLIVER (O.S.)
Put out the fire!

Kee breaks his stare, lowers the branch. Toma beats the fire out.

Oliver, Debid, and Wiyam slink out of the woods, heads low, glancing back over their shoulders.

DEBID
British. Two hills east. They are attacking Ojibwe.

ANABET
How many are there?

WIYAM
Many. Must be half of the fort. The village burns.

KEE
Is the Lieutenant among them?

OLIVER
Kee, we will not--

KEE
Is the Lieutenant among them?

Debid nods. Kee rises, marches to his sleeping mat, and swipes his bow and quiver from the ground.

OLIVER
Kee--

KEE
Those who wish to redeem themselves may follow me.

Kee dashes into the woods.

Newi is the first to follow. Then Wiyam. Then Toma.

Zhamyen gives Oliver a grave look.

ZHAMYEN
You are losing control of him.

OLIVER
Do not test me.

He nods at Debid. They follow Kee, leaving Zhamyen and Anabet behind.

EXT. TREELINE - EVENING

Kee crouches in a bush beside Oliver. The other Potawatomi fan out along the treeline.

KEE
Why did you not strike when you
first saw them?

OLIVER
Keep your wits, Kee. There are too
many for us to face.

Fifty feet away, an OJIBWE VILLAGE is in flames. Two dozen wigwams cast shadows across a clearing.

A battalion of Redcoat British SOLDIERS swarm the village.

KEE
You could have saved them.

OLIVER
Perhaps they fled. I am sure they
heard the cannons coming.

Kee eyes two wheeled cannons at edge of the village. Beside them, a soldier on horseback surveys the scene.

Kee squints. It is the Lieutenant.

Oliver sees it too. He puts a hand on Kee's back.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Stay hidden--

Kee charges out of the bushes, bow raised.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
KEE!

He can't hear a thing. His eyes are trained on the Lieutenant. He notches an arrow.

KEE
(to himself)
Breathe.

The Lieutenant spots Kee. It is a look of pure bloodlust.

Kee falters, lets loose the arrow. It sails past the Lieutenant's head. Kee SCREAMS.

KEE (CONT'D)
MONSTER!!!

Kee pulls another arrow, but the moment is gone.

CRACK! CRACK! Soldiers begin to open fire as the other Potawatomi emerge from the trees, firing arrows of their own.

OLIVER
FORWARD!

Kee rushes for cover in a partial retreat, fires an arrow at the nearest soldier. He's dead before he hits the ground.

The Lieutenant pulls at his horses reins and turns away from the fighting. Several soldiers follow, flanking him.

Kee skirts around the treeline to follow.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Kee do not break away!

Kee ignores him, sight set on his target.

Ext. forest - night

Darkness falls on the thickening forest. Kee dashes after the Lieutenant, galloping hooves sounding somewhere nearby.

The other Potawatomi are hot on Kee's heels.

The galloping fades. Kee stops to listen.

THE LIEUTENANT
I know you.

Kee whirls around. The Lieutenant stands with four SOLDIERS, muskets raised.

Toma, Wiyam, and Oliver catch up to Kee. They freeze.

DEBID
You have doomed us!

A massive shadow flies by them, careening into the soldiers. The beast has returned.

The immense creature cleaves open the chest of one soldier, descends on another, maw gaping.

The Lieutenant's horse rears up and NEIGHS. Without a second thought the Lieutenant turns and flees.

KEE

RUN!

The men sprint through the woods, bloodcurdling screams echoing behind them.

Ext. Riverside - night

Kee, Oliver, Toma, Debid, and Wiyam convene at the river, muddied and panting.

OLIVER

Were we followed?

DEBID

No. I am sure of it.

TOMA

Where is Newi?

They look around. Wiyam hangs his head.

WIYAM

Fallen. Shot in the back as we pursued the Lieutenant.

A sharp silence among them. Oliver looks to Kee, cold.

OLIVER

His death is the fault of yours and yours alone. You will help prepare a sweat, but you may not enter the lodge.

Kee does not meet his eyes. Oliver walks away.

WIYAM

And what of the Frenchman? We would be dead if he had not intervened.

OLIVER

I will consult Zhamyen. A sweat would root out the truth.

The men follow Oliver away.

EXT. CEDAR GROVE - DAY

A pair of warblers flit through branches. Jonas watches them, sitting against a tree.

THWAP! A knife lodges into the trunk a few feet above his head.

JONAS

GAH!

Jonas ducks down as Kee approaches, chuckling.

KEE

Do not worry. I am well-practiced.

JONAS

You could take my eye out.

KEE

If I wanted to, yes. Come, you are my ward today. We must prepare for the sweat.

JONAS

My father told me not to stray.

KEE

Then we will stay right here.

Jonas takes Kee's outstretched arm. He gives a shy smile.

JONAS

What are we to do?

KEE

Do you know this tree?

JONAS

I know nothing of the forest.

KEE

This is kishki. Cedar. It is one of our most sacred medicines. We use it for every sweat.

Kee pulls his knife from the trunk and hands it to Jonas.

KEE (CONT'D)

Our lodge must have a floor. Today we make one.

Jonas holds the knife like it might bite him.

JONAS

I am not one for such savage tools.

KEE

(laughing)

*Well there is no silver here, Lord.
I am afraid you must work with the
rest of us.*

Kee waltzes to a nearby tree. Dismayed, Jonas follows.

KEE (CONT'D)

*Long planks are best, shorn to at
least your height.*

JONAS

*Only a knife for such work? I am
not as strong as you.*

KEE

It is easy.

Kee takes Jonas hand, guides the knife to the trunk of a young cedar. Jonas's breath hitches.

KEE (CONT'D)

*Now cut across, no more than half
the trunk.*

Jonas draws the knife across the trunk, carving a line in the bark.

KEE (CONT'D)

Good, peel it back.

Jonas pulls the bark back. A plank of bark detaches from the trunk. Jonas pauses, astonished.

KEE (CONT'D)

Keep going!

He pulls until the plank is taller than him. Kee puts a hand on Jonas's shoulder.

KEE (CONT'D)

I told you.

Kee takes the knife from Jonas and slides it up the trunk, slicing what sinews remain connected.

JONAS

*How does it come off? Surely you
won't make me climb.*

KEE

Like this.

Kee stands behind Jonas, grabs a hold of the bark. Together they lean back, pulling the bark taut.

KEE (CONT'D)

And now, twist.

They jerk the bark to the right. It SNAPS off the tree and they both fall to the ground, laughing.

JONAS

You could have warned me!

KEE

I thought it would take a few tries!

JONAS

I am sorry.

KEE

No, it is good. Our work will be done in no time.

Kee begins to get to his feet.

Jonas turns to face him and cups his chin with one hand.

KEE (CONT'D)

I--

JONAS

I like being with you, Kee.

Kee is taken aback. He gives a curt nod and stands.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Jonas and Kee make their way back to camp. Kee shoulders a bundle of cedar planks. Jonas admires Kee.

JONAS

Thank you for teaching me.

KEE

There is no need to thank me. I thought you could teach me something in return.

JONAS

(bashful)

I am sure nothing I know is of use to you.

KEE

Your father's pelt. How does it work?

Jonas stiffens, goes silent.

KEE (CONT'D)

I am only curious.

JONAS

He is bonded with it. At night it gives him the strength to hunt.

KEE

Are you bonded too?

JONAS

I am forbidden from using it. Besides, I have no desire to hunt.

KEE

If your father lent it to me, even for an evening, could you show me?

Jonas shakes his head.

