

FIRST COW
(working title)

Screenplay by
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Story by
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(based on his novel "The Half-Life")

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filmscience
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EXT. DRY POND BED - DAY

On the edge of a suburban neighborhood, THREE THIRTEEN YEAR OLD KIDS play in a muddy pond bed.

The dry pond bed resembles a giant ashtray. Weeds grow through the damp earth.

Down below, in the center of the dry pond, ARTHUR attempts to arrange a bounty of discarded motorcycle tires. The tires are heavy and ill-shaped.

His efforts ultimately amount to a random pile of tires.

CHRIS stands above with a tire of his own.

Arthur runs from the pile of tires.

ARTHUR

Let'er rip!

From the far end of the pond, JAMIE looks up and watches as Chris lets his tire fly, his arms already in the air, making a victorious "V."

The tire rolls down the edge of the pond, hits a rock and goes veering off course.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Ah, damn it.

Chris and Arthur retrieve the fallen tire and roll it back up the hill.

Jamie returns to her earth drawing.

She uses a stick to carve through the thick, clay-like soil. With nothing particular in mind, she drags her stick in whatever direction the earth-drawing spirits guide her.

Soon her stick runs into something protruding through the ground.

She goes over to examine it more closely. At her feet is something white and rounded.

Jamie, begins to dig around the shape of the protruding object.

She discards her large stick and swaps it out for a smaller one. Crouching on her hands and knees, she sets to work uncovering the mysterious object.

As the thick dirt is scraped off -- a human skull emerges.

CREDITS BEGIN

Jamie stares at the discovery. She continues unearthing.

EXT. DRY POND BED - LATER - DAY

The sun is high behind the clouds.

Arthur and Chris have joined in the excavation, carefully moving excess mud away from the uncovered bones.

As Jamie works, a full human skeleton is being uncovered.

EXT. DRY POND BED - LATER - AFTERNOON

Chris scavenges around the pond. He finds a piece of rag stuck in the earth.

After a brief tug-of-war, he yanks the rag free.

With his tee shirt pulled over his nose and mouth, he shakes out the rag.

He runs the dirty cloth over to where Jamie and Arthur are working doggedly, covered in dry mud.

A second skeleton is emerging.

EXT. DRY POND BED - LATER - LATE AFTERNOON

The afternoon ages.

Chris has fashioned his rag into a brushing tool. The three kids work carefully.

Finally, stepping back to fully realize their discovery.

Two full skeletons have been revealed. They lie side by side, holding hands.

Jamie and the boys stare at the remains with amazement and reverence.

CREDITS END

EXT. WOODS - CIRCA 1820 - DUSK

A dense rain forest.

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

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

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

He walks deeper into the woods clutching his basket.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS - DUSK

Cookie keeps hunting. The voices fade and disappear.

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

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

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS - DUSK

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

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

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

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

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

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

Another foot fall.

COOKIE

Hello?

No answer.

COOKIE (CONT'D)

Who's there?

No answer.

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

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

He starts jogging. Soon he is sprinting through the trees.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS - DUSK

Cookie runs, chased by the sound of his own footsteps.

EXT. CAMP - CONTINUOUS - DUSK

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

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

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

TRAPPER 1

(noticing Cookie)

Cookie. How about some of that buffalo steak for breakfast? With the fried cakes?

COOKIE

We finished all that back in Colter's Hell. I'm sorry.

TRAPPER 2

What about soda bread?

TRAPPER 3

Dried apple pie.

COOKIE

None of that left, either.

The men brood, passing the bottle.

TRAPPER 3

You find anything out there tonight?

COOKIE

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

TRAPPER 3

What's in the larder?

Cookie is slow to answer.

COOKIE

Ten dry biscuits. Some jerky. Salt.

TRAPPER 3

Nothing else?

COOKIE

No.

A long silence.

TRAPPER 3

It's the cookie's job to improvise. This is a land of abundance, Mr. Figowitz. You're charged with finding our vittles until we reach Fort Clatsop. You're aware of that, I know.

Cookie is silent, on the spot.

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

TRAPPER 4

Hold up there, mister. Share the wealth.

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

They rise and start menacing each other.

TRAPPER 2

Hey there, that's a waste, bud.

TRAPPER 1

He's drinkin' more'n his share.

TRAPPER 4

Now no one's got it.

Cookie slips away into his tent.

INT. TENT - CONTINUOUS - INTO EVENING

Cookie, among the few pots and pans and utensils, listens as the sound of fighting begins. Punching, yelping, the crashing of branches.

EXT. WOODS - LATER - NIGHT

The men sleep.

Cookie wanders the woods with his basket again. The forest is now very dark. He smokes a cheroot.

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

EXT. WOODS - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie comes to a view. He watches the moon shining brightly on the trees.

He smokes.

Faraway, a coyote howls.

He moves a little farther along.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

An owl stares from a tree branch.

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

The owl takes flight.

Cookie is again alone.

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

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

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

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

Cookie stumbles backwards, shocked and afraid.

NAKED MAN
(quietly)
Hello.

COOKIE
(quietly)
Hello.

They stare at each other in the darkness. Two men in the primordial wood. The strange man has disheveled, black hair and almond eyes.

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

NAKED MAN
Hungry.

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

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

COOKIE
No, I don't think so.

NAKED MAN
Perhaps you could call him out here? For a moment?

Cookie examines the naked man in the moonlight.

COOKIE
I'm the cook.

The man takes this in.

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

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

Cookie watches him, debating with himself what to do.

COOKIE

Wait.

Cookie goes.

The naked man sits and waits, watching.

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

Eventually, Cookie returns with a dry biscuit and a piece of jerky, and some clothes.

Cookie hands him the food.

The naked man gobbles the food down.

He's obviously ravenous.

COOKIE (CONT'D)

You speak good English... for an Indian.

NAKED MAN

Hm? Oh, I'm not Indian.

COOKIE

Oh.

NAKED MAN

No, no. Chinese.

COOKIE

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

NAKED MAN

Mm hm. Everybody's here. English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Russian. Everyone. We all want that soft gold. It's why you're here, isn't it?

COOKIE

We've trapped our share. (a pause, watching the man eat) What's your name?

NAKED MAN

King-Lu. So they call me. You?

COOKIE

Otis. They call me Cookie.

KING-LU
Good to know you.

As the eating ends, King-Lu puts on Cookie's clothes.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
There are some men chasing me. Have you seen them? Don't know how many.

COOKIE
No.

