

The Story Eaters

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Abstract

The Geological Survey of Canada (GSC) and its anthropology department had a significant role in constructing representations of indigeneity in the early twentieth century. Originally tasked with furthering knowledge of Canada's natural resources, the GSC's move to create an anthropology department in 1910 marked a new chapter in the national organization's advancement of settler-colonialism. My creative research project, *The Story Eaters*, is a novel that explores the ongoing impact of anthropological archives and narratives on mixed-blood Indigenous people. The story moves back and forth between 1924 and 2024 as genealogist Leor St. Onge attempts to uncover what happened to a Geological Survey of Canada ethnographer who disappeared in 1924, shortly after photographing her great-grandparents in Sept-Îles, Québec. As she grapples with a series of strange encounters and a frustrating lack of answers in the archives, she is forced to find a different way to make sense of the past. In exploring archival research and the history of anthropology in Canada, the novel confronts the following questions: What impact do anthropological ideas of authenticity have on mixed-blood indigenous identity? How does colonization shape the archival records available? And how do the resulting archival gaps and failings influence the stories we tell ourselves about history and our relation to it?

Dedication

For all the mixed-blood people who feel that they are not enough. May we find fullness.

May we find home.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
The Story Eaters.....	34
Works Cited.....	235
Archives Used in <i>The Story Eaters</i>	241
Curriculum Vitae	

Introduction

Mixed-bloods, Museums, and the Struggle of Homecoming

in *The Story Eaters*

What impact do archives have on Indigenous mixed-blood identity? How does colonization shape the archival records available? And how do the resulting archival gaps and failings influence the stories we tell ourselves about history and our relation to it? *The Story Eaters* is a novel that grapples with these questions. To fully understand the relationship between archives and identity, we must first understand the way that the Canadian legal system has constructed and controlled Indigenous identity to advance settler-colonialism and the ongoing impact this has had on Indigenous peoples in Canada.

The Legislation and Reclamation of Indigenous Identity in Canada

The Canadian government has long had a vested interest in regulating Indigenous identity. While early government policy relating to Indigenous peoples was rooted in land negotiations and accruing land for the Crown (*Constitution Act, 1867*), over time the government focused on enfranchisement and assimilating and relocating Indigenous people to urban centers as a means of reducing the number of Indigenous people and freeing up land for settler occupation (*The Indian Act, 1876*). For Indigenous peoples, enfranchisement meant that by participating in Canadian society they lost their Indian status and any of the rights that went along with it. Enfranchisement could be voluntary—Indigenous men were able to apply for enfranchisement and receive an

allotment of land in return—but when there seemed to be little interest in this, enfranchisement became compulsory (Joseph 27-8). At first it was compulsory for Indigenous people who got university degrees or became clergymen, but eventually compulsory enfranchisement was built into the Indian Act. Under Section 12 of the 1951 *Indian Act*, Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men faced compulsory enfranchisement. This section of the Indian Act led to generations of Indigenous peoples losing or not being eligible for Indian status. It was not until the passage of Bill C-31 in 1985 that this compulsory enfranchisement was lifted for Indigenous women (Joseph 27-30).

Nearly 150 years since its inception, the Indian Act remains the central legal framework for the government’s dealings with Indigenous peoples in Canada. This is particularly significant because the Indian Act outlines who is and is not eligible to be federally recognized as an Indigenous person and to receive Indian status. Sébastien Grammond in his book *Identity Captured by Law* notes that “From the outset, the Indian Act employed descent as the main criterion of transmission of Indian status” (85). In effect, such membership criterion privileged “pure” bloodlines, implying that mixed-blood is fractional or diluted and thereby inferior and not Indigenous enough. The Indian Act profoundly impacts Indigenous identity in Canada because it defines who is and is not entitled to claim Indian Status. As evidenced by Section 12 of the 1951 *Indian Act* and the compulsory enfranchisement of Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men, such definitions have been based largely on gender and bloodlines and privilege the “full blooded” or “pure blooded” person, implying that “Indianness” is quantifiable and that one person can be more Indigenous than another (Allen, Strong and Van Winkle,

Schneider). Governmentally-defined identity categories based on blood quantum such as Status Indian, Non-Status Indian, and Métis were designed to bring about the eventual diminishment of the Native race and to encourage assimilation, both culturally and racially (King, Heiss). In her ground-breaking book *Beyond Blood: Rethinking Indigenous Identity*, Pamela Palmater highlights that “Registration as an Indian has become a significant part of Indigenous identity on an individual and communal level, despite our best efforts at maintaining our cultural identities. An individual’s proof of Indian status more often than not equates with that individual’s acceptance by others as being truly Indigenous” (19).

It is in this idea of being “truly Indigenous” and the resulting impact of Indian status on community, social acceptance, and feelings of worthiness and belonging that I am interested. As a mixed-blood person who became eligible for Indian status under Bill C-31, my feelings about applying for status have always been ambiguous. I know that it would feel validating to have status, and that very fact makes me resistant to apply because in reality nothing about me would change by having that plastic card in my wallet. Yet I know that inside of me, a lot would change. As a mixed-blood person who has grown up far from Uashat-Maliothenam, the community my father comes from, who additionally has had little access to cultural knowledge or Innu-aimun (the Innu language), I find it hard to feel like I am Indigenous enough. And it would be easy to apply for status, get my card, and finally feel accepted, to be legally and socially *recognized* as an Indigenous person. But I refuse to base my sense of self on that card. I refuse to apply for status. And as a result, I have had to seek out other avenues of connection.

I know that I am not alone in my experience of feeling not Indigenous enough. In her book on urban mixed-blood identity in Canada, *“Real” Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood*, Bonita Lawrence explains that many mixed-blood Indigenous people who live in large cities, live everyday “where Nativeness is considered extinct, and is recognized only as a fleeting, primordial essence, and where an Otherness that is mixed-blood or urban *cannot* be recognized” (9). Lawrence emphasizes the fact that stereotypical ideas of what a “real Indian” is still dominate in urban centers across the country and are often internalized by Indigenous people. Compounding this, mixed-blood people often have a variety of experiences of Indigeneity depending on how Indigenous they look to others:

For mixed-bloods who look white, the consensus from the non-Native society that for them to in any way actualize their Indigenous heritage would be ‘inauthentic’ and false—or indeed, even ‘appropriative’—works as a constant drain on their sense of self-worth.

Most urban mixed-bloods have therefore had to contend, at some point in their lives, with the fact that they do not fit the models of what has been held up to them—by whites—as authentic Nativeness. The response of many individuals has been to struggle to measure up to the images before them and to feel their identities tainted and diminished because they cannot be the ‘real Indians’ they feel they are supposed to be. (135)

Sadly, it is not only non-Native people who hold these ideas of authenticity; many Indigenous people have internalized these ideas of Indigeneity and judge themselves and

each other accordingly. This is one of the many ways that colonization continues to disempower Indigenous people.

The question of Indigenous identity and the correlating problem of authenticity are symptoms of colonization. As Bonita Lawrence explains,

The question Who is an Indian? in North America begins with the colonial project of land theft and regulation of Native identity, either through direct legislation such as the Indian Act (in Canada) or as part of the process of privatization and selling off of reservation land, both before and during the allotment era in the United States. At present formal regulation of Native identity in Canada and the United States must be seen as having an overarching primary goal: to set the legal parameters by which Indigenousness can be said to be eliminated. (Lawrence 16)

Resisting legislated identity categories and claiming our hereditary Indigenous identities in spite of hegemonic conceptions of authenticity and blood quantum are essential for the future of Indigenous people on this continent. Leor, the protagonist in *The Story Eaters*, struggles to overcome inherited colonial ideas of Indigeneity. Throughout the novel, she confronts the dominant belief that Indigenous authenticity lies in “pure”, “undiluted” blood. Because she is a mixed-blood person, this ideology disinherits her from her Indigeneity and leads her to reflect on the ways in which her body connects her to her ancestors.

A growing number of texts by Métis and mixed-blood Indigenous people are reclaiming Indigenous identity by writing characters who connect to traditional culture and ancestry in ways that defy the lineage-based exclusionary system of the Indian Act. Mixed-blood authors such as Mihku Paul, Louise Erdrich, and Drew Hayden Taylor, as

well as Métis authors such as Gregory Scofield, Cherie Dimaline, Marie Clements, and Katherena Vermette have written about the experience of being mixed-blood people and the complicated relationships that develop to one's community, one's sense of self, and one's sense of belonging and self-worth. Though both mixed-blood and Métis people have mixed heritage, their experiences of indigeneity often differ. While Métis people are recognized as a distinct cultural group with legislated rights and distinct membership criteria, other mixed-blood people often have more tenuous connections to indigeneity. Through poetry, fiction, and playwrighting, contemporary mixed-blood Indigenous writers are able to overcome these colonial and exclusionary identity categories by tapping into a bodily, ancestral, and cultural connection that undermines legislated identity categories based on lineage and colonial conceptions of Indian blood. By representing the mixed-blood body as a site of both genetic and cultural connection to ancestry, traditional culture, and history, Indigenous authors are able to resist the narrow identity categories set up by the Indian Act, which are based solely on lineage and blood quantum, creating more flexible definitions of Indigenous identity and belonging that undermine this colonial legislation of Indigenous bodies and bloodlines. For example, in Cherie Dimaline's novel *Red Rooms* and in Katherena Vermette's graphic novel series *A Girl Called Echo*, the mixed-blood body is a site of genetic and cultural connection to the present and to the ancestral past and defies the Indian Act's privileging of descent, expanding Indigenous identity to focus on cultural inclusivity rather than on genetics and blood quantum. Both authors explore characters who are disconnected from their families, cultures, communities, and histories. In Vermette's series, as Echo learns about Métis history in school, her ancestral memory allows her to time travel and experience

that history firsthand. As she learns to hone this new skill, she meets more of her ancestors, developing a deep connection and bond with them, fostering a greater sense of self and well-being. She comes to know who she is by knowing herself in relation to them. Similarly, in Dimaline's *Red Rooms*, the character referred to simply as "the girl," overcomes her sense of disconnection through ancestral memory—visions and dreams that remind her of who she is and where she comes from. For these characters, it is in becoming aware of their connections to ancestry that they are able to begin to heal from the disconnection they experience.

The choice to focus on the body as a site of cultural connection resists the legalized, and often exclusionary, identity categories set up by the Indian Act and instead privileges a more Indigenous concept of relationality. Grammond argues that identity categories based solely on lineage may likely have been contrary to traditional First Nations membership practices. He writes

The emphasis on ancestry was apparently not a feature of traditional indigenous societies. As anthropologist James Clifton says, "no native North American society subscribed to the idea of biological determination of identity and behavior ... they stressed as criteria of group membership learned aspects of human nature: language, culturally appropriate behavior, social affiliation, and loyalty." [...] indigenous societies did not classify persons into discrete categories but, rather, recognized the interconnectedness of all human beings. (78)

While this may be a Pan-Indian generalization, it highlights the fact that the membership criteria that the government set up through the Indian Act did not accord with the systems of cultural and ethnic membership that Indigenous groups traditionally had in place. As

Palmer stresses, the basis of Indigenous identity lies not in blood quantum but in connection—connection to ancestry, communities, and future generations (218).

Focusing on relationality over blood quantum offers a more decolonial construction of Indigenous identity.

Inherent in the identity debate are assumptions about authenticity that are rooted in colonialism. As Maximilian Forte notes in the introduction to *Who Is an Indian?*, “the question of ‘who is an Indian’ very often resolves into ‘who is a *real* Indian,’ thereby introducing various categories of unauthorized indigeneity, or non-recognizable ‘Indians,’ which also implies that the nearly divine intercession of some higher authority must be needed to put the debate to rest (6-7). Forte goes on to note that “When studying the question of “who is an Indian” further, we need to inquire into who is asking and why, and why some answers have been institutionalized and others marginalized. Simply asking the question renders Indigenous identity open to question, and often the questioner is removed from scrutiny” (7). If the question “who is an Indian” inevitably resolves Indigenous identity into a real/fake dichotomy, what criteria is used to determine who is a real Indian and who is not? More often than not, the criteria that is used is one based on colonial identity categories such as the Indian Act. While false identity claims are deeply problematic, the resultant policing of identity and the need to prove oneself can negatively impact mixed-blood people who often already feel that they are not Indigenous enough. The term “pretendian” can trigger mixed-blood people who themselves feel like imposters even when they have real and documentable connections to bloodlines and communities. Because colonial ideas of authenticity and popular representations of Indigeneity are deeply internalized by Indigenous people, many find

themselves struggling to feel Indigenous enough. Additionally, there are many justifiable reasons why a person's claims to be Indigenous may be real yet unverifiable. For example, someone who experienced the 60s scoop may not know who their parents are. How are they to identify as part of a community if band membership is considered the necessary proof of connection? Verifying identity is complicated and needs to consider the various familial, historical, and political situations that impact the ways in which people are (and sometimes are not) connected to communities. In fact, relying on band membership disadvantages non-status Indigenous people, particularly urban non-status people who account for a significant portion of the Indigenous population in North America. It is important to think carefully about what types of proof are required because many of these (including band membership) are based on colonial systems and are not applicable to every situation. Given the current state of identity politics, it is important to explore and express the many ways in which Indigenous people are and are not connected to their families, communities, histories, languages, and cultures. This dissertation reflects my experience with connection, disconnection, and finding a sense of belonging. It is not reflective of all Indigenous experiences though some might find similarities with their own experiences.

While legal definitions of Indigenous identity categorize the mixed-blood body as diminished, as a means to eliminate Indigenous peoples, mixed-blood authors focus on the ways that the body connects them to their histories and ancestries. Often writers use the body as a source of cultural connection to undermine the identity categories set up by governments. Many Indigenous cultures teach that ancestral memories are carried in the body (Kim Anderson). Founded on traditional beliefs, blood memory challenges and

resists imperialist conceptions of “Indian Blood.” For instance, in their essay “‘Indian Blood’: Reflections on the Reckoning and Refiguring of Native North American Identity,” Pauline Turner Strong and Barrick Van Winkle examine how blood memory works in N. Scott Momaday’s writing:

though at times it is located more imprecisely in a person’s “genes or his blood or wherever,” and is characterized as “imagination” rather than “recollection,” or as “cultural” rather than “racial” [...] Momaday’s use of blood imagery aims not to differentiate but to relate; not to administer but to imagine; not to impose quantified identities upon others but to make sense of the intersubjective quality of his own experience; not to appropriate the land of others but to appropriate the experiences of his own ancestors. (562)

For Momaday, and for many Indigenous authors, the body is a site of connection, a place where the past, present, and future converge. By focusing on their bodily connection to ancestry, these authors resist legislated identity categories that are designed to dispossess them of their Indigeneity. In her poem “Cheeky Moon,” Annharte highlights the danger of termination inherent in hegemonic conceptions of ‘Indian Blood’ when she writes “I’m left to defend / one lonely drop of blood. / I might terminate / if I get nosebleed” (69). Her poem “destabilizes the concept of ‘Indian Blood’ by taking it literally” (Strong and Van Winkle 552). Blood memory, dreams, visions, and intuition are all ways of exploring the relationship between the body, time, and ancestry. *The Story Eaters* examines how representations of the body can subvert colonial constructions of Indigenous identity that are based on what David Schneider calls “the perverse arithmetic of blood mixture” that functions as a discourse of oppression and exclusion (554). Leor’s

intuition while working in the archives and her focus on her genetic connection to her ancestry resist the discourse of authenticity and the privileging of pure-blood that she is surrounded by in her archival research.

Métis and mixed-blood literatures in particular challenge such hegemonic conceptions of “Indian Blood” because such quantifications of identity often exclude Métis and mixed-blood people from being able to experience a sense of tribal or racial belonging. Such exclusion tends to be less acute for “full-blooded” First Nations people. Marilyn Dumont’s poem “Leather and Naughahyde” explores the complex relationship between the body and authenticity: “I say I’m Métis like it’s an apology and he says, ‘mmh,’ like he forgives me, like he’s got a big heart and mine’s pumping diluted blood [...] he’s got ‘this look,’ that says he’s leather and I’m naughahyde” (58). By likening ‘full’ or ‘pure blood’ to leather and mixed or ‘diluted’ blood to naughahyde, Dumont voices the assumptions of artificiality and un-authenticity that many Métis people experience on a daily basis.

It is important that the concept of Indian blood be reconfigured in Indigenous terms through blood memory and other Indigenous conceptions of embodiment. As Bonita Lawrence argues, “The manner in which the Canadian government’s regulation of Native identity has become deeply internalized, by Aboriginal people as well as by members of the dominant culture, severely restricts the kind of future we are capable of imagining” (18). Indeed, this is evidenced by the fact that even in Indigenous speculative fiction—in which lies the possibility of imagining a future beyond colonization—conflict over identity, bloodlines, and kinship continue to be pervasive in Indigenous communities and families. Several stories in *Love After the End: An Anthology of Two-*

Spirit and Indigiqueer Speculative Fiction examine identity; in Kai Minosh Pyle’s “How to Survive the Apocalypse for Native Girls,” surviving the apocalypse involves Nigig, the narrator, not only surviving “the hungry years” but also surviving as a mixed-blood person when the kinship system of their community does not recognize or accept them. Resisting and reconfiguring colonial identity categories that define mixed-blood people as culturally and genetically inferior and inauthentic is essential to the survival and continuation of Indigenous people. As Lawrence argues:

In a sense, when urban mixed-bloods begin to take their Native heritage seriously, what is really meant is that they are taking cultural genocide seriously—both in terms of the phenomenal pressures that most urban mixed-blood families have faced historically to minimize, deny, and in every way virtually eradicate their Indianness and the absolutely unchallenged everyday assumptions permeating the dominant culture that Indianness will *continue* to die with mixed-bloodedness and urbanity. (12)

By redefining urban Indigenous and mixed-blood identity from an Indigenous perspective, contemporary Indigenous authors open new possibilities for future understandings and definitions of Indigenous identity. And in doing so, they offer urban Indigenous and mixed-blood readers a sense of belonging through the realization that the body’s inherent connection to home, culture, and ancestry is something that no law or imposed identity category can diminish. For Leor, who, throughout *The Story Eaters*, experiences various types of disconnection and unhomeliness, it is through her bodily connection to her family and the stories that she constructs about the past, stories that she

is able to put something of herself into, that allow her to feel a sense of home and belonging.

Archives and Authenticity

The Geological Survey of Canada (GSC) has played a particularly significant role in shaping past and present conceptions of “Indianness,” authenticity, and Indigenous identity in Canada. Founded in 1842, the organization was tasked with furthering knowledge of Canada’s natural resources. The GSC’s move to create an anthropology department in 1910 marked a new chapter in the national organization’s advancement of settler colonialism. The subsequent relocation to the Victoria Memorial Museum in 1911 allowed for the display and exhibition of the GSC’s anthropological collection. Rooted in the widely held belief at the time that Indigenous people were a vanishing race, the GSC’s anthropology department sought to preserve the vanishing Indian by sending ethnographers on extensive field expeditions across the country, with the goal of building a vast collection of Indigenous cultural items to be displayed in the nation’s capital. The *1908 Geological Survey of Canada Summary Report* demonstrates that the “vanishing race” mentality was a key argument in justifying the addition of the anthropology division as well as in legitimizing the work of collecting Indigenous artifacts. The Director at the time, R. W. Brock, writes: “the native is disappearing, or coming under the influence of the white man’s civilization. [...] If the information concerning the native races is ever to be secured and preserved, action must be taken very soon, or it will be too late” (9). With this sense of urgency and purpose, the GSC began its campaign to “secure and preserve” Indigenous cultures by embarking on numerous anthropological

and ethnographical field expeditions across the country and gathering stories, photographs, artifacts, and skulls for study and display.

GSC anthropologists practiced salvage ethnography in their efforts to preserve Indigenous cultures. Salvage ethnography is a type of anthropology prevalent in the 19th and early-20th-centuries concerned with preserving cultures believed to be on the brink of extinction. Coined by James Clifford, the term describes a type of anthropology

concerned with the last-gasp salvaging of the cultures and material culture of ‘primitive’ peoples, whose ‘traditional’ ways of life must soon inevitably be destroyed by the progress of the white man. The salvage paradigm placed ‘primitive’ peoples back along a linear timescale predicated on post-Enlightenment notions of the progress of social evolution, with modern ‘western’ culture as its apotheosis. It has been argued that the salvage paradigm robs these Other peoples of their own complex and ever-changing histories. (Whitehead 216)

As the Canadian government was finetuning and implementing the legal framework it had created to get rid of what Duncan Campbell Scott called “the Indian problem,” the GSC ethnographers were travelling coast to coast to preserve what they could of the Indigenous cultures that the government was actively trying to eradicate. Because of their view that Indigenous people were “primitive” and were progressing towards civilization by assimilating to settler culture, it became crucial for ethnographers to collect the most authentic cultural artifacts possible during their field expeditions. Andrew Nurse has written extensively about the colonial power politics of salvage ethnography and its preoccupation with authenticity:

The development of salvage ethnography in Canada worked not simply to sustain the ideology of the ‘vanishing race’ but also shifted the basis of cultural authority from informants (or communities) to experts whose conclusions seemed predicated on a rigorous method and extensive research. In this way, salvage ethnography became part of a process of cultural disempowerment that allocated to white intellectuals the authority to determine what was and was not an authentic part of Aboriginal (or folk) culture. (Nurse, “But Now” 463)

In effect, ethnographers became the arbiters of what was truly “Indian,” and what was considered truly “Indian” was more often than not that which was perceived to precede colonization, that which was thought to be “untainted” by outside cultural influences. This desire for authenticity led to a scepticism amongst ethnographers and a need to discriminate when collecting artifacts. Edward Sapir, the director of the GSC’s anthropology department from its inception in 1910 until his departure in 1925 writes:

It seems important to me to keep very clearly distinct that part of [Native] [...] culture which may with some degree of certainty be called aboriginal, and that part which has grown up only secondarily through contact with whites. I do not for a moment deny the right to be interested in such handicrafts [...] but such objects are hardly what our museum would be particularly interested in [...] The aboriginal element should always be peeled out. (Sapir to Waugh)

Nurse notes that for Sapir, “[d]etermining what to collect [...] was not easy. He recommended avoiding seemingly modern objects while concentrating on bows, arrows, silver brooches, wampum, and cornhusk and wooden masks. Still, determining

authenticity in the field proved difficult because informants themselves were not clear on this matter” (Nurse, “Marius Barbeau” 54).

Other GSC ethnographers experienced similar struggles. Around the same time, Marius Barbeau was publicly reflecting on the limits of ethnographic field research, urging that researchers “needed to question the authenticity of the material they collected because the long history of Native-white interaction had displaced authentic Aboriginal cultures” (Nurse “Marius Barbeau” 52). In “The Native Races of Canada,” Barbeau argues that “The ethnologist is a fool who so far deceives himself as to believe that his field notes and specimens gathered in the raw from half-breeds or [the] decrepit survivors of a past age, still represent the unadulterated knowledge of the prehistoric races of America’ (Barbeau 52-53). Here Barbeau makes clear the perceived link between cultural authenticity and “pure” bloodlines embedded in salvage ethnography, an ideology that holds mixed-blood people as “tainted,” culturally and genetically diluted, and inauthentic. In effect, this ideology and the efforts of these ethnographers work in tandem with the government’s legislative eradication of Indigenous peoples by disinheriting mixed-blood people of their Indigenous heritage.

The Story Eaters moves between a contemporary storyline and historical fiction to explore the role that the GSC has played in shaping past and present conceptions of “Indianness,” authenticity, and Indigenous identity in Canada. The novel explores the ongoing impact of anthropological archives and narratives on mixed-blood Indigenous people. The story moves back and forth between 1924 and 2024 as genealogist Leor St. Onge attempts to uncover what happened to a Geological Survey of Canada ethnographer who disappeared in 1924, shortly after photographing her great-grandparents in Sept-Îles,

Québec. As she grapples with a series of strange encounters and a frustrating lack of answers in the archives, she is forced to find a different way to make sense of the past and her relationship to it.

The Story Eaters incorporates fictionalizations of GSC archival documents to illustrate salvage ethnography's preoccupation with authenticity and "pure" bloodlines, as well as the impact of these historical preoccupations on contemporary mixed-blood people like the protagonist, Leor. Frederick Vaughan, the ethnographer in the novel is a fictionalization of Frederick Wilkerson Waugh, a GSC ethnographer who disappeared in 1924 after visiting Sept-Îles, Québec where he photographed my great-grandparents. Included in the novel is one of his 1916 letters to Edward Sapir, written during a field expedition in Northern Ontario. In the letter, he writes:

The Ojibwa here are quite primitive in many ways and are a damn dirty bunch, but the Catholic Missions have knocked out the old religion and mide'wiwan ceremonies. I am getting a lot about medicine, fords, handicrafts of all kinds and general folklore. I will likely have to travel further into the bush if I am to find untainted Ojibwa stories and religious practices. Several Longuelac Indians have offered to sell me stories but most of them I have found to be inauthentic, although I have purchased two or three good ones from an old Ojibwa man my informant introduced me to. [...] At the place where I am now there is very little personal recollection of the mide'wiwin and other pagan practices. Very little is known here even of conjuring and witchcraft. It is a very good place, however, for native handicrafts. [...] I have taken quite a large number of photographs including portraits. It is a very good place for real Indian types, as most of the

Indians seem to be of pure blood. They are a damned dirty bunch, but a very good lot for Knowles' work I should say. [...] From here I am not sure whether I should go to Pic or Lac Seul. Pic would be cheaper but it is more Christianized so I would be less likely to find authentic specimens there. (Waugh)

Reading this letter, Leor is forced to confront the perceived deficiencies of her blood; Vaughan would not see her as a “real Indian type.” By juxtaposing the history of the GSC and the practice of salvage ethnography with the contemporary experiences of Leor, the mixed-blood protagonist, *The Story Eaters* explores the complex identity politics and fractured sense of belonging that many Indigenous people negotiate on a daily basis and traces them back to their roots. Because the narrative moves back and forth between the past and the present, it highlights the lasting impact that the history of ethnography and ideas of authenticity have had on Indigenous and mixed-blood identity politics in Canada.

This dissertation contributes to a growing body of work by Indigenous writers, musicians, and artists that draws on early anthropological archival materials and subverts the power dynamics inherent in them. Artists such as Marie Clements, Jordan Abel, Garry Thomas Morse, Jeremy Dutcher, Louise Erdrich, Kent Monkman, Jeff Barnaby, James Luna, Rebecca Belmore, and Zacharias Kunuk have been working with anthropological archives to highlight and overturn the colonial power dynamic of these records and to privilege Indigenous versions of and engagements with history. For example, in 2010, Marie Clements set out to create *The Edward Curtis Project: A Modern Picture Story*. The project consists of a play that questions the photographic work that Edward Curtis did in the United States to document the vanishing Indian, as well as of a photographic collaboration with Rita Leistner in which they recreate Curtis'

photographs from a contemporary Indigenous perspective. Garry Thomas Morse's 2011 Governor General's award-winning collection of poetry, *Discovery Passages*, explores the history of anthropologist Franz Boas' impact on the Kwakwaka'wakw people in British Columbia and the tension between discovery and recovery inherent in Indigenous engagements with anthropological texts and collections. In 2013 Jordan Abel published *The Place of Scraps*, a collection of poetry which examines ethnographer Marius Barbeau's work relating to the Nisga'a Nation. All these projects engage in a process of reappropriation of power, voice, and story. All these projects are proof that the Indian has not vanished.

Having access to archival and anthropological records can be incredibly magical and rewarding and can offer a way of connecting to the past and to one's ancestors, especially for people who for a variety of reasons are unable to connect through direct contact with family or community; however, connecting with culture and ancestry through these records and through the frame of non-Indigenous anthropologists who objectify, exoticize, and taxidermize Indigenous culture can lead to numerous problems. While Indigenous archives and artifacts can offer a sense of closeness, they simultaneously lead to a state of being further removed and disconnected. For example, Abel's *Place of Scraps* explores the complicated consequences of working with anthropological texts as a way of connecting to culture and ancestry. Engagement with Barbeau's texts causes the narrator to anthropologize and objectify himself—he becomes “the poet,” an object that the poems record and study. The use of third-person point-of-view conveys that the poems are an objective study of a person dispossessed of their cultural and familial heritage. In a sense, the narrator becomes a kind of Barbeau,

studying himself and the impact that anthropology has had on him. The book highlights the limitations and the consequences of using anthropological frameworks and lenses to explore one's culture and identity. These anthropological frameworks are inherently objectifying—a looking in from outside—which, when used, naturally mirror the experience of someone disconnected from culture, fostering only further disconnection. Both Morse and Abel use poetry to examine the ways in which anthropological work done in their home communities has contributed to cultural dispossession for their communities. In doing so, their work acts as a means of cultural reclamation and a taking back of power.

Other artists, such as James Luna, force audiences to confront their role and participation in objectifying Indigenous people. Both his 1987/1990 performance piece *The Artifact Piece* and his 1991/2001/2010 performance piece *Take a Picture with a Real Indian* use his body and performance to challenge and subvert popular ideas of Indigeneity. In *The Artifact Piece*, Luna becomes an actual artifact in a museum display case. In “James Luna and the Paradoxically Present Vanishing Indian,” Elizabeth Hawley notes that *The Artifact Piece* was first performed at the San Diego Museum of Man, the same institution housing a photograph of Luna's great-grandmother, “linking ethnographic interest in his ancestors to the continued Western epistemological obsession with archiving the Other” (19-20). It is in this context that Luna

slightly sedated, lay wearing a breechcloth in a sand-covered museum display case, his body framed by museum labels that rhetorically ruptured romantic preconceptions of the Indian. For example, one described an unsuccessful marriage, stating: “Skin callous on ring finger remains, along with assorted

painful and happy memories.” The description of a physical callous and the memories it evokes for the artist brought Luna’s Native body into the present and his life into the contemporary context[.] (Hawley 20)

Included in the display case were “mementos from the artist’s own history, including a driver’s license, diploma, divorce papers, tapes and records of contemporary musicians, political buttons, comic books, and small figurines” (20). These personal “artifacts” of his actual life expose and challenge the museum’s tendency to “represent indigenous peoples as anachronistic to modern life, perpetually vanishing because they are characterized as already of the past. [...] [T]he Western institutional archive favors bones over flesh, the ancients over their living descendants. Luna’s intervention was thus to rupture this archival assumption of past” (20). The power of Luna’s work lies in the audience’s participation in the piece. For *The Artifact Piece*, the audience looking down at him in the glass display case is forced to confront their own colonial gaze, their role in the objectification of Indigenous culture, people and bodies, and the stereotypes they have accepted and internalized. Luna’s disruption of the “archival assumption of past” that characterizes museum representations of Indigenous peoples, his presencing of his body, his life, and his story—in this space designed to negate Indigenous futures and to keep them rooted in the past—replaces the vanishing Indian with Indigenous presence, contemporaneity, and futurity.

The Story Eaters is also concerned with occupying the museum space and challenging its characteristic negation of Indigenous presence and futures. It does this through an exploration of home and the unhomey. In both the 1924 and 2024 storylines, characters confront the museum’s tendency to taxidermize Indigenous culture. The

photographs, documents, skeletons, dioramas, and displays cause both Leor and Veronica to experience the space as unhomely and unsettling. And like in Luna's *The Artifact Piece*, their very presence in this space nullifies the museum's assumption of Indigeneity as something existing only in the past.

Beard-Heart: The Failings of Canada's National Archives and the Unhomely Museum

There's an Innu story about Atshen, a cannibal monster who sucks the life out of humans and leaves the husks behind (Millman, Kaneuketat, Peastitute). While stories of this monster predate museums and anthropology, "Beard-Heart," the version recorded by Lawrence Millman in *Wolverine Creates the World: Labrador Indian Tales*, is analogous to what Canada's national archives have done with Indigenous culture and history. From totem poles to cultural objects both sacred and mundane, Canadian museums are full of husks—objects stripped of their cultural context and, in effect, their vitality. In fact, Millman himself is engaged in this colonial "husk-making" project. He, too, is a settler and a collector, transcribing, curating and then publishing and claiming ownership of Indigenous stories. Although there are many Innu versions of Atshen stories, I use Millman's because, like the GSC ethnographers, Millman's work is another instance of Innu stories being anonymized and filtered through a settler lens. Beard-Heart is a cannibal monster who grows by eating Innu people. In the version Millman has recorded, he notes that the monster's characteristic bearded heart "seem[s] to suggest the presence of Euro-Canadians, especially the early *voyageurs*, who were not altogether genteel in their dealings with Native people" (147). As museums and archives are clear extensions of settler-colonialism, it is not a stretch to think of ethnographers as beard-hearts sucking

the life out of Innu culture and putting the husks on display in the national museum in Ottawa.

The Story Eaters explores the monstrosity of the museum and its displays by examining the relationship between the museum and home. While Leor attempts to find a sense of home and belonging in the archives and in the museum, what she finds is the opposite—a negation of her identity due to her mixed and “insufficient” blood and an unsettling experience of the museum. In his 1919 essay “The Uncanny,” Freud posits that the uncanny is the result of a return of the repressed. His theory is based on the German word *unheimlich* “of which the nearest semantic equivalents in English are ‘uncanny’ and ‘eerie’, but which etymologically corresponds to ‘unhomely’” (Freud 124). He explores the etymology of the word, noting that *heimlich* “becomes increasingly ambiguous, until it finally merges with its antonym *unheimlich*. The uncanny (*das Unheimliche*, ‘the unhomely’) is in some way a species of the familiar (*das Heimliche*, ‘the homely’)” (134). From there, he posits that if repression is the “secret nature of the uncanny, we can understand why German usage allows the familiar (*das Heimliche*, the ‘homely’) to switch to its opposite, the uncanny (*das Unheimliche*, the ‘unhomely’) (134), for this uncanny element is actually nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed” (148). The uncanny occurs when one is presented with aspects of themselves that have been repressed and are therefore simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar. Freud sees the psyche as the product of evolution. For him, the psyche has evolved from a so-called primitive stage to a more modern stage, during which time society has grown out of “primitive” beliefs in the supernatural. These have been replaced by a belief in science and reason—things that

can be materially verifiable and are thus held to be real. Freud views all encounters with the occult and beliefs in the supernatural as relics of a psychological evolution from primitivism to positivism. It is this privileging of science and psychoanalysis that makes it problematic to apply Freud's theory of the uncanny to Indigenous gothic texts. For Indigenous peoples, the spirit world is not a metaphor, nor is it a product of the subconscious mind. It is a real and natural aspect of life and of daily existence. Freud's framework for the uncanny carries with it inherent hierarchies which privilege science over the supernatural, and which classify those who believe in the supernatural as primitive and less evolved. As a result, generally, a Freudian analysis is not an adequate framework through which to understand Indigenous texts because it can only understand the uncanny in terms of repression and psychoanalysis. It cannot grasp the deeper cultural significance of haunting in an Indigenous context. However, when it comes to the representation of the museum in *The Story Eaters*, the uncanny is an effective framework because the museum and the haunting and unsettling aspects of this space are representative of the national imaginary, to which repression and psychoanalysis can effectively be applied.