JONAS

No. He will not part from it.

KEE

I am persuasive. Meet me upriver tonight. I want to see you.

He winks at Jonas and trudges ahead.

EXT. CAMP - EVENING

Toma is roasting the doe's leg over the fire when Kee walks out of the woods.

Kee drops the bundle of cedar strips before Toma.

TOMA

They are building the lodge down there.

He points down at the edge of camp. The Potawatomi men toil over a small sweat lodge, using their own hide tunics to trap the heat.

KEE

I have a request, but you must be quiet about it.

TOMA

It depends.

Kee holds open his palm, revealing the yellow flowers.

KEE

Nbéweshke. I need you to grind it for tea. Strong tea.

TOMA

Can you not sleep?

Kee crouches to Toma's level, pulls him close.

KEE

It is for Pierre.

TOMA

Why?

KEE

My father wishes to test him in the sweat. He must not fail.

TOMA

You ask that I go behind my chief.

KEE

If you help me, I will kill you a mighty elk to cook. You can smoke it for all of us. Make jerky.

TOMA

Pshha! You could not find an elk in these woods, let alone kill it.

KEE

Perhaps you are right. I am not half the hunter you are as a man. But as something more than man...

Toma's eyes widen.

TOMA

I will have no part in your quarrels with Oliver.

KEE

Then starve like him. I intend to
find food for us.

TOMA

You forget yourself.

KEE

I forget nothing. My father would
let Pierre's gift rot untouched.
Now look what a meal you prepare
for everyone. He clings to pride
and forgets us.

TOMA

Will you... tell anyone?

KEE

This remains between us and
Creator.

Toma takes the flowers.

EXT. SWEAT LODGE - NIGHT

The lodge is complete. A thatched dome at shoulder height,
fifteen feet around, small hole on top. A fire blazes beside
it, heating stones.

The Potawatomi are gathered outside the lodge around Zhamyen.
Pierre and Kee watch from afar.

Zhamyen produces an abalone shell, filled with herbal
medicine. Oliver lights it with kindling from the fire.

OLIVER

Lead us.

Zhamyen murmurs a prayer, wafting smoke over his head and
shoulders with an eagle feather. He clears his throat.

ZHAMYEN

Let the mourning doves sing Newi's
remembrance.

One by one, each man steps forward to be bathed in smoke
before ducking into the sweat lodge.

Oliver waves at Pierre to join them. Pierre, surprised, steps
forward.

Kee catches his sleeve.

KEE
 (whisper)
It is a test.

PIERRE
 (brow raised)
It is an honor.

KEE
*We sweat to mourn, and to purify.
 He means to reveal bad spirits.*

PIERRE
 (chuckles)
And if bad spirits are revealed?

KEE
*I shudder to think. You mustn't
 fail.*

Pierre tightens. Kee hands him a clay cup of tea.

PIERRE
What is this?

KEE
*Strong medicine. You cannot cough
 in the lodge. Nor spit, nor weep,
 nor retch. The Creator purifies us
 through our sweat, alone.*

Pierre smiles.

PIERRE
I am glad to have your trust.

KEE
And I yours.

Pierre takes the tea and drinks it. He steps forward.

OLIVER
*You must enter as a man. Nothing
 more.*

He nods at the pelt on Pierre's shoulders.

Pierre pauses.

PIERRE
Very well.

He sheds the pelt, sets it alongside the lodge, and ducks inside.

Oliver turns to Kee.

OLIVER

Think on your actions, Kee.

He enters the lodge. Kee is alone.

Kee swiftly bundles the pelt under his arm and scurries off.

EXT. RIVERSIDE - NIGHT

Kee finds Jonas kneeling by the river, wetting his hair. He stands at Kee's approach, notices the pelt.

JONAS

How did you--

Kee drops the pelt and takes Jonas's face in his hands.

KEE

Do not worry, it is ours for the evening. Your father felt too unwell to hunt.

JONAS

Papa is sick? I must go to him--

Kee hugs Jonas closer and smiles.

KEE

He is asleep. He will feel better in the morning.

He kisses Jonas lightly. Just as Jonas begins to reciprocate Kee steps back, retrieves the pelt.

KEE (CONT'D)

How do you use it?

Jonas is squeamish, refuses to go near it.

JONAS

I do not know. It is not my place.

Kee fans it out, holding the hollowed bear head over his own.

KEE

This magic, Jonas, I must understand it.

JONAS

Do not wear it! It is a damned thing, I want no part of it.

Kee lowers the pelt.

KEE

Shh!

Kee pauses, ensuring no one has overheard. The sound of the river surely covers their voices.

KEE (CONT'D)

You have your life to thank for this pelt. Pierre said it himself. You would have starved in the woods.

JONAS

We lived without its aid for many months.

KEE

On what? Berries? You are not trappers.

JONAS

Papa was resourceful.

KEE

Come now. Show me how he transforms.

Jonas wrings his hands in worry, shrinking away from Kee.

JONAS

It frightens me.

KEE

It is only fur, now. I will wear it.

JONAS

No! You will attack me!

KEE

Your father had control enough to spare my kin. Do not worry.

Kee takes a deep breath, twirls the pelt onto his back and pulls the maw over his head.

Wind rustles the trees. Jonas cowers. Kee closes his eyes.

He does not change. He opens his eyes. He shrugs the pelt off his shoulders and shakes it.

KEE (CONT'D)

Show me your secrets!

(to Jonas)

What must I do?

JONAS

I do not know!

KEE

If you cannot tell me, show me.

He removes the pelt and offers it to Jonas. Jonas shakes his head, turning his back to Kee.

JONAS

If I had known this is what you wanted, I would never have left Papa.

Kee stops.

He lays the pelt out on the ground and goes to Jonas's side.

KEE

*I am sorry. I ask too much of you.
That is not the reason I wanted you here.*

He rubs Jonas's back. Jonas turns, eyes hopeful. Kee kisses him. Jonas kisses back.

Kee runs his hands down Jonas's chest and stomach. He grabs his crotch.

Jonas GIGGLES, pulling his buttoned shirt off.

Kee quickly steps back, laying down on the pelt. He pats the ground beside him.

KEE (CONT'D)

Lay with me.

Jonas stands shirtless and erect, panting. Kee coos.

KEE (CONT'D)

It has no interest in me. At least it can give us some comfort.

JONAS

I mustn't--

KEE

You've lain on it before. What difference does it make?

JONAS

It was day, then. I do not want to touch it.

KEE

(stern)

Do you want to touch me?

Jonas hesitates, approaches. Kee holds out his hand and guides him to the ground.

KEE (CONT'D)

That's right.

The two lay on their backs together. Jonas is trembling. Kee turns, pulls him close. Jonas lifts his head and kisses Kee's neck. Kee keeps his eyes open.

Jonas is inflamed. He grabs Kee's shoulders and rolls on top him. The pelt flips with him, sticking to his back.

KEE (CONT'D)

Wait--

Jonas kisses Kee with ferocity. He thrusts a fur-covered hand between Kee's legs. Kee is overwhelmed, he tries pushing Jonas off but can't budge him.

KEE (CONT'D)

Wait--

Jonas's breath grows heavier, deeper. Kee reaches for Jonas's body but can only find fur.

Kee kicks with all his might and wriggles out from under Jonas. Jonas SCREAMS.

JONAS

NO!

Kee watches the misshapen mass of fur convulse. All semblance of Jonas is gone.

KEE

Jonas...

The bear head snaps up, yellow eyes glinting.

