

FIRST COW

Screenplay by

Jon Raymond and Kelly Reichardt

"The bird a nest, the spider a web, man friendship."

William Blake, Proverbs of Hell

EXT. SAUVIE ISLAND / COLLINS BEACH - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

The day is overcast, a light on and off drizzle. The river is a solemn gray expanse.

In the distance, a huge cargo barge grinds towards port, its long, globe-crossing journey almost at a rest.

Up on the wet sand, JORDAN and TAKUYA are stirring. In need of coffee, they attempt to get a fire going with a bundle of store-bought logs.

On the waters edge, BRUNO, fetches a stick, runs and drops it at the feet of twenty-seven year old TERI.

In her rain jacket, Teri picks up the stick and throws it further down the beach.

EXT. SAUVIE ISLAND / COLLINS BEACH - CONTINUOUS - MORNING

As Teri wanders the beach, she finds a head of cabbage, a bundle of radishes, a melon. She pokes at some of the groceries washed up on shore with a stick.

Bruno lopes ahead.

Teri follows.

EXT. SAUVIE ISLAND BEACH-SANDY TRAIL-MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Teri turns onto a sandy trail leading back into the brush, leaving the beach behind

EXT. SAUVIE ISLAND MEADOW - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Teri and Bruno enter a tawny meadow banded by cottonwood and maple. The ground is damp. The dead grass is matted.

Bruno rushes ahead to investigate something on the ground. He barks and begins excitedly to sniff.

Teri goes over to join him.

Bruno stands anxiously near something white and rounded embedded in the earth. He's eager to share.

Teri looks closer.

She kneels, and wipes wet mud away.

It's a human skull.

She stares at it, worried at first, but also intrigued.

She holds Bruno back and looks around. No one else is around.

She pulls a phone from her sweater pocket and finds no bars, no reception.

She snaps a photo of the skull, and returns the phone to her pocket.

Bruno hovers, waiting impatiently.

Teri crouches again and touches the remains. The wet dirt scrapes off and more bones are revealed.

She gets down on her knees and starts unearthing.

EXT. SAUVIE ISLAND MEADOW - LATE MORNING

The sun peeks through the cloudy sky. The drizzle has let up.

Jordon and Takuya walk down the path that leads to the meadow.

BEGIN CREDITS:

In a chunky sweater and wool cap, Teri continues her excavation, carefully digging around the bones.

Bruno explores nearby, happy to be in the open air.

Already, a human skeleton is uncovered. Skull, clavicle, rib cage, pelvis, all still in proper order, exposed by recent drought followed by hard rains. She keeps going.

EXT. SAUVIE ISLAND MEADOW - AFTERNOON

The sun is slanting into afternoon.

Teri's cap is off, her sweater unzipped. She eats a power bar and drinks from a thermos as the boys dig. The three of them take turns, working two at a time.

Bruno is stretched out chewing on a stick.

The skeleton is fully visible now. And more:

A second skull.

EXT. SAUVIE ISLAND MEADOW - LATER DAY

The afternoon is aging. The sun has disappeared and the light rain has returned.

Two complete skeletons, the forms intact, only loosely jumbled by the passage of time.

Teri, Jordon and Takuya, stare at the remains with amazement and reverence,.

The skeletons lie side by side, holding hands.

END CREDIT SEQUENCE

EXT. WOODS NEAR CAMP - CIRCA 1820 - DUSK

A dense rain forest.

On the ground, ferns and moss-covered rocks and disintegrating trunks. Overhead, a canopy of needles and lichen-draped limbs. All around, the fir trees form melancholy aisles into the gloom. The last light of day sifts through.

OTIS "COOKIE" FIGOWITZ, the hired cook for a fur trapping expedition, prowls for mushrooms. He's bearded, tentative, and dirty.

From the distance, rough laughter and yelling drifts to his ears. Men's voices muffled by the woods.

He walks deeper into the woods clutching his basket.

EXT. WOODS NEAR CAMP - CONTINUOUS - DUSK

Cookie keeps hunting. The voices fade and disappear.

He's alone in the silence of the primordial forest. He can hear the smallest sounds of crackling twigs, scurrying bugs.

He finds some mushrooms and puts them in his wicker basket.

EXT. WOODS NEAR CAMP - CONTINUOUS - DUSK

Cookie bends to examine a bug. His own breath is the only sound.

The bug is shiny and desperate. The bug can barely scramble through the moss.

Cookie helps it along. He watches the bug scurry into some ferns.

He's still watching when he hears a noise, like a footstep, not far away.

He pauses. He crouches still. Another crunching, foot-like sound.

He waits. The woods are darkening. Every direction is the same tangle of greenery.

Another foot fall.

COOKIE

Hello?

No answer.

COOKIE (CONT'D)

Who's there?

No answer.

Another rustling sound. He panics. He picks up his basket and starts walking briskly away.

He hears footsteps behind him and looks behind, seeing nothing.

He starts jogging. Soon he is sprinting through the trees chased by the sound of his own footsteps.

EXT. CAMP - CONTINUOUS - DUSK

Cookie runs into camp. A few ramshackle tents, sleeping DOGS, and a partially unpacked sled piled with pelts and supplies.

Scattered around a fire are FIVE ROUGH-LOOKING MEN, each alone among the group. They sit smoking, whittling, chewing tobacco. One stabs a log with a dagger. Another shakes a rock out of his shoe.

They barely look up as Cookie catches his breath and tries to hide his terror. They pass a bottle of alcohol around. The dirty tin plates and spoons of their last meal lie cast about.

JACK TRAPPER 4
 (noticing Cookie)
 Cookie. How about some of that
 buffalo steak for breakfast? With
 the fried cakes?

COOKIE
 We finished all that back in
 Colter's Hell--

DAME TRAPPER 2
 What about soda bread?

CLYDE TRAPPER 3
 Dried apple pie.

COOKIE
 None of that left, either, I'm
 afraid.

The men brood, passing the bottle.

CLYDE TRAPPER 3
 You find anything out there
 tonight?

COOKIE
 Some mushrooms. And a digger
 squirrel. I had the squirrel. But
 it got away.

CLYDE TRAPPER 3
 What's in the larder?

Cookie is slow to answer.

COOKIE
 Ten dry biscuits. Some jerky. Salt.

CLYDE TRAPPER 3
 Nothing else?

COOKIE
 No.

A long silence.

CLYDE TRAPPER 3
 It's the cookie's job to improvise.
 This is a land of abundance, Mr.
 Figowitz.

Cookie is silent, on the spot.

CLYDE TRAPPER 3 (CONT'D)
You're charged with finding our
vittles until we reach Fort
Tillikum. You're aware of that, I
know.

One trapper has been hogging the bottle. Another trapper
rises.

BILL TRAPPER 1
Hold up there, mister. Share the
wealth.

The trapper takes one more swig and the other one yanks the
bottle away, which causes some liquid to spill.

They rise and start menacing each other.

DAME TRAPPER 2
Hey there, that's a waste, bud.

BILL TRAPPER 1
He's drinkin' more'n his share.

JACK TRAPPER 4
Now no one's got it.

Cookie slips away into his tent.

INT. COOKIE'S TENT - CONTINUOUS - INTO EVENING

Cookie, among the few pots and pans and utensils sits and
pulls off his boots. He pokes his finger through a hole in
the sole.

Outside the sounds of punching, yelping, the crashing of
branches.

EXT. WOODS NEAR CAMP - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie wanders the woods with his basket again.

He finds some mushrooms and gladly scoops them into his
basket.

He watches the moon shining brightly on the trees.

Faraway, a coyote howls.

He moves a little farther along.

An owl stares from a tree branch.

Cookie stares back. The owl's eyes are wide and penetrating, seeing into Cookie's mind.

The owl takes flight.

Cookie is again alone.

As he turns to move on, he spots a discarded plate sitting on a fallen log next to a bush. There are a few beans left on the plate.

He goes over to retrieve it but when he tries to lift it the plate remains in place. He pulls again but it won't budge.

He looks closer and notices a man's finger holding the plate down. The finger is attached to an arm that extends from the bush.

In the bush is a NAKED MAN. He stares out at Cookie.

Cookie stumbles backwards, shocked and afraid.

NAKED MAN
(quietly)
Hello.

COOKIE
(quietly)
Hello.

They stare at each other in the darkness. Two men in the primordial wood. The strange man has disheveled, black hair, a two-inch scar running from his shoulder down his arm, and dark almond eyes.

COOKIE (CONT'D)
Are you... all right?

NAKED MAN
Hungry.

Cookie nods, and realizes the man is completely naked. He seems slightly dazed.

NAKED MAN (CONT'D)
Your cook has retired for the night?

COOKIE
No, I don't think so.

NAKED MAN
You can call him out here? For a moment?

Cookie examines the naked man in the moonlight.

COOKIE
I'm the cook.

The man takes this in.

From the bush the naked man rises. He steps out and sits on a log.

NAKED MAN
I see. I've been walking for a long time... might stay here awhile.

Cookie watches him, debating with himself what to do.

COOKIE
Wait.

Cookie goes.

The naked man sits and waits, watching.

He keeps waiting. He's totally depleted, resigned.

Eventually, Cookie returns with a dry biscuit, a piece of jerky, a jug of water and a blanket.

Cookie hands him the food.

The naked man wraps the blanket around himself. He sits on the log opposite Cookie and gobbles the food down. He's ravenous.

COOKIE (CONT'D)
You speak good English... for an Indian.

NAKED MAN
I'm not Indian.

COOKIE
Oh.

NAKED MAN
Chinese.

As the eating ends, King-Lu takes a drink of water from the jug.

COOKIE
I didn't know there were Chinese in these parts.

KING-LU
Everyone is here. Everyone wants
that soft gold. It's why you're
here, isn't it?

COOKIE
We've trapped our share.

They sit in the dark. Cookie keeps his eyes on the stranger.

COOKIE (CONT'D)
What's your name?

NAKED MAN
King-Lu. So they call me. You?

COOKIE
Otis Figowitz. They call me Cookie.

KING-LU
Good to know you.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
There are some Russian men chasing
me. Have you seen them?

COOKIE
No.

King-Lu seems mildly relieved within his weariness.

COOKIE (CONT'D)
Why are the men chasing you?

KING-LU
I might have killed one of their
friends.

COOKIE
Oh.

King-Lu gathers his thoughts, stares at the ground. He sighs
and holds his head.

KING-LU
Chenamus...my friend...they called
him a thief. They gutted him from
neck to loin.

