



Legend of the Rain Wolf

A Play in Three Acts

Written by

Kevin T. Baldwin

Legend of the Rain Wolf

A Play in Three Acts

Written by

Kevin T. Baldwin

CAST:

CASSANDRA BONHAM - SENIOR STUDENT, MILLBOROUGH UNIVERSITY

NINA SWENSON - JUNIOR STUDENT, GOES OUT WITH MICHAEL.

MICHAEL HANCOCK - SENIOR STUDENT, NINA'S BOYFRIEND

VERONICA BARNES - JUNIOR STUDENT

MABEL ABRAMSON - SOPHOMORE STUDENT

SAGE PEMBLETON - STUDENT, GREW UP WITH CASSANDRA

JAZIDUA "JAZZ" LETHOU - SOPHOMORE STUDENT, BRAINY, BIT OF A NERD.

MR. LETHOU – A GOVERNMENT PHYSICIST, JAZZ'S FATHER

MRS. LETHOU – ALSO A GOVERNMENT SCIENTIST, JAZZ'S MOTHER

VERALL ABSOLON – TRAIL GUIDE, NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN

ISAIAH KARLITIS – TRAIL GUIDE, HUNTER

AMOUX – A MYSTERIOUS YOUNG MAN OF THE WILDS

CLERK – WORKS AT SMALL BAR AND GRILLE JUST OUTSIDE SASKATCHEWAN

WOODLAND PRIESTESSES - (1-4)

Time: The Present

Setting: A remote section of northern Saskatchewan, Canada

Synopsis of Scenes:

Act 1, Scene 1 - A Day in Mid-August

Act 1, Scene 2 - Same Day, Several Hours Later

Act 1, Scene 3 - Same Day, Early Nightfall

Act 1, Scene 4 - Same Day, Later That Evening

Act 1, Scene 5 - Next Day, Mid Afternoon

Act 1, Scene 6 - Same Day, Later That Afternoon

Act 2, Scene 1 - Same Day, Nightfall

Act 2, Scene 2 - The Next Morning, Around 3:00A.M

Act 2, Scene 3 - The Next Night, Early Evening

Act 2, Scene 4 - Same Night, About Ninety Minutes Later

Act 3, Scene 1 - Same Night, About Two Hours Later

Act 3, Scene 2 - Next Morning, About 2:00A.M

Act 3, Scene 3 - Same Day, Early Dawn

Act 3, Scene 4 - Same Day, Later That Morning

Act 3, Scene 5 - The Next Morning

Act 3, Scene 6 - Same Day, Hours Later

A Word from the Author:

The intention of this play is not to propose solutions to any of the planet's numerous social or ecological problems. Nor is it intended to bring to light to any Native North American cultural issues. It is strictly a work of fiction, an entertainment piece.

Certain information, although supported on a foundation of facts, is based on an amalgam of sources, especially in the area of ancient native North American mysticism. But it is with the greatest respect for these nations that I wanted to shed a little bit of light on various beliefs.

If this story, which has both light and dark moments, should cause some to want to learn more about any of the aforementioned issues, I think that is just fantastic. At the very least, I hope this piece serves to entertain.

It has been fun revisiting these "White Spider" characters, and if you enjoy this story as well, their collective journey concludes in the final chapter of the trilogy, "The Ghost in the Camera".

Kevin T. Baldwin

Synopsis:

Millborough University students Cassandra, Veronica, Michael, Nina, Mabel and Sage join fellow student Jazidua Lethou (aka "Jazz") and her traveling physicist parents on a hiking trip to explore the Canadian wilderness and to witness the annual Perseids meteor shower. While hiking through a beautiful forest they stumble upon a completely emaciated area, desolate in comparison to the area they had been exploring. They also find an ancient abandoned campground built upon Native North American burial soil. Trail guides Verall Absolon and Isaiah Karlitis explain how the ecosystem for the area became a virtual wasteland ever since the extinction of Rain Wolves, a subspecies of the Timber Wolf hunted by man into oblivion.

The wolves naturally preyed on caribou, deer, moose, elk, bison, musk-oxen and beaver. But without the wolves as a natural predator to control population those same animals over-bred and laid waste to the area, consuming the forest, leaves, grass and other vegetation surrounding the landscape.

The group discovers the area is haunted by the collective spirits of Rain Wolves, unseen phantoms producing mystical howls at the moonlight. Jazz gets separated from the rest of the group and encounters a young man who cannot speak and whom she names Amoux. Amoux wears only a wolf's pelt for clothing. Is he some sort of lost wilderness refugee, or is Amoux perhaps really a ghost who lived a previous life as a wolf?

Jazz learns the truth behind the Legend of the Rain Wolf, but is it possible that she and the others are too late to return the land to an ecological balance?

Act 1, Scene 1 - A Day in Mid-August

(At LIGHTS UP, we are in a small bar and grille located in a small French-speaking township in Northern Canada, near Saskatchewan. The time is almost noon on an August day, just before the start of the fall semester at Millborough University. Students CASSANDRA BONHAM, her boyfriend SAGE PEMBLETON, friends VERONICA BARNES, MICHAEL HANCOCK, NINA SWENSON and MABEL ABRAMSON have all joined their friend JAZIDUA LETHOU, or "JAZZ", and Jazz's parents, MR. and MRS. LETHOU on a backpacking vacation. They are all dressed in clothing appropriate for a long wilderness hike. NINA and MICHAEL stand stage center near MRS. LETHOU who is stage left at the lunch counter. SAGE, VERONICA and CASSANDRA are isolated stage right as they wait for MABEL, JAZZ, MR. LETHOU and their hired trail guides to arrive. CASSANDRA is scanning through her handheld computer as both SAGE and VERONICA look on)

VERONICA – What are you scowling about, Cassandra?

CASSANDRA – I'm not scowling, Veronica. It's my new contacts. They bug me.

SAGE – See any text messages or emails yet from Mabel?

CASSANDRA – (Not looking up from her computer) Nothing yet. (After a beat) "Watching Star Trek". "Watching Twilight". "Watching Star Trek". "Watching Twilight". "Watching Star Trek".

VERONICA – What are you doing?

CASSANDRA – Reading Mabel's last ten Facebook status updates.

SAGE – From when?

CASSANDRA – Yesterday. "Watching Twilight". (To SAGE) You know, I thought maybe she'd post something up there about our vacation.

VERONICA – I posted to all my friends. What an adventure this is going to be! I just wished I had brushed up on my French a little more.

SAGE – Yeah.

VERONICA – I thought English was supposed to be the most widely spoken language in Saskatchewan.

SAGE - I guess nobody told the folks around these parts.

CASSANDRA – “Watching Star Trek”. (To SAGE) Come on, Mabel. Oh, here’s something different. “Going to the beach today then getting ready for school tomorrow. Summer way too short.”

SAGE – Who was that?

CASSANDRA – Lorraine Chelsea.

SAGE – Who’s Lorraine Chelsea?

CASSANDRA – Beats me, but she “friended” me on Facebook. (Hangs up) I give up. Where the heck can she be?

VERONICA – Lorraine Chelsea?

CASSANDRA and SAGE – (Simultaneously) Mabel!

SAGE – And what’s keeping Jazz and her dad? We were told by the travel agency that our trail guides would be meeting us here at eleven. (Pause) I hope they didn’t get lost.

CASSANDRA – Well if our trail guides get lost getting here I doubt Mr. and Mrs. Lethou would let them lead us along an uncharted trail. Sage, relax. It’s only quarter till eleven. We’re early. I’m sure everyone will be here soon.

SAGE – All right, all right. Sorry. Guess I’m a little jumpy. I haven’t been backpacking in about five or six years.

CASSANDRA – Uh-huh. Did you remember your bug spray?

SAGE – I don’t know.

CASSANDRA – Check your backpack.

SAGE – Okay. (Takes off his backpack and begins rummaging through it) You know what’s weird, though?

VERONICA – John Travolta in a backless gown?

SAGE - It seemed like every time my folks and I went on a backpacking trip we’d always run into some stranger, usually a dentist, on vacation with his kid and the kid would always be named either Caleb or Nathaniel.

CASSANDRA – That is weird.

SAGE – (Pulls out the bug spray) Got it. (Puts it back in his pack)

VERONICA – I've never been backpacking at all.

CASSANDRA – Never?

VERONICA – Are you kidding? I grew up in the middle of the 'burbs. Camping to me was like spending money to pretend to be homeless.

CASSANDRA – (Laughing) Oh, Veronica.

VERONICA – No, really. Roughing it to me was when the mall coffee shop ran out of lattes. Speaking of which, I wonder if there's...

CASSANDRA – There's no Starbucks around here, Veronica.

VERONICA – (Shocked) Ah! What kind of hell hole have you brought me to? (CASSANDRA laughs) Don't laugh at me. I can't believe I let you talk me into going on this hiking trip, Cassandra.

CASSANDRA – (Smiling) That's what friends are for. Besides, we're north of Prince Albert National Park, which is supposed to be the perfect place to witness the annual Perseids meteor shower! (To SAGE) I'm told this time of year it's like looking at a silent fireworks display in the night sky. Ooh, Sage! I can't wait!

SAGE – Me, too. Did you find out if anyone brought a telescope with them?

CASSANDRA – Mr. Lethou is supposed to have one, but if the sky is clear we shouldn't need one. I read they put on quite a show. So close you can touch them!

VERONICA – (Disinterested) Yeah, well I'm already starting to miss my comfy hotel room. Heck, I even miss my little single dorm room on campus. My bed, my fridge, my microwave, my illegal hot plate...(Realizing) my maid!!

CASSANDRA – I keep telling you she's not your maid, Veronica. She's your R.A.

VERONICA – Like there's a difference?

CASSANDRA – (To SAGE) You wanna wait outside?

SAGE – Okay. (To VERONICA) I think this is going to be a major culture shock for you, Veronica. I mean we're talking about six days in the vast Canadian wilderness, breaking trail.

VERONICA – Breaking trail? Couldn't we get in trouble for doing that?

SAGE – That just means we'll be exploring trails that have never been explored.

VERONICA – How do you know they haven't been explored?

SAGE – It said so on the travel agency's web site. It reported that this region we're going to is supposedly one of the last remaining uncharted natural areas in the entire country.

CASSANDRA – (Mildly sarcastic) Ah-ha, so, of course, if the web site said so it must be Gospel.

SAGE – Hey. I checked Wikipedia, too, and it said the same thing.

CASSANDRA – Didn't you say Wikipedia also reported proof that alien life forms were running an illegal gambling casino at Area 51?

VERONICA – And that Michael Jackson was secretly living with Elvis, Hitler and the Kennedy brothers in Acapulco?

SAGE – (Slightly embarrassed yet defensive) Yeah? So? What's your point? (BOTH girls laugh and exit out the door with SAGE) What? (Stage lights dim stage right and isolate MICHAEL and NINA center)

MICHAEL – (Dressed as a "head banger", wearing all black and Goth style clothing. Shakes his head back and forth while listening to a portable music player with his earphones on, sings out) Baby-baby, durt, durt, duuhhhh!

NINA – (Annoyed) Michael! Michael! (Pulls the earphones off MICHAEL's head) Michael!! (MICHAEL winces as the earphones come forcefully out of his ears) Shut that off! We're in a public place.

MICHAEL – (Shutting off player) I'm wearing earphones, Nina. Nobody can even hear the music.

NINA – No, but they can see how stupid YOU look while it's playing.

MICHAEL – It's air guitar. Makes me look (strikes a masculine pose) smmmokin' hot.

NINA – If you were engulfed in flames you wouldn't look hot. This air guitar thing you're doing makes you look more like one of the banjo kids from the movie "Deliverance."

MICHAEL – Yeah, right.

NINA – No, really. I hate this new phase you’re going through, Michael.

MICHAEL – This isn’t a phase! You’re just afraid that you won’t be woman enough to handle the new improved Michael. (Posing like a bodybuilder) Strong. Virile.

NINA – Irritating. Viru-lent. Listen, I could barely handle the old Michael.

MICHAEL – What’s that supposed to mean?

NINA - I ignored it when you voted for Bush in the last election, even though he wasn’t even running. I put up with those Facebook days you commemorated by either walking on stilts, crying like a baby, talking like a pirate or rhyming like Doctor Seuss. But I just can’t handle this head banger act.

MICHAEL – “Act”? I’m not acting. This is the real me! I mean just look how comfortable I am in my masculinity.

NINA – Mascu-? Oh my God, Michael! You get winded picking out socks! Now you think a one week hike in the woods is going to turn you into Conan the Barbarian? You know there’s comfortable and then there’s just delusional. (MICHAEL puts his earphones back in as NINA bursts out laughing)

MICHAEL – (Can’t understand why she’s laughing so hard) What’s so funny?

NINA – I was just thinking the one good thing about you playing that thing so loudly is that you probably don’t have to worry about any wax build-up in your ears.

MICHAEL – (Pointing to his ears) Yeah, but it makes it hard to keep the earphones in, though.

NINA – (Stops laughing and is disgusted) Ewww! (Lights dim center and isolate MRS. LETHOU stage left)

MRS. LETHOU – (To the clerk behind the counter) Hi there. We’re in a bit of a hurry. What’s the lunch special for the day? (A PATRON walks past the counter)

CLERK – Pardon?

MRS. LETHOU – (Holding out a menu) The specials?

CLERK – Ah! Ze specials. Well, ze tuna casserole is to die for.

PATRON – (Dropping money on the counter) And from. (Belches then exits)

CLERK – (To the PATRON) Sortez! (translation: Get out!)

MRS. LETHOU - Could we just have nine orders of French fries to go, please? (Takes out her credit card)

CLERK – Oui. (Writes the order down on paper) You want fries with zat?

MRS. LETHOU – What are you talking about? I just ordered nine fries.

CLERK – Je suis désolé? (translation: I'm sorry?)

MRS. LETHOU – I just ordered nine fries to go.

CLERK – (Looks at paper) Ah. Oui. Oui.

MICHAEL – (To NINA, making a bad joke) It's down the hall, to the left. Ha-ha. (NINA elbows MICHAEL in the stomach) Oof.

MRS. LETHOU – (Hands her credit card to the CLERK) Oh, and could we also get six jumbo soft drinks with that?

CLERK – Oui. (Writes the order down on paper)

MICHAEL – (To NINA) Here it comes.

CLERK – (To MRS. LETHOU) Would you like to jumbo-size that order?

MICHAEL – Bingo.

MRS. LETHOU – (Sighs) Yes, please. (CLERK exits with the credit card. MRS. LETHOU looks at NINA and MICHAEL)

NINA – Oh, look. (Pointing off left) There's someplace else we should be. (NINA pulls MICHAEL away and the duo exits out the door to the bar. Lights dim stage left and isolate stage right as SAGE, VERONICA and CASSANDRA return)

VERONICA – (On her cell phone) What do you mean cellular surveillance has been ruled okay by the government? (VERONICA crosses to stage left as lights return to wash stage center and left) It has not! It's totally unconstitutional. (After a beat) Listen, I know my rights.

SAGE – Who is Veronica talking to? Some lawyer?

VERONICA – (Into the phone) Yes I did make a purchase from the Iraq Gift Catalog. (After a beat) “Subversive”? It was through Catholic Relief Services.

SAGE – The IRS?

VERONICA – (Into the phone) It is NOT “un-American”.

CASSANDRA – No. It’s her carrier service.

SAGE – Oh.

VERONICA – (Crossing right) What you’re engaging in is nothing more than domestic spying!

SAGE – Wow. She’s really letting them have it!

CASSANDRA – Go Veronica!

VERONICA - It’s one thing for a telephone company to tally all my incoming and outgoing calls for billing purposes, but for your company to send that information to the government under some stupid homeland safety issuance is just....it’s just... (VERONICA stops cold, pauses, closes her phone slowly and stares around the room for a long time) Whoa.

SAGE – (Joining VERONICA with CASSANDRA stage right) What is it, Veronica?

CASSANDRA – What did they say?

VERONICA – They said “Please stay in view.” (ALL look nervously around the room. CASSANDRA stands next to SAGE rubbing her eyes)

SAGE – Those new lenses really are bothering you, huh?

CASSANDRA – Yeah. Now I know why I never wore them before.

SAGE – You’ll get used to them. I did.

CASSANDRA – You wear contacts? I didn’t know that.

SAGE – For about ten years. I just decided to walk right in to the optometrist’s office and ask him for a new prescription.

VERONICA – What did he say?

SAGE – He told me to get out of the post office. (He laughs for a moment then realizes the two women aren't laughing) You see, it was the glasses, and I...I walked into the wrong...(The girls cross to the bar and after a beat) I'll shut up now. (Lights dim stage left and center isolating stage right)

(JAZZ enters stage right with her father, MR. LETHOU, both carrying their camping gear. MR. LETHOU is also carrying a telescope. JAZZ, who is wearing a light red sweatshirt or jacket with a hood, is taking a breath from an inhaler and looking mildly winded)

MR. LETHOU – Okay, Jazz? Do you have everything?

JAZZ – (Putting inhaler away) Yeah, Dad. Are you going to keep asking me that the whole trip?

MR. LETHOU – Sorry. (Looking around the room) Where's your mother? (Sees MRS. LETHOU as lights come up again on stage left and center) Oh, there she is. (Calling out) Sweetheart!

MRS. LETHOU – (Seeing MR. LETHOU) Just getting some food, dear!

MR. LETHOU – Have you met up with our guides yet?

MRS. LETHOU – Not yet, but we're a bit early.

MR. LETHOU – Has everyone checked out of the hotel?

MRS. LETHOU – Yes, and I paid the bill. Sage, Veronica and Cassandra are over there. Nina and Michael went off someplace. And I haven't seen Mabel yet. (A loud crash is heard from offstage)

CASSANDRA, SAGE and VERONICA – There she is. (MABEL tries entering through the door to the bar while wearing her full backpack and gear and gets stuck)

CASSANDRA - Mabel? Do you need help?

MABEL – (Banging the door with her pack) I'll be right there. (Bangs it again) Just a minute. (Bangs it again) Hold on. (Bangs it again) I'm coming. (Bangs it again) Don't leave without me.

SAGE – (To CASSANDRA) You sure she's brilliant?

CASSANDRA – That's what she said, not me. I'd say she's more (After a beat as they watch MABEL finally fall through the door and wind up face first on the floor) gifted. (MICHAEL and NINA enter through the door and assist MABEL in getting up. SAGE, VERONICA and CASSANDRA go help, as well) Easy, Mabel. Here you go.

MABEL – Thanks, Cassandra. (Looks at CASSANDRA, who is still scowling) Are you mad at me or something?

CASSANDRA – No, why?

MABEL – You look angry.

VERONICA – New contacts. Make her look nasty.

CASSANDRA – They do NOT make me look nasty! (After a beat, to SAGE) Do they?

SAGE – I'm pleading the fifth. (CASSANDRA gives SAGE a very dirty look) That's not from the contacts, is it? (CASSANDRA shakes her head and points off left) I'll stand over there. (Moves away from CASSANDRA to stand near MABEL)

MR. LETHOU – All right, gang. Now that we're all together, let's make sure we have everything we need. (MABEL starts checking her backpack to assure herself she hasn't lost anything from the fall) Our guides should be here soon. (The CLERK arrives with the fries and sodas and starts passing them out to the GROUP. MR. LETHOU says to the CLERK) Thank you. (Back to the GROUP) They've been thoroughly checked out by my wife and myself and come highly recommended.

MRS. LETHOU – (Taking her food and drink from the CLERK) Thank you. (To the GROUP) They're two of the most knowledgeable guides for this region.

SAGE – According to their web site. (Taking his food and drink) Thanks. (To the LETHOUS) I really want to thank you both again for inviting us on this hiking trip, Mr. and Mrs. Lethou.

VERONICA – Yeah. I've never even been outside of the United States before, except for Florida, so this'll be really cool.

MRS. LETHOU – It was our pleasure, kids. Although my husband and I are scientists we do enjoy getting outside of the lab once in awhile to explore new things. This is the last week to enjoy the Perseids, so it should be really exciting.

MR. LETHOU – Yes. We've traveled all over the world with Jazz and the rest of our children. All our other kids are grown.

JAZZ – (Embarrassed) Correction: ALL your kids are grown up, Dad. I'll be a sophomore in college, remember?

MRS. LETHOU – (Hugging JAZZ) Ah, you'll always be our little baby Jazzy.

JAZZ – (Embarrassed) Mom. Stop it!

CASSANDRA – (Mockingly comes up and ribs JAZZ) “Jazzy”? Sounds like a kitty cat. Meow!

JAZZ – (Laughing, although still embarrassed pushes CASSANDRA away) Quiet, “Captain Underpants”. Remember, I know your nickname, too.