Kee runs. In two bounds he's scrambling up a spindly oak sapling, clambering to fifteen feet before looking down.

The bear spins in agitation. An awkward, cursed jumble of fleece and flesh. It rears onto its hind legs, then tips off balance and lands on its side.

KEE (CONT'D)

Take it off!

Kee can't get through to him. The bear moves like a spider, limbs crooked and too long. It locks eyes with Kee.

Kee's breath hitches. There's fury in those yellow eyes.

KEE (CONT'D)

Stop!

It lunges toward the sapling, full force. It SLAMS its shoulder against the trunk.

The bear ROARS in pain, loses its footing and *tumbles into the river*.

Kee clings to the sapling, it begins to creak.

SNAP! The whole tree tips toward the water, shaking Kee free. He SPLASHES down into the river, swept way in an instant.

EXT. RIVER RAPIDS - NIGHT

Kee struggles for air as the current tosses him like a rag doll. He flings his head above the surface.

KEE

JONAS!

He can't see a thing in the turmoil.

A fallen tree casts a branch out over the water. Kee throws an arm out, catches it.

He hauls himself onto the branch and looks downriver.

Kee spots the beast fifty feet ahead, paddling and ROARING in desperation. Kee SHOUTS.

KEE (CONT'D)

SWIM TO THE SIDE!

The bear bobs below the roiling water, already exhausted. It can't keep it up much longer.

KEE (CONT'D)

Shit!

Kee releases the branch and plunges back into the water.

The river narrows into whitewater rapids. Kee flips onto his back and sticks his feet up, ready for the oncoming rocks.

He slips through each wave with ease, keeping his head above water to track the drowning bear.

KEE (CONT'D)
DO NOT FIGHT THE CURRENT!

He's gaining on the flailing bear, should reach him in seconds. Its massive paws slash at the water with growing panic.

A jagged boulder sticks out of the rapids. The bear barrels towards it, Kee just behind.

KEE (CONT'D)
WATCH OUT!

WHAM! The bear's head CRACKS against the rock.

Kee dodges the boulder and watches the bear go limp.

EXT. SECLUDED RIVER SHORE - NIGHT

The rapids are long gone. The moon illuminates a calm pool.

Kee pulls the bear by the scruff of its neck, struggling to kick to shore.

He heaves the beast onto a moss-covered shore and collapses, panting.

KEE
Creator forgive me.

He rolls to his side to look at the bear. Its head is smashed in, one ear ripped clean off by the boulder.

Kee kneels closer to its face, checking for any sign of breath.

Nothing.

Kee shakes his head.

KEE (CONT'D)
Even as a bear you could not
swim...

He shoves the bear onto its stomach, mangled head now facing the sky.

Kee holds his hand out, hesitates. He grabs a fistful of fur above the shoulder and pulls.

The fur does not budge. He tries pulling on one paw. Nothing.

KEE (CONT'D)

It sticks to you...

He pokes and prods, yanking at fur up and down the body.

His grabs between the ears and pulls again.

The pelt begins to peel off.

The bear's ear, eyes, and maw slip off their human host with a sickly *SCHLICK*. Fleshy tendrils stick to Jonas's skin beneath.

Kee takes his knife from his belt and continues to peel, sawing at the sinews along the spine.

When the work is done, Kee wrests the pelt from Jonas's body and lays it to dry on the rocks.

Kee sits back, half in shock, staring at Jonas.

KEE (CONT'D)

I am sorry.

Kee sets to work cleaning the bloodied pelt.

Jonas lies dead, brain protruding from his skull, skin paler than the moon.

EXT. SWEAT LODGE - NIGHT

Kee stumbles toward the lodge, shaken and dragging the soaking bear pelt behind him.

Oliver stands outside with the other Potawatomi. Pierre lays unconscious at their feet.

OLIVER

What have you done?

Kee drops to his knees, concealing a sob.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Kee. Answer me.

Kee is despondent. Oliver SLAPS him, startling the men.

ZHAMYEN

Oliver--

OLIVER
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

KEE
H- he fell in the river! Jonas.
Drowned.

Murmurs among the men. Oliver seizes Kee, hoists him up.

OLIVER
Is this your doing?

KEE
No! An accident. He could not swim.

OLIVER
How did he fall?

Kee's eyes wander to the pelt, crumpled on the ground.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Ach! You play with evil and bring
death with you.

KEE
I did not mean harm! He- He
attacked me, father.

OLIVER
You brought it on yourself. My son,
a thief.

Oliver relinquishes Kee, gestures at the supine Pierre.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Toma has confessed.

Toma looks meekly at Kee. Oliver paces.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Newi's body is not yet cold and you
act like this. You were supposed to
tend to the sweat. *His* sweat.

KEE
I thought... This power, father. If
only we understood it we could--

OLIVER
What will the frenchman say when he
wakes? Your recklessness has
claimed another life, Kee.

KEE

It is not my fault. I am trying to protect us!

OLIVER

We will protect ourselves. This is no time to court with dark magic.

KEE

You are no protector!

Oliver turns away from Kee.

OLIVER

(to the men)

Tear down the lodge. We are leaving.

DEBID

Where will we go?

OLIVER

Farther south. The marshes. There was an Odawa camp there two winters past.

ANABET

The game there is even more scarce.

OLIVER

I see no other choice. The British grow bolder. They will find us close, but the mud ensures their cannons cannot follow.

DEBID

(nodding at Pierre)

And what of him?

OLIVER

He has brought ruin on us. Leave him.

Oliver looks at Kee, scornful.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Your mother would be ashamed of you.

He turns away.

Kee shoots to his feet, dashes to Oliver and SHOVES him to the ground.

TOMA WIYAM
 Kee, no! Control yourself!

 KEE
 BASTARD!

Toma and Wiyam grab Kee. He writhes in their grip.
 Debid rushes to Oliver's side.

 KEE (CONT'D)
 You are WEAK and AFRAID! Ashamed of
 me? You left me and mother to die!
 Quaking in the forest with the rest
 of these cowards.

 ZHAMYEN
 That is enough, Kee--

 KEE
 No! You know it to be true. You
 place Newi's death on my shoulders
 when your fear brought the deaths
 of ALL our sisters. ALL our
 mothers.

 ANABET
 There was nothing--

 KEE
 QUIET!

Kee snatches the bear pelt from the ground, shaking it.

 KEE (CONT'D)
 This. This is the strength I
 choose! I will know it's powers and
 find the Lieutenant, with our
 without you.

 OLIVER
 (waving Debid off)
 Enough.

Oliver rises, brushing off his tunic. He collects himself and
 begins to walk away.

 KEE
 Even now you are too much a coward
 to face it!

Oliver whirls around, exasperated.

OLIVER

What would you have me do?! It was an ambush, we were led astray by men at the river. When we returned, there was no hope.

KEE

There was no hope for Micah and still he came! For me. For mother! He cut short her torture and it cost him his life.

OLIVER

I must think of all our lives, Kee. That is my burden!

KEE

Yet you left us defenseless!

OLIVER

(scowling)
I left you.

The two glare at each other, blood boiling.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

I will not walk one more step beside this man. He is marked by foul, wicked things. If you stay with him, you will do so alone.

KEE

So be it.

Oliver strides off, Debid at his hip. The men begin to tear down the lodge.

Toma catches Kee's eye.

TOMA

I am sorry. When Pierre did not wake and you were gone... he was furious.

KEE

I guess that elk will have to wait.

TOMA

You should not leave us. It is not safe.

KEE

There is nothing left for me. You should be happy, one less mouth to feed.

