

COLD FANGS

- SEARCH FOR THE WINTERWOLF -

an mythical adventure

written by

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Reading Sample

FADE UP TITLE SEQUENCE

EXT. LOG CABIN - EVENING / 50 YEARS AGO

Snow covers the Alaskan wilderness. Young trapper WILLIAM (23) ties bunches of nails to a string fence surrounding the cabin. The trapper shakes them. They tinkle audibly.

His young wife ANNIE (early 20s) beckons him from the window: Dinner! William smiles, waves, and walks toward the cabin. Her brown eyes sparkle with love and joy.

INT. LOG CABIN - NIGHT / 50 YEARS AGO

Skins of wild animals line the walls. Emptied food bowls litter the rough wooden table.

Annie fastens a hare skin on a drying frame.

William surprises her, putting a pelt hood onto her head: a wolf's head. She turns around, laughing.

We see she is pregnant. William kisses her.

A faint *TINKLE* from outside. A beast howls fiercely. Like wild animals, both look up, alarmed. He looks **out of the window**.

OUTSIDE in the dusk, he spots a dark animal inside his fence!

Annie grabs a huge double-barrel Winchester '86 rifle, hands him a revolver.

As William takes the gun, a huge beast LEAPS through the window:

CRASH! Glass splinters. *BOOM!* Annie fires, misses.

BANG-BANG-BANG! William empties his revolver, hitting the giant wolf's eyes.

Dying, the wolf claws at William's arm. He drops his gun.

A white wolf lands on Annie. William draws his Bowie-knife. The white wolf sinks its FANGS into Annie's neck.

BLOOD gushes from her wound. SCREAMING, William hurls himself at the wolf. His knife impales its paw, splits it in half. The wolf snaps at him, howling in pain. Its claws scratch William's chest, tearing his shirt, leaving 8 bleeding cuts.

The white wolf jumps **OUTSIDE** through the window, disappearing into the dark. Only bloody paw prints remain in the snow.

A pack of more huge wolves follow, howling.

William cradles his dying wife in his lap. Her eyes grow dim. Blood flows, painting the young couple in a deadly hue of red. He sobs, then yells out an almost inhuman scream.

FADE OUT TITLE SEQUENCE

EXT. IVY LEAGUE UNIVERSITY / OUTDOOR ENCLOSURE - DAY / TODAY

SLAM! Two paws hit a wire mesh fence. Fierce teeth glimmer in warm autumn sunlight. A growl emits from between the teeth of a fearsome wolf leaning erect at the netted barrier, sniffing.

Ice-blue eyes focus on the intruder outside the fence.

Wide-eyed, young zoologist MATT CRAVEN (27) approaches the cage hesitantly, baby-faced as if no beard ever sprouted on his cheeks, wearing a tweed suit he should be too young for but strangely isn't.

MARGARET WEISE (O.S.)
(soft Austrian accent)
Dinnertime! Laika, come and get it!

Her voice breaks the spell: The wolf trots away from the fence. Cautiously, Matt's eyes flick around the cage.

Inside, he spots a noble white-haired lady in a Native American suede skirt, feeding a skinned rabbit to the wolf: PROFESSOR MARGARET WEISE, a European crypto-zoologist scholar of a distinguished age.

MATT
Look, I got your travel tickets,
Professor Weise.

MARGARET WEISE
For the last time, call me Margaret.

MATT
Yes, Professor.

Laughing, she plays tug-of-war with the wolf, pulling at the bloody rabbit cadaver. The beast's fangs won't let go.

MATT (cont'd)
Here's the ticket to Anchorage,
then the coach to A... Awani...

MARGARET WEISE
Awanitok. You really should come
with me this time, Matt.

MATT
Thanks Professor, really. But I ...
There's so much to do for my thesis ...

MARGARET WEISE
Humbug! You are just afraid to
leave the safe walls of your Ivy
League study.

MATT
No, really ...

