

WAR PARTY

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. GREAT PLAINS 1720 - DAY

A prairie dog stands on its hind legs near the entry to its burrow scanning the sky.

A red-tailed hawk circles overhead.

The prairie dog CHIRPS a warning at the hawk.

Crawling slowly through the tall grass, SCREECHING HAWK (13), with an ever present wisp of hair covering her left eye, stalks to within twenty paces of her prey.

She nocks an arrow - rises to her knees - fires.

The arrow zips silently past the animal, unseen.

She dips back into the cover of tall grass.

SCREECHING HAWK  
(hissing to herself)  
Great Bear!

Her quivering hands desperately nock a second arrow - rises slowly to her knees - looses the arrow.

The arrow flies true - skewers the prairie dog.

She rushes over - kneels beside her bloody quarry.

She dips a finger into the animals blood and draws a red line under each of her eyes.

She squeezes her eyes closed - prays over the dead animal.

SCREECHING HAWK (CONT'D)  
Thank you for your sacrifice. Let  
your vigilance become my vigilance.

When she opens her eyes, the hawk that was circling overhead lands a few feet away.

SCREECHING HAWK (CONT'D)  
Sorry. He's mine. But thank you for  
the distraction.

She reaches into her medicine bag and pulls out a slice of jerky - tosses it to the hawk.

The hawk picks up the jerky and flies away.

As she watches the hawk depart, Screeching Hawk spots a lone rider wandering across a knoll a hundred paces away.

She ducks - hiding in the grass.

DARK PAW (20s), Nehoma tribe, wears two black lines tattooed below his left eye.

SCREECHING HAWK (CONT'D)  
Nehoma scout.

Dark Paw continues on - not spotting Screeching Hawk.

Once the rider is out of sight, She cautiously departs the area.

EXT. GREAT PLAINS - LATER

Screeching Hawk approaches her meager camp site - tattered lean-to - a circle of rocks around a small fire pit.

She tosses her kill onto the ground.

About twenty paces away, she gazes upon the Camp of the Great Black Wolf.

She squats - pulls her knife - skins the prairie dog.

EXT. GREAT PLAINS - DUSK

Green and brown grasses bend in the breeze, stretching out in all directions until grass touches the sky, burnt orange by the setting sun.

EXT. CAMP OF THE GREAT BLACK WOLF - SAME

Twenty teepees and lean-tos are the prominent structures of the camp. A few fires smolder in pits.

On one edge of camp, two young boys tend a herd of grazing sky dogs tethered together with woven buffalo hair ropes.

A large fire burns at one end of camp surrounded by five families in the midst of celebration.

The group includes two girls, LOST FEATHER and SOUTH WIND, and three boys, HALF MOON, FALLING ROCK, and DEW CLAW, all in their thirteenth summer.

Screeching Hawk arrives - takes a seat a few paces away from the group.

The group goes quiet when MISTY RIVER, 30's, stands as she prepares to speak.

MISTY RIVER

It is hard to believe that thirteen summers have passed for these five sons and daughters. We feast here tonight on the eve of The Step. You five will enter the training field tomorrow as children and exit as warriors.

WALK WALK, father of one of the teens clears his throat.

WALK WALK

So long as you can pass the tests of Preceptress tomorrow.

Laughs.

MISTY RIVER

Each of you, that survive Preceptress, will be asked to choose your own path. Will some among you choose the Great Walk? May the Great Bear shine upon you no matter which path you choose.

The families clap and laugh.

Misty River takes her seat next to her son Half Moon, named for the distinctive birth mark on his left cheek.

Half Moon hugs his mother tightly.

Misty River squeezes him close - whispers in his ear.

MISTY RIVER (CONT'D)

Your father and I are so glad you have chosen to stay.

As they separate, Half Moon chuckles half-heartedly as he nods his head to his mother, then to his father.

The eating and celebrating continues into the night.

EXT. CAMP OF THE GREAT BLACK BEAR - LATER

All have gone to bed except the five teens who remain around the withering fire and Screeching Hawk who lingers nearby.

They listen intently to a story being told by Falling Rock - his bald, half-shaved head glistens in the fire light.

## FALLING ROCK

It is said that long ago, Knife Runner, was the smallest and weakest boy in his thirteenth summer. Despite his size, he was the only one to choose the Great Walk. All others stayed behind and none expected him to return alive. And so it was that he was long forgotten as two summers passed.

## FLASHBACK

Knife Runner, partially obscured by a heat haze mirage, approaches riding a sky dog, with another sky dog in tow.

## FALLING ROCK (V.O.)

One day, his mother saw a figure in the distance moving toward the camp. This man that approached could not be her son, he was not small or weak. In fact, he appeared as tall as two men. As he got closer, his mother could see that he was not as tall as two men, but he was riding a great beast and pulled another behind him. Those were the first sky dogs.

The entire village comes out and sees that the man riding the sky dog was Knife Runner.

Knife Runner tells the story of his great walk to the people.

Knife Runner walks to the edge of an arid and dry desert.

## FALLING ROCK (V.O.)

He had traveled until the grass had ended and the land was dry and hot.

Knife Runner speaks with a Conquistador riding a horse.

There he found a tall pale man dressed in the shells of giant turtles riding a sky dog. Knife Runner was afraid. What medicine created such a man, such a beast? The pale man whispered into the ear of the sky dog and the animal charged at Knife Runner.

The Conquistador charges at Knife Runner.

FALLING ROCK (V.O.)

Knife Runner was frozen with fear,  
but as the pale man on this great  
beast charged forward, Knife Runner  
pulled his blade.

Knife Runner pulls his blade and leaps upon the Conquistador -  
the two struggle.

FALLING ROCK (V.O.)

Knife Runner leapt into the air  
grabbing the pale man and pulling  
him from the sky dog. After a long  
struggle, the pale man was dead.

The bloody Conquistador lies dead.

Knife Runner pulls the Night Blade, appearing to glow black,  
from the dead man's pouch.

FALLING ROCK (V.O.)

In the pale man's pouch, Knife  
Runner found a blade that was as  
black as night and as smooth as the  
surface of water.

Knife Runner shivers - confused - amazed.

FALLING ROCK (V.O.)

When Knife Runner gripped the  
blade, he could feel the medicine  
pulse through his body. He could  
feel that the Night Blade longed  
for blood.

END FLASHBACK

It is said that Knife Runner loved  
the Night Blade even more than a  
mother loves her children. Knife  
Runner became a great warrior. He  
rode the sky dog and wielded the  
Night Blade through many battles  
and to many victories. Knife Runner  
spoke often of the Night Blade's  
desire for blood. Then one day,  
Knife Runner and his Night Blade  
disappeared and were never seen  
again. It is believed that the  
Night Blade's lust for blood drove  
Knife Runner from the camp. He who  
carries the Night Blade will become  
a great warrior.

Falling Rock looks to the sky spreading his arms wide.

FALLING ROCK

Great Bear, bestow upon me the  
Night Blade so that I may become  
your greatest warrior.