Kee pats Toma's shoulder and steps away.

He settles by boulder, clutching the sopping pelt in his arms.

EXT. BARREN CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Kee watches the procession of men start into the forest.

Oliver does not look at him.

Anabet marches in the back. He stops, whispers to Kee.

ANABET

We will stop near the small lake, a day's journey. There will surely be fish.

Kee gives a tired nod and Anabet joins the party, filing away.

Kee turns his attention to Pierre, still dozing in the dirt.

EXT. BARREN CAMPSITE - DAY

Birds CHIRP, the brush rustles with passing wildlife.

Kee still sits at the boulder, eyelids drooping. He clings to consciousness.

Pierre GRUNTS.

Kee jerks upright.

Pierre stretches his arms, eyes still closed.

PIERRE

Errnnngh.

Realizing he's still holding the pelt, Kee rises silently and crosses to a nearby elm.

He drapes the pelt over a low branch and continues to watch Pierre.

Pierre turns to his side, swinging a leg out as if to straddle someone-

PIERRE (CONT'D)

Jonas?

His eyes flicker open, blinking in the sun.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

Hello?

Kee clears his throat, gives a toothy smile.

KEE

(chipper)

Good morning.

Pierre cranes his neck, sees Kee.

PIERRE

Kee... where am I?

KEE

*Not ten paces from where I left
you. We broke down the lodge last
night.*

(a thin chuckle)

You did not last long in there.

Pierre GROANS and sits up, holding his head.

PIERRE

I felt so...

KEE

*Zhamyen tells me you were not
breathing proper. No wonder you
were passed out in minutes.*

PIERRE

I don't remember...

Pierre clocks the pelt, alarmed.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

Why...?

KEE

*Ah yes, I washed it for you! It
will take some hours yet to dry.
But my, there was all manner of
dirt--*

PIERRE

*It does not need washing. I would
thank you not remove it from my
side again.*

Kee nods, taken aback.

Pierre tries to sit up but falters.

KEE

Easy! You are weak, you should rest longer.

PIERRE

I have not eaten, that is all.

Pierre rubs his eyes and takes in the rest of his surroundings.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

I slept the whole night?

KEE

Half the morning, too. Sound as a bear in winter.

PIERRE

(shaking in head)
Where are the others?

KEE

Wiyam spotted elk tracks not far from here. They have all joined the hunt. It may take some days.

Pierre scoffs.

PIERRE

I could find them an elk.

KEE

I have no doubt. My father though... he prefers things done his way.

PIERRE

Of course.

KEE

Would you like to eat? Toma left us some venison.

PIERRE

No, no. Where is Jonas?

KEE

Somewhere near. He said he was going to tear new cedar planks for your lean-to.

PIERRE

Alone?

KEE

*Oh yes. He took to it in
yesterday's preparations.*

Pierre inhales deeply. He lurches to his feet with surprising speed.

PIERRE

*Take me to him, if you would be so
kind.*

Kee rubs his shoulder.

KEE

*Yes. I am not sure where exactly he
has gone, but he is close.*

Pierre offers a smile, pulling the wet pelt from the tree.

PIERRE

Thank you. Lead the way.

Kee nods and ventures on.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The two men zigzag through trees, Kee ten paces ahead. Pierre appraises him coolly, Kee sweats bullets.

PIERRE

Why are you here?

KEE

Me? I- er- I offered to stay back.

PIERRE

*One so eager for the hunt as
yourself. I'm surprised.*

Kee looks back, smiling.

KEE

*I am tired of my father's hunts. He
is not the tracker he used to be.*

PIERRE

*Hah! And he would not touch the doe
I brought you.*

KEE

Jealous of your abilities, I am certain.

Pierre looks smug.

KEE (CONT'D)

What a rush it must be. That animal might coursing through you.

PIERRE

A blessing, yes.

KEE

How came you by it? You said the pelt was in your possession for some time before you... harnessed it.

PIERRE

Yes, it revealed itself in my hour of need.

KEE

It is a guardian then.

PIERRE

In a way. But then... I often feel it brings out something within me.

KEE

How is that?

Kee walks at Pierre's side now, pressingly curious.

PIERRE

There is great ferocity in me. I have known this since my youth. But no body of man can incarnate such an animal force. This pelt, it is a part of me.

KEE

I see.

Pierre smiles coyly.

PIERRE

It is in you too. This ferocity.

He claps Kee on the back and trudges on.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

It is a vigor I know my son does not possess, so let us press on before the whelp gets hopelessly lost.

Kee and Pierre chuckle.

EXT. CEDAR GROVE - DAY

Kee enters the same grove where he and Jonas peeled bark. Naked trees surround him.

KEE

He was here, I think.

Pierre ambles up behind.

PIERRE

He did this?

KEE

I told you he took to it.

PIERRE

I cannot get him to peel a potato let alone a tree.

KEE

(proud shrug)

I am a good teacher.

PIERRE

But he is not here now.

KEE

Yes--

PIERRE

JONAS!

Pierre cups his hands and yells.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

JONAS COME TO PAPA!

Pierre rubs neck, perturbed.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

I do not know him to be so adventurous.

KEE

He cannot be far now.

PIERRE

Perhaps we went the wrong way. We should check the river.

KEE

No sense in it, I am afraid. I gave him a full deerskin before he left.

Pierre scans Kee's face.

PIERRE

You are sure he was here.

KEE

I did not make this mess! He is enthusiastic but unrefined. See here.

Kee pats the first tree Jonas peeled yesterday.

KEE (CONT'D)

A waste. With a little patience he could have peeled another leg's length of bark.

PIERRE

Hmm... I suppose.

KEE

He could have made his way toward the hills to the west. I told him the trees are softer there.

PIERRE

Right. You are good to accompany me.

Kee smiles and steps out of the grove.

EXT. DENSE WOODS - AFTERNOON

Kee trudges through thick brush, fighting sleep with all his might. Pierre follows close.

PIERRE

JONAS! JONAS! PAPA IS HERE!

Pierre grabs Kee's shoulder.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

This is not right. He would not wander so far.

KEE

Perhaps he is lost after all.

PIERRE

It seems so.

KEE

When you in your other form, beyond the strength... can you smell like a bear?

PIERRE

Yes. You are wise to ask. It is how I always find my way back to Jonas, no matter how far I hunt.

KEE

Then we need not worry. Come nightfall, he will be known to us.

PIERRE

(nodding)

Thank you dear boy.

Kee stops and looks Pierre in the eyes.

KEE

Pierre, I must confess to you the nature of my favor.

Pierre halts, raises an eyebrow.

PIERRE

Favor?

KEE

Your pelt. Last night when I washed it... I wore it, for a moment.

Pierre's face darkens.

KEE (CONT'D)

I hoped... I wanted desperately to understand. And you have described it- your ferocity come into being- I must have it. My home was burned, my people taken, my mother... I will not flee as my father does. I seek the strength to stand against my enemy.

Pierre stands in stony silence.

KEE (CONT'D)

But... it did not work. It did not deem me worthy. I am sorry for my incursion, my curiosity got the better of me.

PIERRE

I commend your honesty.

KEE

You have my word it will not happen again.

PIERRE

It may.

KEE

Sir?

PIERRE

Your cause is noble, Kee. I see you. You are worthy.

KEE

I... thank you.

Pierre pulls Kee's head close to his.

PIERRE

But this power demands much of you, Kee. You must pledge yourself to it, body and soul.

KEE

I will. I will do all that is asked of me.

PIERRE

Then tonight you will become all that I am.

