

BARKSKINS

by

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Based on the novel "Barkskins" by Annie Proulx

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1690 OR THEREABOUTS, NEW FRANCE: THE FRENCH, FRESH OFF A VICTORY AT THE BATTLE OF QUEBEC WHERE THEY HALTED THE BRITISH, FACE NEW ENCROACHMENTS FROM THE VORACIOUS HUDSON BAY FUR TRADING COMPANY WHO, WITH THE HELP OF THE BRITISH, SEEK TO OPEN TRADE ROUTES NORTH. THE LAND IS THICK WITH INDIAN TRIBES, SOME HOSTILE, OTHERS OPEN TO TRADE AND PARLEY WITH THE JESUIT MISSIONARIES, FRENCH FUR TRADERS AND BRITISH MERCHANTS. ALL PARTIES BELIEVE THIS NEW LAND TO BE A VAST AND INEXHAUSTIBLE SOURCE OF WEALTH.

EXT. WOODS -- NIGHT

BLACKNESS and then the sounds of the night creatures seep in like music from the past. The electric hum of mosquitos and gnats fills the air.

WEAK TORCHLIGHT reflected off the inky surface of a cedar bog as the REFLECTION of a MAN appears, face wrapped in muslin to keep the mosquitos at bay. The bog denizens spook at his approach as he DRAGS something to the water's edge.

The Man swings the reed torch at the night, scattering sparks as he steps into the bog.

WE PULL BACK to see that the Man is dragging a BODY, wrapped in dirty sack cloth. A leather belt secures the burial shroud around the body. On the belt we see a polished BRASS PLATE with the motto, Pro Pelle Cutem etched into it...

An ARM flops free from the wrap. The Man tucks the arm back in, plants his torch in the soft mud.

He drags the body deeper into the brackish water.

The thick bog water lifts the body and it drifts into the Man's arms as if in some final baptism.

He pushes the body down but it floats back up.

The Man trudges back to shore and pulls a LARGE STONE from the muck. He lugs it back out to the floating body.

A BEAT as The Man looks skyward through the roof of trees and to the sky and the stars, twinkling ancient and indifferent to this speck of a moment.

MAN

Adieu...

With that he sets the stone on the dead man's chest.

WE PULL BACK and again see the Man's masked reflection in the bog standing over the sinking body as it races down to the watery depths, the brass plate on the belt shimmering, *Pro Pelle Cutem* as we...

EXT. ST. LAWRENCE RIVER -- NEXT DAY

CAMERA FLOATS down the broad dark ribbon of water, mist shifting over its inscrutable surface as a LONG BOAT coalesces and WE FIND...

EXT. LONG BOAT -- PREDAWN

HARKENING FACES of MEN lined at the gunwale as the boat makes its way across the dark choppy waters.

There are two types of men on the boat -- A CAPTAIN and his CREW and then two dozen 'PASSENGERS' from Europe -- men who have signed their life away, debtors, petty thieves, drunks, cutpurses -- all of them hoping to make a fresh start in this new and savage land as a dim settlement takes shape on the shore.

As we PAN ACROSS the 'passengers' and find RENE SEL (20s) French, lank hair, dark hooded eyes. He has something the other men don't -- the flicker of hope, a new beginning.

The Captain grabs Sel.

CAPTAIN

You there, see if that one's done for...

He indicates CHARLES DUQUET (20s), a Parisian sneak thief in his former life, stick thin, wrapped in a dirty cloak laying in the filthy bilge water by the cargo of kegs, baled furs, caged fowl and two hobbled mules tethered to brass cleats.

Sel nudges Duquet. Nothing.

Sel kneels and puts a hand to Duquet's neck, lifting his face from the bilge water. There is a dim light in Duquet's eyes as if some horror is now coming back to him.

DUQUET

I want to go back. To France...

SEL

There is no going back now. We
must ready for our new lives.

Duquet looks around and then SCRAMBLES to leap over
board.

He slips past Sel, puts a hand on the gunwale and just
before he can jump into the dark river the Captain THUMPS
him with an oar handle.

Duquet FALLS back to the bottom of the boat.

CAPTAIN

You will not exit my boat without
permission.

Duquet cowers, Sel intercedes...

SEL

He's taken with a fever and
delirious.

CAPTAIN

I will have him delivered properly
into the custody of Constable
Bouchard as that is my contract.
See that he does not elude his
fate.

The Captain strides off.

Sel leans Duquet against a nail keg. Blood runs from a
gash on Duquet's skull as he carries on his litany of
pity...

DUQUET

... I did not take the dress, just
the apples. Yes I am guilty of
the apples. My Jacqueline wanted
the dress and so I took it on
credit and that was my doom.
Bastille or this godforsaken
place. What choice is that?

SEL

It matters not what came before.
We are here...

Sel points to the outline of land -- tree covered swales,
misted over and then the faint glow of something in the
dark, dozens of hearth fires burning.

DUQUET

Fucking trees.

SEL

Yes trees.

Duquet looks out and then VOMITS into a tin bailer as the deckhands scramble, readying the landing.

BOAT CAPTAIN

Ready to land!

The boat takes aim for the bank as a crude dock appears from the river mist.

A YOUNG BOY stands on the dock holding a guttering candle lamp flocked by mosquitos and gnats.

The Captain studies the men as they take in the vast forest, the hearth smoke and stench of the settlement drifting down the bank in welcome.

CAPTAIN

Welcome to Wobik. All the land and bugs and Savages a man could want.

The Captain spits into the water as the 'passengers' discuss their new home taking shape through the wet gloom.

The boat thumps into its berth.

But then we hear a murmur ripple through the passengers as they spy a LARGE TREE TRUNK circling in a nearby eddy. The ROTTING BODIES of a dozen INDIANS decorate the twisted limbs of the tree trunk. Ravens and magpies look up, startled from their repast and caw a carrion welcome.

Sel crosses himself at the sight.

EXT. DOCKS -- DAY

Sel and the other men are led off the docks toward the settlement of Wobik.

Sel looks back to see Duquet being carried off the boat by two deckhands. The men drop Duquet face first into the mud next to a pile of rotten beaver pelts.

EXT. WOBIK, NEW FRANCE -- DAY

A collection of low wooden buildings hacked into the shoreline. A single muddy road splits the settlement in two, lined with small cabins and canvas wall tents. The whole place is alive with trade and barter, the messy tide pool of civilization and commerce springing up.

WE FIND Sel and the rest of the men as they are herded through town by CONSTABLE BOUCHARD (40s) and his two DEPUTIES -- what passes for law in these parts.

Some of the sights:

TRAPPERS barter all manner of furs to steely-eyed merchants. Men with sledges emerge from the gloomy woods bearing forest plunder.

Slaughtered moose and deer carcasses hung on a game rail and splayed over a smoking peat fire to keep the flies at bay. Ravens and magpies circle stealing entrails, wild dogs lurk.

Sel stops to watch three Jesuit PRIESTS standing around a CAGED BLACK BEAR singing "Ave Verum Corpus" to it. Bouchard pulls him back in line with the others.

THE CAMERA LANDS on TOM MCBOGLE (12) watching the entrance of the new men. He dashes off as we...

INT. COOKE & SON HOUSE -- DAY

FIND Tom as he scampers up a set of stairs and comes to a door. He knocks and then ENTERS to find his father DUD MCBOGLE, local mill owner.

McBogle is short and powerfully built and wears a long skinning knife on his belt and has sawdust in his beard.

Seated at a large desk is ELISHA COOKE (40s), a wealthy Englishman, land owner and businessman who has pushed his way into New France hoping to extend the Crown's tenuous financial and trade route holdings.

McBogle & Cooke are studying a large map of the territory.

These are men with grand designs, who talk with the belief that they are a step ahead of the rest of the denizens of Wobik. Everything is at play -- most importantly the repercussions of the recent Grand Alliance between the French, the Spanish, the Dutch and the English.

