

The Trapper's Wife

By

April J. Miller

April J. Miller
770-253-2198
Apriljmilller@mailfence.com

FADE IN

INT. CABIN - MINNESOTA - PREDAWN

SUPER: MINNESOTA WILDERNESS 1831

Barely visible by the fireplace glow are two sleeping forms.

With a loud THUMP, a HUGE DOG jumps onto the bed. He treads carefully between the two figures and pushes one with his nose. A hand comes up to swat him away. An irritated female voice mumbles.

SLEEPING FEMALE

Go away, Blue. It's not time yet.

Undeterred, he taps her with his paw. Groaning, she covers her head with the blanket. This is a game he knows well. He grabs the blanket and pulls it off revealing SAMANTHA WILKES (60's), strong willed as a tempest, but mellowed with age. A frontier woman who has lived a hard life and earned every gray hair on her head. Stretching, she groans with the pains of a body giving in to old age.

Blue licks her face. She swats at him.

SAMANTHA

Okay, okay. Get Gideon up.

The dog turns his attention to the other figure. Samantha slowly, painfully, stands and stumbles to the wood pile, mumbling as she goes.

SAMANTHA

The least he could do is put some wood on the fire before he gets us up.

She places kindling on the coals and blows until they glow. Pieces of wood are carefully placed on top.

A throaty roar sounds from the bed.

SAMANTHA

Give it up, Gideon. You know he'll win.

A tall, lanky man stands up. GIDEON WILKES (late 60's) stumbles to the table pulling on his pants and shirt as he goes. A trapper, he's the rock in the tempest: patient, steadfast, and sometimes just as obtuse. He flops on a

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chair and pulls on his boots. Giving Samantha a peck on the cheek, he lights a lantern and leaves the cabin followed by Blue.

Samantha puts more wood on the fire. She fills the coffeepot with grounds and water. Placing it in a hook to boil, she flinches with pain and shakes her hand, flexing stiff, arthritic joints. As it cooks, she gets breakfast ready.

By the growing firelight a rustic log cabin is revealed. One large room with a fireplace and a loft overhead. Furniture is sparse, only the absolute necessities for a comfortable life.

The door opening signals Gideon's return.

GIDEON

Darn that Rosie. She almost kicked me again. Barely got the pail away.

He puts down a pail of milk.

SAMANTHA

She's young. She'll settle down in time.

GIDEON

Look what I found.

Gideon presents several blue wildflowers. The smile on her face is all the gratitude he needs. She takes them. As he turns away, he staggers and clutches his chest. With a grimace, he works his left arm and hand. Samantha doesn't notice.

SAMANTHA

They always remind me of the first day we got here.

GIDEON

Still glad I didn't sell you for the three ponies?

Samantha retrieves the coffeepot and pours two cups. She puts a little milk in hers. As they talk, she mixes the dough for biscuits.

SAMANTHA

Now that the weather has broke, are you headed for the trading post?

GIDEON

Thought I'd shoot some meat before I left. We're almost out.

SAMANTHA

I can hunt.

GIDEON

Never said you couldn't. Thought you'd want to start planting the vegetables.

SAMANTHA

You've got a point. Want to catch the spring rains.

GIDEON

Is there something you'd like me to get?

SAMANTHA

I could use a new kitchen knife. Also, see if he has some maple syrup. One less thing to worry about.

Gideon grabs her around the waist.

GIDEON

Sam Wilkes, if I didn't know you, I'd say you were starting to feel old.

Samantha slaps him with her spoon.

SAMANTHA

I'm not so old I can't run you out of this cabin.

Placing the biscuits in the brick oven, she works on the porridge.

SAMANTHA

Eagle's Cry should be coming soon. I'd feel better if you would take him with you. You can get him something for his wife and new baby.

GIDEON

I could do that.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Samantha waves to Gideon as he rides away.

LATER

To the side of the cabin, Samantha hoes the ground. Each movement reveals the aches and pains of a long life of hard work. BLUE WHINES beside her. She stops and looks around.

Coming out of the trees, Gideon's horse strides carefully to the barn. Samantha can see a limp figure draped over him like a blanket.

SAMANTHA

Oh, God, no.

She drops the hoe and runs for the horse. The animal stops and waits. She takes the reins and leads him to the cabin where she grabs Gideon by his shirt and pulls him down onto the porch. Ear to chest, she listens. The anxiety on her face turns to pain and sorrow. She raises her head and cries out her loss.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

An ancient oak sits on a hill beyond the cabin. Under its low-hanging branches, Samantha digs a grave. One tiny cross marks another beside it. Her sorrow has mixed with anger and she mumbles to herself as she works.

SAMANTHA

Dang it, Gideon, you always did have poor timing. I was supposed to go first. We discussed this. How am I supposed to get the furs traded? I can't do the trapping. How am I supposed to get the supplies I need?

Tears stream freely.

SAMANTHA (CONT.)

I love you, Gideon Wilkes. I'm sorry I didn't say that enough, but you know I did.

Finished, she climbs out. Gideon's body is rolled in. Her anger has faded.

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SAMANTHA (CONT.)

Say hello to the baby for me. I wish I could have given you children. They would have been a joy to you and a help to me. I could sure use some now, that's for sure.

Her gaze looks to heaven.

SAMANTHA (CONT.)

Good Lord, Gideon was always more yours than mine. Thank you for the time we had together. Help me live without him and don't let it be too long before you take me, too. I'm afearin bad right now. Amen.

Slowly, she shovels in the dirt.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

The remains of a meal sits on the table beside a small pile of unwashed dishes. Only a few pieces of firewood await the fireplace. Samantha rocks gently in her chair, eyes forward and unfocused. She's lost in memories of times past. BLUE'S WHINE snaps her out.

Slowly, she lifts herself, stumbles to the door and opens it. Blue trots out. She looks at the dishes - they can wait. Her eyes search for - what? She sees Gideon's Bible. Picking it up, she plops back down and opens the cover.

Inside, lays a single, dried rose. She brings it to her nose searching for a trace of fragrance. She reads Gideon's neat, bold letters proclaiming their wedding. She strokes the page, remembering...

FLASHBACK - INT. KITCHEN - TAYLOR RESIDENCE - DAY

SUPER: NEW YORK STATE, 1784

The kitchen is bright and spotless, except the table where Samantha (16) beats the pancake batter into submission. Flour, milk and egg shells coat everything. She stiffens at the sound of footsteps behind her. A male voice roars:

(CONTINUED)

MAN

Samantha, what is this mess?

It is her father, WILBUR TAYLOR (40's), an arrogant and hypocritical man, he does what he wants and manipulates others into believing him. Samantha fears and hates him which gives her the strength to stand up to him.

She continues beating the batter.

SAMANTHA

I'm making pancakes for your breakfast.

WILBUR

You're making a mess.

SAMANTHA

I'll clean it up.

He stalks in like an army captain inspecting his men. Samantha swings over to the stove, dodging him. She pours the batter.

WILBUR

Why are you dressed like that?

SAMANTHA

It's a school day. I'll be leaving after I'm done.

Wilbur stands, ever in control.

WILBUR

There will be no more school.

SAMANTHA

I have to go to school. Ma said...

She's stopped by a hand slamming on the table.

WILBUR

Your mother is dead. I need you to take up her duties here at the house.

SAMANTHA

I did all the chores last night.

WILBUR

This kitchen is filthy.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

I said I'll clean it up.

Rising smoke reminds Samantha of the pancake on the stove. She turns it over. It's coal black.

SAMANTHA

Oh, no.

WILBUR

You've burned my breakfast.

SAMANTHA

There's more batter.

Samantha grabs a plate and flips the pancakes on it. She pours more batter. While it cooks, she wipes down the table.

SAMANTHA

School starts soon.

WILBUR

I said you are not going.

Samantha stands straight, staring him down in defiance. Wilbur takes a step forward, fist clenched. He checks himself. His smile is ugly.

WILBUR

The Book says that children are to obey their parents in all things. You wouldn't want me to tell the parson and the good women of this community how unruly and disobedient you are, do you?

Samantha blanches.

WILBUR (CONT.)

They would say I have every right to beat you. Spare the rod and spoil the child.

Samantha remains silent. Wilbur tucks a strand of her hair behind her ear.

WILBUR (CONT.)

You are the woman of the house, now. It's your duty to perform all duties that that entails.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

No.

He grabs a hold of her sleeve.

WILBUR

What did you say?

She jerks away, tearing the cloth.

SAMANTHA

I will not be your wife, and I will
not let you beat me like you did
mother.

Wilbur takes a step forward. Samantha looks
around. Spotting a knife, she grabs it.

SAMANTHA

Don't touch me.

Wilbur unstraps his belt from his middle. Samantha backs
up. Once again, dark smoke billows from the stove. On
impulse, Samantha uses the knife to fling the hot griddle
towards her father. When he flinches, she ducks around him
and down the hall.

INT. SAMANTHA'S BEDROOM - SAME

She dashes in, throws the DOOR SHUT and SLAMS the BOLT into
place just as Wilbur's weight CRASHES against the other
side.

WILBUR (O.C.)

(yelling)

Open this door.

SAMANTHA

(screaming)

I will not be your wife.

She opens the trunk sitting at the foot of her
bed. Rummaging, she pulls out a purse, a pair of walking
shoes and a cloak. Another CRASH tells her she must hurry.

Pushing the window open, Samantha climbs out and drops to
the ground.

EXT. HOUSE - SAME

She stops dead. On the other side of their picket fence, stands Gideon Wilkes (25), watching her. Beside him is a paint pony. They both look astonished.

GIDEON
Samantha?

Another BANG.

GIDEON
What's wrong?

SAMANTHA
I don't have time to explain.

Gideon points towards the woods behind the barn. A SPLINTERING CRASH from inside. She runs for the woods.

Samantha is barely concealed before her father crawls through the window. He's just as astonished to see Gideon, only his face is tinged with guilt and fear.

WILBUR
Gideon. I wasn't. . What. . Aren't you supposed to be out west?

GIDEON
I found out my father died.

WILBUR
Yes, I was at his funeral. I'm sorry.

GIDEON
Saw Samantha running down the street. Is she all right?

WILBUR
We had a bit of an argument and she ran off. You know how willful she is.

GIDEON
I remember she likes having her way.

WILBUR
Well, losing her mother has made things worse. In fact, I need to go and find her.

Gideon watches Wilbur trot down the street. He mumbles:

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON
Samantha, Samantha, how you stir up
a tempest.

He strolls to her hiding place. Passing, he commands:

GIDEON
Follow me.

He seems to glide over over the ground barely make a sound.

SAMANTHA
Thank you for saving me.

Gideon turns and places his finger to his lips.

Samantha huffs, but shuts up.

A few minutes later, he stops and faces her.

GIDEON
Now, we can talk. And by the way,
you're welcome. So, what was that
all about?

SAMANTHA
Mom died and father has gotten
these strange ideas.

Gideon raises his eyebrows.

SAMANTHA
He wants me to take up her wifely
duties.

Still no comprehension.

SAMANTHA (CONT.)
All her wifely duties.

Understanding dawns. He indicates her sleeve.

GIDEON
Did he do that?

SAMANTHA
He's worse than ever. I'm afraid
to be near him. He used to beat
mother horribly.

Gideon is not sure what to say. Samantha fills in the
following silence.

SAMANTHA

So, when did you return?

GIDEON

Last week. Word finally reached me of father's death.

SAMANTHA

Your mother was distraught.

GIDEON

Yes, well...

He shrugs.

GIDEON

So, what are your plans.

At her head shake, he continues:

GIDEON

Do you have kin folk nearby?

SAMANTHA

None that will help me. They all believe what father says. He's told them I'm a stubborn and rebellious child. They'd give me right back to him.

GIDEON

Where did you intend to go?

SAMANTHA

Anywhere but here.

GIDEON

That covers an awful lot of territory.

SAMANTHA

You see my dilemma.

Gideon gazes around, thinking.

GIDEON

I'll do this. I'm heading back west. I'll can take you to a friend in the next town. They're good people and I'm sure they'll help you.

Samantha nods.

Gideon puts a hand on her shoulder.

GIDEON
Everything will be okay. Is there
anything you need to get?

SAMANTHA
Nothing that's worth seeing my
father.

Gideon hops on his horse and stretches his hand to Samantha.

GIDEON
Then let's put some distance
between us and him, shall we?

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Illuminated by the glow of a campfire, they eat the remains
of a rabbit.

SAMANTHA
So, where do you live?

GIDEON
On the other side of the Great
Lakes in Dakota territory.

Samantha pauses.

SAMANTHA
Indian territory?

GIDEON
That's right. They allow me to
trap, and in return, I trade with
them and basically leave them
alone.

SAMANTHA
You're not afraid?

GIDEON
Don't believe everything you hear
from people who have never been
there. The Dakotas I deal with are
people just like you and me. They
just have different ways of living,
that's all.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

Are there no other white men?

GIDEON

There are a few other trappers about. Mostly French. Crow and I share a cabin.

SAMANTHA

I remember you just disappeared.

GIDEON

Father sent me. He wanted to expand his trading. The west was virgin country with great possibilities. I went to Pittsburgh to scout out the competition and discover new trade sources, fell in love with the country, and just kept on going.

Samantha is starting to get an idea.

SAMANTHA

He'll never find me.

GIDEON

What?

SAMANTHA

If I go with you, then my father won't find me.

GIDEON

Whoa, I never said anything about you coming with me.

SAMANTHA

But its perfect. You need a wife, and I need someplace away from here.

GIDEON

Where I'm going is no place for a young girl.

SAMANTHA

I'm sixteen.

GIDEON

Exactly. I live in a country that loves you one minute then tries to kill you the next.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

But I can cook, garden, take care
of a home.

GIDEON

No. The frontier demands all you
have and then things you didn't
know you had in you.

SAMANTHA

I can do it, I know I can.
(small, pleading)
I have to.

Gideon shakes his head.

GIDEON

I'm sorry. I just can't.

EXT. NEXT TOWN - EVENING

Gideon and Samantha leave the woods and gaze over a
valley. In the center sits a small town. Gideon points to
a house on the outskirts.

GIDEON

That's the Binson's home. They're
good folk.

Samantha remains silent.

EXT. BINSON'S HOUSE - EVENING

Gideon steps onto a porch and knocks on the door. SHUFFLING
and STEPS signal the occupant's approach. The door opens to
reveal LANKY BINSON (40's). One glance is enough to put a
grin on his face. He wraps Gideon in a bear hug.

LANKY

Gideon Wilkes, it's been a coon's
age. Thought I'd never see you
again. Sorry to hear about your
father.

Lanky turns around to include MISSY (30's), his wife.

LANKY (CONT.)

Hey Missy, looks who's come.

Missy puts her sewing down to give Gideon a hug.

(CONTINUED)

MISSY
Gideon, it's wonderful to see you.

She spies Samantha.

MISSY (CONT.)
And who is this pretty girl?

GIDEON
This is Samantha Taylor. Mind if
we come in?

At the mention of Samantha's name, both smiles
disappear. Gideon notices.

GIDEON
What?

Samantha's head shoots up, fear etched on her face.

LANKY
We need to talk.

The house is small but comfortably furnished.

MISSY
Let me make you something to
eat. Would you like coffee or tea?

GIDEON
You know me, Missy, I love my
coffee.

SAMANTHA
I'd like tea, please. Would you
like me to help you?

MISSY
Lands, no. You just rest. I'll
have it out in no time.

Seated, Gideon leans forward.

GIDEON
What's this about, Lanky.

LANKY
A rider came in this morning. He
says they're looking for a
kidnapped girl named Samantha
Taylor. Says her Pa's going crazy
looking for her.

Anger replaces Samantha's fear.

SAMANTHA

That lying...

Gideon stops her with a hand gesture.

GIDEON

She's Samantha Taylor, but I didn't kidnap her - I rescued her.