Kee nods his head fervently.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

There is no use searching farther so long as the sun moves against us. You are weary. The sweat must have sapped you of your strength. Why don't you rest until nightfall?

KEE

Are you sure?

PIERRE

I will keep watch for you.

The two men begin to search for a place to settle in.

EXT. GRASSY HILLSIDE - AFTERNOON

Pierre and Kee happen on a peaceful hill to rest.

Kee lies back on the grass, falling asleep in seconds.

Pierre lays out the pelt to dry and sits in the grass, picking dirt out of his nails.

Something catches his eye. He stops.

The bear pelt is missing an ear.

EXT. DREAMSPACE - DAY

A serene meadow, bathed in sunlight.

Kee rests against a tree as his fallen relatives sing.

FAMILY

We remember you sun how you shine
 We remember you moon waiting
 We should all remember always
 We should all remember always

Kee spots his mother dancing among them. She catches Kee's eye and smiles.

IDA & FAMILY

We remember the connected ancestors
 We remember all our relatives
 We should all remember always
 We should all remember always

Kee smiles, then he steels himself.

KEE

I will not fail you mother.

The sun begins to dim. Kee's vision stretches, his kin shrink farther away.

Ida breaks off as her family continues to sing.

IDA

Kee, listen.

She pleads to Kee, urgent now. She is so far away.

IDA (CONT'D)

LISTEN.

KEE

Mother--

IDA

LISTE--

EXT. GRASSY HILLSIDE - EVENING

Crickets have begun to CHIRP through the foliage.

Kee sits up drenched in sweat. He looks down.

The pelt is gone, and Pierre with it.

Kee bolts up, looking in all directions.

KEE

Pierre?

Kee's breath quickens.

KEE (CONT'D)

Pierre, are you here?

He sprints back into the brush.

EXT. DENSE WOODS - EVENING

Kee tears through the woods, thorns slashing at his legs, branches whipping his face.

EXT. RIVERSIDE - RAPIDS - EVENING

Kee emerges at river bank before rushing rapids.

He dashes downstream, kicking up rocks.

EXT. SECLUDED RIVER SHORE - EVENING

Golden light blankets the river bank.

Kee comes to a stop, gasping for breath.

Jonas lies on the shore. Pierre is crouched before him, donning the pelt, back turned to Kee.

KEE

You... you found him.

Pierre says nothing. His head and shoulders shake.

KEE (CONT'D)

I am sorry. I feared this would happen.

Sickly SLURP sounds from Pierre. He is not crying.

KEE (CONT'D)

He must have fallen in.

More SLURPING noises. Kee leans in.

KEE (CONT'D)

Pierre, are you alright?

Pierre turns to face Kee, tears streaming, face covered in blood.

KEE (CONT'D)

You--

Jonas' stomach is torn open. Half eaten intestines spill onto the shore.

Kee scrambles back.

KEE (CONT'D)

What are you--

Pierre chews Jonas' flesh. Swallows.

PIERRE

You asked for my instruction.

KEE

This... you are windigo!

PIERRE

I am blessed with the strength you seek. I must feed to maintain it.

Pierre gets to his feet, stalking toward Kee.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

Why did you lie to me Kee? You said he was not by the river.

KEE

I did not-- Pierre I did not know--

PIERRE
YOU KILLED HIM.

Pierre LUNGES for Kee.

Kee leaps just beyond his grasp. Foot catches on a root, he trips.

Pierre rushes Kee, SCREAMING.

Kee manages to draw his knife just before Pierre barrels down on him.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
YOU KILLED HIIIIIM!

Pierre's gnashing maw reaches for Kee's neck. Kee barely holds him back.

He rams the knife into Pierre's side.

Pierre SCREAMS and falls back, writhing.

Kee clambers around Pierre and takes off running downriver.

Pierre calls after him, blood spilling from his abdomen, convulsing in pain..

PIERRE (CONT'D)
*NIGHT IS COMING! I WILL FIND YOU,
INDIAN! I WILL FIND YOU!*

Kee does not look back.

The current picks up. Kee dives headlong into the river.

EXT. RIVER RAPIDS - EVENING

Kee BURSTS above the roiling surface, arms flailing. The river surges.

Kee flips onto his back, feet pointed down the current.

Kee cranes his neck to see Pierre, but he has vanished. The sounds of the river have drowned out all else.

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

An exhausted Kee treads water as the river whisks him South. He looks warily at either bank, scanning the treeline for any sign of Pierre.

A deadwood elm bobs ahead. Kee paddles off to one side to grab it.

He seizes a branch, flops his upper body over the trunk, panting hard.

EXT. RIVER SHORE - NIGHT

Kee drags himself to the rocky shore. His teeth chatter, the cold has reached his bones.

He lays on his back. The moon is high in the night sky.

Kee peers down the river, swift waters fading into the gloom.

 KEE
 The small lake. They are at the
 small lake.

He gets to his feet, wringing water from his clothes.

EXT. MARSHLANDS - NIGHT

Kee trudges his way through the sparse woods, following the river. His boots stick in the mud.

He wields a long stick, shaving the end to a point with his knife.

EXT. LAKE WINNEBAGO SHORE - NIGHT

Calm waters stretch on to the dim horizon. A thick fog hangs low, obscuring the far shore.

Kee reaches the shore, looking left and right for any sign of life.

Nothing.

 KEE
 FATHER! TOMA!

His voice echoes across the bay. No response.

He sinks to his knees. drops his head, closes his eyes.

 KEE (CONT'D)
 Creator, I am lost. My family is
 near, I know it. Show me the way
 they have gone.

Kee looks again, squinting through the mist.

In the distance, the faint flicker of a campfire, some miles to the East.

KEE (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Kee rises, leaning on his spear, shaking in the cold.

EXT. LAKESIDE CAMP - NIGHT

A pile of embers beside a small pile of driftwood. A semi-circle of empty sleeping mats surrounds it.

Kee beelines for the fire, crouching to hold his hands over the embers. They're almost out.

He produces his knife, shaves a few thin strips from his spear onto the pit.

He pulls out two flint stones and knocks them together until a spark hits the tinder.

The fire livens. Kee drops a piece of driftwood atop and warms his hands again.

He sits back, glancing around the camp.

KEE

Hunting...

A violent shiver courses through him. He pulls his knees up, rocks back and forth.

KEE (CONT'D)

They will return soon.

He spots his father's musket and gunpowder sack lying beside a mat. He frowns.

ZHAMYEN (O.S.)

Kee...

Kee leaps up, seizing his spear.

KEE

Who is there?

A feeble COUGH, somewhere in the dark. Kee points the spear toward the sound.

KEE (CONT'D)
Show yourself.

ZHAMYEN (O.S.)
Come...

Kee stalks forward, kicking more driftwood into the fire. The flames rise, casting light toward the treeline.

Zhamyen lies on his side, bleeding from his chest.

KEE
Zhamyen!

Kee rushes to his side.

ZHAMYEN
Quiet...

Kee examines Zhamyen. A bullet has pierced his chest. His hair is matted in sweat. He is clinging to life.

KEE
What has happened? Where are the others?

ZHAMYEN
Zhagnash... **Lieutenant**...

Kee's blood runs cold.

KEE
Here?

ZHAMYEN
Attacked... took them... for slaves. Anabet was shot. I was... too weak.

KEE
How many were there?

ZHAMYEN
Many... but slowed. They are not... far.

Zhamyen COUGHS, blood spilling down his lip. He reaches for Kee's face.

ZHAMYEN (CONT'D)
I thought... the dark had taken you...