He waves the travel documents in protest. He loses his grip. They fly through the air, landing on the mossy pavement. He kneels to collect them.

The wolf lets go of the rabbit, eyes him.

MARGARET WEISE

To understand nature: beasts and people, you have to go out there. Explore the wild, sleep under the stars, make love to the wrong girl, get hurt, get well, fall in love with a stranger, find something to believe in other than lifeless books, and take a stand. Go out and live!

While she speaks, Margaret bows down to the wolf. A peculiar totem slips out of her blouse, dangling from a leather strap right in front of the wolf's eyes. In reflex, it snaps at it. Sharp fangs sink into her neck! Pulling away instinctively, she collapses onto the ground, bleeding profusely.

Without thinking, Matt storms into the cage.

The wolf bares its fangs, growling. Matt pulls out Margaret, slams the door shut. The wolf jumps after them. Matt takes off his jacket, presses it onto the gushing wound. Looking up to him, Margaret faints in his arms.

The wolf lets out an ear-piercing howl.

MATT

Professor? Margaret?! - Help!

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF IVY LEAGUE UNIVERSITY - DAY

Matt stands behind an ambulance. Next to him, Margaret lies on a stretcher with a bandaged neck, weak but alive.

MARGARET WEISE

You really fell for my trick!

Matt holds her hand, looking at her quizzically and worried.

MARGARET WEISE (cont'd)

Now you have to go to Alaska in my stead. After all, only you know where to go, what to do, whom to meet, and what to look for, as well as I do.

Smiling, she takes off her totem: a clay ocarina whistle covered in ancient tribal symbols. She hands it to Matt.

MARGARET WEISE (cont'd)

Now go. Go out and live!

MATT

I -- Anything for you, Professor.

Matt takes the totem solemnly. The ambulance drives away. He blows into the ocarina, but no sound emerges from it.

INT. PROFESSOR WEISE'S STUDY - EVENING

Matt goes through a pile hand-written notes from a desk, scattered in papers, drawings, and half-full tea mugs.

Professor Weise's study is full of artifacts and PHOTOS from when she was a young explorer till today: in Tikkal, the Himalayan, the Sahara etc., often accompanied by Natives. There are labeled teeth, hairs, clay paw prints. Carefully HANDWRITTEN CAPTIONS read: "Yeti: Nepal", "Bruja: Mexico".

Matt looks at a masterfully drawn PENCIL SKETCH of a wolf. with handwritten scaled measurements: "shoulder 80cm", "length 160cm". Its CAPTION reads "Common Wolf, Canis Lupus".

A sketch on the same sheet shows another wolf double in size labeled "Winterwolf, Lupus Hibernus". Next to its shoulder measurement it says: "150cm ? 200cm ?"

Next in the pile of notes Matt finds a BLURRY BLACK&WHITE PHOTO from what could be a big wolf behind a rock. He turns it around. Written in the same handwriting a CAPTION on the back reads: "**North of Awanitok, Alaska, 1973. WINTERWOLF???**"

He puts all notes and images into a file titled "Winterwolf: Alaska", takes a last look around, then exits the study.

EXT. ALASKA HIGHWAY - DAY

A highway cuts through deserted plains. Wind blows dust over the tarmac. Mountains line the horizon. A bus stops at a T-junction. A backpack gets chucked out, a pair of brand-new hiker boots follow.

The bus drives away, leaving behind a lonesome figure in its dust. Matt coughs, waves away the fumes. He looks at his SMARTPHONE MAP APP: No signal. Taking out a travel map, he starts to walk down a gravel road leading away from the highway.

EXT. AWANITOK ROAD - AFTERNOON

Tired, Matt passes a SIGN at the side of the road:

**Welcome to Awanitok.
Last trading post South of the Arctic Circle.
Pop. 423**

Matt trudges along into the small town. He scans the main street, spotting a SALOON named "Nobody's Inn". He enters.