King-Lu seems mildly relieved within his weariness. He imagines the questions running through Cookie's mind.

KING-LU
You'd like to know why they're after me?

COOKIE
If you'd tell me.

King-Lu considers where to begin. He sits on a rock opposite of Cookie.

KING-LU
I went to a potlatch.

COOKIE
A what?

KING-LU
Potlatch. A party. The Chinook, they like to throw a party and give away everything they own. All their salmon, roots, furniture, baskets, everything. Their relations, and neighbors, come and take it away. It keeps things moving around is the idea.

Cookie nods.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
This potlatch was thrown by my friend Chenamus. He's a rich man. Ten slaves. Four wives. One of the great men anywhere. Real open handed with everyone. Funny, too. He threw a great potlatch. It went on for two days.

King-Lu gathers his thoughts, stares at the ground.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

We were late into the second night when everything went wild. I was in the woods relieving myself and I heard crashes, cries, explosions. It was white men, overrunning the village. They came through with their guns blazing, and pushed everyone onto the ground. They were Russians. They went straight over to Chenamus and grabbed him by the hair. They told everyone he stole a knife.

King-Lu looks directly at Cookie, as if he might need convincing.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

But Chenamus didn't do that. He's no thief.

King-Lu shakes his head in disbelief. Cookie watches the man struggling with his thoughts.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

But they didn't care. They gutted him from neck to loin for all to see. All his guts fell out right there on the ground. The people were wailing and crying.

Cookie listens intently. King-Lu becomes more animated.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

I had a pistol in my belt and I took a shot at them. I got one in the neck, I think. And then they came after me, and I fled into the woods. That was two days ago.

COOKIE

What happened to your clothes?

KING-LU

I took them off while I was running. Stuffed them in hollow trees. Threw my gun in a creek. I'm lucky to have my shoes. I was out of my mind for a while there. And then I found you. I thank you for the food. And the clothes.

King-Lu is obviously traumatized and exhausted. He rubs his face with his hands.

COOKIE
Come on. You can sleep.

Cookie helps him up.

EXT. CAMP - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie and King-Lu creep past the sleeping men and A DONKEY towards Cookie's tent.

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

INT. COOKIE'S TENT - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

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

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

INT. TENT - MORNING

The morning sun cast shadows on the tent walls.

Cookie awakens.

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

Cookie sees that King-Lu is gone.

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

INT. TENT / EXT. CAMP - CONTINUOUS - MORNING

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

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

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

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

He speaks to everyone in ear shot:

TRAPPER 3
Move out! We got us some
directions! Due north to Fort
Tillikum. Two day's journey.

The trappers grumble their pleasure.

Cookie closes his tent flap.

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

Cookie takes in the new situation.

EXT. WOODS - LATER - DAY

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

The donkey pulls the sled of cooking supplies and provisions.

Cookie trails towards the rear carrying his own heavy load.

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

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

Their eyes meet. They say nothing.

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

EXT. WOODS - LATER - DAY

The trapping party continues slogging.

TRAPPER 4
I need food. Food!

TRAPPER 1
Food!

TRAPPER 4
I'll shoot somethin.

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

TRAPPER 2

What else he say?

TRAPPER 3

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

TRAPPER 4

Women?

TRAPPER 3

More than one.

The men grumble, emboldened. They march on.

EXT. WOODS - SOON - DAY

Cookie walks alongside his provisions sled pulled by the donkey.

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

They keep walking.

EXT. RIVER - LATE AFTERNOON

The trappers arrive at a wide, beautiful river. The sun is setting. The trees on the far side are dense, just like the trees on their side.

TRAPPER 3

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

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

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

TRAPPER 4

(calling from nearby)

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

TRAPPER 2

We'll be there tomorrow. Eat your hand.

TRAPPER 4

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

He comes over and shoves Cookie.

TRAPPER 4 (CONT'D)

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

He shoves Cookie again.

TRAPPER 4 (CONT'D)

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

TRAPPER 3

Leave him alone.

The trappers square off and Cookie scurries away.

EXT. RIVER - MOMENTS LATER - LATE AFTERNOON

Cookie wanders down by the water, flustered and afraid.

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

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

Cookie hurries back up to the camp.

EXT. RIVERSIDE CAMP - CONTINUOUS - LATE AFTERNOON

Cookie locates a butterfly net among his things.

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

He catches his breath, afraid for King-Lu.

The trapper rips out some boxes and rope, digging for something.

But no King-Lu.

Cookie is relieved. He doesn't wait around.

He heads back down to the water.

EXT. RIVER - CONTINUOUS - LATE AFTERNOON / DUSK

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

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

He stumbles along, pulling fish from the river, tossing them on land, and when he's done he goes ashore.

He finds his clothes lying on the bank.

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

Cookie watches him swimming strongly towards the other side.

He makes no gesture.

He turns and goes.

The men are calling for dinner.

EXT. SHIP IN THE FOG - MORNING - ANOTHER DAY

Through the thick morning mist, A COW appears.

The animal seems to be floating over the river.

The lapping water is even and hushed.

Soon a flatbed ferry boat comes into view.

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

EXT. FORT - RIVER BANK

The ferry boat is beached.

A SWARTHY SAILOR MAN leads the cow off the ferry, onto the shore.

A CHINOOK MAN, WOMAN and CHILD gather and watch as the cow arrives on land.

LLOYD, a corporate guard approaches, handing papers over to the sailor. The sailor looks at the papers and shrugs. He gives the reins of the cow to THOMAS, a ten year old boy standing alongside Lloyd.

The cow, still getting its land legs, young Thomas, and Lloyd head off for the misty trees.

Up the bank wait the walls of a trading fort.

ANOTHER CHINOOK WOMAN watches them go.

EXT. FORT - TWO WEEKS LATER - DAY

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

Outside the fence, imposing fir trees and a drab flea market at the edge of the world. A few INDIANS, RUSSIANS, BRITONS, and FRENCHMEN barter back and forth on blankets laid with nails, herbs, knives, whatever might have some value.

Cookie, cleaner, with new boots, walks among the MEN and WOMEN, lonely. He overhears snippets of conversation floating through the drizzle. They talk about trade, weather, gossip. His feet slurp in the mud. Someone teases him about his new boots. He keeps moving.

Cookie walks to the edge of "town."

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Cookie stands under the boughs of the fir trees and counts his money. A handful of silver coins.

Now where to go?

He sits on a stump, with nothing to do.