Cookie listens intently.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
I had a pistol and I took a shot. I
got one in the neck, I think.
(MORE)

KING-LU (CONT'D)

Then they came after me, and I ran
into the woods.

King-Lu shakes his head at the memory of it.

COOKIE

What happened to your clothes?

KING-LU

(remembering)

I stuffed them in hollow trees.
Threw my gun in a creek. (sighs)

King-Lu is obviously traumatized.

Cookie observes him in the dark.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

(More to himself)

His insides fell out right there on
the ground. I can still hear it.

King-Lu simply stares now, exhausted by the telling.

COOKIE

Come on. You can sleep.

Cookie helps him up.

EXT. CAMP - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie and King-Lu creep past the sleeping men, the dogs, and
A HORSE.

King-Lu seems worried, peering at the white trappers snoring
and tossing on their bedding.

INT. COOKIE'S TENT - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie hides King-Lu on a mat among his supplies.
Immediately, he's asleep.

Cookie lies nearby, unable to sleep. His mind ablaze.

INT. COOKIE'S TENT - MORNING

The morning sun casts shadows on the tent walls.

Cookie awakens.

The sound of gruff conversation. Somewhere, the men are exchanging words.

Cookie sees that King-Lu is gone.

He pulls back his tent flap and looks out across the camp to see...

INT. COOKIE'S TENT / EXT. CAMP - CONTINUOUS - MORNING

At the edge of camp, Trapper 3 speaks to a RUSSIAN TRAPPER-- fur bonnet, long moustache, long rifle, long knife.

The Russian's words float over to Cookie's ears. The Russian seems angry. The trapper nods with understanding, and some impatience.

SABONIS RUSSIAN TRAPPER
...a fool... a little mongrel son
of a whore... when we find the
whoreson he'll wish he never set
foot in this shit forest.

CLYDE TRAPPER 3
... So what I'm hearing is two days
all told, is that right? Or
sometime early on the second
day?...

SABONIS RUSSIAN TRAPPER
Two days, the most.

CLYDE TRAPPER 3
So not too late that day...

SABONIS RUSSIAN TRAPPER
Not late, if fast.

CLYDE TRAPPER 3
If you make good time, I
understand... Ford the river about
midday...

SABONIS RUSSIAN TRAPPER
After falls, after falls. Midday,
no. What's that? This time of year,
midday is early.

CLYDE TRAPPER 3
After the falls... whenever you get
there. Right.

Some final pointing and nodding goes down between the trappers. And at last the Russian leaves, stalking into the greenery of the woods.

As Trapper 3 ambles back to the center of camp, the other trappers are just rousing.

He speaks to everyone in ear shot:

CLYDE TRAPPER 3 (CONT'D)
Move out! We got directions! North
and west to Fort Tillikum. Two
day's journey. Hit the river and
head downstream. Downriver at every
branch.

The trappers grumble their pleasure.

Cookie closes his tent flap.

CLYDE TRAPPER 3 (OS) (CONT'D)
Oh, and there's a murderer in the
woods so stay close!

Cookie takes in the new situation.

EXT. WOODS BETWEEN CAMPS - LATER - DAY

The trapping party slogs through the rain forest. Each trapper carries a bundle of beaver pelts on his back.

The horse pulls the sled of cooking supplies and provisions.

Cookie trails towards the rear carrying his own heavy load.

A trapper, Dame, plays a Jew's harp until another trapper, Bill, bats it from his hands.

Cookie keeps walking. He pulls near the sled. He spots King-Lu in hiding among some blankets.

Their eyes meet. They say nothing.

Cookie keeps walking. He looks at the horse to see if he detects signs of obvious burden from the added weight he hauls.

EXT. WOODS BETWEEN CAMPS - LATER - DAY

The trapping party continues slogging.

JACK TRAPPER 4
I need food. Food!

BILL TRAPPER 1
Food! (mumbling to himself)
Stupid, pathetic trees.

JACK TRAPPER 4
I'll shoot somethin.

CLYDE TRAPPER 3
The Russian said the elk are gone
this time of year.

DAME TRAPPER 2
What else he say?

CLYDE TRAPPER 3
The Russian said the company is
paying three silver ingots for
every beaver pelt, two copper for
muskrat. Your choice of Spanish
heads or Chinese sycees. There's
beer at the fort. And other things.

JACK TRAPPER 4
Women?

CLYDE TRAPPER 3
More than one.

The men grumble, emboldened. They march on.

EXT. WOODS BETWEEN CAMPS - SOON - DAY

Cookie walks alongside his provisions sled pulled by the
horse.

He can see King-Lu's foot exposed under a blanket. He covers
him.

They keep walking.

EXT. RIVERSIDE CAMP - LATE AFTERNOON

The sleds are stopped.

The sound of a rushing river can be heard.

The sun is setting.

CLYDE TRAPPER 3

We go down river from here. A day more. We can camp here for the night. We'll find the fort tomorrow.

The trappers hurrah. One man wanders off to piss; another starts setting up his tent; two others start joking around with each other, wrestling among the rocks.

Cookie can see King-Lu peering from under the blanket.

JACK TRAPPER 4

(calling from nearby)

I'm hungry as hell, Cookie! Find me some food.

CLYDE TRAPPER 3

We'll be there tomorrow. Eat your hand.

JACK TRAPPER 4

I want food tonight. Or I'm takin it out of this one.

He comes over and shoves Cookie.

JACK TRAPPER 4 (CONT'D)

I'm sick of looking at this one. Can't wait to be done with him. Can't wait to never see him again.

He shoves Cookie again.

JACK TRAPPER 4 (CONT'D)

You get your cut at the fort, then we can see if you keep it. I'll be waitin for you outside the gates. Waitin for you with your sack full of silver.

CLYDE TRAPPER 3

Leave him alone.

The trappers square off and Cookie scurries away.

EXT. RIVER NEAR RIVERSIDE CAMP - MOMENTS LATER - LATE AFTERNOON

Flustered and afraid Cookie wanders down to the river.

EXT. RIVER SIDE - LATE AFTERNOON

He goes to the river's edge and looks into the water.

The water is teeming with fish. Fish everywhere. Big, meaty salmon with silver skin.

Cookie hurries back up to the camp.

EXT. RIVERSIDE CAMP - CONTINUOUS - LATE AFTERNOON

Cookie locates a butterfly net among his things.

He pulls a basket from his pile, too, and as he looks over at the supply sled he sees trapper, Bill, digging for something among the blankets.

Cookie catches his breath, afraid for King-Lu.

The trapper rips out some boxes and rope. He gives Cookie a cold look.

But no King-Lu.

Cookie is relieved. He doesn't wait around.

He heads back down to the water.

EXT. RIVER NEAR RIVERSIDE CAMP- CONTINUOUS - LATE AFTERNOON / DUSK

Cookie wades into the river. He dips his net in the water and lifts out a silver salmon.

He tosses it on the bank and dips again, catching more.

He stumbles along, pulling fish from the river.

He spots his blanket near the water's edge.

He looks out and sees the receding figure of King-Lu swimming across the river.

Cookie watches him swimming strongly towards the other side.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. SHIP IN THE FOG - TWO WEEKS LATER - MORNING

Through the thick morning mist, A COW appears.

The animal seems to be floating over the river.

The lapping water is even and hushed.

Soon a ferry boat comes into view, piloted by a SWARTHY SAILOR MAN.

The ferry floats upstream, carrying the cargo of the cow.

EXT. FORT - RIVER BANK - MORNING

On a sandy beach, a MULTNOMAH BOY skims a rock.

The ferry boat is beached.

A sailor leads the cow off the ferry, onto the shore.

SOME WORKERS stop to watch.

A MULTNOMAH MAN and WOMAN with a BABY on her back, gather and watch as the cow arrives on land.

THOMAS, a junior fur company guard, approaches, handing papers over to the sailor. The sailor looks at the papers and shrugs. He gives the reins of the cow to Thomas.

Thomas leads the cow over the sandy beach towards the misty trees.

DESMOND, a MULTNOMAH MAN watches them go.

Up the bank wait the walls of a trading fort.

EXT. WOODS NEAR FORT - DAY

A ROUGH-LOOKING MAN ambles along a forest trail, counting silver coins (or Fort coupons). Over his shoulder is a pair of pants, on his head two hats, around his wrist a mahogany cane, on his face a satisfied smile.

Behind him, Cookie, cleaner, with shorter hair, sits on a stump, putting on a new pair of boots.

Satisfied with his purchase, he leaves his old boots behind.

Cookie walks around a bend and passes a bloodied knife on the ground.

Further along, some bushes and piles of debris. Among the local population's refuse, Cookie spots a BODY. Is it alive? He can't tell. All he can see are bare legs, stockinged feet that stick out of the bush.

He peers at the body a moment longer but doesn't want to investigate.

He hurries on.

EXT. PARSON'S - DAY - SOON

Cookie, walks through town, getting used to his new boots.

The new boots are fetching in his eyes, and fairly comfortable.

He passes ERIC, a trapper, who is heading in the opposite direction, holding a pig he has just stolen.

PARSON, who lives at the edge of town, is carrying the week's supplies back to his shack. He stops and takes notice of the man with the pig and then Cookie.

PARSON
Fancy boots, lad!

EXT. FORT - DAY - SOON

The trading fort is a simple cluster of wooden shacks surrounded by a sturdy wooden fence. Atop a stripped post flies the flag of the trading company.

Outside the fence, imposing fir trees and a drab flea market at the edge of the world.

A few INDIANS, RUSSIANS, BRITONS, and FRENCHMEN barter back and forth on blankets laid with nails, herbs, knives, whatever might have some value. A LAZY GUARD loiters near the main gate.

Cookie, with his new boots, walks among the MEN and WOMEN, lonely. He overhears snippets of conversation floating through the drizzle. They talk about trade, weather, gossip.

His feet slurp in the mud as he rounds the corner of the long fence.

He passes TWO MEN.

MAN #1 (OS)
Those look like Jean-Baptiste's boots.

MAN #2 (OS)
How the hell would I know?

Cookie walks to the edge of "town."

EXT. WOODS NEAR FORT - DAY

A LITTLE GIRL with pigtails in a gingham dress, carries an empty wooden bucket.

EXT. EDGE OF FORT - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Cookie sits under the boughs of the fir trees, untucks his pant legs from his new boots. He counts his money. A stack of fort coupons.

Now where to go?

He sits on a stump, with nothing to do.

The LITTLE GIRL with the empty wooden bucket comes out of the woods and passes Cookie.

He watches her walk gaily towards the fort, swinging her bucket.

He follows her.