INT. SALOON "NOBODY'S INN" - AFTERNOON

Despite its name, it is lively inside. Rough-looking folk fill the tables. Cautiously, Matt approaches the counter. A gruff BARKEEPER nods at Matt, raising his eyebrows.

MATT

Anything you can recommend to eat?

The barkeeper points at a BLACKBOARD over the counter. It states in wonky chalk letters: **"Today's Special: Soup"**.

MATT (cont'd)

Ah. -- What's in it?

BARKEEPER

You don't wanna know. It's hot, filling. Far tastier than it looks.

MATT

Sounds -- promising. One, please.

The soup arrives. Bubbles rise from its depths to the surface. Matt smells it and curls his nose in suppressed disdain. The barkeeper eyes Matt, so he musters up some courage and tastes it: Better than expected. He smiles at the barkeeper.

BARKEEPER

What brings you here, young man?

MATT

I am looking for a trapper. William Harding. You know him?

BARKEEPER

(laughing)

Wild Bill, that crazy ol' fool?

At the same moment, a heavily DRUNK guy slumps down on the next stool, staring at Matt with glazed, unfocused eyes.

DRUNK

Whatcha want from William Harding?

MATT

I am supposed to team up with him for a wildlife trip.

The drunk laughs manically, falling from his stool, backside first onto the wooden floor; yet the drunk is still cackling.

MATT (cont'd)

(disgusted, at bartender)

William Harding, I presume?

WILD BILL (O.S.)

Hardly.

Matt swivels around. A weathered man stands in the door. A SCAR runs down from his left eye to his chin: a bite mark of a fierce creature. Clad in an old fur coat with a hood made out of a black wolf's scalp, he must be north of 70, but looks more alive than anybody in the dingy place: WILD BILL HARDING.

WILD BILL

Where the hell is Margaret?

MATT

Mister Wild Bill, erm, Mister Harding?
I'm Matt Craven. Professor Weise --
got injured, and sent me instead.

Wild Bill musters Matt from head to toe, before he replies.

WILD BILL

Well, any friend of Margaret's is a
friend of mine. And since you dared
eat the food in here, you must be a
lot braver than you look.

He offers his hand. Relieved, Matt shakes it, smiling.

WILD BILL (cont'd)

A beer for me, and a Sour Toe for
my new friend, please.

MATT

"Sour Toe"?

The barkeeper puts a beer in front of Wild Bill and a shot glass with a clear liquid. In it floats - a human toe! Flabbergasted, Matt looks at the drink.

MATT (cont'd)

Is that a real ... ?

BARKEEPER

Froze off a gold digger in 1923.
Kiss the toe, don't swallow it.
Or you have to provide a new one.

WILD BILL

Let's drink to our journey: May we
find what we are looking for.

Hesitantly Matt raises the glass. He gazes at the toe, then shuts his eyes, puts the glass to his lips, sips cautiously. While drinking his beer, Wild Bill watches him with a grin. The toe touches Matt's lips. Coughing, he puts down the glass, looking at the severed digit in disbelief.

WILD BILL (cont'd)

Welcome to Alaska, Matt Craven.
And watch your every step.

His head motions to the drunk on the floor, snoring.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A run-down but tidy motel room. Matt exits the bathroom, a towel wrapped around his head. Cozy steam follows him into the bedroom. He stops, startled.

Sitting on the bed, Wild Bill rummages through his bag. Tools, maps, a camera, clothes, a sleeping-bag etc. are scattered all over.

WILD BILL
(muttering)
Just as I thought.

MATT
Pardon me: What are you doing?

WILD BILL
Separating the stuff you need from
the crap you'll leave behind.

Searching for words, but drawing a blank, Matt just watches Wild Bill with an open mouth, slumping onto the bed. Moments later, there are two piles on the floor.

WILD BILL (cont'd)
Keep this. We sell the rest tomorrow.

Wild Bill takes off his shirt. Matt can see old scars running over the trapper's chest: like claw marks from a fierce beast. Wild Bill notices Matt staring.

WILD BILL (cont'd)
Sleeping-bag or bed?