CASSANDRA – (Startled, puts a hand over JAZZ’s mouth) Heh-Heh-heh! We’ll just keep that our little secret, okay? (Takes hand away. JAZZ and CASSANDRA smile at each other and CASSANDRA goes back over to SAGE. MABEL is searching her pockets for something)

MRS. LETHOU - We’ve never gone exploring in the deep woods of northern Canada before, so we thought this would be a nice vacation before school starts up again. (Looks at JAZZ for a beat then continues) And, since Jazz has told us so much about you over the past year, we feel like we know all of you. (MABEL has a panicked look on her face)

MABEL – Nobody move! I can’t find my R2D2 laser pointer. (Digging through her backpack) Man, this really stinks! We come all this way to Saska-whatcha-macall-it, I make sure I have everything I need. (Pulls out a heavy laptop computer and hands it to SAGE to hold) Here. Hold this. I have to give up updating my blog for the whole week and now I can’t find my (finds the item, pulls it out and immediately changes her mood from angry to almost giddy) Oh. Here it is. Silly me. I found it. See?

MRS. LETHOU – (Looking at MABEL) Some of you we’ve heard more about than others. (CLERK has finished giving out the food and begins to head back to behind the counter)

SAGE – (Handing MABEL back the laptop) Mabel, we all agreed that cells were okay but no laptops.

MABEL – (Meekly) We did?

JAZZ – Right. We’re supposed to be getting back to nature on this trip.

SAGE - We’re going to be a hundred miles into the very center of Canadian rough country. No roads exist where we’re going. It’s one of the most remote areas in all of the Canadian boreal forests. (Pulls out the brochure) Here. It’s all in this pdf brochure I printed out from the travel agency web site.

CASSANDRA – (Taking the brochure and crumpling it up) Right. The point of this trip is to get away from technology. (Hands the crumpled up brochure back to SAGE)

JAZZ – (To MABEL) What in the world do you need with a laser pointer on a camping trip?

MABEL – (After a beat) Doesn't everybody?

MR. LETHOU – (Pulling out a similar laser pointer from his pocket, smiling) I know I do.

MABEL – Whoa! You rock!

(Lights dim to isolate two large men, VERALL and ISAIAH, entering the bar. ISAIAH wears a large western-style hat, hiking clothes and is carrying a propane gas tank. VERALL is also dressed appropriately for a hike. He wears a bear claw necklace around his neck. They BOTH walk up to the CLERK)

VERALL – Excusez-moi.

CLERK – Oui.

VERALL – My friend and I are meeting some people here. Americans.

CLERK – Oui. Over zere.

VERALL – Merci. Could we please have two energy drinks to go?

CLERK - Qua? (translation: What?)

VERALL – Energy drinks.

CLERK – Qua?

VERALL – (Sighs) Two Coca-Colas, s'il vous plait. (CLERK rolls eyes and exits. VERALL says to ISAIAH) Uh-huh. He (She) won't be coming back. (VERALL and ISAIAH approach the LETHOUS as lights return to wash the whole stage) Pardonnez-moi. Are you Mr. and Mrs. Lethou?

MRS. LETHOU – Yes. We are the Lethous. Are you Mr. Absolon and Mr. Karlitis?

VERALL – Oui. I am Verall and this is Isaiah. We are your guides. Together we have traveled extensively over Canada. I am originally from Manitoba, while Isaiah comes from Ontario.

CASSANDRA – (Coming up and looking at VERALL's necklace) I'm sorry. I was just admiring your necklace. That's a bear claw. May I? (VERALL nods and CASSANDRA examines the bear claw more closely) Wow. Are you Cree?

VERALL – I am a Cree descendent. You are very observant.

SAGE – (Making a joke) Must be her new contacts. (Laughs. CASSANDRA returns and steps on SAGE’s toes) Ouch.

CASSANDRA – Keep it up and I’ll take a weed whacker to that nose hair of yours.

SAGE – Double ouch.

VERALL – (To MR. and MRS. LETHOU) I do not mean to rush, but we really must get going. It will take us three hours on foot to get to where we will begin to break trail.

MR. LETHOU – Sure thing. First, let me introduce you to our group. Kids, (the rest of the GROUP gathers) These are our guides, Mr. Absolon and Mr. Karlitis. Gentlemen, meet Sage, Cassandra, Veronica, Michael and Nina, and Mabel. They all attend Millborough University with our daughter, Jazidua.

VERALL – Jazidua. Mademoiselle that is a beautiful name.

JAZZ – (Smiling) Merci. Thank you.

VERALL – (To the GROUP) Ladies and gentlemen, we will be entering a remote area of the boreal forest which makes up almost one third of the world's forests and is one of the largest intact forest ecosystems on the planet

CASSANDRA – (Excited, to SAGE) I can’t wait.

VERALL - So it will be very important to listen to our instructions closely and to stay together.

VERONICA – What is this forest like, Mr. Absolon?

VERALL – Haven’t you ever seen one before?

CASSANDRA, VERONICA & SAGE – (In unison) No, she hasn’t.

VERALL – Where we go there are many beautiful lakes, rivers, and wetlands.

SAGE – It’s a huge area, Veronica.

VERALL – Oui, the boreal eco-region spans from Alaska to Newfoundland, borders the tundra to the north and touches the Great Lakes south. I hope you all have packed warm clothes, because even though it is summer, the forest picks up an arctic air mass this time of year and it can instantly get very cold.

MR. LETHOU – I read this area can experience six months of winter with temperatures getting below freezing and even shorter summers.

VERALL – Oui, but we are enjoying a mild summer this year so I believe we should be all right.

MR. LETHOU – Good. What else should we know?

VERALL - I just want everyone to be prepared. We go to one of the few remaining areas still untouched, not decimated by humans.

VERONICA – What do you mean by “decimated”?

CASSANDRA – (Adjusting her contacts again) My guess is that he’s talking about deforestation, right?

VERALL – Oui. Logging and other industrial development have taken a toll on many of the boreal forests. This area we go to has not yet been ruined by such...practices. (After a beat) There will be no one else around, so we need to depend on each other for survival and safety. Again, you need to listen to our directions. No exceptions. Understood? (ALL nod)

MRS. LETHOU – We totally understand, Mr. Absolon.

VERALL – We will travel in two teams. Some of you will be with me. I will take (pointing to SAGE, VERONICA, MR. and MRS. LETHOU) you, you, and you two. Oh, (pointing to CASSANDRA) I will also take the angry looking one. The rest of you go with Isaiah. (CASSANDRA reacts mildly insulted)

MR. LETHOU – Okay, kids. Toss out your trash and let’s get started. (ALL toss out their food and drinks. ISIAIAH points to JAZZ, MICHAEL, NINA and MABEL, saying nothing and leading them out of the bar. MICHAEL notices the propane tank ISIAIAH is carrying)

MICHAEL – Hey dude! How do you expect to carry around a propane gas tank like that in these woods? (ISIAIAH looks at MICHAEL then thrusts the tank hard into MICHAEL’s chest and hands, then walks away) Oh. I see. That’s how. (As the group exits NINA turns to JAZZ and says)

NINA – (To JAZZ) That Isaiah guy gives me the creeps.

JAZZ – Yeah. (Secretly tosses her inhaler into a nearby wastebasket) Maybe he starred in the last “Friday the 13th” movie.

NINA – Smells like “Old Spice”, too. I hate “Old Spice”!

MICHAEL – Doesn’t your mom wear “Old Spice”?

NINA – Shut up, Michael. (To JAZZ) It’s gonna be a long week.

CASSANDRA – (Irritated, picks up her gear and follows her group out of the bar, muttering) I am NOT angry! (SAGE turns to her) What? I’m not. Really! Sage? (SAGE exits) I’m not. (CASSANDRA follows) I’m not! (ALL exit out. JAZZ returns and grabs her inhaler out of the trash, shakes it, shrugs her shoulders, then exits again. The stage is isolated as the CLERK returns with ISAIAH’s and VERALL’s drinks and MRS. LETHOU’s credit card in hand. Smiling, the CLERK proceeds to drink one of the drinks and then pockets the credit card as lights fade)

CLERK – Woo-hoo! Le shopping channel here I come! (LIGHTS DIM as CLERK exits the stage.
Scene TRANSITIONS to Act 1, Scene 2)

Act 1, Scene 2 - Same Day, Several Hours Later

(LIGHTS UP for full wash of the stage. It is several hours later and, after much walking the CAMPERS find themselves deep in the Canadian wilderness, surrounded by magnificent large green trees and vibrant plant life all around. The CAMPERS emerge from various trees stage right, led by ISAIAH and VERALL)

MR. LETHOU – (Looking around) Would you look at this? Just green as far as the eye can see.

NINA – (Panting, sarcastic) Yes. I just love that new forest smell.

MR. LETHOU - Here we are, kids. Miles from the nearest road or town.

VERONICA - (Trying to talk on her cell phone) Hello?

MRS. LETHOU – No traffic. No crowds. Just nature’s wonder surrounding us.

VERONICA – (Into her phone) Hello?

MICHAEL – Yep. No one around to bother us. (Puts his arm around NINA)

NINA – (NINA looks at MICHAEL) Well, almost no one. (MICHAEL removes his arm)

VERONICA – Hello?

CASSANDRA – (Takes the cell phone away from VERONICA) Veronica, I've been telling you for over two miles there's no way you're going to get a signal out here, so put the cell phone away.

VERONICA – Can't I just hold it?

CASSANDRA – Why?

VERONICA – (After a beat) Security?

CASSANDRA – Fine. (VERONICA smiles, but CASSANDRA is slightly irritated) You know this is probably why you're still a junior. Too many distractions.

VERONICA – No, it was my "F" in personal finance class. I mean who uses a check book anymore, anyway? That professor was soooo 1990's. (ISAIAH approaches CASSANDRA from behind)

CASSANDRA – (Slowly) Right.

ISAIAH – Everyone unpack.

SAGE – (Startled by ISAIAH's outburst) My God. It speaks.

CASSANDRA – (Joking) Maybe it was just a reflex.

ISAIAH – We rest for ten minutes only. We still have another two miles to go. Then we make camp for the night. Verall, mon ami. Come with me. (VERALL and ISAIAH exit as EVERYBODY unpacks their gear and takes a rest. CASSANDRA and VERONICA are isolated stage right sitting together on or in front of a log)

VERONICA – Thank God! My new boots are killing me! (Takes them off) I thought boots were supposed to help your feet on hikes. I paid eight hundred dollars for these things and my feet are STILL in agony.

CASSANDRA – (Stunned) Eight...hundred...? Could I see those? (VERONICA hands CASSANDRA the boots) I think I understand the problem. You see, it only works if you have yourself a good pair of hiking boots, Veronica. You're wearing black ankle boots. With heels, no less! (Hands boots back) It's not like this is the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

VERONICA – Well, I didn't know. (Puts boots back on and then looks at her feet) And look. Now they're all scuffed up. My poor Ralph Laurens (or other current high priced fashion brand).

CASSANDRA – You are so environmentally challenged.

VERONICA - I'll never be able to return them.

CASSANDRA – Maybe you can donate them to the Salvation Army?

VERONICA – Don't be silly! If I can't hike in them how on earth is a soldier in the army supposed to use them? (CASSANDRA rolls her eyes, then takes a small hand towel from her back pack, sprays it with bug spray and then pats the towel on various parts of her skin)

CASSANDRA – So how have you heard from Meier at all, Veronica?

VERONICA – Oh, yes. I just did a video chat with him last week.

CASSANDRA – Video chat? Where is he? (Takes out a second towel and sprays it with bug spray)

VERONICA – Afghanistan (or other place of known danger).

CASSANDRA – Really? Afghanistan? (Holds out the second towel to VERONICA) You want some of this? (VERONICA nods and CASSANDRA gives VERONICA the towel) What's he doing there?

VERONICA – (Starting to pat herself with the towel) Well, the regular reporter who'd be there on assignment got sick so he's filling in for her for the next eight weeks.

CASSANDRA – Wow. That's certainly a step up from the flower shows he used to cover.

VERONICA – Well, after you helped him break the story about the "White Spider" last year, his editor really took notice and has been giving him some really good stories to work on. (Sniffs the towel) Ugh! What fragrance is this?

CASSANDRA – Bug repellent.

VERONICA – Here. (Hands the towel back to CASSANDRA) I think I'm more repelled than the bugs.

CASSANDRA – (Looking around) It's so beautiful here. (Pause) I bet you miss him, huh?

VERONICA – Meier? Oh, sure. But, I'm just going to have to get used to it if I'm going to be the wife of a reporter.

CASSANDRA – (Shocked and excited) Really? He proposed?

VERONICA – (Also excited) Just before he left.

CASSANDRA – Did you accept?

VERONICA – Not right away. I told him I'd have to think about it first. (CASSANDRA looks taken aback) Well I didn't want to say yes right away. I think it looks too desperate.

CASSANDRA – Veronica, are you crazy? What if something had happened to him? It's awfully dangerous over there.

VERONICA – Yeah, guess I should have thought of that BEFORE he left. And now, unfortunately, I won't be able to communicate with him again for awhile.

CASSANDRA – Why not?

VERONICA – There won't be any internet or cable hookups where he's going. So we can't video chat, text each other, do emails or anything.

CASSANDRA – Veronica, if you want to keep in touch with your fiancé in a meaningful way, don't email or text. Write him a letter. Something personal.

VERONICA – Eww. Cassandra that's so 1880's.

CASSANDRA – You mean 1980's.

VERONICA – Again...Like there's a difference?

(Dim on VERONICA and CASSANDRA as lights isolate MICHAEL and NINA stage left. MICHAEL takes his backpack off and places it on the ground next to the propane tank. He is listening to his portable music player and thrusting his head forward and back very quickly)

MICHAEL – (Singing and screeching) Da-duh-Dirrr!!! Baby-baby!! Yeah! (High-pitched) Ow!

NINA – (Annoyed) Would you turn down that head banger music, Michael?

MICHAEL – What's the matter, babe? My death metal too much for you?

NINA – No, "babe". I'm just afraid with all that head waving you might hurt a low flying bird that wanders in your path. (Takes her backpack off and sets it on the ground. MABEL approaches)

MABEL – Ugh! This backpack is killing me.

NINA – Well then why didn't you listen to Verall, Mabel? He said to pack light. How much stuff did you cram into that thing, anyway?

MABEL – As much as I could in order to beat my record.

MICHAEL – (Shouting) Record? What record?

MABEL – Well, I have this packing record. (MICHAEL stops wildly shaking his head and he and NINA look at each other then back at MABEL) Yeah. Last year I went on a weekend backpacking trip in Colorado with my family and set a new personal best for packing my backpack in just under ten minutes. This time, I packed the same amount in well under eight minutes.

NINA – (Expressionless) Wow. You totally rock.

MABEL – Thanks. (Beat.) Do you really mean it?

NINA – (Abruptly) No. (NINA pulls out a small plastic bag of food from her backpack. MICHAEL lunges for it)

MICHAEL – Food. (Takes a big handful and pops some of the food into his mouth. Chewing) Not bad. What's it called?

NINA – Well the pet shop in the town where we stayed called it "Chipmunk Chow". (MICHAEL quickly spits out his food)

MICHAEL – "Chipmunk Chow"?

NINA – Yes. It's special feed for the animals along the trail. It's not meant for humans. (After a beat, hands MICHAEL the bag) So, go ahead and eat up, Michael. (Slaps MICHAEL on the shoulder)

MICHAEL – I'll pass. (Hands back the bag to NINA)

NINA – (Looking at the food) In about a half hour, I'll bet. (Puts the bag back into her backpack)

MICHAEL – (Turning off his music player) I'll tell you something, Nina. (Takes a big breath) Braving the elements, tackling the woods like those great frontier explorers, roughing it here in all this (motioning his hands in the air indicating the trees) this, this wilderness type stuff can sure make a dude feel like a real man. Like he's (quickly does an oriental style bow of respect) – Hi-Yah! - one with nature. Where he can (assumes the stance of a warrior) - Hiyyyaahh! - explore his true primordial urges.

NINA – “Primordial urges”? What do you think you are? Aboriginal? Michael, you used to need your bicycle helmet to go wading into the kiddie pool.

MICHAEL – Times change. (Michael pulls out a water bottle, tries to twist off the cap) A man (beat) grows, develops, evolves. (Still struggling with the bottle) Not only does his inner strength become more evolved, so does his, his outer...(Hands Nina the bottle) Can you open this for me?

NINA – (Easily twists off the cap) It was three weeks ago. (Hands MICHAEL the bottle)

MICHAEL – (Defensive) I swear my baby cousin had the biggest turtle pool I had ever seen!

NINA – Oh, good God.

MICHAEL – (Takes a drink) Yep, you have no idea just how lucky you are to be going out with me, Nina.

NINA – (Sarcastic) You got that right. There’s not another guy on campus whose dorm room is adorned with a dozen motion-activated singing rubber fish.

MICHAEL – (Proudly) Ah, yes. They make quite a sound every time there’s a knock at my door. (Sighs) Just like a beautiful chorus.

NINA – (Incredulously) Right. And remember last year when during track tryouts you successfully ran the hundred meter dash in just under fifty wheezes? Yes, I’m oh so lucky.

MICHAEL – (Ignoring NINA’s comment) It has taken millions of years of evolution and intelligent natural selection for me to become the evolved dude you see standing before you. (Standing proudly, takes a drink) I’m as agile as a cheetah. As fierce as a lion. As solid as an oak!

NINA – As dumb as a stump.

MICHAEL – (Holding the bottle up to the sky) I am the Uber-dude, a male absolutely and so totally secure in his natural design.

NINA – (Looking MICHAEL over) Your fly is open. (MICHAEL turns his back and fixes his zipper) Apparently evolution passed over a few intelligent selections after all, huh, “Mister Uber-dude”?

MICHAEL – I thought there was a draft. (Turning back around and finishing his bottled water) Good h2o. Man, I sure was thirsty. (MICHAEL throws the bottle on the ground. NINA sees this, walks over, picks up the bottle and hits MICHAEL over the head with it) Ow! Hey!

NINA – Are you nuts? What are you doing carrying this around?

MICHAEL – (Sarcastic, grabs the bottle back) Duh - So I don't die of thirst? Death is a bad look for me.

NINA – So is any shirt with horizontal stripes. Don't you realize you are contributing to the ruination of the planet?

MICHAEL – (After a beat) You mean about this morning? Look, I forgot to go before we left the hotel and I really had to go somewhere, so I found these bushes and...

NINA – (Grabs the bottle back) Not that, you pig. Once they're buried these plastic bottles take up to a thousand years before they even BEGIN to decompose.

MICHAEL – (Grabs the bottle back) Then don't bury them. Recycle them.

NINA – Recycle? Are you kidding? (Grabs the bottle back) People only recycle about twenty percent of these things, which leaves almost forty billion water bottles stuck in landfills.

MICHAEL – (Skeptical) Forty billion? (Grabs bottle back) Come on, Nina. I don't drink that much water. Oh, look. There's a little left. (NINA scowls at him as he uncovers the cap and drinks up the last of the water) Ew! Backwash! Tastes like saliva. (Sees NINA) Look. It's only one stinking bottle.

NINA – That's what the other thirty-nine billion, nine hundred ninety-nine million, nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine other people said.

MICHAEL – Betcha can't say that ten times fast.

NINA – Michael!

MICHAEL – Fine. Here you go. (Hands NINA the bottle)

NINA - I'll put in the recycle bin when we get back home.

MABEL – (Rushing over) No. Don't do that! Give it to me.

NINA – (Slowly hands it to MABEL) Okay. Uh, why?

MABEL – Are you kidding? Plastic is great. I can convert these into birdhouses, battery operated toothbrushes or other things and sell them all on eBay. (NINA takes out some cheese and crackers from her backpack)

MICHAEL – No way.

MABEL – Way.

NINA – Seriously? (Takes a bite of one of her crackers)

MABEL – Sure. This way the plastic gets recycled and benefits the earth as opposed to ruining it, and also I can pay for my next semester's text books.

MICHAEL – I just had a thought...

NINA – (Interrupting) I knew I smelled something.

MICHAEL – (Ignoring NINA, to MABEL) Didn't you say you used to download your text books from anytextbookyouwant.com?

MABEL – Yeah, but they shut that site down. Something about copyright n'stuff.

NINA – (Chewing, takes a cracker and points it at MABEL) Infringement.

MABEL – No thanks. I just ate. (NINA stops chewing and does a double-take at MABEL, who is now staring at the plastic bottle) I think this one would make a nice toothbrush.

MICHAEL – Toothbrush? You really can convert these things into toothbrushes?

MABEL – Absolutely. (Puts bottle down) A solar battery-powered one, of course.

MICHAEL – You've got to be kidding me.

MABEL – No, really. I've got one with me.

MICHAEL – Let's see.

MABEL – Okay. Here. (Pulls out the plastic water bottle/toothbrush from her backpack and starts it up. MICHAEL is amazed)

MICHAEL – That's way cool!

MABEL – Thanks.

NINA – I'll say. It's certainly more creative than Michael's idea for an invention.

MABEL – What was that?

NINA – A hot chalupa vending machine.

MABEL – (Excited) Oooh! With sour cream? (NINA rolls her eyes)

MICHAEL – Arriba! I coulda' made millions!