Gideon and Lanky accept cups from Missy who disappears in the kitchen again. She reemerges with two cups of tea. One she gives to Samantha. A WHIMPER stops her. She puts her cup down and walks to the corner of the room. Murmuring softly, she picks up a small bundle and walks to her seat. Samantha is intrigued, but continues.

SAMANTHA

Mother died a month ago. Since then, my father has gotten the strange idea that I'm supposed to take her place.

MISSY

How old are you, dear.

SAMANTHA

I'm sixteen.

MISSY

But shouldn't you take up the house duties?

SAMANTHA

If that was all there was to it, I wouldn't have a problem, but he wants me to be like Lot's daughters.

Lanky and Missy sit back in shock.

GIDEON

I heard them arguing while standing on the street. She was refusing to be his wife. When she ran into another room, I heard him crashing against the door trying to break it open.

MISSY

Oh, Good Lord.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

I slipped out the window and that's when I saw Gideon. I was running away. Gideon helped me.

Samantha pauses, gathering her thoughts.

SAMANTHA (CONT.)

Father always had a way of convincing people to see things his way. He has everyone believing that I'm a rebellious, willful child.

She catches Gideon's glance.

SAMANTHA (CONT.)

I admit I can be, but not like he says. There's not a person I know who wouldn't give me right back to him thinking there were doing right.

GIDEON

I was hoping she could stay here and start a new life.

LANKY

Gideon, you know we would if we could, but everyone here believes she's been kidnapped.

MISSY

They'd send her back just like she said.

SAMANTHA

I swear, if I go back and he touches me, I'll kill him.

GIDEON

The only thing I know to do is take her further west, maybe Pittsburgh, and give her enough funds to settle.

Samantha throws Gideon a desperate look which Lanky catches. He stands up.

LANKY

Gideon, why don't we go into the next room. We need to talk.

(CONTINUED)

The men leave. Missy catches the glance Samantha throws towards the retreating figure. She leans over and covers Samantha's hand with her own.

MISSY

You're smitten with him, aren't you?

SAMANTHA

Since I was six.

She hesitates, searching for the right words.

SAMANTHA (CONT.)

But how do I know? Father seems a good man to everyone, but he's a monster.

MISSY

Gideon has a good heart. He won't hurt you.

The baby whimpers again, shifting in its sleep. Missy catches Samantha's longing gaze.

MISSY

Do you want to hold her?

Samantha nods and Missy shifts her precious bundle into Samantha's arms.

MISSY

Her name is Emily.

SAMANTHA

She's perfect.

MISSY

We think so, although there are times at night when I have a little cause to doubt.

Samantha runs her hand over Emily's cheek.

SAMANTHA

What's it like?

MISSY

A baby changes your life. One day you're free to do as you please, the next, you have a life totally dependent upon you for everything.

There's a deep meaning in Samantha's next words.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

But she's yours and no one can take her away.

MISSY

I'd like to see them try.

SAMANTHA

My mother was like that.

MISSY

The bond between mother and child is the strongest on earth.

Missy catches Samantha's glance at the closed door where the men disappeared.

MISSY

Like I said, Gideon has a good heart. He'll be a loving father and protector.

But Samantha's expression says she's not so sure.

INT. DINING ROOM - SAME

Gideon leans on the mantle of a fireplace where a small fire has been lit to keep the evening chill at bay.

LANKY

Gideon, what maggot has gotten into your brain? You can't just drop a young woman into a city like Pittsburgh and walk away. She'll be eaten alive.

GIDEON

And what will the frontier do? It's no place for an inexperienced child.

LANKY

Sixteen is young, but not a child. She's old enough to be married.

GIDEON

No. I won't take her out there.

LANKY

I understand your fear, but you've got to understand, she's been compromised.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

I never touched her.

LANKY

It doesn't matter. You were with her for - how long?

GIDEON

We've been two days getting here.

LANKY

Alone - for two days.

Gideon nods.

LANKY

It doesn't matter if you touched her or not, her reputation is gone.

GIDEON

I could take her to a boarding house.

LANKY

A man goes to a boarding house with a young woman in tow and leave her. No respectful person will accept her.

GIDEON

But I can't...

LANKY

You don't have a choice. The moment you accepted to help her, she became your responsibility. God had you standing there at the time she climbed out that window. Accept His will.

Gideon's struggle is deep.

GIDEON

But what if she's killed. How can I live with that?

LANKY

A man's times are in the hands of God. Trust Him to take care of her.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON
(introspective)
I have been wanting a Godly wife.

Gideon surrenders.

GIDEON (CONT.)
Okay.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

The women look up as the door opens and the men enter. Missy gazes at Lanky who gives her a slight nod. She smiles and squeezes Samantha's hand.

Gideon hesitates when he sees Samantha holding the baby. Is this a vision of his future? He sits next to her.

GIDEON
Samantha, I - um.

Pause

LANKY
What he's trying to say is that I've gotten through his hard head that his fears are in God's hands.

Samantha glances at Gideon, confused.

GIDEON
As much as I've been praying for a Godly wife, I've also been too afraid to accept that He would give me one.

LANKY
Which I've reminded him is God's responsibility, not his.

GIDEON
Yes. So, Samantha Taylor, will you do me the honor of becoming my wife?

SAMANTHA
Gideon Wilkes, isn't that the same question I asked you not too long ago?

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

Well, yes. Turned around, sort of.

SAMANTHA

I haven't changed my mind.

LANKY

Oh, she's going to lead him a merry chase.

Missy gives Samantha a hug.

MISSY

I still have my wedding dress. It should fit you well enough.

LANKY

I'll go see my uncle tomorrow morning. He's the minister and I'm pretty sure I could convince him to perform the ceremony.

GIDEON

If you don't mind, Lanky, we'll need some supplies.

LANKY

That shouldn't be too difficult. Since no one knows you're here, no one will question it. I'll make something up.

GIDEON

And another horse.

LANKY

I know someone who has a gelding he wants to get rid of.

MISSY

Now that we've got that out of the way, would anyone like more coffee?

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

REV. BINSON (50's) stands before Gideon and Samantha, a Bible open in his hands. Lanky and Missy stand a little behind them with Rev. Binson's wife, SARAH. In Samantha's hand is one red rose.

(CONTINUED)

REV. BINSON

Do you, Gideon Wilkes, take this woman, Samantha Taylor, to be your lawfully wedded wife, to love and to cherish and to protect with your life until death do you part?

GIDEON

I do.

REV. BINSON

Do you, Samantha Taylor, take Gideon Wilkes to be your lawfully wedded husband to love and to cherish and to obey as ordered by God until death do you part?

INT. CABIN - DAY - 1831 (BACK TO PRESENT)

Samantha chuckles softly.

SAMANTHA

Poor Gideon. He had no idea I was an atheist.

FLASHBACK - INT. BINSON'S LIVINGROOM - EVENING

CLOSE: SAMANTHA'S FINGERS CROSSED IN THE FOLDS OF HER DRESS

SAMANTHA

I do.

REV. BINSON

Then by the powers invested in me by the Almighty, I now pronounce you man and wife.

Gideon gives Samantha a small, chaste kiss.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gideon and Lanky relax while drinking coffee.

LANKY

The horse I bought probably won't last. You'll have to change him when you get to Pittsburgh.

Gideon nods, his thoughts somewhere else. Missy's descent from the stairs makes him glance up.

(CONTINUED)

MISSY

I talked to her as I helped her get dressed for bed. Unfortunately, everything she knows about what happens between a man and a woman is from seeing her father beat her mother. She's scared thinking you're going to turn into some monster.

Gideon goes upstairs.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME

Gideon opens the door and steps inside. Samantha sits on the bed, back against the headboard, legs tucked in front of her. Gideon sits at the foot of the bed.

GIDEON

I don't know what you've been told about the marriage bed, but I'm sure you were never given a good example.

Samantha remains silent.

GIDEON

I'm not going to force you, Samantha. In fact, I'm not going to touch you in that way until you decide you want me to.

Her brows furrow.

GIDEON

I don't want a wife that's scared of me. Someday, when we get to know each other, and, hopefully, love each other, then we'll come together like a real husband and wife. Until then...

He stands up and gives her a gentle kiss on her forehead, smiles, and leaves the room.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT - 1831 (END FLASHBACK)

Blue's scratchING pulls her out of her memories. Samantha wipes her eyes. She groans as she totters to the door and lets Blue in.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

I'll see you in the morning.

She blows out the lantern.

FLASHBACK - EXT. PITTSBURGH - EARLY EVENING - 1784

SUPER: PITTSBURGH

Riding the main street, Gideon nods to the curious who stop and stare at their passing. Samantha slumps in her saddle, haggard and tired.

He leads her to a livery stable. In the glow of lantern lights, they see the HOSTLER finishing up.

GIDEON

Do you have room for two more?

HOSTLER

You're just in time. A few more minutes and I'd have been closed up.

GIDEON

I thank you for staying. I'll put the horses up, if you could direct us to someplace where we can spend the night.

The man looks at them closely.

HOSTLER

There a widow down the street who will take in overnight boarders. You and the misses can stay there.

GIDEON

I'm obliged.

HOSTLER

Well, I'm careful who I send to Widow Harkin, but you two seem decent enough.

(smiling)

Though a little worse for wear.

Gideon smiles back.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

True words. We'd both love a good,
hot bath.

The hostler takes the gelding's bridle while Gideon helps Samantha off the saddle.

HOSTLER

Why don't you take your misses on
to the house. I'll take care of
the horses.

GIDEON

I'd be grateful.

He pulls a small purse from his belt, fishes for a coin and hands it to the man.

GIDEON

This should cover it.

HOSTLER

That it does. Go right and head
straight down the street, fifth
house on the left. Big chestnut
tree in the yard.

Gideon nods, holding Sam upright as she staggers forward.

EXT. WIDOW HARKIN'S HOUSE - EVENING

Gideon knocks on the door. The sound of FOOTSTEPS
APPROACHING announces the widow's arrival. The door opens.

WIDOW HARKIN (50's) peers around the door. Dressed all in
black, she holds a lantern up to study her visitors.

WIDOW HARKIN

May I help you?

GIDEON

The gentleman at the livery said
you could rent us a room for the
evening. My wife and I have come a
long way and, as you can see, she's
spent.

She holds the lantern higher, studying. Samantha manages a
weak smile.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

I hope we're not intruding. We just need a place to stay.

Satisfied, Harkin opens the door. Her movements are quick, birdlike. She keeps ducking her head like she's apologizing for living.

WIDOW HARKIN

Of course, of course, come in. I'm sorry, but I've had to be more careful since my husband, well...

SAMANTHA

We understand.

WIDOW HARKIN

Yes, well. I have to do something to make a living.

GIDEON

May we come in?

Widow Harkin realizes she's keeping them outside. She shuffles backwards, holding the door.

WIDOW HARKIN

Yes, yes. Do come in.

She keeps up the conversation as they step inside.

WIDOW HARKIN (CONT.)

It'll be fifty cents a day, breakfast is included. If you stay longer, supper and dinner are ten cents each.

GIDEON

That'll be fine. Will there be extra for a bath?

WIDOW HARKIN

No. I have a room off the kitchen you can use, I just ask you boil and haul your own water. My muscles are getting too tired to pick up heavy things.

GIDEON

That will be no difficulty.

(CONTINUED)

WIDOW HARKIN

With tomorrow being Sunday,
breakfast will end promptly at
eight.

Gideon brightens

GIDEON

Tomorrow is Sunday? I lost track
of time. With your permission,
we'd like to spend the Sabbath so
we can go to church and rest.

Harkin smiles. They both miss Samantha's look of dismay.

WIDOW HARKIN

Yes, of course. I usually spend
the day resting and reading the
Good Book.

GIDEON

As do I.

Samantha interrupts.

SAMANTHA

May we see the room?

WIDOW HARKIN

Yes, yes. It's this way.

She leads them upstairs.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is simply decorated. Samantha nearly falls on the
bed.

GIDEON

You rest a minute while I get the
bath water ready.

SAMANTHA

I won't be going to church. I'm
going to stay and rest while you
go.

GIDEON

You can rest after church.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

What difference does it make
whether I go or not?

GIDEON

It shows your priorities. Anyway,
what will the Widow Harkin think?

SAMANTHA

I don't care what she thinks. I
care that I'm tired and I
hurt. I'm not going.

Gideon sucks in his anger with his breath.

GIDEON

This is the first opportunity we
have had to go before God as a
married couple. I want you by my
side.

SAMANTHA

No.

GIDEON

You swore an oath to God that you
would obey me.

Samantha's smile is tight and defiant.

SAMANTHA

I don't believe in God.

Gideon looks like he's been kicked in the stomach.

GIDEON

You don't mean that.

Samantha gives him a scornful look.

SAMANTHA

My father and the people of that
town gave me enough God to make me
sick. I refuse to follow the God
of those hypocrites.

Gideon struggles for something to say. All his prayers and
dreams have just been shattered. He finds strength in his
anger.

GIDEON

You're going if I have to carry
you.

(CONTINUED)

She looks him straight in the eyes.

SAMANTHA

Then the whole church will see me
turn around and walk out.

GIDEON

Fine. On Monday I'll see the judge
and have our marriage
annulled. You can stay and rest as
much as you want after I'm gone.

Samantha's triumph turns to panic.

SAMANTHA

You can't leave me.

GIDEON

Nothing to stop me.

SAMANTHA

But Missy said you were a good man.

GIDEON

Woman, you're enough to make a
saint swear.

Samantha surrenders.

SAMANTHA

I'll go.

GIDEON

I don't know if I'm glad or not.

INT. BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

The DOOR BURSTS open and Samantha stomps in followed by
Gideon. Trying to keep their voices low, they hiss their
anger.

GIDEON

I can't believe your behavior.

SAMANTHA

What did you expect? We've been
traveling for days. I was tired.

GIDEON

That's no excuse.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

And why not? The man talked for two hours. And it was boring. I'm surprised I stayed awake the first twenty minutes.

GIDEON

Is that how you behaved at your own church?

Samantha shudders, taking a deep breath.

SAMANTHA

No. Father would have beat me. When I would start to fall asleep, Mother would always take my hand and shake it. She invented finger games to help me.

Gideon's anger evaporates.

GIDEON

I'm sorry. I didn't realize.

Samantha sits on the bed.

GIDEON (CONT.)

I'm going to go down and check on the horses. I'll be back in a while. Why don't you take a nap.

He opens the door.

SAMANTHA

Gideon.

GIDEON

Yes?

SAMANTHA

Would you really have left me?

He sighs.

GIDEON

I wish I could say I'm better than that, but truthfully, I'm not sure.

He quietly leaves and closes the door. Samantha picks up Gideon's Bible from the bed, looks at it, then slings it into a corner.

EXT. STREETS OF PITTSBURGH - DAY

Gideon and Samantha stroll in palatable silence, looking in shop windows. Finding what he's seeking, Gideon opens the door for Samantha without word or acknowledgment.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

The SHOP OWNER (40's) looks up when they enter.

SHOP OWNER

Good morning. Is there something I can help you with?

GIDEON

We need some supplies and my wife needs something to wear while riding. We'll be headed west.

The man gazes at Samantha with concern.

SHOP OWNER

I'm sure you know your business, but the frontier is a hard place for a woman.

GIDEON

No one knows that better than I. Still, that's where we're headed.

SHOP OWNER

I'll have my wife assist her.

He walks through a door at the back of the shop. Gideon is curt.

GIDEON

Get what you need. Money has little use in the wilderness.

At Samantha's unspoken question, he explains.

GIDEON

My portion of my father's inheritance.

Samantha nods, understanding.

The shop owner returns with a MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN behind him. Her brown hair already streaking gray. She smiles warmly.

(CONTINUED)

SHOP OWNER

This is Elisabeth. She'll help your wife find the clothing she needs.

Gideon gives Samantha a nudge forward.

GIDEON

This is Samantha. We thank you for your kindness.

ELISABETH

I'm glad to meet you, Samantha.

She looks her up and down.

ELISABETH (CONT.)

I would say you are a size ten.

SAMANTHA

Yes.

The two ladies stroll to the corner of the shop.