The English wish to break the French stranglehold on the region so that it may connect to the Thirteen Colonies.

Dud raises a finger at his son as he ENTERS.

MCBOGLE

Mud, Tom.

Tom addresses the boot scrape. McBogle returns the map.

MCBOGLE (CONT'D)

The Savages are still being put down west of the river.

COOKE

Dillard and Kent?

MCBOGLE

Took care of them.

COOKE

Constable Bouchard?

MCBOGLE

Aye. Thinks it's the work of the very same Savages.

COOKE

I shall further guide the Constable's thinking on this.

TOM

(interrupting)
Father--

MCBOGLE

Not now Tom. Men discussing business...

He returns his attention to Cooke.

COOKE

There is no luck except where there is discipline, Dud.

Dud crosses to give Tom a cuffing. Cooke stops him.

COOKE (CONT'D)

I see things you don't Dud. That is my gift.

MCBOGLE

And I see a parcel rich and ripe for the taking.

(MORE)

MCBOGLE (CONT'D)

Full of straight white pine,
enough to mast an entire fleet.
And there is a crick that connects
it all.

(then)

Stake the claim.

COOKE

When word gets around about what
happened to Dillard and Kent I
will drive twice the bargain.

MCBOGLE

Word is already around.

COOKE

We must not look anxious.

McBogle slams a hand down on the map, impatient...

MCBOGLE

You're not the only one with
designs on that land. Others will
come with the backing of the
Hudson Bay Company, not just
scouts and agents. And the
French...

Cooke turns to Tom McBogle standing in the corner.

COOKE

Tom, do you think your father is
threatening me?

MCBOGLE

That's not--

COOKE

Let the boy speak. He has ears.
(to Tom)
Would you like to know what your
father does for me?

McBogle puts hand to his knife, stares at Cooke...

COOKE (CONT'D (CONT'D)

(to Tom)

He did some important work for me,
Tom. Maybe someday you can do the
same.

TOM

Yes sir...

McBogle takes his hand away from the knife...

COOKE

What news have you Tom?

TOM

The boat is here.

COOKE

We're there new men aboard?

TOM

Yes, Mister Cooke. I counted
twenty.

He gives Tom a candy and EXITS at a clip behind McBogle.

EXT. DOCKS -- DAY

A well-appointed BOAT glides down the channel and into the docks.

The deckhands quickly moor the boat as HAMISH GOAMES, (40s) thin, sporting polished black boots steps off the boat followed by his right hand man YVONNE(30s), a large half Ojibwe Indian with hard black eyes.

Yvonne carries a long shiny axe and a rifle slung over his shoulder in an ornate sling.

Goames carries a BOOK with a long leather bookmark draping from it. He signals to the PORTERS to unload three large crates sitting in the hold.

BEAT as Goames and Yvonne regard the tree trunk with the dead Savages on it as it circles in the eddy.

GOAMES

Iroquois?

Yvonne unlashes a canoe from the boat and paddles over to the corpses...

A bold raven defends his supper and caws and pecks at Yvonne who has pulled alongside the log to study the bodies.

Yvonne pulls his axe and smacks the raven dead with the flat face. He then proceeds to pillage a BONE NECKLACE from one of the bodies. He studies the necklace, noting the craftsmanship that went into it and the strange black OBSIDIAN ORB in the center of it.

He paddles back, ties off the canoe and then crosses to Goames who stands on the dock reading a book. Yvonne drops the necklace onto the book.

YVONNE

Huron...

Off this we...

EXT. WOBK, STREET -- DAY

Bouchard and his deputies lead the men past a church. Bouchard stops to cross himself. Some of the 'passengers' do the same and are then hustled into a TRADE HALL.

INT. TRADE HALL -- DAY

The air thick with smoke and body heat of assembled locals -- farmers, land owners, merchants and tent hawkers and so forth who eye the new men from the boat, sizing them up as though they are livestock.

MOLL, a sallow-faced woman moves among the men, freezing them with a rotten smile and flash of cleavage as she CHALKS numbers on their jackets. Each man is assigned a number...

One of the 'passengers' tries to grab at Moll's bosom and is quick to be shown her knife, the dirty BLADE of which she presses against his neck...

The men ROAR their approval, goading Moll on.

MOLL

Touch for a nick is it?

The man WITHDRAWS the offending paw.

Moll slowly WITHDRAWS the blade and chalks 13 on his jacket, but not before pulling open her blouse to give him a glimpse.

ANGLE ON MCBOGLE & COOKE discussing the men up for indenture.

MCBOGLE

... Eight is one of ours. Good strong back...

COOKE

What of nine?

MCBOGLE

Rapist. Bound for the Selways
down river where he will find
nothing to violate except pine
knots and lingcod.

Cooke indicates Sel, looking around the room, wide-eyed.

COOKE

And that one. Three?

McBogle consults a list he's dredged from his pocket...

MCBOGLE

Not spoken for...

McBogle PUSHES through the crowd to have a closer look.

MCBOGLE (CONT'D)

Ho, French... Parlez vous
L'Anglais?

SEL

Aye...

McBogle raises his hands, indicating that Sel should do
the same. Sel obliges. His hands are deeply calloused.
Strong.

MCBOGLE

Bucheron?

SEL

Aye.

Bouchard steps between them.

BOUCHARD

You'll wait your turn like a good
Englishmen, Dud.

MCBOGLE

I'm with Mister Cooke.

BOUCHARD

Talked that beard splitter into
your masts and planks scheme, I
see. Perhaps I'll un talk him
over brandy.

MCBOGLE

You would do well not to interfere
with my affairs, Bouchard.

(indicating Sel)

(MORE)

MCBOGLE (CONT'D)

This man is not spoken for. We will have him.

BOUCHARD

You have your men. Another boat arrives in a week and another after that. English I hear and then the potato eaters -- your kind, Dud.

MCBOGLE

We want that man.

BOUCHARD

Well he ain't one of yours. Now move off until I have their marks.

Bouchard leads the men to a CLERK seated at a simple pine table. There is a ledger open in front of him, a stack of papers and a large black quill pen with an ink pot. The clerk's grey beard is tipped in indigo ink...

He dabs the quill as the men approach the table.

BOUCHARD (CONT'D)

Make your mark and be quick.

The first man in line takes the quill and hovers over the paper offered by the Clerk. He squints at the words but they are merely black squiggles to him. The man signs a crude X...

CLERK

Miller...

A Farmer steps forward to claim his man.

We see this repeated with each of the men from the boat as Bouchard, Cooke and McBogle have words about Sel.

COOKE

... I am prepared to double my offer.

BOUCHARD

And double I say he is spoken for.

COOKE

By whom?

BOUCHARD

Monsieur Trepagny...

COOKE

Monsieur Trepagny has no money and furthermore no industry on his land to speak of.

BOUCHARD

I'm a man of my word and I will not have your barter talk dislodge that. That man was promised to Trepagny and that is who I shall deliver him to.

MCBOGLE

And if the mad bastard fails to appear?

BOUCHARD

He will show.

ANGLE ON SEL as he approaches the ledger and SIGNS HIS NAME. Crudely, but the other men who have come before have signed away years of their lives with a simple X.

CLERK

Quite the learned fellow we have here...

SEL

Aye, I have the Jesuits to thank for it.

The Clerk searches the ledger -- matches Sel's name to...

CLERK

Claude Trepagny...

No answer.

ANGLE ON McBogle, Cooke who press Bouchard, greedy for additional manpower...

MCBOGLE

Perhaps he's found death on the path.

BOUCHARD

Monsieur Trepagny will have his allotted time to claim.

COOKE

Perhaps what happened to the good and God fearing Dillard and Kent families has been visited upon Monsieur Trepagny.

At the mention of the massacre the room grows quite.

BOUCHARD

Watch your tongue Mister Cooke.

COOKE

How is it the Savages have not
paid a visit to Monsieur Trepagny?

Cooke shares a look with Dud, sees the gathered casting
glances, whispering.