MATT
Huh? What?

Wild Bill takes pillow and blanket, building a resting place on the floor, throwing the sleeping-bag onto the mattress.

WILD BILL
Last night in a proper bed. You'll
need it. I hope you don't snore!

The trapper curls up on the floor, switches off the light.

CUT TO:

Later that night. Matt is lying in bed, wide awake. On the floor Wild Bill snoozes deeply, snoring loudly.

EXT. AWANITOK TRADING POST - MORNING

The sun rises behind a trading post. Wild Bill carries a bundle with Matt's surplus gear. Matt trudges after him. He's tired and cold.

INT. AWANITOK TRADING POST - MORNING

The trading post sells everything: food, gas bottles, fuel, table decorations, outdoor equipment, toys, dusty souvenirs, animal traps, guns and ammunition. Wild Bill stands at the counter, piling up Matt's belongings. A bear-like scruffy storekeeper, GABE, scans the items, calculating.

WILD BILL

Make me a good price for that, Gabe.

MATT

We need those!

Matt tries to grab some dry-frozen meals from the pile. Wild Bill slaps him on the wrist, puts them back. Gabe smiles. Taking a step back, Matt knocks a can of cooking fuel from the counter, which rolls down an aisle. He chases after it, crouching down to pick it up. A slender boot stops the can.

His eyes wander up a pair of skintight suede pants that accentuate a well-toned, curved, slender female body. A Bowie-knife is strapped around her right thigh, and an array of throwing knives around her left: CASSANDRA JENSIGHT, looking almost ageless (but is probably in her 30s). Matt gets up.

CASSANDRA

Hey Babyface, Hold this for a sec!

The tall, athletic, peroxide blonde hands Matt a crate of ammo packs, adding another on top. Wide-eyed, he spots a couple of big pistols holstered at the back of her belt.

CASSANDRA (cont'd)

What's up, Babyface -
the wolf got your tongue?"

She laughs infectiously, causing Matt to join in. Wild Bill turns into the aisle, carrying purchases.

WILD BILL

I see you met the third member of our party. This bookworm is Matt Craven, and the lady is ...

CASSANDRA

Cassandra Jensight.

MATT

You're also a zoologist?

CASSANDRA

Hardly. I want one of them bitches for my trophy collection!

They approach the counter. Matt unloads her purchases. She pulls out a wad of cash, flings a few hundreds across the counter. Gabe collects them, looks disapprovingly at her.

MATT

Trophies? You are going on a search for a legendary creature, and you just want to kill and stuff it?

CASSANDRA

Screw the Red List mentality! And after all, the winterwolf allegedly doesn't exist anyways. Ergo it can't be considered "endangered", right? So who can keep me from shooting it?

Matt frowns, but her dangerous charms aren't lost on him.

WILD BILL

Stop flirting over there and help me with those bibs and bobs, willya?

Matt follows Wild Bill's request, turns into another aisle. He violently bumps into someone else: a Native girl, dressed in practical clothes are embroidered with tribal patterns. She gathers herself up, smiling shyly at him.

Then she focuses on Matt's neck, where Professor Weise's totem dangles from a leather string. He gazes into the girl's magnetic eyes: A pair of piercing-grayish ice-blue that resemble those of huskies - or of wolves... This is YUMA.

ATANIQ (O.S.)

(in Native tongue)

Yuma, come here, we're leaving!

A tall, fearsome Native stands at the door, carrying purchases: CHIEF ATANIQ. The girl jumps up, rushes away. Both exit.

Matt watches her leave. **OUTSIDE** they approach a dented old pickup truck loaded with provisions, fuel and other purchases. The formidable Native speaks to the girl intensely. He turns around, looks through a store window directly at Matt, who ducks away.

WILD BILL

Not even a day in town, and already hooked up with two gals!

Wild Bill slaps Matt on the shoulder, grinning. He drops a heavy box into Matt's arms. Matt buckles, catches himself.