Falling Rock's friends laugh hysterically.

Screeching Hawk chuckles.

Dew Claw, grass stalk clamped between his teeth, points his  
finger at Falling Rock.

DEW CLAW

You would be the Great Bear's last  
choice. I am the bravest among us.

HALF MOON

No, I'm the bravest.

South Wind, hair tied back in two long braids, stares into  
the fire.

SOUTH WIND

Who cares about bravery? I am the  
smartest.

More laughter.

SCREECHING HAWK

That's all just a kid's story.  
It's not real.

The friends go silent.

SOUTH WIND

What's the outcast doing here?

Screeching Hawk drops her head, attempting to shrink further  
behind that wisp of hair covering the left side of her face.

LOST FEATHER

(slight lisp)

What do you mean, he's not real?

SCREECHING HAWK

I'm just saying.

PRECEPTRESS, fit but weathered, approaches the group, tapping  
her disciplinary rod on her shoulder.

LOST FEATHER

Preceptress, do you believe the story of the Knife Runner and the Night Blade?

PRECEPTRESS

I do.

SCREECHING HAWK

Has anyone ever seen the Night Blade?

PRECEPTRESS

I have not. Nor has my father, my grandfather, or my grandfather's grandfather.

SCREECHING HAWK

If no one has seen it, why do you believe?

PRECEPTRESS

I believe in the Great Bear. I believe that strong medicine can exist. The Great Bear protects us from the rise of bad medicine. I feel that the Great Bear will return the Night Blade to us when it is needed. But beware, the return of the Night Blade signals the rise of bad medicine and is an omen of dark days to come. Now, off with you. Go get some sleep. Big day tomorrow.

Preceptress wanders off into the darkness.

Falling Rock wipes beads of sweat from the bald side of his head.

FALLING ROCK

I guess she told you, outcast.

Screeching Hawk gets to her feet and walks away.

Lost Feather punches Falling Rock in the arm.

LOST FEATHER

Why do you do that?

Falling Rock rubs his arm.

FALLING ROCK

What did I do?



## LOST FEATHER

You call her outcast. We've known her our whole lives. What happened with her parents wasn't her fault.

## SOUTH WIND

You taking her side now? Maybe you'd like to join her.

Lost Feather drops her eyes.

Half Moon chimes in to change the subject.

## HALF MOON

I guess we'll have to wait and see if the Great Bear chooses one of us to carry the Night Blade.

## SOUTH WIND

I hope he picks none of us and we just skip the dark days to come part altogether.

## FALLING ROCK

I think we should rethink this whole thing and stay here with our families.

Some nod in agreement - apprehension on their faces.

## DEW CLAW

Look we talked about this. It's been decided. We're going on the great walk, together.

## SOUTH WIND

That was an easy choice to make when the decision was moons and moons in the future. But now the decision is upon us.

Half Moon stands.

## HALF MOON

I'm not going anywhere. And neither are any of you.

Half Moon turns and leaves.

Agreeing South Wind, Dew Claw, Lost Feather, and Falling Rock quickly rise and follow behind him.

Dew Claw remains for a moment - shakes his head.

DEW CLAW  
Some great warriors.

Disappointed by the groups decision to stay, Dew Claw rises, resigned to his fate.

INT. LOST FEATHER'S FAMILY SHELTER - NIGHT

Lost Feather pulls back the skin flap and quietly enters the shelter.

She goes to her sleeping mat and lies down on her back.

A moment later Feather's Father is on top of her. Her arms are pinned to her sides. Her father's hand squeezes her throat. Her face flushes red and veins protrude from her neck and forehead.

He moves his angry face closer to hers, they are nearly nose to nose. Spittle drips from his mouth.

FEATHER'S FATHER  
No war party.

He bears down on Lost Feather's neck.

She opens her mouth but no sound comes out.

FEATHER'S FATHER (CONT'D)  
Do you understand?

Lost Feather's eyes bulge, tears stream. She strains a nod.

Her father releases his grip.

Lost Feather gasps.

He lingers on top of her a moment, her arms still pinned, putting a lot of force on her chest making it even harder to breathe.

Her head swings back and forth, gasping.

Finally, he gets off of her and returns to his sleeping mat.

Lost Feather rolls to her side clutching her throat.

Slowly, her breath returns. She wipes the spittle, her tears, and runny nose on her arm.

EXT. CAMP OF THE GREAT BLACK BEAR - DAY

Most eyes focus on the training field where children of all ages engage in hand to hand combat.

The fighting is brutal. None of the children pull punches.

The five thirteen-year-olds stand in a circle in a heated discussion.

Screeching Hawk stands outside the circle - listening.

FALLING ROCK

I'm not going.

DEW CLAW

What?

SOUTH WIND

Me either.

LOST FEATHER

If I go, my father will kill me.

DEW CLAW

So, just like that, it's over.

The five friends look at each other - nodding agreement.

Preceptress, their teacher, monitors the affray. Preceptress winds her way through the fighting children as she twirls her wooden rod.

PRECEPTRESS

Lost Feather, you're with  
Screeching Hawk. The rest of you  
pair off.

Many adult onlookers bear the scars and disfigurement of war. The Hinu are a sleek agile people. Men and women are of similar size and strength.

The adults watch the melee, their faces stern, emotionless. No fretting mothers in this crowd. This fighting is normal and necessary for survival.

The six oldest children fight with the most ferocity.

South Wind, with her braided hair, battles Dew Claw.

Dew Claw spits out his stalk of grass as blood leaks from the corner of his mouth.

SOUTH WIND

Don't make me hurt you again.

DEW CLAW

Arrogance is your greatest  
weakness.

Dew Claw licks the blood that trickles from the corner of his  
mouth.

SOUTH WIND

Thank you for the lesson. I shall  
now kick your ass with the utmost  
humility.

Nearby, Falling Rock, his nose crooked and bleeding, is  
locked in a wrestling match with Half Moon, whose left eye is  
swollen shut from a head butt. Each boy strains for the  
advantage.

HALF MOON

You really piss me off.

FALLING ROCK

What did I do?

HALF MOON

Every time I punch your face, it  
just looks better and better.

FALLING ROCK

Perhaps I shall punch the jealousy  
right out of you.

Lost Feather punches Screeching Hawk in the chest.

Stumbling backward, Screeching Hawk, trips over the wrestling  
boys, dust flying when she lands hard on her back.

Lost Feather sports a dark bruise on her neck - the imprint  
from her father's strong hand from the night before. Lost  
Feather looks at her fist, eyes wide as if surprised by the  
strength of the blow to Screeching Hawk's chest.

LOST FEATHER

Great Bear! Thanks for the assist  
guys. That finished her.

Screeching Hawk props herself up on her elbows, trying to  
catch her breath.

SCREECHING HAWK

Finished? Really?

In a flash, Screeching Hawk is on her feet charging at Lost Feather. She uses Falling Rock's back as a step as she leaps into the air, fist cocked for the counter attack.