One way in which repression contributes to the museum being an unhomely space for Leor lies in the institution's title. Leor does her research at The Museum of Canadian History. But only a decade ago, the museum went by a different name, The Canadian Museum of Civilization, a name more revelatory of its true guiding assumptions. In "(un)Housing Aboriginality in the Virtual Museum Civilization.ca and Reservation X," Julia Emberley argues that "the idea of civilization is manufactured by the visual commodification of aboriginality; [...] value is accrued through disciplinary knowledges

and representational codes of so-called past and present ‘civilizations.’ Ideologies of civilization are produced either through an oppositional binary logic, such as savagery/civilization, or on the basis of a teleological narrative progression from savagery to civilization” (233). Although the museum changed its name in 2013 to the Canadian Museum of History in an attempt to distance itself from the savagery/civilization binary, it is impossible to avoid this binary in this space, given the past and present colonial reality and the power politics of salvage ethnography and collection, exhibition and display. As Emberley notes,

The Canadian Museum of Civilization itself, still belongs to an early twentieth-century semiotics of extinction and preservation in its reliance on ideologies of tradition and the reproduction of a historical or ‘prehistoric’ domestic sphere. The museum installs a dermopolitics of preservation in that it re-creates the façade of various styles of Indigenous houses, thus signifying its ‘outer-skin’ and shell-like existence for the history of colonization that has itself emptied such spaces of their First Nations meaning and value. (238-9)

The stripping away of cultural context from Indigenous artifacts and homes makes the museum an unhomey space because it defamiliarizes Indigenous cultural items. Leor experiences this the night she transgresses the boundaries of the museum and stays there overnight. By sleeping in the teepee, she turns the museum from a public space into a private space. She tries to make it a home. She enters the teepee that is now just a shell, emptied of its life, its proper use, its history, and function. This space that is supposed to be a homely, private and domestic space is now unhomey because those things have been stripped away. It is only an empty display. Additionally, the museum itself is

unsettling. The orbiting security guard and the rustling ghosts make it an uncomfortable and un-homely space for Leor and only exacerbate her sense of not belonging and disconnection from her Innu background. Throughout the novel, Leor struggles to feel at home anywhere. Her actual house is in the process of being sold in a tax sale, highlighting the fact that Indigenous people, like everyone else in this country, can still find themselves being renters of land that the government owns and controls.

In the end, no physical space offers Leor a sense of home. The museum is a monstrous place, a surreal constricting maze of hallways lined with doors that are all closed to her, a thing with teeth and a hairy heart that nearly consumes her before she catapults onto the roof where she finds a true possibility of home—through stories.

Stories and Survival: Homecoming through Stories

In “Coming Home through Stories,” Neal McLeod discusses the connection between stories, belonging, and a sense of home. He writes: “To tell a story is to link, in the moment of telling, the past to the present, and the present to the past” (170). Going on to discuss the various levels of diaspora that have resulted from colonization, he defines *spatial diaspora* as a separation from one’s ancestral land and *ideological diaspora* as an alienation from one’s stories (172). In *The Story Eaters*, Leor experiences the effects of both types of diaspora. Arguably every Indigenous person on this continent has experienced at least one if not both of these types of diaspora. Indeed, as McLeod notes “spatial diaspora and ideological diaspora are interrelated” (172). He adds that “[i]n contrast to “being home,” diaspora is the process of being alienated from the collective

memory of one's people" (172) so that, from this perspective, storytelling can become a homecoming for both the author and the reader.

Expanding on his discussion of ideological diaspora, McLeod explains the concept of ideological home:

[a]n ideological home provides peoples with an Indigenous location to begin discourse, to tell stories and to live life on their own terms. An ideological home is a layering of generations of stories, and the culmination of storyteller after storyteller, in a long chain of transmission. To be home, in an ideological sense, means to dwell in the landscape of the familiar, collective memories, as opposed to being in exile. "Being home" means to be part of a larger group, a collective consciousness; it involves having a personal sense of dignity. Furthermore, an ideological home, housed in collective memory, emerges from a specific location, spatially and temporally. An ideological home needs to have a spatial, temporal home as well. (172)

The Story Eaters explores what happens when a person does not have a spatial, temporal home and the ways that storytelling can become a way of coming home. This occurs both in the act of me writing the story, but also in the stories that the characters write—Leor's storytelling in the face of all her unanswered questions, her reconstruction of history, and Minuat and Veronica's altering of historical narratives. The novel explores how the stories we are told and how the stories we tell ourselves can dispossess us of an ideological home and a sense of belonging, particularly stories about authenticity and Indian status propagated by salvage ethnography and the Indian Act. But just as stories can dispossess us of a sense of home, they can guide us home as well.

Even Innu stories do not offer Leor (or myself) an avenue for connection. Throughout *The Story Eaters*, Leor experiences varying aspects of alienation. Distanced from family, friends, Innu culture and language, she struggles to feel a sense of belonging. While there is now a great deal of Innu literature available, the majority of it is in French. Because the colonial history of Quebec has resulted in the French taking power, Innu people in Quebec predominantly speak French (Lacombe). This linguistic divide further alienates Leor who finds herself having two linguistic barriers to accessing Innu culture and community – French and Innu-aimun. Past and contemporary Innu authors from Quebec such as An Antane Kapesh, Rita Mestokosho, Joséphine Bacon, Naomi Fontaine, and Michel Jean all write in French and are well-connected to their home communities. For Leor who has grown up and lived in big, English-speaking cities, these texts only further alienate her because she is unable to read them and because they do not reflect her experience. Instead, she must turn to Google to learn about Kuekuatsheu, the Innu trickster, or books like Lawrence Millman’s collections of Innu stories told in English and filtered through a settler lens. Unable to connect to her Innu heritage through the existing Innu literature, Leor must find another way to connect.

The Story Eaters begins with an epigraph, “The Haunted Lodge,” an Innu story from *Wolverine Creates the World: Labrador Indian Tales*. The story is about two hunters who take shelter from a blizzard in an empty lodge. The older man begins telling a story but falls asleep halfway through. As it turns out, a skeleton who has been hiding in the lodge kills the older man in his sleep. When the younger man awakens and finds his friend dead, he knows that the unfinished story is still somewhere in the lodge, and when the skeleton attempts to kill him too, he survives by jumping into the unfinished

story. What I love about this story is that the story, specifically the unfinished story, is a place not only to outwit danger, but to survive and to escape death. For my novel, which is a fictionalization of my own experiences working with Canadian archives, this story is a perfect analogy. In terms of Indigenous history, national archives offer only unfinished stories. They offer objects taken out of context: photographs that have been anonymized and stories that have been retold through a white-male anthropological filter. The corresponding lives and contexts are missing from the archives, so that all Leor's (and my) work with archives remains an unfinished story; the end of the story is not available, so, like the hunter in "The Haunted Lodge," Leor must enter the unfinished story in order to survive. She does this to escape the financial precarity of her life but also to escape and resist the negation of her blood that ethnographic ideas of authenticity propagate, "to dwell in the landscape of familiar, collective memories" (McLeod 172).

By excluding Indigenous voices from archives, museums and organizations like the GSC are able to construct a narrative that reflects the interests of settler colonialism. In their short but significant paper "Decolonial Sensibilities," Crystal Fraser and Zoe Todd discuss the fact that "the majority of archival documents in Canadian archives have been produced by non-Indigenous people: namely white men who dominated exploration, political and other 'great men' tropes of Canadian history (35). They go on to note that "Archival records produced by Indigenous people prove to be far and few between. We know little about the lives of Indigenous women, apart from a few celebrated heroines, such as Thanadelthur, Kateri Tekakwitha, and E. Pauline Johnson. Even less is known about Indigenous children, two-spirited individuals, and liminal figures such as medicine men and women" (35). In *The Story Eaters*, Leor faces this exact dilemma when she

encounters photographs of her relatives but no corresponding information about them. Most of the ethnographic photographs she finds are titled Indian man and wife. Guides and informants are often named, but almost everyone else is anonymized. Their voices, names, and stories are missing from the archive; they were never considered important enough to document and include. Like in “Beard-Heart,” all that is left behind are husks, photographs stripped of names and stories. For Leor, the archive is a place of failure, a place where there are only questions and never any answers or certainty. Of course, this is not a surprise. As Fraser and Todd note: “the structure and function of archives remain bound to National imaginaries and histories. Decolonisation of these structures and processes can only ever be partial” (38). Because of the impossibility of fully and truly decolonising archives, they suggest applying a decolonial sensibility when working with archives: “it is essential that we continue to recognise archival spaces, especially state archives, for their original intent: to create national narratives that seek to legitimise the nation state by excluding Indigenous voices, bodies, economies, and socio-political structures” (38-9). While the archives prove to be a place of erased family histories for Leor, the novel explores other types of archives—more personal archives that do not serve the national imaginary. These archives are gendered and personal—Nancy’s memory bank of family recipes, Veronica’s salvaged love letters, Leor’s wooden box of family photos and mementos. Each of the women has her own private archive that holds a story that is her own, a story that would not be deemed legitimate by the national archive but that is still important and worth preserving. In addition to these, there is also Leor’s blood memory, her knowledge that the body too is an archive that houses the genetic memories and traumas of her ancestors and roots her in a web of connections.

Story is essential to Indigenous survival and futurity because of the erasure of Indigenous voices from the archives. By re-inserting Indigenous voices and Indigenous and mixed-blood subjectivities into the past, we make ourselves present, there in the past, here in the present, but also there in the future. That is what *The Story Eaters* seeks to do and indeed, there is nothing else Leor *can* do. The archives provide no answers. If there are to be stories, she must invent them. Many other Indigenous authors have done, and are doing, similar work. For example, in Marie Clements' play *Tombs of the Vanishing Indians* (2012), Lone Woman, another historical figure who has been left relatively voiceless is given a life and a story. Diane Glancy, in *The Reason for Crows* (2009), gives voice and subjectivity to Kateri Tekakwitha, a historical figure who is more documented due to her religious affiliations, but who remains relatively voiceless in terms of any record of her as a subjective being. In *Brébeuf's Ghost* (2000), Daniel David Moses uses *The Jesuit Relations*, a historic text that erases Indigenous history and voices and tells a settler-focused, colonial version of history. Moses subverts the narrative of the savage Indian that is so prevalent throughout *The Jesuit Relations* and instead portrays the savagery of the missionaries. Where the narrative in *The Jesuit Relations* (Vol. 34) recounts the Iroquois torturing Father Jean de Brébeuf to death and eating his heart (Ragueneau 31), in Moses' telling, it is the missionaries who are cannibals and who eat Brébeuf's heart. Additionally, while *The Jesuit Relations* portrays the Iroquois as particularly savage, Moses' play highlights the fact that The Beaver Wars were the result of colonization and the imposition of capitalism on the Indigenous peoples, a fact that was left out of the Jesuits' version of history (Ragueneau 25-37). Not only is Moses able to subvert this dominant and problematic version of history and depiction of Indigenous

peoples, through story he is also able to populate history with Indigenous subjectivities. In “Speaking Truth to Power: Indigenous Storytelling as an Act of Living Resistance,” Sium and Ritskes argue that

Indigenous stories are a reclamation of Indigenous voice, Indigenous land, and Indigenous sovereignty. They are vital to decolonization. Indigenous storytelling works to both deconstruct colonial ways of coming to know, as well as construct alternatives -recognizing that these two processes do not happen in a linear trajectory; if we are waiting for the dismantling of colonial structures before we focus on rebuilding Indigenous and decolonial alternatives, we will always be too late. Indigenous stories are a creative force, grounded in rootedness and relationality. (Sium and Ritskes viii)

It is through storytelling that we continue. Stories are generative and regenerative. They connect us, and they place us in connection with each other and within history. For Mallory Whiteduck decolonization rests in the ability to know home, to move forward while holding onto the strengths of Indigenous culture and tradition. Because of this, “decolonization must take place on two interconnected levels: 1) where we fight back (or write back) and resist oppression; and 2) where we forge paths into the future and empower the next generations. Much current Native literary criticism focuses on both resisting colonization and establishing ways to move forward in light of history (Whiteduck 82). By using story to repopulate history with Indigenous subjectivities, Indigenous authors not only revision the past, they simultaneously open up the possibility of a new Indigenous future. The failure of archives to tell Indigenous histories can be a

generative space from which Indigenous authors can create new connections to the past, present, and future.

In examining the various ways that archives fail Indigenous history, *The Story Eaters* confronts colonization, challenges colonial and postcolonial constructions of “Nativity” and “Indian Blood,” and offers possibilities for reconstructing mixed-blood identity. When it comes to the failings of Canada’s archives in terms of telling Indigenous history, survival lies in jumping into that unfinished story and making it our own. I do not have a solution to the difficulty of being a mixed-blood person in this current reality, but I can write about the ambiguity of living as one, and I know that other people who feel the same can feel a sense of community in reading it and can also find a home in this story. And maybe in that way, we can find a way of coming home together.

The Story Eaters

The Haunted Lodge

Two hunters got caught in a bad blizzard. They took refuge in a lodge which was empty except for a bundle of furs hung from the rafters. That night the hunters were smoking their pipes.

“I will tell you a story about two men,” the elder man said. “They were caught in a bad blizzard and they hadn’t brought a tent with them ...”

“What happened then?”

“They found a nice little lodge in the middle of the woods ...”

“And what happened then?”

“I’m too tired to finish. I’ll tell you the rest tomorrow.”

Next morning the younger man went over to his friend and shook him. Wake up! he shouted. But the man did not wake up. Nor would he ever wake up, for he had died in his sleep.

Poor fellow, thought the other: my friend gave up his breath before he could finish his story. That means the story is somewhere in this lodge, waiting for an end. I’ll have to stay here myself ... until I find the end.

The man looked for the end of the story all day long. Toward evening he curled up on the floor to go to sleep. He happened to glance up at the bundle of furs. Suddenly a skeleton peered out of it. “Another person for me to strangle,” the skeleton said.

Now a long bony arm reached down and grabbed at the man. He rolled away from it. “Who ... who are you?” he asked.

Came this reply: “I starved in this lodge long ago. Since then I’ve killed everyone who comes here. I killed your friend last night. Tonight I’m going to kill you.”

“Isn’t that rather cruel?”

“Perhaps, but life is supposed to be cruel ...”

How can I escape this murderous skeleton? the man asked himself even as the bony arm made another lunge for his throat.

All at once he remembered his friend’s unfinished story. It was still here, still in the lodge. So the man jumped into the story and that’s exactly how it ended—he escaped the skeleton.

— Innu story (retold by Lawrence Millman)

Do Not Kill a Dream

A man dreamed of a good salmon fishing place by a river. He went there, sat down on the bank, and fished for one whole moon. All he caught was a cold in his chest. I'll kill that dream, he said. So he fell asleep grasping his knife. The dream told him of another good fishing place. The man thrust his knife, thrust it again. The dream let out a sigh and died. Now the man did not even know where the bad fishing places were and he died, too.

— Innu story (retold by Lawrence Millman)

∞

The Paper Trail

2024

∞

The Disappearing Men

Leor used a back exit to leave The Deuce. As she sat in a dark corner of the bar with her work spread out on the table, a file folder of photocopied census records, she felt that she was being watched. The body knows. Feels the eyes. The skin prickles. The hairs stand up. But she wanted to be sure. Scooping together her papers, she snuck out the back door. In the labyrinth of alleyways, the deep veins of the city, she flattened herself into the shadows. The door slipped open behind her. Kitchen sounds spilled out. Shouting cooks. The banging of pots. Grease sizzling in the commercial deep fryer. A figure emerged. A man. Of course, a man. The door closed again, and the noise disappeared. Furtive footsteps echoed in the darkness. She tried to keep her heart steady as he neared. Listening to the steps and breaths, she guessed he was just passing her. With a deep exhale, she flung herself onto his back, linked an arm around his neck in a chokehold. He tried to throw her off, bucking, but her grip was firm. She wrapped her legs around his waist, tightened her arm around his neck until he dug at her forearm for release. He was gasping something. Starved of air, the words were indecipherable.

“Why are you following me?” she growled, loosening her arm, though only slightly, just enough so he could answer.

“My name is Wilkes,” he gasped. I’m looking for Leor St. Onge. I only want to talk. It’s about a job.” He wheezed as he sucked in air.

Still clinging to his back, she weighed his words.

“Don’t you know you should never follow a woman? Especially at night. Especially into a dark alley. Jesus.”

She thought she should choke him out just for his stupidity.

“I have a knife,” she said, in case he wasn’t stupid at all, in case he was lying.

“That won’t be necessary. I only want to talk. I swear.”

Inside The Deuce, they sat at her usual table, far at the back in a dark corner.

“I didn’t mean to scare you,” he said. “Can I get you a drink?”

“I buy my own drinks. Thank you. And I think you were the one who was scared.”

He looked down at his hands. She followed his gaze. They were limp and delicate, motionless on the table. Long hairless fingers, soft, smooth skin. Hands that had typed or turned pages. They glowed like the praying hands that churches gave out. The kind filled with holy water. They were not the rough, battered hands of labour.

She ordered a rye and diet. Sipped it slowly. Rye made her bold.

“So why did you follow me?”

He pushed a manilla envelope towards her.

“I was hoping you could help me.”

When she tilted the envelope towards the table a single piece of paper floated out. Weightless as a feather. She sat for a long time looking at it, reading and rereading the words.

MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE

Ottawa, Ont.. November 15, 1924.

A reward will be paid by Mrs. N. Vaughan, for information leading to the present whereabouts of Frederick W. Vaughan, who was last seen by his son at the Bonaventure Station, Montreal, P.Q., on September 20, 1924. Mr. Vaughan intended leaving on that date for the Caughnawaga Indian Reserve for the purpose of collecting Ethnological specimens, etc., and some members of the reserve claim to have seen him there that afternoon and that he signified his intention of returning to Montreal via the Lachine Bridge.

DESCRIPTION

Age, 52.

Height, 5 feet 10 inches.

Hair, dark brown turning gray.

Eyes, Grey.

Peculiarities, walks with stoop from neck.

Languages, French, Indian, and reads German.

Clothing, grey sport suit, black boots, greenish shade cap.

Please notify the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Montreal, the Deputy Minister of Mines, Ottawa, Ont., or **Cortlandt Starnes, COMMISSIONER, Royal Canadian Mounted Police.**

E637-5.1.001

The accompanying photograph seemed to be cropped. It was long and narrow and was of a thin man standing in front of what looked to be a wooden porch. Ferns rose from the grass behind him, creeping out of the seam where the white wood met the earth. There was something about his face and frame that made her think he looked like a priest, but the correlating memory eluded her. He didn't smile. Perhaps that was it. The lack of visible happiness. His hair thinned at the top. Was thicker on the left side. By wind or design, she couldn't tell. It made his ears more pronounced. Thin wire rimmed glasses perched above them. There were hollows beneath his cheekbones. A cleft of small scars on his left cheek. Was he hunched to one side or had the camera tilted? The hat he held—was it a straw boater hat or a panama hat? Maybe a gambler? It was hard to tell but she guessed straw given he was an ethnographer and likely spent a good deal of time outdoors. Grey eyes. What a pity it was a black and white photo. She stared at his face as if it could tell her what happened to him or why she of all people had been given this 100-year-old missing person poster.

Many questions flashed through her mind as she looked up at the man across from her.

“I need to find out what happened to him,” he said. This answered all her questions and none of them. “You have a good reputation for finding things. People I mean. Ancestors or whatever.”

She raised an eyebrow. “Documents and dates. Sometimes stories. That’s about all I find.”

“Still. You’re good. That’s what I’ve heard.”

Leor took a sip of her drink to hide the creeping smile.

“I didn’t realize genealogy was so dangerous that you need to carry a knife.”

“Ha! This city is full of wackos whether you’re a genealogist or not.” Just that morning, heading towards the walking trail along the Ottawa River, a rough looking middle-aged white man was marching down the middle of the street with a sledgehammer in one hand and a wooden crucifix in the other. Cars honking in a rageful standstill behind him. Every day there was some kind of white extremist, one-man parade shouting or holding a placard, a butcher’s knife, a sledgehammer, a crucifix.

She looked again at the paper. White and black and gray. The darkness of his suit like a black hole at the centre. The fading photocopied letters. How many replications had been made? Creases from the original formed crested mountaintops on the white expanse of copy paper.

“What exactly is it that you want me to do?” She held her glass, turning it back and forth on the table like a doorknob.

“Well, as you can see from the poster, he disappeared in 1924. To this day, no one knows what happened to him. I was hoping maybe you could find out. Even if you could just find out something about him. Anything. He’s my great-great-grandfather. No one talks about him. It’s like some big secret. I found this by accident going through my father’s things. It’s not just some family curiosity. The thing is it keeps happening—this disappearing. Every generation. My grandfather disappeared too. My father. And now I’m starting to ... I just want to know. Whatever you can find.”

He was wringing his hands.

“This isn’t really the kind of thing I do.”

“But you’ve solved crimes. For the R.C.M.P. I saw an article about it.”

She couldn’t hide her smile this time. “It’s not quite like that. My area is records—baptismal, marriage, death. The paper trail of a life. It’s a bit different than what you’re asking.”

His face fell.

“Let me think about it, alright? Can I have this?” She rested her fingers on the paper.

“By all means,” he said, opening his praying hands.

She drained the rest of her drink and stood, digging in her purse for a business card.

“Here,” she said, putting it down in front of him. “Call next time, so we can avoid the dark alley choke out.”

That night she dreamt of walking in a world split in half. On one side was forest on the other a concrete parking lot. Both stretched out as far as she could see. The sky was grey. There was no sun. She walked along the edge—between the concrete and the treeline. In the woods on her left a wolf walked beside her. Keeping her pace. They looked back and forth at each other. Its grey eyes were human. Knowing. Unnerving. A woman appeared from out of the trees. Long hair obscured her face, but as she neared, Leor saw a face much like her own. From a pocket, the woman pulled out Leor's knife. Without warning, in one swift motion, the woman slit the wolf's throat. Its body slumped, blood gushing. Leor ran frantic down the seam of treeline. The woman running alongside her on all fours. Not chasing, just keeping pace. Her body like an animal's. The shoulders and deltoids bulged with each push forward. The back legs taut and strong. The crouched body, its animal movements, were unnerving. The wolf woman looked at her, had the same gray eyes. Curious but sly. When Leor woke up, she still saw them. Grey eyes looking at her from across the room. Red blood. Then darkness. Only when she saw her knife laying on top of the dresser just below where the eyes had been did she feel safe enough to slip back to sleep.

Teeth

Leor was standing in front of the living room wall, contemplating a nexus of post-it notes she had stuck there. It was the outline of a family tree she was building for the one client she currently had. She was looking at the names and dates on each yellow sticky note when the muffled clunk of the mailbox drew her mind back from its genealogical wanderings.

The digital clock below the living room TV blinked 11:02 am. The mail usually came at 4. When she opened the front door, she caught the back of the mail carrier hurrying down the sidewalk. The peace of the silent street shocked her mind, which had been so laboriously engaged in working for the past four hours that she had forgotten that the world existed. Streets and postal service and letters and trees. It all seemed a dawning wonder.

Bills. Her inclination was to add these to the others. The coffee table was littered with them—heaped together in small piles, some open, many more not. She was about to add these new envelopes to the piles, but one caught her eye. NOTICE OF TAX SALE in big red lettering above the little window that housed her name and address. She wanted to tuck it under the other unopened bills. Pretend she didn't see it. But the red ink was foreboding. Doom settled in her stomach as she tore the envelope open.

Her eyes scanned the paper, taking in random bits of information. As if taking it in in these small bits would lessen the weight of it. \$22,000 in arrears. Tax sale scheduled for March 23. A 1-800 number at the bottom of the page.

She punched the numbers into her phone. An automated voice blasted a series of disorienting options into her ear. She pressed 5 for tax sale. Sat in misery as the intense, warped hold music assaulted her ear. 10 minutes passed, then 20. She switched to speaker phone and set it down on the table. Turning down the volume to lessen the noise.

She returned to the wall. The post-it notes she had assembled there. But her mind couldn't focus. She sat back down on the couch, tidied the piles of bills. The stacks of novels that took up half the tabletop. Murakami, Erdrich, Kafka, Highsmith. She had just finished *The Blunderer* and was halfway through re-reading *The Night Watchman*. An unopened cable bill for a bookmark.

Six months. \$22,000. She knew she was on the brink of disaster, and for some reason, in that moment, she became hyper aware. Her senses heightened. She could hear her heart beating. Could feel it. Could almost feel the blood itself. Rushing through her like a tide pushing in and out of her heart. There was relief in this. In simply being alive. In the persistence of her mind and heart which pulsed on, oblivious to the financial sinkhole she was about to be swallowed up in.

The music stopped. She bolted forward for the phone. But it was just another robot voice. "We are experiencing a higher call volume than normal. Please stay on the line. Your call will be answered in priority sequence." The horrible hold music resumed. Crackling and screeching a crack in her mind.

After 40 minutes, a human voice. A woman—tired and miserable.

"Account number?"

Leor read the numbers off the paper.

“I can’t access your file. You need to speak with someone from collections.” The woman sighed. “When you go through the call menu options you need to press 1, then 1, then 1, then 3, then 4, then 4, then 2, then 3.”

“But I did that! Can’t you transfer me?”

But the woman had already hung up.

She couldn’t bring herself to navigate the perplexing call menu again. To sit on hold for another hour. Every aspect of the situation felt impossible. In addition to the taxes, she was also behind on mortgage payments. Eventually they would foreclose. Which would happen first? If only she could disappear. Evaporate off the face of the earth. Then she remembered the missing person poster—the ethnographer and his missing descendants. For a moment she envied him, imagining the relief of what it could feel like to disappear. The bills would pile up in the mailbox. The bank and the government could fight over the house. The credit card debts could balloon up on the unpaid interest. But she would be free. Someone new entirely. In another country with another name. Or just a ghost floating up above it all. Already the lightness was in her body. The tightness in her chest gone.

The truth of the matter was business was slow. There had been years of living above her means. Bills piled up. Went unpaid. Sometimes she had no heat. Sometimes she had no food. The water had been disconnected and reconnected multiple times. But always she had managed to stay afloat. Even if only barely. But this was the worst it had been. She could feel it all crumbling around her. It had been unsustainable, but she had

tried, nonetheless. It was true, she had a good reputation. She was good at what she did. But with ancestry.com and 23andme and all the other DIY genealogy resources, the demand for genealogists was low. It hadn't even been high before all these DIY things came along.

She returned to the wall. The splay of post-it notes was a map. There was a story in it. Long and eroded. She assembled the remnants and gave them to her clients. There were always so many questions she couldn't answer. Time is a story eater. But it leaves the bones. Though she'd had a fraught relationship with the church since childhood, and as much as she disliked the church's history, she was grateful for their records. Baptisms, marriages—religious ceremonies that were markers of a life—were the surviving bones that pointed to a story structure. And then there were the other records—death certificates and phone book entries, cemetery records, and censuses. These were the things she excavated.

The irony of the fact that she was a genealogist who knew little about her own family did not escape her. It wasn't that she didn't want to know. She had given up on knowing. There were too many holes in her map. Teeth marks where death and alcohol had chewed away. Colonization and its way of eroding families.

Maybe she should have taken the job yesterday, but there was something off-putting about the man. She couldn't tell if he was stupid or sneaky. Of course, she was intrigued. It was a one-hundred-year-old missing person case. A dream job. But it was the way he watched her. That she had felt his eyes on her, had looked all around, and had not seen him anywhere. Had not been able to find the source of the watching when she could feel it so clearly. That was what unnerved her and made her unable to trust him.

Later, when her phone rang, she let it go to voicemail. She knew it was Wilkes. He didn't leave a message, but she knew he would call again. Because if she knew one thing, she knew that he wanted answers, and he wanted *her* to find them. And the longer she kept him hanging, the more he would want these things, and the more he would be willing to pay for them.

CANADIAN NATIONAL TELEGRAPHS

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EXCLUSIVE CONNECTION WITH WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY

HEAD OFFICE, TORONTO, ONT.
MANAGER.

GEO. D. PERRY, GENERAL

SEND the following message subject to the terms printed on the back hereof, which are hereby agreed to.

1924.

Ottawa, Ont., Oct. 9,

F.W. VAUGHAN,

c/o Indian Agent,

Caughnawaga,

Province of Quebec.

Mrs. Vaughan and I worried about your not writing. Please wire.

E. Ripas,

CABLE SERVICE TO ALL THE WORLD

CANADIAN NATIONAL TELEGRAPHS

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HEAD OFFICE, TORONTO, ONT.
MANAGER.

GEO. D. PERRY, GENERAL

SEND the following message subject to the terms printed on the back hereof, which are hereby agreed to.

1924.

Ottawa, Ont., Oct. 10,

J.H. JACOBS, M.D.,

Caughnawaga Indian Reserve,

via Adirondack Junction,

P.Q.

Has F.W. Vaughan been to your reserve to work among Indians? Wire at once at our expense.

E. Ripas,

Victoria Museum,

Ottawa.

CABLE SERVICE TO ALL THE WORLD

file under F.W. Vaughan

CANADIAN PACIFIC R'Y. CO.'S TELEGRAPH

FORM T. D. 1

TELEGRAM

CABLE CONNECTIONS TO ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD

J. MCMILLAN, General Manager of Telegraphs, Montreal.

RA89 12 COLLECT

ADI RONCAK JCT OCT 11-24

1250

DERAPIS VICTORIA MUSE

DEPT MINES OTTAWA ONT

HAVE NOT SEEN F W VAUGHAN ON OUR RESERVE THIS YEAR

J H JACOBS

1 PM

A Second Meeting

“25,000,” she said after ignoring his phone calls for a week. They were at the same table at The Deuce. She took a long drink waiting for him to laugh. Or worse, walk out.

He swallowed hard. Whistled. His eyebrows pinched together above his nose.

Her stomach knotted. She wanted the job. Knew it was a ridiculous amount of money to ask for. Not that it was an unreasonable amount of money for the work involved. Not that she wasn't worth it. People just weren't willing to pay, or they didn't have the money.

He sat in silence for a long time. She did not know what mathematical equations he was doing, but she imagined there must be some. Perhaps he was trying to understand how she had come to such a figure.

“I didn't realize it would be so much.”

“It's \$40/hour. I'm setting aside my other cases to focus only on this for the next four months.”

He rubbed his jaw, considering.

“I would need half up front of course. I do weekly check-ins as well. By phone or in person.”

“What if you finish in one month? What if there isn't anything to find?”

“From what I've seen so far, there's lots to find. Think about it and let me know.”

She held her breath as she got up to leave, hoping she hadn't set him in motion to seek out someone cheaper.

CANADIAN NATIONAL TELEGRAPHS

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HEAD OFFICE, TORONTO, ONT.
MANAGER.

GEO. D. PERRY, GENERAL

SEND the following message subject to the terms printed on the back hereof, which are hereby agreed to.

1924.

Ottawa, Ont., Oct. 14,

Prof. F.G. Speck,
University of Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia,
Pennsylvania.

Vaughan has disappeared. Did you notice much depression or anything else that might throw light on this? Please write fully at once.

Ripas.

CABLE SERVICE TO ALL THE WORLD

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HEAD OFFICE, TORONTO, ONT.
MANAGER.

GEO. D. PERRY, GENERAL

SEND the following message subject to the terms printed on the back hereof, which are hereby agreed to.

1924.

Ottawa, November 4,

Mr. Robert Rose.,

c/o Mrs. Burberry,

Seven Islands,

P.Q.

Mr. F.W. Vaughan has been missing for some time. Do you know his movements after September 17th? Wire immediately our expense.

E. Ripas,
Victoria Museum,
Ottawa.

CABLE SERVICE TO ALL THE WORLD

file under F.W. Vaughan

FORM 6123, replacing Form 1-TW

CANADIAN NATIONAL TELEGRAM

HEAD OFFICE, TORONTO, ONT.
MANAGER

CHAS. E. DAVIES, ACTING GEN'L

RA238 15 COLLECT

5 NFT

SEVEN ISLANDS QUE

E. RIPAS

VICTORIA MUSEUM OTTAWA ONT

MR VAUGHAN LEFT SEVEN ISLANDS PER STEAMER LABRADOR
SEPTEMBER

SEVENTEENTH FOR QUEBEC NO NEWS SINCE

MRS. BERUBE

Salvage

Dawn light cast a blue glow on the banks of the river as Leor walked along the trail that curved behind the Canadian Museum of History. The wavy tiers of the brick façade made her think of Gaudi, though the curvature of the curatorial wing was designed to mimic the prehistoric landscape of the area and was more austere than any of his melting concrete dreamscapes.

Dave always finished his night shift when she arrived in the morning. He came down the steps towards her with his head down, a paper cup of coffee in his hand. His dark blue security guard uniform made him look like a police officer. She imagined it was probably no accident and that it worked to his advantage. He nodded as they passed each other. Gave a kind of two-finger salute and whistled his way down the steps.

Inside, she signed in with Adélar, the daytime security guard. Navigated the labyrinth of hallways down to the archives resource room. When she first started doing her research here five years earlier, an archivist had to come up and accompany her down the perplexity of hallways and staircases. Now she knew the way, but the rest of the building was a mystery. On her way to the cafeteria or the print shop, she had glimpsed the vast network of intersecting hallways divided by closed doors barred to her by her lack of a scan card. The big red letters on every door. RESTRICTED ACCESS. AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY.

She entered the amniotic silence of the resource room. Clarice, a daily fixture of the circulation desk, wished her good morning in her thick French accent. Always her

hands were moving. When she wasn't typing, she was knitting. Leor could see her hands working the needles. Before making her way to her usual desk, Leor stopped by René's office. The room was windowless. The light dim. His face aglow with the blue light of the computer screen. She tapped lightly on the door since he hadn't noticed her come in.

He turned from his screen. Tired looking but pliant. He'd flirted with retirement, but luckily for Leor, he'd stuck around. He was a walking encyclopedia of Canadian history.

"Got a minute?" she asked.

She sat down in a nearby chair as he looked down at the paper she had handed him.

"Ah, yes, Vaughan."