BOUCHARD

Tis no concern of mine.

COOKE

I will pay double for that man.

BOUCHARD

Step away or I shall knock you
back to some fucking manners.

CLERK

Claude Trepagny, claim your
property or surrender it back to
fair and open auction.

Just then we hear some LOUD singing coming from outside,
a hearty chanson "Le Chant des Oyseaulx" followed by
several loud bangs on the porch boards.

The door FLIES OPEN to reveal CLAUDE TREPAGNY 40s,
dressed in befouled finery and carrying a long twisted
walking stick.

TREPAGNY

(singing)

*Turn around, master cuckoo, get
out of our company, each of us
gives you a 'bye-bye', For you are
nothing but a traitor.*

Beat as he slowly unwraps the muslin from his face,
shakes the rain and forest matter from his coat crevices.

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

Aye Claude Trepagny present..

He strides forward toward the Clerk, gathers up the
transfer deed and shoves it into his pocket.

Trepagny grabs Sel...

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

Come. We have a jaunt ahead of us. We must provision accordingly.

EXT. WOBİK, STREET -- LATER, DAY

Sel watches as the other 'passengers' are taken away by their new masters in wagons, others ushered into various local shops, still others walking into the throng of Wobik's trade street.

A BEAT as he spots Duquet spraddle-legged in the wheelbarrow next to the dead ram.

COOKE AND MCBOGLE lead their new men over to a team of oxen each yolked to an empty wagon. McBogle hands each of them a new axe and motions them into the wagon.

ANGLE ON SEL following Trepagny. Sel stops to watch a LUCKY MAN being fed a fresh APPLE by a fair-haired farmer's wife. The LUCKY MAN finishes with the apple and chucks the core onto some stones.

Sel retrieves the apple core and DEVOURS it.

TREPAGNY

Leave that for the rats. You will not go hungry while in my employ.

Sel drops the seeds and stem...

SEL

There is another man. Might be had on the cheap.

Sel points to Bouchard and his deputies pushing a wheelbarrow filled with several bags of meal blackened by mold, a dead ram and an UNCONSCIOUS DUQUET.

TREPAGNY

What is wrong with him?

SEL

Took sick with a bad tooth on the crossing.

TREPAGNY

He doesn't look like much. Do you vouch for this man?

SEL

Yes...

Trepagny calls after Bouchard, crosses to him.

Sel watches as Trepagny and Bouchard parley. The deal ends in a handshake. Bouchard leaves the wheelbarrow and departs with his deputies.

Trepagny turns to Sel and signals. Sel crosses to him.

TREPAGNY

I'll have his name.

SEL

Charles Duquet.

TREPAGNY

Perhaps I can show him the path
back to the light through the
grace of labor.

Trepagny leans over Duquet, studying and judging this new sickly acquisition.

Duquet tries to SPIT at Trepagny but manages only a foamy dry glob that lands on the dead ram next to him.

Trepagny pulls his walking stick from the muddy ground and levels it at Duquet's face and then proceeds to give him a smart tap to the skull with each word...

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

Contemplate your contribution to
this realm before I knock you from
it.

He lowers the stick, turns to Sel.

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

If he dies or proves a burden we
will see him into the ground. You
will dig and I shall offer
Benediction over the hole. Are we
clear on the course Mister Sel?

SEL

Yes, Sir.

TREPAGNY

You vouched for him. It is on you
then.

Sel doesn't move...

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

Have you another question?

SEL

What is the nature of the work?

TREPAGNY

God's work Monsieur Sel. God's grand work.

Sel waits for further explanation. None seems to be forthcoming.

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

Now rouse him and re-sack the meal while I procure us some meat.

Trepagny strides over to the BUTCHER carving chunks of moose and deer on a plank table.

Sel helps Duquet out of the wheel barrow. Duquet manages to stand, albeit unsteadily.

He shows Sel a coin purse he's stolen.

DUQUET

I will give you this if you let me go.

SEL

Where did you get it?

DUQUET

One of the deputies was so kind as to let me relieve him of it.

Sel refuses the offer of the purse. Duquet tucks it away.

SEL

Do not make things worse for us.

DUQUET

I don't see how they could be any worse.

SEL

We will have a roof and food and a place at his estate.

DUQUET

And then what?

SEL

Land of our own. A chance to prosper.

Duquet becomes suddenly distracted by A CROWD of boisterous men following a procession of women astride white ponies. The women are Filles Du Roi or the KING'S DAUGHTERS.

CAMERA FINDS one such young woman, DELPHINE in a corseted dress as several keepers attempt to push the men back.

Delphine tears a cuff off her dress and DROPS it in the mud. The men plunge after it, fighting and calling out her name, Delphine as she is the sun in this muddy, mosquitoed backwater...

Duquet stumbles after her transfixed only to be jerked away by Trepagny.

TREPAGNY

Do not grind your pearls, she is
of the King's.

Duquet repeats her name as she passes from view...

UP CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIL OUTSIDE OF WOBİK -- DAY

TIGHT ON the dead ram, tongue lolling as Trepagny marches up the trail with purpose. A sack of moose meat dangles under the ram, dripping blood.

Sel and Duquet follow. Duquet stumbles and trips, his face smeared with dead mosquitos and flies as he incants...

Duquet freezes as he stares through a gap in the trees.

SEL

What is the problem?

DUQUET

I saw something in there.
(points to woods)
Following us.

Sel walks into the woods and sees some bones hanging from a tree, feathers dangling off braided sinew -- some Indian offering...

DUQUET (CONT'D)

What is it?

SEL

Nothing.

He emerges and drags Duquet up the trail as we...

INT. LE GRAND INN, DINING HALL -- DAY

FRANCIS GEFFARD (40s) small fussy man drapes a white linen over a wobbly table. He smooths it out, tries to adjust the wobble. The table and the linen are the lone signs of elegance in the dining room -- mud-caked floorboards, dead and dying flies on the window sill, tables littered with roast bones and dirty tin plates.

In the far corner under a window is a passed out TRAPPER, snoring loudly.

PULL TO FIND his wife, MATHILDE, twice his size, watching him struggle to level the table...

MATHILDE

There is a man who wishes a word--

FRANCIS

-- these will not do. Not at all.

MATHILDE

From the Hudson Bay Company, sharp boots and gold watch, a man of...

FRANCIS

And he can wait. I gave McBogle exact measurements. A table that does not tilt or list. That is all I asked for.

MATHILDE

The man--

FRANCIS

Not now, Mathilde...

He ignores her, tries in vain to level the table.

Mathilde grabs a pewter plate off a nearby table, bends it in half and then hunkers down and jams it under the legs, fixing the wobble. She RISES and in so doing plants her DIRTY HAND on the clean linen, leaving a large PALM PRINT -- a knife to the heart of fussy Francis...

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

You have ruined my refinement.

She snatches the linen from the table and wipes her hands all over it.

MATHILDE

We don't have the money for these refinements and it's the floor that is tilt, not the table. I advised against greenwood planks but did you heed my advice?

He crosses to snatch it back, raising his hand to her. But Mathilde is quick and BACKHANDS him to the floor.

MATHILDE (CONT'D)

These are unrefined tables, to serve unrefined food for unrefined men. That is our business.

We hear the impatient stamp of a boot behind them. They turn to see Hamish Goames, book clamped under his arm.

Yvonne looms behind Goames, bearded, implacable, hand on axe.

HAMISH GOAMES

A minute is a minute and not five.

MATHILDE

My apologies, my husband and I were --

HAMISH GOAMES

Discussing vagaries...

Mathilde helps her husband to his feet. They put on smiles. He ventures an arm around her.

FRANCIS

After a room are you?

HAMISH GOAMES

Aye, two actually.

BEAT as Francis stares at Yvonne as if to say they do not serve half-breeds.

HAMISH GOAMES (CONT'D)

He is my equal and will be treated as such.

FRANCIS

I have other guests to consider.