ELISABETH

Our ladies garments are over here.

Left alone, the men get down to business.

SHOP OWNER

So, what would you be wanting?

GIDEON

First, I need lead and powder, then flour, sugar, coffee and cornmeal.

Something under the glass counter catches his eye.

GIDEON

May I see those?

The owner walks over to see what Gideon is pointing at. He smiles and pulls out a black velvet tray of rings.

Gideon picks one up. It's a jewel encrusted affair, slightly gaudy. He holds it up to the light to admire its sparkle.

GIDEON

Newly married.

(CONTINUED)

SHOP OWNER

If you're thinking of a wedding band, may I suggest something the lady can wear everyday without worry of losing a stone or having it get caught while working?

He picks up a plain gold band.

SHOP OWNER

This one is elegant, yet practical. And, it looks about her size.

Gideon puts the ring he's holding back.

GIDEON

You've got a good point. The simpler the better.

He takes the ring and studies it, and then places it on the counter.

GIDEON

Thanks, add it.

SAME - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

A small mound of supplies covers the counter. The back door opens and the men look up to see Samantha and Elisabeth enter the room. Samantha wears a split skirt, linen shirt, and jacket; pretty yet practical. Her hair has been pulled back and braided. She's stunning, but Gideon barely glances at her.

Samantha's expression wavers between anger and hurt. Her back snaps straight when he gestures her over, his concentration on something in his hand. She glides over with all the dignity she can muster.

GIDEON

Let me see your hand.

She raises her right hand.

GIDEON

No, the other one.

Embarrassed, she lifts her left hand. Her brows furrow when a ring is placed on her finger. Samantha fingers it. Gideon studies it a moment, and then turns - back to business. Eyes glistening, Samantha looks at Elisabeth who smiles sympathetically.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

(To shop owner)

We'll be back to pick this up as soon as we get the horses.

SHOP OWNER

Of course.

Samantha is hustled out of the store.

INT. LIVERY STABLE - DAY

Gideon strides inside, leaving Samantha behind. He sees that their horses have been groomed and waiting for them.

HOSTLER

I've got them ready for you, although I have my doubts about the gelding.

GIDEON

I know. I didn't expect him to make it this far. Do you have any for sale?

HOSTLER

I've got a couple in the pen. Why don't you come and have a look.

Samantha has drifted up, listening. She follows them.

EXT. BARN - EARLY MORNING

They stride to a small pen where the horses are kept. Gideon studies them. One catches his eye.

GIDEON

What about that little paint pony?

The hostler slips through the rails and puts a lead rope on the paint. He brings her out to Gideon who examines her teeth and feet.

GIDEON

We're in luck. This is an Indian pony.

SAMANTHA

How do you know?

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

No shoes.
(to the hostler)
Is she trained to saddle?

HOSTLER

She doesn't like it, but will take
it ready enough.

SAMANTHA

She's ugly. I like that bay
gelding over there.

The men look at the animal she's pointing to.

GIDEON

He's not a trail horse.

SAMANTHA

How do you know? He's much nicer
looking than that scruffy thing.

GIDEON

That one was bred to be a gentry's
riding horse...

SAMANTHA

And I'm a lady.

GIDEON

..for gentle rides in town - not
for day-to-day trail riding.

SAMANTHA

Nevertheless, I like him and I want
him.

Gideon pauses, reining in his anger.

GIDEON

You're not getting that horse, and
that's final.
(to the hostler)
I'll take the paint and a saddle.

Fire flashes in Samantha's eyes. She smiles as an idea
comes to her.

GIDEON (CONT.)

And I'll take that gray gelding for
a pack horse. Do you have an extra
frame?

(CONTINUED)

HOSTLER
I've got one.

GIDEON
Thanks. That'll do it.

HOSTLER
Two horses, one saddle and bridle
and one pack frame. That'll come
to twenty-five dollars.

Gideon hands him the money.

SAME - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Gideon and Samantha ride out of the livery heading for the general store.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Gideon dismounts. He throws the lead rope for the gray around a post. Barely acknowledging Samantha's presence, he throws to her:

GIDEON
I'll be right back.

This only adds wood to her fire. When Gideon disappears, she dismounts, ties up her horse and heads back to the livery.

SAME - MINUTES LATER

Gideon reappears, arms full of supplies, to find Samantha gone. He scans the streets but can't see her. A big sigh, a clenched jaw, and he gets to work assembling the pack.

A few minutes later, the sounds of hooves alerts him of Samantha's return. He glances over his shoulder. She sits the bay, defiant.

GIDEON
Take it back.

SAMANTHA
No.

GIDEON
I said take it back. It won't survive.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

I paid for him and I'm keeping him.

Gideon stops working and turns to face her.

GIDEON

And I'm telling you it will never make it. I'm your husband and I say Take It Back.

SAMANTHA

And I'm telling you, I'm not a servant or a dog to be ordered around. I paid for him with my own money and he's mine.

Jaw clenched, Gideon nods once.

GIDEON

Very well.

He turns abruptly and continues arranging the supplies. When he's done, he ties the paint onto the gray's pack and mounts.

SAMANTHA

Aren't you going to take the paint back?

GIDEON

No.

SAMANTHA

Why not?

GIDEON

Because you're going to need her when I have to shoot your horse.

EXT. OHIO COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

They travel at an easy walk. Gideon keeps a keen eye on the countryside. He's noticed that Samantha has dropped back again and turns, agitated.

GIDEON

You need to keep up.

SAMANTHA

Aiden needs a rest.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

Either kick that horse or I'll cut his throat. There's a lot of Indians in this area who are not happy to see white men here.

SAMANTHA

(almost shouting)

Don't you dare.

GIDEON

Keep your voice down.

Samantha glares at him and gives her horse a hard kick. Aiden stumbles forward into a slow canter.

A few minutes later they pass an outcropping of rock. Gideon points to their base. Samantha's gaze follows his direction to spy a black shape.

GIDEON

Black bear. Looks like he's found a puma kill.

SAMANTHA

How do you know it's puma?

GIDEON

Where the kill is at. Puma like to ambush by jumping down. Wolves chase their prey.

SAMANTHA

I saw a man giving a presentation. He spent a year in the wilderness and was telling of his experience. He said that, when he met a bear, he wouldn't run but raised his rifle above his head and yelled. Then, he'd shoot the ground at it's feet. The bear would then turn and run.

GIDEON

The man is a fool.

SAMANTHA

I thought he was quite brave. He stood up to it and made it back down. Not many men have that kind of courage.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

You might be able to do that with a young black bear, but a grizzly would chew you to pieces.

SAMANTHA

So you would not be able to stand up to a bear.

GIDEON

I'm not that stupid.

SAMANTHA

(mild contempt)

I see.

GIDEON

Actually, I don't think you do, and I pray you never find out.

SAMANTHA

It sounds like I'd better hope that too, shouldn't I?

EXT. BANK OF RIVER - DAY

They are stopped by a creek. Below, the bank has been cut into a ten foot drop. Gideon gazes around.

GIDEON

We'll have to find someplace where we can cross.

He points north.

GIDEON (CONT.)

Looks like there's a dip over there.

It only takes a few minutes for them to reach the spot. Indeed, the bank is lower with a small, steep trail leading down to the water.

SAMANTHA

I don't think Aiden can make that.

GIDEON

He doesn't have a choice. The next crossing could be miles away. You might want to get off and walk him down.

(CONTINUED)

Gideon and Samantha dismount. Gideon goes first. It's steep, but the sure-footed trail horses have no problem with the difficult maneuver.

GIDEON

Okay, take it slow.

Samantha urges him forward, but Aiden backs away from the cliff. Samantha tugs on his reins.

SAMANTHA

Come on. They did it, you can too.

GIDEON

Getting mad won't help. You have to coax him.

Samantha tamps her frustration and strokes his neck.

SAMANTHA

Easy, boy. It's all right.

She pulls gently on the reins.

SAMANTHA

Come on. You can do it.

Aiden starts walking.

Part way down, his foot slips. He starts to panic and back up. A back hoof slips. Aiden lunges, knocking Samantha to the rocks below.

GIDEON

Sam!

He dashes forward and snatches her out of the way just as Aiden falls. He lands with a SCREAM OF PAIN.

SAMANTHA

Aiden!

Gideon runs to the horse's head. He talks low, calming the frightened animal.

GIDEON

Hold his head.

Samantha takes his place, and Gideon examines the horse. He stops at a hoof and runs his hand down the fetlock.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON
He's torn a tendon.

SAMANTHA
But he'll be all right?

GIDEON
No, he won't.

Gideon pulls his knife from it's sheath. Samantha stares in disbelief.

SAMANTHA
You're not going to kill him. I've seen horses with torn tendons recover.

GIDEON
With time and a poultice. We don't have either.

SAMANTHA
Then we'll take him someplace where someone else can care for him.

Gideon twirls, arms wide open.

GIDEON
Look around, wife. There's not a cabin to be had in a hundred miles.

Samantha is ready to cry.

SAMANTHA
(quiet)
But you can't. Please.

GIDEON
I don't have a choice.

Samantha stands between him and the horse.

SAMANTHA
No. I won't let you. He's mine, and I say no.

GIDEON
Would you rather he be alive when the wolves find him?

Reality hits Samantha. She looks around as though seeing the country for the first time. Tears begin to flow. She stares at Gideon, lost.

Gideon places his arm his wife and holds her as she cries.

SAMANTHA
I hate this place.

Gideon wisely remains silent.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - EVENING

The sun is down, but the sky still holds the last traces of light. Gideon and Samantha have stopped and set up a camp with no fire. Samantha tears off a piece of jerky with her teeth.

SAMANTHA
I'm tired of cold, hard food. Why can't we have a fire?

GIDEON
I've told you why.

SAMANTHA
We haven't seen a one Indian since leaving Pittsburgh.

GIDEON
Be grateful. That doesn't mean they're not out there.

Samantha glances around into the growing darkness.

SAMANTHA
I've heard so many stories growing up. Stories to keep you awake at night.

GIDEON
The ponies will tell us if anything comes close.

SAMANTHA
Are they true?

GIDEON
Some. And some are just plain fabrication.

Samantha shivers, rubbing her arms. Gideon gets up and retrieves a blanket from their pack. He walks behind her and gently places it around her shoulders.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

It's going to be a cold night

The gesture surprises her. She huddles down, holding it tight.

GIDEON

You know, the best way to stay warm is to have two people huddle together.

SAMANTHA

Together?

GIDEON

Uh huh. So they can share each other's warmth.

Silence. Gideon sighs, shakes his head. Then:

SAMANTHA

You promised.

GIDEON

And I keep my promises.

Samantha scans the countryside.

SAMANTHA

Okay.

Gideon gets up and comes to her side. He lays down behind her holding her close and throws the blanket around them both. He cuddles her head under his chin.

GIDEON

Tell me about your mother.

The question catches her off guard.

SAMANTHA

What do you want to know?

GIDEON

I remember her a little. She seemed a gentle, yet strong woman.

Gideon feels her head nod.

SAMANTHA

She was the only thing in my life that made sense. She protected me.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON
From your father?

Another nod.

SAMANTHA
I didn't realize how much until I
grew up. He began to notice
me. I didn't totally understand,
but I could feel it wasn't right
and it scared me.

GIDEON
I remember he looked like a
wonderful, loving father.

SAMANTHA
That's what he wanted everyone to
see.

GIDEON
How did she die?

SAMANTHA
Last winter she developed a cough
and fever that wouldn't
stop. Father said it was God's
judgment on her disobedience.

GIDEON
She was a good woman and deserved
better.

SAMANTHA
Not according to my father.

GIDEON
Your father was a fool.

A low chuckle.

SAMANTHA
No arguments there.

A pause for several heartbeats.

SAMANTHA
Gideon, do you like children?

GIDEON
Sure.

SAMANTHA

So you wouldn't mind having some?

GIDEON

That's what usually comes with being married.

SAMANTHA

I want a baby - eventually. I mean, Emily was so beautiful.

It's Gideon's turn to chuckle.

GIDEON

Honey, when you're ready, you can have all the Emilys you want.

Gideon snuggles her closer until her breathing deepened into sleep.

INT. CABIN - MORNING - 1831 (END FLASHBACK)

The THUMP of Blue jumping on the bed, brings Samantha out of her sleep. Instead of her usual scolding, she rolls over and places an arm around him. He gives her a gentle lick and crawls over to Gideon's side of the bed, laying his head on the pillow.

The gesture brings fresh tears to her eyes. Her voice chokes.

SAMANTHA

I know, boy. I miss him, too.

EXT. CABIN - SAME

Huddled in her coat against the morning chill, Samantha shuffles to the barn, her lantern barely making a dent in the darkness. She opens the door and slips in.

INT. BARN - SAME

She's instantly greeted by WHINNIES and COW BELLOWS. She forks a large helping of prairie hay into each trough. While Rosie chews, Samantha takes the stool and bucket, puts them in place and begins milking.

It doesn't take long before a hind leg flies out and Samantha is left staring at the overturned bucket and splattered milk.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

Dang you, Rosie. I'm tired of your shenanigans. If you don't stand still, I'll make you regret it.

She picks up the bucket and begins again. It's only a second before she's dodging a hoof aimed towards her.

SAMANTHA

That's it. You've done got me mad.

Samantha searches the barn until she find what she needs.

MINUTES LATER

Samantha milks in perfect safety. Attached to Rosie's back leg is a leather strap tied to her other leg with only a six inch line between.

EXT. BARN - EARLY MORNING

Samantha huddles against the chill as she leads Rosie to pasture. The gate is two split logs which Samantha removes from their post and lets fall. She leads Rosie across and releases her.

Replacing the logs, she turns and stops. Across the meadow, a profusion of blue wildflowers blanket the ground. She picks one and gently touches the blossom.

FLASHBACK - EXT. MINNESOTA - DAY - 1784

In a country that has only seen a handful of white men, Gideon and Samantha travel at an easy pace. Gideon's eyes catch a movement. In the distance, four figures ride into view. He smiles.

GIDEON

Sam, you're about to meet some friends of mine. Don't be afraid.

SAMANTHA

If they're your friends, why should I ...

Four Dakotas ride up.

SAMANTHA (CONT.)

(hesitant)
Be afraid.

(CONTINUED)

The men are WISE FOX, RUN LIKE DEER, STAR SHOOTING ACROSS SKY, and DANCE IN RAIN; all in their twenties. Two ride around Samantha, curious.

The men speak in Dakota with subtitles:

WISE FOX

Look, he brought a woman for us.

DANCE IN RAIN

She's pretty.

He reaches out and picks up a piece of her hair.

DANCE IN RAIN (CONT.)

She has hair like a yellow flower.

Samantha slaps at his hand. He drops it, laughing.

DANCE IN RAIN (CONT.)

And she has great spirit. How much you want for her?

GIDEON

She's not for sale. She's my wife.

SAMANTHA

(in English)

What are they saying?

GIDEON

(in English)

They say you're very pretty. They want to buy you.

RUN LIKE DEER

I'll give you three ponies.

SAMANTHA

You tell them that if they touch me, they'll regret it.

Gideon grins.

GIDEON

(in Dakota)

She says you are not strong enough to be her husband. You will be like a dog running with its tail between its legs.

The Dakotas whoop and laugh.

(CONTINUED)

WISE FOX

She will do well. We will wait and see if you will run with your tail between your legs.

The men turn their ponies and ride away.

SAMANTHA

I can't believe they wanted to buy me like some horse.

GIDEON

It's their way. It was quite a compliment. One offered three ponies for you.

Fear subsided, Samantha enters the banter.

SAMANTHA

That's all? I'm worth at least five.

GIDEON

I told them you would have them running with their tails between their legs.

Samantha laughs.

SAMANTHA

I'd like to see their village.

GIDEON

I'll take you after we get you settled. Come on, the cabin is not far away.

SAMANTHA

About time.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

A tiny dilapidated log cabin sits snuggled against the woods in a large meadow carpeted by wild blue flowers. To the side, a rough-fenced corral holds a shaggy horse and pack mule.