Stepping through the crowd of adults is their leader, the GREAT BLACK WOLF. He wears the head and skin of a black wolf as a headdress and cape.

Seeing the Great Black Wolf, Preceptress whistles a short blast. Hearing the signal, the children cease fighting.

The Great Black Wolf flashes a wide smile and motions for the children to gather around.

The children that are still standing assist their opponents to their feet.

GREAT BLACK WOLF  
Come. Sit.

The children rush over and take a seat on the ground facing the crowd of adults.

Great Black Wolf steps to the side so that he can address both the children and adults.

GREAT BLACK WOLF (CONT'D)  
Six of our children have reached  
their thirteenth summer.  
Preceptress has trained them well.

He motions for the six to stand.

GREAT BLACK WOLF (CONT'D)  
From this day forth, you no longer  
play as children, you are warriors.  
Today, each of you must take The  
Step. Remain here and fight  
alongside your family; or take the  
Great Walk, form your own war party  
and seek honor in battle with those  
which you have grown.

Everyone looks around murmuring in anticipation.

GREAT BLACK WOLF (CONT'D)  
Screeching Hawk, what say you?

SOUTH WIND  
Not the outcast.

Preceptress raps South Wind on the head with her rod.

SOUTH WIND (CONT'D)

Ouch.

Screeching Hawk looks at her five cohorts, then turns back to the Great Black Wolf.

SCREECHING HAWK

War party.

Gasps can be heard scattered among the adult crowd.

The five friends look at each other in disbelief.

SOUTH WIND

Great Bear! Now what do we do?

Screeching Hawk leaves the children and bows before Preceptress.

Preceptress holds out her hand and Screeching Hawk places a feather upon it.

Preceptress nods her approval and taps Screeching Hawk on both shoulders with her rod.

PRECEPTRESS

The Great Bear shines his light  
upon you.

Screeching Hawk, with a one-eyed stare that challenges her cohorts, moves to a position near the Great Black Wolf.

GREAT BLACK WOLF

Half Moon?

Half Moon eyes dart quickly from friend to friend.

HALF MOON

What do I do?

The question is met with shrugs and stunned expressions.

Half Moon sneers at Screeching Hawk.

Half Moon looks at his friends for some sign of what to do.

Half Moon bites his bottom lip.

HALF MOON (CONT'D)

(half-heartedly)  
War party.

Misty River covers her mouth in disbelief.

Half Moon presents a feather to Preceptress, receives a tap on both shoulders, and the blessing of the Great Bear, then stands on the opposite side of the Great Black Wolf from Screeching Hawk.

South Wind, Dew Claw, and Lost Feather each reluctantly follow Half Moon's lead and complete the ritual.

GREAT BLACK WOLF  
South Wind?

SOUTH WIND  
War Party.

GREAT BLACK WOLF  
Dew Claw?

DEW CLAW  
War Party.

GREAT BLACK WOLF  
Lost Feather?

Looking directly into her father's eyes.

LOST FEATHER  
(indignant)  
War party.

Lost Feather's father rages off.

The four friends smile, embrace, and congratulate each other.

Lost Feather gives an approving nod and smile to Screeching Hawk.

Screeching Hawk hides behind the wisp of hair covering her left eye.

GREAT BLACK WOLF  
Falling Rock?

Falling Rock hesitates.

He rubs a feather nervously between his thumb and forefinger.

Falling Rock turns his eyes from his four friends and walks slowly to join the crowd of adults where his family awaits.

The members of the newly formed war party look at each other with surprise, confused by Falling Rock's decision.

GREAT BLACK WOLF (CONT'D)  
So, it is done.

Great Black Wolf turns to the five.

GREAT BLACK WOLF (CONT'D)

As has been the tradition since the return of Knife Runner, each of you must deliver to the tribe two sky dogs before the first snow flake falls. If you fail to do so, you will disband the war party and return to your family.

Great Black Wolf holds up a hand and wiggles the fingers and thumb.

GREAT BLACK WOLF (CONT'D)

On your journey, always remember that each of you are a single finger, but together you make a powerful fist.

Great Black Wolf clinches his fist tightly, then points to the west.

GREAT BLACK WOLF (CONT'D)

Say your goodbyes, gather your belongings, and leave this place before the grass swallows the sun.

As their leader walks away, the tribe gathers around the war party to offer congratulations.

Misty River shakes her head in surprise as she embraces Half Moon.

Lost Feather hugs her mother.

Tears stream down her mother's cheeks.

LOST FEATHER'S MOTHER

Be strong. You are free.

Lost Feather reaches out a hand to her older brother that two years ago did not choose war party. He doesn't respond to the gesture, then turns and walks away.

Dew Claw's older brother wraps his arms around Dew Claw's neck and squeezes.

DEW CLAW'S BROTHER

I will miss you brother.

South Wind's parents look at her solemnly.



Her father stretches out his arms. In his hands, a flint knife that he has carried all his life.

SOUTH WIND  
No, I can't take this.

SOUTH WIND'S FATHER  
Hush daughter.

South Wind rushes into her father hard, hugging him tightly. Hesitantly, he pats South Wind on the back and whispers.

SOUTH WIND'S FATHER (CONT'D)  
Medicine runs strong in you.

He drops his hands ending the embrace.

Screeching Hawk watches as the others embrace their family members before heading off alone toward her campsite.

EXT. CAMP OF THE GREAT BLACK WOLF - LATER

Screeching Hawk, a few feet from the others, South Wind, Half Moon, and Lost Feather stand west of camp holding the bridles of their sky dogs waiting for Dew Claw to exit the camp.

SOUTH WIND  
Where is he already?

HALF MOON  
Probably afraid to leave his mother.

Each sky dog is equipped with a war bridle made from braided strands of rawhide. Skin bags for water and medicine bags for supplies are tied together and draped over the sky dogs' shoulders.

Screeching Hawk pats the nose of her sky dog Dot. Dot is loaded down with the contents of Screeching Hawks' entire campsite.

Dot is a white sky dog covered in black dots about two inches in diameter. Most of the time, Dot appears to be in a deep sleep.

Champ, South Wind's coal black stallion, nickers. Champ is restless, feet and head always moving.

SOUTH WIND  
Easy Champ. Easy.

Half Moon rides Magic, a fearless young paint filly. Magic's tongue hangs out of her mouth about six inches as she nudges Half Moon with her nose. Half Moon laughs as she grabs Magic's tongue and gives it a squeeze.

Grandfather, yes he's old, sniffs Lost Feather's neck, hands, and pouches constantly searching for a treat. Grandfather is a large heavy gray sky dog descended from a European draft breed.

Lost Feather opens her palm revealing a few wild oats. Grandfather's lips flap and pop as he carefully picks up each oat.

LOST FEATHER

Always hungry eh, old man.

The group's weapons are all made of wood and stone. Each has a bow with a quiver of flint tipped arrows. Each has a stone knife, club, medicine bag, and a short spear tipped with flint.