KEE

You were right, Zhamyen. Pierre is
windigo. He sought my flesh, I ran.

ZHAMYEN

It clings to you still...

KEE

(shaking his head)
I am free of him now. He is
wounded. I left him to die in the
forest.

ZHAMYEN

Swear, Kee... that you will walk in
the light.

Kee nods, tears forming.

KEE

I swear.

ZHAMYEN

Save them...

KEE

I will not rest until the
Lieutenant dies--

ZHAMYEN

No. Revenge is... folly. Save
them... escape...

Zhamyen's eyes are glazing over. He fades.

KEE

Rest now, old friend.

The faintest hint of a smile crosses Zhamyen's face. He dies.

Kee closes Zhamyen's eyes. He pulls Zhamyen up gently,
leaning his body up against a tree.

He rifles through Zhamyen's pockets, produces a small abalone
shell and a medicine bag.

With a stony expression, Kee empties crumbled sage, tobacco,
sweetgrass, and cedar into the shell. He places it on
Zhamyen's lap.

Kee returns to the fire, grabs a burning stick.

He lowers the stick onto the shell, lighting the medicine. He
wafts the smoke over Zhamyen's head and his own.

KEE (CONT'D)

May the stars watch over as you
walk on.

Kee collects himself, and stands. Near Zhamyen's body he spots a path of tracks through the mud.

He snatches Oliver's musket and gunpowder and sets off.

EXT. DEEP MARSH - MORNING

The sun permeates the fog, casting a sickly glow on the marsh.

Kee wades thigh-deep in water, stalks of wild rice around him.

He stops, the tracks are long gone.

VOICES ahead. Kee shrinks down, creeps onward.

EXT. BRITISH CAMP - MORNING

The marsh rises into a dirt embankment. Four British tents surround a tall weeping willow. A horse is tethered to one branch.

Kee stays hidden in the tall grass, peering into the camp.

Oliver, Toma, Debid, Wiyam, and Anabet sit tied up around the base of the tree, each more bloodied than the last.

Anabet is unconscious and deathly pale.

Two FOOTSOLDIERS stand near the tree, bayonets pointed at their prisoners.

SOLDIER #1

**I would not mind offing the lot of
them after the trouble they've
given us.**

SOLIDER #2

**I'll lose a foot if we spend
another day in the marsh.**

SOLIDER #1

**Take those boots. It's only right
they walk barefoot, filthy animals.**

He points at Debid, who stares defiantly at the two men. One eye is swollen shut.

Solider #2 grunts and stoops down. He yanks one boot off. Debid does not blink.

SOLIDER #2
(snickering)
**Must have knocked this one harder
than I thought.**

He starts to pull off Debid's second boot. Debid twists and KICKS the soldier in the face.

The solider falls back, raises his musket.

SOLDIER #2
GAH! Say your last, bushnigger!

THE LIEUTENANT (O.S.)
Stop.

Kee's gaze flits to the nearest tent. The Lieutenant steps into the morning air.

THE LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
**Fort La Baye will not stand the
winter without repairs. We need
what workers we can find.**

Kee tightens his grip on the musket, rage in his eyes.

SOLDIER #2
Damn near bashed my head in, sir.

THE LIEUTENANT
**Then you may choose the assignment
upon our return. Roofing, perhaps?**

Four more FOOTSOLDIERS emerge from their tents, surveying the scene.

Soldier #2 collects himself, smiles.

SOLIDER #2
**I will think on that, sir. Thank
you.**

Kee starts to flank the camp, keeping his eyes glued on the Lieutenant.

THE LIEUTENANT
(nodding at the prisoners)
Are they all accounted for?

SOLIDER #1

Yes, sir. Could not run if they wanted. There was a smaller one among them, last we saw, no?

THE LIEUTENANT

Gone by now, I am sure. These savage folk are prone to eating their young.

Murmurs among the British.

THE LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)

We must return. Our cannons lie hidden to the north.

Kee sneaks onto dry land, taking refuge in the bushes. The British have their backs turned to him now.

The two footsoldiers untie the Potawatomi men from the tree.

The moment the rope drops, Anabet pitches into the dirt, MOANING.

Wiyam turns to help him, Soldier #1 barks.

SOLDIER #1

Stop! Stand up, all of you.

The Potawatomi rise. Anabet remains prone with his face in the mud.

SOLDIER #2

Line up. Single file.

The Potawatomi obey. The Lieutenant walks up and down, examining them.

Soldier #1 shoulders his musket, bends down, rolls Anabet onto his back.

SOLIDER #1

Sir. The wound festers. It will take days to heal.

THE LIEUTENANT

No use.

The soldier stands and aims his musket at Anabet's head.

Kee eyes widen. He bolts to his feet, musket raised.

OLIVER

KEE, NO!!

Kee freezes, his father has spotted him.

The Lieutenant smacks Oliver's stomach with his musket.

THE LIEUTENANT
Silence, Indian.

Oliver keels over, eyes downcast but continues to yell.

OLIVER
STAY HIDDEN KEE! FOLLOW!

The Lieutenant kicks Oliver's legs out. He crumples into the mud.

Kee ducks back into the bush, frantic.

THE LIEUTENANT
I said, SILENCE.

OLIVER
THEY WILL TAKE US NORTH. DO NOT
FIRE IN VAIN.

The Lieutenant draws his sword, points to Oliver's face.

THE LIEUTENANT
**One more word and I cut out your
tongue.**

Oliver falls quiet.

THE LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
(to Soldier #1)
Do not hesitate, soldier.

A SHOT rings out across the marsh. Anabet stills.

Kee claps his hand over his mouth, tears in his eyes.

THE LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
Good.

He strides off.

EXT. BARREN CAMPSITE - DAY

The British march away, tents packed. The Lieutenant leads on horseback. Soldiers surround the line of prisoners.

A single length of rope binds every prisoners' wrists.

They pass Kee, still hidden in the bush.

Oliver talks aloud as he passes.

OLIVER
It is good to see you, my son.

SOLIDER #2
Quiet!

The party proceeds into the woods.

Kee slinks back to Anabet's body.

KEE
Brother. I am sorry I was not here
sooner.

He hoists Anabet into a sitting position, leans him against
the tree.

Kee touches his wounds. He was shot in the side and the
heart.

KEE (CONT'D)
Thank you, Anabet. It was you that
let me here.

Kee touches his forehead to Anabet's and turns to follow the
British.

EXT. MARSHLAND - DAY

Kee trails the British soldiers from afar, catching glimpses
of redcoats through the trees ahead.

EXT. MARSHY FOREST - DEER PATH - DAY

Kee watches the tired party march to a dense thicket. The
Lieutenant raises an arm.

THE LIEUTENANT
Halt.

He swings off his horse.

THE LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
Rest. Ten minutes.

The soldiers settle, popping open canteens to drink.

SOLDIER #1
You lot, down.

He points at the ground. The Potawatomi lower themselves.
Kee sneaks closer, creeping behind a tree nearest his father.

SOLDIER #2
How far, sir?

THE LIEUTENANT
Near, now.

SOLDIER #2
**I can't tell top from bottom in
these woods.**

Kee cups his hands to his mouth, gives a faint WHISTLE.
Oliver sits up slowly, without turning his head.

OLIVER
Kee?

SOLDIER #1
Quiet.

OLIVER
Stay back. They will have their
cannons again soon--

SOLDIER #1
Be QUIET!

An idea dawns on Kee. He looks down at his father's rifle.
Soldier #1 approaches, rolling up his sleeves.