EXT. FORT - CONTINUOUS - DAY

The little girl wanders past the traders Cookie just left.

She enters the fort's walls. And Cookie enters behind her.

INT. FORT - CONTINUOUS - DAY

A guarded warehouse for furs. A watchtower. A saloon. A kitchen garden.

The little girl wanders across down the single row of ad-hoc buildings.

Cookie follows.

She goes into the saloon, passing through it's burlap door.

Cookie waits outside.

He can hear the boisterous sounds of the saloon's PATRONS from outside. Laughter and the stomping of boots.

Soon, the little girl exits with her bucket sloshing with beer.

She belches loudly and walks past Cookie, and back out the gate of the fort.

Cookie has nowhere to go but into the saloon.

INT. SALOON - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Cookie enters the bar.

The air is hot and filled with smoke. It's a long, dirty room with a wood stove and a tattered blanket on the wall. Some of the men speak the Multnomah trade jargon.

He sits at the bar facing himself in the long mirror. He looks small and pale compared to the rough men around him. Timidly, he orders:

COOKIE
Whiskey, please.

The drink appears.

The bartender waits for payment.

COOKIE (CONT'D)
How much?

Cookie holds out his money. The bartender takes two coins.

Cookie sips his drink as the PATRONS--soldiers, sailors, trappers, Indians, etc.--keep laughing and gambling, playing poker and mahjong. The bar is filled with competing voices and competing stories. The men talk about health problems, grand plans, card games, foreign countries. All the talk mixes together and cancels each other out.

Among the conversations, Cookie picks up on one in particular, and tries to catch some of its details.

LLOYD
First one in the Territory. Shipped
it all the way up from Saint
Francisco.

SAILOR
Saint Luis Obispo.

Lloyd is annoyed by the interruption but the drunken sailor doesn't seem to notice.

LLOYD
I'm told Saint Francisco.

SAILOR

Saint Luis Obispo. I spoke to the
ferryman.

LLOYD

The ferryman... Never trust a
drunken ferryman. Your mother never
told you that?

SAILOR

He wasn't a drunk.

LLOYD

Ha! You don't think so? You've seen
his hand in the morning? He's
always drunk, that one. Or sleeping
it off.

SAILOR

He seemed fine to me.

LLOYD

His blood is whiskey.

SAILOR

Well, he said Saint Luis Obispo,
and he was the one bringing the
cow.

LLOYD

Have it your way, Saint Luis
Obispo.

Lloyd directs his story to the man across from him.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

The Chief Factor ordered two cows
and a calf. That's the true story.
But the other ones died on the way.

MAN

What good's one cow to anyone? Cow
needs a stud.

The sailor nods.

LLOYD

Chief Factor wants milk in his tea.
(putting on airs) Like a proper
Englishman.

MAN

Like a proper lady.

They laugh.

MAN (CONT'D)

This ain't a place for cows. God would've put cows here if it was.

LLOYD

No place for white men either then.

Cookie listens, imposing himself into the cow's part.

As Cookie sips his drink and eavesdrops, a BIG, TOUGH-LOOKING MAN walks into the saloon. With him is a BABY, swaddled, in a basket.

They sit beside Cookie at the bar. The big guy orders a beer. He sets the baby on the bar.

Cookie keeps to himself, making eyes with the baby.

Behind him, a bar patron, PAT, has noted the new arrival and can't keep his mouth shut.

PAT

Well, look who's here. Brilliant William.

The bartender gives William his beer.

PAT (CONT'D)

I need a few sun beams, William. Can you gather me up a dozen sun beams? They're on the ground, just lying around everywhere. Any old beams will do.

The big guy ignores the show off, PAT. He drinks and stares at the bar.

WILLIAM

(mumbling to himself)
Sonsabitches.

PAT

Here's a question. What does a tongue taste like? You ever think about that? I bet you have some distinct notions about what your tongue tastes like, am I right William?

Some of the other men in the saloon laugh.

William is not pleased but stays focused on his drink. Only Cookie can hear him mutter:

WILLIAM
Traders all sonsabitches.

Pat gets up and comes near William. Pacing behind him.

PAT
Whatcha sayin there Brilliant
William? Something brilliant, I'm
bettin. He's always good for some
clever opinions. What's the
difference between a river and
lake? You figured that one out yet,
Willy?

The bartender gives a warning glance.

PAT (CONT'D)
I'm not bothering him. I'm just
askin an honest question. What
about the chicken and the egg? He
knew for sure it was the chicken.
Til he thought about it from the
egg's point of view. That really
hurt your old noggin, didn't it,
William?

He touches William's back.

PAT (CONT'D)
Yep, yep. I think that's how you
got this crack in your brain bone.
(He laughs, tapping William's head)

The bartender shakes his head. William is getting angrier and angrier. He's staring furiously at the bar, his mouth twitching.

PAT (CONT'D)
Willy, you better do something or
your head's gonna blow.

At last William spins around. He reaches out and grabs Cookie by the coat.

WILLIAM
You watch him til I'm done.

Cookie barely has time to nod yes, before William turns and slugs Pat in the face, sending him reeling.

William stands and grabs Pat, dragging him across the room and through the burlap door flap.

Cookie watches as the other men rise and follow too, happily chanting and yelling their blood thirst.

As the room empties, Cookie sits with the baby basket and tries to ignore the brutality.

The bartender locks the till and goes to watch the action.

Cookie and the baby sit alone at the bar.

Cookie sighs, looks at the baby. Makes a little face.

A VOICE

Hello, Cookie. I thought I might find you here sooner or later.

Cookie raises his gaze and in the mirror's reflection, sees behind him, a figure sitting across the now-empty saloon.

It's King-Lu, now decently shod, in fine frontier regalia.

Cookie turns, pleased at the sight of a familiar face, but keeps his thoughts to himself. King-Lu gives him a wide smile.

COOKIE

I didn't think I'd ever see you again.

King Lu crosses the room with his beer.

The sounds of the fight waft in through the burlap door: the initial punches, the clamor by some men to stop the carnage, and now, a full-blown street brawl involving all parties.

King-Lu takes a seat at the bar beside Cookie.

KING-LU

I was lucky. Those Russian villains left the country just after I left you. I thought about doing some violence to them but they were gone before I knew it. Now I'm free and easy, right back where I was.

King-Lu sips his beer.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

Where are all your kind friends?

COOKIE
They mostly went south. Some north.

KING-LU
But not you.

COOKIE
Not yet. No one would have me.

A man tumbles in the door and bounces back out to keep brawling.

KING-LU
And where are you staying in the mean time?

COOKIE
I've got a tent a mile thataway.
Other side of the hill.

KING-LU
I've got a place a mile thataway.
I've got a bottle there, too.

COOKIE
(unsure)
Ah ha.

A beat.

KING-LU
(clarifying)
Maybe you'd like to come help me drink it.

COOKIE
Oh. Of course, I would... but...

He nods at the baby.

KING-LU
Leave him. He is fine.

COOKIE
But... He's just a child.

KING-LU
He is fine.

Cookie hands the baby a cork to play with.

COOKIE
You stay here. Your daddy will be back soon.

Cookie and King-Lu exit, slipping away. The fight continues outside.

The baby sits alone on the bar.

EXT. TOWN NEAR FORT - SOON - AFTERNOON

Cookie and King-Lu walk.

Outside the fort walls, the land is a mix of forest and meadow, marked by occasional huts and tents, and pathways worn in the more trafficked areas.

A DOG searches for food scraps.

A BUSINESS MAN, in a suit, sits outside a shack reading a months old London newspaper. He takes a page from the paper to cover the bucket of beer near his chair. The little bucket girl, his daughter, sits on the small porch stringing blue beads onto a necklace.

KING-LU

... I've been in these parts close to two years now. I've thought of leaving more than once, but I sense opportunity here. Ships coming in and out every week. More raw materials than anywhere I've seen, and I've been all over.

JAMES PARSONS comes out onto his makeshift porch with his RAVEN. He takes note of Cookie and King-Lu, watching them as they pass.

COOKIE

(returning to the conversation)

You've been everywhere.

KING-LU

I caught my first trade ship from Canton when I was nine. I sailed to London, Africa, saw the pyramids. Saw the southern cross. This is a land of riches, I'll tell you.

Quickly, the homes taper off.

EXT. WOODS - SOON - AFTERNOON

King-Lu and Cookie make their way along a deer path, stopping to check King-Lu's traps along the way. The traps are makeshift; a scrap of fish for bait, birds pick at the ground surrounding the traps.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
I see something in this land I
haven't seen before. Pretty much
everywhere's been touched by now...

King-Lu lifts the heavy wood and pulls out a dead squirrel.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
but this is still new. More
nameless things around here than
you could shake an eel at.

King-Lu puts the carcass in his shoulder bag and they move on.

COOKIE
It doesn't seem new to me. It seems
old.

KING-LU
Everything's old if you look at it
in that way. But that doesn't stop
new things coming into the world,
does it?

EXT. WOODS/MEADOW NEAR FORT/HUTCH - SOON - AFTERNOON

They walk on, lost in their own thoughts.

They arrive at the next trap.

King-Lu lifts the fallen flat rock. Cookie picks up the smashed squirrel by its tail. King-Lu opens his bag and Cookie drops the squirrel in.

KING-LU
What I'm saying is history isn't
here yet. It's coming, but we got
here early this time. Maybe this
time around we can be ready for it.
We can take it on our own terms.

Cookie likes the sound of that.

EXT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - AFTERNOON

A rustic cabin at the edge of a meadow. Almost more a pile of sticks.

Chickens scratch in the yard near a chicken coop and a woodpile.

A wooden ladder leans against the hutch, on the ground a long wooden yoke near a barrel of water.

The two men walk inside.

INT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - CONTINUOUS - AFTERNOON

King-lu puts his bag of squirrel meat on a wooden table.

Cookie appraises the cottage. A fire pit, a hole in the roof. Dirty clothes on the dirt floor. A grimy rug.

KING-LU

Not much to look at, I know.

King-Lu pulls a bottle from a shelf and finds a cup.

He pours a cup and hands it to Cookie. They toast.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

Here's to something.

They drink.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

I'll get a fire going. You make yourself easy.

King-Lu exits to chop some wood.

Cookie looks around the hovel.

He finds a broom and starts sweeping.

EXT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - CONTINUOUS - AFTERNOON

Cookie shakes out the rug.

King-Lu gathers wood in the near distance.

Cookie goes back inside with the rug as King-Lu sets up another piece of wood.

Cookie returns. He picks some flowers from outside the door.