From the woods appears a LITTLE GIRL with pigtails in a gingham dress. She carries an empty wooden bucket.

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

He follows her.

EXT. FORT - CONTINUOUS - DAY

The little girl wanders past the traders Cookie just left. She enters the fort's walls. And Cookie enters behind her.

INT. FORT - CONTINUOUS - DAY

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

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

Cookie follows.

She goes into the saloon, passing through its burlap door.

Cookie waits outside.

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

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

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

Cookie has nowhere to go but into the saloon.

INT. SALOON - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Cookie enters the bar.

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

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

COOKIE
Whiskey, please.

The drink appears.

BARTENDER
Two.

COOKIE

Two what?

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

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

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

LLOYD

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

SAILOR

San Luis Obispo is what I heard.

LLOYD

(to the sailor)
I think I'd know.

SAILOR

(shrugs)
I heard San Luis Obispo.

LLOYD

(ignoring the sailor)
He bought two cows. And a calf. But the other ones died on the way.

MAN

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

LLOYD

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

MAN

Like a proper lady.

They laugh.

SAILOR

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

LLOYD

No place for white men either then.

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

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

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

Cookie keeps to himself, making eyes with the baby. But behind him, a bar patron, PAT, has noted the new arrival and can't keep his mouth shut.

PAT

Look who's here. Brilliant William. Hey, I need a few sun beams, William. Can you gather me up a dozen sun beams? Any old beams will do.

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

PAT (CONT'D)

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

Some of the other men in the saloon laugh. William is not pleased but stays focused on his drink. Only Cookie can hear him mutter:

WILLIAM

Sonsabitches. Sonsabitches. Trappers all sonsabitches.

PAT

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

BARTENDER

Leave it alone.

Pat gets up. He comes near William.

PAT

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

He touches William's back.

PAT (CONT'D)

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

BARTENDER

I'd lay off, bud.

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

PAT

Willy, you better do something or your head's gonna blow.

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

WILLIAM

You watch him til I'm done.

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

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

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

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

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

Cookie and the baby sit alone at the bar. Cookie sighs, looks at the baby.

A VOICE

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

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

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

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

COOKIE

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

King Lu crosses the room with his beer.

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

KING-LU

(sitting next to Cookie)

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

King-Lu sips his beer.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

Where are all your kind friends?

COOKIE

They mostly went south. Some north.

KING-LU

But not you.

COOKIE

Not yet. No one would have me.

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

KING-LU

And where are you staying in the
mean time?

COOKIE

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

KING-LU

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

COOKIE

(unsure)

Ah ha.

A beat.

KING-LU

I'm askin if you'd like to come
help me drink it.

COOKIE

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

He nods at the baby.

KING-LU

Leave him. He'll be fine.

COOKIE

But... He's just a child.

KING-LU

He'll be fine.

Cookie hands the baby a cork to play with.

COOKIE

You stay here. Your daddy will be
back soon.

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

EXT. WOODS - SOON - AFTERNOON

Cookie and King-Lu walk.

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

KING-LU

... I've been in these parts close
to two years now.

(MORE)

KING-LU (CONT'D)

I'm just biding my time til I hit on a plan. I've tried leaving more than once, but I sense opportunity here, Cookie. I haven't figured how to tap it yet, but I feel it. Ships coming in and out every week. More raw materials than anywhere on earth. I've been most everywhere by now, and I'll tell you, this is a land of riches.

COOKIE

Uh huh. Where else have you been?

They stop to check some of King-Lu's traps along the way. The traps are make-shift; a scrap of fish for bait.

The birds pick at the ground surrounding this trap. King-Lu lifts the heavy wood and pulls out a dead squirrel. He puts the carcass in his shoulder bag, never slowing his storytelling.

KING-LU

I caught my first trade ship from Canton when I was nine. My mama was Chinese; my daddy was a sailor; guess I took after him.

They move along.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

I sailed to London. Went to Africa, saw the pyramids. Saw the southern cross. When I got here, though, I saw something I hadn't seen before. Pretty much everywhere's been touched now. But this is still new. More nameless things around here than you could shake an eel at.

COOKIE

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

KING-LU

I see your point. What I'm saying is, history isn't here yet. Or just barely.

They arrive at the next trap. King-Lu Lifts the fallen flat rock. Cookie picks up the smashed squirrel by it's tail. King-Lu opens his bag and Cookie drops the squirrel in.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
It's coming, don't get me wrong.
But we got here early. We beat
history this time. Maybe this time
we can be ready for it.

Cookie likes the sound of that.

EXT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - AFTERNOON

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

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

A long wooden yoke leans against the hutch, on the ground a covered bucket of water.

The two men walk inside.

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

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

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

KING-LU
Not much to look at, I know. But
good light in the morning. Good
windbreak behind. Hard to find a
spot with room for a garden, what
with all the trees. I haven't
planted anything yet but it'll grow
when I do. Good conditions.

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

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

KING-LU (CONT'D)
Here's to something. To a leg up on
history.

They drink.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
I'll get a fire going. You make
yourself easy.

King-Lu exits to chop some wood.

Cookie looks around the hovel.

He finds a broom and starts sweeping.

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

Cookie shakes out the rug.

King-Lu chops wood in the near distance.

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

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

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

Cookie puts the flowers in an empty bottle.

King-Lu enters with an arm load of wood.

KING-LU
Looks better already!

He starts making a fire.

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

COOKIE
Maryland.

KING-LU
Never been.

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

KING-LU
Not fine enough to stay, eh?

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

KING-LU
Or everywhere.

COOKIE

That's a better way of thinking.

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

MONTAGE OF DAYS:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Grouching among the branches of a thick bush, Cookie and King-Lu gather nuts.

Cookie fills his basket.

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

KING-LU

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

COOKIE

Why don't you?

KING-LU

Oil is in the glands. Glands never make it to the fort. Just rot away in the woods. And anyway, I don't have contacts in Canton. They hate a half-breed. Worse than a white man to them.

INT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - ANOTHER DAY

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

King-Lu bathes in a tub of heated water; Cookie tends the fire...

KING-LU

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

Cookie pours hot water into King Lu's bath.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

Something you can pack up and send.
But you can't just grow a tree like
that. It takes time.

EXT. RIVER - ANOTHER DAY

Cookie and King-Lu fish in the river. A big rock stands on
the other side.

KING-LU

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

COOKIE

You need leverage.

KING-LU

Or a crime.