WILD BILL (cont'd)

Got everything we need. Let's go.

EXT. AIRFIELD - MORNING

Matt, Wild Bill and Cassandra wait at a small air field, next to their luggage. A small propeller plane rolls out of a rusty hangar shed. The motor coughs, emitting dark smoke.

MATT

We're going to fly in that?

WILD BILL

Beats walking.

MATT

I -- like walking.

CASSANDRA

Diaper changing time already?

The plane stops in front of them. The hatch opens.
The pilot exits. He's the scruffy drunk from the inn: GUS.

MATT

How far would we have to walk?

WILD BILL

Everyone, that's Gus. The best bush
pilot in this forsaken corner.
Well, he's really the only pilot.

MATT

We've met.

WILD BILL

Oh, try to forget that. He has.

GUS

Hey folks, jump aboard!

Cassandra gets a whiff of Gus' breath.

CASSANDRA

I don't mind flying with someone
who likes hard liquor. So do I.

GUS

(leering at her curves)
Sweetcheeks, I'd give you a hard
lickin' for free anytime!

Gus attempts to slap her firm bottom as she enters the
plane. Cassandra's hand darts forward, gripping his
wrist, bending it backward. Gus squeals in agony.

WILD BILL

He'll need both hands to steer
this flying coffin.

She lets go. Gus speeds into his cockpit. Matt grins at
her. She smiles at him like a true alpha-female.

CUT TO:

The plane speeds over the rocky runway, huffing and
puffing, before it lifts off with difficulty.

INT. GUS' PLANE - DAY

A narrow passenger cabin. No frills. Matt is crouching in the back. Cassandra sits in the seat in front of him next to Wild Bill. It looks like Matt is the child of this weird family. Wild Bill doesn't enjoy flying at all. He looks nervous.

Matt looks down onto the **LANDSCAPE** passing by underneath. He spots the dented pickup truck speeding northwards.

MATT

The Natives in this region,
what do you know about them?

WILD BILL

Recluse savages, all of 'em.

Still living in touch with nature and the seasons. Got no choice really. The oil belongs to the big honchos down south. There's no gold in their mountains no more, and no timber left to chop down. Every year there's less fur to catch.

CASSANDRA

You don't buy this noble savage
bullshit, do you?

MATT

Wait. Who are we, thinking we know
it all? Most of these tribes have
been here long before us, and
understand that honoring the past,
and preserving the present is the
only way to have a future worth
living in.

CASSANDRA

That really worked out for the
Redskins, eh? Once you step down
from your soapbox, you'll realize
it's exciting to shit in a hole in
the ground for a couple of weeks.
But believe me, there's nothing
noble about that. Knowing there's a
hot shower waiting at the end of
every chase sure makes me feel more
civilized. That and them babies.

She gets out one of her automatic pistols, caresses it.

CASSANDRA (cont'd)

Have you ever shot a gun?

Matt shakes his head. Wild Bill smiles to himself. The plane shakes wildly. Matt looks out of the window: They pass through dark clouds. Rain hits the windows. They get shaken up quite a bit.

GUS
 (from the helm)
 Hold on! It'll get a bit bumpy!
 Sorry there are no seat belts.

Matt checks: No belts. Cassandra laughs excitedly.

CASSANDRA
 Now we're talking!

MATT
 Whooee! Reminds me of the "Tilt-a-Whirl" at the state fair, right?

He looks at Wild Bill, who has his eyes shut tight, clawing into the armrests, seasick, cursing through his teeth.

EXT. ALASKA PLAIN - AFTERNOON

The plane lands at the foot of a hill range. The ground is uneven, the plane bounces up twice, then halts safely. The propellers rotate slower, and stop.

The explorers exit the plane. Wild Bill seems happy to be on solid ground. Matt shoulders his heavy backpack. Cassandra gears up, too. Wild Bill gathers his stuff. He hands out sleds to both. They fasten them to their packs.