"I have a client who wants to know what happened to him."

"Well, no one really knows. It's most likely that he fell off the Lachine Bridge. He was believed to last be at Caughnawaga. His body was never found though."

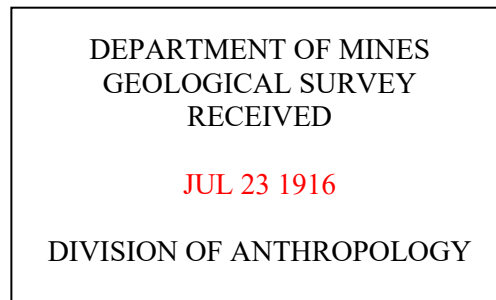
"Do you have any records related to him?"

"Tons. He worked for the Geological Survey of Canada. Anything he did in relation to that we likely have it. I can get you started."

By 9:30 she had three boxes of documents in front of her. She began with his correspondence. They spanned from 1912 to 1924. Twelve years of all his professional communications via paper. There were letters to colleagues. Letters to prominent

anthropologists—Ruth Benedict, Frank Speck, Franz Boas. There were budgets for fieldwork expeditions. Early drafts of monographs and speeches typed up by the department secretary and carefully annotated by Vaughan himself.

She read chronologically. Hours melting away. Completely transported from the small resource room. Clarice was gone. The aisles of bookshelves. Even the desk she sat at. Alone on a dark path, she moved back in time, into the mind of Vaughan, ethnographer. Missing person. An hour before closing, she skipped ahead. Choosing from a file at random.



*Longuelac to Hudson Bay Co. via Nipigon
July 20, 1916*

*Department of Mines
Geological Survey of Canada, Ottawa
Chief of Anthropology Division:*

Dear Dr. Ripas,

I received your letter yesterday and was gladdened to hear that you and Mrs. Ripas are doing well. I am likewise enjoying good health and am making excellent progress in the field. I have secured several authentic Ojibwa artifacts.

The Ojibwa here are quite primitive in many ways and are a damn dirty bunch, but the Catholic Missions have knocked out the old religion and mide'wiwan ceremonies. I am getting a lot about medicine, fords, handicrafts of all kinds and general folklore. I will likely have to travel further into the bush if I am to find untainted Ojibwa stories and religious practices. Several Longuelac Indians have offered to sell me stories but most of them I have found to be inauthentic, although I have purchased two or three good ones from an old Ojibwa man my informant introduced me to.

From here I am not sure whether I should go to Pic or Lac Seul. Pic would be cheaper but it is more Christianized so I would be less likely to find authentic specimens there.

I have seen all the more important handicrafts which are practiced here, including canoe making, snowshoe making, birchbark basketry, moccasin making, mitt making, food preparation, tanning, and a number of minor processes; and have taken photographs of all that were practicable. I have, I think, a couple of dozen herbal and other medical prescriptions and have also a considerable bulk of items regarding such subjects as childbirth, disposal of navel strings, and other such matters; also quite a bulk of folk-lore regarding omens (weather, death, good and bad luck), divination, conjuring, death and burial, hunting, food, constellations, 17 or 18 good string figures and "fool knots"; about 17 good stories, a number of the latter being specifically good, items on totemism, traps and trapping methods (including a fish trap—not unlike that of the Iroquois); quite a bit of detailed information on various games; house construction; utensils; costume and a variety of other matters.

I have bought something under \$50 worth of specimens here. In one case I paid for a birchbark canoe in order to see it made; the same with a pair of snowshoes. I have detailed notes on the construction process of both.

At the place where I am now there is very little personal recollection of the mide'wiwin and other pagan practices. Very little is known here even of conjuring and witchcraft. It is a very good place, however, for native handicrafts.

I have taken quite a large number of photographs including portraits. It is a very good place for real Indian types, as most of the Indians seem to be of pure blood. They are a damned dirty bunch, but a very good lot for Knowles' work I should say.

I sent in some plates to Clark a few days ago. Could you ask him to hurry prints back so that I can see if they turned out ok?

I have sent off some of the artifacts already and you should be receiving them in the next few days. Will you please see that the rabbitskin and cloth articles are put into the fumigating box and some benzine or gasoline thrown on them?

Can you please give the enclosed letter to Mrs. Vaughan? I would be much obliged. I have not had a letter from her for quite some time and would like to know that everything is all right at home. Please give my best to Mrs. Ripas.

Yours very truly,

F.W. Vaughan

Here he was, the white saviour of the vanishing Indian. She wondered who Knowles was and why the “pure bloods” were good for his work. The thing that fascinated her about salvage ethnography was how the ethnographers always found the Indigenous people so “savage” yet worked so hard to preserve the traditional pre-contact culture. It was all some exotic curiosity that they felt compelled to preserve yet simultaneously loathed and degraded. It sounded like he was disappointed in the loss of traditional knowledge and practices that resulted from contact with the church, yet he repeatedly referred to them as dirty and primitive. There was a visceral reaction in her. Somewhere deep. Because she was not “pure blood.” Always this seemed to be a thing in her life. She had not been expecting to confront this again.

Re-reading the letter, it seemed to her that it was the purity of blood he was interested in collecting and displaying in the museum; that the cultural objects were just symbols for him, symbols of this pure blood that he was driven to preserve. She noted the date at the top of the letter. 1916. Hitler would have been thinking along similar lines at that time, fine-tuning the anti-Semitic philosophy that would soon become an obsession for him. She thought of her own blood. The races mixing in her veins like converging rivers. Only once rivers met no one tried to divide the water, tracing the molecules back to the rivers they originated from like they did with blood. She thought of culture. Embalmed bodies under museum glass. Dioramas. Bodies frozen in action. Posed and staged. She thought of fractions.

The rest of the letters were similar, giving descriptions of his field work. There was a small box of photographs. She put on cotton gloves before flipping through them. She too felt the compulsion to preserve. Didn't want the grease of her fingers to contribute to the inevitable wearing away of the images. The descriptions printed on the backs of them were vague. The people photographed were rarely named. The photographs were labelled with things like *Indian man and wife. F.W. Vaughan, Lac Seul, 1916*. Though the pictures were from his various field expeditions over the years and were of different communities, they were all similar. The people stood in the same way. Often, they were looking to the side as if something out of the frame had caught their attention. She guessed this was to better capture their bone structure. They were gorgeous photographs of people whose stories she could not even begin to imagine.

As she flipped through the photographs, she was struck by one of them. It was a man and woman sitting in front of a wooden building. The man was hunched over. His elbows rested on his knees. His face was long, skin sagging slightly from high cheekbones. There was something in the face. Though he was quite old, the similarity to her father was uncanny. She held the picture up, looking at it more closely. On the back the description was characteristically vague. *Montagnais Indian and wife, Seven Islands, P.Q. Taken by F.W. Vaughan, 1924*. She sat for a moment in disbelief. Seven Islands was where her father was from. Sept-Îles. And the date. She looked again at the missing person poster. It was the year Vaughan disappeared. She collected all the Seven Islands photographs into a separate pile and looked through them again. There was another one that looked familiar. On the back of it was a name. *Pierre "Ti-basse" St. Onge and wife, Seven Islands, P.Q. Taken by F.W. Vaughan, 1924*. That was a name and face she knew.

It was her great-grandfather. Her grandmother's father. She tried to understand the connection. Vaughan had photographed people in her father's home community before he disappeared. What did that mean? Did Wilkes know? Had he chosen her on purpose, or was it some strange coincidence? She took a picture of the two photographs with her phone.

A chair scraped against the floor. The 5 p.m. shuffle had started. Clarice was getting her things together to leave for the night. Leor filled out a request form for copies of the 1924 Seven Islands photographs and slid it into the cubby hole beside René's office.

It was dusk when she left. The sky was overcast. The clouds opaque. When she reached the river, she turned back. On her left was the museum and, on her right, the curatorial building, curving away from each other like two lungs. She looked at the rows of windows, behind which worked countless archivists, curators, preservationists. The security guards. The barred doors and scan cards. Nestled inside these two buildings slept the nation's history, well-guarded and carefully curated. Apparently, something of her own history was in there, too. The moon rose. An orange sliver in the darkening sky. She turned back to the river for the long walk home.

Memorandum re the Disappearance of Mr. F. W. Vaughan.

On the afternoon of the 3rd Dr. Ripas and Mr. Goldwyn Vaughan called to see me. They were aware of the contents of Commissioner Starnes' letter of the 27th ultimo, and were disinclined to agree with the supposition set forth therein.

Mr. Vaugahn's idea is that his father may have reached the Caughnawaga Reserve in poor physical condition, and that he may be ill in some outlying part of the Reserve without the officials on the Reserve being aware of it.

The proposal made by Dr. Ripas and Mr. Vaughan was that the services of Charles Cooke, a superannuated employee of the Indian Affairs Department, be enlisted to accompany Mr. Vaughan to the Caughnawaga Reserve, to make a house to house search for Mr. F. W. Vaughan. That the travelling expenses of both Mr. Vaughan and Mr. Cooke (if secured) be paid by this Department and that Mr. Cooke's wages be paid by this Department. They stated that Dr. D. C. Scott was willing to communicate with Mr. Cooke with a view to securing him. The search they suggested might be extended to the St. Regis and Oka Reserves, if the initial search does not furnish information.

Dr. Camsell, to whom I spoke, after discussing the matter agreed that the search might be carried out at the expense of the Department as outlined, provided our funds could be disbursed for the purpose. The Accountant, with whom I conferred, felt that we could safely advance expense money and pay Mr. Cooke's wages, feeling that if the disbursements were questioned an Order-in-Council authorising them could be secured.

With this information in hand I telephoned Dr. Scott on Dr. Camsell's suggestion and from him learned that Mr. Cooke would be a very desirable man to conduct such a search as was suggested; that he might be secured at a rate of \$3.00 to \$3.50 per day; that he would make inquiries as to whether or not Mr. Cooke was in the city, and failing his presence there that he would communicate with him at Low, Quebec. Dr. Scott thought a month would be the outside limit for the time to be spent in searching if all three of the Indian Reserves mentioned were visited.

Dr. Scott is to communicate with me after he has heard from Mr. Cooke.

Secretary, Department of Mines.

Ottawa, November 6th, 1924.

Sleight of Hand

When Leor arrived at the resource room at her usual time of 8 am, she was surprised to see a woman already at work at the desk across from hers. Long dark hair. Straight and glossy. Like the expensive-looking women she often saw in the financial district downtown. She was hunched over an array of documents, her immaculate hair hanging around her. She looked like Leor, in a general way. That was what Leor noticed first. They looked alike, only the woman was more Indigenous looking. She looked how Leor wished to look. Her skin was darker. Her face rounder. Her features fuller. Though they both had brown eyes, the woman's smouldered, were lined in black liner. Despite the differences, they looked like they could be cousins. Sisters even. That was what she thought as the woman stood and leaned over a box labelled E314 in permanent marker.

Leor's boxes were where she had left them the night before, pushed to the edge of her workspace. She always worked at a small table deep in the farthest corner from the entrance. Though the circulation desk was still visible, as was the entrance and the door to René's office, it was quieter and more removed. Closer to the book stacks. Leor returned to the box of old photographs. Seven Islands. 1924. She flipped through them again. Discovered new anonymities: *Group of Indian men playing cards*, *Montagnais Indian woman*, *Montagnais Indian and wife*. She was looking for the photograph from the night before. Still rapt by the astonishing similarity to her father. The frustrating lack of details or names. Her father was born 27 years after the photo had been taken. Who was this man who looked exactly like him? Perhaps it was his great-uncle or grandfather. The box held no answers. Only more nameless faces. When she had flipped through all

the photographs, she went through them again searching for the photograph from the night before. She went through the box of photographs three times, thinking maybe it had gotten stuck or she had missed it. But it was gone. She checked her phone, remembering that she had photographed it. For a moment she felt afraid that it would not be there. What would it mean if it wasn't? There was an uneasy sense that her memory could not be trusted. But it was there. The last photo on her phone. Just as she remembered it. The man sitting beside his wife. Arms resting on his knees. The sweep of dark hair beneath his hat. The same eyes as her father—something timeless in them, god-like even, like looking into the eyes of a dog or a horse. Perhaps the photograph had been lost when the copies she requested were being made. She would wait until she had the copies to see if the photo was included. Temporarily appeased, she fell back into her research. Time went screwball. Hours blurred and fell away. Somehow it was almost lunch time. The letters. The photographs. The fieldnotes. How would she get through it all?

At the desk across from her, the woman was going through her own boxes. Scribbling the day away on little scraps of paper that she piled beside her. Leor was reading a list of artifacts that Vaughan had collected when a movement caught her eye. A whirl of white. She set her eyes in such a way that she could see the woman's movements but wasn't looking straight on. She saw that the woman had a little eraser tucked into her hand. Leor watched, transfixed. Sometimes the woman erased things, but sometimes she added things, scribbling onto the pages. In pencil and in pen! Leor sat in disbelief. Watching but not watching. Then another movement caught her. It was the slowness of it. The woman was reading something, holding the paper with her left hand, while her right hand rested on the desk. But her right hand was not still. Very slowly, almost

imperceptibly, it was dragging the page it rested on towards a coiled notebook that she had been making notes in. Leor thought she had only imagined it, until the woman straightened and tucked the paper under the notebook. Leor was sure of it, but she kept her eyes on the list, pretending not to notice. She felt the woman give a furtive glance her way. Then she took the notebook with the stolen page beneath it, slipped them both into her leather satchel and left for what Leor presumed to be lunch. As the woman walked out, Leor felt a dull panic, as if she had lost something significant in those papers. She repeated in her mind the reference code for the box the woman was working with: B204, f17. Over and over, her lips twitching, she silently recited the numerical prayer.

RE: F. W. VAUGHAN

Mr. F. W. Vaughan, aged 52, is one of the regular scientific staff of the Victoria Memorial Museum, Department of Mines. He occupies the position of Assistant Ethnologist in the Division of Anthropology and has been in the employ of the Department since 1912. He is married and the father of two sons, Goldwyn and Richard. His residence is 26 Broadway Ave., Ottawa, phone no. Carling 2881.

One of his duties is the scientific investigation of Indian life and customs during the summer. In pursuance of this he left in the early part of May, 1924, to undertake investigations among the Montagnais Indians of the lower St. Lawrence. He settled down at Seven Islands and had a tent near the Indian reserve, his son Goldwyn being along as camp assistant. Work with the Indians proceeded normally. He was seen in the course of the summer by Mr. P. Taverner, the Ornithologist of the Victoria Memorial Museum, at Eskimo Point, later on at Seven Islands by Prof. F.G. Speck, of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa. Mr. Vaughan and his son stayed at Seven Islands until a little after the middle of September. They reached Montreal on Saturday, Sept. 20th, by railroad via Quebec. At the railroad station Mr. Vaughan left his suitcase and sent his son ahead to Ottawa, telling him that he would cross over to the Indian reserve at Caughnawaga and be home himself in about a week. The Indian specimens collected at Seven Islands were sent home with Goldwyn Vaughan.

No suspicions were aroused until about two weeks after this, when Mrs. Vaughan, getting no word from her husband, began to have misgivings. She phoned me up Oct. 9th

to say she had no word from Mr. Vaughan and asked if I had heard from him. I had not, as a matter of fact, heard from Mr. Vaughan since July 18th, at which time he was working steadily and with good results at Seven Islands. The tone of that letter was cheerful and optimistic, but it is a little surprising that I did not hear more often from him during the summer, as on previous trips he had been in the habit of writing a number of times during the season's work.

As soon as Mrs. Vaughan informed me of his prolonged silence, I wired, Oct. 9th. There was no answer to this. The next day I wired to the medical officer on the reserve who informed me that Vaughan had not been seen on the reserve this year. Inquiries made at my request by the Dep't of Indian Affairs at Caughnawaga, St. Regis, and Oka reserves elicited no information as to Vaughan's whereabouts.

On Sunday, Oct. 12th, Mrs. Vaughn had become so thoroughly alarmed that she sent her sons to Montreal by motor car to see if they could trace their father. They wired to her Tuesday morning, Oct. 14th, to the effect that no trace of Mr. Vaughan could be found.

The only details I can think of that might help to throw light on Mr. Vaughan's disappearance are:

1. Goldwyn Vaughan seems to have intimated that his father was not in particularly good health at all times during the trip. He suffered a good deal from his stomach and seemed considerably depressed at times. Mrs. Vaughan and Goldwyn could probably give significant details if asked for information.

2. Mr. Vaughan could not have had much money on him. There was advanced to him in all by the Dep't of Mines \$1165.00 as follows:

May 5, 1924 – Cheque no. 318	\$500.00
July 2, “ – “ “ 775	400.00
“ 26, “ – “ “ 1003	<u>265.00</u>
	\$1165.00

Most of this money would have been spent on railroad fares, camp expenses, information obtained from Indians, and specimens purchased at Seven Islands.

Pictures of Mr. Vaughn could be obtained from Mrs. Vaughan as soon as her sons reach Ottawa, which should be today.

E. Ripas,

Chief, Division of

Anthropology,

Victoria Memorial

Museum.

October 14, 1924.

The Colourless Woman

When Leor's back hurt from hunching over the table for so long, she got up to stretch. The woman had not returned. Her things were still spread across the desk. Leor walked by, trying to get a better look at the sprawl of file folders. Pages of thin handwritten papers fanned across the table. Her eyes darted trying to take in as much as she could. She put her arms in the air and leaned slightly to the left and then the right. There hadn't been anyone else in the room that morning except for Clarice, who appeared to be on a lunch break. Despite that fact, she still pretended to stretch as she leaned over the woman's desk to get a better view. In the corner was a photograph, half covered with papers. Only a corner was visible. Not enough to tell what the photograph was of, but her heart quickened at the thought that it might be the photo she had been looking at the night before. The one now missing from the box. She reached for it but heard footsteps. Startled, she sprang back to her desk just before Clarice resumed her post at the circulation desk, and her glum fingers began clicking at her keyboard once more. Leor's heart constricted. Possessiveness snaked through her, coiling in her chest so that it was hard to breathe. Was that really the photograph? She had no reason to think so, except that she was sure she saw the woman steal a paper from one of the files. And what havoc was she causing with her pens and erasers? There was a truth Leor was seeking, and for all she knew this woman was erasing it right off the pages of history.

She needed to move. She needed air. Outside, the sky was a fury of roiling gray clouds. The air was oppressive and held the memory of rain, the smell of wet concrete. Instantly, her clothes stuck to her in the humidity. Cars made wet sibilant sounds as they

drove along the slick streets. Pools of rainwater formed in the dips of the uneven sidewalk, reflecting the steely sky, obliterating the difference between up and down. She stood, disoriented, in this concrete world of grey. It was always like this. After spending hours in the fluorescent lights of the archives, the outside world felt like a waking dream.

A thick cloud of smoke hung heavy on the air. Leor turned towards its source—it was the woman, leaning against the building. A long cigarette between her fingers. Church bells chimed in the distance. A woman in a yellow raincoat walked by. An elderly couple with matching red umbrellas. There was colour everywhere in the gray world that surrounded them. But everything about the woman was black and white. She leaned against the brick wall in a haze of smoke. Leor was always surprised that people still smoked. It was weird to see. Like looking at another time. A sign of class. People who were hard up smoked. People who bought 2L bottles of pop and ate McDonald's and took the bus and drank too much. You could tell just from looking at them. At the grayness of their skin and the crumpled look of their faces. Leor knew this because she herself had smoked. Had come from a long line of smokers, most of whom had passed away from various cancers. And she too had taken the bus and drank too much and never had enough money to eat or live. But the woman did not fit into this observation that Leor had made over the years. The woman stood, stark and bare against the museum.

Seeing her away from her desk for the first time, Leor took in all her details. Her impeccable clothing. Her long glossy hair. The long form fitting black skirt that fell just below the knees. The black high heeled shoes. Impossible to walk in. The thin white blouse. Flawless and unwrinkled. The woman was slim and tall. Bony and canine-like with smouldering eyes. She leaned against the museum and blew smoke into the air.

Peering at the world with her dark eyes. She looked like an Indigenous woman who had taken over an Angela Carter novel. Leor stared against her will and when the woman turned to look at her, Leor looked down and dug in her purse, pretending to look for something. She could see in the periphery that the woman was approaching her. She dug deeper into her purse in vexation, wishing she could crawl into it and disappear. Beautiful people made her uncomfortable.

“Need a light?” the woman asked.

Startled, Leor looked up.

“Oh. No. Thank you. I don’t smoke,” she said, pulling her hand from her bag.

The woman shrugged. Blew a cloud of smoke out. It hung in the breezeless air between them. Leor held her breath, turned away from the toxic plumes.

“You were working in the archives, right?”

Leor nodded.

“I overheard that you’re researching Frederick Vaughan,” the woman said.

Leor tried to remember who she might have spoken with that morning and what conversation this woman might have overheard, but she couldn’t recall speaking with anyone. “I’m a genealogist. I’m working on a family tree.”

“Well, you should be careful what you look into.”

“How’s that?” Leor asked.

“You just never know what you might find is all.”

The woman took another drag of her cigarette and blew a cloud of smoke out. She smoked 100s and had the glamour of Alanis Obomsawin.

“Isn’t that the hope? To find something you didn’t expect to find?”

“I guess that depends on what you find. Sometimes the things you find you wish you hadn’t.” The woman stubbed her cigarette out on the stone wall of the museum and threw the butt in a garbage bin.

She sauntered towards the museum steps. The crowd seemed to part as she moved along the sidewalk. A man held the door for her. She didn’t even acknowledge him.

Leor stood there watching her walk into the museum wondering what it was she had found in those boxes and what she was doing with all the documents she was stealing. What she was scribbling into the margins.

At the end of the day, as Leor was packing up her things to leave, the woman approached her.

“Meet me for a drink tonight. 9 o’clock?” She scribbled an address onto a piece of paper and slid it across the desk towards Leor. She was gone before Leor could say anything. She looked down at the paper. It was the address for The Deuce. She put the piece of paper in her pocket and tried to imagine what drinks with the archive thief would be like.

REPORT OF D. JENNESS ON HIS INVESTIGATION AT CAUGHNWAGA
RESERVE
RE DISAPPEARANCE OF MR. F.W. VAUGHAN

Accompanied by Mr. Goldwyn Vaughan, son of Mr. F. W. Vaughan, I left Ottawa for Montreal on November 9, 1924. We called immediately on Inspector J.W. Phillips, officer in charge of the R.C.M.P. at Montreal. Mr. Phillips allowed us to examine all his files on the subject and placed a sergeant and police car at our disposal throughout the period of our investigations.

The same afternoon we crossed over to Caughnawaga and interviewed the three Indians who had recognised Mr. Vaughan's photograph and claimed that he had visited them on or around September 20. The information we secured not only corroborated what the police had obtained from the same Indians but strengthened it in several details.

We next visited the house of a Mrs. Dybeau, the only informant used by Mr. Vaughan in 1912 who was still living on the reserve and had not been questioned. Mrs. Dybeau's house, which is about four miles from the village, was closed on our arrival. It was still closed the following morning when we called again.

On November 10 we called on Dr. J.H.T. Jacobs, the medical officer on the reserve, himself a Caughnawaga Indian living in the heart of the village. We found that Dr. Jacobs did not attach very much weight to the evidence given by the three Indians who claimed to have seen Mr. Vaughan, for two reasons: first, because so long a period

had elapsed since Mr. Vaughan's disappearance that the memories of the Indians could not be entirely trusted; and, secondly, because Mr. Vaughan, knowing Dr. Jacobs, would naturally have called at his house. It appears, however, that Dr. Jacobs was absent from the village around September 20. We further questioned him as to the advisability of instituting a search of the fields and scrub land on the reserve, and he stated emphatically that such a search would be useless, because practically every foot of the reserve was traversed almost daily by golfers, hunters, children, etc. The same opinion was expressed by the native policeman.

We next interviewed Mr. Lefebvre, the station employee who had identified the photograph of Mr. Vaughan as being that of a man who had called at the railway station on September 20. His information was merely a reaffirmation of what he had told the police.

Finally we examined the Lachine Railway Bridge because there was some evidence to show that Mr. Vaughan, if it were he who had visited the reserve, might have attempted to return from Caughnawaga to Montreal by this route. We walked a few yards along the northern end of the bridge, which was said to be the most dangerous portion. Mr. Goldwyn Vaughan expressed the opinion that his father, if in good health, would have found little difficulty in crossing. The bridge is, however, considered dangerous, although it is frequently used by the Indians.

Conclusion

The evidence, while not decisive, distinctly supports the view that Mr. Vaughan visited Caughnawaga on September 20 with the intention of purchasing some ethnological specimens; furthermore that, not wishing to return by the ferry, and finding

no train to Montreal until two or three hours later, he attempted to cross the Lachine Railway Bridge. Beyond this no trace of him could be discovered. The suit-case and pack-bag that he had left in the Check-Room at Bonaventure Station in Montreal early in the morning were evidently not taken to Caughnawaga.

I cannot speak too highly of the efforts of the R.C.M.P. at Montreal in endeavoring to uncover the mystery. They appeared to have done everything that was possible, and my own investigations merely confirmed what they had already discovered. The great facilities given me by Inspector J.W. Phillips, and by Sergeant Tapp, whom he kindly placed at my service, enabled me to accomplish in a day and a half what would otherwise have taken me three or four days.

APPENDIX

I. Evidence of Curotte, Curio Dealer, Caughnawaga

The man whose photograph was shown me (Mr. F.W. Vaughan) visited me about 2 p.m. on or around September 20. He was a thin, middle-aged man carrying no luggage. He wore glasses, which he once took off to wipe, remarking that it was a nuisance to have to wear them. He wanted to buy a chief's costume, one that was well made, with good bead-work. He asked me the Indian word for canoe and gave me the name in some other Indian language. He said that he had come by the ferry from Lachine and spoke of the big improvements in Caughnawaga with the ferry service. Then he asked about the Lachine Railway Bridge. I told him that it was considered dangerous, but that the Indians used it. He said that he would like to take a chance on it, just to say that he had crossed it;

so I advised him to keep on the left-hand track facing any possible train. After this I guided him to the house of Two-Axe, to enquire there for a chief's costume.

II. Evidence of Anna America, old woman, cousin of Two-Axe

The man whose photograph was shown me was the same man who visited Two-Axe soon after noon on or about September 20. He was a middle-aged man wearing glasses and carried a book or paper in his hand. (When shown a red Survey notebook she said it might have been like that). I did not understand his conversation with Two-Axe, for I do not speak English. He stayed about an hour, or perhaps less.

III. Evidence of Two-Axe, Caughnawaga Indian

I did not recognise the photograph of Mr. Vaughan when it was first shown to me by the police, but I remembered the man when reminded by my cousin, Anna America. The reason I did not remember at first was that I am visited by many strangers. This man (Mr. Vaughan) visited me on or about September 20, sometime between noon and 2 p.m. He was a thin man, not in good health, about 50 years of age, wearing glasses. He carried no bag of any description but seemed to have something in his hand; it may have been a camera, but I do not remember. I think he carried too a book or a paper, although he did not write anything down. He wore a cap, and his suit was grey. Mr. Curotte brought him to my house. Anna America was present at the time, but no one else. He wanted to buy Indian things, genuine old things, and he appeared to know more about Indians than I did. He said something about Lorette (Indian reserve near Quebec), but what it was I do not

remember. He also talked about a museum and said he came from Ottawa. I showed him my peace-pipe and told him a trifling story about the Caughnawaga Indians. He asked about wampum; I told him about the collection the priest possesses and thought when he left me that he had gone to see the priest (the priest has no recollection of seeing Mr. Vaughan). Altogether we talked from half an hour to an hour.

IV. Evidence of Mr. Lefebvre, employee at railway station, Caughnawaga

The man whose photograph was shown me (Mr. Vaughan) visited the railway station between 2 and 3 p.m. on or about September 20. He carried no luggage of any description. He examined the timetable, sat down for ten or fifteen minutes, then descended the embankment to the road without speaking to anyone. I did not see where he went.

N.B. In weighing this evidence it should be remembered that the Indians have been discussing the matter among themselves a great deal since the first enquiries were made and have probably added a few descriptive details, taken originally from the police description, but now confused in the Indians' memories. For example, I regard Two-Axe's statement that the man spoke of a museum and said he came from Ottawa as probably derived from local gossip, since he made no mention of this in his evidence to the police.

Nov. 1924

My What Big Teeth You Have

The bus let her off on an unlit street on the outskirts of lower town. The sun had set, and the humidity was lifting. Fog rose from the cool ground as Leor crossed the dark cobblestoned street. A crescent moon cut through the black sky. Venus winking beside it. The night was silent. There was only the echo of her footsteps. There were no cars and no passersby, only a man sleeping in the entryway of an abandoned building, his back towards her.

Off the sidewalk, a short concrete staircase led down to the bar. The Deuce. The name flickered in neon, faltering, about to go out. It sat in the basement of a large brick building from the turn of the century. An ornate metal streetlight by the stairs. The bulb burned out.

She descended the shadowy steps, pushed through the heavy door. Inside, the bar was mostly empty. A man was hunched over the bar. A beer and a tumbler of amber liquor in front of him. In the corner two men were playing pool. They looked up when she entered. Stopped playing and stared. Jim Morrison crooned *There's blood in the streets. It's up to my ankles. There's blood in the streets. It's up to my knees.* She wanted to disappear to avoid their pursuing eyes.

The woman sat at a table in the far corner. Even in her classy heels and white shirt, she somehow didn't look out of place. Leor had a weak spot for dive bars. Likely the result of descending from a long line of heavy drinkers. There was something in her that belonged in a place like this, and she thought maybe the woman had that too.

The table was small and round. Leor sat down, the half-moon back of the chair pressed below her shoulder blades. Their hands nearly touched; the table was so small.

Theo, the bartender, paunchy and balding, appeared. Nodded his chin at Leor in a silent hello. A dirty rag hanging from his pocket. The woman drained the remnants of her drink and ordered two Black Russians. Doubles.

Pool balls clattered as a new game started. *Blood screams her brain as they chop off her fingers. Blood will be born in the birth of a nation. Blood is the rose of mysterious union.*

“I don’t even know your name. I’m Leor.” She extended her hand.

“Minuat,” the woman said, taking her hand. Leor didn’t shake it but held it for a moment as though it were something delicate.

“I kind of feel like I know you for some reason.”

“Oh yeah? What do you think you know about me?” The woman raised a dark eyebrow. Eyes smouldering.

I know you’re a thief, Leor said in her mind, but out loud she said: “I know you spend a great deal of time doing archival research.”

“Wow. Observant.”

Theo returned with their drinks, setting them on the table with care. His hairy fingers pushing them into the centre of the table. His eyes fixed on Minuat’s chest. She looked up at him, asked for an ashtray. His face blanched.

“You can’t smoke in here, lady. You haven’t been able to smoke in here in almost 30 years. You just get out of jail or something?” He was staring at her tits.

She straightened her back, giving him a better view.

“Yeah, I just did 30 years. I raped my old man with a pool cue. He didn’t make it.”

Theo laughed nervously.

“She’s a riot, this one,” he said to Leor. It sounded more like a question. His bulging eyes shifting back and forth. “You can smoke out the back. Door’s over there.” He was shaking his head as he walked back to the bar.

Leor laughed.

“Shall we?” Minuat picked up her bag and her drink and walked towards the back door.

Leor noticed that it was the same leather satchel she carried at the archives. Were there stolen documents in there? The photograph? For a moment she was flooded with an overwhelming urge to grab the satchel and run.

In the shadows of the alley behind the bar, Leor saw that Minuat had traded her knee length skirt from that afternoon for one much shorter. She stood in her heels, a smoke in one hand and her drink in the other. Her satchel hanging from her shoulder. Leor felt crummy in her jeans and considered going to the washroom to knot her t-shirt into a kind of crop top. But then she thought of the clientele. The pervy pool players. Lecherous Theo.

She looked up at the visible strip of sky. The day’s rain had subsided, and the sky was cloudless. Speckled starlight breaking the dark. Minuat lit a cigarette. The flame of the lighter cast a red glow on her face. Her cheeks hollowed as she sucked the smoke in.

“Your name. I’ve never heard it before, but it sounds familiar,” Leor said.

“It’s Innu-aimun.”

“You’re Innu?”

“Of course. Aren’t you?”

“Well, yes. But I’m mixed.”

“Like, you have mixed feelings about it?”

Leor laughed.

“My father’s Innu. My mother was Italian. I grew up in the city.”

“Do you know about the wolverine?” Minuat asked.

“Are there wolverines here?” Leor asked, eyes wide as whiskey tumblers.

Minuat laughed. “The trickster.”

“Oh. No, I don’t know any of the stories. I’ve only been to Uashat a few times to visit my aunt and my cousin. I can barely even speak French.”

“Did you learn much from your dad?”

“Nah, his father took him when he was little. He grew up in Montreal. He’s never been back. He doesn’t know anything about the language or culture.”

Minuat nodded.

“Wolverine created the world. Turtle Island. Crafted it together with water and soil that mink brought up from the depths of a flood.”

“Kuekuatsheu,” Leor said.

“So, you do know.”

“I taught myself some things. The power of Google.”

“Do you think I look like a wolverine?” Minuat asked. She turned her face this way and that so Leor could take in every angle.

“HmMMM. Well, your eyes are small like a wolverine’s and your nose is kind of thin and pointed. But in a cute way,” she added. “Not like a pointed witch nose or anything. Is that the look you’re going for? Wolverine?”

Minuat bared her teeth at her. They were sharp and pointed. She quickly shifted into a smile. Her red lipstick looked like blood, which was jarring because her smile was sweet.

Leor had not noticed this oddity of teeth before. Perhaps it was a trick of the light.

“Nobody fucks with a wolverine,” Minuat said.

“Who would fuck with you anyways? Going around raping men with pool cues.”

Minuat laughed and took a drag of her long, elegant cigarette.

“You gotta keep them on their toes. They’ll take everything they can get.”

Leor did not need to scan through many of her encounters with men to know that this was true. Maybe it wasn’t true of all men, but it was true of most. But Leor was a creep magnet, so that could have had something to do with it.

They went back inside. Sat in the corner drinking Black Russians until their blood got warm and their tongues relaxed. At some point they began ordering shots of sambuca. Had ended up sitting side by side engrossed in a lively debate about Grey Owl. Cultural hero or imposter? Leor could see both sides, but her mind was fixated on his doting way with beavers, and she kept bringing them up as Minuat rambled through the major life events of the man formerly known as Archie Belaney.