INT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - CONTINUOUS - AFTERNOON

Cookie puts the flowers in an empty bottle.

King-Lu enters with an arm load of wood.

KING-LU
Looks better already!

He starts making a fire.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
Where're you from, Cookie? I've
been talking and talking.

COOKIE
Maryland.

KING-LU
Never been.

COOKIE
It's fine. I don't remember it
much.

KING-LU
Not fine enough to stay, eh?

COOKIE
My momma died when I was born. Then
my daddy died. I had to move on to
find work. Never stopped moving.
You could say I'm from no where, I
guess.

A pause of understanding.

KING-LU
Well, here's to getting out of
there.

King-Lu fills Cookie's cup again. The fire is catching,
growing into licking flames, throwing heat.

MONTAGE OF DAYS:

EXT. WOODS NEAR KING-LU'S HUTCH - DAY

Cookie and King-Lu gather nuts from the branches of a thick
bush.

Cookie fills his basket.

Close-by King-Lu puts his stash in a sling he's made from his shirt.

KING-LU

... Things gain value when you send them around, that's the thing. A fur here is worth a dollar; a fur in Paris, a hundred times that. I had an idea once. Furs are one thing. But there's precious oil in the beavers, too, that's worth something in China. They use it for medicine over there. If a man could take a batch of that precious beaver oil on a ship to Canton, he could make his fortune.

COOKIE

Why don't you?

KING-LU

Oil is in the glands. Glands never make it to the fort. Just rot away in the woods. Anyway, I don't have contacts in Canton. I'm from the north, and they hate a Northern man there. Worse than a white man to them.

INT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - ANOTHER DAY

Cookie's few belongings are now mixed among King-Lu's.

King-Lu debeards mussel shells while Cookie tends the fire and chops vegetables...

KING-LU

... What I'd really like is a farm. The land south of here is wide open. The world wants filberts. Or walnuts. Or almonds.

Cookie collects the mussels from King-Lu. He picks off the last strands that King-Lu missed, puts them in the boiling water.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

Something you can pack up and send. But you can't just grow a tree, it takes time.

EXT. RIVER NEAR KING-LU'S HUTCH - ANOTHER DAY

Cookie washes clothing and dishes in the river.

King-Lu sits against a rock. He's busy thinking.

KING-LU

... It's the getting started that's the puzzle. No way for a poor man to get a start. You can't grow a batch of nuts, harvest them, crate and ship them to market without getting payment on them until after. You need capital. Or you need some kind of miracle.

COOKIE

You need leverage.

KING-LU

Or a crime.

King-Lu thinks harder.

COOKIE

I'd like to open a hotel someday. A place for travelers.

KING-LU

Hotel. That's nice.

COOKIE

Or a bakery.

King-Lu gets up and stretches.

Cookie wrings water from a shirt.

KING-LU

A hotel and bakery. With wild huckleberry pies. You could do that here.

COOKIE

Someplace warmer.

KING-LU

Warmer then.

King-Lu goes over and helps Cookie gather up their load.

Cookie puts his bag over his shoulder, nods to a small black basalt sculpture across the river.

COOKIE
One black rock.

KING-LU
That's a weather stone. It makes rain, they say. They say it was a monster or a powerful spirit once-- a Skookum--who got turned into stone. If anyone sits on it, it rains.

King-Lu and Cookie carry their items, leaving the beach.

COOKIE
Do you believe in that?

KING-LU
I believe different things in different places. It's good to be shifty in a new country. You never know who might be writing the rules come night fall.

MONTAGE ENDS

EXT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - DAY

King-Lu naps in a hammock.

EXT. WOODS NEAR CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Cookie walks in the woods with his basket, gathering herbs and berries.

EXT. CLEARING NEAR CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Beyond the trees, in a clearing, is the cow, grazing.

Cookie stares at the cow. Its eyes are big and brown. Its coat shines in the sun.

The cow is a glorious creature, even more beautiful so far from home.

INT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - EARLY EVENING

A seasonal rain pounds the roof of King-Lu's hutch. Water leaks into make-shift buckets and baskets that the men have set around the place.

King-Lu is mending a pair of pants.

Cookie lights a lantern.

COOKIE

I found the cow today.

King-Lu keeps mending.

COOKIE (CONT'D)

It isn't far from the Chief
Factor's house. In a meadow. I'd
like some of that milk.

KING-LU

I'm not a milk drinker. Doesn't
agree with me.

Cookie brings the lantern over to where King-Lu is sewing and
sets it down next to him.

COOKIE

I wouldn't drink it. I'd use it for
cookies, or scones. There's nothing
better than buttermilk biscuits.
I'm tired of this water and flour
bread.

King-Lu finishes mending. He cuts the thread with his teeth.
He shakes out his pants and steps into them.

KING-LU

(staring at his feet)
What else would you need for good
biscuits, Cookie?

COOKIE

Flour, some sugar, salt, baking
soda.

KING-LU

(looking towards Cookie)
How long does it take to milk a
cow?

COOKIE

Not long.

KING-LU

Make much noise?

COOKIE

No.

KING-LU

Can cows give milk at night?

COOKIE

As long as she wasn't milked after dinner.

An idea is hatched as King-Lu looks deviously at Cookie. Cookie shakes his head, no. King-Lu shakes his head, yes.

EXT. WOODS NEAR CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

An owl hoots.

Cookie and King-Lu sneak through the woods with a watertight Indian basket.

They keep moving and soon arrive at the edge of the cow's meadow.

They find the cow in the moonlight.

EXT. EDGE OF COW MEADOW - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

At the edge of a clearing Cookie and King-Lu stand under a large oak tree.

KING-LU

I'll go up and keep an eye on things from here. Give me a lift.

Cookie gives him a leg-up.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

(whispering)

If I see anything, I'll give a call. I'll do an owl. Who-who.

COOKIE

(looking up)

All right but I don't think you can get up there.

King-Lu's boot is pressing on Cookie's shoulder and face, until finally King-Lu gives up.

KING-LU
(on the ground)
I'll wait here.

EXT. COW MEADOW - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie gently approaches the cow.

Across the meadow, the dim lights of the Chief Factor's house.

The cow lows softly. Cookie speaks to her softly.

COOKIE
How are you? Didn't expect company
so late at night, did you? Well.
Here we are.

Cookie kneels and begins milking the cow. The streams of milk splash in the basket.

COOKIE (CONT'D)
Sorry about your husband. I heard
he didn't make it all the way. And
your calf... That's a terrible
thing. Terrible. But you've got a
nice place here. You've got a very
nice little place here, don't you?

The cow is happy to have Cookie nearby.

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

From beneath the branches, King-Lu watches Cookie vigilantly.

Cookie rises and heads towards King-Lu.

When Cookie reaches King-Lu, they retreat back into the forest.

INT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - EARLY MORNING

A makeshift butter churn and various ingredients lay open on the table.

Cookie pulls a Dutch oven from a stone hearth.

EXT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - CONTINUOUS - EARLY MORNING

King-Lu comes out of the woods carrying a pile of wood. He is in his sleeping clothes and boots. He drops the wood in the yard.

He goes to one of the buckets of rain water. He takes a drink from his cupped hands. As he wipes his hands, Cookie hands him a fresh biscuit through the window.

King-Lu pulls the biscuit apart and the steam comes out.

Taking a bite, clearly the biscuit is heavenly.

INT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - CONTINUOUS - EARLY MORNING

King-Lu comes in from outdoors.

He takes a seat at the table.

Cookie brings over more biscuits.

They are golden and fluffy. The two men lean over the plate and smell the freshly baked goods.

Cookie and King-Lu eat.

KING-LU

How much do you think someone would pay for a biscuit like that?

COOKIE

I wish we had honey.

KING-LU

A glass of whiskey is two silver coins. A pickle is three. The men walk out of the fort loaded with silver and shells and company script-- I once saw a man spend five good beaver pelts on a broken fork.

King-Lu stands. Then he sits again.

Cookie eats another biscuit.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

I think we should test the waters. Next batch, Cookie, we'll take to market. I've heard of fortunes made on less.

COOKIE
Seems dangerous.

KING-LU
So's anything worth doing.

Cookie thinks, studying the plain biscuit.

COOKIE
I think they'd like something
sweeter.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN /PARSON'S SHACK- ANOTHER MORNING

On a path heading to town, King-Lu carries a yoke over his shoulders, balancing covered baskets on either side. Cookie follows along carrying a blanket and a plank of cedar.

A random dog follows the smell coming from the baskets.

James Parson is shooing away the little bucket girl when Cookie and King-Lu pass. The little girl follows Cookie and King-Lu to the edge of town, then watches them go.

EXT. FORT - DAY

The drab flea market outside the fort is ongoing. A few INDIANS, a few TRAPPERS, all peddle their wares on the blankets. A batch of dried mushrooms. A scatter of beads. Piles of mussels and clams.

Cookie lays out the blanket on the edge of the market. On top of the blanket they lay their plank of cedar. On the cedar, they lay a row of primitive donuts. Fried, sugared, puffy dough. Drizzled with honey.

They sit and wait.

EXT. FORT - SOON - DAY

Soon enough, TWO TRAPPERS wander over.

KING-LU
Fresh Oily Cakes. Best this side of
the Sandwich Islands.

FORT TRAPPER 1
Don't look like hard tack. Or soda
bread.

FORT TRAPPER 2
Looks like some kind of pancake.

FORT TRAPPER 1
Smells good. What's in it?

KING-LU
(exaggerating his accent)
Secret ingredient. Ancient Chinese
secret.

FORT TRAPPER 2
How much?

KING-LU
Five ingots. Or the equal in trade.

The trapper shrugs, digs into his purse. They exchange money
for oily cake.

He bites into it. Ecstasy appears on his face.

FORT TRAPPER 2
(mouth full)
Good lord, gimme another.

MORE TRAPPERS show up, flush with money, and buy up more.
Also, Lloyd with Thomas in tow.

A small bidding war ensues. Various currencies are used:
silver, gold, pelts, dentalium.

FORT TRAPPER 3
I'll give you six ingots for the
last one.

FORT TRAPPER 4
Seven shells.

LLOYD
Eight shells.

FORT TRAPPER 4
Eight?

KING-LU
Oily cake to this gentleman. We'll
have more tomorrow.

Cookie hands over the last oily cake to Lloyd. Thomas watches
the oily cake go from Cookie to Lloyd. He hopes Lloyd will
share it but Lloyd turns his back to Thomas and shoves the
cake into his mouth.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN /PARSON'S SHACK- AFTERNOON

The little beer girl walks through the center of town carrying a full bucket of beer. She delivers it to the businessman who sits outside his shack reading the same worn newspaper.