Gus who checks the propeller. Wild Bill walks over to him, holds up a wad of dollar bills to Gus' face, then rips them in half, handing the pilot one wad, pocketing the other.

WILD BILL
 Well Gus, we'll be seeing you in a couple of weeks. Same spot, right?

GUS
 (leers at Cassandra)
 Actually, Bill, I'd rather tag along with you this time. I haven't explored certain beauties of nature enough.
 (eyes Cassandra)
 That is: if your friends don't mind?

CASSANDRA
 If you mess up my game, nobody will know you were with us. Ever.

MATT
 I'd rather not ...

Wild Bill lays his hand on Matt's arm soothingly.

WILD BILL
 Alright Gus. Hope you brought your walking shoes, we ain't be waiting for you when you get blisters.

Gus grins, unloads a threadbare duffle bag from the hold. Matt looks quizzically at Wild Bill.

WILD BILL (cont'd)
Now we're sure we'll get back home.
We don't want to be deserted out
here when winter really breaks.

MATT
And we can make sure he won't be
getting too drunk.

WILD BILL
Good luck with that, son.

Gus shoulders his bag. In it, glass bottles *KLINK* together. Matt looks doubtful. Wild Bill scans the cloudy sky.

GUS
I've got everything. Let's go!

WILD BILL
I don't like the looks of them
clouds we just passed through.
We'll stay here for the night.

-----SKIPPING AHEAD

EXT. TUNDRA - DAY

Lying on a stretcher made out of slim tree trunks, rope and Gus' tent canvas - all attached to one of the sleds, Matt gets dragged through the wilderness by Wild Bill and Cassandra.

CASSANDRA
How can somebody this skinny be so
heavy? I'm beginning to feel like
a mule. How far is it?

WILD BILL
We must be close.

MATT
Close to where exactly?

WILD BILL
Somewhere we mustn't go.
But we don't have a choice.

The trapper's face is grim. He tries to find landmarks showing the right way. He points toward a range of hills.

WILD BILL (cont'd)
This way.

Matt looks glum and frightened. The trek marches on.

-----SKIPPING AHEAD

EXT. NATIVE VILLAGE - AFTERNOON

Wild Bill and Cassandra pull Matt through the village gate. Some Natives look at them, but don't stop them. The explorers walk on through a dirt road lined with yurts, and halt on a round place in the middle of the village.

ATANIQ

You are not welcome here!

The booming voice makes them stop cold. A fierce man comes closer: The Native with the truck back at the trading post. Wild Bill and Cassandra stop, eyeing the chief coming closer.

WILD BILL

Trust me, we don't wish to be here any more than you want us. But my comrade here got injured, and he can't walk on.

ATANIQ

That is not our problem. Up here, nature will take care of him.

MATT

Please -- I don't want to die.

ATANIQ

Everybody dies. When his time comes.

MATT

It's not my time - I hope.
Trust me, I'm not your enemy.

ATANIQ

How did you get hurt?

MATT

I slipped ...

WILD BILL

He fell when he took a shit last night. Silly city boy!

Wild Bill laughs, forced. The Natives don't join in. More and more gather around them. Cassandra puts a hand closer to her pistols. Wild Bill shakes his head. She lowers her hand.

Matt looks into the motionless faces. He realizes they all have ice-blue eyes like the girl in the store - despite their dark complexion. Judging from the impressive totems around his neck, Ataniq seems to be the tribe's chief.

WILD BILL (cont'd)
 You have a car. Is there any way
 we could hitch a ride?

ATANIQ
 We cannot help you.

CASSANDRA
 We've got money. Enough to buy you
 a new truck, if you ...

ATANIQ
 We don't want your money.

CASSANDRA
 That's not very neighborly,
 Geronimo. Look, we ...

Silently, the crowd moves in tighter, threateningly.

WILD BILL
 (under his breath)
 Quiet!

ATANIQ
 You go. Now.

Commanding, he points toward the gate. The crowd stirs,
 open up a gap: Someone walks through the gathered Natives.