Samantha stops her horse, mouth open.

SAMANTHA

You can't be serious?

Gideon looks sheepish.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

Told you it wasn't much.

SAMANTHA

Gideon Wilkes, if you want any peace in this life, you'll build me another cabin.

GIDEON

Said I would. Looks like Crow is here.

(out loud)

Hello, in the cabin.

The door opens to reveal "CROW" LaFLUER (50's), a Frenchman more at home with the Dakota than his own people. A long rifle hangs loosely over one arm.

CROW

(heavy French accent)

Salut.

Pause as he sees who it is.

CROW (CONT.)

Is that you, Gideon? Where the hell have you been? Starting to think you were dead.

GIDEON

Watch your language, Crow. I have a lady with me.

CROW

A woman? My apologies mademoiselle. I did not know.

SAMANTHA

Apology accepted.

GIDEON

And that's madam. Samantha is my wife.

CROW

Felicitations. Come, I have some meat over the fire. We'll talk and eat.

Crow goes back inside. Gideon sees Samantha's uncertainty.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

He's harmless. You'll find that most men out here will ogle a pretty girl, then give their lives to defend her.

SAMANTHA

That's good to know.

GIDEON

I'll put the horses in the corral. Go in and introduce yourself.

Gideon strides away leading the horses and leaving Samantha on her own. She takes a deep breath, squares her shoulders, and steps forward.

INT. CABIN - DAY

The inside looks worse than the outside; dirt floor, the most basic of rough-made furniture, the ceiling and walls black from soot. A knife and scraps of meat still sit on a filthy table. Samantha stands at the door, gaping.

Crow is busy checking a large chunk of meat spitted over the fire. Sprinkling something over the top, he throws a glance over his shoulder.

CROW

Sage and salt: two must have ingredients for a flavorful meat.

As he speaks, he takes two vegetables from the table and puts them in the coals.

CROW (CONT.)

Squash. The Dakota have learned how to grow it and we trade fresh meat for it. A good trade, Bon? They don't have to hunt as much and we get vegetables.

Samantha steps gingerly inside.

SAMANTHA

Sounds like a reasonable trade.

CROW

The Dakota can be very reasonable if you deal with them fairly. Some of them are good friends.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

We met some on the way here.

Crow chuckles.

CROW

You need not tell me. They tried to purchase you. Am I correct?

She decides to sit on a chair at the table, but seeing its condition, changes her mind.

SAMANTHA

Yes, they did.

CROW

It's your yellow hair. To them that is a great - how do you say - novelty. They love it.

SAMANTHA

Gideon told them I would send them running with their tails between their legs.

Crow laughs out loud.

CROW

Now they will surely want you. To have great spirit is something they respect.

Gideon comes in throwing their packs into a corner.

GIDEON

You talking about the Dakota we saw?

CROW

Oui.

GIDEON

It was Wise Fox and his buddies. They offered me three ponies for Sam.

CROW

That is a high price. Why you not take it up?

Before Samantha's shock can turn into outrage, Gideon wraps one arm around her waist and answers:

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

Because I want to live to see
tomorrow.

Samantha relaxes - they're just joking.

GIDEON

Got any coffee made?

CROW

Oui. Help yourself.

Wrapping his hand in a rag, Gideon pulls the coffee pot from
the coals.

CROW

(to Samantha)

There are cups on the shelf by the
window.

Samantha fetches them, wipes the insides with her skirt, and
gives them to Gideon.

GIDEON

You want some?

CROW

Oui, merci. I have whiskey to put
in if you want some.

GIDEON

No, thanks. This is fine.

Samantha throws Gideon a surprised look but says
nothing. She takes the cup offered, sips, grimaces.

GIDEON

You'll find frontier coffee is a
bit stronger than what you're used
to.

SAMANTHA

I don't suppose you would have any
sugar or milk?

CROW

Pas, I am sorry. We have had no
need to purchase sugar and the
nearest cow is thirty miles away.

GIDEON

I think there's still some sugar in
our pack. As soon as we're

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON (cont'd)
settled, I'll buy you a cow of your own.

CROW
Do you plan on staying here?

Samantha throws Gideon a glance that he can't miss while digging in the pack.

GIDEON
Only until I can build her a proper cabin. In fact, I have the perfect spot in mind. Remember the meadow not far from the falls?

Crow's face lights up.

CROW
Ah, I know the very one. An excellent location. Much game, water close by, and well protected. I may even help you build it.
(to Samantha)
You will love it. Very beautiful. Now, how about some dinner?

EVENING

A glow from the fireplace and one lantern on the table are the only illumination fighting against the fallen darkness. Crow stands at the open door.

CROW
Bonne nuit little Samantha, I shall see you in the morning. Have a good night.

He grins wolfishly, winks, throws on a fur hat and closes the door.

Samantha blushes. Just as irritation turns into fear, she glances at Gideon who sits at the table reading his Bible, totally clueless. Relief wars with hurt. She sighs and begins to unbutton her dress.

EXT. MINNESOTA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Gideon, Samantha, and Crow ride their horses into a bright green meadow dotted with oak, ash and maple. Sam gazes in amazement.

SAMANTHA
It's beautiful.

Gideon smiles in anticipation.

GIDEON
Let me show you something.

Crow stays behind as the two ride forward. Several yards into the woods, the roar of rushing water can be heard. They break through the trees to view a magnificent waterfall. Samantha gasps.

GIDEON
This is one of my favorite places.

SAMANTHA
Crow was right, I love it.

GIDEON
We'll visit the Dakota village and ask Silver Wolf if they'd mind we build here.

SAMANTHA
Why?

GIDEON
I want to make sure this area isn't special to them or if I'd be ruining good hunting.

SAMANTHA
You and Crow make them sound normal, civilized.

Gideon throws her an surprised glance.

GIDEON
They are. Come on, I need to talk to Crow.

EXT. DAKOTA VILLAGE - DAY

Gideon and Samantha ride slowly into the village. Around them, people stop to watch. Several men raise their hands in greeting, smiling their friendship. They stop and dismount.

SILVER WOLF (50's) Chief of the Dakota, a warrior of wisdom and honor, glides forward.

They speak in Dakota with subtitles.

SILVER WOLF

Welcome. It has been a long time since we have seen you.

GIDEON

Thank you. I've been east to see my family. I received word my father died and I had to go and get what he left for me.

Silver Wolf nods in understanding.

SILVER WOLF

It is sad when family dies. We had a hard journey back from our winter camp and several did not make it.

GIDEON

That is sad to hear. Each passing weakens a tribe.

SILVER WOLF

That is true, but we are still strong and many babies have been born this year.

GIDEON

That is good news.

SILVER WOLF

I see you have brought a woman.

GIDEON

This is Samantha, my wife. She does not speak your language yet, but I will teach her.

SILVER WOLF

To have a wife is good. I wish you many children. Tell her she is welcome. Come, we will talk.

Silver Wolf leads them to a large tepee in the middle of the village.

INT. TEPEE - DAY

Silver Wolf indicates some furs for them to sit upon. His wife, SINGING WATERS (50's), joins them.

GIDEON

I came today to introduce my wife
and to ask you a question.

Silver Wolf nods.

GIDEON (CONT.)

I would like to build my wife a
cabin as is our custom. I would
like to place it in the meadow near
where the river falls into the
pool. Will this be a problem for
the Dakota?

Silver Wolf's eyes shine with approval.

SILVER WOLF

It is good you asked. It shows you
care about our ways. The land is
not sacred to us. Though the
hunting is good, there are other
places we can go.

GIDEON

Thank you. I hope to have it done
before the snow begins to
fall. Our door will always be open
to the Dakota.

SILVER WOLF

Thank you. You and your wife are
welcome in our village. Singing
Waters and the other women can
teach your wife how to grow our
vegetables and the skills needed to
live in this land.

GIDEON

It will be a great help to her, and
it eases my heart to know that help
will be close by.

Gideon stands signaling the end of their visit.

INT. CABIN - EARLY MORNING

A soft kiss on her cheek wakes Samantha from sleep. Gideon is dressed and ready to leave.

GIDEON

I'll see you at sundown.

Getting up, Samantha walks around the room, surveying the mess. She smiles to herself.

EXT. NEW CABIN - DAY

Gideon and Crow labor to cut down trees. To the side, Wise Fox and his buddies use hatchets to cut off small branches from the fallen logs. However, when Runs Like Deer throws one like a spear, a full-fledged spear fight ignites. The men ignore them.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Gideon and Crow step through the door.

INT. CABIN - SAME

And stop dead in their tracks. The place is spotless. Everything is clean to a polish. Samantha cooks a stew over the fireplace. She glances up.

SAMANTHA

Wipe your shoes before you come in.

Gideon looks down to the dirt floor.

CROW

Sacre Bleu!

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Gideon leads a blindfolded Samantha through trees touched golden with fall; horses' hooves crunching on dry leaves. At the edge of the clearing, they stop.

GIDEON

Okay.

Samantha pulls off the blindfold and beholds her new home. Larger than the trapper's cabin, it sits like a jewel in a setting of trees and creek. Samantha sucks in her breath. Gideon kicks his horse forward.

EXT. CABIN - SAME

On the porch, Gideon opens the door for her. As she steps forward, he picks her up. When she gazes at him, he can't help but kiss her. Before she can protest, he carries her inside.

INT. CABIN - SAME

Samantha looks around, mouth open. It's one room with a fireplace and baking area on the back wall. Two shuttered windows look out over the porch. Above her head, a loft extends seven feet out. But most wonderful is the hardwood floor. Gideon notices her gaze.

GIDEON

I figured you'd like a real floor.

She can only nod.

GIDEON

Do you like it?

SAMANTHA

It's perfect.

GIDEON

I need to make the furniture. Shouldn't take too long.

Samantha looks at him, eyes glistening.

SAMANTHA

Thank you.

Gideon smiles. Maybe there's some hope for them after all.

INT. CABIN - DAY - 1831 (END FLASHBACK)

Samantha touches a wall as though seeing it for the first time. She looks around: the fireplace, the loft above her head, furniture - everything lovingly made by Gideon's hands.

SAMANTHA

Oh, Lord.

Her grief flows fresh from a heart still torn.

SAME - AN HOUR LATER

Finishing a small meal, Samantha looks around. An accumulation of unwashed dishes lay scattered about. She sighs and resigns herself. Picking up the water bucket, she heads outside.

EXT. CREEK - DAY

Getting the water is easy, hauling it is another thing. She staggers under the weight. Holding the bucket in both hands, she's bent over, shuffling her feet. Every few feet she has to stop and put it down.

SAMANTHA

Gideon Wilkes, next time I see you,
you had better be hiding behind an
angel.

She glances down at Blue watching her.

SAMANTHA

The least you could do is help.

No answer.

INT. CABIN - DAY

The bucket is now only half full while the rest adorns the front of her dress. Pouring it into her dutch oven, she sets it on the fire to heat. A hand goes to the small of her back; her knees almost buckle. Reaching for wood, she realizes the pile is nearly empty. She sits on the floor.

SAMANTHA

Dang it, I told you I needed more
wood.

EXT. CABIN - SAME

The wood pile outside is low with only a few logs to be split. She picks up what she can carry and heads inside.

INT. CABIN - SAME

Dishes are washed, dried, and then placed neatly where they belong. Without thinking, she wipes the shelf. Finished, she turns, and then stops. Water and wood shavings cover the floor. Discarded clothes drape over chairs. The bed sits unmade. She sighs.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA
I'm getting old.

FLASHBACK - INT. CABIN - DAY - 1831

Samantha measures flour into a bowl, continuously looking to the door in expectation. Her excitement causes her to spill some onto the table and floor. She looks stricken.

SAMANTHA
Oh, no.

She wipes off the table and then grabs a straw broom to sweep. Unfortunately, the fine flour falls between the boards where she can't reach it. She falls on her knees with her towel and scrubs frantically.

Gideon stomps in with muddy boots and throws his jacket over a chair. Samantha stops, horrified. She practically screams:

SAMANTHA
What are you doing?

GIDEON
What?

SAMANTHA
You're making a mess.

He looks at the slight prints, not understanding.

GIDEON
It's not that bad.

SAMANTHA
Yes it is. You've tracked mud everywhere and your jacket needs to go on the peg.

GIDEON
Okay.

He picks up the jacket and hangs it on the peg by the door.

SAMANTHA
And the mud? You've ruined my floor.

GIDEON
(getting angry)
I'll clean it up.

(CONTINUED)

She stands up and confronts him to his face.

SAMANTHA

You're not going to make this place
a pig sty like the other one.

GIDEON

I said, I'll clean it up. I'm not
going to live in a house that I'm
afraid to get dirty.

SAMANTHA

Then I suggest you build a
barn. You'll be more at home
there.

GIDEON

Woman, if I move out of this house,
it will be to someplace far away
from you.

Samantha stops. How did they get to this?

SAMANTHA

A house has to be spotless.

Gideon is totally confused.

GIDEON

Why?

She can't find an answer.

SAMANTHA

Everybody knows that. It's the way
it is.

(cont'd)

Says who?

SAMANTHA

Says...says...

The word she can't say hangs over the room like a ghost. It
takes a moment, but Gideon finally understands. He takes
her shoulders.

GIDEON

(gently)

Sam, I'm not your father.

(CONTINUED)

She bites her bottom lip to hold back the tears. Seeing the bowl, Gideon reaches over and grabs a handful of flour. Taking Samantha's hand in his, he pours the flour into it.

With a forceful fling, she hurls the flour onto the table, demolishing the demons of her past. Gideon smiles and mimics her action. With a saucy smile, Sam grabs another handful and flings it onto Gideon's head. With a roar, he scoops some up and a full-fledged flour fight begins.

When the flour is gone, Gideon grabs Samantha by the arms and kisses her with a passion that she returns. When they part, Gideon reaches down and draws a little heart in the flour on the table.

Samantha draws an intersecting heart. She takes his arm and draws him towards the bed. His eyes question her. Her smile is the only answer he needs. He follows her.

INT. CABIN - DAY - 1831 (END FLASHBACK)

Sam's hand touches the place where the flour hearts were drawn. She sits in the chair and lowers her head onto her arms.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Samantha tries to split wood with an ax. She's lost weight and her hair is dirty and scraggly. Her strength is failing, and the ax misses more than it hits - and then without much force. The wood flies across the yard. She sees the small pile she's accumulated and throws her head back in frustration. Picking up a few pieces, she shuffles to the cabin.

INT. CABIN - SAME

Dropping the wood by the fireplace, Samantha sits on a chair for a moment rubbing her back.

Blue trots in the open door licking his teeth. He plops down.

SAMANTHA

So, where's mine? Least you could
do is bring me some.

Blue decides not to answer. Samantha harrumphs.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

Which reminds me, I'm out of
meat. I'll have to go in the
morning.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Samantha stops her pony. Eyes ahead, she dismounts and
treads quietly forward.

EXT. EDGE OF MEADOW - DAY

She crouches.

WHAT SHE SEES:

Several elk graze. Some have calves at their sides.

Behind a screen of leaves, she raises her rifle. Shifting
slightly, she sights down the gun.

FLASHBACK - TRANSITION TO YEAR 1784

Gideon crouches behind her adjusting the rifle
slightly. Samantha FIRES.

WHAT THEY SEE:

The elk flee. One young bull stumbles and falls.

Samantha jumps up, screaming.

SAMANTHA

I got it, I got it. My first
kill.

A movement catches Gideon's eye. Wise Fox and his friends
ride into view on a hill overlooking the meadow. He
waves. Samantha has already run forward towards the stag.

EXT. HILL ABOVE MEADOW - SAME

The men watch. They speak in Dakota with subtitles.

RUN LIKE DEER

He lets his woman hunt like a
warrior.

(CONTINUED)

WISE FOX

Their ways are not like ours. She may have to hunt when he is away.

STAR SHOOTING ACROSS SKY

She hit it on the first try.

They watch Samantha walk towards the elk. Gideon is fifty feet behind her. Suddenly, Run Like Deer points to the woods.