King Lu watches his line, thinking.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

What about you, Cookie? What's your
scheme? I know you got one. The
quiet ones always do.

COOKIE

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

KING-LU

Hotel. That's nice.

COOKIE

Or a bakery.

Cookie steps into the cold river, following his line, it's hooked to something.

KING-LU

How about both? A hotel and bakery.
With wild blueberry pies. You could
do that here.

COOKIE

Someplace warmer.

KING-LU

Warmer then.

Cookie makes his way back to shore. He fixes his line. Throws it back into the river.

They fish in silence, lost in their own thoughts.

King-Lu sees Cookie admiring the rock formation across the river.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

That's the gift from the Great
Mystery. Coyote made it by twisting
young lenzel shoots into a rope and
stretching it across the creek, and
he turned the rope into rocks. So
they say.

COOKIE

Do you believe in that story?

KING-LU

Can't say what I believe. I believe
different things in different
places. It's good to be shifty in a
new country. You never know who
might end up writing the rules come
sundown.

MONTAGE ENDS

EXT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - DAY

King-Lu naps in a hammock.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

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

EXT. CLEARING NEAR CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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

Cookie stares at the cow. It's eyes are big and brown. It's coat shines in the sun.

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

INT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - LATE AFTERNOON

Cookie cooks.

King-Lu is mending a pair of pants.

COOKIE

I found the cow today.

KING-LU

Did you now.

King-Lu keeps mending.

COOKIE

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

KING-LU

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

COOKIE

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

King-Lu finishes mending. He cuts the thread with his teeth.

KING-LU

So's everyone.

King-Lu shakes out his pants and steps into them. He gazes down at the hem of his pants.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
(staring at his feet)
What else would you need for good
biscuits, Cookie?

COOKIE
Flour, some sugar, salt, baking
soda.

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

COOKIE
Not long.

KING-LU
Make much noise?

COOKIE
No.

KING-LU
Can cows give milk at night?

COOKIE
As long as she wasn't milked after
dinner.

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

EXT. WOODS NEAR CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

An owl hoots.

Cookie and King-Lu sneak through the woods with a bucket.

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

They find the cow in the moonlight.

EXT. EDGE OF COW MEADOW - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

King-Lu climbs a tree at the edge of the clearing to stand
guard.

KING-LU
(whispering)
If I see anything, I'll give a
call. I'll do an owl. Who-who.

COOKIE
(looking up)
All right.

EXT. COW MEADOW - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie gently approaches the cow.

The cow lows softly. Cookie speaks to her softly.

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

Cookie kneels and begins milking the cow.

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

The cow is happy to have Cookie nearby.

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

From the branches, King-Lu watches vigilantly.

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

Down below, Cookie milks. The streams of milk splash in the
bucket.

EXT. COW MEADOW - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie rises. He nods at King-Lu.

COOKIE
(to cow)
Thank you.

King-Lu descends. They retreat back into the forest.

INT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - BEFORE DAWN

Cookie makes biscuits.

He turns the butter using a small makeshift churn.

He mixes the ingredients.

He cooks the batch in a Dutch oven in the stone hearth.

EXT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - DAWN

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

He goes to the covered bucket by the front door. He takes the tin cup that hangs on the side of the bucket, scoops out a cup of water, and takes it over to the chicken coop.

INT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - EARLY MORNING

As the sun rises, King-Lu shuffles in from outdoors in his sleeping clothes.

He takes a seat at the table.

Cookie serves up the first batch of biscuits.

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

Cookie and King-Lu eat.

KING-LU

Oh my. That is good.

COOKIE

I wish we had honey.

KING-LU

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

COOKIE

Around here? I don't know.

KING-LU

A glass of whiskey is two silver coins. A pickle is three. The men walking out of the fort are loaded with silver, and they've got nothing to spend it on. I've seen men spend ten silver pieces on a length of rope.

King-Lu stands. Then he sits again. Cookie eats his biscuit.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

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

COOKIE

Seems dangerous.

KING-LU

So's anything worth doing.

Cookie thinks, studying the plain biscuit.

COOKIE

I think they'd like something sweeter.

EXT. FORT - DAY

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

Cookie and King-Lu arrive carrying a blanket of their own, and a basket.

They lay out the blanket on the edge of the market. On top of the blanket they lay a plank of cedar. On the cedar, they lay a row of primitive donuts. Fried, sugared, puffy dough. Powdered with sugar.

They sit and wait.

EXT. FORT - SOON - DAY

Soon enough, TWO TRAPPERS wander over.

TRAPPER

What have we here?

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

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

KING-LU
It isn't.

TRAPPER 2
Looks like some kind of pancake.

TRAPPER
Smells good. What's in it?

KING-LU
Secret ingredient.

TRAPPER 2
What is it?

KING-LU
Ancient Chinese secret.

TRAPPER 2
How much?

KING-LU
Five ingots.

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

He bites into it. Ecstasy appears on his face.

TRAPPER 2
(mouth full)
Good lord, that's something. Dish
me up another.

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

A small bidding war ensues.

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

TRAPPER 4
Seven.

LLOYD

Eight.

TRAPPER 4

Eight?

KING-LU

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

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

Thomas scowls, kicks the dirt. Cookie watches.

EXT. WOODS - AFTERNOON

Cookie and King-Lu walk home talking and laughing, the empty basket over King-Lu's shoulder.

They playfully push each other, recount the day's victory.

EXT. COW MEADOW - NIGHT

The moon is high.

In the darkness, the cow awaits.

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

Cookie milks quietly, surreptitiously, now with a milking stool.

Cookie whispers sweetly to the cow.

COOKIE

There now. We made some oily cakes
with your milk. They were very
good. We couldn't sell them fast
enough. A little sugar on them.
What a good cow. It was your milk
in the batter that did it. That's
right.

The cow lows softly.

The moon blankets them.

EXT. FORT - LATE MORNING

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

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

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

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

KING-LU

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

TRAPPER A

You oughtta make more next time.

KING-LU

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

TRAPPER B

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

KING-LU

That's right. We'd do more, but we want to keep you wanting em.

TRAPPER B

What's in these things? It tastes like something my mama made.

KING-LU

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

The oily cakes go quickly again. The last one is sold to the trapper in line just behind Thomas who pushes his money in King-Lu's face, right over the boy's head.

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

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

Cookie and King-Lu are back home, their money stacked on the rustic table.

KING-LU
Fifty silver, three gold. A pretty little package for a few day's work.

COOKIE
You could buy an acre in California for that.