An ancient, white-haired man joins the chief.
 He wears a suede robe covered in tribal patterns.
His right eye is covered by an embroidered patch.
 This is the tribe's shaman: TU'UNBAQTALIK. He speaks softly:

TU'UNBAQTALIK
 (in Native tongue)
Hold on. Do not be hasty, Ataniq.

ATANIQ
 (in Native tongue)
We cannot give shelter to a stranger!

TU'UNBAQTALIK
 (in Native tongue)
Let me take a closer look first.

Worried, Matt tries to make sense of the dispute. The shaman
 approaches the stretcher. He kindly looks at Matt, spots the
 totem around his neck, reaches out to touch it, but withdraws
 his hand before he does: a hand that has a SCAR running all
 the way through from between the fingers down to the wrist...

TU'UNBAQTALIK (cont'd)
 The young one can stay here until
 he is fit to walk.

Matt exhales, relieved. He smiles at Wild Bill who still doesn't look at ease. Tu'unbaqtalik's face hardens when he looks at Cassandra. Then he sternly eyes Wild Bill.

TU'UNBAQTALIK (cont'd)
You two have the whiff of death. You must leave. Go, and do not come back.

ATANIQ
Is this your will?

TU'UNBAQTALIK
(pointing to ground and sky)
It is Tika'ani's will.

MATT
What? Leave me here on my own?

WILD BILL
You'll be alright.
That's more than we could hope for.

CASSANDRA
(smiling, almost worried)
Now you won't get in my way.

She unties her throwing knives belt, hands it to Matt.

CASSANDRA (cont'd)
Stay safe, Babyface!

MATT
Be good, Cassandra.

CASSANDRA
Not if I can help it.

WILD BILL
Farewell, my lad. And Godspeed.

MATT
Godspeed, Wild Bill!

They shake hands solemnly. Then Wild Bill and Cassandra leave. They walk slowly to the gate. All eyes follow them. Matt turns to the old shaman who still looks at him.

MATT (cont'd)
Thank you. What's your name?

TU'UNBAQTALIK
Tu'unbaqtalik. And you must be Matthew The Raven.

MATT
Craven -- How do you know that?

The old shaman just smiles kindly at Matt.

-----SKIPPING AHEAD

INT. YURT - MORNING

Matt wakes up, feeling a wet cloth cooling his forehead. A hand caresses his cheek. Opening his eyes, he notices his nurse. She is the mysterious girl from the trading post!

MATT

It's -- you!

YUMA

Yuma.

MATT

Yuma? I'm Matt.

YUMA

I know.

(touches the ocarina)

Where did you get this?

MATT

My mentor gave it to me. Margaret Weise. Back at my university. Do you know anything about this whistle?

YUMA

Margaret Weise --

MATT

You know her?

Yuma holds his hand, feels his pulse. She smiles shyly.

YUMA

How did you get hurt?

MATT

I -- slipped.

Yuma looks at him calmly. Their eyes lock, like in the store. He feels he can trust her.

MATT (cont'd)

That night, I saw -- a huge wolf. A winterwolf. -- You know, they're legendary giant wolves from the north. I'm searching for them.

She looks like she knows what he's talking about.

YUMA

Yes.

MATT

You know about them? Where they are?

YUMA

The winterwolves exist. They always have. As long as men and women have settled in these lands, the winterwolves lived here also.

ATANIQ (O.S.)

Yuma!

YUMA

(getting up)

I must leave.

MATT

Will you come back and tell me more?

She smiles, nods ever so slightly, and exits the yurt.

-----SKIPPING AHEAD

EXT. SNOW-COVERED WILDERNESS - EVENING

Wild Bill and Cassandra march along a cliff.

CASSANDRA

Just admit you lost the tracks, old man.

Wild Bill kneels down, observes a dry, leafless bush. He takes off his glove, touches a twig, rubs his fingers together and smells them, then touches the tip of his tongue.

CASSANDRA (cont'd)

And?