MABEL - (Putting toothbrush down) I also can convert these bottles into windmills.

MICHAEL – Ooh. Let's see.

NINA – Michael, we're on a camping trip. Why would Mabel carry around a (MABEL pulls out a plastic water bottle/windmill from her backpack and makes it spin) windmill? Now that's just creepy. (Full wash on stage as VERALL and ISIAH return)

VERALL – We have found a clearing where we can set up camp for the night. (ALL gather around) Which of you brought the tents? (ALL look at one another then slowly turn and look at MABEL)

MABEL – Uh-oh. (Rambling) Okay, so here's the thing. I know you're all going to think this is really, really funny. (Starts putting the items she pulled out back into her backpack) You know how when you're all like in a hurry, and you cram your mind with all sorts of things to remember? Well, scientists say that even with a brilliant mind like mine, short-term memory can only hold nine pieces of information at a time, so it's so easy to forget this tenth little teensy weensy thing that turns out to be a really big, enormous thing after all...

ALL – Mabel!!

MABEL – (Ashamed) I forgot the tents.

MRS. LETHOU – You forgot the tents? All of them?

MABEL – I forgot to take them out of the car. Sorry.

MR. LETHOU – You want me to go back and get them?

MRS. LETHOU – Honey, we've got to keep moving and it will take you hours to get caught up with us again.

MR. LETHOU – Darling, I may be a scientist but it doesn't mean I have absolutely no athletic skill whatsoever.

MRS. LETHOU – Oh, honey. (Putting her hand on MR. LETHOU's shoulder) Yes, it does.

MR. LETHOU – (To MRS. LETHOU) Very funny. (To VERALL) Verall, I saw the weather forecast on TV last night and it is supposed to be clear and mild for the week. But going by what you said before, just how quickly do you think that could change? Will we be okay with just our sleeping bags to keep us warm during the overnight?

VERALL – Sure, I've done it before. It is possible we could go on without the tents. It is up to you.

MR. LETHOU – Well, kids? What do you want to do? (JAZZ turns her back and wipes her nose, which has been bleeding)

VERONICA – Tents. I want tents.

NINA – Me, too.

MICHAEL – Not me. I'm a real man. Captain of my own soul. I can handle anything. (Turns on his music player and begins shaking his head back and forth to the music, singing) Baby-baby, (high-pitched) Ow!!

NINA – (Sarcastic) My hero. Fine. Give me a tent and Captain Caveman here can go sleep under a rock.

CASSANDRA – (Hugging SAGE on the arm) I think it would be romantic to sleep under the stars. Don't you, Sage?

SAGE – (Agreeing) Hey. I grew up on a farm so, I'm good. I don't need a tent.

CASSANDRA – (Smiling) Terrific. (Coyly) By the way, did you hear that Veronica and Meier are getting married?

SAGE – (Appearing nervous as CASSANDRA hugs his arm tighter) Oh?

CASSANDRA – He proposed. (Resting her head on SAGE's shoulder) Isn't that sweet?

SAGE – (Nervously) Ummm...engaging?

CASSANDRA – Give you any ideas?

SAGE – (To MR. LETHOU) Then again, tents might NOT be so bad. (CASSANDRA takes her head off SAGE's shoulder and then punches SAGE on the arm) Ow.

MR. LETHOU – Jazz?

JAZZ – (Turning back around, puts the handkerchief away) Doesn't matter to me. I'm fine. But Dad, you aren't going to cook on the camping stove tonight are you?

MR. LETHOU – I was thinking about it. Why?

JAZZ – Last time you tried cooking on a gas stove it took two months for your eyebrows to grow back. (MR. LETHOU feels along his brow with his index finger)

VERALL – (Looking at MR. LETHOU) Isaiah will cook the meals.

MR. LETHOU – Thank you, Isaiah. (Extends his hand out to ISAIAH. ISAIAH just nods and grunts. After a pause) Right.

MRS. LETHOU – I don't know about all this.

MR. LETHOU – Honey it's your call. I can either go back and catch up to you later or we can go forward.

MRS. LETHOU – No. I don't want any of us separated. Let's keep going.

NINA – Are you kidding me? No, seriously. Am I being "punk'd"? (Wandering around the site) Where's Ashton Kutcher. Is he behind that tree over there?

SAGE – Nina, if you're that opposed to it, why don't you and Veronica go back for the tents?

VERONICA – Me? Are you kidding? Uh-uh. We'd get lost for sure.

MABEL – I'll go if you want.

NINA – Good.

CASSANDRA – No, no. We've got to keep going, Nina.

NINA – Fine. But Mabel, if I were you I wouldn't sleep too soundly tonight. (Walks away)

MABEL – (Meekly) I'm real sorry. Guess I'm not so great at multitasking.

VERALL – Do not agonize. There is an ancient Indian proverb: "Good judgment comes from experience and experience comes from bad judgment".

VERONICA – (After a beat) Sooo...which is this, then? (CASSANDRA slaps her hand to her forehead)

MRS. LETHOU – By the way, Verall, up here in Canada is “Indian” politically correct? I was thinking maybe “Native American” because we’re still in North America, or perhaps “Native North American”, or even “Native Canadian”, but it gets so confusing.

VERALL – Mrs. Lethou, I am Cree. For centuries my people were Cree long before any of those other things. I can’t speak for all my people but for me, personally? I am Cree and I am proud.
(Walks away)

MRS. LETHOU – (To MR. LETHOU) Did he answer my question?

MABEL – (Still upset) Oh, God. I feel like such a...

NINA – (Walking up to MABEL, still angry) Yeah, well go with the feeling.

MABEL – Nina, I said I was sorry! (ISAIAH approaches)

NINA – How could you be so stupid?

ISAIAH – Enough bickering. (NINA and MABEL stop arguing) Let us go. After we set up camp we will go over some of the weapons you will need to survive in the wilderness. (ALL begin to pick up their gear and move out)

MICHAEL – (Hugs NINA, puts leg up on her and jokingly says) Carry me.

NINA – Bite me. (Pushes MICHAEL off)

(MABEL turns to CASSANDRA and SAGE)

MABEL – Wait a minute. “Weapons”? Did he say “weapons”? (SAGE and CASSANDRA say nothing as they ALL exit and LIGHTS DIM. Scene TRANSITIONS to Act 1, Scene 3)

Act 1, Scene 3 - Same Day, Early Nightfall

(GRADUAL LIGHTS UP as the sound of mosquitoes is heard. The CAMPERS arrive at their campsite. VERALL and SAGE are beset by bugs)

SAGE – (Swatting mosquitoes with his hands) These bugs are nasty. (Removes the stove off his pack)

VERONICA – (Swatting as well) Horrible!

VERALL – Oui. There is an imbalance of the ecosystem.

VERONICA – What’s that mean?

MR. LETHOU – He means there’s nothing out here which naturally controls the mosquito overpopulation.

VERALL - (Nodding, takes off his backpack and opens it up) We should stop what we’re doing for a moment and pause for protection.

SAGE – (Tired, to CASSANDRA) Did he say pause for reflection?

VERALL – No. Protection. (Takes out a can of bug repellent spray) Let us (after a quick beat) spray. (Begins spraying arms and legs)

SAGE – (To CASSANDRA) Well, what do you know? The man has a sense of humor, after all.

NINA – (Sarcastic) You call that humor?

MABEL – Well I’ve got my own kind of protection. (Takes out a fly swatter and starts whacking with it) Hi-ya! (And again) Hi-ya! (And again, only this time swats MICHAEL who walks in her path after putting down his gear and the propane tank) Hi-ya! Oh. Sorry, Michael.

MICHAEL – (Grabbing fly swatter away) You know, Mabel, maybe you should try using a nice harmless citronella candle instead. Hmmm? (Hands the fly swatter back to MABEL)

VERONICA – (Pointing off downstage left) Oh, look over there. It’s a cute little baby raccoon. Come here little fella. (ISAIAH raises his stick in the air and screams at the unseen raccoon) Ahh! What are you doing? Are you crazy or something?

MABEL – You scared him off!

VERONICA – And me nearly, as well.

ISAIAH – Be careful!

VERONICA – What?

ISAIAH - You don’t know if that raccoon has rabbis.

VERONICA – Rabbis?

MICHAEL – He didn’t look Jewish.

VERALL – I think he meant rabies.

ISAIAH – Oui. Rabies. Sorry. Listen to me, all of you. Everyone’s got to remember to not, how you say, “hobnob” with the animals around here. Reports of raccoon rabies are up twenty percent from last year. They may look cute, but are they endearing enough that you’d like a half a dozen shots in your stomach?

VERONICA, CASSANDRA, MICHAEL & NINA – No.

JAZZ – Dad.

MR. LETHOU – I’m sorry Jazz but Mr. Karlitis is correct.

JAZZ – But,

MRS. LETHOU – (Rummaging through her backpack) Well, further up north the arctic fox is an adorable little guy, too. But he’s prone to rabies just like that raccoon. (To MR. LETHOU) Where’s my credit card? (MR. LETHOU shrugs his shoulders)

ISAIAH – And that arctic fox will eat baby seals for sure if there’s nothing else around.

MR. LETHOU – (Approaching ISAIAH) That wasn’t necessary, Mr. Karlitis. (ISAIAH stares him down and emits a low growl. MR. LETHOU backs off nervously and speaks to the GROUP) Uh, the point is you’re all old enough to realize that you just can’t make assumptions about animals based on how cute they may look.

JAZZ – Aw, nuts! (JAZZ storms off)

ISAIAH – (Directed first at JAZZ then the rest of the GROUP) Oui. A lot of children thought little Simba in “The Lion King” was really cute, too, but let’s not forget that in real life once Simba grew up he probably would have EATEN Timon and Pumbaa. (Off to JAZZ) Do you hear me? (Beat, turns to MICHAEL and the OTHERS) Well, that is the real “circle of life’.

MICHAEL – (Beat) You’re not gonna, like, SING now, are you? (ISAIAH grumbles then walks over to check his gear)

MR. LETHOU – (Taking off his glasses) Whew. Glasses can sure get the ears all sweaty.

MICHAEL – (Disgusted) Thanks for sharing, dude.

MR. LETHOU - Come on, Michael. Let's go check out the cooking gear and then you can help me set up the stove. (Exits off stage right with MICHAEL)

CASSANDRA – Tell me, Mr. Karlitis, what did you do before you became a guide?

ISAIAH – I am not a “guide”. I am a hunter. A tracker. I only do this for a little extra cash. Before this, I worked at carnivals.

CASSANDRA – Carnivals? Really? Somehow I can't picture it.

ISAIAH – Yes. I used to throw straw and sand on the kiddie puke near the tilt-a-whirl rides.

CASSANDRA – That I can picture. (After a beat) Your mother must have been very proud.

ISAIAH – Who do you think trained me?

MR. LETHOU – (Returns without his glasses on carrying the propane tank and finds something on the ground) Would you look at that?

VERONICA – What is it, Mr. Lethou? (JAZZ returns wiping her nose with a handkerchief and then putting it away)

MR. LETHOU – (Picking up a scrap of metal) Some sort of fossil. Crystallized by the looks of it. I'll bet it's from the Potricene era.

VERONICA – The what?

MABEL – The Potricene era. It was when primitive man began using clay and other potteries to survive. (NINA just stares at MABEL) What? I told you...I'm brilliant.

VERONICA – (Reminding MABEL) Hello? Tents?

MABEL – (Remembers, bows head in shame) Oh yeah. Sorry.

JAZZ – (Taking the piece from her father) I don't think this is from the Potricene era, Dad. It seems to be a rusty piece of metal covered in some kind of paint which just makes it appear ceramic.

MR. LETHOU – Is that so?

JAZZ – (Turns the piece over and shows him) It also says “Coleman” on the back.

MR. LETHOU – It does? (Examines the piece more closely) Oh yeah. Missed that. (A loud crash from off stage is heard)

JAZZ – Dad?

MR. LETHOU – Hmm?

JAZZ - Where are your glasses?

MICHAEL – (Enters from stage right carrying MR. LETHOU’s now broken glasses) Say, Mr. Lethou, you know all that cooking gear we stacked up next to the tree stump where you left your glasses?

MR. LETHOU – (Taking the glasses) Dang. (Sighs) Come on, Michael. Let’s set up the stove. (MICHAEL takes the propane tank. MICHAEL and MR. LETHOU cross down right and begin trying to hook up the propane tank attachment to the stove)

VERONICA – So it also seems that other hikers must have come this way before us, making this not as “unexplored” a trail as we had originally thought.

SAGE – Bummer. So much for going where no one has gone before.

CASSANDRA – Oh, well. Maybe next time, Captain Kirk.

SAGE – (Muttering to himself) Well, I’m going to send a very nasty email to that webmaster when we get home.

(MR. LETHOU and MICHAEL can’t figure out how to attach the propane tank to the stove)

MR. LETHOU – I’m telling you, Michael, I just do not comprehend how this propane tank hooks up.

MICHAEL – Let me give it a shot. (Takes off his music player and hands it to MR. LETHOU) Here. Take this. (Takes the attachment and tries to make it fit onto the stove)

MR. LETHOU – (Looking at the music player) Say, how many songs have you got loaded onto this thing, anyway? (VERALL approaches)

MICHAEL – I dunno. About eight thousand tunes, I guess.

MR. LETHOU – Eight...thousand? (Looks at it more closely) I’m surprised you can even lift the thing.

MICHAEL – (Giving up in frustration) I can't figure this out, either.

VERALL – What is the problem?

MICHAEL – This propane hookup thingy won't screw in.

VERALL – That is because it is reverse-threaded. (Takes the attachment and begins screwing it in)

MR. LETHOU – Reverse-threaded?

VERALL – Oui. They are made that way to prevent gas leaks. It is more secure. (Done) There you go. (Returns to his sleeping bag and continues to check gear)

MICHAEL – (Looks at MR. LETHOU for a beat, then) Are you sure you're a physicist?

MR. LETHOU – I never said I was a good one. (Smiling) I work for the government, remember? (THEY laugh)

ISAIAH – All right. Everyone gather around. We need to go over some very important weapons you will need to familiarize yourself with.

(EVERYONE gathers near ISAIAH and VERALL who stand near their bags stage left. MR. LETHOU and MICHAEL remain stage right with the stove, but stand)

VERALL – Isaiah, they are tools. Not weapons.

SAGE – (Looking at a long spear-like object Isaiah is carrying) I don't know, Mr. Absolon. That sure looks like a spear Mr. Karlitis is carrying. Maybe it's just me, but I'd call that more of a weapon than a tool.

VERALL – What Isaiah carries is called an atlatl

ISAIAH – Before man used the bow and arrow he used the atlatl. The shaft is more like that of a dart than a spear.

VERALL – Yes, it is also more flexible. It is a very effective tool against larger game like deer.

ISAIAH – I will carry one and Verall will carry the other. No one else is to use these atlatls. Understood? (ALL nod)

VERALL – The next item everyone was told to bring with them is a basic survival knife. Let me see what everyone brought. (ALL hold out their knives of varying shapes and sizes. MABEL holds out a can opener. VERALL walks over to MABEL and examines the item) Zat is a can opener.

MABEL – Yes, but it has a built-in knife sharpener. (After a beat, embarrassed) I don't like knives. Sorry.

MICHAEL – (Laughing) Great, Mabel. If you get attacked by a bear, you can serve it up a can of soup.

NINA – (A look of shock) Soup? Uh-oh. Um, I'll be right back. (Crosses to her sleeping bag and starts checking her gear)

MR. LETHOU – (Pointing to a curved stick about two to three feet long being carried by VERALL) What's that thing, Verall?

VERALL – It is called a rabbit stick, or throwing stick. It is a primitive yet effective tool for hunting small game.

CASSANDRA – It almost looks like a bird's wing.

VERALL - Because it is carved like a wing it is much easier to throw a long distance than a regular stick. Its shape causes it to almost float on the air.

ISAIAH – It also helps you when you have an animal trapped and pinned you can smack it over the head with the stick. (Demonstrates)

VERONICA – Oooh. That sounds gross.

MRS. LETHOU – I agree.

MR. LETHOU – Well, it's all part of existing in the wild.

VERALL – Everyone should also have lanterns, flashlights, and here (starts passing out bottles of "survival glue"). You will each need a bottle of survival glue.

VERONICA – Survival glue?

VERALL – Yes. It is used for many things such as attaching feathers to arrows or setting arrowheads.

VERONICA – Arrows? (Opens the bottle and looks at it closely) Hey. This smells nice. What's this stuff made out of?

ISAIAH - Pine sap

VERONICA – (Pleasantly) Oh.

ISAIAH - And deer dung.

VERONICA - (Putting the cap on quickly) Eww. (Tosses the bottle to CASSANDRA) The two ingredients are heated using a tin or a hot rock.

VERONICA – (To CASSANDRA) I want to go home.

CASSANDRA – (Puts her arm around VERONICA’s shoulder, consoling) Hang in there. It’s not like we’ll be making our own arrows.

VERALL – (To the group) We will all be making our own arrows during the week. (VERONICA steps on CASSANDRA’s foot. CASSANDRA winces in pain) I have one bow that we will all share.

ISAIAH - No one touches or uses any of these weapons...

VERALL – (Gently reminding) Tools, Isaiah. Tools.

ISAIAH – (After a beat) Tools without our permission.

MABEL – What if we get lost?

VERALL – How many brought compasses? (CASSANDRA, SAGE and MR. and MRS. LETHOU hold out compasses) Good.

MABEL – I didn’t bring one.

ISAIAH – (Annoyed) Do you even WANT to survive in the wilderness?

JAZZ – It’s all right, Mabel. Do you have a watch?

MABEL – Yes.

JAZZ – Is it digital or does it have a face?

MABEL – It’s digital, of course. (After a beat) There are watches with faces?

JAZZ – Never mind. (Takes off her watch) Take this. (Hands the watch to MABEL) It was my grandmother’s.

MABEL – Thanks, but I didn't get you anything. How come you're giving me your grandmother's watch?

JAZZ – Because, silly, you can navigate by using the hands of the watch.

MABEL – (Stunned) They've got hands, too?

JAZZ – (Sighs) Here. Let me see it. (MABEL hands JAZZ the watch back) First you need to determine a north-south line. You hold the watch horizontal and point the hour hand at the sun.

MABEL – Okay.

JAZZ – You bisect the angle between the hour hand and twelve o'clock to get your north-south line. Follow that path and you'll always know where you're going. (VERALL is impressed)

MABEL – Wow! Thanks, Jazz. (NINA returns)

VERONICA – Yeah, good for you. (Whispers to SAGE and CASSANDRA) I'll just follow real close to you guys.

JAZZ – (Looking at MABEL's watch) Hey, Mabel, did you know that this watch is broken?

MABEL – What? Let me see. (Takes the watch) Man. That's the last time I buy a digital watch off of Craig's List. And I'm gonna tell Craig that next time I see him.

VERONICA – You know Craig of Craig's List? I mean like personally?

MABEL – Sure. You know him, too.

VERONICA – I do?

MABEL – Sure. Craig Hoffenmeuller. From personal finance class. See, he's got this list...

VERONICA – Never mind, Mabel.

MRS. LETHOU – Oh, my husband can probably fix that watch for you, Mabel. He enjoys taking apart and reconstructing electronic gadgets.

MR. LETHOU – (Embarrassed, takes the broken digital watch) Well, it's sort of a hobby.

VERONICA – You two really need to take way more vacations.

MICHAEL – I'm starved. When do we eat?

NINA – (Returning) We don't.

ALL – What?

NINA – It's my fault. I forgot to bring the canned food for all the big meals.

MRS. LETHOU – You what?

NINA – I didn't want them getting spoiled in the car so I put them under the tents to keep them safe.

MICHAEL – Spoiled? They were in cans! They were fine!

NINA - I figured when whoever was responsible for bringing the tents unloaded them from the car that would remind me to take the food, as well.

CASSANDRA – So no food?

NINA - I've got some cheese in a can and some crackers. And we've all got our bottled water. But as far as something to make a real meal, forget it. (MICHAEL slowly backs away and then runs to NINA's backpack to find the cheese in a can and crackers)

SAGE – Terrific.

MR. LETHOU – First the tents and now this?

VERALL – (To NINA) There is another old Indian Proverb: "Learn from the mistakes of others (Pointing to MABEL) and perhaps you won't live long enough to make them yourself".

NINA – You know, you're really starting to bug the crap out of me. (To ALL) I'm really sorry, everybody.

VERALL – Not to worry. There is game to be found around here and Isaiah is a master huntsman. So we start our survival lessons a little sooner than expected. Who wishes to go with him?

MICHAEL – (Returning with a mouth full) I'll go.

ISAIAH – No.

MICHAEL – But why?

ISAIAH - You have eaten.

MICHAEL – So?

ISAIAH – I need someone with an empty belly. Hunger makes a man more determined to capture his next meal. (Points to SAGE) You! Farm boy. Have you eaten?

SAGE – Me? No. Just some gum.