Goames pulls the book out from under his arm and brings the spine of it to Francis's throat.

HAMISH GOAMES

It is my wish to be civil in all enterprises but I will not be denied a proper room for my friend Yvonne.

Francis backs away...

FRANCIS

My apologies.

Goames lowers the book. Smiles.

Mathilde CROSSES the room and pours two glasses of brandy. She hands one to Goames the other to Yvonne.

HAMISH GOAMES

Thank you...

MATHILDE

Mathilde...

HAMISH GOAMES

I wish to know about a recent guest in your inn.

MATHILDE

My husband keeps careful records.

FRANCIS

Aye, it's true...

The men sit at the table under dispute as Mathilde attempts to tidy up, gathering plates, listening in...

HAMISH GOAMES

Randall Cross, an agent for the Hudson Bay Company.

FRANCIS

Don't remember him...

HAMISH GOAMES

His correspondences indicate he was guest at your inn. He described the food as adequate, though he did have words of praise for the prune tart.

(then)

I would like to see the room Mister Cross stayed in.

Mathilde circles near, puts a strong hand on her husband's shoulder and SQUEEZES...

MATHILDE

Francis...

FRANCIS

Stay out of this...

HAMISH GOAMES

Do you recall him Mathilde?

MATHILDE

Aye, Mister Cross stayed in the
rose suite.

HAMISH GOAMES

Thank you.

MATHILDE

You will be wanting the top stair
room, it has a view of the street
and pleasant exchange of heat with
the chimney.

Goames rises...

HAMISH GOAMES

Show me and after I have settled I
shall like to avail myself of this
prune tart my colleague spoke
highly of.

Mathilde smiles.

MATHILDE

I soak the prunes in brandy, that
and leaf lard from Cormac's pigs
is my secret.

She grabs the keys and shows Goames and Yvonne up the
stairs.

INT. LE GRAND INN, ROSE SUITE -- DAY

Goames inspects the modest room. Nothing but a bed,
chest of drawers, horse hair rug and single ladder back
chair in the corner.

Francis and Mathilde stand in the doorway, Yvonne behind
them.

HAMISH GOAMES

And of his habits?

MATHILDE

Took meals by himself mostly.
Avoided the poker table.

HAMISH GOAMES

Did Mister Cross leave anything
behind?

FRANCIS

Unpaid bill and a bucket of night
soil.

Goames hands Francis a sack of coins.

HAMISH GOAMES

Apply the balance toward my stay
and all sundry I shall incur.

FRANCIS

Is Mister Cross missing then?

HAMISH GOAMES

(nods)

It's been a month since his last
report. He was a punctual man. A
letter to headquarters each week,
one to his family. He saw much
promise in this territory for our
Company's future business. I'm
not sure I share his convictions
but I shall keep an open mind.

FRANCIS

The Company sent you to look for
him?

HAMISH GOAMES

(nods)

We are blood. He is married to my
wife's only sister. She is with
child.

MATHILDE

I hope you find him.

A beat and then...

HAMISH GOAMES

If I may ask, why is this called
the Rose Suite?

Mathilde crosses to the dirty curtains and pulls them
aside to reveal a CHILD'S CRUDE DRAWING OF A ROSE.

Mathilde stifles a sob. Her husband looks away as Goames puzzles over this.

MATHILDE

Our daughter, sweet Veronique,
left that for us. It is all we
have left to remind us of her
bright light in this now dim
world.

HAMISH GOAMES

I shall see my room now...

Mathilde nods and lets the curtain drop on the rose as we...

EXT. TRAIL -- DAY

We find Sel, Duquet and Trepagny as they:

CROSS creeks.

FORD a sallow marsh, pluck leeches from their legs.

NAVIGATE a jumble of deadfall trees.

Trepagny puts up a grueling pace while Duquet repeatedly dallies, stalls and trips.

At a switchback Sel helps Duquet to his feet...

SEL

We must keep pace. Our new home
awaits, it must be large and grand
to prosper so far from town.

DUQUET

I'm done for, Rene. I can walk no
more.

Duquet falls to the ground and plunges his face into a muddy rivulet of water running off the incline, drinking noisily until Sel pulls him away.

SEL

You'll get the drizzles.

DUQUET

I want to go back to town.

SEL

We are Trepagny's now. Signed to
him.

(MORE)

SEL (CONT'D)

That is the law and there is no going back. Make good on our three years and we will be granted our freedom and a parcel of land.

Sel looks up the trail as he hears Trepagny doubling back.

Trepagny arrives to find Duquet seated in a bed of ferns.

TREPAGNY

Rise and put your legs to it.

DUQUET

I can't, my tooth it has cankered.

Trepagny gives Sel a CRACK with his walking stick.

TREPAGNY

The next one will split your skull.

(off look)

Or perhaps we leave you to the loup garou. A beast you do not wish to meet.

Sel makes a face as if this is a fairy tale meant to strike fear and motivate Duquet. Trepagny however seems full of conviction.

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

I've seen the beast's terrible work with mine own eyes.

Duquet instantly believes. He looks around at the forest primeval, pressing down around him, seemingly alive...

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

It has the strength of ten men and large eyes white as ant eggs, better to drink in the moon light. It has jaws that will crack your skull and lick your brains out of your worthless head. It can smell your soul from a single drop of blood.

DUQUET

Wolf or bear?

TREPAGNY

Neither, but tarry and you shall find out...

Trepagny turns to Sel...

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)
Come, we will leave him for the
night forest and the Beast.

They start up the trail. Duquet calls out.

DUQUET
Wait ... how much farther is it?

Trepagny stomps back to Duquet...

TREPAGNY
Arise, therefore!

He raises his stick to whack some sense into Duquet. But Duquet wisely LEAPS to his feet and follows.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal an ocean of forest stretching as far as the eye can see. A vast green nothing as we...

EXT. WOODS, BEAVER POND -- LATER DAY

Trepagny, Sel and Duquet take a break beside a flat still pond. A small fire smolders.

Trepagny saws off hunks of raw moose meat and hands it to the men who skewer it on sticks and attempt to roast it.

Duquet sucks on the raw meat, trying to draw the blood.

TREPAGNY
What do you have against fire?

Duquet points to his mouth.

DUQUET
Rotten tooth...

TREPAGNY
Where is your knife?

DUQUET
I have none.

Trepagny draws his knife and THROWS it in a practiced arc. It sticks in the earth next to Duquet.

Duquet retrieves the knife and saws the meat into chunks.

SEL

So many trees. This is not at all like the forests back home.

TREPAGNY

It is the forest of the world. No one has ever seen its end, nor will they.

SEL

And your land?

TREPAGNY

You will see soon enough. But there are trees. A multitude to be managed and repurposed. Lakes full of fish. You have not seen Paradise until you've lain eyes on my Doma...

Trepagny rises, scoops up some mud from the pond bank. He rubs a mud mask over his face and indicates that the men should do the same.

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

Come, I do not wish to be on this path when night falls.

Sel and Duquet follow suit only to have Trepagny, turn...

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

Do you hear that?

He points to a dead spruce shaking as if it is alive.

DUQUET

(whisper)

Is it the beast?

Trepagny ignores this and crosses to the dead tree. He stands at the foot of it watching the rattle of dead limbs.

Duquet hides behind a nearby clump of bushes.

Trepagny pulls a shiny CRUCIFIX from his jacket.

Beat as he sets the crucifix on the ground beneath the tree, wriggling it as he mutters..

TREPAGNY

*So is a spirit born of spirit, and
flesh of flesh, and so is the
kingdom of Satan accomplished in
this world and among all
nations...*

The rustling in the tree grows louder and then a large PORCUPINE descends down the dead trunk as if drawn to the glittering crucifix.

Trepagny approaches the porcupine, incanting. Walking stick raised like Moses...

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

Behold...

He STRIKES the porcupine once on the nose with the stick. The porcupine rolls over dead as we...