Leor leaned back against the wall feeling the coolness of the bricks on the back of her neck. Pretendians. It seemed they had existed for as long as colonization. As a mixed-blood person she sometimes felt like one. Likely others thought she was one. Because her

skin was light. Because her nose was thin. Because she grew up in the city. Because she didn't have a status card.

The music had mellowed. She closed her eyes and listened to Roy Orbison. *Just runnin' scared each place we go*. The room wobbled. Opening her eyes steadied her.

“Can you watch my bag?” Minuat asked as she got up and walked to the bathroom.

She watched Minuat amble towards the washroom. Her muscular legs taut with each flawless step in her heels. She walked as though they were part of her feet. As though she wasn't drunk at all. Leor watched in amazement. She would be a pinball in those shoes, ricocheting off every proximate thing. The men, still playing pool, had grown rowdy. One whistled under his breath as Minuat walked by. They elbowed each other. Her impressiveness making them too afraid to actually talk to her. Instead, they behaved like teenage boys.

Leor snickered, eyed Minuat's bag. Here was her moment to rifle through it. The impulse was strong. But she was buzzed and was uncertain of her ability to be discrete. She closed her eyes. The approaching clicks of Minuat's heels drew her eyes open. She took in the vision with a mixture of adoration and envy. The long hair. The faded red lipstick. The eyes bleary and dark. Black eyeliner smudges that somehow only made her more attractive. Minuat never felt like an imposter. Leor was sure of it.

“How can you walk in those shoes?” she asked in awe as Minuat sat down, tossed back the remnants of a Black Russian.

“It's easy. Here.” She slid her feet out of them and handed them to Leor.

Doubtful, she put them on. They were tight and pinched her toes, but they didn't slip off her heels, which is what always made her trip in pumps. She rolled up the bottoms of her jeans to see them better.

“Heeeeeey. There you go. Look at youuu!” Minuat laughed.

Leor modeled the shoes, pointing one leg out and then the other. Hand behind her head like a 50s calendar girl.

She swayed back and forth in what she imagined to be a sexy saunter as she made her way to the washroom. Just as she had impressed herself with the fact that she had not yet fallen or bumped into anything, one of the men playing pool walked towards her. Patsy Cline crooned loudly from the speakers. *I've got your memory, Or, has it got me, I really don't know, But I know it won't let me be.* An incongruous delight like so much of that hazy evening.

The man was in front of her now. His mustache made her think of Yosemite Sam. How she never realized the significance of that name before. The colonial history of it. He was a close talker apparently. His eyes small, and his breath rancid. His plaid shirt smelled like sweat and cigarette smoke. He slurred at her, “hey honey, where you going?” He was pressing her up against the wall with his body. His hand on her waist moving towards her chest.

“What the fuck?” She kneed him in the balls to free herself.

“You little bitch,” he yelled, grabbing her by the hair, pulling her head back.

Then the sound of wind. A loud crack. The man held his head cursing. Minuat stood behind him, a splintered pool cue in her hand.

“I’ll call the police if you don’t get out of here,” Theo yelled from behind the bar, waving the receiver of a land line phone in the air as a threat. Was he yelling at Leor and Minuat or at Yosemite Sam? Leor didn’t know. The women took off running. Grabbed their bags and catapulted into the night through the backdoor. Past the place where she choked out Wilkes two nights earlier. Leor stumbled in the heels. Kicked them off and carried them. Her bare feet pounding against the cobblestone streets. After a while of running through a maze of back alleys, they leaned against a wall to catch their breath. A rat, large and hunched slunk along the dark seam of the wall, avoiding the moonlight. There was something in the way it cloaked itself in the shadows that made her shudder.

“Here.” Minuat handed Leor her shoes.

She had forgotten about them, would have left them there under the table if Minuat hadn’t grabbed them. The bottoms of her feet were black. They leaned against the wall, putting their shoes on in the moonlight.

They walked past the dumpsters for the neighbouring stores and restaurants, the weird uplifting slogans painted on them: Stay positive, Keep your chin up, Don’t give up. Their steps on the pavement and panted breaths echoed against the brick walls, making the alley a living thing that breathed and throbbed and sensed. Rats tucked themselves into the shadowed edges of the night. Watching. A blurry moon behind cotton clouds. The memory of running punching in her ears.

When they came out the other side, drunk college students were giving each other stumbly piggyback rides down the narrow sidewalk, slurring the words to “Dirty Old Town” at the top of their lungs. They were stocky and athletic looking. Football players most likely. Probably making their way home from the Byward Market. Leor and Minuat

merged into the group. Sang along. Minuat handed her heels to Leor and jumped on the back of a short but hulky blonde kid who kept calling her “milady” in some weird anachronistic act of gallantry. With her knees locked around his elbows, he ran forward like a bull, making it about half a block before he stumbled sideways and crashed into a brick wall. Leor ran to catch up to them. They were tangled on the sidewalk. His blonde hair was in his eyes. “Sorry milady,” he mumbled but Minuat was laughing, untangling herself from him and helping him up.

“Gordy! Come on!” his friends yelled from up the street.

He jogged towards them backwards, keeping his eyes on Minuat.

“Goodnight, my Lord,” Minuat called after him.

He bowed and then turned and ran off into the night.

“Want to go for a night cap?” Minuat asked, pulling a brown leather wallet from her pocket. She flipped it open, fingered the two twenty-dollar bills tucked into the billfold. “Care of ... Gordon McAllister.” She squinted down at the driver’s license housed in the little plastic window, the face of the jock-boy.

Leor checked her phone. 11:30pm. “I should really be getting home,” she said. She stood under a streetlight feeling raw and woozy. There was so much she wanted in that moment—to continue these nocturnal adventures with Minuat, to drink until every memory disappeared, to know what was in Minuat’s satchel, to have all the answers to the puzzle that her time at the archives had become, to know how to not lose her house, to know anything at all because even the most basic certainties had seemed to come undone in her.

They parted ways on the main stretch, and Leor took the bus back downtown. It was only when she got to her front door that she realized she had lost her keys. Her mind scanned the events of that night as if she could find them that way. But they could have fallen from her pocket at any time. During her bustle with Yosemite Sam. Running down the web of alleys. Jostling with the college kids. She walked around the house trying to find a way to break in, but she was too buzzed to be effective. She contemplated sleeping in a park but felt too exposed. There was nothing to cover herself with. It was too dark to make herself a well-hidden bed. Not knowing where to go she went to the only place she could think of.

In Utero

Dave the security guard let her in. She figured no one would be in the archives building, so she tried the neighbouring museum first. She had to knock on the front door for ten minutes before he heard her. While she knocked, she pressed her forehead against the glass to sober herself. Her breath made a moon-shaped fog on the glass which was smeared by her nose when she heard him coming and turned to look.

“Leor? Is everything okay?” he asked, scanning the surrounding area, his flashlight swaying on his hip.

“I forgot my keys in my desk. Couldn’t get into my house.”

He let her in. Followed behind her.

“I can just get them if you have other things you need to do.”

“Oh, it’s no problem. I’ll walk you down.” He twirled his flashlight in his fingers as if it were a drumstick. The safety lights on either side of the hallway provided enough light for them to see where they were going. She had never taken the underground tunnel to the archives, though she knew it existed. The way seemed straightforward, and she made a mental map of it as they walked.

“Thanks for this,” she said as she opened a desk drawer hoping to find her keys there. “Hmmm. They don’t seem to be in here.” She opened another drawer. Moved some things around.

His walkie talkie crackled. The static so loud she nearly jumped.

“Can you check Zone 4, Dave? Something keeps triggering the sensor by entrance 5.” The voice cracked in and out.

“Sure thing. Be right there.”

The silence seemed louder once the static died off.

Leor opened a third drawer. Rustled some papers around. Bent down to peer inside it. “I’ll be okay. I’m sure they’re here somewhere. I can let myself out.”

“I have to lock up behind you. I’ll be right back.”

As his whistling drifted down the hallway, Leor made her way back the way they had come, carefully muting her footsteps as best as she could.

She rarely visited the museum. There was something about it that creeped her out. Like taxidermized animals. There was something unnatural about it. Grotesque even. She took the stairs, hoping that would put distance between her and Dave. That he’d assume she found her keys and left.

On the third floor, she found herself standing in front of a teepee. It sat at the entrance of a hallway of dioramas. Beneath the sparse security lights, the frozen diorama figures cast long shadows beyond their glass enclosures and were eaten by darkness. A red light blinked from somewhere down the hall, making the walls pulse.

Exhausted, she crawled into the teepee, curled herself into it, wrapped in blankets she borrowed from one of the nearby displays. She worried that there were security cameras. That Dave had seen her sneaking around. That he’d kick her out, and she’d have nowhere to go. Every sound made her jump—the occasional electric buzz that seemed to emanate from the walls, the crackling of the walkie talkie echoing from somewhere far below her.

It was dark in the teepee, and the night sounds of the museum were unnerving. But when she closed her eyes, her body was so light. She floated, her mind dispersing, a

dandelion turned to seed, drifting on a lazy current of air. And then a metal door banged shut in the distance. Footsteps on the stairs, slamming her back to earth. The dull thud of rubber soles filled her with panic as the footsteps neared. She lay there, heart racing, staring into the dark, afraid to breathe, afraid to move. But the footsteps didn't stop. They continued past the teepee, moving down the hallway of dioramas, flooding her with relief as they receded into the distance. When she could no longer hear them, she drifted off to sleep once more. But the footsteps returned. Regular as a clock, waking her every time. It had to be Dave making his rounds. She could see him clearly in her mind walking past the totem poles in the entry way, twirling his flashlight in his fingers, climbing the stairs and walking towards her. He circled the edge of her dreams. His flashlight whirling through the dark.

Lying in the replica teepee in a kind of half sleep, she could sense the life in the things around her. The 93,450 boxes of archival records in the climate-controlled basement, the skeletons that lay in glass cases, the thousands of objects in storage and on display, the uprooted totem poles, the canoes propped up behind rope fences to keep them from the pining hands of visitors. There was a sighing sound like the tide coming in and out. The ectopic pieces of Indigenous cultures from across the country filling up this curated memory bank. And in the middle of this brain, Leor lay curled, sleeping fitfully in the rustling night.

Her dreams were populated with auditory shadows. Nothing really happened. A woman was laughing in the distance. A man hushing her, but his voice held laughter too. A rustling of clothing. Soft mew-like moans.

The nebulous auditory shadows solidified into 3D figures on the darkened stage of her mind. A room formed from the darkness. Vaughan stood beside a glass display case. A west coast style headdress on his head. He had the same wire rimmed glasses, the same grey suit from the missing person photo. She was not in this dream. Was only an observer. Of this man and a woman beside him. Dressed as Indians in an empty museum. The woman had a shoulder length bob. A bone choker around her neck. A buckskin dress. Fringe trim. He tried to weave her hair into two braids, one on each side of her lunar face, but the hair was too short. Unbound, it slid free. He kissed her neck below the ear. Her head fell back, and there were traces of Minuat in the fine bones of her face, the exposed neck.

The museum was dark. Vaughan took a small key from the pocket of his sports coat. Opened the glass case beside him and removed something. Put it in the woman's hand. A knife. Bone handle. Curved blade. A premonition in the woman's open palm. Leor recognized the knife as her own. Watched the woman's hand close around it. Tuck it into a pocket. Then he took the woman's hand. Led her past the display cases of bows and arrowheads. Birch bark containers and tobacco pouches. To a teepee in the corner. He held back the opening for her. He went in after her. Leor was left to hover, a ghost above the glass cases. Their rustling clothes. Shocks of breath. Moans that vibrated the walls of the room, the walls of her brain. Rising and falling in time with her breath until they were indistinguishable.

Keys

Dim light funnelled in through the seams of the caribou skin that covered the teepee poles. Leor strained to listen. There was only silence. She checked her phone. 5:45 am. She'd barely slept at all. Taking her bag and returning the blankets to the nearby display, she snuck to the washroom, slinking down the hallways like the alley rats from the night before. She brushed her teeth and washed her face in the bathroom sink, and remembering the blackened soles of her feet, she washed those too, climbing onto the counter to get her feet under the tap, lathering the soap up in her hands and scrubbing her feet until they were clean. Once the dirty water swirled down the drain, she rinsed the sink out. With her makeup bag upturned on the counter, she did the best she could with her face. When the first archivists arrived at 8 am, she was already at work, nearing the end of Vaughan's correspondence, longing to find out what happened to him, what connection this missing man had to her family.

Ottawa, Ont., Jan. 22, 1925.

Mrs. F.W. Vaughan,

26 Broadway Ave.,

Ottawa.

Dear Mrs. Vaughan,

Under another cover I am sending you the mail that has accumulated here for Mr. Vaughan. I do not know if there is anything of importance in it, but I thought it best to have you decide whether to keep any of it, or to destroy it. We have, of course, no claim on this mail.

The Secretary of the Director is desirous to have all identification cards issued for 1924 returned to him. As I understand that Mr. Vaughan had sent in his identification card from Montreal, I wonder if you would let me have it at your convenience. I should be greatly obliged to you.

I hope that you are keeping well.

With very best wishes for the new year.

Yours very sincerely,

Chief, Division of Anthropology.

Victoria Memorial Museum.

ES/AEP

Ottawa, Ont., Jan. 28, 1925.

Mrs. F.W. Vaughan,

26 Broadway Ave.,

Ottawa,

Ontario.

Dear Mrs. Vaughan,

The enclosed statement covers camp equipment credited to Mr. Vaughan during the summer season of 1924. I should be very grateful to you if you could have these transferred to the Museum in the near future. They are very eager to clean up all the records for this fiscal year.

Yours very sincerely,

Chief, Division of Anthropology.

Victoria Memorial Museum.

ES/AEP

Ottawa, Ont., Jan. 29, 1925.

Mrs. F.W. Vaughan,

26 Broadway Ave.,

Ottawa.

Dear Mrs. Vaughan,

Enclosed I beg leave to send you a set of Mr. Vaughan's prints for 1924 which you may keep as your personal set also three personal films.

Yours very sincerely,

Chief, Division of Anthropology.

Victoria Memorial Museum.

ES/AEP

The final page of his correspondence was a copy of the missing person poster that Wilkes had given her. She put the folder down and stretched her legs. She had been so rapt she had lost her sense of time again. Had a long time passed or a little? Hours or minutes? Something about this research was eroding her sense of reality. She reached for Vaughan to anchor her. Reflected on all that she had read.

Had he really tried to take the bridge back to Lachine and fallen into the St. Lawrence? Had he even gone to Caughnawaga at all? And why had he sent his identification home if he was still doing work buying specimens at Caughnawaga?

She could see him clearly. His lanky form on the bridge. His glasses. Jenness noted that he had complained to Curotte about wearing them. Maybe they had fallen off while he was on the bridge. Perhaps he had looked down at the rushing water below and they slid off his face. The world blurred. He took a misstep. Tumbled down into the roiling water. But she felt that wasn't it. What it actually *was* she had no idea.

She flipped through the pages again looking for something to stick out to her. And then there it was. What stood out to her was his absence. In the final pages of this 12-years-long file of his correspondence, his voice disappeared, was consumed by other voices. The file tapered off into the search.

There was something in the Seven Islands photographs. She was sure of it. Something about those photos inexplicably drew her to them. And she found herself again flipping through them.

She was halfway through the box when Minuat walked in.

“You must have dropped these last night,” she said, placing Leor’s keys on the table in front of her. “How you feeling today?”

“Surprisingly not horrible.”

Minuat looked well-rested and pristine. Leor didn’t bother asking her how she felt.

“Where’d you find them?” Leor asked, tucking the keys deep in her bag. When she looked up Minuat was walking the stacks, out of earshot.

A hangover was dawning. Bile inching up the back of her throat. Hours that had only just seemed to fly by began to drag. By mid-afternoon her sleepless night in the museum of ghosts was catching up to her. Her stomach lurched and heaved. She vomited in the bathroom. Splashed cold water on her face.

“Can I get some copies made?” she asked, poking her pale head into René’s office.

She had the form filled out already and handed it to him.

An hour later, with a turkey sandwich and a coffee in hand and photocopies of Vaughan’s correspondence in her bag, she took the riverside path back to the bridge downtown.

When she got in sight of her house, the hairs on her arms and neck stood up. Something eerie hung on the air. It got stronger as she made her way to the front door. A

vague sense of dread pumped through her. There was a smear of red by the doorknob. A musty smell like a wet animal or something dead. What seemed to be bloody paw prints on the door and on the front steps. The prints were big. They looked to be from a large dog. A cougar or a lynx. She stood for a bewildered moment, trying to understand what she was seeing. A crumpled orange thing caught her eye. It was lying in the patchy dirt between the front steps and the wilted evergreen shrubs that lined the front of the house. Hunching beside it to get a better look, she saw it was the masticated remains of a tabby cat. Its neck chewed. Its heart intact and still attached. Housed in the protection of bloody rib bones. What had done this? At first, she thought an owl but what about the paw prints? Uneasiness settled in her. She looked around to see if she was being watched. Was this some kind of warning or threat? Or was it a natural occurrence?

Inside, things were just as odd. The bloody paw prints were in the house as well. They tracked from the front foyer towards the living room where they got fainter, shapeshifted into human footprints, and disappeared onto the red Value Village living room rug. The atmosphere felt strange. Even though she had only been away for one night, she felt as though she were in a stranger's house. But there on the coffee table were the piles of unpayable bills. The Notice of Tax Sale letter. The stacks of novels.

She stood by the front door listening, trying to hear if a wild animal was somewhere in the house. Hearing only silence, she took a rolling pin from the kitchen for protection and searched room by room, in closets, and under beds, couches, desks, and tables, in the bathtub, and in the basement, and when she had searched everywhere she could think to look, she took an old shoe box and collected the remains of the cat from the front yard. She placed it under a cedar tree out back and put tobacco down with it.

She thought leaving it out would be better than burying it. At least this way it could nourish something.

Spent from the adrenaline and the hangover, she sunk down onto the couch. Taking the photocopies and notebook from her bag and setting them down on the coffee table, she noticed her laptop. The screen was partially open. Had she left it open? She didn't usually. When she flipped it open fully, she saw that it was still on. Word was open. What had she been working on in Word? She tried to remember what she had done in the last 48 hours and when she had last worked on the laptop, but she couldn't remember leaving anything open. On the righthand side of the open document was a little dialogue box. *Welcome back! Pick up where you left off.* She clicked on it. It brought her to another page of the document. It was a list of museum specimens. The list went on and on. When had she put this on her computer? She had no recollection of doing so.

List of Specimens from the Montagnais Indians of Seven Islands, P.Q.

Montagnais, Seven Islands

- 2 Decorated Bark Boxes, 1 with lid. The designs represent trees and vegetation.
- 1 Decorated Bark Box, without lid.
- 2 Birch Bark Comb Cases. Decorated with geometrical and tree designs.
- 1 Plain Birch Bark Cup.
- 1 Plain Birch Bark Plate – used for Maple Sugar.
- 1 Decorated large wooden ladle – used for lifting grease from stewed meat and broth.
- 2 Small Spoons – used by individuals in eating grease.

- 1 Spoon used in eating stewed berries.
- 2 Spoons from the shoulder bone of the black bear. These are kept and used somewhat as fetishes.
- 1 Knife. Caribou bone handle. Curved blade.
- 1 Round Bark Match-Box. The same is also used for keeping needles and scent in.
- 5 Bone Snow-Shoe Needles, made of Caribou bone, the small one of lynx bone.
- 1 Caribou Bone Pointed Tool, used to regulate the size of the mesh in snow-shoe making and as a perforator in working on skins.
- 2 Lynx Jaw Bones (lower). One of these is carried by every hunter in the winter to enable him to untie knots in thongs and to loosen the thongs of his snow-shoes when these are frozen and he wishes to remove the gear without bearing his hands to the cold.
- 1 Roll of Babiche (raw hide), used in mending snow-shoes or as a wrapping.
- 1 Caribou Hide Netted Bag, containing tools, etc. This is made from the discarded head-piece in the netting of a snow-shoe.
- 2 Wooden Netting Needles used in making gill nets and seines.
- 1 Small Netting Needle, used in netting fine dip nets.
- 1 Piece of Decorated Beadwork, a part of some personal ornament. Beads are sewed on with sinew.
- 1 Pair of Women's Snow-Shoes.
- 2 Bear Skulls from a Sacrifice Tree near the Indian Village. These were obtained from the branches of a small Balm of Gilead tree standing alongside of the bark winter wigwam of an old widow. Upon this tree she was accustomed to deposit the skulls and bones of the larger game and fur-bearing animals that she killed each winter. The custom among the Montagnais is to bring the skulls of bears killed to such a place where the repository tree becomes a bear cemetery. Formerly they used to paint and decorate skulls of bears left in the branches.
- 1 Tobacco Bag of Mink Skin, trimmed with Marten, with a Caribou-bone Pin attached as a pipe-cleaner and tamp.
- 1 Tobacco Bag of Moose Skin.
- 1 Tobacco Bag of Moose Ear.

1 Tobacco Bag of Sealskin.

1 Tobacco Bag of Unborn Moose Skin. The skin of unborn animals is esteemed on account of its fineness and certain reverential feelings which the people have toward the foetus.

1 Baby's Mocassin of Unborn Moose Skin, obtained from the same party which had the tobacco bag of this material. Baby costumes of unborn moose and caribou skin are frequently seen, some specimens have been collected by the writer from the coast Montagnais and Naskapi. It is thought exceptionally fitting that little children should wear garments of this material.

She had no memory of typing up or downloading the document, and she could not understand its significance. After clicking around she found that it seemed to come from a desktop file called Vaughan which she also had no memory of creating. Together with the dead cat, the bloody tracks on the steps and in her house, and the odd feeling of being in a stranger's home, the list was further unnerving.

The title and the list itself angered her. These were objects that were valuable. Had use and were used. Were held by real people, some of whom were likely related to her. But here they were referred to as specimens, were reduced to a series of words on a piece of paper in an ethnographer's notebook. And now they were on her laptop. Where were the actual objects? What was the point of taking them in the first place? Of stripping them of their historical and cultural context? She closed the laptop and leaned back onto the couch, exhausted. When she closed her eyes she saw the cat, its tufts of orange fur, its gaping neck, and the perfectly intact heart, still and exposed in the center of its torn open chest.

So much for sleeping. Instead, she opened the laptop again. She wanted to see what else was in the Vaughan desktop folder that she had no memory of creating. Her eyes fell on a file named with a single letter. V.

∞
V
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Ottawa, 1924

Veronica lay in bed watching the light bend around the room. It crept in through the edges of the closed curtains and made her think of the English Ivy climbing the wall outside the bedroom window, how the coils were always reaching, expanding, towards what? Did they never stop creeping? Did they never tire? Plants were sneaky. She didn't like them. It didn't help that the ivy plant was a wedding gift from Constance, her mother-in-law. It had grown at an alarming speed and had overtaken nearly the entire back half of the house. If it overtook the windows there would be no light at all in this room to which she had been sequestered.

It was two days until she would make her escape. On September 20th at 2pm she would meet Fred at Bonaventure Station in Montreal. He had sent her the details in a letter which she kept tucked in the pocket of her voile house dress. All she needed to do was endure the next forty-eight hours. Even though it had been two weeks since she had been released from the hospital, Edmund had instructed her to rest, so she lay in bed, willing the clock hands to move faster. It was better to stay in bed. At least here she was free from his haughty interjections and the exasperated sighs he let out every time she tried to do something, so that she felt that she couldn't do anything right, not even the most basic things such as sweeping the floor or cleaning the windows. *Oh, just leave it* he would gripe, as if there was someone else who could do it instead.

Jack squealed in delight somewhere in the distance, and she moved to the window to peer through the glass, sweeping the curtains back just enough to see out. Jack and Simon were running towards Patterson Creek. If they looked up, she would only be a ghost in the window. A pale face in a wall of ivy. Edmund stood on the back porch calling after them, but the boys only kept running. There were no fences. All the houses backed onto the creek. The boys loved the openness and often ran free or tumbled through the grass. Sometimes they fished for minnows in the cloudy water.

Once, Jack had come flying into the kitchen with his small hands clasped around something dark. Before she could ask him what he was holding, he opened his hands and a grackle flew out, flapping wildly around the kitchen. Its iridescent head shone blue and green in the angular light. Its small black eyes agape. Its beak opening and closing in what she could only imagine to be distress. She opened the back door and tried to shoo it out with a broom while it thrashed about keeping always to the ceiling and making no movement towards the door. Though she had first screamed, she soon bent over laughing because Jack looked so delighted with this turn of events, jumping up and down and squealing with glee. Edmund, who had been working in his office downstairs, as he often did on Saturdays, tore into the room and grabbed Jack by the shoulders. “What is going on in here?” he yelled.

Jack’s face drained. Blank shock. Edmund’s fingers dug into him, Jack’s head rolling backwards and forwards as Edmund shook him. He would never do such a thing to Simon, his little piano protégé.

“You take your hands off him,” she yelled, running at him with the broom still in her hands.

He stood, immovable, watching her, hardness in his eyes. She knew what he would say. He didn't need to say it.

Everything was quiet then but for the black bird banging uselessly along the ceiling. If she didn't quell her rage, he'd send her back to the lunatic hospital. She knew that he would. And he had. Not that day, but 3 months later, and again 6 months after that. If only she could control herself better, but there always seemed to be some small thing that tripped her up, and she would fall out of step, and he would win in this endless game of mental chess to which he made the rules and changed them as he pleased.

Edmund was still standing on the back porch looking out across the grass. A hand angled over his eyes as he squinted into the sun. The boys were small and distant versions of themselves running along the creek bed in the mottled shadows of the oak trees that lined the park.

She let the curtain fall back into place and paced from one end of the room to the other in her bare feet, taking soft steps so as not to make any noise.

There were footsteps on the stairs. A light tapping at the door. She climbed soundlessly into bed and rolled over so her back would face him when he came in, closing her eyes to add another layer of distance between them.

"I'm going to the office for a bit. Jack and Simon will spend the afternoon with the Kant boys. Is there anything you need?"

She didn't answer, only held her breath as he stood there watching her. Finally, she heard him recede into the hallway, pulling the door closed behind him. She imagined his hand on the doorknob. The little tufts of hair on his fingers that repulsed her. When

his car pattered away down the street, she threw the blankets off and put her housecoat on.

Now, alone in the house, her spine lengthened, and she walked down the stairs feeling several inches taller. With the house to herself, she snuck into Edmund's office. It had become a kind of habit. Time tended to shift away from her, and she liked the solidity of the things he had in there. She felt something surfacing in her. Some memory of her father. Distant and blurry. Something he had taught her once about time. But the words were gone. There were only images—the moon, a nest, a drum. Sometimes it was hard to tell if things had happened in the past or if she had imagined them. And sometimes things she thought had happened, had not happened yet. That was why she wanted to be with the bones—because she liked the orderliness of the skeletons, everything with its proper place that you could see.

When he first took the position of Director of Anthropology, he used to talk to her about his work. How he measured the skulls, the femurs, the metacarpals. How he pieced them together on the table like little sticks. “One day there won't be any Indians left. That's why these measurements are so important,” he would tell her, as if she hadn't been there all along seeing the work that he had done, sitting through the banal dinner parties where all they talked about was preserving the vanishing Indians.

She herself was proof the Indians were not vanishing. Her father was Innu, her mother British. But Edmund said that she was not really Indian because her blood was mixed. Halfbreed was the word he used. Her skin was pale, though she did darken quickly in the summer. But Edmund didn't like her to be in the sun. He didn't like her to be dark. It didn't matter what he thought though because there were other things. Things

he didn't know anything about. Her hands, for instance. She did not have small, delicate hands like other women she met. Her hands were Innu hands. Big and thick with wide fingers. They were the hands she had seen her grandfather use to make snowshoes and canoes. They were strong hands made for working. They were her favorite part of her because every time she looked at them, she saw her father and her grandfather. And sometimes when she laughed, it was her father's laugh that would come out. So, she knew that Edmund was wrong. It wasn't true that she wasn't an Indian. But he was often wrong, though he never seemed to know it.

Sometimes he brought the bones home because there was a lack of workspace at the museum. He had one there now, laid out on the big fir table that dominated his office. He did not consider the disrespect of his work—of taking someone's bones, of not giving them a proper burial, of taking them from their families. The first time he brought a skeleton home, she was horrified. She tried to explain to him how bad it was, that he was opening the door for bad spirits to come into their house, but he wouldn't listen. He told her she was superstitious, that there were no spirits. She tried to undo the damage in secret.

With her elbows on the table, she cradled the skull in her hands, marvelling at the lightness, examining the dips at the temples, the dark hollows where the world came in—the eye sockets, the nose cavity, the ears. It amazed her that, when it came down to it, we were really just skeletons, how we walked around with our deaths inside of us, and no one really thought about their bones at all. She took a bundle of dried tobacco from her pocket and placed it where the heart would be. She did not know the Innu ways of doing

things, but she did the best she could to honour the person whose remains had somehow made it into her basement.

The bones were all laid out like a sleeping person. Who had walked these bones around? Or had the bones walked them? She ran her thumbs along the cheekbone. A woman, she decided. He rarely talked to her about his work anymore, but she imagined he would have placed these with care, building his skeleton. He could know the bones. He could measure them out and write it all down, as he had in the black notebook that lay next to the hip bone. But the holes where the world came in, what had entered and what had gone out, what could his measurements tell him about that? And didn't all of that matter more than the circumference of a skull or the length of a finger?

His looping handwriting was cramped inside the thin lines of the field notebook he used to make his notes. She flipped through the pages of measurements and lists. This was how he tried to construct a story of what might have happened. She ran her fingers along the clavicle bone. Had she been kissed on this very spot? What had her name been? She tried to think of where the woman might have come from. What was it like to be this woman? Who had whispered I love you into her ears and what mind had the words swirled around in? Now there was only the hollowed-out shell. Where had all the woman's thoughts and memories gone? She kissed the skull that once housed a life.

If Fred were here, he would push her against the table and kiss her with an edacity that made her lightheaded, tugging at her hair as his mouth sent little shocks down her neck. When the affair had begun, she thought Edmund would be able to tell, that he would be able to feel Fred's kisses on her body because she still felt them there,

sometimes for days, aftershocks everywhere his mouth travelled. But he only told her that she was flushed and wondered aloud whether he should call Dr. Neilson.

She picked up his notebook and very carefully erased the numbers he had printed beside each bone, adding in new measurements that were slightly different. 15 inches became 13. 17 became 19. Line by line, she changed each one, shortening and lengthening at whim. Then she put the book back where he had left it.

It was getting dark outside, and when she turned the desk lamp on her face reflected in the window. It was pale and elongated by the dark glass. There was nothing pretty in it. She wanted to look away, but instead she walked towards it, pressing her forehead against the cold glass. Her eyes were hollowed out. She stepped back and looked again at the dark holes of her eyes. She tapped her forefingers against her orbital bones. They made little vibrations in her head like tuning forks. The tingling it created was so focused, there was nothing else. She thought of her skull. The vibrations echoing from her bones. Who was she really? The one made up of all the things that entered through these holes and all her varying interpretations, internalizations, and rejections of what came in, or was she just the bones themselves? Dumb pieces of calcium that would powder to sand?

What did it matter? Edmund would tell her to go to sleep, to rest. Don't think so much, he would say. She saw again the grim face of Dr. Neilson, the oppressive façade of the Brockville Asylum for the Insane. Best to keep her thoughts private and not to talk.

She turned to look at the photographs on the wall. They were pictures of Indians, many of which he took during his fieldwork over the years. Her favourite was one he had received from the anthropologist Frank Speck. It was from one of his trips to Sept-Îles,

Quebec. He had not learned the names of the people he photographed but had scribbled in pencil on the back “Indian men making a canoe, 1913.” The men sat in a crescent moon, their knees bent, legs tucked under. This was the way her father had worked. His legs bent under him. The tip of his tongue sticking out. It was one of her few memories of living in Sept Îles. Of having a family. Before this new family that she had made with Edmund.

The chug of Edmund’s car rattled the window as he pulled into the driveway. She checked that the notebook was as he had left it, put the tobacco bundle back in her pocket, and stole out of the room like a ghost, pulling all traces of herself from the room, so that only the dim light was there to touch the bones of the mystery Indian woman who had so strangely found herself in Veronica’s basement.

On her way up the stairs, she saw through a gap in the curtains that he wasn’t alone. Her mother-in-law was beside him, and he was helping her lug two big suitcases onto the porch. Veronica felt an all-encompassing anger that reached even to the roots of her hair. She hurried up the stairs to avoid being seen and resumed her place in bed.

“My goodness, Edmund. This house is in no condition for these poor children.” That was the first thing Constance said when she walked through the front door.

Veronica heard her from the bedroom and was glad that Constance did not get to witness the sting of her words. She heard Edmund carrying his mother’s suitcases upstairs, and then Constance’s slow ascent, pausing on each step to rest her weight before moving on to the next one, her breath whistling in her chest. Then she heard Constance stop outside her bedroom door, could hear her straining to listen for any sound coming from the other side. Veronica held her breath and clamped her eyes shut. Then a little

“humph” as Constance resumed pulling her weight down the hallway to the guest bedroom at the end of the hall.

Wilkes

“I can only pay you \$12,000.”

It wouldn't save her house, but she knew she would keep searching for Vaughan whether he paid her or not.

They were walking alongside the canal. Ducks bobbed on the grey water. They walked slowly, stopping occasionally to take in the stillness, the wobbly reflection of trees and sky.

“What was he doing before he disappeared?”

“Like I told you, I don't really know much. No one really talks about it. He worked as an ethnographer, as you know. He travelled to different Indian reservations and collected artifacts for the museum. I know he had two sons and that he left a wife behind as well.”

“And your grandfather?”

“I was young when he disappeared. I don't know too much. I think he worked with bees. He might have been a biology professor. Have you found anything?”

“There's a lot to go through. I'm still sorting it all out.” Then she said “I remember you mentioning that this keeps happening. Do you think your grandfather's disappearance is connected in some way?”

“I don't know. I just know that it seems to be a recurring thing in my family. Men disappearing.”

“It seems he was last in Seven Islands, Quebec, at the reserve there. Do you know what he might have been doing there?”

“I’m not sure. I think I remember hearing something about string figures.”

“String figures?”

“Yeah. I remember finding an article about it a few years ago. It’s like Cat’s Cradle. Apparently, he was doing research on string figures.” He gripped the railing and leaned over, looking down at the water below them. “I just want to know what happened to him.”

When she looked at his face, she saw an earnestness that made her look away. She gazed down at the water; it was still but opaque. The world reflected back on the rippling surface was dull and indefinite, and she found that she really wanted to help him and would be disappointed if she couldn’t.