ISAIAH – Then take Verall’s bow and arrow and follow me.

SAGE – Okay. (Grabs the bow and arrow from VERALL and joins ISAIAH)

ISAIAH – Bring the gum, as well.

SAGE – Right. (Pulls out the gum)

ISAIAH – Is it tutti-frutti?

SAGE – Cinnamon stick.

ISAIAH – Damn. (BOTH exit)

MRS. LETHOU – (To MR. LETHOU) Dear?

MR. LETHOU – I’ll go with them. (Heads out)

MRS. LETHOU – Good. (MR. LETHOU exits)

VERONICA – Well, as long as we’re settled in here, I want to explore. Take a look around. Really get to be one with nature.

CASSANDRA – You want to get a signal on your cell phone, don’t you?

VERONICA – (Desperate) There’s got to be a way!

MABEL – Let me see your phone, Veronica. (VERONICA hands MABEL her phone) Nope. Sorry, you’ve got a model TLX one thousand. You’ll get no signal out here. (Hands VERONICA back her phone) You need at least a TLX fifty thousand in order to get any signal.

VERONICA – How do you know that?

MABEL – (Pulling out her own cell phone) Ta-da! It’s my very own TLX fifty thousand!

VERONICA – Oooh. And it has GPS tracking?

MABEL – Yep. It’s got everything.

CASSANDRA – That’s great, Mabel. I was hoping one of us would have a GPS.

MABEL – And it works great. I used it the last time I got lost at the mall. You know, I wish they’d make a GPS for socks. I can never find a matching pair.

VERONICA - Let me see.

MABEL – (Holding it closely) What? Why?

VERONICA – I just want to log into my account and check my text messages.

MABEL – (Resisting) Okay. Here you go. (Hands the phone over to VERONICA who tries to get it to work but can’t) No signal?

VERONICA – It just says “searching for signal”.

MABEL – What? Are you serious? Let me see that. (Takes the phone back and looks at it) After all the money my mom paid for...I mean...after all the money I paid for this thing. (Looking around) it must be all these trees.

NINA – Ya think?

MICHAEL – (Joking) Maybe if you climb a tree you’ll get a better signal.

NINA – Great, then you two twits can “tweat” each other.

MABEL – Good idea.

MICHAEL – What? Wait. I was kidding!

MABEL - Come on, Michael. You can protect me from any attacking bears.

MICHAEL – Fine. (Starts to leave with her, mumbles) Bears, right. (Then stops and speaks up) What? Wait. Bears? Attacking bears? You’re kidding, aren’t you?

NINA – Go ahead, Tarzan. You wanted to prove how macho you are.

MICHAEL – Okay. Fine. I’m not scared. I’m not scared. I’m not scared.

NINA – Why do you keep repeating that?

MICHAEL – I’m trying to convince myself.

NINA – My hero.

MABEL – (Pointing to a direction off stage) I think just a few hundred yards in that direction and we should be able to find some sort of clearing nearby. Then I should be able to get a signal on my cell. Or, a good size tree to climb.

MICHAEL – (Chuckling) Climb a tree. That's a good one, Mabel. Maybe we can find some honey to eat, too.

MABEL – (Enthusiastic, not realizing MICHAEL's joking again) Ooh, maybe. Grab your gear.

MICHAEL – Okay. (Grabs his gear and chuckles some more) Hey Mabel - At nudist colonies, how do you think they carry around their cell phones?

MABEL – (Disgusted) If they're not using their hands then I don't want to know.

NINA – (To MABEL) Please. Take him and go. Both of you, take a hike!

VERALL – (Handing MICHAEL a rabbit stick) Here. Take this with you. Be careful not to throw it until you are more comfortable with it. And don't wave it around in the air. You might hurt someone.

MICHAEL – (Takes the rabbit stick) Thanks. Okay. And...we're off! (Tries to use the rabbit stick as a sword, brings it up to his forehead and clunks himself with it)

NINA – You certainly are.

MICHAEL – (Wiping his brow) Off to explore vast uncharted territory. To test our wits and will against nature! Much like Lewis and Clark!

NINA – More like Abbott and Costello. Now go. (MABEL and MICHAEL leave)

VERONICA – (Taking out a coin from her pocket) I thought I saw a creek back there. I'm going to go and make a wish.

VERALL – (Takes the coin away from VERONICA) Save your money. It pollutes the water. (Hands the coin back to VERONICA, smiling) Make your own wishes come true. (Crosses to MRS. LETHOU)

NINA – (Annoyed) Man. Mr. Killjoy strikes again. Listen, Verall, if you want to be one with nature why don't you go jump in that creek yourself and drown?

MRS. LETHOU – Now, now, Nina. We have to respect the area as Mr. Absolon says.

NINA – Oh, brother. (NINA walks away)

MRS. LETHOU – (To VERALL) Well, we may not have any food yet, Mr. Absolon, but I did remember the coffee and coffee pot. Care for some?

VERALL – Oui, Madame. Merci. (VERALL and MRS. LETHOU move off right as VERONICA, CASSANDRA, JAZZ and NINA gather to sit on a nearby log stage left)

NINA – (Pulling out the can of cheese and the crackers) Anyone want one?

VERONICA – I'll take one. (NINA puts the cheese on a cracker and hands it to VERONICA) Do you think Mabel and Michael will be okay out there in the woods?

NINA – They'll be fine, just as long as she doesn't make him climb any trees in order to get a better signal. (VERONICA eats her cracker)

MABEL – (From offstage) Here's a good tree, Michael. Just watch out for that bees nest.

NINA – (To the sky) Lord, please tell me you didn't make him that stupid. (NINA eats a cracker)

CASSANDRA – (To JAZZ) I was sorry to hear that Todd broke up with you, Jazz.

JAZZ – (Defensive) What? What are you talking about? Are you crazy? Hey, Todd didn't break up with me. I broke up with him.

NINA – Uh-uh-uh. That's not what Todd said. (Holds out crackers) Want one?

JAZZ – No thanks. Why? What did he say to you?

NINA – Well actually, he told Michael, who told me.

CASSANDRA – And then of course she told me, so I naturally had to tell Veronica.

VERONICA – But with Meier overseas, I didn't have anyone I could tell, so...anyway,

JAZZ – Yes?

VERONICA – (Forgot what she was saying) What? (Remembering the subject) Oh, right. Well, anyway, of course we didn't believe him, you know, so you've got to take that into consideration, as well.

CASSANDRA – Sure. You know how men like to brag.

JAZZ – Brag? What did he have to brag about?

NINA – He said you were too short for him.

JAZZ – What?

NINA – Said he likes tall girls.

JAZZ – Tall girls? I'm not that short, and anyway he was way shorter than me! He only wore that stupid hat of his to make himself look taller than me.

NINA – Really? (Shakes her head) Didn't help. (Holding up crackers to JAZZ) Sure you don't want a cracker?

JAZZ – (To NINA) No I don't want a cracker. (To VERONICA) And I'll tell you something else.

VERONICA – What?

JAZZ – He wore lifts in his shoes.

NINA – He did not.

JAZZ – Sure did. With his shoes off, in terms of actual height, I'd say he really only came up to about my kneecaps. (After a beat, the GIRLS ALL start to chuckle, building to a huge laugh)

VERONICA – (Laughing) Oh, that's good. Funny, Jazz. Real funny.

NINA – (Laughing) Yeah, no wonder he was always so good at CPR, (making a big joke of it) since he was close to the ground already! (GIRLS continue to laugh)

CASSANDRA – (Laughing) Maybe he could get a transfer to Munchkin Land University! (GIRLS continue to laugh)

VERONICA – (Laughing) Of course, he'd STILL have to wear those lifts, though. (GIRLS continue to laugh)

NINA – (Laughing) Yeah, and maybe he could bring Trudy with him, too. (Continues to laugh, but JAZZ stops)

CASSANDRA – (Laughing) Who?

NINA – (Laughing) Trudy Fitzpatrick. His new girlfriend. (CASSANDRA and VERONICA also stop laughing, leaving NINA the only left laughing. But then, NINA slowly realizes that she is the only one still laughing) Oh, no. Whoopsie. (Clears her throat) Ahem, did I, like, say that...out loud? (JAZZ begins to well up and burst out crying) Uh-oh. Guess I did. (ALL GIRLS start to console JAZZ, who sits down on the log sr)

VERONICA – Nice going, Nina.

CASSANDRA – Yeah. So much for that ebullient moment.

NINA – Don't say that!

CASSANDRA – Why not? It's true!

NINA – That may be but I don't know what "ebullient" means. (Upset, to JAZZ) I'm really sorry, Jazz. I didn't mean to upset you.

CASSANDRA – (Hugging and consoling JAZZ) Easy, Jazz, easy. It's all right. Don't worry. We're all right here.

JAZZ – (Through sobs) No, it's true. Todd did break up with me. Said he and Trudy had a lot more in common.

CASSANDRA – Well, she is going into nursing. So, Todd being an EMT, I could see how...

JAZZ – No, that wasn't it.

CASSANDRA – Then, what?

JAZZ – They both like Lindsay Lohan (or name of other actor or actress famous for making bad motion pictures) movies.

VERONICA – What? But that's impossible.

NINA – Yeah, NOBODY likes Lindsay Lohan movies.

JAZZ – She was pretty, too.

CASSANDRA – So are you.

JAZZ – No, I mean she was truly drop dead gorgeous. She was a former Miss Teen USA contestant.

CASSANDRA – Oh. I see.

JAZZ – Not that I was jealous or anything. I mean I'm totally comfortable with myself.

VERONICA – I'm comfortable with myself, too, but if Meier ever started dating a former Miss Teen USA contestant, I'd be a little jealous.

CASSANDRA – That's because you're just such the multi-tasker, Veronica.

JAZZ – Oh, and Todd also said he hated my cooking.

VERONICA – He did?

JAZZ – He told me that instead of studying astronomy I should have studied gastronomy.

NINA – I always though gastronomy was the study of planets you could eat.

CASSANDRA – Jazz, I can't believe Todd would dump you for such shallow reasons.

JAZZ – Oh, thank you, Cassandra. No, there were other reasons. We really hadn't been getting along for quite awhile. Those were just some of the reasons (Welling up)...some of the many reasons...he gave...he gave me...at the time....at the time....he DUMPED me! (Full out sobbing again, grabs the crackers away from NINA) Gimme those damn crackers! (Starts eating crackers)

CASSANDRA – Jazz, we all know what you're going through.

JAZZ – Oh, I don't think you do.

NINA – Yeah. We've all been there.

JAZZ – (Munching on her crackers) Easy for three girls with boyfriends to say. And I certainly don't think any of you guys have been where I am. You see I'm (stops short)...never mind.

NINA – Oh, look on the bright side: Now you don't have to go through all the hassle of buying birthday or holiday presents.

CASSANDRA – Yeah, all that constantly wondering "what can I get for my boyfriend"?

NINA – (To CASSANDRA) What are you offering? (NINA and CASSANDRA laugh, but JAZZ starts to cry again. VERONICA tries to console)

VERONICA – There, there, Jazz. It'll be okay. I mean, I know you probably feel depressed...and gut-wrenched...and miserable right now, but that's only human.

JAZZ – Then I don't want to feel human. I want to feel good!

NINA – Sure you do and you will feel better, too. (Sits next to JAZZ and puts her arm around her) You just need to remember there's plenty of other fish in the sea. (Hears a loud growling sound) What the heck was that?

JAZZ – My stomach. Except for these crackers and those lousy fries from this morning I haven't eaten since yesterday, so maybe we shouldn't talk about food.

NINA – I meant boyfriends, Jazz. There will be plenty of boyfriends. Remember, the semester's just starting.

JAZZ – (After a long pause) No. It's not going to happen.

NINA – Sure it will. You've just got to have some self confidence, Jazz, some faith. Why, I mean, look at me? It took me years to find the right boyfriend. One who could care about the things I care about. One who appreciated me for who I am and what I could bring to the relationship. A boyfriend who was kind, caring and intelligent...(MABEL comes running quickly with her and MICHAEL's backpacks in tow and does not stop)

MABEL – Whoahhhhhh!!! (Quickly exits off stage. MICHAEL enters following MABEL, running off after her and frantically waving a multitude of bees away from his face with the rabbit stick in the air)

MICHAEL – Help!! I swear I didn't try to eat your honey. I swear!!! Help!! Get away from me! Leave me alone!! (Exits off stage)

NINA – (After a beat, to JAZZ) But then we broke up and I started going out with Winnie the Pooh. (LIGHTS DIM as scene TRANSITIONS to Act 1, Scene 4)

Act 1, Scene 4 - Same Day, Later That Evening

(LIGHTS UP on ALL sitting around a campfire trying to eat a dinner caught and prepared by ISAIAH, who is no longer wearing his hat. MR. LETHOU and MABEL are at the telescope looking through it and also eating. EVERYONE is having difficulty eating the meal, while VERALL and JAZZ find it delicious)

MABEL – (Looking through the telescope) I still can't see the Perseids, Mr. Lethou.

MR. LETHOU – Be patient, Mabel. They're not brilliant at this time of night and tend to come in waves. Then when they all crisscross, bumping into one another without any reason or provocation, it's really a sight to behold.

MABEL – Oh, sort of like the crowds at a hockey game, huh?

MR. LETHOU – (Not sure how to respond) Well, ah, hmmm...(Eats his dinner, but finds it repulsive)

MICHAEL – (Covered in bee stings, trying to taste his food but finding it painful) Ow. Ow. Ow.

NINA – (Simultaneously comforting and needling MICHAEL) My poor little Uber-dude. Bees stings still hurt? (MICHAEL nods)

VERALL – You ran very fast from those bees. My people would have called you Kahkewistahaw (pronounced: "kah-kwíwístaháw").

MICHAEL – (With swollen tongue) Weewee? I always wanted an Indian name. What does it mean?

VERALL – "He who runs very fast from bees". Actually it means "He who flies around in a circle", (smiling) but in your case it's basically the same thing. (ALL laugh)

MICHAEL – Haw-haw. Vewy funny, Vewall. Vewy funny.

NINA – (To MICHAEL) Say, "Elmer", how DID you get stung on your tongue, anyway?

MICHAEL – Mah mou wa open.

NINA – Why was your mouth open? (MICHAEL looks away) You weren't really trying to eat their honey, were you? (MICHAEL bows his head in shame) You were? (MICHAEL bows his head lower) Michael!

MICHAEL – (Looks at NINA and whines) I wath hunwee.

NINA – (Snide) You were hungry.

(SAGE and CASSANDRA are eating together. SAGE is looking at MABEL who has now sat down and taken out another bottle contraption)

SAGE - What's that thing, Mabel?

MABEL - It's a battery-operated ketchup bottle.

SAGE – A battery-op...(After a beat, to CASSANDRA) And here I thought it was going to be something silly. (To MABEL) Battery-operated? What do you need with a battery operated ketchup bottle?

MABEL - Well, so many people put gobs and gobs of ketchup onto their food or plates and then toss their leftover ketchup down the drain or into the garbage. It's a complete waste.

SAGE – What, so you're saying this could lead to a tomato shortage, Mabel?

MABEL - Exactly.

SAGE - (To CASSANDRA) See? Again I knew.

MABEL - So I designed to automatically squeeze a pre-set amount of ketchup so you don't waste a lot of ketchup.

NINA – My mother's plastic surgeon has a similar device he uses for her Botox treatments.

MICHAEL - (With his tongue still swollen) That's only because they don't make Botox by the dwum. Ha-ha. (NINA twists the bee stings on MICHAEL's cheeks) Ow. Ow. Ow! (Gets up and approaches MABEL) Wet me thee that. (Grabs the bottle away from MABEL) How'th it wook?

MABEL - Careful, Michael. It's precision calibrated so that the slightest squeeze of the bottle will...(MICHAEL squirts the ketchup onto his face).

MICHAEL – (Startled) Ahh!

MABEL - Oops. (MICHAEL just stares at MABEL, who says meekly) Sorry.

MICHAEL - (Takes some ketchup off his face and licks it) Achewally, it feelth pwetty good on my bee thtingth. (Goes back over and sits with NINA, who begins to clean MICHAEL's face with a rag or napkin)

NINA – It's okay, Mabel. You tried to warn him. But what do you expect from a college student who still watches "Sesame Street"?

MICHAEL – Thhhhh! You pwomised not to tell! (After a beat) I'm thtill hunwee.

(The sound of bats are heard)

VERONICA – What was that?

SAGE – The "Scooby-Doo" theme about to begin?

VERALL – (Eating) Bats. Brown bats. (Pointing to the sky) They live high up in the trees.

VERONICA – (Nervous) B-B-Bats? There are bats around here? Nobody told me about bats.

CASSANDRA – (Approaching VERONICA) Relax, Veronica. They don't attack humans.

VERALL – No. (Takes another bite of food) Although there have been stories about blind rabid bats flying into people's hair. (Continues eating)

CASSANDRA – (Holding onto a panicky VERONICA's ears, to VERALL) Not helping.

VERONICA – (Singing with ears covered) La-la-la-la-la...

VERALL – (Laughs, then says to ISAIAH) Another wonderful dinner as usual, mon ami.
(CASSANDRA releases VERONICA's ears and returns to eating)

ISAIAH - Vous êtes bienvenue, mon ami. (translation: You are welcome, my friend)

VERALL – How did you do with the bow and arrow, Sage?

SAGE – Not well, Verall. Sorry about that, Mr. Karlitis.

ISAIAH – Don't worry about it. (Pulls out his hat which now has an arrow through it) I can always get a new hat. (Takes the arrow out and puts the hat back on) You'll do better next time.

MR. LETHOU – (Tries to take another bite of his food but can't) I'm not sure I can stomach anymore of this. (Looks at JAZZ and is amazed how much she is enjoying her meal) Um, is your food all right, Jazz?

JAZZ – (Eating voraciously) Terrific. I didn't realize I was so hungry. I must have worked up a huge appetite today. (MR. LETHOU begins to try his food one last time) And this meat is so, so, you know, I don't know the right word...compelling?

MR. LETHOU – (Chewing his meal) Compelling. Yes. Hmmm. I was looking for a word to describe it (gags and then secretly pulls out his food and throws it away) but that one didn't come to mind. Thanks, sweetheart. You go back to eating. (Takes his plate up to ISAIAH with MICHAEL right behind) That was a very...interesting...meal you prepared for us, Isaiah. Thank you. (Goes to sit with MRS. LETHOU)

CASSANDRA – Yes. It certainly has a unique, um, texture? (Smiles at ISAIAH who plops food into a dish for MICHAEL, who then goes over to sit by NINA near the campfire)

MICHAEL – (Chews then pulls a piece of his meal out of his mouth. Stares at it) Uh-oh. Nina, tewl me something. Just how cwunchy is woast chicken thuppothed to be?

NINA – Don't start complaining to me. Remember what happened last time we went to Burger King and you asked for a hamburger with no bun and a chocolate shake with no cup?

MICHAEL – Hey, they weh the oneth adwewetising how I could have it "my way". I jutht wanted to thee if they'd achewally do it.

NINA – It took me three weeks of cleaning my car to get rid of all those ketchup and chocolate stains. (To VERONICA) Last year? I had to call the fire department to help him get his hand unstuck from a Pringles can.

VERONICA – It got stuck?

NINA – (Nodding) Turned out he wouldn't let go of the potato chip. (Looks at MICHAEL who tilts back his head and squirts more ketchup into his mouth) Sigh. You know scientists have proven that one out of every five adult males suffers from chronic stupidity? Leave it to me to wind up with their leader.

VERONICA – Why do you stay with him, then?

NINA – I don't know. (Looks at MICHAEL attempting to eat his meal then playing it like a musical instrument) Oh, yeah. (To VERONICA) He amuses me.

MABEL – (Spitting out her food) Ugh. This is the worst chicken I've ever tasted.

VERALL – Chicken? It is not chicken.

MRS. LETHOU – What is it, then?

ISAIAH – Roast goose.

MR. LETHOU – Roast goose?

ISAIAH – Today, roast goose. (Pointing to MICHAEL) Tomorrow afternoon, after we get settled in a new camp site, the "head banger" boy and I shall take our atlatl and rabbit sticks and go hunting for some real food like venison.

MICHAEL – (Standing up and striking a manly pose with his rabbit stick) Oh yeah!!

NINA – Good luck with that. Pooh bear here couldn't even catch honey with his mouth open.

MICHAEL – Thankth fow the thuppowt.

CASSANDRA – I've had goose before and it's never tasted like...this.

ISAIAH – It is a recipe handed down to me by my grand-mère. You see, in order to maintain the flavor you baste it with special flavoring. (Holds up can) It comes in a can so it will not spoil.

VERONICA – What does it say on the can?

ISAIAH – (Reading the can) "Canine Caviar".