INT. LE GRAND INN, SALOON -- DAY

At a table we find Hamish Goames with Constable Bouchard. Bouchard is drinking and Yvonne stands near the piano, listening in.

BOUCHARD

Aye, I seen your man.
(off look)
Poking about for the Company was
he?

HAMISH GOAMES

He felt strongly of the need that
we should expand our operations
here.

BOUCHARD

Long way from Quebec to be
expanding. You are in New France,
Mister Goames. It's bad enough
the English have crept north.

HAMISH GOAMES

One does not prosper to empire
with timid strokes.

BOUCHARD

I keep my distance from empire.
That is for others to sort out.

HAMISH GOAMES

I'll have what you know of Mister Cross's time here.

Bouchard drains his brandy.

BOUCHARD

First another brandy on the Company's tab.

HAMISH GOAMES

It's been cut with some base spirit. It is disagreeable and most likely slow poison.

BOUCHARD

It agrees just fine. I'd like another and a coin for troubles.

HAMISH GOAMES

Very well.

Goames signals Yvonne who crosses to the bar.

Bouchard taps his fingernail on the table, indicating he'd like that coin now.

Goames slides a copper sou across the table. Bouchard continues to tap until Goames slides another from his purse.

Bouchard pockets the coins.

HAMISH GOAMES (CONT'D)

I aim to get to the truth of Mister Cross's disappearance so that I may report back and suggest a course of action.

BOUCHARD

So you've said. Now I have a question for you Mister Goames. Why is it you think I would know something about your man?

HAMISH GOAMES

You are the law and it is your business to know such things.

BOUCHARD

If it is to my advantage and the will of King Louis

HAMISH GOAMES

And was told he sought your
counsel before he disappeared.

BOUCHARD

Where did you hear that?

HAMISH GOAMES

The Innkeeper's wife...

Bouchard realizes he needs to be more discreet. He looks to Mathilde across the room and sees that Elisha Cooke has entered the Inn...

Cooke strides across to them.

COOKE

Constable...

Bouchard nods. Cooke extends a hand to Goames.

COOKE (CONT'D)

Elisha Cooke.

HAMISH GOAMES

Hamish Goames.

BOUCHARD

Mister Goames here has come to town looking for a Company agent who went missing.

HAMISH GOAMES

Randall Cross...

COOKE

I'd heard the Company had sent a scout but I can't say I had the pleasure of making his acquaintance.

BOUCHARD

He was poking around west of town.
(off look)

Lucky Creek. Land there is up for grabs. Animals abundant. It's the new frontier.

HAMISH GOAMES

I don't have that on my survey.

BOUCHARD

Everybody calls it something different, Bitch Creek, No Name Creek, Moose Creek.

COOKE

I trust Constable Bouchard told you of the recent tragedy out by there.

BOUCHARD

Aye, I did.

BOUCHARD (CONT'D)

I warned your man Cross off striking out in such a place alone. But he got it into his head to parlay with some folks who in turn had plans to parlay with the Savages.

COOKE

Aye. There is no dealing with the Savages, I'm afraid. They must be removed root and all if we are to live in peace.

Yvonne arrives with a bottle of brandy and pours Bouchard another glass.

BOUCHARD

Have your man fetch Mr. Cooke a glass...

COOKE

I'm afraid I must be going.
(then to Goames)
I shall ask around about your man...

Cooke exits. Bouchard drains his glass...

BOUCHARD

Cooke's right, they have animal hearts that rule them and their animal hearts will pump until the last drop leaves them and then their sons will take up the cause and pray to their god that death finds you and yours. Now that is some witchcraft I wish to avoid...

HAMISH GOAMES

I worked clearing Pottawatomie along the lakes. Hurons too and they fell in line. Of course we had numbers on our side.

Bouchard is not impressed.

BOUCHARD

We'll see how you do when it's just you in the woods and one of them has the drop on you. Silent as deer. You can't make them out from the trees, like shadows or fog. Hell I seen a squaw gut a trapper with nothing more than a flint knife. Baby on her back too.

HAMISH GOAMES

I will keep that in mind.

BOUCHARD

Well your man went out where I told him not to go. Most likely ran afoul of those same Savages that killed those families or maybe he back dealt some trapper and took a creek rock to the head.

HAMISH GOAMES

I'm sure Mister Cross's dealings were forthright and upheld the Company's reputation and therefore we can rule malfeasance out.

BOUCHARD

Maybe he forgot his company ways and went with the Savages.

HAMISH GOAMES

We shall investigate.

BOUCHARD

I would stick to town Mister Goames. The forest is filled with bones of men like you.

Bouchard stumbles past Yvonne who stands holding his shiny axe as we...

EXT. WOODS -- DAY

LOW SMOKE rolls through some recently cut tree stumps as the CAMERA FINDS our trio pushing through a curtain of juniper.

The trail is wider here, CRUDE CROSSES blazed into the trunk of every tree as far as the eye can see.

Trepagny stops beside a small rock cairn at the trail's edge. He pulls a smooth river stone from his pocket and sets it atop the cairn as if this gesture is some token of admittance.

Sel and Duquet follow. Sel carries the dead porcupine lashed to a drag stick. They see a low scooped valley with felled trees criss-crossing it, muddy trails running hither and yon, half built stack rock walls.

TREPAGNY

My Doma...

The men look about. It is just more muddy woods and smoke coming from some cook fire and still the mosquitoes and slate gray sky pressing down for an eternity.

Trepagny strides down the path toward the source of the smoke.

Sel pulls Duquet after Trepagny

BEAT as they hear child's laughter, the bleat of goats.

A shadow darts between the trees. Duquet jumps, still spooked by Trepagny's loup garou story.

A pine cone sails out and hits Duquet in the face. He bends to retrieve it and hears more laughter, senses creatures moving about in the smoky gloom.

A child's dirty face appears in the bushes and then vanishes.

SEL

Come on, leave it...

Sel gets Duquet to follow him down the muddy trail and they come to a low wooden CABIN, in front of which is a green wood fire and the source of the smoke. Over the smoke hang several haunches of venison.

Trepagny begins to sing.

TREPAGNY

Mari, Mari, dame jolie -- the men
are here.

Trepagny drops the dead ram outside the door and kicks it
once.

The door opens to reveal MARI (20s) a Mi'kmaq Indian.
She's dressed in a dirty red silk dress with deer skin
legging under it all, her hair a wild black tangle.

Sel smiles at Mari as A CHILD crawls out behind her and
stands pointing and smiling at Trepagny...

Trepagny leans over the child, unwraps the muslin
mosquito scarf from his face and gently FOLDS the child's
pointing finger back into a fist.

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

Only God points, Jean-Baptise,
only God.

Little Jean-Baptiste cries and runs back into the cabin.

Mari crosses to Trepagny and sniffs him. He stands for
his inspection.

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

I have not spilled seed, Mari. A
trip to town for the men as I
promised.

MARI

No Saro?

TREPAGNY

No Saro or Eileen of the red hair.
I did not go by the house or even
lay eyes on it. To this I swear
to you.

Satisfied, she studies Duquet and Sel, looking right
through them and finding no deception, yet.

MARI

(to Sel)
What is your name?

SEL

Renee Sel...

Trepagny steps between them.

TREPAGNY

I brought quill pig and a fine
black ram Mari.

Trepagny motions to the ram as Sel drops the porcupine
next to the fire...

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

The weak one will help you
butcher.

MARI

I don't need help.

TREPAGNY

You will show him. And you will
be pleasant.

MARI

Did you bring me a gift?

TREPAGNY

You shall have it later.

MARI

I want it now.

TREPAGNY

It will be made better for the
waiting, Mari.

MARI

That is because you have not
brought me anything.

TREPAGNY

I have said the last of this,
Mari. Tonight I shall bestow the
gift.

(then)

We have hungry men. Men who wish
to do work and rise to their
station and help build the doma...