She promised to give him a detailed report outlining all her research and findings, and they parted ways. He receded into the distance. His shoulders slightly hunched. His frame as lanky as she imagined Vaughan’s to be. Then she turned and walked in the opposite direction.

Though the sky was overcast, it was warm, and she felt like walking. She followed the canal north towards downtown walking slowly, thinking that Vaughan had walked here, along this very path, surely he had, and immersed in the frustrating separation of time, she walked, blind to her surroundings.

Soon she found that she was at the concrete steps that led to McLeod Street, where the Canadian Museum of Nature stood, imposing in stature and clearly from

another time. This was the building Vaughan had worked in. She had not been in there in years but felt suddenly drawn to it.

She tried to picture him walking where she walked. One hundred years ago, he would have been walking here. One hundred years ago, his whole life was here. Inside this building. All his life working and working. And he hardly got any recognition at the time. Let alone now—does anyone even remember? Does anyone even care? But Wilkes did. And she cared. She didn't know why she cared, but she did. She had been thinking about him constantly. Ever since Wilkes had given her the missing person poster. Since she had immersed herself in his correspondence. She wondered what he thought about. What his voice sounded like. His mannerisms. His quirks. What had he said to her great-grandfather when he photographed him? Had they spent time together? Had they spoken at length? Who was the other man he'd photographed who looked so much like her father? She felt that if she could somehow find Vaughan, she could find the answers to these questions.

As she walked up the stone steps, again she was struck by the fact that he had walked here before. That he had was certain. He had worked here for over a decade. And knowing that was at once magnificent, magical even, but also upsetting. Only time stood between them. If that could be removed somehow, she could walk right into him. Or follow behind him. See where he went, who he talked to. Hear his voice. See the way his shoulders stooped when he walked.

When she reached the three towering double doors that marked the entrance, she saw that the museum was closed.

She dreamed of Vaughan. Tall and thin. Lanky. With large, freckled hands. Eyes remarkably clear. Like the fresh river water that salmon spawn in. But he didn't appear to see her at all. His face was a blank. He was sitting at his desk in his cubbyhole office. Hunched over his work. He sat up. A ponderous look on his face. Pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose with his pointer finger. Greying sable hair in wisps on his freckled forehead. He did not strike her as attractive until he smiled. Then, it was like he was two different people. One serious, blank faced, as though he were off travelling far away in his mind. Stoop-shouldered in his chair. But when he returned. When he smiled. There was such life. Such beauty in his face.

Nothing much happened in the dream. He wrote things in a notebook. He read. She watched him. Taking in the details of his office. The walls lined with filing cabinets covered in towering stacks of books and papers. A hand drawn map on the wall. Of where, she couldn't tell. Disembodied, she hovered behind him watching what he wrote. The profusion of k's and the number of words that started with tsh- told her it was Innu-aimun. She didn't know many words but could recognize the language when she saw it. Many of the sentences started with Minuat. She read the sentences, but it did no good. She couldn't understand any of it. He seemed to write for hours. And woven throughout the lines were Minuats, little heartbeats all down the page.

She had never had dreams like these. Where she was not the center of action. Where she just watched other peoples' lives unfold before her, an ineffectual observer standing in the corner. But she came to love these dreams and wanted more of them. Wanted to see as much as she could. More of Vaughan and the woman with the bobbed hair. Wanted to go back to that time. Seeing it all like that made it all seem so close. And really what was a hundred years? It was a lifespan for some, but in the billions of years of the earth's history, it wasn't anything at all. "See you in a minute," her father always said, always thinking of the infinite, staring at the stars, knowing his life was mere seconds in the greater scheme of things. Only a clock kept her from Vaughan. And if she could just get the hands to run in the opposite direction, then maybe she could sit down across from him at his cluttered desk in his cluttered office and ask him everything she needed to know.

Since she couldn't, she turned to Google. Searched for Minuat. She didn't know her last name, but the name was so unique she figured something would come up. There was a Latin definition. Minuat. Inflection of minuō – to make small, to diminish. She tried again. This time typed in Minuat Innu. When a search result came up that seemed to be in Innu-aimun, she clicked on it. Like in her dream, there were rows of sentences in Innu-aimun, many of which started with Minuat. Finally stumbling across an Innu dictionary, she found a definition for Minuat. It meant "and then."

Innu String Figures and Tricks

collected by

FREDERICK W. VAUGHAN (1872-1924)

edited and illustrated by

MARK SHERMAN, Pasadena, California

In 2001 the ISFA published an article on Ojibwe String Figures and Tricks gathered by Canadian ethnographer Frederick W. Vaughan between 1916 and 1920. It was celebrated for being the first major Native American string figure collection ever made among a tribe that speaks an Algonquian language. Here we present yet another major collection that F. W. Vaughan made while working among an Algonquian-speaking tribe, this being the Innu (Montagnais-Naskapi), a tribe that traditionally occupied the vast interior region of the Québec-Labrador peninsula. The collection, assembled at Sept-Îles (Seven Islands) during the summer of 1924, consists of 25 string figures and one string trick. Surprisingly, only a small percentage are similar or identical to figures gathered among the linguistically related Ojibwe, who live south of Innu territory: most are related to figures gathered among the linguistically unrelated Inuit (Eskimos), who live north of Innu territory.

Ottawa, 1923

The first night they met his eyes never left her. She could feel them on her even when she wasn't looking because they had a power of their own, a presence that she could feel though didn't understand. It was the night of their annual Christmas party. Ungainly and hunched, he stood beside her husband in the entryway, as though he wished to escape back out the front door just as he had entered it. There were little piles of snow on the shoulders of his coat, and his eyelashes were wet. A trill of piano carried into the foyer as someone opened the parlor door behind them. Diamond Jenness was talking over the music, and the group laughed with gin-induced rowdiness. But all of that was peripheral. Looking at this stranger, she thought *who is this man staring at me?* She liked to remember this. The way time elongated like a shadow in a pillar of sunshine. The blankness of him. Before she began building him in her mind into the web of associations he had become. She could return to this moment when he was no one—only a tall man watching her. Though she loved the man he was, she loved this blank version of him as well. This unknown person who looked her in the eye. That was what had caught her. Because she did not know that she had been invisible all this time, until this moment when he had really seen her—had looked into her and, observing all that was there, had not looked away but kept looking; and then he had let her look into him, and what she saw there was open sky.

“Fred, this is my wife, Veronica.”

She had lost all sense of time, but Edmund's words pulled her back. It was the way he said *my wife*. It was the sound of those two words together and the ownership implied that made an angry little fire in her chest.

"Can I take your coat?" she asked, walking towards him.

He thanked her. "It's nice to meet you," he said, handing her his coat. His fingers were long and thin. Bare but for a plain wedding ring, the gold dull and brassy looking.

When he smiled his eyes creased in such a deliciously handsome way that she had to look elsewhere. She focused on his coat. The heaviness of the wool as she hung it up in the closet and led him into the parlor where Diamond stood in the middle of the room commanding a captive audience. Her eldest son, Simon, was playing the piano, a new jazz song he had learned the evening before. Edmund had stationed himself beside him, overlooking his fingering and sighing at the imperfections no doubt.

"Can I get you something to drink?" she asked, leaning into him so he could hear her over the music. There was a woodsy smell about him, like cedar, green and smoky.

"Do these usually go very long?"

"The songs?" she asked, looking up at him.

"The evening." He surveyed the room of guests with a look of resignation.

It was a rude statement, but she could see from the pained look on his face and his retracting body language, that he likely preferred to be alone, most likely reading judging by the slight stoop of his shoulders. "You know, you could *try* to have a good time."

"Fred! You old bore. You made it!" Diamond, having finished entertaining his group of enraptured listeners, was now throwing an arm around Fred's shoulders and

leading him over to the corner of the room where Barbeau, Dollaire, and MacMichael were in what sounded to be an intense debate about the proper preservation of walrus tusks.

As he was being swept away, he turned and gave her a pleading look as though he were begging her to save him, but then he was pulled into the circle of armchairs that the men had assembled in, and she lost sight of him.

“Veronica!” Ginny, Desmond’s wife, waved to her from the card table where several of the wives sat smoking and playing gin rummy.

After spending the past three months “resting”, she was delighted to host a party. It was a liberation to spend the afternoon curling her hair, trying on various dresses, putting on her makeup in the vanity mirror. With her shoulders thrown back, she walked around the room with a bottle of gin topping up people’s glasses and emptying ashtrays. Edmund had stockpiled liquor when the Ontario Temperance Act was passed. The stockpile was for special occasions and tonight was one.

Ginny was laughing and tapping ashes from her cigarette into the ashtray. “You should have seen it!” she kept saying, shaking her head. Her eyes bright, her cheeks brighter.

In between topping up drinks, Veronica snuck her own fair share, and now her face was flushed, and the music was sloshing around in her head, and she spilled wine on Collins’ sleeve when she filled his glass. But he only winked at her. Patted her arm and said “Oh, don’t worry, dear,” as she dabbed at his sleeve with a napkin.

She needed air. Taking the backway through the kitchen, past the disarray of dirty dishes and platters of half-consumed food that littered every inch of the counterspace, she gathered her coat and scarf from the front entryway and snuck out, exiting the French doors onto the back porch.

The sky was clear. The moon full. Bands of clouds hung in the distance. When she looked up, the stars were all shooting, trailing lights across the sky, she steadied herself against the balustrade. The cold air felt refreshing against her skin. She took a cigarette from the case she kept in her coat pocket. Inside, clinking glass and waves of laughter rose and fell. Made her grateful for this silent night she had just escaped to. Leaning against the stone handrail, she threw her head back and exhaled a long ribbon of smoke into the darkness above her. The back porch was in shadow except for a large square of light made by the electric lights pouring out of the house. A figure was slipping out the French doors. The lights from inside accentuated his height. His face pale in a cloak of night. He was thin and tall. Thin like a starving ghost. She didn't know why she thought of that. She didn't recognize the figure. But then she noticed the stoop in the shoulders.

“Did you tire of Diamond's stories?”

When their eyes met, he looked down. He was genuine. He was honest. He was suffocating just like her. Of course he was. Why else would he be out here and not inside, enjoying the party with everyone else. And for the first time that evening, for the first time in weeks, she felt that she didn't need to pretend.

“He does have a lot of them,” he said. He cleared the distance between them and stood beside her looking out at the dark pond in the distance, the perfect expanse of undisturbed snow that stretched across the park all the way to Clemow Avenue.

“You must be freezing. Here,” she said, handing him her cigarette. “I’ll be right back.”

She cut through the backway again so no one would see her and quickly re-emerged from the house with her arms full of winter things—a pair of Gaytees overshoes, his coat, scarf, and overshoes—a bottle of gin in one hand, and two glasses in the other.

“Let me help you,” he said, reaching over and taking the bottle and glasses from her hand. He swept flat some snow on the balustrade and put them down on the flat stone surface of the handrail, pressing snow around them to hold them in place.

She handed him his coat and overshoes. “Pour us some drinks, will you?” she said, cramming the overshoes over her t-strapped heels.

He filled the tumblers half way and handed her one.

“Maybe we better just take the bottle,” she said, taking a long drink from her glass before putting it down on the snow cleared spot and taking the bottle instead. She pulled his arm leading him down the snowy steps.

He looked back at the house, uncertain.

“Shouldn’t we get back in? Won’t Edmund wonder where you are?”

“Go back if you like,” she said, pressing forward, crashing through the snow.

He stood for a moment not knowing what to do. He looked back at the house then at her willowy form receding into the night.

“Where are we going?” he asked jogging after her.

“To freedom!” she yelled as she took off running through the snow, but the snow reached to their mid-calves now, and it was hard to run. He followed behind her, taking careful uneven steps, his full weight shifting side to side in the heavy snow.

“We need snowshoes,” he called after her. Somehow, she had gotten far ahead of him.

He had seen this park before but never like this. He had seen it from the streetcar as he made his way to the museum. Or on foot, walking over the bridge on O’Connor Street. He had never been in the park. And never at night. It felt stranger still that he was outside his boss’s house with his boss’s inebriated wife, with the full moon turning the snow cover blue. But having already committed to this transgression by following her out this far, he let himself go. He ran after her.

Hearing his clomping feet, she turned. The wind blew her hair back into her face, covering her reddened cheeks. It started snowing then, lightly. She resumed running, the gin sloshing around in the bottle.

When she got to the oak trees that lined the pond she stopped and waited for him. Though his legs were longer, he was clumsy. Seeing that he was close, he lunged forward as if to make a mad dash for it, but he lunged too far and mis-stepped.

There was such determination on his face, which turned to a look of surprise as he lost his footing and went down. His arms windmilled trying to keep him upright but to no avail. He fell face first into the snow and didn't move. She ran towards him. Falling beside him, she put a hand on his back, shaking him slightly. He sat up. Snow was crusted into his eyelashes and eyebrows. His face was red. His glasses crooked.

When she thought of his face, the way his eyebrows rose in surprise as his feet left the ground, his arms spinning uselessly, she was overcome by laughter. It started out as a chuckle, but soon she was wheezing and couldn't stop.

"Was it that funny?" he asked, but she was laughing too hard to respond. It made him laugh too, and he found that he could not stop laughing either. The two of them lay staring up at the stars, clasping their stomachs as they laughed into the night.

"Your eyes," she tried to say, but as soon as she saw his face again in her mind, it set her off again, and she was off on a new trail of laughter, though this one shorter than the last. How lovely it felt to laugh again. A delicious warmth spread through her body. Her face and stomach hurt. Her eyes were wet with tears, not from sadness for once but from mirth.

They sat in the snow by the pond passing the bottle back and forth. The recklessness of it made her feel strong and the liquor filled her mouth with words. She told him about the letters she had found. The pages of Edmund's knotted handwriting. The word that had caught her, made her unable to put the letters back without reading them. The loop of the l, the whorl of o, the bifurcating v, and the hooked eyelet flourish of e. And then the words before and after it. And the words before and after those. The "My dearest Margaret" at the top of the page which all the other words followed from.

And then the letters from Margaret which confirmed her worst fears. How the blood drained from her as she read. Even now when the moment had long passed and she was just re-telling it, her insides burned, and she found it difficult to breathe.

Fred said nothing as she talked. His face set in deep concentration, his forehead creased. A somber expression in his eyes and mouth.

“Do you think it’s Margaret Mead,” she asked. “I know he met her when he was at Columbia early last year.” She remembered his numerous trips and the vague details shared upon his return. Her inability to reach him while he was away.

She looked at Fred trying to determine whether he knew something about it. There seemed to be genuine concern in his face. It made her feel that he hadn’t known. That if Edmund had been making a fool of her behind her back, Fred at least had not known about it.

“Did you tell him you found the letters?”

She shook her head. She couldn’t bear the thought of him knowing that he could hurt her, of him having any more power over her than he already did.

There was the sound of a door opening in the distance behind them. She knew it was Edmund checking the back porch for her. She could see him craning into the dark.

“Ronnie?” he called out.

She wasn’t sure if he could see them. The pond was nearly 100 yards from the house, but the band of clouds had passed, and the moon was full and bright. Their clumsy footprints breaking a swerving path through the flawless snow from the house to where they sat.

“You go on back. I’ll come up shortly,” he said, handing her the bottle.

The way back was easier. She used the footprints to guide her steps. When she came to where he had fallen, where the impressions of their bodies had flattened the snow, she was filled with a warm feeling, an exhilaration in her stomach. She thought of his tallness. How his arms would feel around her. Perhaps it was because she had let herself be vulnerable. Perhaps it was because of Ripas and his goddamned affair. She was a mess, and she was broken and she could have fallen in love with a rock if it had listened to her as intently as Fred had just done. She reminded herself of these things to temper herself. Because she could not bear to fall for anyone ever again. It was a mistake that she refused to repeat. But she couldn’t help it. It had already started. It was out of her control.

Fool Knots

The chime of an email notification knocked Leor out of the story. It was from the library—an electronic copy of the Mark Sherman article about Vaughan’s string figure research that she had requested. She clicked on the attachment with excitement. It had taken her a long time to find it. It was published by the International String Figure Association. Not surprisingly, the obscure and very niche publication had long been out of print. With a lot of digging, she was able to find a copy through document delivery from the University of Ottawa’s Morisset Library.

Though she had searched extensively, Leor had never been able to find anyone who knew about Innu string figures, and from her research it appeared that Vaughan’s informant was actually Inuit. The Sherman article confirmed this. He speculated, as did she, that it was possible, likely even, that Vaughan’s informant, being Inuit himself, had been teaching him about Inuit string figures and not Innu string figures after all. This would make sense since she could find no information anywhere about Innu string figures. Additionally, the article stressed that the string figures that Vaughan had collected were more similar to recorded Inuit figures than those gathered from other Algonquian-speaking peoples.

Throughout the article, there were photographs from Vaughan’s field notebooks where he had drawn diagrams of the string figures. Big sideways W’s of looped string. She herself had copies of these, had even found a series of photographs of Vaughan making one. His hands held out. The string looped around his fingers. One was titled rabbit, but she couldn’t see anything rabbit-like in the jumble of string between his

fingers. Where there weren't diagrams, there were detailed instructions. Each finger was numbered: R1 and L1 for the right and left thumbs, R2 and L2 for the pointer fingers, and so on. A step-by-step guide for how to knot the string into a deer, a spider, a goose.

She couldn't help thinking it was an odd thing to collect. In the article, Vaughan was credited with "collecting" the figures. She had seen photographs, too, from the museum displays that he made to exhibit these figures. He used nails for fingers, hammered into a board, with the string looped around them into various shapes. Other things the ethnographers collected and displayed were more solid—baskets, utensils, tools, clothing. These were different. They were not objects but a process, frozen, a thing that should be done stripped of the doing, an action pinned down like a moth in a glass case.

At the end of the article the author noted: after spending the summer in Seven Islands studying Montagnais string figures, Vaughan mysteriously disappeared. He went on to note that this was not the first strange event to happen to an anthropologist working in that area. Ethel Bradstock, who had worked among the Montagnais a year earlier, had been brutally murdered by her 15-year-old stepson with an axe. Her husband was murdered alongside her.

She wondered why Sherman had chosen to include this information, if he was implying that there was some kind of curse that the Innu were placing on white ethnographers or if the detail was just supposed to add intrigue to a dry article published in an arcane string figure journal.

As she finished the last page of the paper, she scrolled back to the beginning. Beneath the title, an illustration of a string looped into a fox. She thought again about the

general lack of information about Innu string figures. Perhaps it was just something that had fallen out of practice and had long been forgotten. She wondered if it was a kind of storytelling. The string was a circle. Could be manipulated into different shapes. Yet still it was just a string. Knotted around the fingers to make a series of images, dissolving back into its round essence again and again.

At night she dreamed of his hands, the string twisting around his fingers. He pulled his fingers together and apart, each time revealing a different small animal. Rabbit. Dog. Snake. Two snakes. Fox. He pulled the string—forming and reforming it. On a stage like a magician. A black background behind him. The white string coiled around his fingers. Wabush—the arctic hare—between his palms, a story, unravelling.

Ottawa, 1924

Heavy snow fell in feathery white clumps, and Veronica could barely see where she was driving. If she crashed the car or got stuck in a ditch, she would have to explain to Edmund what she was doing driving his car at 11 o'clock at night, so she drove slowly, taking her foot off the gas pedal every time the tires slipped. With her hands clutching the cold steering wheel, she squinted into the thick sheet of snow that whirled in the headlights. There were no other cars out. It was like another place or being inside a dream. The sidewalks were empty, and she could hardly see the storefronts through the snow.

Over time they had managed to sneak off on occasion to be together. The meetings were infrequent but impassioned. They had planned this meeting weeks ago. Edmund was supposed to have been in New York for the week, giving a lecture, and meeting with his old colleagues, and Fred would be able to sneak out for a few hours without his wife noticing. But Edmund had gotten the flu and had cancelled his trip at the last minute. He spent the day sleeping fitfully, and she worried that he might wake up and notice her gone. But her biggest concern was the children. That they would wake up and need her and that she would not be there for them. At least Edmund was home, she told herself. Even though he was ill, if there was an emergency, he could take care of it.

By 9pm he was already in bed. He had sweat through the sheets, so she replaced them, draped a blanket over his shivering body, made him a hot toddy and waited until he

had drunk all of it. Finally he fell into a deep sleep. His chest rising and falling, a quiet whistling in the chest. Once she would have looked upon him with love seeing him in such a pitiful state, so helpless and pale, already the sweat gathering on his forehead, making his hair wet at the temples, but looking at him now, she felt only apathy.

Taking the car keys from his coat pocket, she slipped silently out the front door, hoping the wind would blot out the sound of the car starting. She drove towards Fred's house in the most roundabout way, with no one seeing her. The car lurched forward in the thickening snow. Many times the wheels spun out, and working by instinct she took her foot off the gas pedal, waiting only until the car straightened to accelerate once more.

They arranged that she would meet him on a side street off Brown's Inlet. She clicked off the Model T Ford's headlights and drove slowly down his street, looking for him. The streets were empty, snow covered and glistening in the light of the oil streetlamps. Pulling up by the park, she parked out of sight of his house and waited, squinting into the dark. The snow kept falling, billowing in the wind. Thick fluffy snowflakes that fell soundlessly from the sky like little pieces of cloud. She shivered, her breath fogging the windows. After a while, she checked her watch. 11:45. Maybe he had been intercepted. Maybe he had forgotten. Or worse, maybe he had changed his mind. They hadn't spoken in two weeks. Perhaps things had changed. Suddenly she realized that she was a complete fool. A 40-year-old married woman, sitting in her husband's car in the middle of the night, waiting for a married man she couldn't stop thinking about. Though no one was there to see it, her cheeks were red with shame.

Through the fogged glass, something dark moved. A wisp of smoke in the shadows. Then a figure emerged. Bundled up, so she couldn't tell at first if it was him.

But her heart beat faster because it might be. Moving from the pathway that split Brown's Inlet, the shadow crossed towards her car.

The passenger door opened, and he got in. He was smoking a cigar. She had never seen him smoke a cigar. There was something different about him, as though this secret rendezvous had authored him into him someone new. He seemed less stooped, was confident and debonair, smoking his cigar with aplomb. She realized that she could be someone new as well. But she didn't know who she wanted to be.

"I thought you might not come."

"Nancy woke up as I was trying to sneak away. I was waiting for her to fall back asleep. Eventually I just told her I was going for a walk. She thought I was mad, but I managed to get out." He twirled smoke around the inside of his mouth, exhaled an aromatic cloud, smoky and warm.

She pictured him lying in bed with Nancy and was surprised to find herself buffeted by jealousy.

"I don't love her," he said, as if reading her thoughts. And then, as if to prove it, he groped for the back of her neck, kissed along her collar bone, exorcising all the breath from her body with each plodding brush of his lips. His hair had the musk of cigar smoke. She pressed her face into his chest, inebriated by the smell and feel of him.

Lifting her onto his lap, he scooped his way over to the driver's seat, flicked the headlights on, and eased the car onto Bank Street.

"Aren't you worried someone will see us?"

He gestured an arm to the left and then the right, the deserted streets, the whirring snow. They both laughed. He wrapped an arm around her, pulling her into him, as he drove slowly through the squall.

Bank Street at midnight was a novelty. The darkened shops and empty sidewalks. There was something magical about the way the snow blanketed the city. The way the moon hung in the sky. The way his arm felt around her shoulders.

Turning, the headlights cut into the dark of an empty parking lot. She recognized the building—the museum stood like a gothic castle in the moonlight. It was built in the Tudor style with decorative buttresses. An imposing structure. But tonight, with the thick snow falling and the moonlight filtering through a haze of clouds, it seemed otherworldly. She was rarely at the museum. This was Edmund's world, where he did his work. It was more a place that she heard about and imagined than an actual solid reality that she could walk around in. So, as he led her to the front entrance, she ran her hands along the stone wall like a person who had woken up in a dream and was diligently exploring every detail. There was not a car or a person around. Only the snow falling. The silent sleeping city.

Above the front entrance, in place of gargoyles, two watchful moose heads, the only witnesses to their secret rendezvous, their magnificent antlers protruding from their stony heads.

Slipping a key from his coat pocket, he pulled open the heavy wooden door, led her through the darkened foyer of the Victoria Memorial Museum. She held onto him, taking halting steps like someone blindfolded, for there were no lights and her eyes had not adjusted to the darkness.

“How do you know where we’re going? I feel like we’re going to fall down a flight of stairs any moment.” She clung tightly to his arm as he moved through the darkness by memory alone.

He hit a switch and the gas lights flickered on. The rugged stone walls of the stairwell made it feel like they were in a cave. He took her hand and led her up the stairs. There was something eerie about the building. It was something more than just a result of them being there at a time when they shouldn’t have been, or of her entering what felt like Edmund’s private space. It was a kind of energy that seemed to emanate from the place. A darkness. It made her think of the English ivy that crept up the side of her house. Its blind insistence. Its perpetual clinging. She held tighter to his arm. They climbed the stairs, and he led her down a hallway.

“Close your eyes,” he said.

When she opened them, they were in a room lined with long glass cases. They made her think of coffins. She didn’t like the room. A teepee was set up in the corner. Along the back wall another long glass case, this one with various animal skeletons in it.

“I have to go away for a while. To Quebec.”

She took his arm again. “Do you have to go for very long?”

“Around three months. Maybe longer depending on how it goes. I leave in late spring.”

“What will you do there?” She was looking at a porcupine skeleton. The abundance of spinal bones, the perfect rows of them tapering off into a long, curved tail.

“I’ll be living amongst the Montagnais. Doing fieldwork. Gathering stories and artifacts. Studying their customs and language.”

She did not tell him that she was half Innu, or Montagnais as he called them. She worried he would say what Edmund said, that she was only a halfbreed. And maybe he wouldn’t like her anymore if he knew. Or maybe he would like her more. She wasn’t sure which would be worse.

They walked alongside the display case. Stopping in front of a large, almost dog-like skeleton with its mouth pinned open. Vicious teeth protruding from the open jaw bones. Enormous and sharp. Beside the skeleton was a taxidermized creature. Head like a miniature bear. Light brown fur that darkened at the legs. Long white claws. The snout long and cute. Ears small and round.

"That’s a wolverine,” he said. “Have you ever seen one?”

She shook her head, imagining the ferocious teeth hidden behind the cute snout.

“It looks like a little bear.”

“They might look small, but they can kill a caribou, even a moose.”

She looked at the small black eyes and the little black nose.

“The Montagnais tell a lot of stories about the wolverine. Kuekuatsheu, he’s called.”

Veronica thought of the skeleton. The spirit of this creature. Was it trapped there beneath the glass? Still clinging to the bones?

“Do you ever open these cases?” she asked.

“I told the director we need a cleaning person. There are so many fingerprints griming up the glass. Often I have to clean them myself. I open the cases and dust them, wipe down the glass on the inside and outside. I do it when I can, though it shouldn’t be up to me.”

Perhaps the spirit was free then. She imagined it swirling out when he opened the case. She didn’t want to think about what other skeletons might be in this building. What other spirits.

He took her hand and led her to the teepee. There were animal furs inside. Sticks piled into a campfire. They lay down on them. He kissed her all over until she forgot all about the skeletons and spirits, and the wolverine and the halfbreed blood swelling in and out of her heart. When they made love she bit his neck lightly to quiet herself, and after as she lay on his chest she fingered the dull teeth marks there. A perfect circle—a moon, a nest, a drum.

Wolverine Creates the World

Long, long ago was a time of great floods. Almost the whole world lay under water. Wolverine was able to keep dry only by leaping from stone to stone. He said to himself: If these floods get any worse, even my stepping stones will be submerged and that'll put an end to my wandering, perhaps my life, too.

So he called a meeting of all the water animals. He asked each to help him save the world from drowning.

First he talked to Otter. "Dive down, Otter," Wolverine said, "and bring me some ground."

Otter dived down, but he came up without any ground. He said he couldn't see anything down there except weeds and a few fish.

Next he talked to Beaver. He said: "If you bring up some ground, I will find a pretty little wife for you."

Beaver also went down, but he didn't bring down any ground, either. "I can't swim deep enough to reach the bottom," he gasped, "and as for a wife, I'd rather live without one than drown."

So Wolverine asked Muskrat to bring him some ground. "I'll try," Muskrat said, "but only if you tie a thong to my leg."

The thong was tied and Muskrat jumped into the water. He was down there for quite a while. I hope he didn't drown, Wolverine thought. He pulled up the rope and when he did, up came the thong ... without Muskrat.

Too bad, thought Wolverine. That means only water, water, and more water from now on.

But just when he had given up, Muskrat surfaced. His mouth was so full of ground that he couldn't talk. Nor could he breathe. Wolverine put his lips to Muskrat's ass and blew as hard as he could. Out came the ground from Muskrat's mouth, more and more ground, heaps and heaps of it, seemingly without end.

This ground is the very earth we walk on today.

— Innu story (retold by Lawrence Millman)

The Back Room

Leor was on the phone, trying to get through to the tax sale people again. But it was always the same. The awful hold music, the recorded message warning about long wait times, higher than normal call volumes. After an hour she gave up. That was the maximum amount of time she would tolerate being on hold.

Wilkes had e-transferred her \$6,000 and she was able to pay some bills down, but she still had tight panic in her chest because she knew it wasn't enough to get her out of the mess that she was in.

After doing some research online, she learned that it was sometimes possible to keep your house by filing for bankruptcy. She clicked on the number for a local licensed insolvency trustee. He told her they offered free consultations. Gave her a list of documents she would need to bring and scheduled an appointment for her.

Though even the word itself mortified her, it felt good to be doing something, to be taking action, even if it was only just getting a better sense of what her options were.

The list of things she needed for the meeting was long. One of which was her birth certificate which she had not been able to find for several years. There was a time when she had contemplated applying for Indian status and had ordered a copy of her long form birth certificate for the application, but she couldn't remember where it was now. Probably in the back room. It was where all her old papers were.

The back room was sectioned off from the rest of the house. It used to be her office. Once, she had numerous clients at a time, so the office was useful for working out of and

storing documents. As her clients dwindled away, she took to working in the living room in the main part of the house. She couldn't remember the last time she had even been in that back room. She hadn't even been in to clean in many months. It had become an abandoned part of the house, locked away and forgotten about. As she pushed the door open, there was a sound like something unsealing. A faintly musty smell clung to the air. Slanted beams of light fell through the bay window on her left, illuminating a flurry of dust particles hanging on the air like snow.

Again, she had the feeling that she was in a stranger's house. She stood in the doorway for a moment feeling that maybe she shouldn't be here. Something in her wanted to step back, gently close the door, and walk away from this room and all it contained. But she knew that she couldn't. She needed to find her birth certificate for the meeting, and it was likely here in this room of neglect.

She began with the filing cabinets. Even these were filled with unopened bills. No wonder she was in the financial crisis she was in. Searching through folders and drawers and old shoe boxes, she dug around for her birth certificate. Unable to remember where exactly she might have left it, she searched at random. When that neglected to turn up anything, she searched methodically, beginning in one corner and moving across the entire length of the room.

The house was silent, creaking occasionally as though tired. Outside chickadees, grackles, and sparrows chattered about through the grove of cedar trees at the side of her house. She finished with the back wall and moved on to the south facing wall. Beginning with the first filing cabinet there, she opened the bottom drawer. An energy poured out. Palpable. Profound. She sat back. Felt the impact. She had forgotten about this drawer. The

work that she had started long ago but had abandoned. From the back of the drawer, she removed a wooden box. It was what she had of her family. Old photographs. A family tree her cousin had given her that he had gotten from the band office. Some documents. Jewelry. A string tied in a big loose circle.

She sat on the floor leaning against the wall, the slanted light in a rectangle on the faded carpet in front of her. From the old photographs she took one of her father. Placed it next to her phone, where she'd pulled up the photo from the archives, the one that had disappeared. She studied the images side by side. She lay them in the sunlight. It could have been the same person. The faces were so similar. The tuft of dark hair from beneath the cap. The high cheekbones and narrow face, the skin hanging down slightly, weighted by time. The only difference was in the hands. The man in the old photograph had bigger hands. Knobbier knuckles and joints. Thick fingers. Hard worked hands. Her father's hands were thinner. Still hard worked. The fingers were long but were not as wide.

She wondered again who the man in the archival photo was. Surely Vaughan had spoken to him to get these photographs. How strange that this photograph had just come into her life. This man she could not identify who was connected to her in some way she could not understand.

She looped the string around her fingers. Where had it come from? She always imagined it had once been wrapped around a stack of old letters, holding them together, or that it had once been a necklace. But holding it around her fingers, she thought of string figures. At the bottom of the box, under the family tree, and another stack of old photographs, she found her birth certificate.

Ottawa, 1924

“You look nice this morning,” Constance said, surveying Veronica as she came into the kitchen. Was it suspicion in her voice or sarcasm? Veronica couldn’t tell, but today was the day she was leaving to meet Fred, and she was not going to let Constance and her endless misery drain on her.

“Thank you, Connie” she said, joining Constance and Edmund at the kitchen table. “I’m going to visit my sister. I’m sure Edmund told you.”

“Seems a waste to put lipstick on for a trip to the country.”

Veronica only shrugged. Poured herself a cup of coffee.

“I’ll put your things in the car,” Edmund said, pushing his chair back from the table and resting a hand on his mother’s shoulder as he made his way out of the kitchen.

Simon was practicing Chopin’s Prelude in E minor in the living room. The somber notes, sometimes lagging, sometimes jumbled slipped through the open kitchen door.

“With intensity!” Edmund scolded.

She could see his back through the doorway, his rigid form hovering over poor Simon, prime to every flaw in his apprentice fingers. It filled her with guilt that she was leaving them. But it would only be for a week, and then Constance would go home, and she would spend all her time with the boys. Maybe she would even take them to a movie.

Buster Keaton was their favourite. Only for a week she told herself again when she kissed Jack's warm forehead when they lined up by the front door to say their goodbyes and see her off.

Edmund parked outside Union Railway Station.

“Don't exert yourself,” he said as he lifted her suitcase out of the car. “Get lots of rest. We don't want another episode.”

After watching him drive away, she let herself be absorbed by the group of people entering the train station. On the platform, sunlight broke through a wall of clouds, few people milling about. She wondered if she was early. She looked up at the sky to see a wisp of something making a slow descent from out of the clouds. A feather. It tumbled so slowly, riding the current and rocking back and forth, until the tiny feather landed right at her feet. She leaned over and picked it up. It was so small. Fluffy and white.