Cookie and King-Lu pass by as the businessman pays the little girl.

James Parson keeps a sharp eye on Cookie and King-Lu as they walk home talking and laughing, the empty baskets over King-Lu's shoulders.

They recount the day's victory.

EXT. TREE NEAR COW MEADOW - NIGHT

An ad-hoc ladder leans against the trunk of the oak tree.

High above, King-Lu sits in his sentry position in the branches of the tree.

EXT. COW MEADOW - NIGHT

The moon is high.

In the darkness, Cookie milks quietly, surreptitiously, now with a milking stool.

Cookie whispers sweetly to the cow, pressing his head against her side.

COOKIE

There now. We made some oily cakes with your milk. They were very good. We couldn't sell them fast enough. A little honey on them. It was your milk in the batter that did it. What a good, nice girl you are.

The cow lows softly.

The moon blankets them.

EXT. FORT - LATE MORNING

TRAPPERS gather round as they set up shop. There are some Company SOLDIERS in the group, a NATIVE WOMAN, a couple Native men, returning trappers and Thomas. They jostle and jockey for the best spot in line.

King-Lu has added a hand-made sign: "Best Oily Cakes East of Canton."

This time they make the oily cakes on site. They have a fire and a cast iron skillet with boiling lard. They pour the batter, pull out the oily cake, drizzle it with honey and grated cinnamon.

King-Lu makes the customers line up in an orderly fashion.

KING-LU

One for each customer, all right, men? Seems only fair. You were here first, I saw you. You step up.

FORT TRAPPER 5

You oughtta make more next time.

KING-LU

Only so many we can make in a day, friend.

FORT TRAPPER 6

They want to keep the prices up. They're not dumb.

The trapper takes a bite of his oily cake.

FORT TRAPPER 6 (CONT'D)

Damn it, what's in these things? It tastes like something my mama made.

KING-LU

That's our secret, boys. Think of it as a little taste of home.

The oily cakes go quickly again. The Native men pay in dentalium shells. Others in silver, gold, blue beads, one pelt. The last one is sold to a man just behind Thomas who pushes his money in King-Lu's face, right over the boy's head.

As Thomas steams, King-Lu takes the money and places it in a special sack.

INT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - LATER - DAY

Cookie and King-Lu are back home, their money stacked on the rustic table. A hodgepodge of coins, beads, a single pelt, and shells.

COOKIE

You could buy an acre in California for that.

KING-LU

It's a start all right. It won't last much longer, though.

COOKIE

No?

KING-LU

No, they'll get tired of it. And more milk cows will be here soon. We've got a window here, Cookie.

They regard their money.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

This is too much to keep in the house. We need a bank.

COOKIE

How about the cottonwood tree? There's a good hole in the trunk.

King-Lu concurs.

They walk outside.

EXT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - CONTINUOUS - DAY

King-Lu goes over and puts the money in the tree as Cookie follows along. King-Lu has to climb onto a piece of wood to reach the hole.

COOKIE

Which side of the tree has the most branches?

King-Lu tucks the sack inside the hole.

COOKIE (CONT'D)

The outside.

EXT. RIVER NEAR KING-LU'S HUTCH - LATER DAY

King-Lu naps on the shore.

Cookie casts his line into the cold water.

They enjoy their afternoon of leisure.

EXT. FORT - NEXT DAY - MORNING

Cookie and King-Lu arrive at their spot. A GROUP OF CUSTOMERS is already waiting for them.

They begin to set up when Lloyd, the Company man, draws near. Thomas staggers behind him.

LLOYD
(to Cookie)
Hold one out today. The Chief
Factor wants one. He'll be here
soon.

Cookie hears him. His gaze seeks King-Lu. He lights the fire.

Behind Cookie, Lloyd smacks Thomas on the back of the head for loitering about.

LLOYD (CONT'D)
(to Thomas)
Don't you have some work you should
be doing? I don't need two shadows,
do I?

King-Lu is already selling to the gathered men.

EXT. FORT - SOON - MORNING

The lazy guard snoozes with a gun in his lap. He is roused by the poking in the ribs with the long end of a decorative cane.

The CHIEF FACTOR at the entrance of the fort pokes at the guard.

CHIEF FACTOR
Look alive, sir!

The Factor is a stately, imposing figure, older and more dignified than anyone else in the territory. He has red-blond hair and mutton chops, and wears a waistcoat with starched collar.

He walks past the line of merchants selling their wares outside the fort fence.

He walks directly to the oily cake area and comes to a stop. Cookie and King-Lu look at him expectantly.

CHIEF FACTOR (CONT'D)
I've heard about your cakes. I'd like to try one, if I may. How much?

KING-LU
Yes, sir. For you, only ten silver pieces.

He pulls his purse from his coat and pays.

Cookie prepares him an oily cake.

COOKIE
A little cinnamon is nice.

Cookie offers a small grating of cinnamon.

The Chief Factor eats.

He loves it.

CHIEF FACTOR
I taste London in this cake. A bakery in South Kensington I once knew... Astonishing. How did you do this?

COOKIE
I was indentured to a baker in Boston, sir. He taught me the trade.

CHIEF FACTOR
He was a good baker.

COOKIE
Indeed. He was.

CHIEF FACTOR
What was his name?

COOKIE
Barnaby Rose.

CHIEF FACTOR
Never heard of him. I commend you on a delicious baked good, sir.

(MORE)

CHIEF FACTOR (CONT'D)

I hope you won't be moving on too soon.

KING-LU

We have no plans.

The Chief Factor ignores him.

COOKIE

We have no plans.

CHIEF FACTOR

(taking his last bite)

Very good.

The Chief Factor bows and leaves.

Cookie and King-Lu watch him go.

The other vendors call for customers.

EXT. WOODS NEAR CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cookie with his milking stool and King-Lu carrying his ladder, they sneak through the woods.

KING-LU

(whispering)

... a hotel in Saint Francisco is harder. More competition. But more opportunity, too. More people coming through.

EXT. TREE / COW MEADOW - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Into the meadow they creep. King-Lu leans the ladder against the tree's trunk.

KING-LU

(whispering as he climbs)

It's a good idea. We'll have enough to go there soon enough.

COOKIE

(holding the ladder)

We have enough to go now.

KING-LU

(whispering)

Enough to go. But not enough to start.

Cookie continues towards the cow.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Psst.

Cookie looks back.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
Another cup is another dozen cakes.
That's another fifty silver pieces,
at least.

Cookie goes to the cow.

COOKIE
Hello. Good evening. Back again.
How are you tonight? You seem well.

Another secret milking begins. The bucket begins to fill.

A faraway dog starts barking.

Cookie's nervous.

Cookie does a questioning owl sound.

COOKIE (CONT'D)
Who who?

No response. Cookie keeps milking.

COOKIE (CONT'D)
You've never slept on a feather
bed. A feather bed is very nice. It
would be an excellent feature in a
hotel. But how do you clean a
feather bed? I don't know. It might
not be the best idea for a hotel.

Cookie fills the bucket as much as he can bear.

EXT. FORT - LATE MORNING

A blot of batter fries in oil.

Cookie flips it. Pulls it out. Drizzles honey on it.

And hands it to the Chief Factor who stands eagerly waiting.

CHIEF FACTOR
Very good.

COOKIE

Good morning, sir. Here you go.

King-Lu holds out his hand for payment. The Chief Factor gives Cookie his money.

The Chief Factor eats.

CHIEF FACTOR

I'm entertaining a small group next week. The captain of the Ruby is coming for tea. I'm tired of his jests about the savagery of life on the frontier. Do you know what a clafoutis is?

COOKIE

I do.

CHIEF FACTOR

Could you make one? A good one? He loves a clafoutis. I'd like to humiliate him.

COOKIE

Without fresh raspberries or apricots, I'm not sure...

CHIEF FACTOR

Have you tried the bilberry?

COOKIE

Out of season, I believe.

CHIEF FACTOR

There are still blueberries on the bush. I would pay handsomely for a proper blueberry clafoutis.

COOKIE

It's a simple enough cake. If the blueberry is available, I'm sure I can make one.

CHIEF FACTOR

Capital. Saturday then. A clafoutis. We'll be dining at my residence. You know it's whereabouts?

COOKIE

(on the spot)

I think I've passed it or know of it--

CHIEF FACTOR
 (departing)
 Tea time.

The Chief Factor ambles back to the fort with a spring in his step.

EXT. WOODS NEAR KING-LU'S HUTCH - AFTERNOON

Cookie hunts. Into his basket go berries that he tickles from a bush.

INT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - NIGHT

Cookie mixes the ingredients of the clafoutis in a bowl. He pours the batter into a pan.

As Cookie works, King-Lu lays on his bed talking.

KING-LU
 The hotels in Saint Francisco are grand. We can't compete on that scale. But regular travelers need shelter, too. A room with a bed, that's all. A few rooms near the sea. That's a start. And if we choose the site very well, we can add the garden and the corn rows--

King-Lu trails off, lost in his imaginings.

Cookie puts the clafoutis into their make-shift oven.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
 This is a dangerous game we're playing here. The Chief Factor has a delicate palate. He'll taste his milk in there eventually.

Cookie comes and sits near King-Lu.

COOKIE
 We can't say no. He'd be suspicious.

KING-LU
 Where does he think the milk is coming from?

COOKIE
 Some people can't imagine being stolen from. They're too strong.

Cookie wanders to stand in the open doorway.

KING-LU

Let's hope he's one of those.

Cookie stares up at the clouds moving across the moon.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

How much will we charge?

KING-LU (CONT'D)

20?

A gentle owl calls somewhere in the night.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

25.

INT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - SOON - AFTERNOON

The GUESTS are collected in the living room.

An American CAPTAIN (né Ulysses Welt), dressed in nautical garb; a prominent Multnomah leader, TOTILLICUM, in local regalia; and his wife, ILLCHE, in a combination of local and foreign dress.

The CHIEF FACTOR (né Cheston Plumb) is also there, and the Factor's wife, CELESTE, a native woman.

A CAT drinks from a small porcelain bowl of milk.

It's a stiff party. They gather around a table with a nice table cloth, linens, a bouquet of flowers, a glass decanter.

CHIEF FACTOR

Hmm, sounds like quite a situation,
indeed. And in the end, how many
lashes did you order?

Out the window, Cookie and King-Lu can be seen making their way up the long path leading to the house. Cookie carries the cake.

CAPTAIN

Twenty. It was a memorable day for
that man.