HALF MOON

Anybody here touched by the Great Bear? Is there a Knife Runner among us?

SOUTH WIND

I feel exactly the same.

Nods from the other teens.

HALF MOON

The Great Bear probably blessed Falling Rock with strong medicine.

SOUTH WIND

That would be just our luck.

Lost Feather points toward camp.

LOST FEATHER

There he is.

Dew Claw brings Mini to a trot. Mini is a small but sturdy mount, who thinks he's actually a big sky dog. Mini always carries his head and nose aristocratically high in the air.

SOUTH WIND

What took so long?

DEW CLAW

Mom made me dinner.

LOST FEATHER  
Great Bear.

As Dew Claw approaches, the remaining members of the war party mount up and gallop off through the grass toward the setting sun.

EXT. NEHOMA CAMP - NIGHT

The war council sits around a large fire.

Dark Paw has a contingent of young warriors standing behind him as he addresses the war council.

DARK PAW  
I have seen with my own eyes. The  
Hinu have become fat and lazy.  
They no longer make war. They  
possess sky dogs in abundance.

MEDICINE TALKER, ancient, struggles to his feet.

MEDICINE TALKER  
Ten summers ago, Bird Man made a  
peace with the Hinu.

DARK PAW  
Then, we were weak, nearly wiped  
out. Now, we are strong and our  
warriors thirst for battle.

BIRD MAN (50s) leads the Nehoma. Bird Man has several small bird skulls woven into his long tangled hair. A buffalo hide is draped over his shoulders. His large war club rests in his lap.

BIRD MAN  
When we were weak, did the Hinu  
break the peace?

Dark Paw becomes agitated.

DARK PAW  
We are no longer weak.

BIRD MAN  
Why do you thirst for this war?

DARK PAW  
Old man. Have you forgotten that  
you were once a warrior?

BIRD MAN

I have not forgotten that blood  
taken demands an equal amount of  
blood given in return.

DARK PAW

Have you grown so soft that you  
will deny our ways and traditions?

BIRD MAN

We will not break the peace.

DARK PAW

But . . . .

BIRD MAN

You will make no war with the Hinu.

Dark Paw spits into the fire.

He stands and storms off into the night followed by his  
warriors.

Medicine Talker returns to his seat next to Bird Man.

MEDICINE TALKER

Great turmoil lies ahead.

BIRD MAN

Dark Paw will obey. He will not  
break the peace.

Medicine Talker offers a skeptical nod.

EXT. WAR PARTY CAMP - NIGHT

The full moon casts a dim light over the plains.

The small camp fire crackles sending glowing sparks floating  
into the air before harmlessly burning out.

Screeching Hawk sits near the fire drinking from a skin  
filled with water.

Dew Claw bites off a piece of jerky.

Lost Feather takes inventory as she examines her weapons.

Half Moon stands and walks away from the group.

DEW CLAW

Thirty paces from camp.

Half Moon turns.

HALF MOON

What?

DEW CLAW

We don't want to smell your scat  
all night.

HALF MOON

Just adds flavor.

LOST FEATHER

He didn't just say that.

Dew Claw offers his jerky to Lost Feather.

DEW CLAW

Want some jerky?

LOST FEATHER

Not now.

HALF MOON

Don't know what you are missing.

A strong gust blows through the camp.

South Wind races up on Champ.

SOUTH WIND

Storm coming.

Lightening flashes in the west, exposing an approaching storm  
cloud.

DEW CLAW

Anyone bring a shelter?

The group looks at each other.

Half Moon returns.

HALF MOON

Storm coming. Anyone bring a  
shelter?

Lost Feather shakes her head.

LOST FEATHER

Really. I am the only one that  
brought a shelter?

Eyes drop embarrassed.

Lost Feather gets up.

LOST FEATHER (CONT'D)

I'll grab the shelter. Someone should probably make sure the sky dogs are secure.

SOUTH WIND

I'll see to the sky dogs.

DEW CLAW

I'll help.

EXT. WAR PARTY CAMP - LATER

The storm pounds the tiny sky dog hide shelter.

INT. SHELTER - SAME

Four teens lay side by side barely fitting inside the tent.

A few feet away, Screeching Hawk lies alone under her lean to.

Dew Claw throws an arm around South Wind.

DEW CLAW

This is cozy.

South Wind frowns and wiggles, but doesn't remove Dew Claw's arm.

SOUTH WIND

Not only do we have to round-up ten sky dogs, we need a least one more shelter.

HALF MOON

I like being close.

DEW CLAW

Me too.

Rain drops splash Lost Feather.

Lost Feather props herself on one elbow - looks into Screeching Hawks lean-to where Screeching Hawk lies on her back.

Lost Feather moves to Screeching Hawk's tent and cautiously lies down.

After a few moments, Screeching Hawk turns on her side and snuggles closer to Lost Feather. Lost Feather can feel Screeching Hawk's warm breath on her neck.

Lost Feather shivers.

Screeching Hawk whispers.

SCREECHING HAWK

Friends?

Lost Feather nods.

SCREECHING HAWK (CONT'D)

Neck ok?

Lost Feather shrugs.

Screeching Hawk lightly kisses Lost Feather's neck.

SCREECHING HAWK (CONT'D)

Make it all better?

Lost Feather makes one big slow nod up and down.

SCREECHING HAWK (CONT'D)

Good.

HALF MOON

We can hear you, you know?

Screeching Hawk and Lost Feather giggle.

The rain and wind batter the tiny shelters.

DEW CLAW

Great Bear. Thank you for precious Lost Feather, who provided us with this spacious shelter so that my friends and I may stay warm and dry.

LOST FEATHER

Oh brother.

South Wind elbows Dew Claw in the stomach.

EXT. WAR PARTY CAMP - MORNING

The sun creeps over the horizon.

One by one, the teens crawl from the shelters.

DEW CLAW  
The sky dogs are still here.

HALF MOON  
That's a relief.

Lost Feather breaks down her tent - Screeching Hawk, her lean-to.

SOUTH WIND  
I'm soaked.

LOST FEATHER  
Stop complaining or you'll find  
yourself sleeping alone under the  
stars.

Dew Claw opens a folded skin and offers everyone jerky.

They all accept the jerky and eat ravenously.

Dew Claw gives Lost Feather the side-eye when she takes two  
slices of jerky and hands one slice to Screeching Hawk.

EXT. CAMP OF THE GREAT BLACK WOLF - DAY

Falling Rock stands at the edge of camp staring off to the  
west.

He is joined by Preceptress.

PRECEPTRESS  
Missing your friends?

Falling Rock shrugs.

PRECEPTRESS (CONT'D)  
You made the right choice.

FALLING ROCK  
How's that?

PRECEPTRESS  
No one has chosen war party for  
more than ten summers. In my  
lifetime, no war party has ever  
returned from the Great Walk.

FALLING ROCK  
Why are you telling me this now?  
You should have warned them.



PRECEPTRESS

Everyone must choose their own path. That is the tradition.