She stuck it in her hat—everything seemed full of promise—like the sky had opened and offered this to her. As if in agreement, a beam of sunlight fell on her. It warmed her skin. But soon, a cloud covered the sun. How quickly fortunes turn. A stranger bumped her then and her suitcase fell from her hand, splintering on the ground, the lock unfastened, and a gust of wind came westward and blew her clothes down the platform. People paced about, no one helping her. Women gaped and clung to their men's arms. She chased after her clothing. Her night dress bunched up against the wall. The whistle of an oncoming train. A crowd descended on the platform, stepping on her things. Then, to her horror, she realized that not only had her clothes gone off in the wind, but so

had the small bundle of Fred's letters. She watched in dismay as the wind pulled them up into the air and deposited them, much to her consternation, perfectly on the train tracks, and here was the train coming now. Rushing forward in a cloud of smoke. Oh, what could she do? The wheels clattered along the tracks. Steam pummelled out of the top, spewing a thick grey cloud into the sky. As if pulled along by the very hand of the devil, the train tore up to the platform, and she lost sight of her keepsakes.

The train screeched to a halt, and the doors flew open. She stood on her tiptoes trying to see above the crowd, looking for Fred amongst the people deboarding the train. She was caught in the bustling crowd of families embracing, some with tears of joy and some with tears of sadness. They joined together with the people preparing to board. There was a young couple, the man leaving, a tearful woman clinging to his sleeve. Further down, a small child was swept up in a grandmother's embrace. Only the faces differed in this repeating tableau. Was she then fated to repeat her own performance again and again? Standing alone on the platform with her belongings swept away in the wind and no sign of her lover to be seen? She pushed through the crowd, searching the faces, looking for his tall frame, his stooped shoulders.

A tide of people moved towards the train as it clanked back to life and the last passengers boarded. Porters loaded large bags of mail onto a railway car, and then, in a haze of steam, the train clattered off, chugging down the tracks, thick smoke trailing behind it. Veronica stood looking down at the tracks where torn pieces of paper were swept away on the wind as the train sped away.

The platform cleared. Still there was no sign of Fred. She was sure his letter said 2pm, but there was no way to check now. That letter had been bundled with the others and was now in torn pieces dispersed along the train tracks.

Inside, light sloped down from the large halfmoon window of the arrivals hall. A haze of smoke hanging over everything, obscuring the vaulted coffered ceiling. The hall had cleared as the rail passengers set off into the city. A porter lugged a trunk along, struggling beneath the heft of it.

“Excuse me,” she called, jogging towards him.

The man turned, shifted the weight of the trunk in his arms.

“Are there any more trains arriving from Montreal?”

“There’s one every two hours ma’am. Schedules are over by that counter there.” He gestured with his chin.

“Thank you so much. Thank you.”

Between the stone Corinthian columns reminiscent of the Temple of Apollo were wooden benches, thick and ornate as church pews. She sat at one and flipped through the schedule, running a finger along the arrival times. 4:05, 6:05, 8:05, 10:05. The last one arrived just after midnight. Perhaps something happened and he had to take a later train.

She wandered around the station, looking at the architecture, flipping through random train schedules, trying not to worry, reassuring herself that Fred would be on the next train.

At 3:50 she went to the restroom to refresh herself, fussed over her reflection in the mirror. There were dark orbs beneath her eyes. In the unforgiving bathroom light she

saw that the powder she had applied that morning had creased into the lines on her face. Did she really look so old or was it the oblique light filtering down from the window high above. She passed a hand through her hair, primping her curls.

The clouds parted when she walked out onto the platform, a finger of light pointing the way to her future, which stood bright before her. Soon the train would arrive and Fred would emerge, and they would laugh about the mix-up. She smoothed her skirt, patted her hair down. An engine chugging in the distance, the billowing smoke, the shrieking whistle, the screeching halt, the passengers filtering out.

People bustled by her, wives embraced their husbands, families gathered, smiling and cheerful, children scooped up into the arms of grandparents. Solitary people walked the platform looking for connecting trains or for the way out of the station. Sea gulls flew over them, their sunlit bellies pink against the encroaching patches of grey clouds that would soon overtake the sun. She scanned the crowd for Fred. There were so many tall men in dark suits. None of them him. She pushed through them all, her broken suitcase in her hand.

But again, the reunited people dispersed, into the station and back to their cars or out onto the street, and new people were boarding the train. As the crowd thinned, she stopped for a moment, putting the suitcase down. Still there was no sight of him. The train rumbled back to life. Steam funnelling out the top. For the first time she felt afraid. Afraid that he wouldn't be on any of the trains no matter how long she waited there, that he never intended to meet her at all.

She wanted to cry, but it was too humiliating—a grown woman standing alone on a train platform crying. An old fool with makeup smeared, tears drying on her overly powdered face.

Still, she wanted to believe. Something could have happened. He could be on the next train. Had she gotten the day wrong? The place? The time? Her dogged mind considered every possibility, that Fred was dead, that he was in the hospital, that there had been some horrible accident, that he no longer loved her, that he never did, that he'd run off with a beautiful Innu girl, that it was all a joke, that he never planned to meet her at all.

After midnight, when the last train from Montreal had come and gone, was breaking through the night toward Kingston, Belleville, Toronto, Veronica was the only person on the platform watching it disappear into the darkness.

The Ghost in the Machine

Leor was early for the evening panel of the genealogy conference. She paced alongside the windows taking in the view. The conference was in the Westin. The floor to ceiling windows offered an expansive view of the city. The Chateau Fairmont, the Parliament building, Gatineau in the distance. City lights blinking in the indigo dusk. Soon it would be too dark to see out. The windows would only reflect this room. She took a seat near the back and flipped through the program. She had not really planned out what panels she would attend.

There was a subliminal buzz of excitement. People filtered in, took their seats. Chattered in small groups. The audience was predominantly white and over 50. Leor read the program write up for the panel that was about to start: “Supernatural Genealogy and Spooky DNA Theory.” The presentations were about synchronicities in genealogical and archival research. Leor had attended this conference every year for the last decade and had never seen a panel so polarizing. Usually, the panels were about different genealogical methodologies, databases, ethics, practices, documentation, that sort of thing. The practical. The scientific. This panel seemed to border on the spiritual.

As the seats filled up, the moderator stood at the podium. A middle-aged woman with billowy hair and watery eyes wearing a linen blazer and scoop neck shirt, low heeled shoes, creased dress pants. She cleared her throat, quieting the room, and introduced the first panelist. Lucille Rafferty. Genealogist, researcher, self-proclaimed amateur historian. Bouncy curls tumbled down her shoulders—ash blonde streaked with gray. Her

skin was astonishing. Glowing. Though around fifty, there was an agelessness to her. Her energy was boundless. It filled the room with light.

She presented on what she called “spooky DNA,” a term borrowed in part from quantum mechanics—entanglement—Einstein’s “spooky action at a distance”. There were two cases she was interested in. One was a man who, as an adult, had found out he was adopted. After spending months trying to locate his biological family, he had been shocked to learn that his best friend, whom he had met at the age of 7 and had become instantly inseparable with and with whom he had shared a lifelong friendship, was actually his biological brother. In fact, they had long referred to each other as brothers—had been such great friends that they saw each other as such—and were stunned to find that they actually were.

The second case involved a man who had a recurring dream that he was in his childhood home, where he found a photo album. When he flipped through it, it was full of his baby pictures. But in each picture, there were two identical babies. Side by side. In every shot. Lying on the change table. Rolling in the grass. Sitting in highchairs with birthday hats on, one birthday cake between them. The dream had been so insistent he began to do some genealogical research. Eventually he learned that he did in fact have a twin brother and that they had been separated at birth when their mother died in labour. Tracking down his twin brother, he was shocked to learn just how similar their lives had been. They had both married schoolteachers, both had two sons. They both worked as accountants, both feared open water. They both loved Bob Dylan, both drove with the seat so far back they were nearly horizontal.

From these cases, Lucille argued that genealogical research was often guided, that there was sometimes a supernatural aspect to it. Leor had to admit, there *were* odd coincidences. Even in her own work she could think of countless examples. You'd come across a name and get a hunch. The kind you can't shake. So, you'd dig. You'd search the archives until you found it. The proof that that name you can't get out of your head is connected to you in some significant way. A way that you had no way of knowing but could feel somehow. Or you'd take a wrong turn or grab the wrong file and accidentally end up looking at the exact thing you'd been searching for all along. Such coincidences were so common in genealogical work and in archival research that it seemed impossible that they weren't being guided. The hunches intrigued her. Surely a part of you must already know that a particular photograph is of your great-grandfather or that a seemingly random document that you inexplicably cannot part with is actually quite important. And if a part of you already knows the whole story, why all the searching? Why not just lay it all out flat? Why does part of you remember and know but part of you has forgotten and must be retold the story in excruciatingly sparse details? For her, the photograph she found in the archives had been a signpost. "This way," it said. But which way? She wanted badly to know more about it, but there were no answers anywhere.

She didn't know what it was. A feeling. Intuition. Instinct. It was a knowing that was felt in the body. There was something about the man in the photograph. The man who looked like her father. She couldn't get it out of her head. At some point it had crossed over from curiosity to necessity. And that Vaughan had photographed him and that Wilkes had sought her out to find Vaughan. It was an intricate chain of

interconnections. Were all of these things coincidences or by design? And if by design, whose design?

The blood pulls. Genes are magnets. They pull you to who you are. Where you belong. The panelists were preaching to the choir. They were all there because they'd felt the pull.

Ottawa, 1924

Her nerves were raw from waiting, from straining to hear every small sound in the dark because maybe it was Fred. Maybe he had come for her, though she had no reason to think that he would. It was only a desperate wish. Something that if it were to happen would overturn the disaster of the day. So, she lay in bed listening. And the more she listened the more she could hear. Constance snoring in the guest room down the hall. The old grandfather clock doling out the rhythm of the day. The creaking of the house and the rattling of the furnace. And outside a mourning dove singing a few quiet notes as if in sleep. Then nestling in—the rustling of wings as it settled into a more comfortable position. And beyond that the hum of the night. It got louder the more she focused on it. And then the realization that the hum was not coming from far away but from within—or from both outside and inside. The hum was coming from everything. That soothed her, and finally she was able to fall asleep. Her mind tumbling into a black well of dreamlessness.

At some point, when the sun was still low, someone knocked lightly on the door, but she lay with her back to it. The blankets up to her chin. Her head pounded. She could feel it throbbing against the pillow. Her heart was broken, and she was ashamed. And what did Constance know about what had happened? She couldn't stomach it.

She slept until the afternoon. When she heard Constance out back with the boys, she snuck downstairs. Made herself some toast and tea and took it up to bed, successfully avoiding being seen by anyone.

After days in bed, she finally ventured downstairs. Jack threw his arms around her legs. “Momma!” he squealed.

She ran her fingers through his dark curls, picked him up and kissed his flushed cheeks. “Oh, Jack, I’ve missed you so much.” She pressed her face into him, smelling his skin. The freshness of his hair. How could she leave him? How did she ever think that she could leave him?

“Feeling rested?” Constance asked, her voice a blade.

“I feel much better. Thank you.”

Jack clambered out of her arms and raced into the living room, where Simon had just turned the radio on.

Veronica sat at the kitchen table looking out the French doors at the creek. The late afternoon sun. The long, speckled shadows of the oak trees in the distance.

Constance was making dinner and the smell of roasting beef and onions made Veronica feel hungry for the first time in over a week.

That night she ate dinner downstairs for the first time since her failed meeting with Fred. For all her faults, Constance was an impeccable cook, and Veronica ate with vigor. She stabbed a potato with her fork and smeared it into the gravy, cutting a piece of roast beef and stabbing that onto her fork as well. She shoved both into her mouth and swallowed it all down with coffee. Edmund was talking to his mother, so neither of them

was paying any attention to her, as she rammed forkfuls of food into her mouth with abandon. Gravy dripped down her chin, and she didn't wipe it away. Let them think she was insane. She didn't care. As she was stuffing a crust of bread into her mouth, she suddenly cued into what Edmund was saying.

“One of my ethnographers is missing.”

“He stopped coming to work?” Constance asked, hovering the coffee pot over Edmund's cup. A plume of steam rising it.

“It's a bit more than that. He was supposed to return from a field expedition last week, but he never returned.”

Veronica stopped chewing and listened.

“I don't think it was an accident” he was saying.

Constance clicked her tongue. “Such a shame.”

Veronica wanted to slap her across the mouth.

“Honestly, I have reasons to think that he's disappeared on purpose. I don't expect that he'll be back.”

“Does he have a family?” Constance asked. Her eyes two full moons.

Veronica couldn't eat anymore. She looked at her plate in misery.

And just like that he evaporated. It was like he was standing in front of her, and she was watching him dissolve right in front of her eyes. Each short strand of his hair down to his boots and all the associations, all her dreams, every minute they shared

together, etherized, breaking down into their subatomic particles until there was nothing left. Had she known him at all? He was so gone now that it hardly seemed to matter. Had he really touched her waist and kissed her collar bone? Had she really smelt his skin and tasted his lips? Or had she imagined it all? All her dreams, this man that she had imagined, who had swept her up in an illusion of some impossible and bliss-filled future. None of it was real at all. And as he began to disappear, so too did she. For now, no one seemed to see her. It was as though only his eyes had given her form, and now that the promise of him had been dashed, that those eyes were forever turned away from her, she was as formless as the wind.

She saw how the present could change the past, that the past wasn't solid. It was pliable and ever changing, like a sculpture that never cured, that you just kept adjusting every day to suit your whim. She had shaped it into a man, but now it was just a blank formless mass of clay.

Inheritance

As the final panelist finished his presentation, “Synchronicities in Genealogical Research,” the audience began to disperse. A small group had gathered around the presenters who stood at the front of the room answering questions and accepting compliments.

Leor had thought a lot about genetic inheritance over the years. Often people think of inheriting money, or businesses, houses, or jewelry. But what about the other things? Trauma, addiction, disease. What was her own, and what had been passed down? Or was there a difference? Because there were so many things she didn’t understand about herself. Like why she had spent so much of her youth drinking herself into a blackout. When the hangovers got so bad that she had to quit drinking, she replaced it with other things. Compulsive spending. Maxing out credit cards. Hoarding. Exercising even. Sometimes eating. Sometimes sex. Finally she had settled on work. All her life she jumped from excess to excess. And she wondered if that was a kind of inheritance. Because every single person on her father’s side of the family was an addict. Every single one.

A tech person was testing the podium microphone. “Check, check.” He tapped on it twice. Two dull thuds amplified in surround sound. They were preparing for the keynote that would start in half an hour. Her mind felt raw and tired. She joined the back end of a small group moving out into the hallway. Across the room she thought she saw Wilkes. His sandy hair. The slight stoop of his thin shoulders. An influx of people came down the hallway, blocking her. When she looked again, she’d lost sight of him.

Had he been at the same panel? She thought again about what he'd said the first day they met. That the men in his family kept disappearing. Perhaps that was his inheritance. One he probably didn't want. She thought about his need to find answers. To know what happened to Vaughan. She thought about her own need for answers. *Who we are is in who they are*, she thought. But try as she did, it seemed that *who they are* was impossible to pin down.

Ottawa, 1924

Moonlight upset the darkness. Some noise had permeated her sleep, rousing her from her dreams. Some quiet but persistent sound from outside. The ivy. It was rustling. The sneaky tendrils holding onto the house. Climbing like a slow octopus, up and up the brick. The sound was unmistakable. The audacity of it. It was maddening. Throwing her housecoat on, she opened the door without a sound. Taking slow and careful steps so as not to creak the floor, she made her way down the stairs. This was how it had been the night she snuck out to meet Fred. The night they drove through the snow. Made love in the museum. But she couldn't think of that now with her wrecked heart. The grandfather clock pulsed out of the darkness. Plunk plunk plunk like water dripping from the side of the tub. In the kitchen she found what she needed in the top drawer, and she managed to get out the French doors without rousing anyone. The wet grass was cold on her bare feet. She stood in the moonlight at the side of the house surveying the ivy. It rustled and twisted with a life of its own. She grabbed onto it with both hands and tried to tear at it, but it was too thick to break. It was like thick hair attached to the house. From the pocket of her housecoat, she took the scissors she had taken from the kitchen. Between quick fanatical snips, she tried to pull the tendrils loose. It was a gigantic monster suctioned to the house, and she could not remove it. In turns she cut at the stalks and ripped at them with both hands, throwing at her feet all that she could detach. Little piles of leaves and torn stalk grew around her as she worked in a blind fury. Then a gasp from somewhere

nearby. Someone was running towards her. She picked up speed. Plunging the scissors into the stalks. Snipping at all she came in contact with.

Something was pulling her back. The ivy was wrapping around her wrists. She stabbed at it with the scissors. There were arms around her, trapping her arms to her sides, dragging her away.

The last thing she saw was Constance standing on the back porch, her mouth open. Her face a bleached moon in the darkness.

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The Thief

2024

∞

The Cardboard Hearts

“René says someone has been stealing documents. We’re only allowed to look at one box at a time now.” She studied Minuat’s face for a reaction but there wasn’t one.

“I bet it’s Clarice,” she said. She was applying lipstick, holding a small folding mirror in her left hand.

Leor did not understand lipstick. She understood that it looked nice, but she didn’t understand how anyone could wear it. It got on everything. Teeth, sandwiches, forks, spoons, the rims of glasses. You couldn’t make out with anyone with it on. You’d both look like clowns. It was completely impractical. For makeup, it was the most uncomfortable thing you could put on your face. And unless your teeth were blindingly white, any colour other than nude just made your teeth look yellow. Minuat’s teeth were not blindingly white but somehow the red lipstick didn’t make hers look yellow.

“Why would Clarice steal archival records?” Leor turned to the circulation desk to see if Clarice could hear them. She was standing by René’s office, talking to him through the open door.

“Who knows? Her hands are always moving. She’s probably cramming half the archives into her purse.” She snapped the compact closed and dropped it into her satchel.

“She’s knitting!”

Minuat raised an eyebrow. Returned to the folder she was working with.

The Seven Islands photos were spread across the desk in front of her. There seemed to be fewer of them every time she looked through them. A lot of them were by

Vaughn but some were also taken by the American anthropologist Frank Speck. She held the one that Vaughan had taken of her great-grandfather, Tibasse St. Onge. Like many Indigenous peoples, there was a long history between the Innu and white ethnographers and *coureurs des bois*. Ti-basse had gone on an expedition with Paul Provencher, the last *coureur de bois*. There were pictures of them together on Google Images. That was what led her into genealogy in the first place. It's also what taught her that in genealogy, answers, if you ever got them, only led to more questions.

When Leor was a child, she had thought that *coureur de bois* translated to cardboard heart because when she heard it, she heard *coeur de boite*. From what she had learned in her French class *coeur* was heart and *bois* sounded like *boite*, which was box, and in her child's mind, boxes were made of cardboard. So, she always imagined explorers with cardboard hearts, traversing the wilderness. Later, when she learned that *bois* meant woods and *coureur* meant runner, she still couldn't stop seeing the *boite* in *bois* and the *coeur* in *coureur*. Bearded white men running through the woods, trying to keep their brown paper hearts dry. They had darting eyes and thin mouths, and their faces never softened on account of their corrugated hearts.

Her great-grandfather was in his 70s when he accompanied Paul Provencher into the woods. According to Paul Provencher's writings, Tibasse, who had not been to the land of his family in many years, was happy to return. He acted as a guide for Provencher, carrying a pack of over 100 lbs on his back. They walked for several hours each day. Setting up camp and setting out again the next morning. There was a picture of the three of them, sitting down in the bush to eat. Her great-grandfather was laughing, a piece of food held between his thumb and forefinger, just in front of his mouth. His white

hair blown to the side by the wind. A sparkle in his eye that she noticed in a lot of his pictures. Mischief. That's what it made her think of. The only pictures of him where he didn't have that twinkle in the eye were the ones in which he stood beside his wife. A severe looking woman in a black dress. A look of perpetual mourning. The edges of her lips tugged down. Hair pulled back into a tight knot at the nape of her neck. A large silver cross around her neck. They looked like complete opposites.

Leor studied Tibasse's face, his cheekbones. That part of her face was shaped exactly like his. His fingers were long and thick, looked just like her father's. She put the picture down. It hurt her heart.

Even though they were now only allowed one box at a time, Minuat was still clipping pages from the files. Leor noticed her palm sliding the page across the table. The swift tuck behind the notebook. Her usual trick. It was filling Leor with increasing anxiety. There were so few answers to begin with, and this woman was thieving away the little that there was. Every visit Leor found there were fewer photographs in the box, fewer pages in the files. And now when there were notes scribbled into the margins, she wasn't sure if Vaughan had made them or Minuat. The uncertainty was making her unhinged.

Leor had the knife in her pocket. She could feel the weight of it there. Like an oval stone. Or an egg. She stood outside the archive building, waiting for Minuat to descend the concrete steps. The dark edge of dusk. A half moon rising in the east. Cobalt sky with winking stars. Minuat emerged. Impeccable as always. Her sleek hair. Fitted pencil skirt. Towering stilettos. The black leather satchel hanging from her elegant shoulder. Her shadow was long in the circle of streetlight she passed through. Leor followed her down the steps towards the riverside trail. The rain had stopped, but the metallic smell of it was still in the air. All was quiet but for her heels clicking against the pavement. Leor wore sneakers and made no sound as she trailed behind her.

Then, as if the night had conspired in her favor, the moon dipped behind a cloud. Miraculously, Minuat tripped. Ha! That's what you get for wearing such impractical shoes! Leor pulled the knife from her pocket and plunged the blade into Minuat's neck. Using Minuat's shock to her advantage, she grabbed her satchel, heavy with the stolen documents. Leor's skin vibrated with adrenaline. She finally had it. But there were footsteps fast approaching, the glint of a knife in the dark coming for her out of the night. She ran down the trail, clutching the satchel to her body. When she turned back, expecting to see Minuat lying in a heap on the pavement, there was nothing there. Not even a spot of blood that she could see.

At home, Leor shook as she emptied the contents of the satchel onto her coffee table. The first page had only two words on it: The Searchers.

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The Searchers

1924

∞

Whitcomb

Constable Whitcomb sat down with a coffee and a cigarette and was perusing the file on his desk, a baffling string of bank robberies. The last one, the day before at the Bank of Nova Scotia on Sparks Street, marked the fifth robbery. Three banks in Ottawa and two in Gatineau, Quebec. In this last one, the thief ran off with \$2,000, and though there had been many witnesses, Whitcomb had so far been unable to find a suspect. White male, middle aged, average height and build. The robber wore a hat and a long coat with the collar pulled up, so no one got a good look at his hair colour or face. But the man had a cane. Did the thief have some kind of handicap or was the cane a ruse or a weapon?

Though Whitcomb had moved up from Cadet to Constable, he was still having to take on mundane cases—traffic accidents and minor thefts. When Corporal Ehrlich fell ill with the Spanish flu, Whitcomb was asked to take on the robbery case until he returned. He was working long nights trying to get a lead on the case, hoping to move up to Corporal. He read through the file again to see if there was something he may have missed. Often that was the case. The answer was staring right at you, only you couldn't see it because you were looking for something grand and elusive rather than something plain and clear. At least that's what he had heard. He hadn't had to do very much investigating in his handlings of traffic accidents. The smashed-up cars usually told the whole story. He was flipping through the first few pages of the robbery file when a man appeared in the doorway, tapped on the door.

“Constable Whitcomb?”

“That’s what they call me. Can I help you?” he asked, blowing smoke into the already smoky room. “Have a seat,” he said, gesturing to the chair across from him. He butted his cigarette into the amber glass ashtray, held in a tall and ornate cast iron stand beside his desk.

The man looked young, out of his element. He was looking blankly around the office like someone in a dream. It was a look Whitcomb had seen often. A side effect of shock.

“What seems to be the trouble?” he asked.

“My father is missing.”

“How long has it been? He’s probably spent the night boozing at some blind pig. Blowing off steam. Happens all the time. I’m sure he’ll show up.”

“No, it’s not like that.” The young man held his hat in his lap and was clenching and releasing his hands around the brim. “This is really out of character for him. He was supposed to be home two weeks ago.”

“Home from where?”

“He works for the Geological Survey. At the Victoria Memorial Museum. He’s an ethnographer. I went with him to work on an Indian reservation on the north shore of Quebec. We took the train back two weeks ago. We were supposed to return to Ottawa together, but at Bonaventure Station in Montreal, he handed me my pay for helping him on the trip, checked his luggage, and said he was going to stop at Caughnawaga for three days to pick up some Indian artifacts for the museum before coming home. He should have returned three days after me, but he never came back. He has never done this before. I’m afraid something has happened to him.”

“Can you tell me your name, your age. You father’s name and age?”

“My name is Goldwyn Vaughan, 18. My father is Frederick Wilkerson Vaughan, 52.”

Whitcomb jotted down details in quick looping script that was illegible to anyone but him.

“Physical description of your father?”

“He’s about 5’10. Lanky. Grey eyes. Thinning hair. Reddish blonde but turning grey now. His shoulders are stooped, from decades of being hunched over books, I guess.”

“What was he wearing the last time you saw him?”

“A grey suit. A white shirt. Black boots. He checked his luggage, but he kept a smaller case with him. It had his camera in it, a Kodak Vest Pocket Autographic, film, his field notebooks, a mosquito net. Things he never travelled without.”

Whitcomb handed Goldwyn a pad of paper.

“Write down in detail everything that happened leading up to the last time you saw him.”

The young man looked down at the pad of paper with great focus, wrote in slow, deliberate bouts. He had a ruddy complexion with freckled cheeks. His hair was a reddish blonde and had been swept to the side by the wind or an anxious hand.

Whitcomb lit another cigarette and reopened the robbery file. Twenty-eight witness statements and not one person could describe the man’s face. He flipped through the statements: three bank tellers, the bank manager, ten customers, fourteen by-standers who

had been near the bank at the time of the robbery and had seen the thief either enter or leave the bank. Had the man been faceless?

“Do you think you’ll be able to find him?” Goldwyn asked.

The young man handed Whitcomb the pages. Whitcomb was still thinking of the faceless bank robber.

“I’m sure it’s just a misunderstanding, and he’ll turn up soon. I’ll look into it and see what I can find out,” he said, rising and ushering Goldwyn out of his office.

By a little turquoise desk lamp, in a small circle of light, he worked late into the night chasing a faceless bank robber.

Nancy

The warm aroma of baked apples and cinnamon filled the kitchen. Maybe this would be the one, she thought, slipping the muffin tins out of the oven and placing them on the cooling trays. Ever since Goldwyn had come home alone from his field trip with Fred, nothing she baked had turned out. Recipes she had made religiously for the past twenty years, for cakes and pies and casseroles, for breads and biscuits and scones, that had once been moist and light and that the boys had delighted in eating, had all come out dry and flavourless. She poked the sunken muffins with a fork. Twelve more casualties.

It was not that she had been doing anything differently. She baked from memory, recipes that she had inherited matrilineally. Recipes repeated so many times her hands could make them on their own. It was that no matter what she did, part of her was always straining, was listening with focused attention for the familiar sound of his boots on the front porch, for the turn of the doorknob, for the little vibration before the telephone rang. For any little sound that would signal the relief of his return. But the relief never came, the house was silent. She did everything in a semi-conscious way, sleepwalking.

When Goldwyn told her that Fred had made an extra stop and would be home in two days, she knew that something was wrong. Her mind accepted what Goldwyn said, but her body knew different. Now two weeks had passed, and there had been no word from him.

She left the sunken muffins to cool on the counter and stood in the living room. Dappled sunlight shifted on the hard wood floor, filtering in through the big oak tree out front and revealing the thin layer of dust that had gathered on the end table and on the

Handel lamp. Though she had stood in this very spot countless times, the room felt unfamiliar. Goldwyn had gone to report the disappearance. Had insisted on going alone. Richard had gone to see a movie with his friend Paul. The house was unnervingly quiet.

The house was full of ghosts. All the iterations of Fred from over the years were still milling about, and every once in a while, she caught sight of one. She would be in the bedroom, making the bed and there he would be leaning against the dresser trying to tie his tie before Goldwyn's graduation. His forehead scrunched in concentration. Fred 10 years ago. 5 years ago. She'd walk into the dining room and spot him out of the corner of her eye, standing by the window, looking out at the lilac trees, the years slipped from his face. She let him linger there on the edges of her vision, ghostly and still, but with her nonetheless.

She remembered when they had first bought the house. How excited they had been. It was the nicest place they had ever lived. In those early days, in the long evenings of summer, she and Fred would walk arm in arm around Bowman Lake, while the boys chased each other around the murky water. Goldwyn was only five then. Richard three. It seemed like another life now. Fred had been so happy then. And she had been, too. It was his first year working at the Victoria Memorial Museum. He had moved them out of the cramped rooming house in Toronto where the four of them had slept in one small room. Had gotten the museum job in Ottawa, miraculously, with no education. All the nights he stayed up late researching on his own. Publishing and presenting papers for the Folklore Society. It had all paid off. Even now she felt proud and grateful for what he had done. The way he lifted them out of financial peril, solely through his own hard work.

There was a dull thud of footsteps on the front porch. She hurried to the front door. The mailman walking away in the slanted sunlight. She flipped through the mail to see if there was a letter from Fred, but there was only a postcard from her brother Patrick, who was doing a train tour of New England, and a bill from the gas company. And she realized with dismay that he had taken care of all the bills, and she would have to figure out a way to pay them. When were they due and were there others? This was something solid for her mind to grasp onto. She made her way to his study.

He didn't like his things disturbed, so she stood for a moment in the doorway, as though crossing the threshold was a betrayal. The curtains were drawn, and the room was full of shadows. It felt like him, this room where he spent most of his at-home hours. She could feel him all around her, as if the air was made up of him. It made the hairs on the back of her neck stand up because she couldn't see him anywhere like she could in the rest of the house, she could only feel him, and the feeling was unnerving. She felt like an intruder and contemplated leaving, but remembering the bills, she stepped inside, pulled the curtains open.

Dull daylight fell across the desk. A squall of dust swirled slowly in the hazy light. Books and papers were piled neatly on the desk. The bookshelves that ran along the walls were also dusty. A carved mask hung on one of the walls. The eye openings were dark black holes. A thick red line was painted down the middle of the forehead, right down the nose and crossing the center of the lips. Fred had brought it home a few years ago, one of his field trips working with the Indians in northern Ontario. Though he usually liked spent the night of his return sharing stories with the boys about where he had gone, artifacts he had collected, and the stories the Indians had told him, he had never

talked about this mask. He had brought it into his study straight away, carrying it with the awe and care with which one would handle a religious object. Who had worn this mask she wondered? And how had he come to possess it? Fred always called them false faces. She always found that curious because it meant something different than a mask. Something more willfully duplicitous.

She opened the top drawer of the desk, careful not to disturb things. He will come back, and he will be angry that I have gone through his things. There were pens, pencils, a stack of paper with the official Geological Survey of Canada letterhead. She searched every drawer. Drafts of articles. Reams of paper. Notebooks and writing utensils. She sat down in the chair and looked around. This was the view that he had when he sat there. She had never seen the room from this perspective before. A filing cabinet stood in the corner. A tall basket sat on top of it. Another Indian artifact. She moved towards it, picked up the basket. It was lighter than she thought it would be. Something rustled inside of it when she moved it. She looked inside. There were papers wedged into it. She pulled some out. They were from the bank and from the gas company. As she looked through them, she saw that the amounts due kept increasing. Some were stamped with OVERDUE in big red letters. Some said FINAL NOTICE. Were these all unpaid? She started adding the balances together. A wave of panic overtook her, and she needed to sit down in Fred's chair. The bills spread out, a sense of doom widened within her.

Goldwyn

When Goldwyn got home, he found all the lights were off. His mother and Richard were sitting in the living room listening to Eddie Cantor's "If You Do What You Do" on the Victrola. A well-lit fire crackling in the fireplace. The flames leaping out, giving everything a red hue. He had turned the light on when he walked in, but nothing happened.

"The lights aren't working," he said, taking a seat in the armchair.

"I know. I'll have to call the gas company tomorrow."

They were working on a puzzle. The image on the box was of a woman in a cloche hat with two Dobermans jumping up to greet her. They were working on filling in the edges. They had almost gotten all four sides connected. Goldwyn leant over and picked up one of the wooden jigsaw pieces. He turned it until it was shaped like a question mark, and then he turned it back. They had an unspoken agreement. They did not talk about things in front of Richard. Though Goldwyn sometimes wondered if it was unfair to protect him in this way, to keep him oblivious of the important shifts that were taking place in their lives, it was his natural inclination to do so.

He went into the kitchen to get a drink. There was a plate of orange drop cookies on the counter. He broke one in half, put half in his mouth, and opened the ice box. It seemed emptier than usual. The dish that was usually full of eggs, was down to two. The shelf for vegetables had only an onion. There was a pork roast, but that was it. The cookie formed a dry ball on his tongue and stuck to the top of his mouth. He had to drink half a glass of milk to get it down his throat.

Had his father sent money back to his mother? He hadn't thought about it before. How would they pay for everything? He would be staying at the University of Ottawa next year. What would happen if his father didn't come back? He went to his room before rejoining them in the living room.

"I forgot to tell you, dad gave me some money to give to you." He handed her the \$100 he had earned working with his father that summer.

The lights were back on the next day.

Edmund

Sept-Îles, Québec

July 29, 1924

Dear Dr. Ripas,

I was much surprised to read your letter of the –th of July which was secretly enclosed in a letter from my mother. I was equally surprised to hear that my father has not been in correspondence with you for the last two months. It was my understanding that he had been posting letters to the Geological Survey on a regular basis. He is always writing, and I had assumed that he was writing letters to you as well as working on his field notes. We go to the post regularly and I know he has received your letters. He has mailed letters every time we have gone into town.

In regard to your concern about my father's health, I must admit that I am equally alarmed having noticed some marked changes in his behavior over the last few weeks. It does appear as though something is affecting him, though what it is I do not know. I would be very grateful to you if you would refrain from mentioning any of this to my mother as you know how anxious she can be, especially when he is away on field work. To be perfectly honest, he has been acting rather strangely over the last couple of weeks, and I do not know what to make of it. He is often depressed and moody and unusually pale. He hardly eats anything at all most days and when I ask him what is wrong, he laughs and pretends as if he hasn't a care in the world. Sometimes I catch him staring off and when I try to talk to him, he looks at me as if he has not the slightest idea who I am.

If you know something more about this, please do tell me. We will likely be in Sept-Îles for another 8 to 10 weeks and I am anxious to see how his health progresses. If you know of something I can do, please do not hesitate to advise me. I have always looked to you as a friend of the family, and I know that your concern for my father is beyond that of a colleague but is that of a longstanding friend.