(EVERYONE in unison except for VERALL and JAZZ spits out their food and throws their plates away. As the rest leave, ISAIAH sits down and begins eating. VERALL and JAZZ look at each other, shrug their shoulders then also continue eating as LIGHTS DIM and scene TRANSITIONS to Act 1, Scene 5)

Act 1, Scene 5 - Next Day, Mid Afternoon

(LIGHTS UP. It is the next day in the middle of the afternoon. The CAMPERS arrive at a new section of the forest, which is now opposite of their previous setting. This part of the woods is now gray, lifeless and devoid of any healthy natural growth. The campers all look around as they start to unload their camping gear. SAGE notices NINA is barely awake)

SAGE – Hey Nina, you look exhausted. Or are you practicing taking a nap and hiking at the same time?

NINA –Don't start with me, Sage. (Looks at MICHAEL) Michael kept me up all night with his noises.

SAGE – Noises? What noises?

NINA – (Looks at SAGE) Pick one. At night from head to toe all he does is make noise. Starts off with this nose whistling he does in his sleep. Then it just runs on down the line from there. He's a human sound effects machine. I'm surprised his sleeping bag doesn't get up and walk away from him.

SAGE – I see. Nose whistling, huh? So that’s what that sound was. I thought it was pretty strange for somebody to be making a pot of coffee at three a.m.

MICHAEL – (Speech still suffering from the bee stings) Thanks for the compassion! I happen to have a deviated septum-um-um!

NINA – Your whole body must be deviated then, because you make noise from everywhere and I do mean EVERYWHERE!

SAGE – Go easy on him, Nina. He did get stung pretty badly.

NINA – But HE didn’t lose any sleep. I did!

MICHAEL – Well, what do you want me to do? Quit bweathing?

NINA – It’s a thought.

SAGE – Come on, Nina. Move the clouds away from that sunny disposition of yours.

NINA – Bite me, Sage.

VERONICA – (Noticing the condition of the area) I can’t believe it. What happened to all the trees and plant life around here? Some kind of forest fire?

MICHAEL – (Looking around) Yeah, a fowest fyuh.

SAGE – Deforestation?

MICHAEL – (Looking around) Yeah, defowestation.

NINA – Michael’s natural gas emissions?

MICHAEL – (Looking around) Yeah, my (To NINA) Hey!

VERALL – No. The ecosystem for the area has become a virtual wasteland ever since the extinction of the rain wolves.

SAGE – (To CASSANDRA) The rain wolves. See? I swear Verall knows everything. He must have spent his whole life living in these woods to have become so wise. Yep. He’s probably the last true woodsman.

CASSANDRA – (Skeptical) I don’t know.

JAZZ – The rain wolves?

MR. LETHOU – Wolves have thriving populations in other parts of Saskatchewan, Verall, but I didn't think wolves were found in this particular region anymore.

VERALL – Oui. Not now. (To JAZZ) The rain wolves were, how you say, a “subspecies” of the timber wolf until they were hunted by man into oblivion.

ISAIAH – (Annoyed) They were devils. Predators. They would feed on cattle and livestock while still alive.

VERALL – (To ISAIAH) Don't be so dramatic, Isaiah. You know as well as I that the wolves were only doing what came naturally. (To JAZZ) The wolves did prey on area animals such as caribou, deer, moose, elk, bison, beaver.

MRS. LETHOU – But you mean by doing this the wolves actually helped to control the population?

VERALL – Oui.

ISAIAH – (Arguing the point) They did not. (To MRS. LETHOU) There was a climate shift, and it got too warm around here. All the bears migrated south, leaving the wolves to consume all wild life until there was practically nothing left. (To VERALL) We were better off without those devils.

VERALL – But Isaiah doesn't mention that when a wolf takes down a deer or a moose, it is the ravens, eagles, wolverines and bears who all share in the feast.

MICHAEL – (To NINA) Gwate, we're back to that “Circle of Life” theme again.

NINA – (To MICHAEL) Keep quiet, Pumbaa.

VERALL - (To MRS. LETHOU) Without the wolves as a natural predator to control population, the animals all over-bred and laid waste to this area, consuming the forest, leaves, grass and other vegetation surrounding the landscape. Also notice (waves his hands in the breeze)? No vegetation means no insects.

SAGE – You're right. I haven't been bitten once since we arrived here.

CASSANDRA – I see. So as a result of the imbalance my guess is that many of the other animals around here probably became sick and died. (VERALL looks at CASSANDRA) I'm a natural science major.

SAGE – She wants to be a vet.

VERALL - The wolves were not devils. (To ISAIAH) They were beautiful animals. (ISAIAH walks away) We will camp here tonight. Everyone unpack their gear. Sage, gather up some kindling for the fire. Mrs. Lethou, please help me with the grille.

MRS. LETHOU – (Joining VERALL) Okay.

SAGE – Right. (Exits)

MR. LETHOU – (Offering to help) Say, I can...

VERALL – No. No. That’s quite all right. Thank you.

(ALL start unfolding their sleeping bags. MABEL finds a spider and freaks out jumping up and down)

MABEL – Eek! Spiders! There’s a thousand big hairy spiders in my sleeping bag. With fangs!

CASSANDRA – (Skeptical) A thousand?

MABEL – (Stops. Looks down) Okay, one. (Freaks out again) But it’s really big!

JAZZ – How big?

MABEL – (Stops. Looks down) Okay, it’s little. And I can’t see any hair. But still. (Freaks out again) There’s a spider in my sleeping bag!

NINA – Well kill it already. The last thing I ever want to see is another spider!

MABEL – (Looking around her back pack) Where’s my fly swatter? Where’s my can opener? I’ll hit it with that.

VERONICA – (Throwing her arms up in the air) That’s it. (Points to MABEL) I swear her parents CAN’T be earthlings.

CASSANDRA – Wait! Don’t kill it, Mabel. I’ll take care of it. (MABEL steps away from her bag as CASSANDRA comes over with a little slip of paper, scooping up the spider)

VERONICA – I had forgotten how much you like spiders, Cassandra.

MABEL – Are you kidding? How could you forget after the whole “White Spider” incident at school last year?

NINA – Oooh, don't go there. I don't think my spider bites have healed yet. (Sneezes) Excuse me. (CASSANDRA takes the spider and deposits it onto a nearby bush)

CASSANDRA – Here you go, little guy. Bye-bye. (To the GROUP) There. Another one of God's creatures saved.

MABEL – (Leans over and looks at the bush) Terrific, Cassandra. Ummm, only now it looks like that spider's eating one of God's other creatures.

CASSANDRA – (Rejoining MABEL at the tree) Oh, yeah. Whoops.

MABEL – (Staring at the bush) You know, maybe that fly should have offered up some nice flowers or something? Perhaps moved a lit-tle bit quicker? (Looks again) Hey. Now it's going after an ant. (Cheering on the ant) Come on. Run, little guy, run. Wait! Where'd he go? Uh-oh! He's hiding behind a twig. (Reacting) Oooh! Ouch! Too bad. It was that one last leg. (Upset) He couldn't hide that one last leg. (Turns back to see that EVERYONE is just staring at her)

NINA – (Rolling her eyes, after a beat) Like wow.

CASSANDRA – (Puts her arm around MABEL) See, Mabel, this is why I'm having you committed. (Walks away)

MABEL – (Looks back at the spider one more time) Man, I'll bet stuff like this must drive Buddhists crazy.

MRS. LETHOU – (Looking at a photo with VERALL) Is that your wife?

VERALL – Oui. Her name is Sarah.

MRS. LETHOU - Is she Cree, as well?

VERALL – (Laughing) No. She is from Montana. (Smiling) Well, nobody's perfect. (BOTH laugh) We met while serving together in the Peace Corps. (SAGE returns with kindling in his arms)

MRS. LETHOU – Sarah's just lovely, Verall. And are these your children?

VERALL – Yes, my twin sons.

MRS. LETHOU – They're so cute. What are their names?

VERALL – Oh we had quite a discussion back and forth on that. (Takes the picture back) I wanted Cree names, but my wife wanted to name them after family. Ultimately we settled on the names Caleb and Nathaniel.

SAGE – (Dropping the wood and shouts) My God! You’re a dentist?

VERALL – (Looking up at SAGE) Why, yes. Orthodontist, really. I only do this during my summer vacations. How did you know?

SAGE – (Embarrassed by his previous assumptions) Oh, uh...just a lucky guess? (SAGE picks up the kindling again and goes to build the campfire as LIGHTS DIM. The scene TRANSITIONS to Act 1, Scene 6)

Act 1, Scene 6 - Same Day, Later That Afternoon

(LIGHTS UP on MICHAEL and ISAIAH who are out hunting. ISAIAH carries the atlatl while MICHAEL carries the rabbit stick. They are in an open area depleted of all trees. The area is grey and lifeless. Both men are moving very slowly and silently when MICHAEL breaks the silence and startling ISAIAH)

MICHAEL – Do you see anything yet?

ISAIAH – (Sternly) Quiet, you fool! Do want to scare all the animals away?

MICHAEL – But we’ve been out for hours and we still haven’t caught anything. (Feels his tongue) Swelling has gone down some, but it still stings. Can’t we take a break?

ISAIAH – Very well. We’ll stop and have a rest.

MICHAEL – Good. (Sits down, puts his rabbit stick down and pulls out a canteen) Say, was your father also a hunter, Isaiah?

ISAIAH – Hunter? No. My father was a lifetime military man. Fought in World War Two, Korea, Vietnam. He was even serving in the first Iraqi War when he died.

MICHAEL – Wow. That’s amazing. How’d he die?

ISAIAH – Infected pimple.

MICHAEL – Not exactly a wawwior’s death.

ISAIAH – Have you ever had one?

MICHAEL – No.

ISAIAH – (Shuddering) Definitely NOT a pleasant way to go.

MICHAEL – (Nodding) War is hell. (Looking around the area) Vewall was wight. (Opens the canteen) This whole place is out of whack. (Takes a drink from the canteen) Turn one cohner and you’ve got animals and insects all around you. Turn another cohner and you can’t find any. There’s no consis-consis-consisten, ah heck, evenness. All the twees here are dead.

ISAIAH – Yes. There is a lot of bleak devastation. Speaking of bleak devastation, your girlfriend. She sure seems to give you a lot of grief, mon ami. Why do you put up with it?

MICHAEL – Ah, that’s just Nina. We weally do wove each other. It’s just that we came to a mutual understanding years ago about our welationship.

ISAIAH – Oui? What sort of understanding?

MICHAEL – Simple. I don’t understand her and she doesn’t understand me. (Pause) Funny thing is I have the same welationship with my pwiest. (Takes another drink as ISAIAH wanders the site) Maybe we should head back and twy a diffwent area. This whole awea appears to be deserted.

ISAIAH – Ah-ha! That’s what they want us to think.

MICHAEL – (Confused) Who wants us to think...what?

ISAIAH – Those devils. Can’t you feel it, Michael?

MICHAEL – Feel what?

ISAIAH – The eyes. Watching us now.

MICHAEL – (Slowly stands up) Watching us? What? Who’s watching us?

ISAIAH – Shhh! I hear footsteps. Be quiet.

MICHAEL – Don’t woowy. I’ll be vewwy quiet.

ISAIAH - They’re stalking us right now as we speak. Oh, they want us to think this area is deserted, luring us into a false sense of safety.

MICHAEL – (Becoming weak in the knees, high pitched) Oh?

ISAIAH – Yes. They ensnare us together here and then -BAM!- (MICHAEL is startled) They pounce!

MICHAEL – (Meek, high pitched whine) They do?

ISAIAH - But we are the ones with the superior intellect and reasoning skills. (There is a rustling sound offstage) There you are! (Points his atlatl towards offstage left)

MICHAEL – (Frightened, low pitched) What was that?

ISAIAH – Get your rabbit stick.

MICHAEL – Are you cwazy? What if it’s a bear? I think bear might be higher up on the food chain than human.

ISAIAH – Get your rabbit stick! (MICHAEL gets his stick. BOTH come as far stage left as the sound gets louder until something appears before them yet unseen to the audience)

MICHAEL – It’s a bunny wabbit.

ISAIAH – (Snickers) Why do you think I had you get your rabbit stick? (Begins to laugh)

MICHAEL – (Realizing he has just been had) You, you jerk! I thought we were about to be ovejun by wolves! You know I’m still way too young to have my life pass before my eyes like that!

ISAIAH – There are no wolves, remember? (Laughs again) They’re all extinct! (Laughter subsides) Go ahead. (Slaps MICHAEL on the back) Kill the rabbit.

MICHAEL – (Puzzled) Kill the wabbit?

ISAIAH – Yes. That’s why we came out here, isn’t it?

MICHAEL – Yeah, I suppose it is.

ISAIAH – He’s a good size. We can all have it for dinner tonight. And I’ve made some leftover goose pie for dessert.

MICHAEL – I’m not sure I...

ISAIAH – You wanted to prove how much of a man you are, right?

MICHAEL – (Approaching the bunny slowly) Yeah, but it’s a bunny.

ISAIAH – (Crouching down, guiding MICHAEL at a distance from behind) Don’t let it fool you. They move very quickly and aren’t the easiest things for hunters to capture.

MICHAEL – But we’re not capturing it. We’re just, y’know, like, killing it. (After a beat, turns to ISAIAH, excited) There’s pie?

ISAIAH – (Annoyed) Concentrate, Michael. (MICHAEL turns back around and approaches the rabbit again) This is for survival. That’s it. (MICHAEL edges closer to his prey) Closer. We are carnivores, Michael. Hunters. (MICHAEL moves closer) Closer. Hunting is something man has been doing since the dawn of time. Closer.

(MICHAEL lifts up his rabbit stick and prepares to toss it at the rabbit. Then, slowly lowers it and hands the stick to ISAIAH)

MICHAEL – Not this man. Not anymore. (MICHAEL walks far stage right. ISAIAH slowly takes his atlatl and pantomimes sticking and pinning the unseen rabbit, and then hitting it over the head with the rabbit stick. He does a primal scream as he performs this act and then laughs as MICHAEL just stares in horror. Shortly after ISAIAH’s kill there is the sound of a distant howl, which sounds like a wolf’s howl. ISAIAH and MICHAEL look around as LIGHTS DIM)

(Blackout)

End of Act One

Act 2, Scene 1 - Same Day, Nightfall

(LIGHTS UP on ALL gathered around a new campfire. ALL are eating the rabbit ISAIAH has caught and cooked, all that is, except MICHAEL)

VERALL – Another wonderful meal, mon ami. (Hands dishes to MRS. LETHOU, who puts them in a dish bucket) Well, I am turning in early. Good night, everyone. (VERALL heads over to his sleeping bag)

JAZZ – You are an amazing cook, Isaiah!

MRS. LETHOU – (To MR. LETHOU) I've never had rabbit before. I can't believe I'm trying it now. If we were back home I'd never even think of it.

MR. LETHOU – I know. It's amazing the things you'll try when you're hungry enough and have to survive out in the wilderness. Still won't ever replace a hamburger, though.

MABEL – I have these cousins in New Orleans who had me try rabbit tenderloin once with Creole mustard sauce, collard greens and grits. I've got to admit, it was tasty.

NINA – (Sarcastic) You're making me long to be lonesome, Mabel, you know that?

VERONICA – Well this is a certainly lot better tasting than goose. I can't believe you actually caught this, Michael.

MICHAEL – I (Sullen, looks at ISAIAH, who stares back at him) I had help.

(VERALL kneels down cross legged and prays next to his sleeping bag)

SAGE – I'll admit it, Michael. I didn't think you had it in you.

CASSANDRA – I could never do it, that's for sure.

NINA – Aren't you going to have some, Michael?

MICHAEL – (After a long pause) No thanks. (MICHAEL gets up and walks away)

JAZZ – (Seeing VERALL praying by his sleeping bag) Wow. Speaking of Buddhists. (She walks over to VERALL.

VERALL looks up at JAZZ) Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Absolon. I didn't mean to disturb you.

VERALL – Not at all. I was just praying. And please, call me Verall. (As scene progresses, OTHERS get ready for bed)

JAZZ – Are you a Christian?

VERALL – (Preparing his sleeping bag) You don't have to be a Christian to pray, eh? (pronounced "ay")

JAZZ – I suppose not.

VERALL – (Crawling inside his bag) I find it an amusing thing about human religion. So many people spend their youth running away from their God yet spend the rest of their lives trying to catch up to their God.

JAZZ – "Human" religion?

VERALL – (Sits up) What? Do you think only people have a lock on religious beliefs?

JAZZ – Well, kinda, sorta, yeah.

VERALL – (Laughs then crawls out of his sleeping bag) With the multitude of God's creatures on this planet? It's only human arrogance which makes us believe there can't be other forms of life on this planet who worship in some way.

JAZZ – I suppose I never thought about it in that way. But have you ever seen such animals?

VERALL – (Nodding) Oh, sure. Wolves for one. Remember, they've been around for centuries. Researchers have studied the many different kinds of wolf howls and how certain pitches can carry specific messages.

JAZZ – To the other wolves.

VERALL – (Nodding) Oui, and some say each pack has their own language, their own way of sharing messages. So, yes, I believe they can worship. I have seen it. I have watched them for years.

JAZZ – It sounds beautiful.

VERALL - It is a beautiful thing, really. (JAZZ listens intently) They gather in an open space. Obviously there is no scripture nor anything spoken in any language humans would understand, but there is...how you say...communication.

JAZZ – But how can they possibly...

VERALL – (Continuing) No church, Jazidua. No altar, no structure, but no, there was something, something, uniform, to these gatherings. Something which can only be described as a ceremony. Not religious in a way you nor I nor any of us would recognize, but...

JAZZ – (Interrupting, as if she understands) ...But for them a deeply moving spiritual experience. (Closes her eyes)

VERALL – Oui. Spiritual. That is the word. Then they conclude in howling...something...as beautiful as any hymn you've ever heard.

JAZZ – Wow. (Opens her eyes) Verall, Can I confide in you?

VERALL – Certainement (pronounced: sur tan mon).

JAZZ – My family has lived all over the world, but no matter we go, there would be some nights when I'd look up at the night sky and then suddenly I'd hear a wolf's howl.

VERALL – Oui. So?

JAZZ – It never, I don't know, changes, Verall. It always sounds the same. As if it's a message meant only for me, but I don't know what the message is.

VERALL – (Joking) Perhaps they are singing a hymn just for you, eh? (BOTH laugh) You know, Jazidua, when I cannot be out here because of family or my practice, then to be able to hear the call from a distance would be the next best thing to experiencing the thrill of touching another world. (JAZZ closes her eyes again) A world where...wildness...(thinking about his choice of words) yes, wildness...still exists. (Yawns then crawls into his sleeping bags and goes to sleep)

JAZZ – (Softly, slowly) I think, I think I hear them again. (Opens her eyes) Mr. Absolon, do you think...(Sees that VERALL is asleep. Gets up and goes back to her own sleeping bag and goes to sleep. LIGHTS DIM as scene TRANSITIONS to Act 2, Scene 2)

Act 2, Scene 2 - The Next Morning, Around 3:00A.M

(It is still dark, early the next morning. The scene begins in total darkness. EVERYONE is asleep when suddenly there is the haunting sound of a wolf's howl heard. LIGHTS UP quick as VERALL awakens and gets out of his sleeping bag and lights a lantern. CASSANDRA, SAGE, MABEL MR. and MRS. LETHOU also awaken. ISAIAH follows, picking up his atlatl and moves to the front of the stage. VERALL and MR. LETHOU both stand and join ISAIAH, looking out into the night)

MR. LETHOU – (After a pause, yawning) Could it be a coyote?

VERALL – (Shaking his head slowly, cold) It's not.

(There is another singular howl. MRS. LETHOU and the others all stand up)

MRS. LETHOU – What is it?

ISAIAH – (Coldly) It's a wolf.

MR. LETHOU – But I thought you said there were no more wolves around here.

ISAIAH – (Ominous) Apparently there is one, at least. (Looking around) Now.

MABEL – (Gulps) Are you saying there could be more? (ISAIAH nods) Swell. (Crawls back into her sleeping bag and zips it up over her head)

MRS. LETHOU – Is he going to attack?

ISAIAH – You can count on it.

VERALL – (Shaking his head again) No. That is not the right sound. This is more of a...it is calling out. It seeks out something. (Turns to the GROUP) This is...a spirit.

(One final howl as LIGHTS DIM and scene TRANSITIONS to Act 2, Scene 3)

Act 2, Scene 3 - The Next Night, Early Evening

(LIGHTS UP. It is early evening on the next night. NINA, MICHAEL, VERONICA and MRS. LETHOU are all getting ready to turn in. MR. LETHOU is working on MABEL's watch with a screwdriver and the laser pointer. ISAIAH is checking his weapons and other gear. VERALL is explaining North American legend of the rain wolf to the rest of the GROUP)

MR. LETHOU – Nope, Mabel. I'm sorry, but Dirk Benedict was the only true Starbuck, as far as I'm concerned.

MABEL – (Scoffing) Please. Did you even see the new "Battlestar Galactica" series?

MR. LETHOU – (Holding up the screwdriver) No. No. No. And you want to know why? They put Starbuck in a dress!