KING-LU
Or build something on the property we've got staked here. It's a start all right. It won't last much longer, though.

COOKIE
No?

KING-LU
No, they'll get tired of it. And more milk cows will be here soon. We've got a window here, that's all. Make hay while the sun shines.

They regard their money.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
This is too much to keep in the house, Cookie. We need a bank.

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

King-Lu concurs.

They walk outside.

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

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

COOKIE
I wish I could buy a real butter churn.

KING-LU
Wish you could, too. I'll help with
the churning tonight.

COOKIE
What now?

KING-LU
Swim?

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Cookie and King-Lu romp in the cold water, enjoying their
afternoon of leisure.

EXT. FLEA MARKET - NEXT DAY

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

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

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

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

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

LLOYD (CONT'D)
(to Thomas)
Don't you have some work you should
be doing.

King-Lu is already selling to the gathered men.

EXT. FORT - SOON

The gate opens and the CHIEF FACTOR emerges from the fort.

He's a stately, imposing figure, older and more dignified
than anyone else in the territory. He has wild white hair and
mutton chops, and wears a waistcoat with starched collar.

He walks the short path from the fort with a decorative cane.

He nods to some passing CITIZENS, but walks directly to the oily cake area and comes to a stop. Cookie and King-Lu look at him expectantly.

CHIEF FACTOR

I've heard about your cakes. I'd like to try one, if I may. How much?

KING-LU

Yes, sir. For you, only ten silver pieces.

He pulls his purse from his coat and pays.

Cookie prepares him an oily cake.

COOKIE

A little cinnamon is nice.

Cookie offers a small sprinkle of cinnamon.

The Chief Factor eats.

He loves it.

CHIEF FACTOR

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

COOKIE

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

CHIEF FACTOR

He was a good baker.

COOKIE

Indeed. He was.

CHIEF FACTOR

What was his name?

COOKIE

Barnaby Furnace.

CHIEF FACTOR

Never heard of him. I commend you on a delicious baked good, sir. I hope you won't be moving on too soon.

KING-LU
We have no plans.

The Chief Factor ignores him.

COOKIE
We have no plans.

CHIEF FACTOR
(taking his last bite)
Very good.

The Chief Factor bows and leaves.

Cookie and King-Lu watch him go.

The other vendors call for customers.

EXT. WOODS NEAR CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cookie and King-Lu sneak through the woods.

KING-LU
(whispering)
... a hotel in San Francisco is
harder. More competition. But more
opportunity, too. More people
coming through.

EXT. COW MEADOW - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Into the meadow they creep.

KING-LU
(whispering)
It's a good idea. We'll have enough
to go there soon enough.

COOKIE
(whispering)
We have enough to go now.

KING-LU
(whispering)
Enough to go. But nothing more.

King-Lu starts climbing his tree.

Cookie continues towards the cow.

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

Cookie looks back.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
Another cup is another dozen cakes.
That's another forty silver pieces,
at least. A few more squirts.

Cookie goes to the cow.

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

Another secret milking begins. The bucket begins to fill.

A faraway dog starts barking.

Cookie's nervous.

Cookie does a questioning owl sound.

COOKIE (CONT'D)
Who who?

No response. Cookie keeps milking.

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

Cookie fills the bucket as much as he can bear.

EXT. FLEA MARKET - LATE MORNING

A blot of batter fries in oil.

Cookie flips it. Pulls it out. Sprinkles sugar on it.

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

CHIEF FACTOR
Very good.

COOKIE

Good morning, sir. Here you go.

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

The Chief Factor eats.

CHIEF FACTOR

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

COOKIE

I do.

CHIEF FACTOR

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

COOKIE

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

CHIEF FACTOR

Have you tried the bilberry?

COOKIE

No.

CHIEF FACTOR

The bilberry is a very delicious berry. They're still in season. I would pay handsomely for a proper clafoutis.

COOKIE

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

CHIEF FACTOR

Capital. Saturday then. A clafoutis. We'll be dining at my residence.

COOKIE

(on the spot)

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

CHIEF FACTOR
(departing)
Tea time.

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

EXT. WOODS - AFTERNOON

Cookie hunts for bilberries in the forest.

King-Lu tags along.

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

KING-LU
The hotels in San Francisco are grand. We can't compete on that scale. But regular travelers need shelter, too. A room with a bed, that's all. A few rooms near the sea. That's a start.

COOKIE
Up the coast. It could be cheaper.

KING-LU
But near enough to a port for supplies.

COOKIE
Of course.

INT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - NIGHT

Cookie bakes at home. He mixes the ingredients of the clafoutis in a bowl. He pours the batter into a square pan.

As he works, he and King-Lu talk.

KING-LU
... begin with three rooms, in addition to our own, and if we choose the right site, we can add more rooms as we go.

COOKIE
(stirring)
That sounds wise.

KING-LU

And if we choose the site very well, we can add the garden and the corn rows outside, and let the rows spread.

COOKIE

Exactly. A hotel and a farm.

The clafoutis goes into their make-shift oven.

KING-LU

This is a dangerous game we're playing here. The Chief Factor has a delicate palate. He'll taste his own milk in there eventually.

COOKIE

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

KING-LU

Where does he think the milk is coming from?

COOKIE

Some people can't imagine being stolen from. They're too strong. Let's hope he's one of those.

The cooking goes on.

KING-LU

How much will we charge?

COOKIE

20?

KING-LU

25.

EXT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - NIGHT

Cookie wanders outside.

Under the moon he smokes a tranquil cheroot.

A gentle owl calls somewhere in the night.

EXT. FORT - AFTERNOON

Cookie and King-Lu walk the clafoutis to the party.

The regular, torpid scene passes by. A few TRAPPERS watch as they stroll along with their cake.

INT. CHIEF FACTOR'S ABODE - SOON - AFTERNOON

The GUESTS are collected in the living room.

A CAPTAIN, dressed in European nautical garb; a local Indian CHIEF, in local regalia; and his WIFE, in a combination of local and foreign dress.

The Chief Factor is also there, and THE FACTOR'S WIFE, a native woman.

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

CHIEF FACTOR

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

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

CAPTAIN

Twenty. It was a memorable day for that man.

CHIEF FACTOR

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

CAPTAIN

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

CHIEF FACTOR

He was a young hand?

CAPTAIN

Not so young.

CHIEF FACTOR

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

Cookie and King-Lu near the residence.