RUN LIKE DEER

Look.

A grizzly bear stalks out of the trees, it's eyes on the elk.

WISE FOX

(yelling to Gideon)

Watch out.

EXT. MEADOW - SAME

Gideon has seen it.

GIDEON

Samantha, stop!

Samantha slows down, but keeps walking forward. She glances over her shoulder.

SAMANTHA

What?

GIDEON

Stop. It's a bear.

Sam sees it and stops.

SAMANTHA

It's huge.

GIDEON

It's a grizzly. He just wants the elk. If you back up slowly, it should leave you alone.

Samantha looks at him, incredulous.

SAMANTHA

Gideon Wilkes, I'm not letting that bear get my elk.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

Sam, that bear can tear you in two. Now back away.

Samantha watches it come. She reloads her rifle.

SAMANTHA

We can chase it away. Come and help me.

EXT. HILL ABOVE MEADOW - SAME

The Dakota watch in awe.

WISE FOX

Look, she's standing up to the bear.

RUN LIKE DEER

I'll pay him five ponies.

EXT. MEADOW - SAME

The bear is almost to the elk. Samantha stands before it, rifle over her head, yelling. The grizzly stands on it's hind legs threatening with bared teeth. Samantha lowers her arms and aims the rifle.

Gideon is just behind her.

GIDEON

No, don't. You'll only make it mad.

SAMANTHA

I'm shooting the ground in front of it. Now help me.

Just as the bear comes down, Gideon reaches Samantha. Grabbing her around the waist, he tosses her over his shoulder, turns, and runs.

SAMANTHA

Dang it, Gideon. Let me down.

EXT. HILL ABOVE MEADOW - SAME

All four Dakota men are hysterical.

STAR SHOOTING ACROSS SKY
Look, he's running with his tail
between his legs.

That does it. They're laughing so hard, Dance In Rain's pony shies and dumps him, running back towards the village. Wise Fox pulls him up on his pony and they ride after it.

EXT. MEADOW - SAME

The bear stops at the elk.

EXT. WOODS - SAME

Gideon drops Samantha on her feet. Grabbing her by the shoulders, he shakes her.

GIDEON
What were you doing?

Samantha throws off his hands, pushing him back with the rifle. He grabs it out of her hands, but it only adds fuel to her anger.

SAMANTHA
I told you. If you weren't such a
coward, we could have chased it
off.

Gideon is incredulous.

GIDEON
If I had, we would be dead right
now.

SAMANTHA
You don't know that.

Frustration balls his hands. He takes a step towards her. Samantha steps back pulling her knife, placing it between her and Gideon.

Astonishment, then understanding. Gideon holds up both hands, open. Slowly, he reaches forward and takes the knife. He pulls a trembling Samantha close, touching his forehead to hers.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

Don't ever scare me like that again.

EXT. WOODS - DAY - 1831 (END FLASHBACK)

Samantha leads her pony back to the house, elk meat tied onto it's back.

FLASHBACK - INT. CABIN - DAY - 1784

Gideon inspects his traps. Samantha watches him, uncertain.

GIDEON

I'll stay closer than I normally do. You have plenty of food and supplies until I get back.

He climbs the ladder to the loft.

SAMANTHA

But what if something happens?

GIDEON (O.C.)

Nothing will happen. Just keep the fire burning and you'll be fine.

SAMANTHA

But what if something does happen? Maybe you can have Crow look in on me.

Gideon climbs down with supplies.

GIDEON

Grow is gone with his own traps and the Dakota have left for their winter campgrounds in the south.

SAMANTHA

What if you don't come back?

He stops.

GIDEON

I'll be gone a week. If I take longer, then go to the old cabin and wait for Crow. I promise, I'll set my traps and come right back.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

I could always clean the cabin.

GIDEON

Heaven help me.

He looks at his pile and nods, satisfied.

GIDEON

That should do it. How about we go to bed and I'll tell you good-bye properly?

Samantha takes his hand and allows him to pull her up.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Three Anishinabe warriors ride slowly through the woods. Muffled in white and brown furs to match their ponies' colors, they are perfectly camouflaged. The lead warrior stops and points towards the ground.

WHAT THEY SEE:

Fresh hoof prints indent the snow.

They tap their ponies and ride to the top of a ridge. From above, they can clearly see a Dakota warrior riding south. Ever silent, they ride ahead.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The Dakota warrior rides unaware of the danger. Behind him sits a six-year-old boy, almost invisible, wrapped in the same type of fur as his father.

A SHUSHING and THUNK. An arrow projects from the father's chest. He falls to the side, wrapping his arm around his son to hide him. He speaks in Dakota with subtitles.

FATHER

Run. Hide.

The boy is scared but well trained. He runs for the cover of the woods as the three horsemen ride forward. The Dakota draws his knife to keep their focus on himself. The effort is futile. The men laugh, kick the knife away, and draw their own.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The boy watches as his father is killed. Fear takes over, and he runs.

INT. CABIN - MORNING - 1831 (END FLASHBACK)

Samantha sleeps deeply. From outside, a voice calls out:

VOICE (O.C.)
Hello in the cabin.

Blue lifts his head and whines. He stalks to the bed and noses Samantha. She reaches out and slaps him away.

VOICE (O.C.)
(closer)
Hello in the cabin

Samantha's eyes open. She gets up, pulls her dress on and feels her hair. She's a mess and doesn't care. She picks up her rifle and looks at Blue. His tail is wagging. She puts it back.

EXT. CABIN - SAME

A tall DAKOTA stands just off the porch. He is EAGLE'S CRY (early 40's) Gideon's and Samantha's surrogate son. He watches the door open slightly and a small gray head peek out.

EAGLE'S CRY
Little mother?

With a cry, Samantha throws the door open and runs out. She hurls herself into his arms.

INT. CABIN - FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

Eagle's Cry sits at the table while Samantha makes tea.

SAMANTHA
Wasn't long before I saw his horse
carrying him back. I buried him
next to the baby.

Eagle's Cry is in shock. He accepts the offered tea.

(CONTINUED)

EAGLE'S CRY

What will you do now? You cannot stay here alone.

SAMANTHA

I'm not leaving my home.

Eagle's Cry starts to say something, but she cuts him off.

SAMANTHA

I know I can stay at the village, but I won't. Everyone there is wonderful, but it's not my home. Anyway, I'd never make it when you travel south.

EAGLE'S CRY

I would help you.

SAMANTHA

I know you would, but my answer is still no. Anyway, what would I do with the animals?

EAGLE'S CRY

I've heard beef is better than elk or deer.

Samantha snickers.

SAMANTHA

If she tries to kick me one more time, you may have a chance to find out.

EAGLE'S CRY

People are passing by in greater numbers heading west. I'm sure someone would love to have a home already built.

SAMANTHA

They'll just have to wait until I'm dead. You can give it to whomever you want then.

EAGLE'S CRY

But how will you make it on your own? When we return to our winter range, there will be no one here to help you.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

I've had nearly fifty years to learn how to survive. I can still hunt and garden. I'll be okay.

Eagle's Cry sighs in resignation.

EAGLE'S CRY

Then, what can I do?

SAMANTHA

I could use fire wood.

He grimaces.

EAGLE'S CRY

Not my favorite chore.

SAMANTHA

You liked it as a little boy.

EAGLE'S CRY

Before I knew better. Why can't you just pick up dead wood like we do? It's much simpler than cutting down trees.

SAMANTHA

Because it burns too fast.

Eagle's Cry stands up.

SAMANTHA (CONT.)

The seasoned wood is behind the barn.

EAGLE'S CRY

I remember.

From the window, Samantha watches him walk away. Her lips give a tiny smile, remembering.

FLASHBACK - TRANSITION TO 1784

Samantha stands at the window watching the snow fall. She picks up Gideon's Bible, sits, and reads for a moment, then puts it down. She goes back to the window. She makes a decision. Putting on the winter boots and a heavy jacket, she picks up her rifle and leaves the cabin.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - SAME

Ambling slowly, she glides between the trees.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

She's deep in the woods and getting colder by the minute. She stops and looks around. It was a good walk but time to go home. Turning, she takes a few steps before A LOW CRY stops her. It's faint, but definitely there. She follows the sound.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - MINUTES LATER

A huge downed tree lays half covered in snow. It's well rotted and partially hollow. The sound emanates from inside. She stalks the sound like prey. Closer, it becomes more distinctive - someone is crying. She reaches the mouth and looks inside.

INT. HOLLOW TREE - SAME

Only a dark shape can be distinguished. At the sight of Samantha, there is a cry of alarm and it squeezes tighter into the tree.

EXT. HOLLOW TREE - SAME

SAMANTHA

Hello?

Silence. Samantha can only hear rustling.

SAMANTHA

Hello?

The shape shifts and the face of a YOUNG DAKOTA BOY is revealed. He looks to be around six. Samantha puts down the gun and sits on the ground.

SAMANTHA

I won't hurt you.

To demonstrate, she raises her hands in a non-threatening gesture. He's not moving. A wave of snow falls from the tree above her and hits her on the head and neck. She squeals, flinging snow from her head and neck. She brings her long hair forward, shaking it free.

(CONTINUED)

A giggle echoes from the log. The boy crawls forward. His hand reaches out to touch her hair and, in the process, he leaves his shelter.

Samantha smiles gently.

SAMANTHA

Ate'?

The boy shakes his head sadly.

SAMANTHA

In'a?

He shakes his head again.

Sadness fills her eyes.

SAMANTHA

You poor thing.

She rises and puts out a hand to him.

SAMANTHA

Come.

He looks confused.

SAMANTHA

I'm sorry, I don't know that word.

She puts his hand in hers and gently pulls.

SAMANTHA

Come.

He follows.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Samantha holds the young boy snuggled in a blanket while rocking gently in her chair. She sings softly.

FOOTSTEPS CLOMP over the porch boards just before the door is thrown open and a huge, furry shape enters. An empty TRAP CLANKS to the floor. The boy screams, bursting out of Sam's arms and runs to hide behind some furniture. Gideon takes off his fur hat and the buffalo coat that made him look twice his size. He stares at the boy.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

Who's that?

SAMANTHA

I found him a few days ago hiding
in the woods. I believe he said
his parents are dead.

Gideon stands by the fire. He kneels to be less
threatening. They talk in Dakota with subtitles.

GIDEON

I won't hurt you.

The boy peeks out. Gideon looks at him closely.

GIDEON

Roaring Waters?

The boy runs to him and throws his arms around his neck,
sobbing.

Gideon gently lifts the boy's head.

GIDEON

Why aren't you with your family?

ROARING WATERS

Mother was sick and couldn't make
the journey. Father and I stayed
behind with her.

He chokes up a moment.

ROARING WATERS (CONT.)

She died.

SAMANTHA

What happened?

GIDEON

(to Samantha)

His mother was too sick to travel
south so he and his father stayed
behind with her. He says she died.

GIDEON

(to Roaring Waters)

What happened to your father?

As Roaring Waters speaks, Gideon translates.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

He says that after his mother died, they buried her and started south to find the others. He was sitting behind his father on the pony when his father was hit by an arrow and they both fell. His father told him to run and hide. He didn't want to, but then he heard the warriors coming and ran behind a log. Several warriors came. One bent over his father with a knife. He was afraid and he ran. He hid inside the log for several days. When you came he was afraid, but when he saw your hair, he remembered seeing you at the village and knew you were a friend.

SAMANTHA

Poor thing.

GIDEON

(in Dakota with subtitles)

Tomorrow we will find your father and bury him as a warrior next to your mother. They are with Wakan Tanka now.

The boy nods.

INT. CABIN - AN HOUR LATER

Roaring Waters sleeps snuggled in furs close to the fire. At the table, Gideon eats while he and Samantha talk quietly.

SAMANTHA

Who would kill Roaring Water's father?

GIDEON

The Dakota were not the first people here. There were several tribes that were pushed out when they came. More than likely it was the Anishinabe. There's been skirmishes between the two for years.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

I want to go with you tomorrow.

Gideon sighs, thinking.

SAMANTHA

They're probably long gone, and it's impossible to know where they'll be. I can't hide in this cabin forever.

GIDEON

I know.

SAMANTHA

I'll do whatever you tell me to.

Gideon harrumphs.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

LIGHT MUSIC, NO SOUND

Roaring Waters rides behind Gideon while Samantha's pony pulls a travois. Soft snow falls when they reach the small glade where the boy's father lay. An arrow shaft marks the place. Everyone dismounts. Gideon takes a buffalo hide and, while Samantha holds Roaring Waters close, he pushes the snow aside and snaps the shaft off. Roaring Waters breaks away and runs to his father. Falling to his knees, he throws himself over the body, crying. Gideon picks him up and places him into Samantha's arms. He rolls the body onto the hide and wraps it.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - GRAVE SITE - DAY

Gideon tosses out the last bit of dirt from the grave and climbs out. Samantha holds Roaring Water's hand while Gideon pushes the body in.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - GRAVE SITE - MINUTES LATER

The job is done. Two mounds lay side-by-side. Gideon stands on the other side of the boy.

RESTORE SOUND

Quietly first, Roaring Waters begins singing a death chant. Gideon joins and the song gains momentum until it fills the air. Overhead they hear a CRY. Above them, a circling EAGLE CALLS OUT.

INT. CABIN DAY

Samantha and Roaring Waters sit together at the table. Sam writes the alphabet with a piece of charcoal on a crude slate of wood, speaking out each letter. The boy listens carefully. To the side, Gideon cuts and then braids thin lengths of rawhide into a rope while quietly singing Amazing Grace.

Samantha retches.

SAMANTHA

Darn it, Gideon, that stuff stinks. Can't you take it outside?

GIDEON

It's about twenty degrees outside with four foot of snow - no.

Samantha retches again. She runs outside. Concerned, Gideon puts down the rawhide and stands to follow. She returns just as he grabs their coats.

GIDEON

Are you sick?

SAMANTHA

I don't know. Everything I smell makes me want to be sick, especially in the mornings.

GIDEON

Maybe you need to lay down.

ROARING WATERS

(in English)

She not sick. She have baby.

Simultaneously

GIDEON

What?

SAMANTHA

What?

(CONTINUED)

ROARING WATERS

I see at village. Women get sick. Few months later, baby comes. And, her tummy bigger.

SAMANTHA

No, it's not.

GIDEON

(sheepish)

Actually, I though you were just putting on weight.

A smile widens Samantha's mouth as she realizes her dreams are coming true.

SAMANTHA

You sure?

GIDEON

I'm sure not an expert in this sort of stuff, but all the signs point to it. When was the last time you - you know.

Questioning look - huh? Realization.

SAMANTHA

A while. I forgot about it.

GIDEON

Then that seals it. Congratulations, Mrs. Wilkes.

She throws her arms around his neck with a little squeal. Then retches.

SAMANTHA

You smell like the rawhide.

GIDEON

The Dakota will be back in a couple of months. The women will help you. They've been having babies for centuries.

Roaring Waters nods sagely.

ROARING WATERS

Women good at having babies. Many help. You see. They know plants that stop sickness.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

A lot of good that does me now.

GIDEON

After trapping season, when I take the furs to the trading post, I'll ask Jimmy if he knows anyone selling a milk cow and maybe a few chickens.

SAMANTHA

That would be heavenly: milk, eggs, cheese.

The thought, once blissful, has her running for the door.

INT. CABIN - DAY - 1831 (END FLASHBACK)

Eagle's Cry strides through the door and dumps the wood by the fireplace.

EAGLE'S CRY

This should keep you for a while.

He studies her.

EAGLE'S CRY

You always were a stubborn one.

SAMANTHA

It's what's helped me survive.

He shakes his head.

EAGLE'S CRY

I'll be back to check on you.

SAMANTHA

Thank you. Gideon was going to ask you to take the furs with him to the trading post. If you want them, they're yours, and the traps and gun, too.

EAGLE'S CRY

I'll take them and bring the money back.

SAMANTHA

I won't need it.