OLIVER
Go now, Kee!

Kee retreats, silent. Soldier #1 delivers a punch to Oliver's
gut. Oliver GROANS.

SOLDIER #1
**You have lost yourself a week's
rations.**

The Lieutenant peers past Oliver into the woods, suspicious.
Kee slinks further away.

EXT. MARSHY FOREST - DAY

Kee runs through the woods, leaving the British far behind
him.

Mud still pulls hat his boots. His eyes dart through the trees in search of the cannons.

EXT. MARSHY FOREST - TRODDEN PATH - DAY

Kee stumbles across heavy wheel tracks, gored deep into the muddy earth.

Breathless, he changes directions, follows the tracks.

EXT. MARSHY FOREST - CLEARING - DAY

Kee steps out into a wide, sunny clearing.

The tracks deepen as they go, stopping before a towering pile of branches.

Cautious, he pulls one back. The cannons hide beneath.

He clears the brush, assessing the massive weapons.

Below one wheel rests a small stack of cannonballs and a powder bag.

EXT. MARSHY FOREST - EVENING

Two British soldiers march up front, followed by the prisoners, the remaining foot soldiers, and the Lieutenant on horseback picking up the rear.

Kee steps into their path, rifle raised.

CRACK! One of the front soldiers, falls into the mud.

OLIVER

NO!

The Potawatomi look on, hopeless.

The Lieutenant's eyes zero in on Kee, a cold snarl forming.

THE LIEUTENANT

Kill it.

Kee sprints away.

EXT. MARSHY FOREST - CLEARING - EVENING

Kee bursts into the clearing and scrambles behind one cannon, pulling out his flint. He flicks them over the wick.

All five remaining soldiers tear out of the woods straight toward Kee.

SOLDIER #2
Come here boy!

The Lieutenant follows close behind, dragging the shuffling Potawatomi men by their reins.

Kee flicks a spark onto the wick. It lights, burning down fast.

The Lieutenant's eyes widen.

KEE
GET DOWN!

Kee leaps away. The Potawatomi hit the deck.

BOOOOMMM!

The Lieutenant's horse NEIGHS and rears up, bucking its master off. It gallops away.

Smoke fills the clearing. Kee's ears RING.

Kee stands, stalking through the smoke towards the Potawatomi.

He passes three British soldiers lying dead on the forest floor, limbs blown off.

THE LIEUTENANT (O.S.)
FALL BACK. ALL FALL BACK.

Kee spots Soldier #2 limp off into the woods.

Kee reaches Debid first. He stoops down, cuts his wrist restraints. Debid takes off running after Soldier #2.

Soldier #2's SCREAMS pierce the air.

The other Potawatomi have pinned Soldier #1 to the ground. Oliver catches Kee's eye.

Kee peers through the thinning smoke. The Lieutenant's coat disappears behind a tree.

Kee takes off after him.

OLIVER
Kee!

Oliver reaches for the downed soldier's knife.

EXT. MARSHY FOREST - DAY

The Lieutenant runs for his life. He glances behind him.

Kee chases him, closing the gap fast.

The Lieutenant stops, pulls the musket from his shoulder and FIRES.

Kee doesn't break stride. The bullet whizzes past his head.

The Lieutenant reaches for his sword.

THE LIEUTENANT

NO!

Kee leaps atop the Lieutenant and plunges his knife into his chest.

The Lieutenant blinks in shock, stares into Kee's eyes. His lips curl into a smile.

THE LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)

**I remember you... Scared...
little... boy...**

Kee stabs him again. And again. And again. He CRIES OUT, raining blows on the Lieutenant.

Oliver pulls Kee off, his wrists bloodied but freed.

OLIVER

Calm, son. Calm. It is over now.

Tears flow down Kee's cheeks.

KEE

He killed her. It was him--

OLIVER

I know. I know.

Kee hugs his father close, sobbing.

EXT. MARSHY FOREST - CLEARING - TWILIGHT

The British bodies are piled beside the cannons. Sun sets on the battlefield.

The Potawatomi men nurse their wounds around a small campfire.

Kee paces back and forth at the fringes.

TOMA
Kee, how is it you return to us?

DEBID
Our lives are in your debt,
brother.

KEE
We must keep moving.

TOMA
We have marched all day.

WIYAM
It will take time before more
British come this way.

KEE
It is not the British I fear.

DEBID
What then?

KEE
Pierre. He is windigo.

A silence falls over the men.

OLIVER
How do you know?

KEE
He found Jonas by the river. When I
reached him... he was eating... I
fled.

No one says a word.

KEE (CONT'D)
That is how they survived so long.
The bodies of French and Indians
litter the North forests.

TOMA
The pelt, then. It helped him turn.

KEE
It must. He did not know what he
had done--

WIYAM
Zhamyen warned of this! Oliver,
your son does not listen--

OLIVER

We have won a great victory today,
at my son's hand. Kee, come with
me.

Oliver rises and takes Kee by the arm into the trees.

The other men rise too, pacing in worry.

EXT. MARSHY FOREST - NIGHT

Oliver slows his pace, talks calmly to Kee.

OLIVER

Zhamyen is gone.

KEE

I know. I found the camp where you
were taken. He was still breathing.

This pains Oliver.

KEE (CONT'D)

I smudged before I left him. He is
with the Creator now.

Oliver takes Kee's shoulder.

OLIVER

As is Anabet.

Kee nods. Oliver produces a bundle of sage and presses it
into Kee's hands.

KEE

Why--

OLIVER

Do you see the darkness now? It has
closed around you, thick. Zhamyen
saw this.

KEE

Yes.

OLIVER

And do you renounce it fully?

KEE

Y- Yes.

OLIVER

There is no greater evil, Kee. He would have eaten you or made you like him had you stayed. Do you renounce it?

KEE

I do.

OLIVER

I could not help you on the path you chose, but you are here now, and Zhamyen is not. You will take up his mantle. Ask that the spirits watch over us.

Kee takes the sage gingerly.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Now we sleep.

KEE

Father I cannot rest. Nights will be haunted by Pierre. He is wounded, I caught him with my knife as I ran, but I do not know how his magic heals him. We must move.

Oliver considers, gives a curt nod.

OLIVER

Shoulder Debid's load. He is hurt most.

KEE

I will.

Kee pockets the sage.

EXT. MARSHY FOREST - CLEARING - NIGHT

Toma and Debid bicker by the fire. Oliver strolls out of the woods with Kee, barking orders.

OLIVER

Toma, up. Pack what rations the British had, we are going.

TOMA

But--

OLIVER

Do not speak. Move.

Toma obeys.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Debid, is your arm braced?

DEBID
Yes, sir.

KEE
Can you walk unburdened? I will
carry what you need.

Debid nods, solemn.

OLIVER
Where is Wiyam?

DEBID
Fetching firewood.

OLIVER
Call him back.

Debid rises, cups one hand over his mouth and WHISTLES.

Oliver begins to put out the fire.

Kee crosses to the pile of bodies, where Toma pulls bread
from bloody satchels.

TOMA
There is not enough here.

KEE
We must manage.

Kee draws the sword from the Lieutenant's waist. He examines
it in the moonlight.

TOMA
Will you wield it?

KEE
In her memory, not his.

Kee rifles through the other belongings. He grabs a small tin
ammunition box.

A SCREAM echoes from somewhere in the woods.

DEBID
WIYAM?

Silence.

KEE
Together! He is here!

Toma, Debid, Oliver and Kee stand back-to-back, weapons drawn.

Heavy FOOTFALLS emanate from the dark. The direction is unclear.