CHIEF FACTOR

A fine number. But for mutiny? It
seems conservative.

CAPTAIN

More than twenty and he would have been useless the remainder of the voyage.

CHIEF FACTOR

He was a young hand?

CAPTAIN

Not so young.

CHIEF FACTOR

You see, here is the rub. When one factors the loss of labor from the punished hand versus the gain of labor from the hands who witness the punishment, a stricter punishment can sometimes become the more advisable path.

Cookie and King-Lu near the residence.

CHIEF FACTOR (CONT'D)

Sometimes a properly rendered death is even useful in the ultimate accounting. It can be a vastly motivating spectacle for the indolent, let alone the mutinous.

Cookie and King-Lu arrive.

A knock at the door.

CAPTAIN

Fair enough. But some calculations can never truly be made.

A SERVANT lets Cookie and King-Lu in the front door and leads them to the living room.

CHIEF FACTOR

(his back to his guests)

No, there you are wrong, Captain. Any question that can't be calculated is not worth asking.

The Chief Factor turns to greet Cookie with some pleasure.

CHIEF FACTOR (CONT'D)

Ah, here he is. Our baker. A baker as fine as any you'll find on the continent, captain, you'll see. Bring the clafoutis over here, Cookie. Show the captain.

Cookie brings the cake over. The servant leaves.

The Captain and Chief Factor gather around a small round table where the cake has been placed. The men admire his handiwork.

CAPTAIN
(looking at Cookie)
Indeed, it is a fine looking cake
Mister...

COOKIE
Figowitz.

CAPTAIN
What brought you to the Oregon
Territory, Mister Figowitz?

COOKIE
Chance. I hired on with a trapping
company.

CAPTAIN
Ashley's men?

COOKIE
No. A lesser crew.

CAPTAIN
They're trapping out the whole map.
Won't be any pelts here much
longer.

CHIEF FACTOR
I disagree. The beaver are endless.

KING-LU
(standing in the doorway)
When I got here, there were beaver
everywhere. Whole cities of beaver.
Living like people in row houses in
New York. Smart animals, the
beaver.

They ignore King-Lu. TOTILLICUM moves from his chair near King-Lu over to join the Captain and Chief Factor.

CAPTAIN
In any case, fashions are changing
in Paris. The beaver hat is on the
wane.

CHIEF FACTOR

The market in China is strong. The
beaver will always find a home.
It's too beautiful, too supple.

Totillicum isn't following.

Celeste translates between the men.

CHIEF FACTOR (CONT'D)

He's saying the men in Paris are
favoring new hats this season. They
no longer want beaver fur. I'm
saying the beaver is forever.

Totillicum responds. Celeste translates.

CELESTE

He can't understand why the white
men hunt so much beaver and never
eat the tail. The tail is
delicious.

CAPTAIN

Maybe I will. I'm sick to death of
salmon already. You can tell him
that.

An awkward pause. Thankfully, the servant brings tea.

CHIEF FACTOR

Ah, here we are.

Tea is poured for the guests, including Cookie.

CHIEF FACTOR (CONT'D)

Chinese black tea. Very subtle.
Cream?

CAPTAIN

Thank you.

CHIEF FACTOR

Enjoy the cream. My cow gives only
the smallest amount. She's a lonely
girl, I'm afraid.

CAPTAIN

You have a cow?

CHIEF FACTOR

She arrived only a month ago. Sans
husband, I'm afraid. I hope to have
a mate for her within the year.

CAPTAIN

She's the only cow in the region?

CHIEF FACTOR

For at least five hundred miles in any direction. Would you like to meet her? Let's have a walk. Shall we?

Cookie is clearly invited, too.

The men leave the room.

The women immediately become more relaxed.

EXT. COW MEADOW - LATE AFTERNOON

The men walk from the house to the meadow.

CHIEF FACTOR

... What are the fashions in Paris this year, captain?

CAPTAIN

The ladies are moving away from the empire silhouette this year. They are favoring fuller skirts and visible corseting. For the men, broad shoulders and puffed sleeves. Trousers for smart day wear, breeches in court and the country. As for colors: canary yellow and turkey red are the colors du jour.

Without taking much interest, Totillicum lets the nonsensical chatter float around him.

CHIEF FACTOR

History moves so quickly in Paris.

CAPTAIN

So quickly it wears itself out. It never reaches here at all.

The cow stands alone, chewing grass.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

She looks well enough.

CHIEF FACTOR

And yet she barely produces.

CAPTAIN
What's her provenance?

CHIEF FACTOR
A good line. Half Alderney, of
Isigny, half Froment du Leon, from
the province of Brittany.

The cow edges towards Cookie. The cow lows softly.

The cow nuzzles Cookie's hand and arm. Cookie pats her flank
and she lows some more.

Totillicum, the Chief Factor and the Captain watch Cookie
petting the cow.

King-Lu watches them watching.

CAPTAIN
She seems to have an affection for
you Mr. Figowitz.

Cookie becomes self conscious and stops petting the cow.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
(amused)
She is a very fine cow.

INT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - NIGHT

Cookie and King-Lu drink whiskey.

KING-LU
Froment du Leon, from the province
of Brittany? The cow's got better
breeding than me. A royal cow.

COOKIE
I think we should halt awhile. I
think the Captain sensed something.

KING-LU
Now is our time. Another cow is on
the way. And more cows after that.

COOKIE
The Chief Factor...

KING-LU
... is a fool. Paris this, London
that. He misses everything right
under his nose. What kind of woman
is he?

Cookie doesn't respond.

King-Lu feels a little abashed, realizing he's somehow bruised his friend.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

Men like us, Cookie, we have to make our own way. There are no empire silhouettes and colors du jour for us. We have to take what we can when the taking is good.

COOKIE

I know.

KING-LU

We'll sell a little longer and then we'll make our way south. We haven't even begun, Cookie. This is only the time before the beginning. We'll be through it soon.

Cookie drinks, reluctantly agreeing.

INT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - NIGHT

A large CAT eats from a plate of the evenings left-overs.

The Chief Factor's servant grabs the cat by the scuff of his neck and tosses him out the kitchen door, into the night.

EXT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

The cat lands with a thud on the wooden floor outside the house. The door closes behind him.

INT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

The servant moves through the small clapboard residence, extinguishing candles with a brass snuffer, closing curtains, retrieving an empty glass.

The CAPTAIN snores on a daybed, spending the night.

EXT. COW MEADOW - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

The cow is a little skittish. She shuffles away from Cookie.

COOKIE

There, there. Shhhh.

The milk sprays into the basket. Shhh. Shhh.

Cookie milks.

INT. SERVANT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

The servant undresses. He neatly hangs his uniform over the back of a near-by chair.

He slips on his night gown.

He carries a glass lantern over to his bedside table, opens a drawer and pulls out a small toy.

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

In his tree, King-Lu watches the shadows from above.

Below in the meadow, Cookie milks.

Over at the house, a small flicker of light from a single window.

INT. SERVANT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

By lantern light, the servant lies in bed playing with his small toy. He tilts the little wooden box from side to side until a tiny ball rolls into one of the holes.

He lowers his toy and lies listening, thinking. Finally, he gets out of bed, putting on his boots.

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

King-Lu watches the small light move from one room in the house to the next. The back door opens and out steps the Chief Factor's servant, holding his lantern.

EXT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

The servant peers into the darkness.

SERVANT

Psst. (Whispering) Come on back.
Come on back you stupid cat. Psst.
Psst.

He shines his light about the area, landing on the cat. The cat's eyes open wide.

SERVANT (CONT'D)
Ah, there you are...

The cat runs into the night.

SERVANT (CONT'D)
Psst. Psst.

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS

King-Lu gives the warning call.

KING-LU
Who..

EXT. COW MEADOW - CONTINUOUS

KING-LU
Who...

Cookie stops milking.

EXT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

The servant walks further towards the meadow.

SERVANT
Inside before you get me in
trouble.

A CRACKING SOUND FROM THE MEADOW.

The Servant holds his light out in the direction of the cow.

SERVANT (CONT'D)
Who's there?

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

King-Lu keeps very still.

EXT. COW MEADOW - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie is hunched low behind the cow.

The meadow and surrounding woods are as silent as they can be.

EXT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

The servant stands weary, holding his lantern higher...

Another long CRACK...

EXT. COW MEADOW - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie is startled by a loud thud followed by a thrashing, clunking tumble

KING-LU (OS)
(groaning)
Argh!

Cookie looks back towards King-Lu's perch and sees the jagged end of the tree where the branch once was.

EXT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

The servant runs inside the house.

EXT. COW MEADOW / TREE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie abandons the basket and stool and goes to King-Lu.

COOKIE
(whispering)
Are you all right?

King-Lu grunts.

KING-LU
(in pain)
Shhh.

EXT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

In his nightgown and boots, the servant runs back outside, and across the yard in another direction, towards a bunk house.

INT. BUNK HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

The servant pushes open the door and kicks the man sleeping on the bottom bunk.

LLOYD
What?

SERVANT
Something, someone in the meadow!

LLOYD
Who?

SERVANT
Attackers. All around.

A SET OF LEGS fall down from the bunk above Lloyd, knocking him in the head.

LLOYD
Goddamn it, Thomas!

SERVANT
I woke the house. Get dressed,
hurry!

The servant rushes out in the same flurry he came in.

Lloyd pulls on his pants. Grabs his guns. Thomas jumps down from the upper bunk and starts putting on his boots.

LLOYD
Where the hell do you think you're
going?

Lloyd laughs at the idea of it. He pushes Thomas in the head.

EXT. COW MEADOW NEAR THE TREE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie and King-Lu crouch in fear. King-Lu in pain, too. He clutches his shoulder, getting his breath back.

COOKIE
Can you move? We have to go!

The cow is between them and the house.

EXT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

In his socks and nightshirt, the Chief Factor comes out of the house with his gun in hand. Followed by the Captain.

EXT. COW MEADOW - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

King-Lu holds his hand up to stop Cookie from talking.

CHIEF FACTOR (OS)
You there. Come out!

Cookie and King-Lu stare at each other in silent, appalled communication.

The Chief Factor fires his gun.

Time to run. Cookie and King-Lu get to their feet and make a run for it.

EXT. CHIEF FACTOR'S BACK PORCH / MEADOW - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

The Chief Factor and the Captain run across the meadow to where the cow stands.

Lloyd joins them.

EXT. BUNK HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Through an opening in the bunk house, Thomas watches the men as they cross the meadow.