Eagle's Cry tightens his lips. He ducks out the door.

When the door closes, she steps to the window.

WHAT SHE SEES

Eagle's Cry walks to the grave beneath the oak tree. He falls to his knees, bowing low, his shoulders shuddering. A few seconds later, he sits up. Samantha hears the chant of the warrior's death song. In a soft voice, she joins him.

EXT. SIDE OF BARN - DAY

Samantha hoes a large garden preparing it for planting. Blue suddenly jumps up, BARKING.

SAMANTHA

Dang it, Blue, you've scared the pee out of me.

Blue's BARKS turn into SAVAGE GROWLS. Warned, Samantha gets the gun propped against the barn. She scans the area. She hears the LOW GROWL before she sees a YOUNG GRIZZLY striding towards the corral fence. Inside, the HORSES mill around, NEIGHING THEIR FEAR. Samantha marches forward.

SAMANTHA

I had to put up with your grandfather and your father, but I'm sure not putting up with you.

At her approach, the bear hesitates. He's still young and inexperienced. Samantha raises the RIFLE and SHOOTS the ground right in front of him, spraying him with a shower of dirt. Surprised, he turns and run, Blue close to his tail. Samantha watches, satisfied. She heads to the house.

SAMANTHA

Now I have to change my pants.

FLASHBACK - INT. CABIN - EARLY MORNING - 1785

Samantha's eyes are startled open by the sound of a LOUD CRACK. She sits up showing off her much larger stomach.

Gideon is placing wood on the fire, warming the cabin.

SAMANTHA

What was that?

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

The creek. The ice is breaking up.

Samantha groans and lays back down. Roaring Waters climbs down from the loft, jumping past the last few rungs of the ladder.

ROARING WATERS

That means my family will return soon.

She shoots back up.

SAMANTHA

But -

GIDEON

- Sam, he has to go back to his village.

SAMANTHA

Why?

Clueless, Roaring Waters continues.

ROARING WATERS

I can't wait to see Grandfather and the others. The boys will be jealous I can speak your language.

SAMANTHA

No, he stays here with us.

The boys finally realizes something is wrong.

ROARING WATERS

But I don't want to stay. I must go back to village.

GIDEON

Samantha, he's not a stray puppy you find and keep. He has a family.

Samantha is in tears.

SAMANTHA

We're his family.

Roaring Waters nods sagely.

ROARING WATERS

I see this with women who have babies. They cry all the time and talk nonsense.

She's devastated by his rejection. Gideon grabs the water pail and hands it to the boy.

GIDEON

Why don't you get us some water for breakfast?

The boy grabs the pail. Gideon calls after him.

GIDEON

Be careful of the ice.

Gideon strides to the bed and sits next to her.

GIDEON

Sam, you have to let him go.

SAMANTHA

I can't, I love him.

GIDEON

I know you do, but so does his family, and with his parents gone, he's the only one they have left. What if you lost a child and someone else found him and kept him.

SAMANTHA

I'd gut them with my knife.

Gideon chokes.

GIDEON

Then you know how they would feel.

She wipes her eyes.

SAMANTHA

He's not mine.

GIDEON

No.

He puts his hand on her stomach.

GIDEON (CONT.)

But this one is.

She leans her head against his shoulder, a tiny smile on her lips.

EXT. DAKOTA VILLAGE - DAY

Much of the snow has melted revealing a landscape newly awoken from its sleep. On their ponies, Gideon, Samantha, and Roaring Waters enter the Dakota village still in the process of being constructed. SEVERAL MEN step forward. Gideon reaches behind him and helps the boy down.

HUNTING WOLF (50's), the boy's grandfather, cries out and runs forward. They collide in a huge embrace. To the side, a warrior pulls back the entrance of a tepee and speaks inside. Silver Wolf steps out. Gideon and Samantha dismount.

A wail pierces the air. DEER IN MEADOW (50's), Roaring Water's grandmother runs forward and grabs him up. Gideon reaches over and takes Samantha's hand.

Everyone - including Samantha - talks in Dakota with subtitles.

SILVER WOLF

We will hear what you would tell
us. Come to my tepee.

Hunting Wolf joins them.

INT. TEPEE - DAY

Singing Waters guides Samantha to a pile of furs while the men sit around the fire.

SINGING WATERS

Would you like some hot tea to calm
your stomach?

SAMANTHA

Yes, please.

Singing Waters nods and leaves.

Hunting Wolf jumps in before anyone can say anything.

(CONTINUED)

HUNTING WOLF

What of my son and his wife?

GIDEON

I am sorry, they are with Wakan Tanka.

The man lowers his head, tears flowing. Singing Waters returns, hands Samantha a "cup" and sits next to her.

SILVER WOLF

Tell us.

GIDEON

My wife found Roaring Waters hiding in a log. I was trapping. She brought him back to our home and cared for him. She has taught him to speak and write our language and he has taught her Dakota.

Silver Wolf smiles and nods.

HUNTING WOLF

But what of my son?

GIDEON

Roaring Waters told us his mother died from sickness. As they were riding to join you, his father was struck by an arrow. As the boy hid, several warriors came and killed your son. The boy ran away.

He pauses to let the man grieve.

GIDEON (CONT.)

When I returned, we found him and buried him next to his wife. Roaring Waters sang the warrior death song. His bravery so impressed Wakan Tanka that he sent an eagle to cry across the sky.

Silver Wolf leans back and whispers to his wife who gets up and leaves.

SILVER WOLF

What you say grieves us deeply, yet you bring us the joy of returning Roaring Waters. From now on you will be Friend of the Dakota to us.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

I am honored, but it was Samantha
who took care of him.

Silver Wolf gives a sly smile. Samantha watches him
closely.

SILVER WOLF

Your wife already has a great name
among us.

GIDEON

Really?

SILVER WOLF

She is known among the young
warriors as Stands Up To Bear.

Gideon chokes.

At that moment, they are interrupted by Singing Waters
returning with Roaring Waters. The boy stands proud.

SILVER WOLF

Friend of the Dakota has told us of
your bravery. From this day on you
will have a new name. We will
honor you in the same way as Wakan
Tanka. Your name shall be Eagle's
Cry.

Eagle's Cry puffs out his chest. Then, he looks confused.

EAGLE'S CRY

Friend of the Dakota? Then he has
a new name too?

Silver Wolf nods. Samantha can't help herself.

SAMANTHA

Wait, he had a Dakota name?

EAGLE'S CRY

He not tell you?

Sam shakes her head.

EAGLE'S CRY

Smells Like Beaver.

Samantha breaks out laughing. Gideon groans.

EXT. DAKOTA VILLAGE - DAY

Silver Wolf walks with them to the horses.

SILVER WOLF

Be careful, the Anishinabe may return.

GIDEON

If I see anything, I'll let you know.

SILVER WOLF

I do not want war, but if they come back, we will fight to protect our people.

GIDEON

If you do go to fight, tell me and I will join my rifle and knife with your bows and lances.

Silver Wolf nods his approval.

SILVER WOLF

I notice your wife is with child. I will send some of our women to help her.

GIDEON

Thank you, that would be a great help.

When they reach the horses, Eagle's Cry runs up and hugs Samantha. She kneels down and holds him close, tears flowing.

GIDEON

He has grown close to her heart. She will miss him.

SILVER WOLF

He can come and see her any time he wants. Thank you again for bringing him back safely to us.

The men briefly grasp hands. Gideon turns to Eagle's Cry.

GIDEON

Hey, don't I get one too?

The boy runs over and hugs him.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON
(in English)
Silver Wolf says you can come see
us any time.

EAGLE'S CRY
I will.

Gideon and Samantha mount and ride away.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Gideon tightens the straps on the pack horse, it's back laden with furs. Samantha stands on the porch watching.

GIDEON
I hate leaving you.

SAMANTHA
I'll be fine.

He finishes and joins her.

GIDEON
Just be careful. Crow and the women will come by often to check on you.

SAMANTHA
Don't worry. I'm still months away. I handled the winter, I'm sure I can handle this.

They hug and kiss passionately. Gideon is reluctant to let her go.

GIDEON
I'll be as quick as I can.

SAMANTHA
You can't run a cow or chickens. Take your time, I'll be here.

He nods. Breaking away, he mounts his horse and leaves.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Resting in her chair, Samantha strokes a baby cradle that Gideon has made for her. Her face is gentle and content, smiling at a future that promises joy. From that place, a baby's lullaby flows from her heart.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Spring is in full bloom with a riot of flowers and new leaves on the trees. Samantha hardly sees it as she struggles to carry a pail of water from the creek. She screams as pain pierces her belly. Dropping to her knees, she doubles over and clenches her stomach.

SAMANTHA

No, no, no. Too soon.

Leaving the pail, she wobbles to her feet and staggers to the cabin.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Inside, she grabs a cloth and wipes her legs. The rag comes away bloody. Groaning, she looks around, trying to think. Suddenly pain rips through her. She doubles up. Raising her eyes, she gazes across the cabin to where her gun rests against the wall.

Crawling across the floor, she leaves a bloody trail. Her hand shakes as she grabs the rifle. It's unloaded, and the pouch dangles from a peg above her head. She can't stand up. It takes several tries, but, using the rifle barrel, she's able to push it off where it drops to the floor. Loading the rifle, she sticks the barrel out the window.

SAMANTHA

God, if you're real.

She FIRES THE RIFLE. The GUN CLATTERS to the floor as Samantha slides down into a haze of pain.

INT. CABIN - LATER

CROW (O.C.)

Hello in the cabin.

On the floor, Samantha doesn't hear.

FOOTSTEPS THUD on the porch followed by a KNOCK on the DOOR. A second passes by before the door slowly opens.

(CONTINUED)

CROW

Hello?

Crow walks in. He looks around, first seeing the blood trail, then following it to its source.

CROW

Sacre Bleu!

He kneels beside Samantha. Putting his hand on her chest, he checks her heartbeat. He picks her up and carries her out.

EXT. DAKOTA VILLAGE - DAY

Crow's horse races into the village. Before it hardly stops, he's thrown his leg over and dropped to the ground, Samantha in his arms. Men and women run to help. Singing Waters pulls him to a tepee. He carries Samantha inside.

EXT. TEPEE - MOMENTS LATER

Crow paces outside. The flap flies open and Singing Waters steps out. Crow throws her an anxious look. They speak in Dakota with subtitles.

SINGING WATERS

She has lost much blood and the baby is gone.

Crow bows his head in anguish.

CROW

Is there anything I can do?

SINGING WATERS

Can you find Friend of the Dakotas?

Crow gazes to the south.

CROW

He's gone to sell the furs, but I know the way he goes. I'll see if I can catch him.

Singing Waters nods and returns inside. Crow runs to his horse and races away.

INT. TEPEE - DAY

Samantha tosses in the throes of a fever. The women bring water to bath her.

EXT. MINNESOTA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Crow races his horse unmercifully.

INT. TEPEE - NIGHT

Samantha thrashes, hallucinating while Singing Waters fights to have her drink some liquid.

EXT. MINNESOTA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Gideon is on his way home. On the pack horse are several crates of chickens. A young milk cow follows, tied to the pack.

In the distance, he sees a rider running his horse hard. Crow stops beside him and they converse a moment. Gideon throws the lead rope to Crow and digs his heels into his horse.

INT. TEPEE - DAY

She's calm and sweating. The worst is over. Finally lucid, she realizes the baby is gone. Searching the faces of the women around her, she's given her answer. Curling up into a ball, she vents her grief.

EXT. DAKOTA VILLAGE - DAY

Gideon pulls to a stop. Several warriors come to meet him. One points to a tepee.

INT. TEPEE - DAY

Samantha lays on a bed of furs. She's awake, but pale and listless; her eyes puffy from crying.

Light flares from the entrance. She looks up to see the silhouette of her husband. Her eyes glow with hope. Gideon steps in and kneels next to her. With an anguished cry, she wraps her arms around his neck and sobs her broken heart.

It takes a few minutes before she's able to speak.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

It's gone.

He holds her closer.

GIDEON

Are you okay?

She nods.

GIDEON

That's all that matters.

She stiffens. Her hands ball into fists.

SAMANTHA

No.

Gideon's confused.

GIDEON

What?

She pulls from his embrace.

SAMANTHA

He mattered. The baby mattered. It was a boy.

GIDEON

Of course he did, I didn't mean -

SAMANTHA

- I lost him. Don't you understand, he's dead.

GIDEON

Samantha, it's not your fault.

Her pain has turned to anger.

SAMANTHA

No, it's not. It's God's fault. He took him. He took my baby. He takes everything.

Astonishment silences Gideon.

SAMANTHA

I'll never forgive him - never.

GIDEON

God didn't take your baby.

SAMANTHA

He gives and He takes away. Isn't that what they say?

GIDEON

What I know is that children are a gift from God, and once He gives a gift, He doesn't take it back.

She falls back into his embrace.

SAMANTHA

Then where is He?

Gideon holds her close.

GIDEON

He's right here. He's holding you.

EXT. TEPEE - MOMENTS LATER

Gideon steps out. Eagle's Cry races to him, wrapping his arms around his waist. Gideon picks him up and holds him tight. His own tears mimic the boy's. Silver Wolf joins them. They speak Dakota with subtitles.

SILVER WOLF

I am sorry.

Gideon nods, too choked for words.

SILVER WOLF

Singing Waters says she is still too weak to travel. She may stay as long as she desires.

GIDEON

Thank you.

Silver Wolf grasps his shoulder in support. He ruffles the boy's head, and then leaves. Eagle's Cry lifts his head. They speak in English.

EAGLE'S CRY

I will come and live with you. She can be my mother.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

That is kind of you, but your family is here. They need you, too.

The boy thinks a moment.

EAGLE'S CRY

But she can still be my mother.

Gideon's tears flow again.

GIDEON

She would like that very much.

EAGLE'S CRY

And that would make you my father.

He's undone. He kisses the boy's head. At that moment, Deer In Meadow comes and takes him from Gideon's arms, jealousy blazing from her eyes. She walks away with him. Gideon watches them go.

Singing Waters steps forward and touches his arm. They talk in Dakota with subtitles.

GIDEON

Thank you for taking care of her.

SINGING WATERS

It was close, but she will recover.

His eyes are stricken.

GIDEON

I should not have left her, but she was not far along and I thought she would be okay. I almost killed her.

SINGING WATERS

It was not your fault. Many women lose babies.

GIDEON

I should have been there.

SINGING WATERS

What has happened, has happened. She is going to need you now more than ever.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

Why? What's wrong?

SINGING WATERS

Her mind is sick with grief and
guilt. She will need your patience
and strength.

GIDEON

But it wasn't her fault.

SINGING WATERS

Just as it wasn't yours.

Gideon nods.

GIDEON

Will she have more children?

SINGING WATERS

I don't know. That is in the hands
of Wakan Tanka.

GIDEON

I knew I should not have brought
her out here.

He looks back toward the tepee.

GIDEON (CONT.)

I just have to make sure she
doesn't get pregnant again.

SINGING WATERS

You take much upon yourself. Be
careful that you do not do more
harm than good.

GIDEON

What can be more harmful than
having her die?

SINGING WATERS

You will do what you want, but
remember to consider what Stands Up
To Bear wants, too.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Samantha sits in her chair, listless, eyes unfocused as she stares at the empty baby cradle. In the background, she can hear CHOPPING AND SAWING, but that fades as childhood memories return. Like ghosts from her past, we see phantasmal figures coming to life in front of her.

MEMORY FLASH - SAMANTHA'S BEDROOM - DAY

A young Samantha (5) sings a lullaby to a baby doll she cradles in her arms. The door opens and her father enters.

SAMANTHA

Hello, daddy

FATHER

I need your doll.

SAMANTHA

Why?

FATHER

The church is collecting old toys for the poor, and we must do our part.

SAMANTHA

But Mary is mine.

FATHER

Not anymore. Give it to me.

SAMANTHA

No, you can't have her. She's mine.

FATHER

Don't you dare say no to me. I said I want the doll. It won't be said I didn't do my part.