Jean-Baptiste ventures forth and POINTS at Trepagny
again. This time Trepagny raises his walking stick and
PUSHES Jean-Baptiste over like a toy.

Mari hits Trepagny...

MARI

How will he know the name of
things?

TREPAGNY

He will learn without pointing.

He turns and motions for Sel to follow. Duquet tries to follow but Trepagny stops him...

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

Help her prepare the food.

(then)

Lay a wanting eye or hand on her
and you will find your place in
the bog.

SEL

Do as he says.

Duquet obeys and watches as Trepagny leads Sel through the bed of smoke.

We follow Trepagny and Sel.

Trepagny pulls several axes and hatchets from an oiled sack and hands them to Sel.

TREPAGNY

Always stay on the trail. That is
the first order of things and do
not cross the bog. I cannot
attest to your safety if you cross
the bog. There are things there
you do not wish to meet with...

He walks Sel over to a low rise that overlooks a seemingly endless forest.

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

... and stay away from the cabin
unless invited and do not attempt
a trek back to Wobik unless I have
sent you. Do I have your word
that you will convey this to
Duquet?

Sel nods...

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

Do not attempt to deceive me
Mister Sel, I can see through
trees and around the whole of the
land. And what I do not see comes
to me in dreams.

SEL

I shall make it clear to Duquet.

TREPAGNY

Now Monsieur Sel what is the most important thing besides God?

Sel has no reasonable answer for this.

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

... blood. Your family, your blood people. This land and what I make and grow from it is what my blood shall have when I am gone.

SEL

I have no blood.

TREPAGNY

That is impossible.

SEL

Just a brother but he was took by river ice. Washed under and out to sea.

TREPAGNY

Then you must build a family. Start anew.

SEL

I hope to.

TREPAGNY

Now then you shall build a shelter for the both of you. And then one a piece if you can manage. Or not. How you lay is no business of mine, but you will want a wall and stack rock chimney come winter. I will allot you the time to build a proper shelter and not count it against you. Are we clear?

Sel nods. Trepagny traipses over to a copse of trees and points at the dim light leaking over the valley, deep in its slant to evening.

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

You will build here. Hurry, it will be dark soon. A meal and then to bed. We begin work at dawn.

SEL

What is the work?

(off look)

So that I might prepare Charles
for it.

TREPAGNY

Charles will fall into it as all
men do.

With that he leaves Sel to it and we...

EXT. LE GRAND INN, SALOON -- NIGHT

We see Mathilde exiting the back of the Inn, cloak pulled
over her head. She stops at the firewood stack and
removes a smooth axe handle from its hiding place.

She moves quickly through the back alley.

And as she nears the moonlit main street a SHADOW rises
up from behind a broken wagon. It is a large DRUNK
TRAPPER in dirty buckskins, reeking of applejack...

DRUNK TRAPPER

Ho there. After some sport I am.

He swipes a paw at her. She stops and swings the axe
handle up and conks the Drunk Trapper. He lets out a
gasp and falls to the mud.

She rifles through his coat and finds a rancid piece of
pack cheese, some pemmican and a few coins.

He stirs too drunk to realize he's just been set in his
place and thus..

DRUNK TRAPPER (CONT'D)

Rough I can too, darlin' if that
is the way you prefer...

MATHILDE

Rough you shall have, then.

Mathilde promptly brings the axe handle down on his balls
and continues on her journey...

EXT. MCBOGLE & SON, TIMBER MILL -- NIGHT

Mathilde comes to the back of the mill house but is stopped at the door by Tom McBogle who stands watch outside the door, flipping mumblety-peg with PETE, (12) chubby and the boat wright's son.

MATHILDE

Gimme that, you'll cut your foot.

Chubby Pete ignores her, throws the knife at Tom's feet and sticks it. Tom retrieves the knife.

Behind the door we can hear the ROAR of men at cards...

TOM

Ma'am.

MATHILDE

Need a word with your father.

TOM

He is indisposed.

MATHILDE

(Re: the knife)

Do not point that at me...

TOM

It's private business, Ma'am, now allow us our game.

Mathilde knocks the knife from his hands, GRABS him by the ear and pushes him through the door.

INT. MCBOGLE & SON, TIMBER MILL -- NIGHT

Mathilde enters dragging Tom by the ear and interrupts a card game in progress, rum and whiskey in evidence, as well as several sporting women watching and cavorting with the men.

MATHILDE

You ought to teach this boy some manners. Pointing a knife at a lady.

McBogle looks at his hand and then throws the cards down disgusted, crosses to Mathilde.

She releases Tom.

MCBOGLE

Is this true?

TOM

It was in my hand.

McBogle cracks him. Tom slinks off. McBogle pulls Mathilde away out of earshot.

MATHILDE

There is a man at the inn asking after Mister Cross. His name is Mister Hamish Goames and he is our guest at the Inn.

MCBOGLE

Asking in what manner?

MATHILDE

What other manner could there be, Dud? The Company sent him. He sat with Bouchard and met your Mister Cooke. I have kept my ears open as you asked.

(she holds out her hand)

I'll have my reward, Dud.

MCBOGLE

My money's on the table. Pair 'o queens put me on the dog's wick.

MATHILDE

Take a marker then or I shall speak to others of our business.

(then)

Now I'll have as you promised.

McBogle slinks back to the table and we see him whisper something to one of the gamblers sitting on a pile of coins. This is HENRY MARTH, dead-eyed, massive round shoulders, hair growing up of his neck.

Marth stands close to Mathilde as a bear might, sniffing, sorting animal thoughts.

He reaches out and touches her dress sleeve, rolling the fabric between his rough fingers.

Dud returns...

MCBOGLE

Henry...

Marth lets go of Mathilde's dress.

Dud hands Mathilde some coins which she promptly secures in her cleavage.

MATHILDE

I will not be a party to any crime.

MCBOGLE

There is nothing for you to worry about. No crime has been committed...

MATHILDE

What has become of him then?

MCBOGLE

I am done speaking on this.
(then)

Now tell me where is this Mister Goames, presently speaking.

MATHILDE

He set out west of town to have a look. Bouchard pointed him that way.

MCBOGLE

Perhaps he will meet with his end and all shall be as it was.

McBogle looks to Marth as if this might be the plan.

MATHILDE

He seems steadfast and capable.

MCBOGLE

Go back to your Inn and sit on that husband of yours.

MATHILDE

We will be asking for a refund for the tables you built for us. They are coarse and poorly constructed.

With that she pulls her cloak tight and walks off into the night.

EXT. MARI'S CABIN -- DAY

Mari stirs porridge as Duquet attempts to gut the ram, hands trembling, hesitating with the knife as he sucks air between his teeth.

MARI

What is the matter?

DUQUET

My tooth.

MARI

Let me see.

DUQUET

There is nothing to be done for it now. I will have it looked at in town.

MARI

Yet you are here. With us, not in Wobik.

DUQUET

I shall ask Trepagny for my leave.

MARI

He will never allow that. We are all here now. Make the best of it.

(re: the ram)

Now cut, so that I can read what gift Mister Claude has brought me from town.

Duquet PUNCTURES the ram's bloated belly and gas releases. He gags, unable to continue.

Mari crosses to have a look and grabs the knife from him, slipping it along the ram's belly.

MARI (CONT'D)

Here make the heaven cut...

She indicates the windpipe and sinew binding the innards to the ram. She holds the bloody knife for him.

MARI (CONT'D)

Go on...

DUQUET

I can't...

Mari does it herself, cutting the windpipe, reaching up severing the cord and then freeing the gut sac.

It drops to the ground. Jean-Bapiste begins to point excitedly at the ENTRAILS, gurgling unintelligible words...

The lungs are covered with BLACK LINES, odd circles and signs...

MARI

Where did this animal come from?

DUQUET

The boat. Kicked to death by a mule.

(then)

What is wrong?

MARI

This is the sign of Chenoo...

(off look)

He is coming, we must hurry.

She rises and kicks the entrails back inside the carcass....