FALLING ROCK

I should have gone.

PRECEPTRESS

Your family needs you here. You are a first born. Those that left are all second sons and daughters.

FALLING ROCK

Will they return?

PRECEPTRESS

Only the Great Bear knows.

Falling Rock lets out a long breath, squinting toward the western horizon.

EXT. GRASSLANDS - DAY

Four of the war party ride through the tall grass single file.

They stop as they see Half Moon charging toward them, his sky dog making top speed.

At the last moment, Half Moon pulls the reigns and his sky dog slides to a stop.

HALF MOON

Two riders coming this way.

DEW CLAW

Did they see you?

HALF MOON

Yes.

LOST FEATHER

There. Riding hard.

Lost Feather points to the two riders headed their way at a full gallop.

SOUTH WIND

What do we do?

DEW CLAW

We can run - lose them.

Half Moon slaps his steed hard on the ass. Sky dog and rider barrel towards the enemy.

SOUTH WIND

Wait.

Grandfather knickers loudly as Lost Feather urges him forward.

Screeching Hawk, Dew Claw, and South Wind look at each other, then gallop off after their friends.

Half Moon has a thirty yard lead on Lost Feather, with the other three trailing far behind.

Half Moon pulls his knife.

He steers his sky dog between the two enemy riders.

The rider to his right raises a stone tomahawk. Half Moon can see his face painted in streaks of blood.

As Half Moon approaches, his opponent swings the tomahawk violently towards his head.

Half Moon ducks while simultaneously hooking his assailant around the waist with his arm.

Both riders hit the ground hard.

Half Moon opens his eyes just in time to avoid the tomahawk racing at his face.

After rolling clear, Half Moon gets to his feet, pulls his blade, then charges his assailant. Half Moon tackles him hard. On top of him, Half Moon stabs and stabs and stabs, blood everywhere.

The second enemy rider drives his sky dog directly at the charging Lost Feather.

Grandfather's heavy hooves pound the ground.

The sky dogs collide with such force, that each rider is thrown several feet away.

Lost Feather lands poorly on her back. The air forced from her lungs. She struggles for breath as the second enemy rider staggers toward her.

Screeching Hawk flashes between Lost Feather and her assailant.

Blood pours from the gaping neck wound of the enemy left by Screeching Hawk's knife.

South Wind flies off her sky dog to check on Lost Feather.

SOUTH WIND (CONT'D)

You OK?

Lost Feather nods as her breath slowly returns.

Screeching Hawk gallops off to gather up the loose sky dogs.

Panting, Half Moon lies flat on his back covered in blood.

Dew Claw jumps off his mount and frantically checks Half Moon for injuries.

DEW CLAW

Where are you hurt?

HALF MOON

It's not my blood. Not my blood.

Dew Claw throws himself on top of Half Moon hugging him tightly.

South Wind and Lost Feather arrive at Dew Claw's side.

SOUTH WIND

Is he dead?

LOST FEATHER

Wounded?

HALF MOON

I'm not dead, but I will be if you don't pull Dew Claw off of me.

Dew Claw releases his embrace.

Half Moon takes in a long breath of air.

Screeching Hawk arrives with three sky dogs in tow.

SCREECHING HAWK

Everyone alright?

LOST FEATHER

Yes. We're fine.

SCREECHING HAWK

Couldn't catch Magic.

Lost Feather pulls Half Moon to his feet.

Half Moon sticks two fingers from each hand into his mouth and blasts a whistle.

Magic comes charging up after hearing his call.

Half Moon looks at the dead man with the red striped face, steps aside, and vomits.

DEW CLAW

Any idea what tribe these two are from?

SOUTH WIND

I haven't heard of any tribe using these red striped face markings.

Screeching Hawk holds out the reins for the three sky dogs.

SCREECHING HAWK

Grab these. I will ride ahead and see if they have any friends.

Dew Claw takes the reins.

Screeching Hawk gallops off in the direction the enemy riders came from.

HALF MOON

You're bleeding.

Lost Feather touches her side, then looks at her blood covered fingers.

LOST FEATHER

Just a scratch.

Half Moon sits down and begins to dig a hole.

HALF MOON

Come. Sit. Let's take care of it now.

Lost Feather takes a seat next to Half Moon.

LOST FEATHER

How's Grandfather?

Dew Claw pats Grandfather on the nose.

DEW CLAW

He's indestructible.

Half Moon pours water from a skin into the hole he dug. He mixes the water and dirt into a mud pie.

Half Moon scoops out some mud with his hand and plasters it over Lost Feather's wound.

Lost Feather winces.

LOST FEATHER  
Ow. You're so gentle.

HALF MOON  
Stop being a baby.

Half Moon places his hand on Lost Feather's shoulder and looks sincerely into her eyes.

HALF MOON (CONT'D)  
You are truly a warrior now.

LOST FEATHER  
As are you.

Half Moon nods.

Lost Feather grabs Half Moon by the back of his neck and pulls him close, foreheads pressed together.

HALF MOON  
We are alive.

Dew Claw kneels beside his comrades.

DEW CLAW  
One sun since we left the Camp of the Great Black Wolf and we have captured two sky dogs, a bow, a club, and two knives.

Lost Feather walks to the dead warrior and kneels by his side. She unceremoniously soaks her right hand in the blood oozing from his neck.

Lost Feather walks to Grandfather and presses a bloody hand onto his gray neck leaving behind a red hand print.

She kisses Grandfather's nose.

LOST FEATHER  
Great Bear. You are fearless my friend.

EXT. GRASSLANDS (CONQUISTADOR SITE) - SAME

Screeching Hawk scans the area - no other enemies in sight.

Screeching Hawk reaches for her ear.

A HUM - like a buzzing bee - but no bee.

She follows the sound until she spots human skeletal remains on the ground.

Screeching Hawk cautiously dismounts.

SCREECHING HAWK

Great Bear.

Screeching Hawk kneels next to the bones.

She finds a leather pouch and looks inside - sees six tiny gold animal figures.

The HUM grows louder.

Strapped to a leather belt - a long metal sword in a scabbard.

Screeching Hawk grips the sword's handle - the humming stops.

Startled, she rises.

The sword slips from the scabbard - a black, glowing, pulsing weapon - the Night Blade.

Screeching Hawk grips her head with her free hand - squeezes her eyes closed in pain - drops to one knee.

MONTAGE

Knife Runner, holding the Night Blade, skewered in the back by a Conquistador's lance -

- a Conquistador wielding the Night Blade massacring Aztec -

- the Night Blade beheading a man during a blood ritual on an alter -

- the Night Blade slices through a necklace with the six gold animal figurines worn by a medicine man -

- six Conquistadors and their mounts lying dead on the ground here -

- blood flies through the air as Screeching Hawk wields the Night Blade in battle.

END MONTAGE

Her whole body shaking, Screeching Hawk somehow manages to return the Night Blade to the scabbard.

Screeching Hawk breathes heavily - studies the scabbard.