CHIEF FACTOR (CONT'D)
 Sometimes a properly rendered death
 is even useful in the ultimate
 accounting. It can be a vastly
 motivating spectacle for the
 indolent, let alone the mutinous.

Cookie and King-Lu arrive.

A knock at the door.

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

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

CHIEF FACTOR
 (his back to his guests)
 No, there you are wrong, Captain.
 Any question that can't be
 calculated is not worth asking.

The Chief Factor turns to greet Cookie with some pleasure.

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

Cookie brings the cake over. The group admires his handiwork.

The captain smells it, impressed.

CAPTAIN
 (looking at Cookie)
 Mister...

COOKIE
 Figowitz.

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

COOKIE
 Chance. I hired on with a trapping
 company.

CAPTAIN
Ashley's men?

COOKIE
No. A lesser crew.

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

CHIEF FACTOR
I disagree. The beaver are endless.

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

They ignore King-Lu.

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

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

The Indian chief isn't following.

The Chief Factor's wife translates between the men.

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

The chief responds. His wife translates.

WIFE
He can't understand why the white
men hunt beaver at all. Why run
around in the woods after animals?
The salmon are abundant. Hunting is
for fools.

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

An awkward pause. Thankfully, the servant brings tea.

CHIEF FACTOR
Ah, here we are.

Tea is poured for the guests, including Cookie.

CHIEF FACTOR (CONT'D)
Chinese black tea. Very subtle.
Cream?

CAPTAIN
Thank you.

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

CAPTAIN
You have a cow?

CHIEF FACTOR
She arrived only a month ago. Sans
husband, I'm afraid. I hope to have
a mate for her by the end of the
year.

CAPTAIN
She's the only cow in the region?

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

Cookie is clearly invited, too.

EXT. COW MEADOW - LATE AFTERNOON

The women have stayed behind. The men walk from the house to
the meadow.

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

CAPTAIN

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

Without taking much interest, the Indian Chief lets the non-sensical chatter float around him.

CHIEF FACTOR

History moves so quickly in Paris.

CAPTAIN

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

The cow stands alone, chewing grass.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

She looks well enough.

CHIEF FACTOR

And yet she barely produces. She's afraid of the wildlife here. For good reason.

CAPTAIN

What's her provenance?

CHIEF FACTOR

A good line. Half Montbeliarde, half Holstein-Frisian. By way of Austria by way of Pennsylvania.

The cow edges towards Cookie. The cow lows softly.

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

The Indian Chief, Chief Factor and Captain watch Cookie petting the cow.

King-Lu watches them watching.

CAPTAIN

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

Cookie becomes self conscious and stops petting the cow.

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

INT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - NIGHT

Cookie and King-Lu drink whiskey.

KING-LU
Holstein-Frisian? The cow's got
better breeding than me. A royal
cow.

COOKIE
I think we should pause awhile. I
think The Captain sensed something.

KING-LU
Now is our time. Another cow is on
the way. And more cows after that.
The value of this milk, and
anything you make with the milk,
can only go down. If we want to
fill our coffers, we make hay now.

COOKIE
The Chief Factor...

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

Cookie doesn't respond.

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

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

COOKIE
I know.

KING-LU
We'll sell what we can and make our
way south.

(MORE)

KING-LU (CONT'D)

We haven't even begun, Cookie. This is only the part before the beginning.

Cookie drinks, reluctantly agreeing.

INT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - NIGHT

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

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

EXT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

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

INT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

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

The CAPTAIN snores on a daybed, spending the night.

EXT. MEADOW - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Below, in the meadow, the cow stands in the moonlight.

Cookie approaches the cow with his stool.

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

King-Lu climbs his tree.

INT. SERVANT'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

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

He slips on his night gown.

He carries a glass lantern over to his bedside table. He gets on his knees beside his bed and begins to silently pray.

EXT. MEADOW - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

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

COOKIE
There, there. Shhhh.

The sound of the milk spraying in the bucket. Shhh. Shhh.

Cookie milks.

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

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

In the meadow, Cookie milks, lightly pressing his head against the cow's side.

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

INT. SERVANT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

The servant lays in bed reading by the light of his lantern.

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

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

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

EXT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

The servant peers into the darkness.

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

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

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

The cat runs into the night.

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS

King-Lu gives the warning call.

KING-LU

Who..

EXT. MEADOW - CONTINUOUS

KING-LU

Who...

Cookie stops milking.

EXT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

In his slippered feet, the servant walks further towards the meadow.

SERVANT

Inside before you get me in trouble.

A CRACKING SOUND FROM THE MEADOW.

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

SERVANT (CONT'D)

Who's there?

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

King-Lu keeps very still.

EXT. MEADOW - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie is hunched low behind the cow.

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

EXT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

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

Another long CRACK...

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

A branch breaks! A thrashing, clunking tumble as King-Lu falls from the tree.

KING-LU

Argh!

King-Lu hits the ground with a loud thud. He can't help but groan.

EXT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

The servant runs inside.

EXT. MEADOW / TREE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

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

COOKIE

(whispering)

Are you all right?

King-Lu grunts.

KING-LU

(in pain)

Shhh.

EXT. CHIEF FACTOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

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

INT. BUNK HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

The servant pushes open the door and kicks the man sleeping on the bottom bunk. It's Lloyd.

LLOYD

What?

SERVANT

Something, someone in the meadow!
An attack.

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

LLOYD
Goddamn it, Thomas!

SERVANT
I've alerted the house. Get
dressed, hurry!

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

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

LLOYD
Just where the hell do you think
you're going?

Lloyd laughs at the idea of it.

EXT. MEADOW NEAR THE TREE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

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

COOKIE
Can you move? We have to go!

The cow is between them and the house. The Chief Factor comes out of the house with his gun in hand. And the Captain.

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

CHIEF FACTOR
You there. Come out!

They stare at each other in silent, appalled communication.

The Chief Factor fires his gun.

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

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

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

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie and King-Lu plunge into the woods.

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

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

The Chief factor puts on his pants.

Lloyd arrives.

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

CAPTAIN

It would appear someone has been milking your cow.

CHIEF FACTOR

(seeing the stool)
Mr. Figowitz!

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie and King-Lu run.

Cookie bends onto the path leading home.

But King-Lu grabs him.

KING-LU

No. Not home. Keep going.

They run deeper into the woods.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

They make their way through the brush.

The sound of a distant gun shot.

EXT. WOODS / CLEARING / CLIFF - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

They come to a clearing before a cliff.