MARI (CONT'D)

Help me...

Mari drags it away from Jean-Baptiste and into the woods, deeper and deeper into a brushy ravine cut by a narrow creek.

Duquet follows, stumbling after, helping her drag it.

EXT. BONEHEAP, TREPAGNY'S LAND -- DAY

Mari leads Duquet to a small opening in the forest. There are bones everywhere and in the center of the bones a crude rock cairn.

Mari drags the ram across the bones, things scurrying beneath. Duquet stops short...

DUQUET

What did you see?

Mari silences him with a look and drapes the ram carcass over the cairn. The entrails slither out as she runs back to Duquet and looks about wildly.

The wind moves through the trees.

DUQUET (CONT'D)

Is it the beast?

MARI

It is Chenoo, now hurry...

They run as we...

EXT. TRAIL, WEST OF WOBİK -- NIGHT

A large blazing campfire where we find Goames and Yvonne gathered around. Goames is consulting a map, book of verse opened nearby.

Yvonne melts duck fat in a cast iron pan. He removes two potatoes from a sack and slices them with his axe into the pan.

HAMISH GOAMES

But Bouchard's story doesn't make sense.

YVONNE

Aye...

HAMISH GOAMES

Mister Cross need not have consulted him about private Company matters such as land. He is a man of discretion. Constable Bouchard is a man for sale.

YVONNE

Aye...

Goames paces to the edge of the light and stares up at the night sky.

He pulls the bone and obsidian necklace he took from the dead Indians on the log and he looks through the obsidian at the fire. The obsidian glows. He dons the necklace, tying it around his neck.

Yvonne stirs the coals sending sparks blowing past Goames.

BEAT as Goames spots something hanging off a branch nearby. He goes to investigate and finds a broken spruce branch and snagged on the branch a strip of BLACK SACK CLOTH.

He retrieves the cloth and shuttles it back to Yvonne who stands over the frypan stirring.

Yvonne examines it, takes a deep whiff and then...

YVONNE (CONT'D)

Jesuit...

Goames stares out into the darkness...

HAMISH GOAMES

In his last report Cross spoke of
the Jesuits. Brave soldiers of
God he called them.

(off look)

What do you think he meant by
that?

Yvonne says nothing to this, concentrates on the sizzling
pan as we...

INT. MARI'S CABIN -- NIGHT

Trepagny, Mari, Jean-Baptiste, Sel and Duquet sit around
a rough hewn table. THEO, 7 jumps out of the rafters and
lands beside his mother, Mari. He sets several pine
cones on the table next to Duquet.

In the center of the table sits a cast-iron pot with
porridge. Trepagny is just finishing the Cathar Pater...

TREPAGNY

Give us this day our super
substantial bread. And remit our
debts as we forgive our debtors.
And keep us from temptation and
free us from evil.
Thine is the kingdom, the power
and glory forever and ever.
Amen.

Mari rises without saying Amen...

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

Mari?

MARI

I can hear this one's stomach
rumbling.

She indicates Sel.

TREPAGNY

Do you not wish to enter the
Kingdom?

MARI
 (half-hearted)
 Amen.

She proceeds to serve them bowls of porcupine stew. Theo jumps up from the table, half wild, drawing the ire of Trepagny.

TREPAGNY
 Theo you will sit and accept this
 humble providence.

THEO
 Yes sir.

Theo sits. Trepagny turns to Sel, regarding Theo...

TREPAGNY
 The wild savage blood beats in
 this one's chest. It is both a
 blessing and a curse. I fear the
 battle for his soul will be
 eternal and perhaps futile.

MARI
 See if it is to your taste.

She hands him a bowl of stew. Trepagny sniffs it and then takes a bite.

TREPAGNY
 Perhaps Mister Sel can pass the
 sel?

He laughs at his own joke as he grabs a pinch of salt from a bowl, stirs it into the stew, and then proceeds to spoon the entire bowl down.

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)
 I didn't detect the ram. Was it
 not fit for the pot?

MARI
 Spoilt.

TREPAGNY
 Through and through?

MARI
 Yes.

Trepagny looks to Duquet for confirmation. Mari gives him a look -- this is their secret. Sel sees this and is jealous of their connection.

DUQUET

Putrid it was.

TREPAGNY

And the hide?

MARI

Worms got to it as well.

TREPAGNY

Would have made nice hinges.

(then to Duquet)

Tomorrow we shall see about the
hide, one must not waste what God
has provided.

Everybody eats while Duquet gingerly spoons up the pan drippings and eases them into his mouth, leaving his stew untouched.

Sel digs into the food as we UP CUT TO:

INT. SEL & DUQUET'S LEAN-TO -- NIGHT

A single tallow candle gutters under the crude shelter -- some spruce boughs lashed over two split saplings. Sel and Duquet sit staring through the woods at the cabin in the distance.

They see Trepagny's shadow pacing around the fire, singing for Mari before entering the cabin.

DUQUET

What sort of man lays with a
Savage?

SEL

She is beautiful.

DUQUET

Yes but she is a Savage. Trepagny
is making do I suppose.

(then)

How far is it back to town?

SEL

You can't go back.

DUQUET

I will do as I see fit.

SEL

Not when he holds me responsible
for your actions.

DUQUET

There is nothing here for us.
There is no estate. We have been
tricked into serving a mad
squatter.

SEL

There is land waiting for us when
our contracts are completed.

DUQUET

All I see are trees and bugs.

SEL

You can't leave me here.

DUQUET

I don't owe you anything. I shall
make my own way as will you.

SEL

He will have me hunt you down if
you leave.

DUQUET

Then we shall make a game of it.

They step out into the moonlight.

They listen to Trepagny and Mari carrying on and then
something else -- the crack of a branch, some low
bestial growl coming from the darkness as a cloud slides
over the moon.

DUQUET (CONT'D)

What was that?

SEL

Perhaps the beast.

Duquet runs back to the lean-to as we hold on Sel,
smiling...

EXT. MARI'S CABIN -- NEXT MORNING

Sel and Duquet warm themselves by the fire as Mari
emerges from the cabin with a shiny new RIBBON in her
hair. She seems very proud of the ribbon as she sets a
kettle of biscuits out for the men.

Sel watches her intently, bewitched.

Trepagny emerges from a nearby path, seemingly out of nowhere

TREPAGNY

To work!

He walks off up the trail, expecting Sel and Duquet to follow.

Mari pulls Duquet aside and hands him a cloth sack full of warm biscuits.

MARI

They are for Mister Claude, but
you may steal one if you wish...

Sel watches this and falls in alongside Duquet as they follow Trepagny.

SEL

What did she give you?

Duquet opens the sack for Sel to see. He puts his nose into the sack, inhales the aroma.

DUQUET

They're for Trepagny.

Sel takes the sack from Duquet and presses it to his chest feeling the warmth...

SEL

I shall see that he gets them.

They continue on up the path as we...

EXT. HILLTOP, TREPAGNY'S LAND -- DAY

Trepagny stands under a tall spruce axe in hand. He swings and the axe takes a bite of the white tree flesh. He swings again and again.

Sel pitches in, driving a chock into the bite. Duquet paces off watching.

A BEAT as Trepagny stands back, the tree listing, the cut deep.

TREPAGNY

Go on...

He indicates that Sel should have the honors. Sel picks up his axe and swings. One bite, two bite and then on the third the tree begins its slow topple, ripping through the canopy and opening up a small patch of sky above as it crashes down in a heap of dust and thrown debris.

Trepagny puts his hand on the tree stump and pulls it away wet with sap. He crosses to Sel and dabs the sap on his forehead and then he whistles for Duquet to come over.

Duquet crosses and at that very moment in the wake of the tumult of the fallen spruce the forest goes dead quiet.

Trepagny puts a finger to his lips, shushing the men, instructing them to listen. Then in a sacred whisper...

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

Can you hear it?
(off looks)
God in the whirlwind...