SCREECHING HAWK (CONT'D)

Great Bear, I am not worthy of this powerful gift.

She looks around - area still devoid of humans.

She rises to her feet and hides the Night Blade inside the skin used for her lean-to.

EXT. GRASSLANDS - LATER

Screeching Hawk returns from her reconnoiter and dismounts.

SCREECHING HAWK

She's wounded.

Gesturing at Lost Feather.

HALF MOON

She'll live.

DEW CLAW

Were those scouts? Do others follow?

Screeching Hawk shakes her head.

SCREECHING HAWK

I saw no one, but I found something you should see.

LOST FEATHER

What is it?

SCREECHING HAWK

I can't explain. You just have to see it.

SOUTH WIND

Lost Feather, can you ride?

LOST FEATHER

Yes.

SOUTH WIND

Let's see what Screeching Hawk has found.

They all mount their sky dogs and chase off after Screeching Hawk.

EXT. GRASSLANDS (CONQUISTADOR'S SITE) - LATER

The war party rides up to where Screeching Hawk has dismounted. Screeching Hawk pulls the tall grass aside and points to an object on the ground.

Partially visible is a human skull capped with a helmet in the style of a Spanish Conquistador.

DEW CLAW

What is it?

Screeching Hawk taps a knuckle on the bronze helm.

SCREECHING HAWK

A headdress made of stone.

The others push the grass aside for a better look.

Half Moon places his hand on something hard - the fallen Conquistador's armor vest.

Half Moon raises one corner of the vest and sees that the rib bones of the dead man are still inside.

HALF MOON

Not stone. This is something else.  
More like the shell of a turtle.

SOUTH WIND

Like the prophecy.

Dew Claw picks up the helmet and places it on his head.

LOST FEATHER

What's it for?

Dew Claw raps on the helmet.

HALF MOON

Protection?

DEW CLAW

Just for show.

Half Moon untangles the vest from the grass and bones.



HALF MOON  
Help me put this on.

Lost Feather and Dew Claw help Half Moon slip the garment over his head.

DEW CLAW  
What medicine is this?

Half Moon rubs his hands over the armor.

SOUTH WIND  
Who are these men?

Half Moon removes his flint bladed knife and presses the tip against the armor covering his stomach.

LOST FEATHER  
What are you doing?

Half Moon looks up, then rakes the knife across the armor - sparks flying as flint meets metal.

His friends' eyes go wide with fear.

Lost Feather reaches out and presses her hand against the vest as if to stop the bleeding, but then realizes that there is no blood.

DEW CLAW  
Great Bear.

HALF MOON  
Protection.

From behind, the sound of a sword being drawn from a scabbard.

All eyes turn to South Wind.

South Wind stands holding a metal sword, steel blade gleaming in the sunlight.

DEW CLAW  
Great Bear.

LOST FEATHER  
Magnificent.

HALF MOON  
That's the longest knife I've ever seen.

South Wind moves the sword awkwardly through the air, not accustomed to the weight.

She swings the sword at the tall grass, cutting the tops off like butter.

South Wind's eyes go wide.

SOUTH WIND

Incredible.

Screeching Hawk kneels in another spot.

SCREECHING HAWK

Here is another headdress.

Half Moon scans the area.

HALF MOON

Spread out. There may be more.

The group begins a search of the area.

They gather armor and weapons, leaving leather boots and gloves behind.

EXT. GRASSLANDS - LATER

The war party stands side by side looking at the ground in awe.

Before them lies the armor and weaponry of six fallen conquistadors; and the bridles and saddles removed from the bones of five dead sky dogs.

DEW CLAW

Is this a gift from the Great Bear?

LOST FEATHER

A gift to who?

SOUTH WIND

May be a curse. Those men are all dead.

SCREECHING HAWK

But there is one set for each of us.

DEW CLAW

There's one extra.

HALF MOON  
Falling Rock.

SCREECHING HAWK  
What?

HALF MOON  
The sixth is for Falling Rock.

LOST FEATHER  
He chose not to be here.

DEW CLAW  
It's not a gift or a curse. It's  
just some dead men and their gear.

SOUTH WIND  
Have you ever seen gear like this  
before?

South Wind picks up a sword.

SOUTH WIND (CONT'D)  
Long knives like these? If not a  
gift from the great bear, then what  
medicine created such things?

The five young warriors begin trying on helmets and armor.

Everything is large and bulky.

They laugh at each other in the silly helmets.

SCREECHING HAWK  
I'm not sure where this gear came  
from but I feel that we must learn  
to use it.

LOST FEATHER  
Let's get to work.

Lost Feather tries to rise but cringes from the pain of her  
wound.

LOST FEATHER (CONT'D)  
Tomorrow. Let's get to work  
tomorrow.

She eases herself back slowly to the ground.

EXT. CAMP OF THE GREAT BLACK WOLF - NIGHT

The camp sleeps.

The tribe's sky dogs are nervous, stamping the ground, eyes going white.

Smoke rises from a couple of smoldering fires.

Nearby a sky dog whinnies loudly.

Then, the thunder of forty charging hooves and the war cries of their ten riders.

Warriors exit their homes, some with weapons in hand, but they are no match for the charging men on sky dogs.

The ten attackers whoop and holler as they reap death and destruction throughout the camp.

Falling Rock steps from his lean-to as a warrior charges toward him on a sky dog's back. The warrior's face bears the tattoos of the Nehoma tribe.

Women and children run in fear.

Falling Rock fumbles for his knife. He pulls it free too late. A war club cracks him in the head with such force that he is launched into the air.

His body crashes into his lean-to, toppling the structure on top of him.

Blood streams from the gash on his bald head.

EXT. CAMP OF THE GREAT BLACK WOLF - MORNING

The camp has been flattened.

Bodies lie everywhere.

The few remaining individuals gather around fallen loved ones, wailing in sorrow.

Falling Rock crawls from beneath some fallen debris. Blood streams from a gash on his head. At first, the world is a blur but then sharp focus reveals his new reality.

Falling Rock vomits from the shock, the concussion, or both.

He tries to stand but falls hard to the ground, out cold.

EXT. CAMP OF THE GREAT BLACK WOLF - LATER

Falling Rock's eyes open slowly. He pulls himself onto his elbows. Around him, all is destroyed.

An old lame sway backed mare, Storm, limps through the middle of camp.

Finally making it to his feet, Falling Rock inspects what is left of the camp. Nearly everything was plundered.

He kneels next to the dead body of his mother. A tear streaks down his cheek.

FALLING ROCK  
May you find happiness in the sky  
with the Great Bear.

He walks up on the body of the Great Black Wolf. The Great Black Wolf's throat had been slashed open wide.

Kneeling, Falling Rock notices that the Great Black Wolf's headdress is missing.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)  
Great Bear.

Falling Rock moves to the body of Preceptress. He places her rod across her chest and folds her hands over the rod to hold it in place. Falling Rock pulls a feather from his pouch and places it under Preceptress's lifeless hand.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)  
War party.