They STRUGGLE for a moment. The child cries in protest when Mary is ripped from her arms.

SAMANTHA

(in tears)

No. Please. Don't take Mary.

She jumps up and tries to grab her from his hand, but he pushes her down.

(CONTINUED)

FATHER

You are a stubborn and disobedient child, Samantha. I'll be back later with my belt.

The father stomps out leaving behind the sobs of a heartbroken child.

INT. CABIN - DAY

The image fades and Samantha is left alone, once again, with her empty arms.

Outside, the sounds of CHOPPING AND SAWING abruptly come to an end. FOOTSTEPS THUMP on the porch and the door opens. Gideon walks in.

GIDEON

The barn is almost finished. And look who's come to visit.

Her eyes brighten for one moment when Eagle's Cry steps in, then return to their dullness. The boy's eager expression wavers and drops.

EAGLE'S CRY

Mother, are you okay?

Surprised, she throws Gideon a questioning glance. His tone carries a warning.

GIDEON

He asked if you could be his mother. I said you would like that very much.

SAMANTHA

If he wants to.

Gideon's anger flares.

GIDEON

(to Eagle's Cry)

Why don't you help Crow for a moment? And, you can see our new cow. When she's had her calf, I'll teach you how to milk her.

Eagle's Cry knows he's being excused. He tries not to let the hurt show.

(CONTINUED)

EAGLE'S CRY

Okay.

(to Samantha)

I hope you feel better.

He shuffles out.

GIDEON

What are you doing?

She opens her mouth to answer, but he doesn't let her.

GIDEON

He came all this way to see how you were doing. He loves you enough to call you mother, and you throw it back in his face.

SAMANTHA

I'm sorry. I just can't.

GIDEON

I can't possibly know how difficult this has been for you, but you need to find a way to break free of this. It's been months.

The tears, ever close to the surface, break out again.

SAMANTHA

Why couldn't God have taken me too?

Cut to the heart, Gideon drops to his knees. He pulls Samantha into his lap and sits with her on the floor. He rocks her for a moment.

GIDEON

Because you're His gift to me.

When she lifts her head, he kisses her tenderly. Wrapping her arms around him, they hold each other tight.

EXT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER

The barn is finished except for the door. In front, Crow and Eagle's Cry saw a large plank although is easy to see Crow is doing the work while the boy does his best to hold on. Gideon walks up just as the end piece falls off. He places his hand on the child's shoulder and points back to the house.

(CONTINUED)

Samantha sits on the porch step waiting for him. Eagle's Cry runs back to her. After talking for a few moments, the boy throws his arms around her neck.

Watching from the barn, Crow asks:

CROW
She will be all right?

GIDEON
Time will tell, but I think
so. This is a good start.

CROW
Bon. I have grown to care about
her.

Gideon throws him a hard glance which Crow catches.

CROW
Like a sister.

Gideon smiles and nods.

CROW
Which is going to make my leaving
more difficult.

GIDEON
What do you mean?

CROW
I'm going back to Canada. The war
is over, and I wish to see my
family again.

GIDEON
It doesn't have anything to do with
the Anishinabe does it?

CROW
It could. I am not a fighter. If
the two tribes are going to war, I
don't want to be any where near
it. And, I miss my family.

GIDEON
We're going to miss you. When are
you leaving?

CROW
As soon as the barn is
finished. The warm weather will
follow me north - I hope.

Gideon nods sadly. When they continue working, he doesn't seem so eager to get it done.

EXT. MINNESOTA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Riding his horse through the woods, Crow's eyes constantly scan the area around him, his rifle ready. He pulls up at the sudden outburst of a TURKEY'S GOBBLE. Sliding from his horse, he slowly stalks the sound. He doesn't need to go far when he freezes.

WHAT HE SEES:

A large tom with a couple of hens.

Slowly raising his RIFLE, he FIRES.

EXT. MINNESOTA COUNTRYSIDE - SAME

The grizzly rummages through a rotten log, scavenging what he can. At the BLAST of the GUN, he looks up, and then chases the sound at a run.

EXT. MINNESOTA COUNTRYSIDE - SAME

Satisfied, Crow walks forward. The tom is a big one. Grabbing its legs, he turns back towards his horse and find himself staring face-to-face with the grizzly. The SOUND OF THUNDERING HOOVES tells him his horse is high-tailing it for home.

Slowly, he puts the turkey on the ground. Keeping his head ducked, he carefully walks backwards away from the prize. With a SATISFIED GRUNT, the BEAR picks up the turkey and leaves.

Trembling, Crow watches it go. He looks down at the spot between his legs.

CROW

Damn.

INT. CABIN - AFTERNOON - 1831 (END FLASHBACK)

Samantha reads the Bible. What she once scoffed at has now become a comfort to her. Outside, the RUMBLE OF THUNDER echoes followed by anxious NEIGHS from the PONIES. She opens the door.

(CONTINUED)

WHAT SHE SEES:

To the west and through the trees, she can make out a line of black clouds moving quickly. A LOUDER, STRONGER RUMBLE vibrates the air. BLUE WHINES.

SAMATHA

Come on, Blue.

She runs first to the barn. Throwing open the door, she disappears inside and reemerges with a length of rope.

Hurrying across the yard to the pen where the ponies and Rosie are kept, she takes down the gate poles and walks to Rosie allowing the ponies to run out and into the barn on their own. Rosie is another matter. She runs from Samantha.

SAMANTHA

Blue, watch the gate.

Blue positions himself at the pen entrance. Whenever Rosie comes near, he snarls and chases her away.

The WIND WHIPS the trees into a frenzy while LIGHTENING FLASHES.

SAMANTHA

Rosie, you stupid bovine. You've got the brains of a chipmunk.

Finally, she's able to corner her and get the rope through her halter. She leads her out just as the first hail stones hit the ground. They run.

Inside the barn, Samantha leads Rosie to her stall. The NOISE of the HAIL STONES is deafening. Rosie shakes her head, dancing and trying to pull away. Soothing her doesn't work. Then, just outside the door, the SKY LIGHTS UP with a SNAP AND CRASH OF THUNDER. ROSIE BELLOWS, swivels and kicks out with her back leg striking Samantha in the hip.

Samantha screams, crumbling to the ground.

FLASHBACK - INT. CABIN - EVENING - 1785

Gideon banks the fire for the night while Samantha tucks away her mending.

SAMANTHA

I'm going to miss Crow.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

He's not so bad when you get to know him.

SAMANTHA

It was nice knowing there was someone close by.

She stands, and with a saucy smile, puts her arms around his neck.

SAMANTHA

Now it's just you and me.

Gideon stiffens.

SAMANTHA

What?

GIDEON

Sam.

SAMANTHA

What's wrong.

GIDEON

This. We can't do this. I mean - I don't want you hurt.

SAMANTHA

What are you talking about? How am I supposed to be hurt? Being hurt would be not being able to be with my husband.

GIDEON

What if having another baby kills you? I can't live with that.

SAMANTHA

And I can't live with you deciding what's good for me without giving me any say in the matter. Gideon, I want a baby. I want something to hold and love; something that is mine, that no one can take away. Please.

GIDEON

I can't.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

Yes You Can. You just won't because you're a coward. It was the same with that dang bear. You're afraid so you won't even try.

GIDEON

That's not true.

SAMANTHA

Then prove it. Give me a baby.

GIDEON

Is that all I am to you?

SAMANTHA

So, you won't.

GIDEON

No.

She picks up the baby cradle.

SAMANTHA

I'm begging you.

But Gideon shakes his head.

She slings it down, SHATTERING pieces of the wood. Broken, everything is broken and she knows no way to fix it. She flees the cabin.

EXT. DAKOTA VILLAGE - DAY

A young Dakota warrior rides hard into the village. He pulls up his pony outside Silver Wolf's tent. Silver Wolf emerges. As they talk, he stiffens. Pointing to the village, he gives instructions and re-enters the tepee.

Silver Wolf's horse is brought by a young boy. Behind him, warriors gather on their ponies, agitation and worry in every movement. Silver Wolf comes out, mounts, and they all ride after the young warrior.

EXT. MINNESOTA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Silver Wolf stops them when the trees end on the shores of a large creek. He points out four men and then indicates: north, south, east, and west. They nod and each rides away in a different direction.

(CONTINUED)

Leaving the shelter of the trees, the warriors ride onto the rocky shore, ever watchful of ambush. It does not take long to find what they are searching for. Two bodies riddled with arrows, lie in the water.

One warrior sobs in anguish, throws himself from his pony and runs to a body. He pulls it up, his face a mask of grief - but he dares not make a sound. He looks around, hoping to find the killers.

Silver Wolf gestures for the men to bring the bodies and return to the forest.

EXT. MINNESOTA COUNTRYSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Silver Wolf talks to a warrior next to him. He speaks in Dakota with subtitles.

SILVER WOLF

Go, and tell Friend of the Dakotas
what has happened. Tell him to
come with his gun and knife as he
promised. And, he must keep Stands
Up To Bear close to their dwelling.

The man nods and rides away.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Samantha stands at the table kneading a large lump of bread dough. Tight lipped and angry, she picks it up and slams it back onto the table punching it with all the energy of a boxer. When the door opens and Gideon enters, she ignores him.

After stacking the armful of wood he just brought in, Gideon walks behind Samantha to give her a peck on the cheek. She half turns and pushes him away.

SAMANTHA

You've decided you don't want me.

GIDEON

I don't want to lose you.

She turns an angry look to him, accusing him with her gaze.

He sighs and starts to the door.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

I'm going out to gather blueberries
when I finish here.

He merely nods and walks out.

SAMANTHA

And leave the door open.

INT. CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

As Samantha puts the dough into a cast iron pan, through the door Gideon can be seen fixing a fence post. He turns when a Dakota warrior rides up to him. They speak for a moment, and then the warrior rides away while Gideon runs for the house.

He flies into the house, grabbing his rifle, powder and shot.

GIDEON

Stay close to the house and don't
leave till I get back.

With no further explanation, he runs out the door. Furious, Samantha stomps to the DOOR and SLAMS it shut. A moment later, she hears him RIDE AWAY.

Samantha paces back and forth, indecisive. Decision made, she grabs her pail and leaves.

EXT. MINNESOTA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The Dakota war party with Gideon glides through the woods on quiet, sure-footed ponies. A warrior in front points to a spot on the ground.

WHAT HE SEES:

Hoof prints on a spot of soft dirt.

They kick their horses forward.

Suddenly, they stop, studying the ground. Their heads swivel westward. They speak in Dakota with subtitles.

SILVER WOLF

They have turned west.

(CONTINUED)

WISE FOX

They head towards your cabin,
Friend of the Dakotas.

SILVER WOLF

Go.

Gideon kicks his pony into a full run, racing for home.

Silver Wolf points to two warriors.

SILVER WOLF

Follow him. We'll follow the
tracks. It could be they will lead
somewhere else.

The two warriors race after Gideon.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Gideon pulls to a stop in front of the cabin, leaps off the pony and races inside. A second later, he reemerges. He screams his fear to the empty yard.

GIDEON

Samantha!

All is silent. He runs to the barn - nothing. Remounting his pony, he races away. The two warriors emerge just in time to watch him leave and they follow.

EXT. MINNESOTA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Gideon knows his wife; he knows where she went. Racing for the blueberry patch, he has eyes for nothing else. He doesn't see the two Anishinabe warriors a ways off the trail, but they see him and give chase. The two Dakota warriors are just in time to intercept and they close in battle. Gideon races on, unsuspecting.

EXT. MINNESOTA COUNTRYSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Samantha is backed into a deep entanglement of brush and trees. She has no where to go. Pacing slowly towards her is an ANISHINABE WARRIOR, hatred burning in his eyes. Bloody scratches on his face shows he has already tangled with this woman once. He's being a bit more cautious. Behind him, two WARRIORS hurl insults and laughter.

(CONTINUED)

Samantha is just as angry as he is. She holds the knife in her hand forward, daring him to come closer. He feigns with his left hand, hoping to draw her hand away, but she slashes close to his chest forcing him to retreat a step. Respect dances in his eyes. He smiles.

An insult from his friend wipes the smile away. He studies her. With speed Samantha can't match, he rushes forward. He grabs the wrist with the knife and twists it. Samantha screams and her hand opens. A strong backhand on her face sends her to the ground. The warrior stands over her, knife in hand.

His plans are interrupted by the BLAST of a RIFLE. One onlooking warrior twist and falls to the ground. The other pulls his knife and runs to meet Gideon. Rifle spent, Gideon reverses it and uses it as a club which he swings with all the strength of an angry, protective husband. When the rifle breaks, Gideon pulls his knife and finishes the job.

The final warrior and Gideon face off. Samantha staggers to her feet.

GIDEON

Samantha, I need you to run.

SAMANTHA

I'm not leaving you.

GIDEON

For once in your life, woman, do what I tell you. Now Run.

The warrior lets her go. He's anticipating the fight.

Evenly matched, the fight begins cautions, but soon turns violent. Still, it doesn't take long for the warrior's blade to penetrate Gideon's side. He falls close to the blueberry bushes. The warrior smiles. But, again, his plans are thwarted, this time by a BELLOWING ROAR. He turns and finds himself face-to-face with a huge GRIZZLY.

On the ground, Gideon rolls as far under the bushes as he can get.

The bear, unable to find the meat the rifle blast promised, turns his anger on the man in front of him. The smell of blood encourages the attack. The warrior meets the bear with his own war cry.

Gideon watches from the bushes until it is over. Having killed his opponent, the bear's anger is spent and he walks off.

Gideon crawls out, in pain and bleeding badly. He loses consciousness just as the Dakota warriors arrive, one bearing Samantha behind him.

INT. DAKOTA VILLAGE - TEPEE - NIGHT

Gideon is pale, his breathing shallow. Singing Waters feels his forehead. Samantha sits curled up a few feet away. They speak in Dakota with subtitles.

SAMANTHA

He's going to live, isn't he?

Singing Waters sighs. She gives Samantha a stern look.

SINGING WATERS

I don't know. The knife hit his bone, but it still went deep.

SAMANTHA

What will I do if he dies?

Anger tinges Singing Waters' reply.

SINGING WATERS

Should you not be praying to Wankan Tanka for him to live than be so worried about yourself?

SAMANTHA

He didn't tell me why I had to stay at the cabin. He just told me.

SINGING WATERS

And you were rebellious and left anyway.

SAMANTHA

I was angry.

SINGING WATERS

You are stubborn and willful. Even if you were angry, you should have trusted your husband.

The truth crumbles Samantha's defenses. Tears begin to form.

SAMANTHA

I'm afraid.

Singing Waters' anger relents.

(CONTINUED)

SINGING WATERS

Go and pray. Maybe He will hear
you and send healing.

Samantha slinks out of the tepee.

EXT. TEPEE - MOMENTS LATER

To the side, Silver Wolf softly chants a prayer. In the distance she spies Eagle's Cry with his grandmother. He starts to run to her, but Deer In Meadow grabs him and pulls him down beside her. As she walks through the village everyone looks at her with either sympathy or anger. She heads for a large boulder that sits at the edge of the village.

EXT. EDGE OF VILLAGE - MOMENTS LATER

She scoots onto the rock, surveying the village. No one seems to see her or care. She's a mere dot in a vast, limitless landscape. Alone - and scared. She holds herself tight, rocking lightly.

Inside, a shift occurs. She gazes to heaven, eyes glistening.

SAMANTHA

God, are you real?

A brief pause, then a small wind stirs, rustling her hair. She gasps. For a moment she is still, eyes closed, and then she breaks down into deep sobs.

SAMANTHA

Please help me.

INT. BARN - NIGHT - YEAR 1831 (END FLASHBACK)

Samantha lays on the floor of the barn. The dark night softened by a bit of moonlight beaming through the door.

She tries to get up, but a stab of pain forces a scream from her mouth and she falls back down. Blue whines, nestling his muzzle on her chest. She places a hand on his head.

SAMANTHA

Looks like I got myself into a mess
this time, boy. I always said
Rosie would be the death of me, but
I didn't really mean it.