TOMA
Wiyam! Are you there?

Wiyam's body is thrown like a ragdoll into the clearing, chest torn open.

The monstrous bear charges into the clearing. Even with a stilted limp it moves with speed.

OLIVER
WATCH OUT!

The Potawatomi jump away. Debid isn't fast enough. The bear pins him to the ground and steps on his neck.

Toma jumps onto the bear's back, stabbing his knife into the hide.

KEE
GRAB THE HEAD!

Toma hangs for dear life on the thrashing creature. He reaches for the scalp.

The bear twists, shaking Toma off. Kee charges at the bear, sword raised.

KEE (CONT'D)
TOMA!

The bear bites into Toma's face.

Kee brings down the sword on the bear's head, lodging squarely in its skull.

The bear swats at Kee. Kee leaps back, strikes again, this time cleaving the bear's remaining ear off.

Oliver flanks the bear.

The bear backs off, stumbling over Toma's body.

KEE (CONT'D)
Now!

Oliver reaches for the scalp. He grabs ahold and heaves backward.

The pelt peels off Pierre's head. The bear body still bucks.

Pierre's eyes are black, teeth bared in rage. Blood flows from his wounded head.

Kee stabs the sword straight through Pierre's mouth.

The body seizes, then drops.

Oliver and Kee catch their breath, look at their fallen brothers.

OLIVER
Burn it. Him with it.

EXT. MARSHY FOREST - CLEARING - MORNING

Oliver and Kee watch as a bonfire rages, rising to consume Pierre and the pelt.

Oliver bends to one knee and bows his head, overcome with sorrow.

Kee looks at the dancing flames, watches a twisted dream go up in smoke.

Part of Pierre's head is cleaved open from the sword. His ear dangles by thread.

Before the flames reach it, Kee juts his arm out and pulls the ear free.

He stares at the ear. He pulls the tin ammo box from his pocket and places the ear inside.

He shuts the box and shoves it into the bonfire.

Oliver does not notice a thing.

EXT. ROCKY HILLSIDE - DAY

SUPER: TWO WEEKS LATER

Snow blankets the landscape. Clouds hang low, a frigid wind blows downhill. The land lays in eerie silence.

A BEAR CUB wanders uphill, nosing at bushes.

A weather-worn Kee and Oliver peek over a nearby boulder. Oliver wears a beaver pelt. Kee bares his teeth in cold, still donning a simple tunic.

Oliver hands Kee a new bow, along with a quiver of arrows. He holds his finger to his mouth.

OLIVER
(whisper)
It is alone.

Kee nods. He notches an arrow and rises, taking aim.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Breathe.

Kee stares daggers into the unsuspecting bear, stills his shaking hands.

Kee lets the arrow fly. It strikes the bear in its heart. The bear ROARS, stumbles, collapses into the snow.

Oliver claps Kee on the back.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
AHEEYA! That's my boy! You have
been gifted a new coat for winter!

Kee smiles shakily, lowers his bow.

The two men approach the felled bear with caution. Its chest heaves but it does not move.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Your knife. Quick.

Kee moves swiftly to the bear's head. He slits the bear's throat. He watches as the life leaves the bear's eyes.

KEE
Where has its mother gone?

OLIVER
Shot, surely. The British hunt them
for sport. We will find her rotting
near.

Oliver spits into the snow. Kee holds his hand over the bear's eyes, bows his head.

KEE
Loyal bear, may your journey bring
you peace.

Without pause, he begins to skin the bear.

EXT. SNOWY FOREST - CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Oliver roasts a massive hunk of bear meat over a fire.

Kee sits beside him, staring at the bear pelt drying on a branch.

OLIVER

You did well, son. I could not fell
a bear at your age.

KEE

Mm.

OLIVER

You should be proud.

KEE

I am father.

OLIVER

We will need to stay put a while.
There is a month of meat smoke.

KEE

Then, West?

OLIVER

Where else?

Kee nods, absent-minded. He rises.

KEE

I will gather more firewood.

He ambles into the dark.

EXT. SNOWY FOREST - CLEARING - NIGHT

Kee hoists a bundle of sticks under one arm.

A SNAP of a branch nearby. Kee looks up.

A BRITISH SOLDIER wielding a torch stares at him some ten
paces away.

Kee drops the sticks and starts to run.

The soldier SHOUTS.

SOLDIER
OVER HERE! INDIAN!

More VOICES, too many to count. The forest comes alive with the sound of redcoats.

Kee breaks into a sprint.

EXT. SNOWY FOREST - CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Kee tears into camp, Oliver is already standing.

OLIVER
 How many?

KEE
 I could not see. Many. Too many.

OLIVER
 Go! Cover your tracks. I will lead them away.

KEE
 We can outrun them. We always have.

OLIVER
 You were right Kee. I have run long enough. I will die a warrior, not a coward.

KEE
 No, I will not leave you--

OLIVER
 Hush.

Oliver holds his Kee's head against his own. Then he rises and dashes into the fray.

Kee watches in despair.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
 HEYA HEYA!

Oliver draws the redcoat's focus. Some DOZEN SOLDIERS emerge from the darkness. Oliver hightails through the trees like a madman, shots ringing out.

Kee begins to hyperventilate. He clutches his chest, sinking to the ground.

Kee fumbles through his pocket, pulls out the SMOKED EAR. It is long spoiled, black with spots of mold.

A shadow blots out the moonlight. Oliver opens his eyes.

SOLDIER

BEAR!

The monster slams into the oncoming British. SHOUTS of confusion and terror.

Oliver gets to his feet, gaping at the scene before him.

The bear bounds in and out of the dark at impossible speed. With each pounce it mauls another soldier. Rending arms from their sockets, heads from their necks.

In flashes, Oliver sees the crooked limbs, the gaping maw, the beady, glowing eyes.

OLIVER

NO!

Oliver marches toward the bloodbath, grief and horror struck across his face.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

The British forces have descended into chaos. It is every man for himself.

Oliver waves his arms wildly, begging for Kee to notice.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

KEE! TAKE IT OFF!

The bear pays no mind. It gleefully pounces on the last two surviving soldiers, crushing their spines beneath its paws.

The bear pants, blood dripping from its jaws. It tears a chunk from one soldier's neck and swallows it. It turns.

Oliver stands, aiming a fallen soldier's flintlock pistol at the bear.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

You kept a piece of him, didn't you?

The bear stares unblinking.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

You took a piece of that monster.

The bear rears onto its hind legs and reaches for its head, pulling down. The pelt begins to unravel, revealing its human host.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

You had your revenge! Everything was behind us! Now this evil returns to the world because of YOU! I do not know you.

The bear face peels back. Kee stands before Oliver, his body half man, half bear. One arm remains a paw.

Kee's eyes shimmer, a craze of bloodlust.

KEE

Father, it is me.

OLIVER

You are not my son. You are a child of Nishnabe no longer.

KEE

I could not lose you--

OLIVER

DO NOT LIE! I see it in your eyes. The monster is within you.

KEE

Look what I have done, father. Slaughtered twice the men in minutes what took us a year to achieve.

OLIVER

Not like this, Kee. You have turned on your God, your family.

Oliver raises the pistol. Kee stares right past it, he feels invincible.

KEE

I will continue this fight. My work is only beginning.

OLIVER

I will not let you.

KEE

So be it.

Kee leaps at Oliver, raising his bear claw. Oliver FIRES.

Kee collapses in the snow.

Oliver's eyes do not waver. Jaw tight, shoulders stiff, he drops the pistol and walks away.