The few survivors that Falling Rock had seen earlier were gone. He found a trail in the bent grass where four or five people had escaped to the north.

On the east side of camp, the trail where the ten assailants came and went was obvious in the bent grass. Traveling away with them, possibly ten or twelve captives.

He takes inventory of the dead bodies to see who is missing.

Falling Rock slowly walks up to the leery old mare, Storm.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)  
Easy old girl.

After settling the mare, he reaches down and lifts her lame leg. A rock is jammed into her hoof. Falling Rock removes his knife and pries out the rock. He leads her around watching her legs.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)  
That's better. Good as new.

Falling Rock goes through the rubble gathering supplies. He finds a water skin, a pouch of jerky, a bow, medicine bags, and a quiver of arrows.

The old mare's back seems to sag even farther as he mounts her. He guides the mare to the trail of the captives and pauses as his eyes follow it off to the east.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)

I swear that I will not rest until  
this slaughter is avenged and you  
are returned.

Falling Rock turns the mare. He follows the trail of the women and children survivors to the north with his eyes as he passes.

He leaves the camp heading west in search of the friends that he had abandoned.

EXT. GRASSLANDS - EVENING

Screeching Hawk crawls slowly through the tall grass with her bow.

She raises her head just high enough to see a pronghorn grazing about thirty paces away.

Screeching Hawk looks at the ground.

The excitement of the hunt has her breathing heavy.

Screeching Hawk slowly reaches down to her side where the Night Blade hangs from the belted scabbard.

A shiver runs through her body.

She returns her focus on the pronghorn.

SCREECHING HAWK

Just five more paces.

Screeching Hawk silently inches forward as she slowly closes the distance.

Once she is in range, she cautiously nocks an arrow with her adrenalin charged quivering hands.

Taking in a deep breath, she fully draws the bow and raises up above the grass.

The pronghorn continues to graze.

The pronghorn's head snaps up, eyes on Screeching Hawk, just as she looses the arrow.

The arrow zips through the air striking the pronghorn just behind the shoulder, piercing both lungs, and passing through the other side.

Screeching Hawk watches as the pronghorn runs a short distance, blood spraying from its wound with each beat of its heart.

She nocks a second arrow but it will not be necessary.

The pronghorn staggers, catches itself, then collapses.

Screeching Hawk places her hands on her knees as she attempts to get her breathing under control.

She jumps in the air and pumps a fist in celebration of her success.

SCREECHING HAWK (CONT'D)

Yeah!

Screeching Hawk approaches the animal with caution. She jabs it with her bow confirming that it is in fact dead.

Blood oozes from the animals wounds.

The Night Blade HUMS.

Screeching Hawk drops to her knees and pulls the Night Blade. She cuts the animal just below the ribs. She sticks her hand, then her arm, into the incision. Screeching Hawk is feeling around until she finds the heart.

SCREECHING HAWK (CONT'D)

Come on. You're in there  
somewhere.

Screeching Hawk pulls hard, ripping the heart out of the fallen animal. As is the tradition, she takes a huge bite of the heart.

Screeching Hawk's face, arms, and hands are covered in blood. She holds the heart high above her head and looks to the sky.

SCREECHING HAWK (CONT'D)

You are the giver of life Great  
Bear. Let this animal's blood  
become my blood, and its soul my  
soul.

Her prayer complete, Screeching Hawk pulls out her stone blade and guts and cleans the pronghorn.

EXT. WAR PARTY CAMP - LATER

Lost Feather tends a small fire.

Nearby, South Wind and Dew Claw swing their new swords.

A bit farther away, Half Moon, dressed in his new battle gear, wields a lance while riding Magic in circles.

Lost Feather stands as she spots someone approaching.

It's Screeching Hawk carrying the pronghorn across her shoulders.

LOST FEATHER

Whoop!

Lost Feather's call gets the attention of South Wind, Dew Claw, and Half Moon.

When they spot Screeching Hawk, they all whoop and race in her direction.

Half Moon squeezes his heels into Magic's flanks. Magic responds, reaching top speed in just a few strides. As Half Moon approaches, he points the lance directly at Screeching Hawk.

The Night Blade HUMS.

Seeing the imposing figure approaching on Magic, Screeching Hawk drops the pronghorn and raises her hands in the air, signaling her surrender.

Just a few feet from Screeching Hawk, Half Moon pulls back on the reigns and brings Magic to a sliding stop sending dirt flying into Screeching Hawk's face.

Screeching Hawk spits and coughs.

SCREECHING HAWK

I surrender.

Half Moon laughs.

HALF MOON

Nice kill. Run far?



## SCREECHING HAWK

About thirty paces, then dropped  
dead.

Half Moon pats Magic's behind.

## HALF MOON

Throw that buck up here. I will  
carry it the rest of the way.

Screeching Hawk tosses the pronghorn over the backside of  
Half Moon's sky dog.

The others arrive and inspect the beast.

## LOST FEATHER

Fresh meat tonight.

All smiles, everyone mobs Screeching Hawk and congratulates  
her on her kill.

## EXT. WAR PARTY CAMP - NIGHT

Strips of meat are laid out on the rocks around the fire to  
dry.

Dew Claw rubs his belly with one hand while stuffing his  
mouth with cooked pronghorn with the other.

Lost Feather, Half Moon, and South Wind listen intently as  
Screeching Hawk recounts the hunt.

## SCREECHING HAWK

Just as I release the arrow, its  
head jerks up and it looks right at  
me. I thought it was a good hit,  
but I could see the arrow on the  
ground, so I was afraid I had  
missed. When I picked up the arrow  
it was covered in blood. It ran  
off a few steps, then it was done.

## HALF MOON

How did it feel?

## SCREECHING HAWK

My hands were shaking and I  
couldn't breathe, but otherwise it  
felt great.

All laugh.

Dew Claw, his mouth full of venison, slaps Screeching Hawk on the back.

DEW CLAW

I thank you my friend with all my heart.

Half Moon stands and removes his armor.

SCREECHING HAWK

When you charged at me, I was nearly scared to death. You are an imposing figure with the shell and the lance.

HALF MOON

I feel with a little work, we can all master the shells, the lance, and the long knives.

SOUTH WIND

They could be a great advantage in battle.

All grunt and nod in agreement.

With no storm on the horizon, the five friends settle in and get more comfortable lying around the fire.

HALF MOON

There may be more scouts around. I think we should leave this spot tomorrow morning.

SOUTH WIND

I agree. We need to keep moving.

SCREECHING HAWK

We can practice with the new equipment while we are on the move.

LOST FEATHER

We have eight more sky dogs to gather.

SOUTH WIND

The next ones will not be as easy as the first two I fear.

DEW CLAW

Easier for some than others.

Lost Feather snickers as she gingerly touches her wound.

HALF MOON

Will you be ready to travel  
tomorrow?

LOST FEATHER

I'll be ready.

Everyone lies quietly for a moment.

SOUTH WIND

Screeching Hawk, tell it again.