(CONTINUED)

Carefully, she rolls on her side. Dragging her injured leg, she slowly crawls, gritting her teeth against the pain. Blue stands a few feet away, watching.

SAMANTHA

The least you could do is go get help. Blue, Eagle's Cry - go.

He perks his ears.

SAMANTHA

Get Eagle's Cry - go.

Blue whines, looks over his shoulder, and then trots out the door.

SAMANTHA

Well, I'll be. Gideon kept tellin me he's smarter than I thought.

However, a glance out the barn door shows Blue standing, watching her.

SAMANTHA

Oh, well.

As Samantha continues to crawl, Blue trots away. She doesn't get very far before the pain becomes too severe and she has to stop and rest. She looks to see how far she traveled. Barely five feet. She drops down on her back.

SAMANTHA

Lord, I can't do this. I'll never make it.

Staring out into the night sky, she softly sings Amazing Grace.

INT. BARN - MORNING

The feel of a cold nose pushing her cheek barely registers in Samantha's consciousness. The wet tongue, however, shocks her awake. She opens her eyes to find Blue cuddled against her side in an instinctive attempt to comfort her.

Inside her stall, Rosie bellows to be fed and milked. The ponies, however, have already left to graze.

SAMANTHA

Blue, take her out so she'll shut up.

(CONTINUED)

Reluctant, but obedient, Blue trots to where Rosie stands, waiting. Planting himself in front of her, HE SNARLS showing his teeth. A stupid bovine to the end, she lowers her head to sniff him. He snaps. Her head shoots up with a BELLOW, and she stumbles several feet back. Blue follows, GROWLING and SNAPPING. He drives her backwards until she turns and trots out the barn door. Blue returns to his place next to Samantha. On one elbow, she ruffles his coat.

SAMANTHA

Good boy. Now, think you can make some breakfast?

EAGLE'S CRY (O.C.)

Hello?

Blue runs out almost knocking Samantha sideways.

SAMANTHA

In here.

Eagle's Cry runs in, kneeling at Samantha's side.

EAGLE'S CRY

What happened?

SAMANTHA

Rosie kicked me on the hip yesterday during the storm. I was trying to bring her in.

While he talks, Eagle's Cry runs his hand over her thigh area pressing gently.

EAGLE'S CRY

I knew we should have cooked her. Where is she now?

SAMANTHA

I had Blue chase her out.

He touches her hip and she screams in pain.

EAGLE'S CRY

I think the bone is broken here.

He ponders for a moment.

EAGLE'S CRY

You can't make it to the village. I'm going to carry you to the cabin. Then, I'll ride back and get Wise of Heart.

Eagle's Cry scoots his hands beneath her. Samantha screams as he gently lifts. The walk to the cabin is torture, every step a stab of pain.

INT. CABIN - SAME

Eagle's Cry kicks the half open door and shuffles in with his burden. He places Samantha as gently as he can on her bed. Even so, the tears are streaming from her eyes.

EAGLE'S CRY
Anything you need before I leave?

SAMANTHA
Can you get me some water?

He complies returning with a small tin cup which she gratefully takes.

EAGLE'S CRY
I'll be as quick as I can.

He leaves and Samantha hears the sound of his PONY'S HOOVES drift into the distance.

AN HOUR LATER

Samantha is slow to wake up when Eagle's Cry walks in with WISE OF HEART (50's). The medicine woman sits on the bed and feels Samantha's forehead. They speak in Dakota with subtitles.

WISE OF HEART
How long has she been like this?

EAGLE'S CRY
She seemed all right when I left.

WISE OF HEART
The fever is starting. I got here just in time. How long was she outside?

EAGLE'S CRY
Since the storm, yesterday. She was bringing the cow in and it kicked her.

Wise of Heart nods.

(CONTINUED)

WISE OF HEART

Can you make a fire and heat some water?

Samantha becomes more lucid. She opens her eyes and smiles at her visitor. But her mind is still not fully functional.

SAMANTHA

(in English)

Wise of Heart, it is good to see you.

The Dakota woman glances at Eagle's Cry.

EAGLE'S CRY

She said she was glad to see you.

She smiles.

WISE OF HEART

As I am of you, Stands Up To Bear. So, did you teach that cow a lesson?

Samantha snorts, grimaces with pain.

SAMANTHA

(in Dakota)

Blue chased her out of the barn. Serves her right.

WISE OF HEART

As soon as your son warms the water, I'll given you something to ease the pain and fight the fever.

Samantha's eyes bore into the Dakota woman's, demanding honesty.

SAMANTHA

Will I ever walk again?

The answer pains her.

WISE OF HEART

No.

The clatter of a cup startles them both. They had forgotten Eagle's Cry. His face is stricken, the cup and water spilled onto the floor. He knows what this means.

(CONTINUED)

EAGLE'S CRY

There must be something...

Wise of Heart shakes her head.

WISE OF HEART

Old bones do not mend, especially
ones that hold the body up.

Her voice breaks. She waves her hand, hiding her emotion
behind mock anger.

WISE OF HEART (CONT.)

Now, get some more water.

Eagle's Cry obeys.

SAMANTHA

I don't want to live like this.

WISE OF HEART

I know. The powder I give you will
help with the pain, but your days
are in the hands of Wakan Tanka.

Eagle's Cry hands her the water. She takes a pouch from her
side and pours a little powder into it. Stirring it with
her finger, she hands it to Samantha.

WISE OF HEART

It is bitter. Honey can be added
if you wish.

Samantha takes the cup, sips, grimaces.

SAMANTHA

(in English)

That's awful.

EAGLE'S CRY

She says...

Wise of Heart waves her hand to silence him.

WISE OF HEART

I know when something tastes bad.

She wobbles to her feet.

WISE OF HEART

I will come again
tomorrow. Hopefully, there will
not be much fever.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

Thank you.

The Dakota woman nods and shuffles towards the door.

WISE OF HEART

I think I could use some of that powder myself.

EAGLE'S CRY

I will take her back to the village and return.

Samantha nods weakly.

EXT. CABIN - SAME

WISE OF HEART

You will stay with her?

EAGLE'S CRY

I won't leave her.

Wise of Heart pats his arm.

WISE OF HEART

You've grown into a fine man.

EAGLE'S CRY

How long?

WISE OF HEART

She was fairly strong, but she was also outside, on the ground and cold for a full night. But that is not what matters.

EAGLE'S CRY

Then, what?

WISE OF HEART

Her heart. Her desire to live. I have seen others who did not have the injuries she has die simply because they wanted to.

The fear in Eagle's Cry's eyes inflect into his voice.

EAGLE'S CRY

But she's strong, and she's stubborn.

(CONTINUED)

WISE OF HEART

And she's just lost the man she
loves and her ability to walk.

Eagle's Cry picks her up and gently places her on his pony's
back. She reaches down and places a hand on his shoulder.

WISE OF HEART

Son, consider. Would you want to
live like that?

He ducks his head. When he raises it, tears are trickling
down his cheeks. He shakes his head.

Wise of Heart nods once and scoots so that he can jump up
behind her. Eagle's Cry turns the pony's head and kicks it
into a canter.

FLASHBACK - INT. TEPEE - NIGHT - 1785

The dim light of a dying fire gives Samantha's face a rosy
glow. She should be asleep, but instead, she watches
Gideon, waiting for any movement, any sign that he will
live. But her eyes are heavy. They fall of their own
accord until she forces them to reopen. Open - close - open
- close. Closed. Her breathing deepens.

A low moan snaps her awake. Her eyes open and she stares
into Gideon's: warm and loving. He smiles. She crawls to
his side. He lifts the edge of his fur and gathers her into
his bed. Gently, she kisses him, tears streaming down her
face. The kiss is broken by a sob. He shushes her.

SAMANTHA

I'm so sorry.

GIDEON

It's okay.

SAMANTHA

No, it's not. I did this. You
almost died.

GIDEON

But I didn't.

SAMANTHA

You could have. How did you know
where to find me.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

You told me where you were going.

SAMANTHA

After you told me not to.

GIDEON

Since when have you ever listened to me?

SAMANTHA

I'm going to go out and shoot that bear anything he wants to eat.

Gideon chuckles, then winces.

GIDEON

Don't talk like that, it hurts.

SAMANTHA

Why did you do it?

GIDEON

Because that's what love does.

SAMANTHA

Even after...?

GIDEON

Even then. I love you Samantha Wilkes, stubbornness and all.

EXT. DAKOTA VILLAGE - DAY

Gideon and Samantha trod slowly through the village. His arm is around her shoulder as she struggles to take some of his weight.

GIDEON

I think I'll try to make it home tomorrow. You brought my pony didn't you?

Samantha nods.

SAMANTHA

Some of the men went out and found them.

Pause

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

I haven't done well, have I?

Gideon looks surprised.

GIDEON

Says who?

SAMANTHA

It doesn't matter. The fact is, I've been rebellious and willful, and it almost got you killed.

GIDEON

The only thing I've asked is that you trust me.

SAMANTHA

I'm sorry, I'll try to do better.

Gideon points to some large rocks.

GIDEON

Lets sit down, my side hurts.

They settle themselves. Gideon thinks a moment.

GIDEON

When I was a boy, we had a beautiful two-year-old filly. She was feisty, yet sweet and loving. One day, a man came whom my father wanted to sell horses to. When he heard who the filly's sire was, he told my dad that that horse always threw mean offspring. Father protested, and to prove his point, the man went into her stall and put a rope on her halter. Then, he started jerking it, hard.

SAMANTHA

Why?

GIDEON

As I said, to prove his point. Of course, the filly started rearing and pitching around the stall, and when she did that, the man said, "See, there it is." By the time my father was able to stop him, the damage had been done.

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

She changed.

GIDEON

Yea. She never turned mean, but she was no longer the sweet girl we raised. Her trust had been broken.

Samantha's next question carries a double meaning.

SAMANTHA

Did she ever recover?

Gideon smiles.

GIDEON

My father was a patient man. He never forced her to give more than she was able, and every day he spent time giving her his love. And, yes, eventually she forgot her trauma and came back to us.

SAMANTHA

I love that story.

Gideon puts his arms around her.

GIDEON

So do I. And God has taught me a powerful lesson. We are in His hands. I was trying to make His decisions and I'm sorry. If you want a baby, then we'll do everything we can to get you one.

SAMANTHA

Thank you.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT - 1831 (END FLASHBACK)

Eagle's Cry sits at the table inspecting the traps and furs that now belong to him. He thinks Samantha is asleep, then:

SAMANTHA

You can say it now.

EAGLE'S CRY

Say what?

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

If I had listened to you, I
wouldn't be in this mess.

EAGLE'S CRY

Saying something after it happens
is like blowing on cold wood after
the fire has gone out. All you're
doing is blowing out air.

Samantha giggles.

SAMANTHA

Gideon taught you that, didn't he?

EAGLE'S CRY

I think if was after he told you
not to ride that half-tamed pony
and you ended up walking home.

Samantha is silent a moment, pensive.

SAMANTHA

All he wanted was a Godly wife.

EAGLE'S CRY

And what he got was a redeemed one.

SAMANTHA

I think I could have saved myself a
lot of misery if I'd just listened
a bit more.

EAGLE'S CRY

Now, I know you're hurting.

SAMANTHA

No, it's an old woman at the end of
her days looking back at the good
and bad. I gave him a lot of
trouble.

EAGLE'S CRY

He loved every day of it.

SAMANTHA

Liar. I was so busy pursuing what
I thought I wanted, that I almost
missed what was right in front of
me.

(CONTINUED)

EAGLE'S CRY

He loved you. What you did never changed that. He gave me a good example for my own marriage.

SAMANTHA

Treat her well. Will you bring them over to say good-bye?

He nods, his throat choking up.

Samantha tries to shift positions and mews in pain. BLUE lifts his head and WHINES.

SAMANTHA

Take care of him, will you?

EAGLE'S CRY

Of course. You want to try and eat something now?

SAMANTHA

No, I'm not hungry. I think I'll try to sleep a little.

EAGLE'S CRY

Good night.

Eagle's Cry watches her, dismayed at how much older she looks after such a short time. She's like a shell of her former self. Rising, he takes Gideon's old buffalo coat, throws it on the floor, and lays down next to Blue.

INT. CABIN - HOURS LATER

Samantha (17) awakens to the door opening. Gideon strides in.

GIDEON

Still in bed? Come on, there's something I want to show you.

SAMANTHA

What?

GIDEON

Nope. It's a surprise.

SAMANTHA

You know I hate surprises.

He grins big.

(CONTINUED)

GIDEON

You'll love this one.

Grumbling, she throws the covers off and gets up.

SAMANTHA

This had better be good.

Unrepentant, Gideon takes her hand and leads her to the door. Behind them, Blue lifts his head. Gideon opens the door and the cabin is flooded with light.

SAMANTHA

It's beautiful.

Gideon smiles broadly and pulls her forward.

She hesitates, glancing back at the figure of Eagle's Cry sleeping peacefully and the shell of an old woman in the bed. Blue thumps his tail.

SAMANTHA

Take care of him, Blue.

Setting her face forward, she follows her husband into eternity.

EXT. MINNESOTA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

A covered wagon pulled by two powerful draft horses, slowly rumbles over the prairie grass. At the reins a YOUNG MAN (20's) and his WIFE struggle against the constant tossing as the wheels dip first in one direction, then in another.

He pulls his team to a stop when a Dakota warrior suddenly appears at the top of the next rise. He pulls out the gun sitting just behind him. He cocks it, waiting.

The Dakota rides slowly forward, both hands up.

MAN

Mary, get in the back with the children.

Without hesitation, she obeys. He hears small voices.

CHILD (O.C.)

What is it, Mama. Why are we stopping.

(CONTINUED)

MARY (O.C.)
It's okay, honey.

The warrior stops just in front of the team.

EAGLE'S CRY
My name is Eagle's Cry. I did not
come to bring trouble, but to help
you.

MAN
Help us how?

EAGLE'S CRY
Are you looking for a place to
live?

MAN
We might be.

EAGLE'S CRY
Then come with me, There is a cabin
not far from here.

The woman peeks her head over her husband's shoulder.

MARY
How can we trust him?

MAN
I said, get back. Don't show
yourselves.

She ducks back down.

MAN
How do I know I can trust you?

EAGLE'S CRY
If you already knew, you wouldn't
need trust. Doesn't the Bible say,
faith is the evidence of things not
seen?

MAN
You know the Bible?

EAGLE'S CRY
I read it every night.

MAN
But do you believe it.

EAGLE'S CRY
With my whole heart.

The man comes to a decision.

MAN
Very well. But ride close because
I'll have my gun trained on you.

Eagle's Cry turns his pony and walks back the way he came. The wagon slowly follows.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

MARY
It's beautiful.

Both are staring in wonder at the cabin and barn sitting at the edge of a meadow like a picture in a book. Eagle's Cry turns his pony back around.

EAGLE'S CRY
It's yours if you want it.

MAN
What happened to the other
occupants.

Eagle's Cry points to three grave markers under a large oak tree. One grave is fresh.

EAGLE'S CRY
They were my parents.

MAN
Indians don't live in cabins.

EAGLE'S CRY
They adopted me when my own parents
were killed. I loved them both
very much.

MARY
Look, Jimmy, a cow and chickens.

Blue trots up, tail wagging, as though to welcome them home.

Eagle's Cry points to the north.

EAGLE'S CRY
You'll find a Dakota village over
there. They're good people and
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EAGLE'S CRY (cont'd)
will be your friend if you'll let
them. I can teach you to speak
their language.

Jimmy jumps down. He sizes up Eagle's Cry, then gazes at
the cabin.

MARY
Jimmy, can we? I mean - a cow.

JIMMY
Okay, we'll take it.

Eagle's Cry nods.

EAGLE'S CRY
I'll be back in a few days to see
how you are doing. There's just
one thing, though.

JIMMY
What's that?

EAGLE'S CRY
Watch out for the cow - she kicks.

THE END