EXT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE / COW MEADOW - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

The Chief Factor, Captain and Lloyd arrive at the cow, followed by the servant, out of breath, carrying holsters, guns and the Chief Factor's pants.

The Chief factor puts on his pants.

Cookie's milking stool and bucket lay on the ground. Amused, the Captain rights the stool with his boot.

CAPTAIN

It would appear someone has been milking your cow.

CHIEF FACTOR

(seeing the stool)
Mr. Figowitz!

EXT. WOODS NEAR CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie and King-Lu make their way through the brush.

The sound of a distant gun shot.

EXT. WOODS NEAR CLIFF - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie and King-Lu run.

Cookie bends onto the path leading home.

But King-Lu grabs him.

KING-LU

No. Not home. Keep going.

They run deeper into the woods.

EXT. WOODS / CLEARING / CLIFF - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

They come to a clearing before a cliff.

Down below is a rushing river. The moonlight shines in the current.

Behind them, rising sounds.

Without a word, they agree to jump.

King-Lu runs and jumps off the cliff into the night.

Cookie runs but is too afraid. He doesn't jump.

He hears the splash of King-Lu's landing, followed by the voices of the approaching men.

EXT. WOODS NEAR CLIFF - CONTINUOUS

Cookie crawls and hides among the ferns.

EXT. WOODS / CLEARING / CLIFF - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

The Chief Factor, Captain and Lloyd appear and stop on a ridge above Cookie's hiding place.

THE CAPTAIN

Which way?

LLOYD

The deer path goes that way. But the river path is over there.

CHIEF FACTOR

(stomping around)

Stealing my milk. What we did to that savage when he took my chalice, we'll do ten times--

Lloyd holds up his hand. They all listen.

Lloyd looks in the direction of the cliff.

He runs down towards the cliff, passing Cookie's hiding place.

Lloyd peers over the edge into the darkness.

LLOYD

There's one. Crossing the river.

EXT. POV RIVER BELOW CLIFF - CONTINUOUS

King-Lu splashes and reaches a clearing on the opposite side of the river.

EXT. WOODS - UNDER A BUSH - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie lays low and still as Lloyd yells to the men standing above him.

THE CAPTAIN

Which way now? Or will we jump?

CHIEF FACTOR

We'll overtake him on foot. We'll use the path downriver. Lloyd, hurry along. We follow behind. The rest will find us soon enough.

The men give chase.

When things settle down, Cookie creeps from the bush.

He heads in the other direction.

Behind him, the known world recedes.

EXT. WOODS - ELSEWHERE - NIGHT

The forest is dark.

Cookie hikes, fearful.

Cookie hurries through the ominous forest, fleeing faster into the forest.

The trees cover the moon's light, the ground is dark beneath his feet.

He trips over a fallen branch, rises and moves quickly along.

A few yards later, he falls down a narrow ravine, his head landing on a rock.

EXT. RAVINE - NIGHT

Cookie is crumpled at the base of the ravine, his head bleeding.

Pain and darkness all around.

The silence of the forest rises. The smallest sounds press in.

FADE OUT

INT. COTTAGE - PRE DAWN

FADE UP

Cookie awakens in a humble cottage. His face is bruised and swollen.

Through his dimming consciousness An OLDER COUPLE comes into view.

Across the room, the man sits in a rocking chair, smoking a pipe. The woman brews a poultice on the stove. They have white hair, shabby but dignified clothes, and an air of almost spooky peace.

The room darkens, Cookie is out again.

FADE OUT

INT. COTTAGE - MORNING

FADE UP

Cookie again opens his eyes. Through a watery softness, he sees the couple hovering over him. They appear Hawaiian. The woman offers him a bowl of steaming fluid.

Cookie smells it and recoils.

WOMAN

Drink, drink. It will make you feel better.

Cookie drinks, wincing. He's thirsty.

COOKIE
(discombobulated)
Where am I?

WOMAN
No one will find you here.

COOKIE
Who are you?

WOMAN
Have a drink. You'll feel better...

Cookie takes a few more sips, then rests his throbbing head.
He struggles against sleep but the room quickly dims.

FADE OUT

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

FADE UP

Cookie awakens. He is alone.

Cookie touches his swollen face, his cracked head.

He looks around, trying to focus.

A square mirror hangs on a post across from his bed. Through it, he can see the old man outside a window. He is doing tai chi. The motions are slow and mysterious.

The old woman is at the stove.

Cookie watches her from his sick bed as she stirs a large pot, her shadow large on the cottage walls.

Cookie speaks to the woman from his sick bed. The sound of his own voice rings in his head.

COOKIE
I... I need to find my friend.

WOMAN
You are safe here. Nothing can harm you.

The man continues his slow, deliberate motions in the mirror.

COOKIE
But... my friend doesn't know where I am.

WOMAN

He wants you to rest. If he is a true friend.

Cooke rests his troubled head on his pillow.

DISSOLVE

EXT. WOODS / RIVER SIDE - DAY

King Lu emerges from the woods.

He looks around to get his bearings. He walks onto the sand, takes off his socks and boots and walks on the soft sand.

EXT. RIVER SIDE - CONTINUOUS - DAY

King-Lu comes to a sandy hill. In the distance, he sees a canoe pass along the river.

As he comes to the top of the small hill, he spots a beached canoe.

He walks over and ponders the canoe. A small, wooden canoe, unattended.

No one else is around.

King-Lu goes closer to the canoe and admires it, sizing up the situation.

He wonders if and how to steal the canoe, when a Multnomah man, CHONACHONA, emerges from the brush. With him is A LARGE DOG.

Chonachona stands behind King-Lu watching grimly.

King-Lu looks over his shoulder to make sure no one is around and sees Chonachona.

King-Lu greets him in the trade jargon. They speak in the shared trade jargon.

KING-LU

Good day. Is this your canoe? I need to get downriver. Can you take me?

CHONACHONA

I'm not going downriver.

KING-LU
Can I pay you?

CHONACHONA
How much would you pay?

KING-LU
I don't have shells on me...

CHONACHONA
A knife?

KING-LU
I don't have a knife.

CHONACHONA
A bell?

King-Lu doesn't understand.

CHONACHONA (CONT'D)
One of those metal cups with the
little tongue inside and when you
shake it it makes the sound: dinga
ling a ling?

KING-LU
No, I don't have a bell.

King-Lu looks himself over, checking his pockets. Nothing.

CHONACHONA
Those buttons.

Chonachona nods at his buttons.

King-Lu looks down. Relieved, he pulls all the buttons from
his coat.

Chonachona seems pleased enough.

EXT. RIVER - CONTINUOUS - AFTERNOON

The dog rides up front as they slide over the water.

Chonachona paddles steadily from the rear.

King-Lu is relieved to be moving.

EXT. RIVER - CONTINUOUS - AFTERNOON

They continue paddling along.

Chonachona is uncommunicative.

KING-LU

I'm going near the fort. Not to the fort. But near.

Chonachona seems to hear.

He keeps paddling.

In the distance: another canoe.

The Multnomah man sees the distant canoe. He raises a hand in greeting.

The ROWER in the distant canoe raises a hand in greeting.

They call out to each other over the water.

Chonachona alters course.

They head for the other canoe.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

Wait. What are you doing? I need to get downriver. Quickly.

CHONACHONA

Don't worry.

They continue towards the other canoe.

King-Lu has no way out.

EXT. RIVER - CONTINUOUS - AFTERNOON

King-Lu and the Chonachona pull up next to the other canoe.

In the other canoe is a young Multnomah man, WATUTUM, with a cargo of acorns.

The two Multnomah men talk in their native tongue. Watutum tells Chonachona that two women are collecting drying salmon downriver a mile, on the other side of the river, and there's a young woman there that was asking about Coalpo.

WATUTUM

There are some women drying salmon a mile upriver. The daughter of Cultee is with them. She was asking about you.

CHONACHONA
The older daughter?

WATUTUM
No, the middle daughter. The
daughter of Cultee and his wife
from over the mountain.

CHONACHONA
Mountains to the south?

WATUTUM
East.

CHONACHONA
I don't know her.

WATUTUM
She knows you. She kept asking
about you.

CHONACHONA
Maybe I do know her. Maybe I should
go say hello.

King-Lu waits in anger and disbelief.

At last, the other canoe starts to move.

And King-Lu's canoe follows.

KING-LU
What are we doing?

They head for the opposite shore.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
You're taking me downstream. I paid
you.

CHONACHONA
I will. I will.

EXT. OPPOSITE RIVER BANK - CONTINUOUS - AFTERNOON

The canoes beach. The dog jumps out and goes to shore.

The Multnomah men get out.

King-Lu grudgingly waits.

EXT. RIVER SLOUGH - CONTINUOUS - AFTERNOON

TWO WOMEN dry salmon on the shore. Another woman does the elaborate task of making an acorn polenta.

As the Multnomah men come ashore, they call greetings to the women, who vaguely greet them back.

From the canoe King-Lu watches as his ride goes over and strikes up a conversation with the younger women, STIZA. She doesn't seem that interested, though.

Frustrated, King-Lu gets out of the canoe and goes up to wait on the shore.

EXT. CANOE - CONTINUOUS - AFTERNOON

The afternoon is wearing on.

King-Lu paces on the beach, watching Coalpo talk to STIZA. Chonachona is telling her about a trip to the Celilo market last year.

CHONACHONA

... one man from way down south,
near Shasta, had twenty horses.
They were beautiful horses. He
counted them every morning. He
didn't want to lose any. One
morning he counted only nineteen.
He thought someone stole his horse.
He went all around the market and
accused everyone...

EXT. RIVER SHORE - CONTINUOUS - LATE AFTERNOON

Watutum, meanwhile, is taking a nap under a tree.

EXT. RIVER SLOUGH - CONTINUOUS - LATE AFTERNOON

King-Lu approaches Chonachona, watching as he hovers around the young woman dealing with her salmon.

She walks away from Chonachona and he stands near ANOTHER WOMAN and starts talking to her. He wonders why the first woman didn't seem that interested. He'd heard she was asking about him. The woman keeps working, and denies knowing anything about anything.

CHONACHONA

I was talking. And she walked away.

Stiza's friend shrugs.

COALPO

I wasn't done with the story.

STIZA'S FRIEND

It took a long time.

King-Lu waits pacing on the beach, while the two continue talking. It goes on and on until King-Lu can't stand it any longer.

KING-LU

I need to go upriver! Take me or
give me back my buttons!

Hearing King-Lu's voice, Chonachona looks at King-Lu without expression. He takes the buttons from his pouch and hands two of them back to King-Lu.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

All of them.