I cannot thank you enough for showing your concern, and it is a great relief to me to finally have someone to confide in. I look forward to reading your forthcoming letter and hearing your advice.

Yours most gratefully,

Goldwyn Vaughan

Edmund re-read the letter. He moved to the window to clear his head. Rain came down in sheets, gathering on the window in V shaped rivulets that rippled down the glass, to what end? That was the question.

Outside, a man was fighting with his umbrella. The wind had turned it inside out, and he was stabbing it into the wind to try to reset it. The sky opened up then, and the rain battered down. The man gave up, jogging towards the museum entrance with his useless umbrella dangling from one hand. His black trench coat was open, trailing behind him like a cape.

Edmund folded the letter and put it in the top drawer of his desk, at the back, under the little birch bark quill box an Indian chief had given him during his last field expedition in Nova Scotia.

Was there something they could have done? Did Goldwyn know more than he had disclosed? And if he did, perhaps he could get him to tell him a bit more. That was why he had arranged this meeting.

There was a gentle tap on his office door, and Goldwyn leaned in, hanging nervously by the doorway, his hat in his hand. His broken umbrella hung at his side like some strange long-legged black bird.

“Goldwyn,” he exclaimed. “So good to see you.” He moved towards him, wrapping him in what he meant to be a fatherly embrace, but which turned out to be more of a bear hug since Goldwyn was still holding his hat and umbrella. He ended by patting him awkwardly on the shoulder before taking Goldwyn’s wet coat, hat, and umbrella, and hanging them on the coat rack in the corner.

“I’ve something I’d like to show you while you’re here.”

They made their way through the anthropology department, passing the offices of Marius Barbeau, Sir Francis Knowles, Harlan Smith, Diamond Jenness, and then, at the end of the hall, the office of Goldwyn’s father. Passing Fred’s office unnerved Edmund. Typically, the silence that radiated from behind the closed office doors was a living silence; it was the silence of labour, of deep thought and furrowed brows. But the silence that came from Fred’s office was different. There was something foreboding about it. Heavy. To distract Goldwyn from feeling it, he spoke.

“There’s a new exhibit going up in anthropology. I’ll show you some of the artifacts we’re putting in.”

They fell into step with each other as though they were old friends. Goldwyn’s face was pale, and he looked like he hadn’t slept in quite some time. Though his hair was a redder blonde than his father’s, he had the same softness in his eyes and the same gaunt face.

They took the main staircase that had once been part of the museum’s impressive stone tower, an extravagant add-on that had been removed out of architectural necessity. The 97-foot-high tower, built of Nepean brown stone, had been too heavy and had begun to crack shortly after being completed in 1911. In fact, the tower had been so heavy, the museum had begun sinking into the Ottawa clay it rested on. Eventually, the tower had been removed, and the museum had been salvaged from sinking. The Geological Survey of Canada moved their offices into the building and began filling it with artifacts.

Buzzing students passed them on the stairs.

“Andy told me there’s a dinosaur skeleton,” a young boy cried to the child beside him.

Their teacher yelling down at them in exasperation “Remember, you are not to touch anything.”

Their feet receded, as they turned off on the third floor towards the paleontology exhibit.

“My father loves lecturing to the school children on Saturday mornings,” Goldwyn said.

“He is rather great at it,” Edmund said, careful to mirror his use of the present tense.

They made their way to the museum basement. The walls were of thick unfinished rock. It was cool, dark, and cave-like.

“This whole building is made of Canadian stone,” Edmund said, running his hands along the walls.

“It’s like being inside a rock,” Goldwyn said, looking around in awe.

Edmund led him to a back room deep in the museum. He had a ring of keys in his pocket, and he fumbled through them, looking for the right one.

“What was it you wanted to talk to me about?” Goldwyn asked. “Is there any news about my father?”

Edmund pushed the door open with his shoulder, and reached into the darkness, running his hand along the wall in search of a light switch. There was the buzz of electricity, and the lights flickered on.

“I’ve spoken with someone from Caughnawaga,” Edmund said.

Goldwyn looked at him impassively. Dark moon shadows hung from his eyes. Only his eyebrows rose in a querying manner. He was so quiet, it seemed that he wasn’t even breathing.

“There have been sightings of him there, though it would be good to corroborate them.”

“So he made it there, then?” Goldwyn said. “Maybe he’s still there. I’m going to go. I’ll look into things myself and see if I can find anything.”

“I was thinking of sending Diamond Jenness. He’s done some work out there and has built somewhat of a rapport with the Mohawks. He might be able to find out whether or not your father went there. Maybe your father’s there right now and we can put this all to rest.” Edmund reached out and touched his arm. “Maybe the two of you can go together. I’ll arrange for your ticket if you’d like to go.”

“Yes. Of course. That would be great. Thank you.”

“We’ll get your father home,” he said.

“Have you found out anything else?” Goldwyn asked.

Edmund hesitated.

“If there’s something you know, please tell me. My mother is a wreck. She hasn’t been sleeping. None of us have. I’ve heard her crying in her bedroom every night this week.”

Edmund thought of what he was going to say, opened his mouth to say it, but changed his mind. If he said it there was no going back, and he didn’t want to be responsible for the loss of hope his words might cause.

“There’s nothing else. Just that I wanted to show you these.”

He led Goldwyn to a long glass case at the back of the room.

“We’re launching this new exhibit next week. Your father collected some of these.”

Beneath the glass was a series of carved masks, painted in various colours. The features exaggerated. Thick knife mark rivets in the nose and cheeks. The hollow eyes, the frozen expressions. No faces animating them from behind, this collection of empty shells.

Goldwyn

As Goldwyn walked home from his meeting with Edmund his mind was consumed with a memory. It was something that he had forgotten but that had become dislodged during their conversation. It was a look he had once seen on his father's face.

For his 12th birthday, his family took him and his brother Richard to see a travelling magic show. He had heard his parents arguing about it in the kitchen that morning because his father had wanted to work.

“Can't you take them?” he had heard his father ask.

“Really, Fred? Would it kill you to take one day off work? It's his birthday for God's sake.”

In the end, his father had decided to work at the museum for the morning and meet them at the show later that day. He was in the middle of preparing a treatise on Iroquoian food. It's all he talked about most days. When he was home, that is, which wasn't very often.

His mother was shucking peas at the kitchen table. The windows were open, and a warm spring breeze carried in the scent of lilacs and the trill of sparrows.

“I don't mind if we don't go today,” Goldwyn said, sitting down beside her.

She looked over at him, a furrow in her brow. “Don't be silly. It's your birthday. Besides, how often do you get a chance to see the most famous magician in the world?”

Outside the Regent Theatre, families lined up and milled about. Everyone buzzing with excitement. As they made their way into the theatre and the crowd took their seats,

there was an electricity in the air partly due to the excitement about the show, but also partly due to the warm weather, a gratifying reprieve from the long winter. Goldwyn craned his head looking for his father in the crowd, but there were too many people still milling about to see. His mother also seemed to be looking around for him. Only his younger brother was able to fully enjoy the moment, sitting with the program spread across his lap and his feet dangling in the chair. He had one hand thrust into a bag of popcorn, while the other was pressed into the program, underlining as he read, so that he wouldn't lose his spot. Thinking she'd spotted him, his mother jumped from her seat and waved. Goldwyn looked to see, but it wasn't him. The man joined a group sitting a few rows ahead of them.

Soon the band started up and the curtain rose. But even as The Master Mystifier took the stage, Goldwyn's eyes kept wandering to the nearest entrance. His mother grabbed his hand and squeezed it. On stage, two policemen handcuffed The Master Mystifier who raised his arms so that the audience could see that he had a pair of handcuffs locked onto each wrist. Then they tied him to a wooden chair. Each policeman had a length of rope and wound it around his body. The music sped up as they wound the rope around and around shackling him to the chair. One coiled it around his arms tying his wrists together with several knots. The second tied the rope around his torso, fixing him to the chair. Then, together, they tied his legs down, making a point to end by looping the rope into a number of elaborate knots. Seeing that he was secured, the police officers gave each other a satisfied nod. One walked off stage, while the other took a seat behind the magician to keep watch. But soon the policeman was dozing off, and The Master Mystifier began to wriggle his ankles and wrists. As the policeman began to

snore, the magician grew more confident and wriggled his limbs some more until he fell over in his chair, where he thrashed about to the crashing music. Seconds later he had somehow managed to completely free himself. He stood up triumphantly and held the two pairs of handcuffs in one hand. They hung open, dangling in the air like snakes. The crowd erupted, cheering and clapping, awakening the police officer who was startled to see the magician free. He took after him and chased him in circles around the stage, whistling for the other policeman who re-emerged and also took chase. The violins, like buzzing bees, were making frantic zzzzzz sounds as the police officers tried to corner him, but he was too fast. When they charged at him, he crouched down and ran through their legs. Richard giggled in delight. He'd had a rapturous look on his face the entire time, which made Goldwyn smile. The magician ran off stage left with the policemen in pursuit only to re-emerge seconds later from stage right. Having lost the policemen somewhere backstage, The Master Mystifier took a bow center stage, and the crowd cheered.

The other sets were similar. He did a number of escapes—from ropes and from boxes, even from a milk crate full of water while in a straitjacket. Intermission had come and gone, and there had been no sign of his father. Now the magician was beginning his final act. Richard's eyes widened as The Master Mystifier walked onto the stage pulling an elephant in tow behind him.

“And now for my final trick. Behold this 10,000-pound elephant.”

All eyes were transfixed on the enormous animal that lumbered onto the stage behind him. The music had stopped, and the room was silent, the air heavy with anticipation. The magician pulled a gun from the waist of his pants. A silver revolver that

glinted in the theatre lights. He pointed it at the elephant. Several people gasped, his mother included. Richard sat forward in his seat, eyes glued to the stage. The magician stood with his legs spread apart and his right arm aimed at the elephant. He stood like someone about to shoot a bow and arrow.

Some movement to the left caught Goldwyn's attention. His father, having ducked in late, leaned against the wall at the far end of the theatre, watching. There was an explosion as the magician pulled the trigger. The audience sat in stunned silence. But Goldwyn only watched his father's face which seemed to be asking a question. And when he looked back at the stage, the elephant was gone. Only a dispersing cloud of smoke lingered where the 10,000-pound elephant stood just seconds earlier. And when he looked back at his father, there was a look on his face that he did not understand. He did not clap or cheer. He only stood there looking as though he had been given the answer to something he had been asking his whole life, like something had clicked into place behind his eyes. But then, the audience rose whistling, and whooping, and clapping, and yelling. Children jumped up and down. People stomped their feet and drummed the backs of chairs. Someone behind him was whistling so loudly his ears ached. In the uproar, he had lost sight of his father. And they did not catch up with him until they spilled out of the theatre, with the sun setting and the trees aflame in the pink evening light.

That had been seven years ago, and he had forgotten all about it, but now he could see his father's face again with such clarity. But what had been the question that that face had asked and what had been the answer that had clicked into place in that moment when the gun turned the elephant to smoke?

Edmund

Goldwyn and Desmond had been gone for a week before Edmund finally made the trip to the house on Broadway Avenue. He had not spoken to Nancy since Fred first went missing, at which time he called to tell her that he would do whatever he could to get Fred home. That had been a month ago now. He rang the doorbell and waited. The leaves of the oak tree out front had turned orange in the weakened October light. They sat in piles at the base like burial mounds. The house was quiet. He shuffled his weight from leg to leg. He knew that he should have done more.

The door cracked open, and a spectral face peered out. Thin and white. It took him a moment to recognize that the owner of the face was Nancy. He tried to smile, but he was too startled, and it came out as more of a grimace. She looked at least ten years older than when he had seen her last Christmas. It reminded him of when his mother had passed away, and his father had become ill. How quickly a few weeks could ravage a body when one's heart was broken.

“I’m sorry I didn’t come sooner.”

“It’s okay,” she said with a weak smile, moving aside to let him in.

The house was dark and silent. Something about it made him want to back out and leave.

She led him to the kitchen and poured him a cup of coffee. The aroma of lemon cake hung on the air, but she took a package of tea biscuits from the pantry.

“Thank you for coming,” she said, arranging the tea biscuits on a plate and putting it down in front of him.

“Oh, you’re welcome.” He didn’t know what to say. Everything that came into his head seemed insensitive and pointless. How are you? Obviously not good! What’s new? My husband is still missing.

“Is there anything I can do?” he finally said.

She shook her head.

“Have you found something out?” she asked, dropping a sugar cube into her coffee, and stirring.

“I haven’t. Have you heard from Goldwyn?” he asked.

“He called the other day, but they haven’t found anything out yet.”

He pulled the envelope from his coat pocket.

“Fred still owes money for some equipment he took out to Seven Islands. This is an itemized list along with the amount owing.” He unfolded the slip of paper and handed it to her. “There was a camera and some film, as well as some money he was given to collect artifacts with, but neither the money nor the artifacts have ever been returned.” His voice was quiet. He was embarrassed, but he had no choice. McInnis, the chief of the G.S.C., had ordered that the money be returned, and as the head of the department, Edmund was responsible for getting the money back. Money was still tight from the war, and McInnis kept the purse strings closed.

Nancy looked down at the list. Her pale face somehow draining even more of colour.

“When does the money need to be paid back by,” she asked, tapping the amount with her pointer finger. Twenty-five dollars.

“As soon as possible I imagine.”

“I’ll have to go to the bank first.”

“Of course,” he said.

“Was there anything else?”

After she led him to the door and said goodbye, she called *The Ottawa Citizen* and placed an ad for a boarder.

Goldwyn

Bonaventure Train Station, Montréal, Québec

Goldwyn was too anxious to sit down. He paced. He picked up a train schedule. Stared at it blankly. He took out his pocket watch. 9:17 am. The station agent had been gone for almost 20 minutes. He rubbed the watch face clean with the sleeve of his shirt. He had smeared a thumb print on it when he pulled it out of his pocket. The train station was filling up. He moved further in, leaning against a wall, still keeping an eye out for the squat man who was assisting him.

A man and a young boy hurried by. Father and son, he thought, looking away. His eyes were aimed at the gathering crowd of arrivals and departures that moved by him, but he was elsewhere. This was his life now, a slave to his mind, endlessly working to answer the question that his father now was. He began with the least bleak. Had his father decided to extend his stay or visit another reservation? His mind jumped to the bleakest. Was he injured and unable to get in touch? Was he lying in a hospital somewhere? Had he lost his memory and forgotten who he was or where he lived? Had his father died in some horrible accident? Had his father disappeared on purpose?

The father and son were climbing on board a train. The father grabbed the boy's hand and pulled him up. The boy's suitcase swung at his side. They entered the train and were gone.

The station agent came rushing through the crowd. A perplexed look on his face. A small piece of paper clutched in his fat hand. Sweat running down his hairline. The black waves stuck to his forehead.

“I’m sorry, sir,” the man heaved. The thin moustache above his wide lips quivered. He was out of breath, and he spoke in spurts. “I searched the check-room twice, and all of the places it might be.” He cleared his throat. “Someone claimed the luggage, sir. I have the claim ticket here.” He handed it to Goldwyn.

Goldwyn stared at the red and white claim ticket, trying to understand what it all meant.

“Someone claimed my father’s luggage?” he asked.

“On Saturday, September 18th, someone claimed the luggage,” he said, pointing at the ticket.

“Is there any way to know who it was? Do you have a signature for the person who claimed it?”

“I’m sorry, sir. We don’t require signatures for claimed luggage, only the matching claim ticket. And no one remembers who claimed it. I’ve already asked the porter and the claim ticket agent.” He ran his hand through his hair, pushing the black waves back from his forehead.

“But it could have been someone else? It could have been someone other than my father?” Goldwyn asked, his voice catching.

“Yes, it could have been,” the man said with wide eyes, nodding his head too eagerly.

“Thank you,” Goldwyn said, taking the man’s hand. “Thank you so much for your help.”

Goldwyn took a photograph from his pocket and handed it to the man.

“If you see him, or if any of your employees see him or remember him, could you please call me right away?” He scribbled his phone number on a piece of paper and handed it to the station agent.

“Of course,” the man said, nodding his head again.

Outside the train station, people rushing this way and that. Cars were parked down the side of the street. He walked towards the traffic to distance himself from the train station because he still could not make sense of what the station agent had told him. Did his father claim the luggage? Had he been robbed? Had someone else claimed the luggage by accident? On purpose? He stared into the crowd, a hundred blurred faces rushing by, and none of them his father’s.

Edmund had given him a list of places his father had stayed at on past field expeditions when he had travelled through Montreal to get to Caughnawaga or to Odanak, or when he had travelled even further along the North Shore to Seven Islands and up to Nain. With the list in his pocket, he took a taxi to the Auberge Heney Inn on Boulevard Saint-Joseph.

It was just after noon. The sidewalk outside of the inn was crowded. Couples walked arm in arm in the snap of the cooler autumn air that had shadowed a prolonged, though rainy, Indian Summer. A small family passed him as he lugged his suitcase towards the entrance. A young boy walking behind his parents and sister at a slow pace. Arms crossed and sulking. The mother turning to see where he had got to.

“Quit your dawdling, John,” she yelled.

And he ran to catch up, catching sight of a stray dog along the way. A black and white mutt with matted fur that had stopped to pee on the brick exterior of the inn. He cast a wistful look at it as he ran to catch up with his family.

Exhausted, and still flummoxed from his interaction with the train station agent, the brightness of the day gave him a gritty feeling behind the eyes. The banded sun gave everything a golden hue but offered little warmth. The lobby of the inn was dark, and his eyes had to adjust. The décor was warm and comforting. Someone somewhere was playing a piano. He showed the front desk clerk a picture of his father.

“Did this man stay here?” he asked. “About three weeks ago?”

The man gave the photograph a brief glance before busying himself with straightening the objects in front of him—a logbook, a pen, a stack of papers.

“It really isn’t my place to give information about our guests,” he said, pushing the pen closer to the logbook.

“Please,” Goldwyn said. “He’s my father, and he’s disappeared. No one has heard from in three weeks.”

The man looked at him with curiosity.

“And you think he stayed here?”

“It’s possible. He was going to work in Caughnawaga. Is that far from here?”

“It’s not that far. You can walk to the Saint-Laurent Railway Bridge in twenty-five minutes. People walk across it to get to the Indian Reservation on the other side of the St. Lawrence, but I wouldn’t recommend it. The bridge is long, and there is no railing for most of the way. It’s a faster way to get there, but not very safe.”

Goldwyn put the photograph down on the counter in front of the man. He took another glance at it.

“Is there anything else I can do for you?” he asked.

“Can I book a room for a couple of nights, please?”

“Certainly,” said the man, taking the pen in his hand and filling in the logbook. He handed Goldwyn a room key and took the two dollar bills Goldwyn handed him, punching the buttons of a large brass National cash register, and putting the bills into the wooden cash box that sprung open.

“If you remember anything about my father, please let me know.”

“I can ask around, but I’m not promising anything,” the man said.

Goldwyn thanked him and took the stairs to the second floor.

He walked the twenty-five minutes to the railway bridge, knowing that his father had taken the same steps, had walked the same route. What had been in his mind? Where was he? In the three weeks since his father stayed in Montreal and sent him on to return to Ottawa alone, he had weighed every possibility. The ones that were too painful to linger on, he let them flash like brief lightning in his mind.

He crossed the Lachine Canal. The water was still, so that the surface was a perfect mirror, as if there was no depth to it all. It was only a flat surface. Piles of gold and orange leaves had drifted to the edges of the canal so that the faultless blue sky reflected in the water was abutted with fire. And for the first time, Goldwyn began to

wonder if his father had known that he would not come back, if he had planned it all along.

At the railway bridge, Goldwyn took in the reality of it. Although the bridge was wide, there was no protection from falling. There were twin tracks, so one could move to the other side if a train came, but would the vibrations knock you off? How easy could it be to trip over one of the tracks? Goldwyn sat on the edge of the bridge, his feet dangling. The river rushing by far below. The sun was beginning its westward descent, a burning eye about to close. Against his will, he pictured his father at the bottom of the river. Grass like tentacles holding him beneath the cold grey water. His face bloated beyond recognition. Fish nibbling at his arms and face. His hair flapping in the water like a fin. His eyeballs long ago ripped out and crushed in the jagged teeth of fish. Goldwyn thought he might throw up. Afraid of falling, he crawled back to the part of the bridge that was over land.

That couldn't be where his father was.

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Hallways

2024

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Someone must have been telling lies about Leor, for one morning, without having done anything wrong, she was arrested. She was compiling the documents she needed for her meeting with the licensed insolvency trustee when there was a knock at the door. She was surprised to see two men in black suits standing on her front porch.

“Can I help you?” she asked.

The sun burned high in the open sky behind them, and their faces were blank shadows. They could have been anyone. They filled the doorway in their tailored suits.

“Who are you?” the one on the left asked.

Her forehead wrinkled. “Who are you looking for?”

“You’re going to have to come with us,” the other one said.

“I don’t *have* to go anywhere. What is this about?”

But they didn’t answer. Instead, they pulled her out of the house, flanked her on either side and led her to the black car parked out on the street. The curtains moved in the house across from hers. Not wanting to be a topic of neighbourhood gossip, she didn’t resist. She stood tall as though she were walking with them willingly. Her posture and energy were so perfectly crafted that only their ushering her into the backseat belied the inequality between them. The windows of the sedan were tinted, and between the authority the men commanded and the look of the car, it seemed that they were undercover police.

“Will this take long?” she asked, but they did not respond. “I have an important financial meeting this afternoon.”

They said nothing as they helped her into the back seat and shut the car door behind her. Leor tried to understand how she had come to be in this predicament. Perhaps it was her debt. Perhaps they were arresting her for not paying. Really, that was not a surprise. She thought of all the unopened bills. Piles of them on the coffee table and stuffed into the filing cabinets of the back room. But surely, she could not be that behind. She knew she had payment arrangements with the power company and with the city for the water bill. Her mortgage was 3 months behind, but she had been that behind many times and had never been arrested for it. There were 3 maxed out credit cards that she had not made payments on in several months, and she hadn't filed her taxes in over 5 years. Possibly 7. Could you get arrested for that? Of course there was the issue of the property taxes, but they were moving towards a tax sale. Why would they arrest her?

Then she remembered her dream. The knife she sunk into Minuat's neck. Her hand gripping the satchel. Minuat slumped on the sidewalk. How Leor had slipped down the darkened trail. How there had been no body when she looked back. No blood. No sign of anything. But that had been a dream. Not a cause for arrest.

Whatever the reason for her present situation—her lack of money or a case of mistaken identity (they had yet to ascertain her name, she reminded herself)—she was confident that she would sort it out. I'll set them straight, and then I'll go home, she thought, but she would not be going home.

The late afternoon heat warped the air above the asphalt giving it a hallucinatory effect. This was exacerbated by the fact that she was, for the first time in her life, riding in the back of what she assumed was a police car for reasons she could not even begin to fathom. The two dark heads of the men looked straight ahead as the car propelled them towards a future both perplexing and uncertain. A silver car stopped beside them at a red light, and a young girl in the backseat pressed her face against the window, trying to see through the tinted windows. Leor stuck her tongue out at the girl even though she couldn't see her through the darkened glass.

Leor saw the girl's exhausted mother turning to say something to the child just as the light changed, and they were in motion again.

The main road had been torn up by a construction crew, and cars were lined up waiting to detour. Men in hard hats, sweat running down their faces, sat in the shade of a maple tree by the torn-out road. One man worked alone, jack hammering the road apart. Cars honked like angry geese in the backed-up queues. It was hot, and driving anywhere took longer as the city gutted the main roads. She turned to the trees that lined the street and watched as two crows landed on a branch above the reclining construction workers. The sun glinted off the crows' wings, and for a second Leor saw the sleek black hair of a woman, and in the haze of the day as the crow threw its head back to caw, it appeared that the woman was laughing at her.

When they had reached the centre of the city, the car turned and drove toward a round towering building. So tall it seemed to be tapered, a finger pointing to the sky. She had never seen the building before. A garage sat beside the building like an open mouth, and they drove into it. It was dark but soon her eyes adjusted; a row of lights mounted to the concrete walls of the parking garage gave everything a neon glow. They drove around and around going lower and lower in level in a concrete maze. There seemed an endless number of underground parking levels, but hardly any cars parked there. Had it been 20 minutes or 5 that they had been descending this circular parking maze? Every floor looked the same, and it was hard to tell if they were actually descending or simply going in circles. The men said nothing. The silence, which she assumed was meant to be intimidating, was actually welcome. She quieted her mind and focused on the hum of the engine, the echo of the car moving through this concrete chamber. She looked at the backs of the men's heads. They were stock still, looking straight ahead. They never wavered in their forward looking. She was sitting behind the driver. His hair was black and cropped short. A deep line ran across the base of his skull. The fat of his neck and skull had formed a wrinkle there. How could you have fat around your skull? It seemed to be an odd and unnecessary place to have fat cells, but perhaps fat cells were everywhere. She'd have to look it up. Later. When she got out of this mess.

They did not handcuff her but again flanked her on each side as they led her out of the concrete parking garage and down a long white hallway. They encountered no one. There was only the hum of electricity as the few bare bulbs that lit the hallway flickered on the edge of dying. She walked between the men in black like someone in a dream. Then, as if arbitrarily, for each closed door looked identical, they stopped and opened one. They entered what appeared to be a police examination room with a one-way mirror. They sat across from her. Their faces were so indistinct they could have been the same person.

“Why am I here?” she asked.

They looked at each other, but she did not know what the look meant.

“Do you have a cigarette?” she asked. She didn’t smoke, but it seemed like the thing to ask in such a situation.

To her surprise, one of them opened a drawer, placed a pack of cigarettes on the table, and pushed it towards her.

Having asked for one, she couldn’t very well not take one, so she leaned towards the lit match he held out and sucked in the smoke with a great deal of regret.

Why were they not asking her questions?

“Will this take long?” she asked, blowing out smoke with what she hoped was an air of elegance as a wave of nausea rose in her stomach. The lights were too bright, and the cigarette was making her sick. “I have a meeting. It’s rather important.”

The dark one scoffed.

“You won’t be making it,” the other said.

“How can you hold me here? What is this about?” Her voice rose, and she was embarrassed to note a slight tremble as her voice fell again with the last word. And then:

“Am I not entitled to a lawyer?”

The one who had scoffed shifted in his seat and they seemed to give each other side glances.

“Have you done something to require a lawyer?” he asked, pushing an ash tray towards her.

The other man raised an eyebrow as if he had posed the question. It was as though they shared a brain.

“I most certainly have not.”

The cigarette was making her ill. She stubbed it out as if to emphasize her point. A cold sweat was collecting at her temples, and she felt grey and in desperate need of lying down. She wiped at her forehead and swallowed down against the sick feeling in her stomach.

These physical cues of nicotine sickness were interpreted by the men in black as proof of her guilt, though she still could not ascertain what it was that they thought her guilty of.

The darker haired man took a thin file folder out of a drawer and put it down on the table, flipping it open with one finger. It was facing away from her, but Leor could tell that it was a picture of Minuat. He became more belligerent.

“You are going to sit here until you tell us who you are,” he slammed his fist against the table.

“But why are you holding me here if you don’t even know who I am?” The absurdity of the situation was making her feel worse. She was so lightheaded she would surely have fainted had she been standing up. Taking a deep breath, she scanned the room for a clock, still hoping that she could clear this up in time to make it to her meeting, but there was no clock. There was only the one-way mirrored glass. Was some great mastermind watching from behind the glass? She peered into the mirror, but she only saw a reflection of the room. The backs of the men’s heads. The roll of fat and the thick wrinkle on the back of the darker man’s head. There seemed to be a flash of something, and she peered harder into the glass, but she could see nothing on the other side. Then a buzzer went off, and one of the men got up and left the room. The other sat with his hands clasped on the table in front of him.

When the man returned, he seemed renewed.

“I think we can clear this up quite quickly. Do you have identification?” he asked as soon as he had sat down.

“Yes!” she exclaimed. “Of course.” But she had brought nothing with her. It was all in her wallet at home.

She lay her head on the table. The cold metal felt good against her nic-sick face. Many times, when she had drunk too much, she would lie on the bathroom floor, regardless of where she was, and press the cold tiles against her face. Once she fell asleep like that in a bar bathroom and woke up on a hospital stretcher.

“Well, let’s see it then,” the other said.

“It’s at home,” she groaned, her face still pressed against the table. “If we just go back, I can show it to you, and we can be done with this.” She raised her head and looked at them.

“I’m afraid that won’t be possible. You have to stay here until your arraignment.”

“But what am I being arraigned for? This is ridiculous. How can I be arraigned when you don’t even know who I am? I’m not staying here.” She got up and went to the door, rattling the doorknob.

“The door is locked. As you can tell,” one of them said.

She walked back to the table. “Who are you looking for? Why are you holding me here if you don’t even know that I’m the person you want to be holding here?”

“All you need to do is prove who you are, and this can all be settled.”

“But I’m trying to! My i.d. is at home. Let’s go right now, and I’ll show you.”

The two men looked at each other, and Leor felt an expansion of hope in her chest like wings opening.

“We can’t do that, but there’s resources here you can use.”

“Resources I can use?” she repeated, not comprehending. “I can access my i.d.?”

They whispered something to each other and one of them left the room. When he returned, he beckoned for her to follow him.

Hallways

After winding down hallway after hallway, each with identical white walls and evenly spaced-out closed doors and having turned so many corners that it seemed that she had been led deep into a cubist painting, the man stopped, turned a doorknob, and held the door open for her to pass. He did not follow her in, but pulled the door shut behind her. It made a shhhh sound like a retreating ocean wave.

The room was dimly lit. It appeared to be some sort of study or office. There was a red chaise longue against the wall with an easy chair beside it. A woman was sitting in the easy chair watching Leor intently. The woman's legs were crossed, and she held her knee with both hands. Prim was the word that came to Leor. A desk was pushed against the far wall and a small lamp gave the room a warm glow. A large oriental rug covered most of the floor. Red faded to rust. There was a picture of Sigmund Freud by the chaise longue. He was holding a cigar, pointed like a gun, a hand on his hip, a condescending glare. She quite enjoyed reading his books when she was younger, but she couldn't help noticing that he looked like a sadist in the picture.

"Please, lay down," the woman said, gesturing towards the red couch.

Leor looked back at the door. It was hard to picture such a sterile hallway on the other side of it, and the nexus of sterile hallways beyond it. And what were all the rooms? She wanted to open every door. But maybe she could talk her way out of this strange situation, this labyrinthine building.

"Are they policemen?" Leor asked.

“Should the police be interested in you?”

“Why can no one answer a question? Look, I’m not sure why I’m here, but maybe there is some information you are looking for, something that can get this all cleared up. I have an appointment this afternoon. Do you have the time?”

“Why don’t you lay down?”

Leor looked back at the door again.

“It’s locked. You won’t be able to get out. Please,” she gestured again to the chaise lounge.

Leor lay down on the couch and looked up at the ceiling. The woman was seated beside her but at such an angle that Leor couldn’t see her. She was only a voice coming down from above.

“What’s the meeting you have this afternoon about?”

“I’m meeting with a client.” Leor did not want to tell her about the bankruptcy. It was a humiliation she preferred to keep to herself.

“What type of work do you do?”

“I’m a genealogist. This particular client is quite interesting actually. His great-grandfather disappeared in 1924. I’ve been trying to figure out what happened to him.”

“And have you found out what happened to him?”

“No. Not yet. Well, somewhat, I guess. It’s kind of a long story. My meeting! What time is it? You didn’t tell me.”

“There’s time.”

Leor closed her eyes and told her everything—about meeting Wilkes, about the archives and Minuat, about the missing photograph, the bloody paw prints on her door and in her house, the strange files on her laptop, Veronica, Whitcomb, Goldwyn, Edmund, the Men in Black. She didn't tell her about the dreams or about the knife or the disaster of her finances. She talked for what felt like hours. The woman never interrupted. Finally, Leor fell silent.

“That’s quite a story. Is it true?”

“All stories are true.”

“Do you understand why you’re here?”

“No. I haven’t done anything. They don’t even seem to know who I am.”

“That’s getting at it. Have you ever wanted to be someone else?”

“Of course. Hasn’t everyone?”

“When was the last time you felt that you’d like to be someone else?”

“Every day. Now.”

“Could it be that you already are someone else right now?”

Leor closed her eyes. “If I’m already someone else then why would I still want to be someone else?”

“Your name, it doesn’t sound Indigenous. Leor—that’s a Jewish name, isn’t it?”

“Maybe it’s Jewish. I’m not Jewish though. I didn’t choose the name. I think Charging Wolf was the Indian name of the year when I was born, but my mother decided to go with something a little different.”

“Are you close with your family?”

“I was at one time. Yes.”

“But not now?”

“I think in every family, there are certain people who, you don’t realize at the time, but they kind of hold everything together. When they die, things fall apart.” Leor pictured a necklace being torn from a neck, the beads falling everywhere, spinning away from each other on the floor. Her family was still spinning. Would always be spinning. She only realized she was crying when the tears fell into her ears. She wiped the sides of her face. Sat up.

The woman was gone. The door open.

Beard-Heart

Once there lived an *atcen* named Beard-Heart who liked nothing better than to suck the juices from people's bodies. Once he sucked out these juices, he'd leave behind the husks. Which is why there used to be so many human husks propped against trees or lying on the ground in the old days.

One day Beard-Heart was chasing a man whom he wanted to turn into a husk. The man climbed up into a tree. Beard-Heart camped right below him, not knowing he was there. After a while the man had to piss and he pissed down a mighty stream on Beard-Heart.

"Damn rain tastes like piss," the *atcen* said. And he bent down to avoid getting it in his eyes. The man saw this, so he hopped down out of the tree and plunged his spear into Beard-Heart's back. Beard-Heart merely swatted at it, saying that the mosquitos seemed to be a lot worse this year. Then he bent down his head again.

Now the man ran back to camp and related his story. The others were fearful that the *atcen* would soon make all of them into husks, so they got ready to break camp.

Suddenly a very old man stepped forward. "It's better to fight than flee," he said. Then he added: "Our friend tried to kill this Beard-Heart with a cold spear. Everyone knows a cold spear doesn't work with an *atcen*."

The younger man took this old man to where Beard-Heart was sitting, his head still bent down. The old man heated up a spear. "Let him taste this," he said.

The other drove the spear deep into Bear-Heart. The *atcen* hissed, groaned, made a loud choking noise, and died. Then the old man cut open his chest and took out the heart. It was all covered with hair, just like a beard. It kissed and died, too.

After that, nobody ever found another human husk in the woods again.