Sel closes his eyes, basking in the silence and sunlight coming down from above on his felling.

Duquet meanwhile pulls the bundle of herbs Mari has given him from his pocket and eats it.

For a minute it seems to salve the pain but then he lets out a gasp and clutches at his tooth.

Trepagny points at him, afire that he should snap their revery with such earthly concerns.

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

I shall have that tooth.

He moves on Duquet who tries to scuttle away.

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

It is for the better.

DUQUET

No please...

TREPAGNY

Mister Sel, assist me...

Sel grabs Duquet as Trepagny fishes around the canvas tool bag and comes up with a pair of iron pliers.

DUQUET

No, no, it is mine to suffer.

TREPAGNY

Don't be foolish. We shall excise the rot and have you on the way to productivity.

SEL

It is for the better, better than infection should set in and take your tongue.

Duquet slowly stops resisting.

TREPAGNY

Come, it will be over in but a moment.

DUQUET

Please...

Trepagny indicates that Duquet should put his head down on the tree stump. He hesitates, but Sel guides him there.

TREPAGNY

Now open so that I shall see...

Duquet opens his mouth. Trepagny pokes at a tooth with the pliers.

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

Ahh, this one...

DUQUET

Wait...

He struggles to close his mouth, but Trepagny forces it open with the pliers, grabs hold of the tooth and pulls.

Duquet cries out and thrashes against the bleeding tree stump as Trepagny pulls harder until the tooth unmoors itself from his rotten gums and pops put. Duquet cries out as blood SPATTERS onto the white tree stump.

Trepagny holds forth the tooth, admiring the blackened roots. He pockets the tooth.

Duquet falls silent -- whether it's the shock from the extraction or the sudden absence of pain.

TREPAGNY

He will rise and be twice the man.

He pulls Sel aside and points at the trees.

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

In the meantime I wish you to fall
the ones with two blazes.

Sel looks around and sees dozens and dozens of trees
carrying two blazes.

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

Men must change this land in order
to live in it.

(then)

Someday my children will grow
cabbages and grapes here.

SEL

If the soil will have it.

TREPAGNY

The soil will have what we put in
it as God sees fit.

Trepagny hands him an axe.

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

Now clear so that we shall live
like men on clear and open earth.

Sel addresses a tree as Trepagny pulls Duquet to his
feet.

TREPAGNY (CONT'D)

And you -- fetch the ram hide you
so carelessly wasted.

Duquet nods and starts down the path, holding his bloody
mouth.

EXT. WOODS, WEST OF WOBİK -- DAY

We find Goames and Yvonne in a wide birch bark canoe
navigating down a narrow brush lined creek.

Yvonne sticks his oar into the mud, slowing the canoe.
He trades looks with Goames -- something lies around the
bend.

He slips into the stream and drags the canoe onto a bank.

Goames, exits. Both men shoulder their rifles as they
walk along the bank.

Yvonne points to a child's rag doll snagged along the
creek bank.

Goames crosses to the doll and retrieves it. He sees its crude gingham skirt is stained with dried blood.

Yvonne steps onto a narrow game trail, Goames follows.

EXT. SETTLEMENT -- DAY

Goames and Yvonne step through a veil of juniper and into a small meadow. The remains of two BURNT OUT CABINS smolder along the edge of the meadow.

A single tree stands in the center of the meadow, its branches heavy with turkey buzzards and crows, feasting on something.

Yvonne shoulders his gun and fires a single shot, hitting a large buzzard atop the tree.

The buzzard falls to the earth with a thud and then all of the birds lift off the tree revealing the remains of a woman bound up there.

HAMISH GOAMES

My god...

Yvonne simply nods and points behind the partially burned wall of the cabins as they hear somebody praying in Latin.

They cross to the cabin and see a pile of fresh earth, handfuls being tossed out of a pit.

HAMISH GOAMES (CONT'D)

Show yourself...

Nothing except the incantation of prayer. Goames steps to the hole and sees a Jesuit Priest, FATHER JEROME CLAPE, naked except for a breechcloth digging into the earth with his bare hands. Over the top of the excavated pit we see the PALE HAND OF A CHILD, still as death.

HAMISH GOAMES (CONT'D)

Hello...

Father Clape ignores Goames. Yvonne pulls a clod of dirt from the pile and throws it at Clape.

Clape turns on them slowly, his eyes have seen far past the glory to some hell on earth and still he keeps up the prayer.

CLAPE

*Réquiem ætérnam dona eis Dómine;
et lux perpétua lúceat eis.
Requiescant in pace. Amen*

Clape looks at them and points to the woods...

HAMISH GOAMES

Yvonne, stand ready.

Yvonne turns, rifle in hand as we...

EXT. HILLTOP, TREPAGNY'S LAND -- DAY

Two other trees lay felled. Sel stands, axe in hand as Trepagny emerges carrying a basket of food, inspects the fallen trees, pleased. Then...

TREPAGNY

Where is Charles?

SEL

He has not come back from your task.

Trepagny looks through the forest...

TREPAGNY

You must find him. Bring him back.

Sel nods. He sinks his axe into a stump and sets out through the woods. We follow him.

He crosses a shallow creek.

SEL

Duquet...

NOTHING except the hum of the forest and so he strikes out west, into the section of land Trepagny warned him to stay out of...

EXT. BONE HEAP, TREPAGNY'S LAND -- DAY

We find Duquet picking his way along a narrow game trail.

He stops to rest and pulls his hand away from his bloody mouth. He plants his palm on a bare white rock, leaving a behind a BLOODY HAND PRINT.

A BEAT as he hears something scuttling in the distance and moves, pushing through some bushes to the bone heap. He sees the rock cairn where Mari left the ram carcass but the ram is gone.

Duquet pauses, listening and then he hears it -- something rooting around, unseen -- a branch snaps, rocks clatter.

Duquet goes wide-eyed and runs, blundering through the bushes and into a ravine, something chasing after him as we...

EXT. BOG, TREPAGNY'S LAND -- DUSK

We find Sel, sweaty and dirty having searched all day for Duquet as he comes to the bone heap where he spots Duquet's BLOODY HAND PRINT on the white rock. He puzzles over this and then hears something thrashing about in a nearby bush.

He goes to investigate and finds a hare caught in a noose snare. He frees the hare and watches it dash off toward.

Sel follows it and comes to the BOG WE SAW IN THE TEASER in a shallow depression, ancient, still.

He discovers the burnt out reed torch impaled in the mud at the bog edge. Just as he's about to give up, he spots several broken and bent saplings leading up the hill away from the bog -- a path of sorts.

A BEAT as he hears Trepagny singing off in the distance.

Sel follows the path through a cleared section of forest. The path widens, mud gives way to oyster shell and then a gravel path. The maintained path seems odd and out of place.

Sel sees a patch of blue ahead as the path winds up to another rise and he comes to a neat hedgerow of holly.

He rounds the holly hedge and stops dead in his tracks as we PULL TO REVEAL a massive WHITE STONE MANOR HOUSE. Chimneys and boxed glass windows, blue slate roof, the whole thing encircled by neat gardens and an elaborate wrought-iron fence that seems to press the forest back.

Sel puts a hand on the gate fence, gobsmacked by the sight of the manor house when he sees a SHADOW moving in one of the windows.

He moves closer and peers in a window -- the inside is well appointed with fine furniture, paintings.

He sees freshly bathed Trepagny seated in a chair dressed in fine clothes as Mari carefully trims his hair, her shift hanging open exposing the curve of her breasts.

Sel exhales, witness to this intimate moment, his breath fogging the glass.

A BEAT as Mari looks up and sees Sel watching them. She pauses, holds the scissors to Trepagny's THROAT as she looks at Sel.

She smiles at Sel and then OPENS her shift to reveal one of her BREASTS.

Trepagny looks up at her, reaching for the breast but she closes her shift and when she looks back to the window she finds that Sel has vanished, leaving only a fogged circle upon it...

END OF SHOW