NINA – (Astounded) Wow. When geek generations collide.

MR. LETHOU - Here you go, Mabel. Here's your watch back. It was just a loose cell regeneration diode.

MABEL – That's what I thought. So you just cross connected the overlay switch with the internal turret mechanism?

MR. LETHOU – (Impressed) That's right. Looks like the whole watch was made up of used PC parts.

MABEL – I'm gonna kill that Craig guy.

MR. LETHOU – Listen, when you're through with your studies at Millborough, we might have an internship opening you might want to apply for.

MABEL – Really? That would be great!

CASSANDRA – Verall, I know you started to explain last night, but tell us again: Why do you think this wolf is a ghost?

VERALL – Not a ghost, Cassandra. A spirit, or rather a spirit creature. You see, my ancestors were an off shoot of the Woodland Cree. Shamans and conjurers wielded great power. and believed in many old legends, including the legend of the Sky People.

SAGE – (To VERALL) Sky people? (Whispering to CASSANDRA) Uh-oh, Toto.

CASSANDRA – (To SAGE) Shh. (Gently punches SAGE in the arm) And thanks for calling me a dog. (To VERALL) Go on, Verall.

VERALL – It is said that the rain wolves came to be when the Sky People cried.

JAZZ – Why were they crying?

VERALL – Because centuries ago on the earth there was nothing. Their tear drops fell from the heavens to the earth like rain drops, each one depositing a great woodland priestess known as a spirit walker.

JAZZ – A spirit walker?

VERALL – Legend says that these spirit walkers were responsible for creating all the two and four legged creatures on the planet.

JAZZ – Including wolves.

VERALL – Oui, including wolves. Thus the name “rain wolf”.

SAGE – Whoa.

CASSANDRA – You mentioned the heavens. Do these Sky People live in a Heaven like Christians believe?

VERALL – (Nodding) Yes, but you must understand that many Indian nations do not believe in Heaven as a place but rather a higher plane of existence. For my people, we believe that Kechemunedo, whom we call the Great Spirit or Manitou, created man from the sky and woman from the earth.

SAGE – Ketchup-huh? What?

VERALL – Kechemunedo. In order to get to the Manitou males, or rather their spirits, must pass through a gate, or portal, if you will, to the spirit world.

JAZZ – What happens on the other side?

VERALL - Once there, each new spirit receives a mission and then brings inspiration to males still on earth to see them through ordeals.

CASSANDRA – Is it just the men?

VERALL – No. Females also enter the spirit world, but their spirit travels and lives many lives through the vessels, or bodies, of other females, lying dormant within. (JAZZ is visibly shaken by this)

MABEL – (Irate, to VERONICA) Figures its women who can't go right through the same front door as a man. How typical.

VERONICA – (To MABEL) I guess chauvinism exists in every culture.

VERALL – Ah, but in many Indian legends, it is the women who own all the property and women who determine relationships and leaders in their clans. For between sky and earth, one cannot possess superiority over the other

MABEL – (Pleased) Well, all right, then. That's better.

VERONICA – (Smiles) That's cool.

ISAIAH – It's bull!

VERALL - The legend is true for beast as well as human. The rain wolves did not become extinct, although they were faced with annihilation.

ISAIAH – (Sarcastic) No one saw this. It's just a story. A silly Indian folktale passed down by elders looking to swap fables for tobacco and other white man goods.

VERALL – (Angered by ISAIAH's remark) Oui, perhaps that was true in some cases, in order for certain nations to survive, Isaiah, but still one man's fable is another man's legend.

VERONICA – (To MABEL) Wow, this is sure better than anything on the Discovery Channel.

MABEL – (To VERONICA) Got any popcorn?

CASSANDRA – (To MABEL and VERONICA) Shh! Quiet, you two.

VERALL - (To the GROUP) In the northwest territory, there is an ancient tale told by the elders of the Dogrib Nation. It's about a woman who gave birth to six children who were both canine and human in spirit.

MABEL – Okay. Eww. Yuk.

VERALL - Her children could change from one form to the other as their spirits willed. The people of the Dogrib Nation are said to be descendents of those children.

VERONICA – (To CASSANDRA) I am spiritually indifferent to all of this.

CASSANDRA – Veronica, hush. I'm interested.

VERALL - Wolves have been around for over sixty million years, survived the ice age, and together, separate yet side by side, wolf and native man have shared this part of the world centuries before any white man arrived.

ISAIAH – (Defensive) Shared? Wolves are vicious predators. They drove away what they could not eat!

VERALL – (Angry) Vicious, Isaiah? And what of the white man?

ISAIAH – (Annoyed) Oh, don't start this again.

VERALL – (Coming up to ISAIAH) The Europeans that first came to this land were worse predators, Isaiah.

ISAIAH – (Arguing) What are you talking about? Those people came to this land to make new lives for themselves. These creatures...

VERALL – (Arguing) Were far less responsible for causing the extinction of entire species and cultures over the centuries!

MR. LETHOU – (Breaking up the argument) Gentlemen! (ISAIAH and VERALL separate) I think we can all agree that we're not going to resolve this debate in the next five minutes, so why don't we focus on what we can do about our current situation.

JAZZ – Just one more thing, Dad. (To VERALL) What happened to these wolves, Mr. Absolon?

VERALL – (To JAZZ) To avoid extinction, the rain wolf called to the heavens with their collective howl. Their spirits passed through the portal and were lifted to the winds with their bodies left to the land.

JAZZ – Why?

VERALL – (Looks at JAZZ) You know why.

MICHAEL – Well, tell the rest of us because quite honestly you lost me at "Manitou".

VERALL - They are waiting for the day the alpha male would return through the portal to find his mate and thus return the wolves to their native land. Some who believe in the legend might say that is what we are facing now. (Long pause as he turns to ISAIAH) Why do you think a wolf always howls towards the sky?

ISAIAH – (Angrily, once again comes face to face with VERALL) This is all superstitious bull! There isn't always a reason to do something.

VERALL – (Smiles antagonistically at ISAIAH) Spoken like a true...hunter. (ISAIAH backs off) Isaiah knows as well as I that even today in many parts of the world wolves are still persecuted.

JAZZ – Persecuted? How so?

VERALL – Oh through hunting, snaring, shooting, habitat destruction and illegal poisoning. Some still hunt them for their pelts, too.

VERONICA – Oh, you know that reminds me. My mom bought me this really cute fur coat last year, and I...(ALL look at VERONICA) Okay. Yeah. Bad timing. Got it.

MRS. LETHOU – (To MR. LETHOU) Honey, remember when we were working in Mexico? (To JAZZ) We were told that there were maybe only about a dozen or so wolves left in the entire country.

MR. LETHOU – (To MRS. LETHOU) That's right. I remember they told us that wolves are now extinct in many European countries.

VERALL - And they no longer exist on ninety-five percent of where they used to roam in the United States.

JAZZ – That's horrible. Why haven't people been able to learn to coexist with wolves?

VERALL – Because coexistence requires human tolerance and education.

ISAIAH – (Defensive) All right, that's enough! I am not going to listen to you continue to put down good, honest people whose only crime is trying to defend themselves, Verall. Any killing of wolves that is done is done within the boundaries of the law.

VERALL – We're not talking about ranchers protecting themselves, Isaiah. Nor is this about wolves encroaching on human land. It's about humans encroaching on the land of wolves.

ISAIAH – (Contemptuously) The land of wolves...

VERALL – (Defensive) Yes, the land of wolves. And these laws of which you speak, Isaiah, are in an imbalance.

CASSANDRA – Unbalanced? How so?

VERALL – (To CASSANDRA) Well, in Ontario, for example, raccoons, which carry more rabies than any other animal, are afforded more protection than wolves. Wolves are slaughtered THERE without “a reason”, Isaiah.

ISAIAH – It’s self-preservation!

VERALL – (To ISAIAH) Self-preservation? When people can’t even tell what it is that is killing their livestock? Coyote are responsible for more cattle destruction than wolves and when you eliminate the wolves the coyote move right in. (To the GROUP) You know some people were shooting and killing their own dogs.

VERONICA – Eww! Why?

CASSANDRA – Oh, let me guess. Because at night, in the darkness, people couldn’t tell the difference between a dog, a coyote or a wolf.

VERALL – That is right. And children, young children who may not even know how to ride a bicycle yet, can shoot and kill wolves as long as they have a valid game license. (To ISAIAH) Is that what you want to happen here?

ISAIAH – (Menacing) When you have had your life, your livelihood, ripped out from beneath your feet as a result of these fiends, then you can preach to me about how wolves are treated unfairly, eh?

VERALL - (Comes face to face with ISAIAH) Mon ami, wisdom has two parts. Having lots to say, and then knowing when not to say it. (ISAIAH storms off into the woods)

MICHAEL – (To SAGE) Man, that Verall is like a walking talking fortune cookie, isn’t he?

MR. LETHOU – Verall is right. We need to find out what it is we’re dealing with.

(Another howl is heard)

CASSANDRA – So, Mr. Absolon, are we hearing a wolf, a coyote or, as your legend makes it sound, some sort of malevolent spirit?

SAGE – Yeah, because quite frankly, from my perspective, none of those options makes we want to stick around here.

VERONICA – I’m with Sage.

MABEL – Well I certainly don't want to end up as wolf chow.

VERALL – Calm yourselves. There has never been a documented case of a healthy wild wolf killing a human in all of North America.

MR. LETHOU – I'm no expert, Verall, but if this is a wild wolf, who knows if it is healthy?

MRS. LETHOU – (Concerned about the safety of her group) Verall. Perhaps...

VERALL – (Picking up the bow and arrow) Very well. I will go get Isaiah and look around. The rest of you stay put. Nobody go anywhere in the darkness without, how you say, a "buddy". Sage, you and Mr. Lethou take weapons and stand watch over on the south side of camp. (MR. LETHOU picks up an atlatl)

SAGE – Sure. (Picks up the rabbit stick) Uh, why the south side?

VERALL – Because that's where the sounds were coming from.

SAGE – Right. Great. (Goes up to VERALL, hands him the rabbit stick and takes the bow and arrow) Now I'll feel better.

MR. LETHOU – (Remembering SAGE's last attempt with a bow and arrow) I won't.

JAZZ – Wait a minute. What is this? Two men heading out into the woods? Two men needed to stand guard over us fragile females? Are you making your choices simply based on the fact that they're guys?

VERALL – (Getting his backpack) I chose they who I felt would make the best protectors.

VERONICA – (Raising her hand) I'm good with that.

NINA – Me, too.

JAZZ – Well, I'm not. Listen, Verall, I can take care of myself.

MR. LETHOU – Jazzy, right now is not the time to engage in a sexual discrimination debate. We'll discuss this when we get back. (SAGE, MR. LETHOU and VERALL exit)

JAZZ – (Angry) Ooohh. (Shouting off after them) For the last time don't call me Jazzy. (To the GROUP) I'm twenty years old and I can take care of myself. (Looks off once more at where her father left then makes a decision) Fine. (Picks up her backpack) You know what? If I'm going to be treated as if I don't matter, I'm heading out by myself.

MICHAEL – Whoa, Jazz. Where are you going?

JAZZ – (Pushes past MICHAEL) Out of my way, Michael. (MICHAEL grabs JAZZ by the arm and JAZZ twists part of MICHAEL's face)

MICHAEL – (Holding his face in pain) Ow! Ow! Ow! Bee sting! Not healed! Still hurts! Ow!

MRS. LETHOU – Jazz, don't. It's dark out there.

JAZZ – Don't worry, Mom. I've got my lantern and I know how to find my way around.

CASSANDRA – Where are you going?

JAZZ - I'm going back for the tents and the food. I'll catch up with you all tomorrow.

MRS. LETHOU – Tomorrow? But...

JAZZ – (Stopping her mother from saying something) Don't say it, Mother. Please?

MRS. LETHOU – (Reluctantly gives in) All right.

CASSANDRA – I'll come with you.

JAZZ – No! Stay here. I want to be by myself. (Storms off)

MICHAEL – Well, so much for the buddy system. (To MRS. LETHOU) You don't seem too upset, Mrs. Lethou.

MRS. LETHOU – Jazz is very...independent. She'll be all right. You heard her talk before about never using a compass.

MABEL – Compass? Oh no.

CASSANDRA – What is it, Mabel? (MABEL holds out the watch) It's your watch. So?

MABEL – Yes. It's my watch. My digital watch.

VERONICA – So?

MABEL – But I never took off Jazz's watch. (Shows the watch still on her wrist) I'm still wearing it. She's got nothing to use as a compass.

MRS. LETHOU – Oh, no. Cassandra, go tell my husband. We have to go after her. Michael, you go with Cassandra as a buddy to keep her safe.

MICHAEL – (Standing proud) Right.

CASSANDRA – (Rolling her eyes) Uh, yeah. You know, I think I'll be safer with Veronica.
(CASSANDRA and VERONICA exit as MRS. LETHOU looks off at where her daughter went)

MRS. LETHOU – (Concerned, but not frantic) Oh, Jazz. (LIGHTS DIM as scene TRANSITIONS to Act 2, Scene 4)

Act 2, Scene 4 - Same Night, About Ninety Minutes Later

(LIGHTS UP on JAZZ arriving in a thickly settled wooded area. There is mist covering the area. She has her lantern out to help see the path. She begins having trouble breathing. She takes out her inhaler, uses it a few times then shakes it. It's empty)

JAZZ – Terrific. Of all the times to get lost. Mom will never let me live this down. Must be after midnight. (Checks her wrist to reveal that her watch is missing) Uh-oh. (Suddenly she hears the wolf howl again. Puts the hood up on her jacket. Nervously) Oh, boy. Why do I suddenly feel like Little Red Riding Hood?

(There are several frenetic clasps of thunder)

JAZZ – What now? There wasn't supposed to be any rain.

(There are flashes of light illuminating from different areas on stage. From the illumination emerge four beautiful women, all dressed in bright white clothing, ethereal in appearance. These are the WOODLAND PRIESTESSES)

JAZZ – (Frightened) Oh, boy.

WOODLAND PRIESTESS 1 – (Calling out with arms extended) Jazidua!

ALL WOODLAND PRIESTESSES – Kechemunedo.

JAZZ – Who are you?

WOODLAND PRIESTESS 2 - (Calling out with arms extended) Spirit child!

ALL WOODLAND PRIESTESSES – Amoux returns.

WOODLAND PRIESTESS 1 – (Calling out with arms extended) Jazidua!

JAZZ – How do you know my name? (JAZZ begins to experience chest pains) What is it you want?

WOODLAND PRIESTESS 3 - (Calling out with arms extended) The alpha female!

WOODLAND PRIESTESS 4 – Kechemunedo!

ALL WOODLAND PRIESTESSES – Amoux returns for you.

(The howling is heard once more as the PRIESTESSES exit the stage as if disappearing. A boy close to her age, AMOUX, appears through the trees. HE is dressed in a wolf's pelt only)

JAZZ – Oh, boy. (She faints. LIGHTS DIM)

(Blackout)

End of Act Two

Act 3, Scene 1 - Same Night, About Two Hours Later

(LIGHTS UP on JAZZ, still unconscious, but relocated to the middle of a desolate clearing. AMOUX stands watch over her. JAZZ begins to stir. AMOUX shifts position from one end of the clearing to another, keeping a fixed watch upon her. JAZZ awakens)

JAZZ – What happened? It’s so dark. (Stands and stretches) I wonder what time it is. (Seeing AMOUX, who emits a short, low pitched growl) Oh, yeah. (She slowly rises, JAZZ slowly backs away and moves behind a tree) It’s all right. I won’t hurt you. (Thinks about it) Well, would you listen to me? (Feeling her head) Hurt you? I’m more hoping you won’t hurt me! (Stares at AMOUX) Did you (Realizing AMOUX may not understand her, JAZZ pantomimes a carrying movement to AMOUX) Did you bring me here? (Sees that AMOUX does not understand) Great. Now I’m doing a Marcel Marceau impersonation. (Looking around) Who are you?

(AMOUX growls again)

JAZZ - Where are we? Do you speak French?

(AMOUX’s growling becomes more fierce)

JAZZ - Parlez-vous Anglais? (AMOUX snarls at her, then approaches, pushing JAZZ down)

JAZZ – (On the ground, brushing herself off) Well, I guess that could be taken for French. It’s got the right attitude. (JAZZ stands up) All right. Look, this has been fun, but I really should be getting back to my friends and family. So, thanks for the hospitality and (AMOUX returns and pushes her down again) Ow! (Gets up one more time, this time getting angry) Okay. Enough with the pushing, understand? Comprenez-vous?

(AMOUX snarls)

JAZZ - That’s it. I’m outta here! (AMOUX lunges for her again, only this time JAZZ takes AMOUX’s arm and throws him down to the ground, when he lands on a nearby rock and hurts his ankle. AMOUX whelps in pain like an injured dog. AMOUX starts to limp slowly away)

JAZZ - Oh, I'm sorry! Wait! Attente! Please! (AMOUX falls to the ground again in pain, whimpering, JAZZ slowly approaches trying to calm him down) Here. Please, let me help you! (JAZZ examines the leg) I don't see any bruises. I think you'll be okay. You just need to keep some weight on it. (Offering AMOUX her hand) Here. Try to stand up. (JAZZ helps AMOUX to his feet. AMOUX just stares at JAZZ as she supports him) Good. Okay. (Looks at AMOUX) I don't know if you can understand me or not, but we've got to work together if we're to get out of here. (Points to AMOUX) You? (Points to herself) Me? (Lifts AMOUX's hand up and she looks at it tenderly for a moment) Together. (AMOUX takes his other hand and gently covers JAZZ's hand. The two look at each other for a moment and make an emotional connection. JAZZ looks at AMOUX)

JAZZ - But what do I call you? Fred? Chuck? No. Gotta be something French. You have that French attitude, after all. Jean-Paul? Francois? (After a beat) Amoux. It means eagle or eagle wolf. That seems to suit you. (Points to AMOUX) Amoux. (Points to him again) Amoux. (Points to herself) Jazia. (AMOUX doesn't understand) Jazz. (She tries to make him understand one more time) Jazz. (AMOUX nods but does not speak) Great. Now, it'll be daylight soon, but I can't carry you all the way out of the woods. (Slowly lets go of AMOUX) Can you try walking again? (Makes a walking motion) Walk? (AMOUX nods and together the two leave the area as LIGHTS DIM and scene TRANSITIONS to Act 3, Scene 2)

(Blackout)

Act 3, Scene 2 - Next Morning, About 2:00A.M

(LIGHTS UP on the main campsite, early the next morning. CASSANDRA, VERONICA, NINA and MRS. LETHOU return from hours of searching for JAZZ)

VERONICA – (Walking while carrying her boots) Oh thank God we're back! My feet are killing me.

NINA – We must have searched behind every tree and under every rock in a three mile radius.

VERONICA - I wish I hadn't gone to the bathroom behind that crowded clump of trees.

CASSANDRA – Well, when you've got to go, you've got to go. We've all had to go out here, Veronica.

VERONICA – Yeah there was this ferret thingy creature staring back at me. (After a beat) It was disturbing.

NINA – For you or the ferret?

VERONICA – (To CASSANDRA) What time is it?

CASSANDRA – (Checking her watch) Two o'clock in the morning. It's so late. I hope Mabel and the guys have better luck searching for her.

VERONICA - (Looking at her feet) You know, they say that hiking and camping helps to build character. Just once I'd like to build character at a nice beach resort someplace. Ugh! I need to do my nails.

MRS. LETHOU – I was hoping Jazz would have found her way back here to the campsite by now. That's why I wanted to get back.

CASSANDRA – She's probably on her way back right now, Mrs. Lethou.

MRS. LETHOU – I know.

VERONICA (Finds a music player) Hey, Michael must have dropped his iPod. I just found it on the ground.

NINA – Let me see. I'll put it in his pack.

VERONICA – I thought you didn't like going into his backpack?

NINA – (Shudders) Oh, Veronica, if only I could un-see some of the things I've seen in that backpack. (VERONICA hands the music player to NINA) That goof. He left it on. I can hear the music coming out of his earphones.

CASSANDRA – Oh, turn it off. I can't stand that head banger stuff.

NINA – (Listens more closely) Wait a minute. That's not heavy metal.

VERONICA – Grunge?

NINA – Not even close. (Turns up the volume on the player and "Laughter in the Rain" is playing) That's Neil Sedaka.

CASSANDRA and VERONICA – Who?

NINA – Neil Sedaka. I've got a great aunt who listens to this guy on her 8-track player in her 79 Chevy. (Scanning through the rest of the iPod tracks) These are all Neil Sedaka songs. It's the only stuff on here.

CASSANDRA – (Starts laughing) Oh, jeez. So all this time our residential macho Goth head banger "scion (pronounced: SY-en) of the devil" has actually been listening to Neil Sedaka tunes?

NINA – I'm embarrassed to even know him right now. (Slowly drifts off, swaying her head back and forth as she listens and gets into the music)

VERONICA – (Laughing) Too funny.