— Innu story (retold by Lawrence Millman)

Run

Sometimes the hallway got so narrow she had to crawl. How anyone found their way through this building was beyond her. Perhaps it was all just one hallway. A square ouroboros. She couldn't tell. Now she was crawling again. It was like being in a duct system. A phone was ringing. The sound echoed in the cramped corridor, tumbling around her. As she crawled it got louder. She banged her head on the ceiling, crawling through this constricted artery. And then it opened up. She could breathe again. Like from another time, a phone booth stood in the corner of the hallway. The black receiver vibrating angrily with each ring. She looked both ways, but there was no one around. The ringing was so loud. She ran towards it. Pressed the smooth receiver to her ear.

“Hello?” Her voice quivered. Uncertain.

“Leor!”

“Dad! How are you?” The sound of his voice was an aperture in her heart.

There was a rushing sound behind her, chugging like a train coming fast. Alarmed, she turned. It was one of the men in black crashing towards her down the narrowing hallway. She let the receiver fall. Took off running. The doors were like teeth, blocking her in. She ran away from this closing mouth, her heart thwacking in her chest. It seemed the entire structure was closing in now, and it would eat her alive. A hungry mouth connected to a black hairy heart.

God's Stenographer

At a bend in the hallway, she was able to get an advantage on him. Picked up speed. The doorways whirring by. She felt herself catapulting. There was a door directly in front of her. She thought she had enough speed to maybe go right through it. She braced herself, and with her arms crossed around her like a woman in a straitjacket, she crashed through. Her feet left the ground. Smack of cold air. Darkness. She fell in a heap in a pile of snow.

When she stood up, she found that she was on the roof of what was once the Victoria Memorial Museum. The city lights, artificial fireflies flickering out into the distance. Above her the sky was clear. The immeasurable stars humbling. The moon was full—a pregnant belly in the sky. Part of it was obscured. She thought it was a cloud at first, but squinting, she saw it was a woman's crossed legs dangling over the moon. Her arched feet hung pendulous and bare. And looking closer, she saw that it was Minuat sitting on the moon, her legs crossed, a laptop on her lap. Typing with abandon. Pages slipping out, falling through the sky like snow. Leor scooped up the ones that fell around her. Gathered them together before the snow blurred the ink. When she couldn't clutch any more to her chest, she sat on the edge of the rooftop and read.

Co. No. 5FRWV

EXTRACTED FROM:

Frederick Wilkerson Vaughan
Field notebook, Nain, 1922

“Handy Expressions” in Eskimo

Thank you – Ekianai
Thank you for the meal – IKianak
Delicious – Mamattuk
Labrador Tea – MamaittuKutik
Seal – Puijik
Kill a seal – Anguk
Land animal – Nitjut
Caribou – Tuttuk
Fire – Ikumak
Knife – Savik
The distance is long – Sivituvuk
Snow – Kannik
Snow blind – Illuik
Snowdrift – Tipvigut
Snowed in - Apik
Ghost – Ijuguk
Sorcerer - Angakkuk

Nice to meet you –
Friend –
Lover – NulettuKutik
I am lovesick –
He is lovesick –
She is lovesick –
Are you lovesick? –
Kiss –
Desire – Kajunginnik
I do not talk about what I see or hear –
Keep mouth shut – Ippumik

∞
Snow
1924
∞

Passages

Thick clumps of snow fell and disappeared into the ocean. Unusual for mid-October, but they were so far north now that nothing about the weather would be predictable anymore. The boat rocked back and forth in the crashing waves. Wilkerson looked out into the distance. There was no land to be seen. Calvert was throwing up again. On the advice of Felix, a local fisherman, they pooled their resources and chartered this privately owned boat. A wealthy newspaperman from Chicago, Calvert had never been on a boat this small and for this long. He clung to the railing and vomited overboard. Waves crashed against the ship and lurched the boat this way and that. The roaring wind gave Wilkerson a headache, but it was better than hearing Calvert retching. The weather had been horrible the whole time they'd been at sea. Since they first met in Port Cartier and decided to travel together, everything had gone horribly wrong. Their canoe was damaged. Then the boat was two days late, and they had to scramble to find a place to sleep. And though everything worked out in the end, and they finally made it on board, now here they were in this treacherous weather. Calvert righted himself and wiped his mouth with his hand. The sea mirrored the slate sky. Gulls cried in the distance. Another wave crashed against the bough, Wilkerson held onto the railing to steady himself, and the ocean spray hit him. Calvert was pale, but the fresh air revived Wilkerson, and he felt a new sense of resolution and excitement. The future was an open palm into which anything could be placed. He didn't know how things would turn out, but the not knowing thrilled him. He could feel it in his body. Freedom. And then he saw the face of a woman. Laughing eyes. A long smooth neck. The dip behind her ear where

his mouth had rested, twelve weeks ago now. What was she doing at this moment? He remembered the softness of her dress beneath his hands as he slipped it up her legs. Her voice as she moaned into his neck. The intoxicating scent of her hair and skin. He looked out towards the sea. It seemed to go on forever, as though there was nothing else.

Calvert said something, but Wilkerson couldn't hear him over the wind and the waves.

"What was that?" he yelled into Calvert's pale and sickly face. Not everyone was built for a life of exploration.

"A whale," Calvert exclaimed, pointing.

Wilkerson squinted into the gray expanse but saw only water and waves.

"Feeling any better?" he yelled.

"Not really, but I doubt there is anything left in my stomach." He clutched onto the railing as the boat jostled about in the waves. "Another game of cards?" he shouted.

"Ready to lose again, are you?"

Sea water crashed onto the deck, and Calvert made his way back inside holding onto everything he could to steady himself along the way. Wilkerson followed, giving a smirk to the captain who had nodded his chin towards Calvert as he passed and raised his eyebrows.

At the small dining table. Calvert shuffled the cards.

"How long till we get to Labrador?" he asked.

"I'm guessing it will be a few days. A week at the most."

Calvert dealt the cards. Thirteen each.

“It will be nice to have a proper meal and a mug of beer.”

Wilkerson smiled. It certainly would.

“Where are you going after Hopedale?” he asked.

Calvert held his cards in front of him, adjusted the order of them with a frown.

“I’m not sure. I’m hoping to secure a guide and travel into the interior. I’d like to go to Churchill Falls. From the maps I’ve seen, it might be a good place for a paper mill. If they ever build a train route that far north.”

The king of hearts was the top card. Calvert threw down a seven of spades.

Wilkerson put a nine of spades beside it and won the trick, adding the king of hearts to his hand.

Calvert blew air from pursed lips. He had lost the last four games.

“What are you going to do in Nain?” he asked.

“I’ve never been further north than Nain. I’d like to see the Torngat Mountains.

I’m hoping to find an Eskimo guide who can take me into the mountains and then west to Kuujuaq.”

“Well, look at us, a real couple of *coureurs des bois*.” Calvert laughed.

He threw down a queen of diamonds with confidence. Wilkerson dropped a seven of diamonds.

“Ha,” he exclaimed.

Having won the trick, Calvert swept the cards away with a flourish. Wilkerson suppressed a smile. He was holding an ace of diamonds.

Later that night, as the hunter's moon tugged the boat towards the shore, Wilkerson slipped into a familiar dream. He was driving the Model T Ford up a mountain road in the dark. She was beside him. Only the light of the stars and the moon. The yellow light of the headlights. The warmth of her hand was on his thigh. They pitched through the dark, winding slowly up the mountain, not seeing much that was before them, but having made this drive before, they knew the terrain. He clung tight to the curves, knowing the steep cliffside was just to the right of them. As they approached a wide bend in the road, he pulled the car to a stop. They looked at each other for a moment, hesitating. Climbed out. He pulled a suitcase from behind the driver's seat. Then they got behind the car and began pushing it towards the brush lining the side of the road, struggling to push the car through. Their feet slipping in the pebbled dirt. Hands on the rear fender, shoulders pressing against the smooth back of it. The wheels crushing the brush beneath it.

"Wait," she said. "Shouldn't you leave something in the car?"

He threw his hat onto the passenger seat and then his Geological Survey of Canada identification card.

"But something more?" When he looked in her eyes, he knew what she meant.

He took the knife from his pocket. Where to cut? He dug the blade into his palm. Sat back in the driver's seat and pressed his bleeding hand to where the back of his head would touch the seat. He flung his arm forward so blood splattered across the dashboard

and window. Then it felt like he was really in there. Like he was pushing himself off a cliff. And he was happy to see himself go. V. wrapped her scarf around his hand. Pressed it in both of hers to stop the bleeding. The moon emerged from behind the clouds. Full and bright. With her scarf still wrapped around his hand, he pushed the car hard. Running and pushing until the front wheels went off the side and then it was as if the earth itself were taking the car. It just slid, dropped away from his hands, crashing through trees. Branches scraping the sides of the car. Metal wrenching in the darkness. The car picked up speed, then silence. Then a loud crash and the twisting of metal as the car smashed into the riverbed below. They stood side by side looking into the darkness. He saw himself in the car, his smashed head, everything falling out, all his life, sprawled in the wreckage. Sweating, he passed a hand over his face, but his features were gone. It was smooth and blank. No nose. No eyes. His face was as flat as a mirror. She pressed her head into his shoulder. His arms were around her. She kissed his neck.

“I love you,” she whispered.

But who did she love? There was no one there.

A Change of Plans

By the time the boat neared Hopedale, Calvert was so sick he could barely walk. When he developed a fever on the fourth day of the trip, they realized it was more than sea sickness.

“Better head on to Nain,” Wilkerson told the captain.

“It’s still going to cost you \$45. That was the deal,” he yelled down from the wheelhouse.

He’d have to bring Calvert along with him. Even if Calvert had been healthy, he couldn’t see how he would have gotten by in Hopedale on his own. He knew nothing about Indian languages or customs, and it was clear he had not spent much time outside the city. What possessed him to come out here to the middle of nowhere by himself?

Two years had already passed since his last trip to Nain. It was not where he meant to go, but fate had led him there. Now he was going by choice, and after five days on the boat, he was anxious to touch solid ground. Perhaps there would be a doctor there among the Moravians, and if not, he was sure the Eskimos would be able to prepare a medicine that would help Calvert. During his fieldwork amongst the Indians, he had been amazed by their depth of knowledge. In a past life, he had learned to make snowshoes and had snowshoed through the woods with Eli Fontaine, his Montagnais guide. They hunted for caribou and bear. It was easy to store the meat in the winter but less so in the summer, so there were many big feasts in the summer. In the evenings, they fished on the

Moisie River. When he spent time with the Indians, he did not want to return to his old life.

Though the Indians were extraordinarily interesting and endlessly resourceful when it came to surviving on the land, they were dirty and heathenish. Still, he had to admit, there were strange occurrences. When he lived among the Montagnais, he had seen things that he could not explain. Somehow, they seemed to know things that they couldn't possibly know. And he came to believe that their way of living was right in a way he found difficult to articulate. They understood deeply the natural world around them and had found ingenious ways to thrive in sometimes unbearable conditions and inhospitable climates. And the ones who knew the old ways—there were so many things they did that he could not explain. Once, he had joined a group of Montagnais hunters. They travelled north towards Lake Nipisso, portaging the 75 kilometers from Sept-Iles in two and a half days. On the third day, when they set up camp, one of the hunters, Messenak, found caribou bones when he was gathering firewood. That night, they made a fire and put a shoulder blade from the caribou in the flames. The next morning, the kamanitushit or shaman, took the shoulder blade from the ashes, and brushing it clean, revealed a map that the flames had exposed on the bone. Studying it carefully, the kamanitushit instructed the hunters what route to take to find caribou.

“Follow the river downstream. It will lead to a hill. Keep along the path until you see a boulder caught between two trees. There will be a cluster of balsam firs further down. You will find three caribou there. Two males and a female.”

Wilkerson went with the hunters, who were careful to follow the kamanitushit's directions. They followed the river in the direction he indicated. And there was the

boulder where he said it would be. Wilkerson told himself that the man likely knew the area. Of course he could tell them about such details. He had probably been here many times. As they neared the boulder, the hunters motioned for Wilkerson to duck down and wait there. They moved through the woods soundlessly. Then there was a light brown flash of movement through the brush. He crouched down. Holding his breath. Chickadees chittering, swooped through the trees around him. The river gurgled in the distance. He heard the guns go off. Three fast shots. Birds erupted from the trees, fleeing. And then the men were running. Running towards the fallen animals. Three caribou lay by a band of balsam firs.

There were other things, too. Shaking tent ceremonies. Predictions of various kinds—from weather to deaths to visits from other tribe members. He had even gotten to do sweats with them. His time among the Montagnais was exhilarating. It cleansed him. He felt like a new person after that. He had never felt so alive as he did living there.

But he suspected that this was not a way of life that Calvert would acclimatize to, and he wondered what the future held for them now that he was bringing Calvert with him.

Landing

Calvert mustered the energy to drag himself to the railing to watch the boat pull into the harbour. His hair was plastered to his head from many nights of feverish sweats. He was gaunt and gray, his hands trembled against the railing.

The shore was rocky. A few rough houses dotted the hilly area by the coast. Some were made of logs and some of clapboard. Clotheslines strewn between them. Amongst the rocks was an immense pile of logs.

“This is a shantytown” he said, stupefied, staring at the barren scene before them.

Wilkerson wondered what he had been expecting. A luxury Eskimo hotel on the coastline?

“Why, just look at the excitement we’ve caused.”

A group of children in seal skin coats and boots ran towards the incoming boat, jumping and shouting. An even bigger group of dogs ran along with them. Big bushy tails wagging. Behind them, more slowly, men and women approached.

Hulking men in white seal skin coats chopping wood, tossing logs into a pile. A woman holding a baby on her hip walked ahead of the small crowd gathering to greet them.

“There are more dogs than people,” Calvert said.

Wilkerson looked out past the small houses to the dense forest and the expanse of rolling hills. It was the best thing he’d seen in a long time.

Deboarding the ship and making the trek to the mission proved exhausting for Calvert. With an arm flung around Wilkerson's shoulders, he dragged his weakened body, letting Wilkerson guide him along the coastline, narrowed by the high tide, riddled with driftwood, their feet sinking into the mud at times. The steeple was the only thing that differentiated the white church from the shacks that surrounded it. A shaggy black dog sat in a patch of snow-custed grass watching them lumber up the wooden steps.

A priest came out to meet them. A widow's peak and beard making his face into a heart. His mustache was black, his beard white. Wind burnt cheeks. Green eyes. He introduced himself as Father Marek. Let them stay in two small rooms in the neighbouring mission building. Told them that Dr. Wallace, the government doctor who came down from Hebron every two weeks, would be arriving in two days. He invited them to dine with the priests later that evening and left them to get settled.

Once in his room, Calvert fell onto the bed and was instantly asleep. Wilkerson closed the door of his own room. The walls were thin, Calvert's snores loud. Anxious to experience more fully the joy of being back on land, to immerse himself in this remote landscape that he had long missed, he filled a bag with a notebook and his camera, put his compass in his pocket and walked the dirt road away from the little white shacks that dotted the coastline until he neared the treeline. Then he cut off the dirt road and walked through the yellowed grass. As he passed the first balsam firs, and the dark of the forest enveloped him, he realized that although his goal in this journey north had been solitude, he had not actually been alone in nearly two weeks. He breathed in the cool northern air. Held it deep in his lungs. The deep green smell of the trees enraptured his mind. There

was more snow here. Less sun. He crossed a path that cut through the forest, and again found himself under the cover of towering trees. Ahead was a clearing, a round patch of sun. He sat down there, leaning against a spruce tree. Taking his notebook from his bag and resting it against his knees, he chronicled the last two weeks. One disastrous misadventure after another. The broken canoe. Meeting Calvert. Nearly missing the boat. Calvert's sea sickness. His progressive illness. The helpful priest. The sun on the white page began blurring his vision. He rubbed his eyes and looked into the trees. For a moment he saw black wings dancing in and out of the white spruce. An impossibly large crow. He couldn't imagine what else it might be. When he blinked, it was gone. But it soon returned and played on his sight. An image fleeting and out of focus. In the brightness of the sun, he could not tell what he was looking at. He squinted to focus and saw a woman's face, long black hair, but then it was gone. Wind rustled through the trees then and stopped abruptly. A strange calm permeated the forest. He had a feeling that he was not alone.

Les Coureurs des Bois

A week in and Calvert was nearly completely recovered. He joined Wilkerson on walks in the woods, desirous to get the lay of the land. Wilkerson liked him better when he was ill. He talked less then.

Wilkerson had his camera out and was photographing the dogs. Kimmet, the Eskimos called them. A group of huskies in the snow. Shaggy and big, sitting together in a close-knit group behind one of the houses. Slats of wood were nailed over the window, large gaps between the crooked boards. The house was in rough condition, all of them were.

With the bellows extended, he was trying to hold the Vest Pocket Autographic Kodak steady, was looking through the finder to make sure the image was framed as he wanted it. Calvert stood beside him, blathering on about the newspaper business, his brother Oswald who was perpetually mismanaging the company, and then moved on to talking about a woman named Betty whom he was having an affair with. Wilkerson blocked him out as best he could. When the finder looked right, he pressed the lever. The click of the shutter, a quick exposure of light piercing the aperture, and the image was set. He opened the door at the back with his thumb, made a note with his pencil on the red autographic record strip—kimmet, nain, 10/30/24. Though he'd taken innumerable photographs over the years, it still felt like magic that such a thing was possible, that a prick of light could imprint an image onto the film. Fixing a moment. Holding time still.

He folded the camera closed, slipped it into the leather case, and put it in his jacket pocket. Calvert had been watching him.

“We should go on a hunt,” he said. His eyes bright with excitement. “We could kill a bear. You could photograph it!”

“I thought you wanted to go to Hopedale and find a guide to take you to Churchill Falls?” Wilkerson looked out at the water, waves crashing grey into frothy white. The mountains on the south side of the settlement shaped like a gigantic seal.

“I can do that later. Before Christmas. Have you ever hunted a bear?”

“I did a long hunting trip once. We went deep into the interior from the north shore. But it was later into winter. The bears were hibernating. We hunted caribou, partridge, and hare mostly.”

“Well then, even more reason to do it now. Here we are in the middle of nowhere. Poised for adventure. Two coureurs des bois on their first bear hunt.”

Wilkerson considered it. Though Calvert was tedious, he had to admit that the thought of a long trip into the wilderness was appealing.

Over the next few days, Wilkerson casually asked around about a guide or whether there would be any hunting expeditions they could join. Though friendly, the Eskimos were wary of Calvert. Wilkerson heard one refer to Calvert as Ijuguk. The word sounded familiar, but it had been two years since he was last amongst Eskimos. Back in his room, he pulled out his old journal of handy expressions. Scribbled down the back

page was a list of words and phrases he felt would be useful. There it was. Halfway down the page. Ijuguk. Ghost. This would not bode well for their securing of an Eskimo guide.

Whiteout

The snow fell in thick sheets, and they could barely see. There was nothing in any direction. Only snow. Snow on the ground and snow falling. It was nearing dusk and overcast. Everything had a blue hue to it. Calvert trudged along beside him. They walked in moody silence. Only their snowshoes crunching against the snow. Somewhere along the way, Wilkerson lost his compass. It likely happened when he fell into a snow-covered gully. He lost his camera then, too, his beloved “hawk-eye.” Now, after three days of unchanging wilderness, his internal sense of direction was muddled. Should they walk towards the black spruce or away? It didn’t seem to make a difference which way they went. They were running out of food, and he was hungry. At least the falling snow made it warmer. His stomach rolled as he dragged his snowshoes through the snow. The packs they carried weighed 60 lbs each. Every laboured step left them hungrier and more exhausted. There was no wind, and the world was quiet. He kept looking over his shoulder because he felt that they were not alone. He did not know if that was the mind’s way of dealing with the isolation—to feel the presence of someone. So, he did not know if he should fear what he felt. He thought he heard a crunching sound behind them. He thrust out his arm to stop Calvert from moving.

“What is it?” Calvert rasped.

“Shhhhh!”

They stood in the falling snow straining to hear. There it was again. A crunching in the distance. The hood of their seal skin coats made it hard to judge the direction. They pulled back their hoods and listened. Two men standing alone in the snowy world. Fat

snowflakes caught in their hair and eyebrows. Clumped onto their eye lashes. The crunching was getting closer, but the snow was coming down so heavily it was hard to see.

“It’s the trees. I told you they were laughing at us. Now they’re following us. We need to go the other way,” Calvert whispered.

Wilkerson studied Calvert’s face. The snow gathered on his overly long eyebrows made him look like an owl. This man who had come here to find a place to build a paper mill was now afraid of the trees. It had only been a month, but he was completely bushed.

He craned to listen again. They had suffered too much hardship for him to be hopeful now, but he couldn’t help but entertain the thought that maybe the hunters had come back for them. Maybe Calvert hadn’t irreparably destroyed their chances of making it out of there alive. He didn’t bother to complain out loud when Calvert was talking so nonsensical.

When the hunters left them, Calvert had sulked like a child because he knew that he would not get to kill a bear. There would be no photograph of him standing over it. One foot on the hulking mass. The heap of black fur on the snow. His pose of conquest and vigour. Calvert had probably already imagined showing the photograph to his brother Oswald and to Betty, had probably already rehearsed the story of the kill in his mind even though it hadn’t happened yet. All of that was botched when Calvert inadvertently committed a taboo so horrible that the hunters immediately parted ways with them. What exactly he had done, neither of them was sure. Though the hunters left them with some food, a rifle, and ammunition, and looked regretful to have to leave them at all, they departed nonetheless, leaving Wilkerson and Calvert stranded in the snowy wilderness.

The sighing of the receding sleds, the panting dogs, the whip cracking, the drivers of the dog sled teams yelling huit! huit! as they faded to white, filled Wilkerson with doom.

He tried not to absorb Calvert's paranoia, but his hunger and the unidentifiable crunching he occasionally heard from somewhere behind them, reminded him of stories he had heard among the Montagnais. Atshen. An emaciated cannibal monster who grew by eating people. As they trudged forward with no idea where they were going, he felt that the landscape itself was a monster. It would eat them both alive if they didn't find a way out soon. When he heard their snowshoes crunching in the snow, it made him think of teeth chewing. His stomach growled. An icy wind howled, blowing snow over their labored tracks.

Howl

Calvert is unwell. It is too quiet, he says. The hoot of an owl makes his face paper white. Wilkerson does not tell him about the skinny ghost that stalks them through the bleached forest. Calvert's head whips around at every branch snap, tree crack. The haunting wind settles at the back of the neck—is all eyes. The snow falls, the flakes knotted together into downy feathers that burn their skin with cold. Calvert keeps his eye on the trees.

“They will murder us,” he says, “look at them laughing.”

He holds his axe over his heart. It is only the wind.

The fire is warm. Red light licking their faces. They wrap doughy bannock around sticks. Hold them over the flames. The warm bread smell and campfire smoke rising up to the infinity of stars above.

When Calvert picks the dough off and chews it, his eyes darting at every sound, Wilkerson sees childish fear in his round face. Something shifts in his chest.

They make a lean to against a nearby fallen tree. Dig the snow out and set down fir boughs. Put up the canvas tent cover. Huddle together. Fitful sleep. Howling wolves make Calvert's teeth chatter. Before dawn, a rushing sound, wind gathering, crashing through the snow towards them. Wilkerson's eyes shoot open. Calvert bolts up, clutches his axe. A supernatural shriek descends.

∞
Epilogue
∞

The moon was full and bare. The museum sleeping below her. Leor scrambled to pick up more pages, but too much snow had fallen on them. They were wet. The words inky tears running down the pages. A rumbling growing behind her. The police officers had caught up. They were pounding down the rooftop towards her. It was snowing again. On the edge, looking down, the world below paper white. Closing her eyes, Leor jumped in.

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- . *A Girl Called Echo: Red River Resistance*, vol. 2, HighWater Press, 2018.
- . *A Girl Called Echo: Northwest Resistance*, vol. 3, HighWater Press, 2020.
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Archives Used in *The Story Eaters*

Note: While much archival research has gone into this dissertation, the archival documents in this novel are anonymized and/or fictionalized based on the following sources:

Berube, Mrs. Mrs. Berube to Edward Sapir. Telegraph. Date unknown, Edward Sapir

Fonds, box 637, folder 5, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.

Frederick Waugh Missing Person Poster. 15 Nov 1924, Edward Sapir Fonds, box 637,

folder 5, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.

Jacobs, J.H. J.H. Jacobs to Edward Sapir. Telegraph. 11 Oct. 1924, Edward Sapir Fonds,

box 637, folder 5, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.

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disappearance of Mr. F.W. Waugh. Nov 1924, Edward Sapir Fonds, box 637,

folder 5, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.

Sapir, Edward. Edward Sapir to Caughnawaga Indian Agent. Telegraph. 9 Oct. 1924,

Edward Sapir Fonds, box 637, folder 5, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau,

QC.

---. Edward Sapir to J.H. Jacobs. Telegraph. 10 Oct. 1924, Edward Sapir Fonds, box 637,

folder 5, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.

---. Edward Sapir to Frank Speck. Telegraph. 14 Oct. 1924, Edward Sapir Fonds, box

637, folder 5, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.

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- . Memorandum re the Disappearance of F. W. Waugh. 6 Nov. 1924, Edward Sapir Fonds, box 637, folder 5, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.
- . Re: F. W. Waugh. 14 Oct. 1924, Edward Sapir Fonds, box 637, folder 5, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.
- . Edward Sapir to Mrs. F.W. Waugh. 22 Jan. 1925, Edward Sapir Fonds, box 637, folder 5, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.
- . Edward Sapir to Mrs. F.W. Waugh. 28 Jan. 1925, Edward Sapir Fonds, box 637, folder 5, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.
- . Edward Sapir to Mrs. F.W. Waugh. 29 Jan. 1925, Edward Sapir Fonds, box 637, folder 5, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.
- Waugh, Frederick Wilkerson. Frederick Wilkerson Waugh to Edward Sapir. 20 July 1916, Edward Sapir Fonds, box 637, folder 5, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC

CURRICULUM VITAE

LISA JODOIN

EDUCATION

Ph.D., English, University of New Brunswick, ABD

M.A., English, Lakehead University, 2010

H.B.A., English, Algoma University, 2008

LITERARY PUBLICATIONS

“Refractions.” Frogs Hollow Press. *City Series: Fredericton Poets Chapbook* 2015. Print.

“The Map Maker.” Frogs Hollow Press. *City Series: Fredericton Poets Chapbook* 2015.
Print.

“Bare Bones.” Frogs Hollow Press. *City Series: Fredericton Poets Chapbook* 2015. Print.

“After the Wreckage.” *Prairie Fire* 2014. Print.

“The Minutes.” *Prairie Fire* 2014. Print.

“1980-2000.” *Fuel Anthology* Thunder Bay, On, Burning Books, 2014. Print.

“The List.” *Fuel Anthology* Thunder Bay, On, Burning Books, 2014. Print

“The Grandmothers Launch a Review of Canadian History.” *Matrix*. Winter 2013. Print.

“Moisie.” *Matrix*. Winter 2013. Print.

“Traces.” *The Antigonish Review* Summer 2013. Print.

“Linda.” *The Artery* Winter 2010. Print.

“When Words Steal Sex.” *The Artery* Winter 2010. Print.

“Gin and Yellow Roses.” *Algoma Ink* Winter 2007. Print.

“Shingwauk Home.” *Algoma Ink* Winter 2007. Print.

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

“Introduction to Indigenous Filmmaking,” Public Lecture, Dept. of Culture & Media Studies, University of New Brunswick, February 2020.

“Navigating Government Services: The Lived Experience of Urban Aboriginal Families in Fredericton, New Brunswick,” Decolonizing the Academy: The Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network Atlantic Conference, University of New Brunswick, February 2019.

“National Centre for Collaboration in Indigenous Education (NCCIE Research Project),” Decolonizing the Academy: The Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network Atlantic Conference, University of New Brunswick, February 2019.

“The Stories in My Blood: A Dissertation,” Decolonizing the Academy: The Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network Atlantic Conference, University of New Brunswick, February 2019.

“Introduction to Indigenous Filmmaking,” Public Lecture, Dept. of Culture & Media Studies, University of New Brunswick, November 2018.

“Collaborations in Indigenous Education: An Introduction to the National Centre for Collaboration in Indigenous Education,” Atlantic Native Teachers’ Education Conference (ANTEC), University of New Brunswick, May 2018.

“Collecting/Connecting: Creative Writing and Research Processes,” Canadian Creative Writers and Writing Programs (CCWWP) Annual Conference, University of New Brunswick, June 2017.

with Dr. Matt Rogers, “Participatory Filmmaking: A Case Study,” DOCTalks, Fredericton Workshop Series, University of New Brunswick, March 2017.

“Navigating Government Services: The lived experience of urban Aboriginal families in Fredericton, New Brunswick,” Canadian Law and Society Mid-Winter Meeting and Symposium, University of New Brunswick, January 2017.

“Navigating Government Services: The lived experience of urban Aboriginal families in Fredericton, New Brunswick,” Research for a Better Life: Restructuring Relationships, Restoring Justice, University of New Brunswick, November 2016.

with Dr. Josephine Savarese, “The Importance of Arts Based Methodologies to Engage Urban Indigenous Youth: Three Perspectives,” Canadian Indigenous /Native Studies Association (CINSA), First Nations University, June 2016.

“The Urban Anthropologists: Decolonization and the Body in Cherie Dimaline’s *Red Rooms*,” North American Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) Annual Meeting, Austin, Texas, May 2014.

with Verlé Harrop and Patsy McKinney. “Conducting Research with Aboriginal Communities in Atlantic Canada,” Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network

Atlantic, The Canadian Association of Research Ethics Boards Atlantic
Conference, University of New Brunswick, November 2013.

“Homesick: The (Un)Homely Body in Cherie Dimaline’s *Red Rooms*,” Dept. of English
Colloquium Series, University of New Brunswick, March 2013.

“Homesick: The (Un)Homely Body in Cherie Dimaline’s *Red Rooms*,” Ghost Stories:
Hauntings and Echoes in Literature and Culture Conference, McGill University,
January 2012.

“The Beauty Monster: *Bricolage* and the Grotesque in Lady Gaga’s Monstrous
Representations of Beauty,” Feminisms at the Lakehead Symposium, Lakehead
University, April 2010.

“An Introduction to First Nations Gothic Literature and the Poetry of Louise Halfe,”
Guest Lecturer for English 3819: First Nations Women’s Writing taught by Dr.
Judith Leggatt, Lakehead University, March 2010.

“When the Creative Meets the Critical: Writing a Métis Gothic Novella,” Graduate
Students’ Conference, Lakehead University, February 2010.

-Awarded Second Place in the Aboriginal Category

“First Nations Gothic Literature and the Reconstruction of Native Womanhood in Ruby
Slipperjack’s *Weesquachak*,” English Students’ Association Conference,
Lakehead University, April 2009.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2020 *I'll Follow You* – Writer, Director, Producer, Art Director
- Currently in post-production
- Funded by a Short Film Venture Grant
-
- 2018 *Anishkutapeu* – Writer, Director, Producer
- Screenings:**
- Regent Park Film Festival**, Toronto, ON, Nov. 2018
- Home Made Visible Library Tour Screenings 2019:** Toronto Reference Library, Halifax Central Library, Spadina Road Library, Thunder Bay Public Library, Sioux Lookout Public Library, Albion Library, Skawenniio Tsi Iewennahnotahkhwa Library, Chinguacousy Library, Fredericton Public Library, Central Library Vancouver, Scarborough Civic Centre Library, Thompson Public Library, Don Mills Library, Enterprise Square Edmonton, Whitehorse Public Library, Toronto Media Arts Centre
- Creative Connections Conference**, Fredericton, NB, Oct. 2019
- St. Thomas University Indigenous Film Festival**, Fredericton, NB, Jan 2020
- Funded by Regent Park Film Festival
-
- 2018 *Re-visiting the Past, Re-imagining the Future: Documenting*

New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council Elders and Youth Leaders in Dialogue – Director, Cinematographer, Sound Recordist

Funded by SSHRC

2015 *In Search of Laura Fearn* – Writer, Director, Producer, Set Decorator

Screenings:

imagineNATIVE Film Festival, Toronto, ON, Oct. 2015

Silver Wave Film Festival, Fredericton, NB, Nov. 2015

Sick Chick Flicks, Cary, NC, Nov. 2016

Funded by imagineNATIVE, New Brunswick Filmmaker's Co-operative and the Jane Leblanc Award

2014 *Tracing Blood* – Writer, Director, Producer, Set Decorator

Screenings:

imagineNATIVE Film Festival, Toronto, ON, Oct. 2014

Silver Wave Film Festival, Fredericton, NB, Nov. 2014

Mirror Mountain Film Festival, Ottawa, ON, Dec. 2015

Women in Film & Television Atlantic Conference, Halifax, NS, Feb.

2015

Outside the Box, Saint Stephens, NB, Sept. 2016

Atlantic Film Waves, Ottawa, ON, Jul. 2017

Creative Connections Conference, Fredericton, NB, Nov. 2017

St. Thomas University Indigenous Film Festival, Fredericton, NB, Jan.
2020

Awards & Nominations:

Award for Best Sound Design at Silver Wave Film Festival, Nominated
for Excellence in Art Direction, Nominated for Best Cinematography,
Award for Best Screenplay at Mirror Mountain Film Festival

Selected for National Distribution through the Cinema Politica Network's
First People, First Screens Program.

Funded by imagineNATIVE and New Brunswick Filmmaker's Co-
operative

AWARDS & GRANTS

2020	artsnb Creation Grant, Screenwriting, \$10,000
2018	Home Made Visible Archival Filmmaking Project Grant, \$6000
2017	Emerging Indigenous Scholar Award – Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network Atlantic, \$7000
2016	Short Film Venture Filmmaking Grant, \$4000
2015	imagineNATIVE/New Brunswick Film Co-operative Mentorship, \$1000
2014	Jane LeBlanc Filmmaker Award, valued at \$1800

2014	imagineNATIVE/New Brunswick Film Co-operative Mentorship, \$1000
2013	Longlisted for Doire Press's Second Annual Chapbook Competition
2013-2014	University of New Brunswick Governor's Merit Award, \$1500
2012-2013	University of New Brunswick Governor's Merit Award, \$1500
2012-2014	SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship, \$40,000
2011-2012	University of New Brunswick Babbit-Davies Award for Student Travel, \$500
2010-2011	University of New Brunswick W.C.D. Pacey Postgraduate Scholarship for Canadian Literature, \$500
2009-2010	SSHRC Joseph-Armand Bombardier Master's Scholarship, \$17,500