WILD BILL

Nothing.

CASSANDRA

Hunter's hunch, my ass. Toldcha you lost the scent.

WILD BILL

(scowling)

That's not the point, missy. There's no scent. Meaning ...

CASSANDRA

There are no animals around.

WILD BILL

Right. Not even rabbits or other small game. All gone.

CASSANDRA

How?

WILD BILL

I'll be damned if I knew.
Don't like it. Not one bit.

CASSANDRA

Good I still have my backup rations.

WILD BILL

Won't do you no good when these hit.

He points to the sky. Clouds build up: Snow clouds.

CASSANDRA

Yikes. And I was looking forward
to the full moon tonight.

WILD BILL

Let's try to get down this rock
and set up camp before the snow.

He points down to a site sheltered by the rocks. Cassandra offers a hand to pull him up. He huffs, gets up on his own but can't suppress a slight groan as his hip cracks. She smiles to herself.

CASSANDRA

Come on, spring chicken!

-----SKIPPING AHEAD

EXT. VILLAGE CENTER - NIGHT

Matt sneaks up to the court in the middle of the village, making sure nobody discovers him. He lies down in a small ditch, watching with wonder what happens on the square.

Natives, young and old, dance around the fire that is surrounded by the huge painted totem poles with fierce wolf heads carved at their tops.

The Natives' ice-blue eyes seem to be lit by a cold fire of their own. Snowflakes are falling slowly, adding a sparkling haze to the dreamlike scene.

Matt spots Yuma among the dancers, moving fluidly with poise.

Across from his spot, Matt spots shaman Tu'unbaqtalik playing a clay whistle not unlike Matt's, but bigger. Around him sit children and adults playing drums and whistles.

The drums beat faster. The Natives join in again, singing, howling. More snow falls. The rings of dancers spin faster.

Chanting, they take off their clothes, and move around in a wild trance, naked. The flames flicker more erratically now. The figures dance in a strobe of blurry light and shadow, reflecting in Matt's mesmerized eyes.

Matt sees Yuma, throwing away her clothes. She is NAKED, just like in his dream. The clouds part. The full moon light hits Yuma: spotless, celestial, not of this Earth. Then she disappears behind the fire and the totem poles.

Chief Ataniq leaves the ring of male dancers, moving towards the shaman. The muscles of his toned, nude body glisten in the firelight: A truly formidable sight, like an ancient god.

Tu'unbaqtalik gets up, pulling out live animals from crates behind him: rabbits and other small game.

The clouds drift away completely, revealing the FULL MOON, which bathes the circle in bright nocturnal light.

The chief and the shaman throw the animals up towards the dancers who catch them mid-air. They hold up their prey - and bite into their necks! BLOOD runs down the nude, dancing bodies.

Matt's hand stops sketching. His eyes widen in fear and awe.

The tribe's people seem to grow in the moonlight. The Natives are turning into huge, frightening beasts.

HAIRS SPROUT all over their bodies. The heads start shifting their shape, elongating. FANGS grow from the mouths.

Ataniq is turning into a marvelous, majestic black wolf.

Matt stares, realizes: The tribe are the WINTERWOLVES! His hand clutches his ocarina. He is petrified.

MATT

(whispering to himself)

This can't be -- !

His eyes dart back and forth. In the light of the dancing flames and the moonlight finding its way through the thickening snow, he sees Tu'unbaqtalik and Taika:

The shaman turns into a white haggard but lean wolf - with a huge SCAR across his face and only ONE EYE, while Taika is a surprisingly small wolf: almost like a big sled dog.

Once their metamorphosis is complete, the pack of otherworldly wolves dash off. Only one slows down, halts, turns around and looks directly at Matt. He freezes. It's the slender wolf from his dream. Is that Yuma?

Matt lifts his hand slowly, but she turns away, rushes off, joining her tribe running out of the village.

Fascinated yet aghast by his discovery, he gets up to follow the winterwolves as they rush into the wilderness, howling.