CASSANDRA – (Looking up at the sky, to VERONICA) Aren't the stars beautiful tonight? I could watch them forever.

VERONICA – (Looking upwards toward the stars) Ad astra per aspera. "To the stars through trials". (CASSANDRA looks at VERONICA, amazed) What? I can't know Latin?

CASSANDRA – Not unless it's caveat emptor.

VERONICA – (Excited) "Buyer beware"!

CASSANDRA - I'm really impressed, Veronica. (Sees something in the sky. Pointing) Look! Just above those trees!

VERONICA – Where?

CASSANDRA – Over there! In the direction to where Jazz took off!

VERONICA – (Looks, amazed) Wow! Are those the Perseids?

CASSANDRA – I'm not sure. But it sure looks...(looks closer) No, wait. It's all clustered together, not like anything I've ever seen before. It's beautiful...no...more than that...it's, oh what's the right word...(thinks of it) celestial, almost glowing.

VERONICA – (Sighs) Yeah. Shimmering like the gleam on a brand new Kenneth Cole Mini Handbag or a brand new pair of Pigalle patent leather pumps.

CASSANDRA – You really are missing that mall, aren't you? (VERONICA nods and CASSANDRA sighs)

VERONICA – Why are they called Perseids, anyway?

CASSANDRA – They were named after the constellation Perseus. (Points to the sky) It's a northern constellation near Cassiopeia and Taurus. (Turns to see MRS. LETHOU still worried)

NINA – (Turns off the iPod and packs it away, yawning) Ugh. That's it for me. This has been one long day. We searched for hours. I can't even keep my eyes open. (Gets into her sleeping bag as does VERONICA)

MRS. LETHOU – Yes. You girls should get some sleep. I'll wait up a little while longer. (Builds a campfire stage left. CASSANDRA watches her uneasily)

CASSANDRA – (To VERONICA and NINA) You two go ahead and get some sleep. I'll stay up a little while longer and keep Mrs. Lethou company.

NINA – (Not caring, trying to sleep) Hoo-kay fine. (VERONICA just stares at CASSANDRA)

MRS. LETHOU – No, no, no. You don't have to, Cassandra. I'm perfectly fine, dear. You should get some rest, too.

CASSANDRA – I'm not tired. (Suppressing a need to yawn) It's no trouble at all. Besides, I need to take my contacts out. (Goes to her backpack and grabs a contact lens kit. Begins to remove her contact lenses and put her glasses on)

NINA – (From her sleeping bag) Hey! Trying to sleep here. Talking not helping.

VERONICA – Nina, shhh. (Gets up from her sleeping bag and joins CASSANDRA and MRS. LETHOU by the fire) I was wondering, Mrs. Lethou...

MRS. LETHOU – Oh, yes, dear. Certainly. (Pointing offstage right) Just use the third bush from the left. There shouldn't be any ferrets over there.

VERONICA – No. Not that (Looks off right) But thanks. I was wondering (Sits down next to MRS. LETHOU) about your name. Lethou. It's French, right?

MRS. LETHOU – Yes. My husbands family. The name comes from a small village in France. It's very small but also very beautiful.

NINA – (Still from under the sleeping bag) Still...Not helping.

MRS. LETHOU - It is located right where the roads intersect from Rue de la Justice, Rue des Brandettes, Rue du Four a Chaux, Rue de Champ de Foire and Rue du Moulin Gentil.

NINA – (Sitting up from her sleeping bag) Well don't wake me too early, or that'll be a "rue de la wakening" for everyone for sure. (Crawls back under the sleeping bag)

CASSANDRA – (Returning) Sorry. She doesn't mean to be (Back to NINA) rude. (Puts her contact lens case away) She just doesn't do late nights.

MRS. LETHOU – (Laughing) You sure she's in college? (The GIRLS laugh) I suppose I shouldn't stereotype. I mean, look at Jazz? Usually it's supposed to be men who have a hard time asking for directions. (An uncomfortable laugh, followed by silence. Changing the subject) Do your eyes feel better, dear?

CASSANDRA – Oh, yeah. Much better. (Curious) Jazz told us that you and your husband have a lot of children, Mrs. Lethou.

MRS. LETHOU – Oh my, yes. Seven. You see, after our first child was born we couldn't have any more children of our own, but we wanted so much to share our love with a large family. So we adopted three girls and three boys, all from the different countries where we had been working on assignment for the government.

VERONICA – That's amazing.

CASSANDRA – Was Mr. Lethou there when your first child was born?

MRS. LETHOU – Oh sure. He said he wanted to experience the miracle of life. But, after 18 hours of labor and a very difficult birth, I don't think he ever will forget the experience.

VERONICA – Really?

MRS. LETHOU – Yes. He didn't blink for several days afterwards.

VERONICA - So Jazz was...?

MRS. LETHOU – Yes, Jazidua was also adopted. Our seventh and our last. By the time Jazz entered college, all our other children are grown and out on their own.

VERONICA – Where was she from originally?

MRS. LETHOU - We got her from an orphanage just outside of Honduras.

CASSANDRA – What were you and Mr. Lethou doing there?

MRS. LETHOU – We were working on an American military base. We roomed off base with a family whose last name was Jazidua. We were told the name means “talented”. So we thought that was a wonderful name for the girl who became our new daughter.

CASSANDRA – It is a pretty name.

MRS. LETHOU – Yes. It wasn't until later that we found out the family's name was actually “Jazidas”.

NINA – (Poking her head back out of her sleeping bag) “Jazidas”. What does that mean?

MRS. LETHOU - “Deposits”.

NINA - “Deposits”? (Laughing, sits up) Oh, man. I'm glad Michael's not here, because he'd definitely find a joke in that somehow.

CASSANDRA – I'm sure Mr. Lethou and the others will find Jazz, Mrs. Lethou.

NINA – Not if Mabel's got the compass. She has trouble seeing in the dark. At night she gets lost on her way to the bathroom. (Crawls back into her sleeping bag and goes to sleep)

VERONICA – (Smacking her forehead) Well that explains the puddles near the TV room in the dorm.

MRS. LETHOU – You’re sweet girls, but I’m not worried. (Beat) Isn’t that a funny thing for a mother to say about her baby girl? “I’m not worried”? But I’m not. Jazz has always been a self-reliant girl. She’d go camping with us and her brothers and sisters and for years, she never depended upon anyone for anything. She always could run or climb faster than any of her older siblings. And she always had good instincts. Now... (Pauses briefly) You know she was lost once before.

VERONICA – Really? What happened?

MRS. LETHOU – We were camping in the mountains in Tennessee for one vacation about four years ago and she got separated from us. She was gone for almost a full day.

CASSANDRA – The whole day?

MRS. LETHOU - We looked up and down every possible trail, hours upon hours. When we finally found her she had caught this fish, this smelly disgusting fish, and she was cooking it over a fire pit she had made out of rocks and lit by herself. (Smiling) She asked us if we wanted some. (Laughs, then almost cries) She really is a remarkable girl.

(CASSANDRA and VERONICA comfort MRS. LETHOU then return to their sleeping bags. After a moment of silence, NINA starts to snore like a very loud buzz saw. CASSANDRA and VERONICA sit up and stare at NINA sleeping).

VERONICA – And she was complaining about Michael’s nose whistling?

CASSANDRA – Great. I knew it might be hard for me to sleep with all the assorted sounds of woodland creatures around us, but I didn’t think I’d have to include the sound of Nina’s snoring.

VERONICA – Yeah. (Trying to sound like a TV weatherman) I think the overnight forecast for Nina’s sleeping bag calls for occasional sleep apnea followed by widely scattered drool by morning. (Both girls laugh and lie back down into the sleeping bags. After a moment, they fall asleep as a loud howling sound is heard. MRS. LETHOU slowly stands up as LIGHTS FADE and scene TRANSITIONS to Act 3, Scene 3)

Act 3, Scene 3 - Same Day, Early Dawn

(LIGHTS UP on early dawn in another clearing in the forest. JAZZ and AMOUX are walking together when JAZZ begins to feel faint. AMOUX keeps her from falling)

JAZZ – (Through short breaths) I’m sorry. I’m really sorry. I guess I need to stop for a minute. Use my inhaler. (Pulls out inhaler and shakes it. Tries using it) Damn. That’s right. I’m all out. Terrific. (Puts the inhaler away. Looks at AMOUX who is obviously concerned for JAZZ) I’ll be okay. Just need to catch my breath. It’s getting a little lighter out. That’s good. That helps. (Stretches and moves ahead as AMOUX follows) I can’t believe all the devastation around here. (Checks out the plant life) Everything’s dead. (AMOUX stops, sensing an impending presence. JAZZ continues forward) At least we’re back on the right path. I think. (JAZZ stops and looks back at AMOUX) Amoux? What is it? Are you okay? Is it your foot again? (JAZZ approaches AMOUX) Here, let me take a look. (AMOUX holds his hand up to stop JAZZ from coming any closer. Claps of thunder are heard and the stage becomes darker) Is it a storm? A storm’s coming? (A bright flash of light is seen and the WOODLAND PRIESTESSES appear once more from various points on stage)

WOODLAND PRIESTESSES – Jadzia!

JAZZ – (Astounded) Oh, my God. It wasn’t a dream. (To AMOUX) Amoux, do you know who they are? (AMOUX doesn’t respond but merely looks at JAZZ, who looks in kind into AMOUX’s eyes. There is more than a connection, now. They obviously have a mutual attraction and strong feelings for one another. But JAZZ pulls away) No. I can’t. (To the WOODLAND PRIESTESSES) I don’t get what’s happening, but...who are you? What do you want?

(MR. LETHOU and the rest of the search party are heard off in the distance)

MR. LETHOU – (Offstage) Jazz! Jazz! Can you hear me?

SAGE – (Offstage) Maybe through that stretch of trees.

MICHAEL – (Offstage) Man, I’ll be glad when we return to camp and get cleaned up. I haven’t changed my underwear in three days.

ALL – (Offstage) We know!

JAZZ – (Calling to MR. LETHOU) Dad! Over here!

(The WOODLAND PRIESTESSES disappear and the light fades as the stage lights return to normal)

JAZZ - (Turns back and calls out to the WOODLAND PRIESTESSES) Wait! Don't go! It's all right! They won't hurt you! (AMOUX also runs off) Amoux! Where are you going? Not you, too! Please! Come back! (LIGHTS DIM as she runs off after AMOUX. Scene TRANSITIONS to Act 3, Scene 4)

Act 3, Scene 4 - Same Day, Later That Morning

(LIGHTS UP. It is later that same morning. NINA is seen coming to a clearing, wiping her mouth with her sleeve, when she spots CASSANDRA and VERONICA with their pants legs rolled up and shavers in the hands)

NINA - Where have you two been? I've been looking all over camp for you.

CASSANDRA – We were shaving our legs in a nearby creek.

VERONICA – (Very happy) Look! I did my toenails, too!

NINA - (Incredulous) Why? Who the heck cares? We're in the middle of the boondocks camping!

CASSANDRA - I don't know. It was just something to do while we wait for the others to get back. Did they return to camp yet?

NINA – (Shakes her head) Not yet.

VERONICA – (Sticks her foot up in the air to show off her toenails to NINA) It's turquoise. Don't you just love it?

NINA – (Annoyed, pushes VERONICA's feet away and shouts) Get those blue things away from me! (VERONICA puts foot down. NINA shakes her head in disbelief, quietly) God I need coffee.

VERONICA – (Picks up her foot again to examine her paint job) Oh, it's in the pack that the boys and Mabel took with them to look for Jazz.

NINA – Terrific. Say, where's Mrs. Lethou?

VERONICA – (Puts foot down again) Oh, she came with us.

CASSANDRA - We asked her to. Thought it might help keep her mind off, y'know.

VERONICA - She was giving herself a waxing. I loaned her my kit.

NINA – You brought a waxing kit with you?

VERONICA – Just like American Express I never leave home without it.

(A loud scream is heard coming from off stage)

NINA - What was she giving herself? A Brazilian (bikini wax)?

(MRS. LETHOU enters sr running with her pant legs rolled up and wax paper all over her legs)

MRS. LETHOU – He's after me!

CASSANDRA, VERONICA and NINA – Who?

(AMOUX enters running on sr, but he is not running after MRS. LETHOU, but rather running from JAZZ, who enters sr followed by VERALL, ISAIAH, MR. LETHOU, MICHAEL, SAGE and MABEL who enter from various points on stage. AMOUX growls but is very afraid, staying close to the ground)

MRS. LETHOU – (Upon seeing JAZZ) Jazz! You're all right!

ISAIAH – Get him!

MR. LETHOU – Careful! Don't hurt the boy!

JAZZ – No! No! Leave him alone! You're scaring him! It's all right! He's with me!

SAGE – With you, Jazz? Who is he? Where did he come from?

JAZZ – (With AMOUX now surrounded, JAZZ tries to calm AMOUX down) Amoux. It's all right. It's okay. (AMOUX sits down quickly and crosses his legs and tightly clenches his sides, rocking back and forth. ISAIAH tries to approach and grab the boy, and AMOUX bites him)

ISAIAH – (In pain from the bite) Ahh! That devil!

JAZZ - I told you to leave him alone! (ISAIAH backs away, angrily. VERALL is fascinated by AMOUX, crouching down to observe the boy from a safe distance)

MABEL – (To JAZZ) Where did you find him?

JAZZ – We met in the forest.

CASSANDRA – How?

JAZZ – I don't remember it all. There were all these bright lights from the sky.

CASSANDRA – The Perseids!

JAZZ – (Shaking her head) They got lower and lower to the ground, then there were these strange women who just appeared out of nowhere.

MABEL – Women? There are others out here?

JAZZ – Yeah. They were dressed all in flowing white gowns.

VERALL – (Curious) White gowns?

MABEL – Ha! You're kidding, right? I mean, what were they doing? Re-enacting Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream"? (Laughs then realizes nobody is laughing with her. Slowly stops laughing and feels embarrassed) I wish I were dead right now.

VERALL – (To JAZZ) Were they with him?

JAZZ – I think they were, in a way. He doesn't speak.

MR. LETHOU – Mute? Is he deaf, too?

JAZZ – No, I don't think so. I tried English and French. It's like he's mute, but not really. I can't explain it, Dad. He seems to understand at least some of what I'm saying. (VERALL approaches AMOUX) I call him Amoux.

VERALL – (Approaching AMOUX) Êtes-vous Métis? Inuit? (AMOUX doesn't respond)

CASSANDRA – (To JAZZ) What did he say?

JAZZ – He asked if he was...

VERALL - Métis or Inuit, two Aboriginal communities nearby.

MR. LETHOU – What do you think, Verall? You’re the most familiar with this area. Are we dealing with some sort of boy raised in the wild, here?

SAGE – What? You mean like Tarzan?

MR. LETHOU – No, not like Tarzan, necessarily, but there have been similar cases reported over the years of young people who lived at least a good portion of their life in desolate woods or jungles.

VERALL – Oui. They survived a long time without any human contact.

MR. LETHOU - When they were found as adults they couldn’t relate to humans after become accustomed with their surroundings for so long.

VERALL – (Shakes his head) There seems to be something more going on here than that.

VERONICA – (To MABEL) Man, and there’s no way we can “tweat” anybody about this.

NINA – Is this some sort of put on? I mean, how do we know this hairy guy isn’t just pulling our leg or something?

MICHAEL – Why?

SAGE - What could he possibly gain from going through all of this?

MICHAEL – Yeah, you think he’s “punking” us or something?

NINA – Well, Mr. and Mrs. Lethou work for the government. Maybe he’s some sort of spy.

MRS. LETHOU – Oh, I don’t think so, Nina. None of our work is classified so I can’t see how important it would be to anyone.

MICHAEL – Yeah, Nina. Look at the poor guy. He’s not exactly James Bond.

NINA – Just remember, Michael, without me you’d be pretty creepy looking at those Selena Gomez concerts.

MICHAEL – I’m just saying he’s a pretty ratty looking spy if he is one.

NINA – That’s it, Michael! You asked for it.

MICHAEL – Asked for what?

NINA – You’ll see. (To the rest of the GROUP) Well I, for one, don’t want to be responsible for taking care of him.

JAZZ – No one is asking you to burp him, Nina.

NINA - Where are we supposed to keep him? Do we put a bowl of kibble out for him or what?

MICHAEL – (Getting an idea) I know! Duct tape. We need duct tape. (Wanders off)

MABEL – I’ll go get my fly swatter. (Wanders off)

(AMOUX watches the following exchange between CASSANDRA and SAGE)

CASSANDRA – (Concerned with what MICHAEL or MABEL may come up with, says to SAGE) Sage?

SAGE – (Understands, quickly yet gently strokes CASSANDRA’s hair and kisses her on the forehead) I know. I know. I’ll go stop them. (Shouts off to where MICHAEL and MABEL went) Michael! Mabel! (Exits)

ISAIAH – Verall, the boy is dangerous. We can’t keep him here. Others may come.

MRS. LETHOU – What “others”?

MR. LETHOU – You think there could be more like him around? That’s highly unlikely. (To VERALL) Uh, isn’t it?

VERALL – I am curious to know more about these women Jazidua said she saw.

JAZZ – I don’t know anymore about them. They just (begins to feel faint) just, appeared...(Leans on her mother’s shoulder)

MRS. LETHOU – (Supporting JAZZ) Jazz! Are you all right?

MR. LETHOU – She’s exhausted.

JAZZ – No. Just a little...tired. Long night. I’m sorry I took off like that. I’m sorry, Mom. Dad.

MR. LETHOU – (Hugging JAZZ) We understand, but you really should go lie down, sweetheart.

JAZZ – (Standing up straight) No. Really, I’m all right. Don’t want to leave Amoux.

ISAIAH – (Agitated) I’m telling you he will bring more wolves, Verall. Remember the legend.

VERALL – (Approaching ISAIAH) I thought you said it was just a silly Indian folk tale, Isaiah?

ISAIAH – (Angry) Damn you, Verall! (Comes up to AMOUX and grabs him) My family lost everything it had to those vermin! (AMOUX snarls at ISAIAH, staring at him fiercely)

VERALL – Isaiah!

JAZZ – No!

MR. LETHOU – Leave the boy alone! Now!

ISAIAH – (Slowly lets AMOUX go and backs away, threateningly) Fine. If you all want to believe in Indian legends, so be it. Then here's what I believe. I believe you are all being fooled (Pointing to AMOUX) by this...Coyote (pronounced ka-o-tee).

MRS. LETHOU – What?

ISAIAH – (To VERALL) Tell them!

VERALL - Coyote was an evil spirit who could take on different shapes and forms. In legend Coyote was responsible for the creation of sickness, sorrow, and death.

JAZZ – And you think Amoux is...?

CASSANDRA - Isaiah, you are starting to lose it big time.

ISAIAH - I won't let these demons take everything again. (Walks off)

CASSANDRA – Why is Isaiah so...

VERALL – (After a brief pause) Isaiah lost his wife and only son to an animal attack at his ranch in Ontario about seven years ago.

MRS. LETHOU – Oh no. How horrible.

MR. LETHOU – Was it wolves?

VERALL – He believes so, but the authorities never found any conclusive evidence. Mountain lions and coyotes were also seen in the area around the same time and the bite marks can all be quite similar.

(AMOUX sits back down on the ground and crosses his legs again rocking back and forth as before. JAZZ slowly approaches and sits down next to AMOUX. AMOUX looks at JAZZ and slowly stops rocking. He feels safe with her. JAZZ looks at AMOUX and smiles, gently brushing away some of his hair to the side, revealing more of his eyes. MR. and MRS. LETHOU move off to the side to speak to one another)

MR. LETHOU – What do you think?

MRS. LETHOU – She obviously trusts him, and he certainly doesn't seem to mean her any harm.

MR. LETHOU - (To VERALL and the OTHERS) Let's leave them be for now. We've all had a rough night. Let's get some food and rest and then maybe later on, once we're refreshed, we can figure out the best way to deal with this. Come on.

MRS. LETHOU – (To JAZZ) Jazz, honey. We're going back to the campsite.

JAZZ – I'll be there in a few minutes, Mom. I just want to make sure AMOUX will be all right.

MRS. LETHOU – Sure. We'll see you back at camp.

(The GROUP exits leaving JAZZ and AMOUX sitting together alone. LIGHTS DIM as scene TRANSITIONS to Act 3, Scene 5)

Act 3, Scene 5 - The Next Morning

(LIGHTS UP on the woods near the campsite the next morning. MR. LETHOU and SAGE are getting cleaned up with a makeshift trough full of water, shaving. MICHAEL shows up with a travel kit in hand. He is wearing shorts with waxing paper stuck to his legs. ALL have towels and T-shirts on. MR. LETHOU is wearing a robe. MICHAEL opens up the travel kit, taking out and hanging an ugly picture of stacked rocks upon a nearby tree. MICHAEL then begins washing up next to SAGE)

SAGE – What's that?

MICHAEL – What's what?

SAGE – The picture. What is that picture for?