CHONACHONA

I took you part way.

KING-LU

I'm not any closer than I was!

CHONACHONA

You are.

The woman looks at the buttons in King-Lu's hand.

KING-LU

(his hand open)

I'm not. I'm on the wrong side of
the river. Give me all of them.
This wasn't the deal.

Reluctantly, Chonachona gives King-Lu back the rest of the buttons.

King-Lu is despondent.

The woman says something to Coalpo. She tells him the young woman he was trying to impress would definitely like those buttons. He asks if she's serious. She says yes, for sure.

STIZA'S FRIEND

Stiza would like those. She has a
collection.

CHONACHONA
A button collection?

STIZA'S FRIEND
Those would be a big deal to her.
She has a box full.

Chonachona turns back to King-Lu.

CHONACHONA
Give me the buttons back. I'll take
you downriver.

KING-LU
I need to go right now.

CHONACHONA
Good. Let's go.

KING-LU
No waiting. No other stops.

CHONACHONA
Fine.

KING-LU
(sensing his new advantage)
I'll give you three buttons.

CHONACHONA
All the buttons.

KING-LU
Three buttons. I'll give you two
more when we get near the fort.

CHONACHONA
Three buttons.

KING-LU
Depends on how fast we get there.
Fast, three. Slow, one.

Chonachona ponders, displeased. He looks at the woman. She tells him again that the young woman he likes really likes that kind of button.

Grudgingly, Chonachona agrees.

EXT. RIVER - LATE AFTERNOON

The canoe skims across the water.

King-Lu grimly watches the horizon.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Cookie rises. His head throbs.

The couple sleeps.

Agonizingly, he leans over to put on his shoes.

He creeps outside.

EXT. COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie makes his way through the darkness to the edge of the clearing.

He stands before the wall of trees.

He stares blearily into the blackness, hearing the howls of hungry animals. Nearby wolves. Distant coyotes.

The trees stretch and bend taking on the shape of the wind. The eyes of many beasts shine in the rolling waves of the ferns and tall brush.

Afraid, Cookie can't force himself to go farther.

He turns, defeated, and stumbles back to the cottage.

INT. COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie returns to bed, exhausted by his effort. His head aches.

He closes his eyes but he can't sleep.

He hears stirring.

The old woman rises to tend the fire. He sees her shadowy shape moving across the room.

She turns towards Cookie. Her face is the skeleton of a cow.

Cookie is petrified.

The woman looks over at Cookie.

Cookie tries to rise but he can't.

His vision is blurred.

The world fades away.

EXT. WOODS NEAR KING-LU'S HUTCH - MORNING

King-Lu creeps through the brush.

EXT. WOODS NEAR KING-LU'S HUTCH - CONTINUOUS

King-Lu pauses at a bush. Through the bush he can see his hutch.

No one is there.

King-Lu waits, making sure the coast is clear.

At last, King-Lu exits the bush. He goes to the hutch.

EXT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - CONTINUOUS - NOON

King-Lu approaches the hutch.

Before anything, he stops at the cottonwood tree.

He gets a round of wood to stand on to retrieve the money sack from the hole.

He can't quite reach it. He pulls it part way out and it snags on a branch. Now the bag is hanging from the tree.

He tries to unsnag it but he pauses, suddenly alert.

He hears something.

He looks into the distance. He jumps down and kicks away the round of wood.

Just in time, he scurries away and hides back in the bush he just came out of.

THREE COMPANY SOLDIERS, led by Lloyd, are marching in his direction.

They enter King-Lu's abode.

King-Lu can hear things breaking, smashing, thumping around. A few items fly out of the door and window.

LLOYD

He hauls timber like a bandit, he does.

SOLDIER
 (half hearing)
 Heart? Like the red, beating heart?
 In your ribs?

King-Lu watches as the soldiers finally exit, laughing.

They loiter for a moment.

Lloyd goes and pisses on the cottonwood tree, the money bag hanging over his head.

LLOYD
 Hart. Like a deer, a red deer. I believe. Jon Hart. A cheater by any spelling. I've skunked him every game regardless. He won't play me anymore. He's not a worthy opponent. He prefers to discard only one card to the crib. Abysmal.

SOLDIER
 One card?

LLOYD
 ((buttoning up his pants)
 An archaic rule. He prefers the old ways. He's an odd man. Wrong in many ways. A poor adversary in Sir John Suckling's noble game.

SOLDIER
 Cribbage players are in short supply in this hemisphere.

LLOYD
 And I suffer for it daily.

At last, they disappear.

King-Lu remains in hiding, crouching in fear and contemplation.

EXT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - SOON - EARLY AFTERNOON

Finally, King-Lu approaches the now-ruined hutch.

INT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - CONTINUOUS - EARLY AFTERNOON

King-Lu goes inside.

The house is a shambles. He begins to put a few things in bags.

He lifts Cookie's broken butter bowl. He puts it aside.

He picks up Cookie's whisk, also broken.

He sets down the bags. No point in saving any of it.

He picks up a fire poker.

EXT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - CONTINUOUS - EARLY AFTERNOON

He uses the fire poker to fetch the money bag.

KING-LU

Who-who?

No answer.

And he wanders into the woods.

KING-LU (OS) (CONT'D)

Who who?

INT. COTTAGE - EARLY AFTERNOON

Cookie awakens.

He is alive.

He is also alone. The old couple are gone.

In the light of day, the cottage is less terrifying. The fire is out. There is no sign of the night's horror. But a weird emptiness.

Cookie rises. He looks around. The cottage is dusty and cobwebs cover the furniture as if they haven't been touched in a very long time.

He sees a jug on the table.

He goes to drink. But it's dry.

He goes to the door. He slips out.

EXT. COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS - EARLY AFTERNOON

The yard is overgrown with weeds and vines. The whole yard is unkept. No sign of the couple here, either.

Cookie pauses at the outskirts of the cottage's clearing. He turns to look back at it.

The feeling in the clearing is eerie. The wind is alive, moving leaves and needles on the dry ground.

It has the feel of a place that has been deserted for a long time.

Cookie creeps away into the woods. The boughs of the trees close behind him. He is leaving for good.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Thomas sits on a log in the woods near a stream. He is still, holding a rifle in his lap.

He watches Cookie who is across the stream.

Unaware he is being watched, Cookie lays on the ground drinking the cool water. He washes the dark dry blood from his head.

He stares into the stream. As the water stills, his reflection takes shape. He touches his sore head, rubs his jaw.

Thomas remains still and unnoticed.

Cookie gets up and goes back into the woods.

Thomas watches him go.

EXT. WOODS / BLUFF - AFTERNOON

Cookie climbs through the forest.

He comes to a bluff with a view. He's careful not to leave the cover of the forest.

He can see hills dense with trees. A smudge of smoke rises in the distance.

EXT. WOODS NEAR BLUFF - AFTERNOON

Cookie hikes into familiar ground.

He intuits his way.

Fearful and glancing over his shoulder.

EXT. WOODS NEAR CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - LATER AFTERNOON

Cookie drifts close to the cow meadow.

Through the trees he can see the cow surrounded by a new, small fence.

The cow raises her head from chewing; she looks towards Cookie; then back to the grass.

Cookie keeps moving.

EXT. NEAR KING-LU'S HUTCH - LATER AFTERNOON

Cookie comes within sight of the hutch.

Is he dreaming? He isn't sure.

EXT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - CONTINUOUS - LATER AFTERNOON

The hutch has clearly been violated. Scattered possessions litter the ground.

Cookie goes over to the cottonwood tree.

He approaches the knothole.

The money is gone.

He's dismayed.

Cautiously, he enters the hutch.

INT. / EXT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - CONTINUOUS - LATE AFTERNOON

With sorrow, Cookie surveys the damage.

Broken furniture, tangled rugs, spilled supplies. Already, an air of dilapidation and abandonment is settling in.

He hears a faint noise and drops to the floor. He crawls over to the window, and takes a peep.

He spots motion among the trees, his head throbs, his double vision returns.

At last: a figure emerges.

Is it King-Lu? It is King-Lu.

King-Lu holds the sack of money in one hand and a jug in the other. He looks at his home with a mournful expression. He doesn't come any closer, but simply watches, shaking his head.

Cookie stands and goes to the door.

The men see each other.

EXT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - CONTINUOUS - LATE AFTERNOON

They both smile. Their happiness is overflowing.

Silently, joyfully, King-Lu closes the distance. They stand in the open doorway and embrace.

COOKIE

I thought you were gone.

KING-LU

I thought you were gone.

COOKIE

I'm only late.

King-Lu's smile fades.

KING-LU

You're hurt. It's not safe here. We need to get away. Right now.

They start off, putting the ruined home behind them.

EXT. WOODS NEAR KING-LU'S HUTCH - TWILIGHT

They walk together.

KING-LU

There's a port at the mouth of the river. We'll go downstream and catch the first clipper south. How about that?

COOKIE

That sounds fine.

KING-LU

You made it all right?

Cookie feebly nods. He concentrates on walking.

King-Lu looks back, concerned.

EXT. WOODS / SANDY TRAIL - SOON - DUSK

Cookie is having trouble keeping up with King-Lu.

King-Lu waits, increasingly concerned. Cookie is clearly hurting.

King-Lu gives Cookie the water jug.

Cookie drinks.

King-Lu watches him, calculating the time, the distance yet to go. Cookie is obviously in need of rest.

KING-LU

This is a good place to rest. We should stop. No one can see us here.

COOKIE

We haven't gone very far.

KING-LU

We need to rest.

COOKIE

I'm fine. We should be on our way.

KING-LU

We should travel at night. Better to stop now and wait for nightfall. This is a good place. Lie down.

Cookie accepts the argument, whether true or not.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

Good. Lie here. On the needles. I'll keep first watch.

Exhausted, Cookie lies down on the dry needles. Immediately, he falls asleep.

King-Lu sits down next to Cookie, realizing he too is exhausted. He lets out a deep sigh.

EXT. WOODS / CLEARING - NIGHT

King-Lu stares at the trees, keeping watch. He strains to hear the world outside their spot.

In the far distance, he hears the faintest calls. Or does he? He can't tell. He sees a bird. It's only a bird. They are alone.

King-Lu looks at Cookie sleeping.

He looks at trees, feeling the money sack in his hand, weighing his options.

At last, King-Lu puts the money bag on the ground like a pillow. He lies down beside Cookie.

KING-LU

We'll go soon. I've got you.

They clasp hands.

King-Lu closes his eyes. In a moment, he's asleep.

An owl calls.