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

Behind them, rising sounds.

Without a word, they agree to jump. They need a good start to clear the bank below. Cookie looks doubtful. King-Lu looks resolved.

They back up for a running start.

They run, full tilt.

King-Lu jumps off the cliff into the night.

Cookie is too afraid. He doesn't jump.

Peering over the edge, into the darkness, he hears the splash of King-Lu's landing.

EXT. RIVER / SHORE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

King-Lu emerges. And begins thrashing towards shore.

He scrambles ashore.

King-Lu looks around realizing Cookie hasn't jumped.

He looks up in the darkness, he can almost make out Cookie, He gestures for Cookie to jump.

EXT. CLIFF ABOVE THE RIVER - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie stands at the edge of the cliff unable to see his friend below, still unable to make himself jump.

EXT. RIVER SIDE BELOW CLIFF - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

King-Lu gestures again, more angrily.

Unable to see Cookie, he gives up and flees.

EXT. WOODS / CLEARING / CLIFF - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie, hearing the approaching men, hides in a bush.

From his hiding place, he can see The Chief Factor, the Captain and Lloyd as they arrive at the clearing.

THE CAPTAIN

Which way?

They are looking about for movement, listening for sound. Lloyd notices footprints. With his lantern, he follows the prints to the edge of the cliff.

They all go to the cliff and look over.

Lloyd keeps snooping, following another set of prints over to the edge of the brush. Cookie lays low and still as the lantern light sweeps above him.

CHIEF FACTOR (OS)

Lloyd, you get down there. There's
a path upriver. I'm going to kill
that little invert so help me god.
Stealing my milk.

The men split up. The Chief Factor and The Captain run right by Cookie's head.

When things settle down, Cookie creeps from the bush and heads in the other direction.

Behind him, the known world recedes.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

King-Lu passes looming trees, pushes through thick ferns. The sound of the river close by.

EXT. WOODS - ELSEWHERE - NIGHT

The forest is dark.

Cookie hikes, fearful.

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

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

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

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

EXT. RAVINE - NIGHT

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

Pain and darkness all around.

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

EXT. WOODS NEAR A RIVER - NIGHT

A cloud passes over the moon and the world is thrown in shadow.

In the same silence, King-Lu pauses to gain his bearings. Beyond the trees, the water barely seems to move.

King-Lu waits, listening, smelling, sensing the best path through the hidden world.

INT. COTTAGE - PRE DAWN

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

Through his dimming consciousness An OLDER COUPLE comes into view.

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

The room darkens, Cookie is out again.

INT. COTTAGE - MORNING

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

Cookie smells it and recoils.

WOMAN

Drink, drink. It will make you feel better.

Cookie drinks, wincing. He's thirsty.

COOKIE

(discombobulated)
Where am I?

WOMAN

No one will find you here.

COOKIE

Who are you?

WOMAN

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

Cookie takes a few more sips, then resting his throbbing head.

He struggles against sleep but the room quickly dims.

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

Cookie awakens. He is alone.

Cookie touches his swollen face, his cracked head.

He looks around, trying to focus.

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

The old woman is at the stove.

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

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

COOKIE

I... I need to find my friend.

WOMAN

You are safe here. Nothing can harm you.

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

COOKIE

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

The woman finally turns to face him. She is suddenly young, looking like an angel. She holds a baby in her arms.

WOMAN

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

EXT. WOODS / RIVER SIDE - DAY

Feet walk on the rough ground.

King Lu emerges from the woods. He goes and sits by the river. He takes off his shoes and soaks his sore feet.

EXT. RIVER SIDE - DAY

King Lu keeps to the river's edge as he continues his journey up river. He maneuvers the rocks and tree roots.

EXT. RIVER SIDE - DAY

King-Lu comes around a bend in the river. He spots a beached canoe.

He ponders the canoe. A small, wooden one. A LARGE DOG sits inside it.

No one else is around.

King-Lu goes closer to the canoe and admires it. He keeps his distance, unsure of the dog.

He is thinking how to steal the canoe, when a CHINOOKAN MAN emerges from the brush.

The man stands and watches him grimly.

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

KING-LU

Good day.

CHINOOK MAN

Hello.

KING-LU

I need to get upriver. Can you take me in this canoe?

CHINOOK MAN

I don't think I can. No.

KING-LU

I need to go.

CHINOOK MAN

How much would you pay?

KING-LU

I don't have much on me. What do you want?

CHINOOK MAN

A knife?

KING-LU
I don't have a knife.

CHINOOK MAN
How about a bell?

KING-LU
A bell?

CHINOOK MAN
One of those metal cups with the
little tongue inside and when you
shake it it makes the sound: dinga
ling a ling?

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

CHINOOK MAN
What do you have?

King-Lu looks himself over. Nothing.

CHINOOK MAN (CONT'D)
Those buttons.

The Chinook man nods at his buttons. King-Lu looks down.

King-Lu pulls all the buttons from his coat.

The Chinook man seems pleased enough.

EXT. RIVER - CONTINUOUS - AFTERNOON

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

The Chinook man paddles steadily from the rear.

King-Lu is relieved to be moving.

EXT. RIVER - CONTINUOUS - AFTERNOON

They continue paddling along.

The Chinook man is uncommunicative.

KING-LU
I'm going near the fort. Not to the
fort. But near.

The Chinook man seems to hear.

He keeps paddling.

In the distance: another canoe.

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

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

They call out to each other over the water.

The Chinook man alters course.

They head for the other canoe.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

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

CHINOOK MAN

Don't worry.

They continue towards the other canoe.

King-Lu has no way out.

EXT. RIVER - CONTINUOUS - AFTERNOON

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

In the other canoe is a young Chinook man with a few large fish.

The two Chinook men talk in their native tongue.

King-Lu waits in anger and disbelief.

At last, the other canoe starts to move.

And Cookie's canoe follows.

KING-LU

What are we doing?

They head for the opposite shore.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

You're taking me upstream. I paid you.

CHINOOK MAN

I am. I am.

EXT. OPPOSITE RIVER BANK - CONTINUOUS - AFTERNOON

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

The Chinook men get out, the one with his fish.

King-Lu grudgingly waits.

EXT. RIVER SLOUGH - CONTINUOUS - AFTERNOON

The Chinook men walk into a reedy part of the river.

A YOUNG WOMAN with a BABY tied to her back is digging for wapato roots in the marshy earth.

The Chinook men call greetings to the woman, she vaguely greets them back.