MICHAEL – (Shrugs his shoulders as if it were obvious) Feng shui (pronounced fung-shway). (MICHAEL continues to clean up as SAGE just stares back and forth at MICHAEL and the picture for a moment)

SAGE – What’s that?

MICHAEL – What’s what? Wait. Didn’t we do this already?

MR. LETHOU – I think Sage meant your legs, Michael. On your legs. (MICHAEL looks down)

MICHAEL – (Realizing) Nina. She must have put this waxing stuff on me during the night. (Tries to remove it and can’t) Yeowch!

SAGE – My Uncle Tanner used to live on the farm with us, and he used to wax his eyebrows. (MICHAEL still working on the paper)

MR. LETHOU – Really?

SAGE - Yeah, they had a tendency to run together. Before he used to shave that little spot in between the two eyebrows, you know (Pointing to the spot on his own face) here? But all it did was make his face look unbalanced.

MR. LETHOU – He should have tried using propane like I did.

SAGE – Finally, it just hurt so much he decided to just leave the wax paper on there.

MICHAEL - On his eyebrows?

SAGE – Yeah. Said it was a good look for him.

MICHAEL – (Still trying to remove the paper) The joys of rural living. Didn’t I read an article about that in “Farm Life Magazine”? Yeowch! Forget it. Maybe it’ll just fall off.

SAGE – Yep. That’s what happened to Uncle Tanner’s eyebrows.

MICHAEL – (After a beat) Well that’s okay. I got something of Nina’s, as well. (SAGE begins to smell something)

SAGE – What’s that?

MICHAEL – What’s...(Stops short, annoyed) Look, I’m beginning to sense a theme here. Are we gonna do this all day?

SAGE – No, I mean what is that smell? (Sniffs MICHAEL) Is that, like, coming from you?

MICHAEL – Yeah. Why?

SAGE – You smell, I dunno, good?

MICHAEL – (Nervous) Come one step closer to me and I'll belt you.

SAGE – No. it's just that you smell like you're wearing some sort of cologne.

MR. LETHOU – I was thinking more like a car freshener. What is that? Fresh Alpine Scent?

SAGE – Crest toothpaste?

MICHAEL – No. It's my roll-on antiperspirant. It's called "Minty Maple Leaf". I forgot to pack my deodorant, so Nina let me borrow hers.

MR. LETHOU and SAGE – (Disgusted by the thought of them sharing deodorant) Eww.

NINA – (Shouting off stage) MICHAEL!!

MICHAEL – Okay, when I said "borrow" perhaps that wasn't the right word.

SAGE – So that's what you took...

NINA – (Shouting off stage) MICHAEL!!!

MICHAEL - Excuse me. (Picks up his stuff and begins to run, nearly knocking over VERALL who approaches the others with his shaving kit and a towel over his shoulder)

VERALL – Good morning. (MICHAEL continues running away. VERALL sees the ugly picture of stacked rocks) Ah. Feng Shui. (MICHAEL returns, grabs the picture off the tree and then exits. VERALL is amused) Ah, yes. This takes me back. It reminds me of when I used to go hiking with my grandfather many, many years ago.

SAGE – Oh, when did he pass away, Mr. Absolom?

VERALL – Pass away? No no. He's still alive.

SAGE – Oh. I see.

VERALL – He's 103 years old now, and every day he still goes out into the woods.

SAGE – That's pretty impressive.

VERALL – Yes. (Begins to shave) Most days the search parties are able to find him.

SAGE – (Stunned) I...uh...hmmmm.

CASSANDRA – Sage! Mr. Lethou! Isaiah has gone.

MR. LETHOU – What?

CASSANDRA – He’s packed up his stuff and has disappeared.

SAGE – Verall, did you see or hear him leave during the night?

VERALL – No, but if you’ll permit me, I’d like to celebrate the moment with a little dance. (Does a small jig in place)

CASSANDRA – It’s not funny. Jazz and Amoux are gone, as well.

MR. LETHOU – What? Jazz? Gone?

SAGE – Where did they go?

CASSANDRA – (To MR. LETHOU) Late last night I heard Jazz tell you that Amoux didn’t sleep all night.

MR. LETHOU – That’s right. Had to be about two thirty in the morning. Jazz said Amoux was curled up, trembling. We tried to give him a blanket to wrap himself in or to sleep on, but he wouldn’t take it.

SAGE – (Nodding) I remember how scared he seemed yesterday. He was definitely afraid of something (beat) or someone.

VERALL – (Nodding) Oui. Isaiah. Since the days when man and wolf first trusted each other, many things have changed. Isaiah fears Amoux, and the boy senses his fear.

MR. LETHOU – But Amoux is a man, not a wolf.

VERALL – Oui. So you say, but he follows the path of the wolf. He probably is moving away from camp to protect the girl so she won’t be hurt by Isaiah. That is how a male wolf protects his...well, his mate

SAGE – Whoa, dude. His what? Are you saying...

VERALL - Amoux is in love with the girl.

MR. LETHOU – That’s preposterous.

VERALL – I watched the two of them closely yesterday, as did you and your wife. You saw it, as well. There is definitely a bond between them.

CASSANDRA – He may be right. This morning Jazz said Amoux was getting farther away from the campsite, making his way toward the deep forest again. Jazz wanted to follow where he was headed, so she took her stuff and left.

MR. LETHOU – Alone? Again? I swear that girl is going to be grounded...

MRS. LETHOU – (Approaching) She’s an adult, dear. She’s too big to ground and old enough to make up her own mind.

MR. LETHOU – Did you know about this?

MRS. LETHOU – (Nodding) I saw her leave.

MR. LETHOU – Did she take her medication?

MRS. LETHOU – (Shaking her head) She hasn’t been taking it for a few days, dear. Not since we arrived. Just the inhaler.

MR. LETHOU – But...

MRS. LETHOU - It makes her too weak and nauseous and she didn’t want that for this trip. (MR. LETHOU looks sternly at MRS. LETHOU) She knew you’d be upset that’s why she asked me not to tell you.

MR. LETHOU – (Irrked) Great. Just great.

SAGE – What medication is she taking?

MR. LETHOU – Several meds, mostly containing mesalamine.

SAGE - Mesa- what? What’s that?

CASSANDRA – Mesalamine. They use that in meds for people suffering from COPD.

SAGE – Oh, great. That clears things up. Now just tell me what COPD is.

MR. LETHOU – (Nodding) Well, Jazz was fine up until about a year ago then she began to have some problems breathing.

MRS. LETHOU – The doctors found she had developed chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD. There were days she could hardly breathe.

CASSANDRA – (To SAGE) COPD is like having emphysema and bronchitis both at the same time.

SAGE – (After a beat, realizes) Lung disease?

MR. LETHOU – Yes, degenerative and advanced.

MRS. LETHOU - Usually it's found in older people or people who smoked over a number of years. It's very rare to find it in a child.

MR. LETHOU - But it is a progressive disease and gets much worse over time.

MRS. LETHOU - Jazz had to have surgery just before she started college this past year.

SAGE – I didn't know she was sick.

CASSANDRA – Neither did I. She never let on.

MRS. LETHOU – She didn't tell her boyfriend, either. She didn't want anyone to know.

SAGE – Why not?

MRS. LETHOU - She didn't want any special treatment. She just wanted to continue on as long as she could.

CASSANDRA – What do you mean as long as...

MRS. LETHOU – Jazz...is dying, kids. (MR. LETHOU turns away. CASSANDRA and SAGE are stunned by the news)

SAGE – (After a beat) How long...?

MR. LETHOU – (Shaking her head) Not long. She was hoping to make it through the next year, but the doctors broke the news to us that she had very little time left.

MRS. LETHOU – That's the real reason for this trip. You see, she wanted to spend this time with her family and friends before...well, until she wouldn't be able.

MR. LETHOU – (Turning back) When were you going to tell me she was gone?

MRS. LETHOU – I was coming to tell you now. Only I didn't know about Mr. Karlitis. (To VERALL) Do you think they're in any danger, Verall?

VERALL – (Nodding) Isaiah is a huntsman. and is obsessed with the wolf boy. The legend frightens him, and when fear takes hold of a hunter, no one is safe.

MRS. LETHOU – Darling, if harms either of them...

MR. LETHOU – Verall, you, me and my wife will go after them.

VERALL – I need to get something first. I'll meet you over by the path. (Exits)

MR. LETHOU - Sage, you coordinate with the others. Pack everything up and then follow along after us. Grab our gear, would you?

SAGE – Sure thing. Don't worry about it. We'll take care of it.

MR. LETHOU - Cassandra, do you think we should be able to follow along the same way they went?

CASSANDRA – I think so.

MRS. LETHOU – (To MR. LETHOU) Remember, honey, Jazz never gets lost. She's smart, and she knows how to mark a path. (Touches his face) She'll be all right.

MR. LETHOU – (Hold her hand, then, after a beat, smiles at her) I know. (Nodding) Good. All right. Come on. (To SAGE) Catch up with us as soon as you can. (MR. and MRS. LETHOU exit off right)

CASSANDRA – I can't believe that about Jazz. I had no idea. Oh, Sage. (Hugs SAGE for a moment then pulling away) I better get Mabel and Veronica.

SAGE – Sure. I'll get Michael.

CASSANDRA – Oh, I just saw him on the ground.

SAGE – On the ground?

CASSANDRA – Yeah. Nina was on top of him beating him senseless. She was yelling something about a "minty maple leaf"?

(There is the sound of wax paper being torn off somebody's legs. In the distance we hear MICHAEL's blood-curdling scream)

MICHAEL – (Offstage) Yeowch!!!

SAGE – (Nodding to CASSANDRA) True love. (SAGE exits right. CASSANDRA moves left over to MABEL who is sitting next to VERONICA. VERALL is searching through ISAIAH's backpack. MABEL is drying her hair with a converted water bottle shaped battery-operated blow dryer, and telling VERONICA a spooky story)

MABEL – So there we were, out in the middle of nowhere. My battery-operated GPS tracking device busted, its insides covered in honey. My camera phone had a full memory card and there was NO signal.

VERONICA – Oh, no! So you couldn't even contact your service provider to increase your digital memory?

MABEL – That's right.

VERONICA – How horrible! Email? (MABEL shakes her head) Text? (MABEL shakes her head, VERONICA gasps) No! I'd just die.

MABEL – I'm telling you it was worse than the blue screen of death.

VERONICA – Talk about roughing it.

CASSANDRA – Come on, you two. We need to find Mabel and Amoux. There's trouble.

VERONICA – What kind of trouble, Cass?

CASSANDRA – I'll explain on the way. Help me pack up. (THEY begin gathering up their gear. VERALL passes by CASSANDRA to exit sr when she turns to him and asks) Did you find what you were looking for?

VERALL – (Turns and shows he is holding a pistol in his hand) Yes. But unfortunately so did Isaiah. We brought two of these with us. I could only find one.

CASSANDRA – Guns? What are you doing with guns here? Aren't we supposed to be using your "wilderness tools"?

VERALL – These aren't mine. They are Isaiah's. He brings them in case of an emergency.

CASSANDRA – Great. Now he is the emergency. (LIGHTS DIM as scene TRANSITIONS to Act 3, Scene 6)

Act 3, Scene 6 - Same Day, Hours Later

(Hours later. AMOUX runs on stage and hides behind one of the trees. JAZZ appears several beats behind him, out of breath, and tries to coax him out of hiding)

JAZZ – Amoux, please come out. It's been hours and I can't keep up anymore. Look, it's all right. It's just me. Please...show yourself. I'm...(JAZZ nearly faints as AMOUX approaches her from the trees. AMOUX catches JAZZ as she starts to fall. AMOUX lowers JAZZ to the ground so she can catch her breath. Very weak) I'll be okay. Just need to...rest...for a moment. (Begins to blackout. AMOUX, not knowing what to do, remembers the earlier exchange between SAGE and CASSANDRA. He begins mimicking their affection by gently stroking JAZZ's face and then kisses her on the forehead. JAZZ awakens and reaches up to AMOUX's face. JAZZ kisses AMOUX. AMOUX slowly stands above JAZZ with his back to the rear of the stage, just as ISAIAH appears. ISAIAH holds out his gun and aims it at AMOUX and JAZZ. NINA and MICHAEL appear from sr)

NINA – Isaiah! Stop! (ISAIAH fires the gun at AMOUX who falls to the ground, then ISAIAH points the gun at NINA. Just as ISAIAH fires again, MICHAEL pushes NINA away)

MICHAEL – Watch out! (MICHAEL is shot in the leg and collapses. There is a screaming sound, and NINA turns to see that it is not coming from MICHAEL but rather ISAIAH, who turns to reveal an arrow sticking out of his side. He slowly falls to the ground, dying. From behind ISAIAH emerges SAGE with bow and arrow. SAGE overlooks ISAIAH. SAGE takes the gun away)

SAGE – (Softly, not knowing what to say to ISAIAH) I-I...I'm sorry, Isaiah.

ISAIAH – (Struggling to speak) I told you...I told you you'd do better next...time. (ISAIAH dies. From behind SAGE emerges CASSANDRA, VERONICA and MABEL. From sr emerges MR. and MRS. LETHOU with VERALL. VERALL approaches NINA and MICHAEL)

NINA – He's all right. (VERALL and MR. and MRS. LETHOU cross to AMOUX and JAZZ. SAGE, CASSANDRA, VERONICA and MABEL also come ds. MICHAEL sits up) Michael, you pushed me out of the way. You saved me. You really are my hero. After all the arguments, the name calling...

MICHAEL – The waxing. Don't forget the waxing. (Smiling) But hey, you're still my girl, right? (Feeling the pain) Ouch!

NINA – Oh, Michael. (Hugs MICHAEL again and kisses him on the nose) You still amuse me.

MICHAEL – Aw, and I know you never mean half those awful things you say to me. (No response from NINA) Right? (No response) Right?

NINA – Yeah. Right. Sure. (Hugs MICHAEL again hard) Oh, I'm just so glad you're okay.

MR. LETHOU – (After examining AMOUX and JAZZ) My God. They're both...dead.

MRS. LETHOU – No! Not my Jazz! Not her! Not her! (Grabs JAZZ and holds her tight)

MR. LETHOU – (Stunned) I guess it was all just too much. (Upset) Her lungs just finally gave out. (Holds JAZZ with his wife. Bright flashing lights are seen on stage again as the WOODLAND PRIESTESSES emerge through the forest trees)

SAGE – (Sees the WOODLAND PRIESTESSES appear, their gowns gently flowing in the breeze with their arms outstretched as the wind slowly picks up) What is that?

MR. LETHOU – (Amazed at the sight) Verall! Who are they?

VERALL – (After a beat, shrugging shoulders) Beats me.

SAGE and CASSANDRA – What?

MR. LETHOU – You mean there isn't some sort of Indian legend tied to them?

VERALL – (Slowly) Not a damn thing that I know of. (After a beat) Unless... Kechemunedo? The spirit walkers!

MRS. LETHOU – What?

VERALL – (Comprehends) Oui. Kechemunedo. The Sky People. Yes. Yes! They have sent these woodland priestesses as a way of restoring the balance of nature here. (Looks at AMOUX, who slowly begins to stir and rise)

CASSANDRA – Look at Amoux! He's getting up!

MR. LETHOU – But he was dead. Nobody could survive a gun shot like that.

(AMOUX slowly continues to rise and then moves toward the WOODLAND PRIESTESSES, standing in formation with them. The wind picks up slightly)

AMOUX and WOODLAND PRIESTESSES – (Calling out) It is time.

VERALL - Yes. Now I understand.

SAGE – Understand what?

VERALL – It is the boy. Amoux is not Coyote, as Isaiah feared. He is the alpha male.

MABEL – The alpha male?

CASSANDRA – You mean the one who passed through the portal?

VERALL – Yes! (VERALL crosses to MRS. LETHOU who stands by JAZZ)

WOODLAND PRIESTESS # 1 – (Calling out) It is time.

VERALL - (With a revelation) It is she! She is the one. Jazidua is the spirit child of the alpha female. (To MRS. LETHOU) Hers is the spirit destined to be joined with that of the alpha male.

WOODLAND PRIESTESS # 2 - She is the one.

WOODLAND PRIESTESS # 3 – She must join with Amoux.

MRS. LETHOU – (Calling out the PRIESTESSES) No! I'm not ready to let her go.

VERALL – (To ALL) But don't you see? They will go and together with the woodland priestesses the balance will be restored. Her spirit lives forever.

WOODLAND PRIESTESS # 3 - Wolves will return.

WOODLAND PRIESTESS # 4 - They will propagate...

WOODLAND PRIESTESS # 2 – ...And prosper once more...

WOODLAND PRIESTESS # 1 - ...And life will begin anew.

WOODLAND PRIESTESSES - Trees will be green once again. Animals will not overrun and raze the land.

MICHAEL – (Leaning on NINA) Whoa! Wait a minute, Verall. Isn't there some sort of online dating service wolf spirits could use instead?

MR. LETHOU – This can't be. It's not possible. Some sort of hoax.

VERALL – How can you doubt your own eyes? Remember all that we've experienced and seen since coming here.

AMOUX and WOODLAND PRIESTESSES – (Calling out again as the wind picks up more) It is time.

MRS. LETHOU – Honey, look at them. Can you offer any scientific explanation for what we're witnessing? I'm a scientist, too, and I certainly can't explain it.

MR. LETHOU – Some sort of trickery, perhaps? I don't know.

VERALL – It is no trick. Amoux has come home and now seeks the spirit of his alpha female.

(JAZZ's lifeless body moves by AMOUX's feet)

MRS. LETHOU – Look! Jazz!

MR. LETHOU – Oh My God!

CASSANDRA - She's not dead.

VERONICA - She's moving! (JAZZ starts to get up, slowly)

MR. LETHOU – How can...? She had no heartbeat. No pulse. (JAZZ stands up and slowly crosses to stand next to AMOUX between the four PRIESTESSES) I am a scientist, Verall. This goes against all laws of physics.

VERALL – It is not about physics. It's about the spirit.

VERONICA – (To CASSANDRA and SAGE) Wow. I wonder what Wikipedia would say about this?

JAZZ, AMOUX and WOODLAND PRIESTESSES – (Calling out once more as the wind picks up more) It is time.

MRS. LETHOU – (Reaching out to JAZZ) Jazidua...

JAZZ – (Calling out) Don't be troubled! This is the way it's supposed to be! I love you! I love you all!

MR. LETHOU – (Watching his daughter as JAZZ joins hands with AMOUX) Jazz! (To MRS. LETHOU) This can't be happening. It isn't logical.

MRS. LETHOU – (Understanding, gently puts a hand up to her husband's face) It's not about logic. It's about faith.

MR. LETHOU – Faith? In this?

MRS. LETHOU – No. Faith in our daughter. (Holds MR. LETHOU's hand tightly as they ALL watch JAZZ, AMOUX and the WOODLAND PRIESTESSES slowly disappear into the woods. As the last person exits, the wind subsides and there is the sound of a distant wolf's cry heard. Then, there is a long silence. SAGE and CASSANDRA join MR. and MRS. LETHOU)

CASSANDRA – Jazz. (To the LETHOUS) I'm sorry.

SAGE – I wish there was something we could have done.

MR. LETHOU – No. This was the way it had to be. (Looks at MRS. LETHOU for a beat) I know that now.

VERONICA – What do we do?

SAGE – Nina, Veronica, Mabel. You three help Michael back to camp. Verall and I will take care of Isaiah. Cassandra, will you...?

CASSANDRA – (Somberly) I'll stay with the Lethous. We'll meet you back at the camp site.
(CASSANDRA exits with MR. and MRS. LETHOU)

NINA – (To MABEL and VERONICA, who help to steady MICHAEL) How are we going to explain this all to the police?

VERONICA – How am I going to explain this all to Meier? While this would make a great story for him, I don't think he'd believe it.

MICHAEL – I'm not even sure I believe it myself.

NINA – Woodland priestesses, hundred year old spirits, Indian gods, wolf people, what's not to believe? (MABEL, VERONICA, MICHAEL and NINA exit)

SAGE – (Heading up to pick up ISAIAH's body) Verall, they will be okay, won't they?

VERALL – (Nodding) My people believe in brotherhood with the wolf, Sage, and that in all things nature finds a way.

SAGE – But Jazz...

VERALL – (Smiling) She is where she is supposed to be. What happened here just now was predestined long ago by nature. If you want to honor her memory, come back in a few years to see how nature has been restored here.

SAGE – But these wolves. They were wiped out once before. What's to keep it from happening again?

VERALL – Sage, that moment when the first wolf stepped into the circle of fear and the light cast by man has been lost in time. Perhaps it won't be today or tomorrow, but soon, soon...(Looks at SAGE and smiles, putting his hand on SAGE's shoulder) Well, I can dream, can't I? (SAGE and VERALL stand over the body of ISAIAH as lights fade. During the prolonged darkness, eyes can be seen peering out of the dark woods as the sounds of multiple wolves is heard)

(Blackout)

THE END