King-Lu's ride goes over and talks to the younger women.

EXT. CANOE - CONTINUOUS - AFTERNOON

The afternoon is wearing on.

King-Lu watches his ride talk to the young woman.

Frustrated, he gets out of the canoe and goes to catch up with his ride.

EXT. RIVER SHORE - CONTINUOUS - LATE AFTERNOON

The other man, meanwhile, goes under some trees and takes a nap.

EXT. RIVER SLOUGH - CONTINUOUS - LATE AFTERNOON

King-Lu approaches the Chinook man, watching as he hovers around the young woman collecting her wapato.

She doesn't respond to the Chinook man, he appears unhappy.

EXT. SHORE - CONTINUOUS - AFTERNOON

The Chinook man goes over to ANOTHER WOMAN who kneels on the shore. He starts talking to her. She responds to him without stopping her work or turning to face him. She doesn't seem to tell him what he wants to hear.

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

KING-LU

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

Hearing King-Lu's voice, the woman turns around. The Chinook man looks at King-Lu without expression. He takes the buttons from his pouch and hands two of them back to King-Lu.

KING-LU (CONT'D)

All of them.

CHINOOK MAN

I took you part way.

KING-LU

I'm not any closer than I was!

CHINOOK MAN

You are.

The woman comes over to inspect the buttons in King-Lu's hand.

KING-LU

(his hand open)

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

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

King-Lu is despondent.

The woman says something to the Chinook man. He says something back.

The Chinook man turns back to King-Lu.

CHINOOK MAN

Give me the buttons back. I'll take
you upriver.

KING-LU

I need to go right now.

CHINOOK MAN

Good.

KING-LU

No waiting. No other stops.

CHINOOK MAN

Good.

KING-LU

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

CHINOOK MAN

All the buttons.

KING-LU

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

CHINOOK MAN

Three buttons.

KING-LU

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

The Chinook man ponders, displeased. He looks at the woman.
Grudgingly, he agrees.

EXT. RIVER - LATE AFTERNOON

The canoe skims across the water.
King-Lu grimly watches the horizon.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Cookie rises. His head throbs.
The couple sleeps.
Agonizingly, he leans over to put on his shoes.
He creeps outside.

EXT. COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cookie makes his way through the darkness to the edge of the
clearing.
He stands before the wall of trees.
He stares blearily into the blackness, hearing the howls of
hungry animals. Nearby wolves. Distant coyotes.

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

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

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

INT. COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

The couple sleeps.

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

He closes his eyes but he can't sleep.

He hears stirring.

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

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

Cookie is petrified.

A RAVEN is in the room.

She whispers with the raven.

They look over at Cookie.

Cookie tries to rise but he can't.

His vision is doubled.

The world spins.

EXT. WOODS NEAR KING LU'S HUTCH - MORNING

King-Lu creeps through the brush.

He pauses at a bush. Through the bush he can see his hutch.

No one is there.

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

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

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

King-Lu approaches the hutch.

Before anything, he stops at the cottonwood tree.

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

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

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

He hears something.

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

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

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

They enter King-Lu's abode.

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

He watches as the soldiers finally exit, laughing.

They loiter for a moment, the money sack hanging over them the whole time. A soldier goes and pisses on the cottonwood tree, the money bag over his head.

At last, they disappear.

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

EXT. KING-LU'S HUTCH - SOON - MORNING

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

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

King-Lu goes inside.

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

He lifts Cookie's broken churn. He puts it aside.

He picks up Cookie's whisk, also broken.

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

He picks up a fire poker.

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

He uses the fire poker to fetch the money bag.

He calls: "Who Who." No answer.

And he wanders into the woods.

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

Cookie awakens.

He is alive.

He is also alone. The old couple are gone.

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

Cookie rises. He looks around. The cottage is dusty, filled with many interesting things. The decor is part native, part Pacific Islander, part antique European, part everything. Strange masks, stuffed birds, hanging herbs and dried roots.

The cobwebs cover the objects as if they haven't been touched in a very long time.

He sees a jug on the table.

He goes to drink. But it's dry.

He goes to the door. Something is blocking it from opening more than a few feet. He slips out.

EXT. COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS - DAY

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

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

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

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

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

EXT. STREAM - DAY

YOUNG Thomas stands behind a tree watching Cookie who is across the stream.

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

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

He hears a sound and sits up, looks around.

Thomas remains unseen behind his tree.

EXT. WOODS / BLUFF - DAY

Cookie climbs through the forest.

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

He can see a distant river, and smoke from numerous fires. The fort and its surrounding abodes.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Cookie hikes into familiar ground.

He intuits his way.

Fearful and glancing over his shoulder.

EXT. NEAR KING-LU'S HUTCH - AFTERNOON

Cookie comes within sight of the hutch.

Is he dreaming? He isn't sure.

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

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

Cookie goes over to the cottonwood tree.

He approaches the knothole.

The money is gone.

He's dismayed.

Cautiously, he enters the hutch.

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

With sorrow, Cookie surveys the damage.

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

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

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

At last: a figure emerges.

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

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

Cookie stands and goes to the door.

The men see each other.

They both smile. Their happiness is overflowing.

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

COOKIE

I thought you were gone.

KING-LU

I thought you were gone.

COOKIE
I'm only late.

KING-LU
You're right on time.

King-Lu's smile fades.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
You're hurt. It's not good here. We
need to get away from here.

They start off, putting the ruined home behind them.

EXT. WOODS - LATE AFTERNOON

They walk together.

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

COOKIE
That sounds fine.

KING-LU
You made it all right?

COOKIE
I'll tell you another time.

Cookie concentrates on walking.

EXT. WOODS / CLEARING - SOON - DUSK

Cookie has trouble keeping up with King-Lu.

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

King-Lu gives Cookie the water jug.

Cookie drinks. King-Lu watches him.

KING-LU
This is a good place to rest. No
one can find us here.

COOKIE
We haven't gone very far.

KING-LU
We need a rest.

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

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

Cookie accepts the argument, whether true or not.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
Good. Lie here. On the needles.
I'll keep first watch.

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

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

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

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

The sun is getting low. King-Lu looks at Cookie sleeping. He looks at trees, feeling the money sack in his hand, weighing his options.

At last, King-Lu puts the money in the small sack he carries. He lies down beside Cookie.

KING-LU (CONT'D)
We'll go soon. I've got you.

They clasp hands.

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

The light is dimming.

An owl calls.