They all laugh as Screeching Hawk retells the story of her  
great hunt again.

EXT. FALLING ROCK'S CAMP - SAME

Falling Rock gathers buffalo dung chips.

He tosses the chips in a pile and attempts to light a fire.

It is no use, he can't get it started. Falling Rock kicks at  
the buffalo chips.

FALLING ROCK

Great Bear!

The chilly air forces Falling Rock to wrap his arms around  
himself. He lies on the ground for a few moments, but he's  
just too cold.

Falling Rock goes to Storm and leads her to a flat area.  
Applying a little pressure to Storm's nose, Falling Rock gets  
her to lie down.

Falling Rock lies against Storm absorbing some of the sky  
dog's body heat.

Frustrated, Storm blasts the snot from her nose.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)

I know. I know. Maybe we will  
catch up to them tomorrow.

Storm nods her head up and down making Falling Rock laugh.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)

They've only been gone two days.  
We haven't missed anything.

Finally, Falling Rock is comfortable and can get some sleep.

EXT. NEHOMA CAMP - SAME

Older men and women sit silently around a fire.

One of the men stands. He hears something.

Bird Man looks at Medicine Talker.

BIRD MAN  
What is it?

MEDICINE TALKER  
Our warriors return.

Moments later, the ten raiders ride into camp laden with spoils, along with their twelve captives.

One of the raiders, Dark Paw, dismounts and approaches the fire. He wears the headdress of the Great Black Wolf.

The old group whispers around the fire.

MEDICINE TALKER (CONT'D)  
Attacking the Hinu was forbidden.

Dark Paw ignores the man and addresses Bird Man.

DARK PAW  
We have won a great victory.

MEDICINE TALKER  
Victory? You will bring the wrath  
of the Great Black Wolf down upon  
us.

DARK PAW  
The Great Black Wolf and his  
warriors are dead.

Gasps and more whispers from the crowd.

DARK PAW (CONT'D)  
We return with much needed  
supplies.

Bird Man looks at the captives.

BIRD MAN  
Who will feed your hostages?

Dark Paw waves him off.

MEDICINE TALKER  
Remove that headdress. It  
rightfully belongs to Bird Man.

Dark Paw steps back.

DARK PAW  
I will not. Bird Man is very wise  
and was once a great warrior. Now,  
he is old and should take his place  
with the old women.

Medicine Talker steps forward.

MEDICINE TALKER  
Watch yourself.

Bird Man stands, at first slouching, then stretches himself  
to his full height.

BIRD MAN  
Do you wish to challenge me? Is it  
your wish to lead?

Dark Paw looks into the eyes of the other raiders. Some are  
shocked, others nod agreement.

DARK PAW  
Bird Man you have my utmost respect  
and I have fought beside you for  
many years.

Bird Man points the head of the war club at Dark Paw.

BIRD MAN  
I have not heard a challenge.

Dark Paw hesitates. He seems to shrink as his eyes drop  
downward.

MEDICINE TALKER  
Sit down Dark Paw. This is absurd.  
Bird Man has been our leader for  
thirty winters.

Dark Paw raises his eyes.

DARK PAW  
Bird Man, I challenge you to a  
fight to the death.

MEDICINE TALKER  
No.

Bird Man quiets Medicine Talker by moving the massive war club in front of him.

BIRD MAN

We shall fight to the death in the circle at sunrise.

Dark Paw swallows hard, then nods his understanding.

Bird Man slumps back into his seat at the fire.

EXT. FALLING ROCK'S CAMP - LATER

Both Falling Rock and Storm are asleep.

Falling Rock's body twitches, dreaming.

Falling Rock's eyes pop open. He sees a vision of the bloody Great Black Wolf.

He's wide awake now as the vision fades.

FALLING ROCK

Great Bear! Ghost walker.

Falling Rock's limbs are shaking. He wraps his arms around his legs and pulls his knees to his chest.

INT. BIRD MAN'S SHELTER - DAWN

Bird Man kneels in the center of his shelter.

Medicine Talker takes a long drag on a pipe and blows the smoke over Bird Man's head and body.

MEDICINE TALKER

May the Great Bear protect you.

Bird Man presents his war club. Medicine talker shakes a strand of rawhide adorned with tiny wood carved animals.

MEDICINE TALKER (CONT'D)

Let your weapon swing true.

Medicine Talker places a hand on Bird Man's shoulder.

MEDICINE TALKER (CONT'D)

It is time.

Bird Man nods. He uses the war club to assist his tired body to his feet.

Medicine Talker shakes his head. The old man fears what is to come.

BIRD MAN

Calm yourself Medicine Talker. It will be as the Great Bear desires.

Bird Man leaves the shelter with Medicine Talker close behind.

EXT. NEHOMA CAMP - SUNRISE

All members of the tribe have formed a circle.

On one side, Dark Paw has his back to the circle speaking with his raiders.

RAIDER 1

Here he comes.

On the other side of the circle, the crowd parts as Bird Man enters. The old man looks tired. He rests the head of the heavy war club on the ground.

Dark Paw removes the Great Black Wolf's headdress and hands it to a raider. Another raider hands him a war club. Dark Paw takes in a deep breath and exhales hard. He turns to face Bird Man bouncing nervously up and down on his toes.

Medicine Talker removes the buffalo robe from Bird Man's shoulders revealing the body of not a young man, but not the body of an old man either.

DARK PAW

Prepare to meet the Great Bear.

Bird Man shuffles forward, head down, dragging the head of the war club on the ground behind him.

MEDICINE TALKER

Let the fight begin.

Dark Paw raises his club high into the air and charges Bird Man.

Dark Paw's raiders cheer him onward.

He takes a long sweeping swing at Bird Man's head.

At the last moment, Bird Man's club blocks Dark Paw's. The clubs collide with such force that the handle of Dark Paw's club breaks in two.

Dark Paw looks at the broken handle in his hand in disbelief.

Bird Man spins. His heavy club strikes Dark Paw squarely in the chest sending him flying into the air.

Dark Paw lands hard on his back and he's exhibiting no signs of life.

The crowd goes silent.

In an instant, Bird Man stands over Dark Paw.

Bird Man raises the club high over his head with both hands and then lowers it to the ground.

The crowd mutters - expecting a fight to the death.

BIRD MAN

Silence! Our tribe has seen enough death, without us killing each other. See that he is tended to.

The two men step forward and each grab an arm of their fallen leader and drag him away.

Breathing hard, Bird Man rests the club on his shoulder.

He scans the silent crowd.

Most stand with mouths agape, in shock that Bird Man won, and further shocked because Dark Paw lives.

Bird Man walks to the raider holding the headdress of the Great Black Wolf.

The raider extends the headdress in offering to Bird Man.

Bird Man takes the headdress.

Bird Man looks into the eyes of each raider.

BIRD MAN (CONT'D)

Anyone else challenge me?

The raiders' eyes drop down or away. No one wants to make eye contact with Bird Man.

Bird Man waits a long moment for a response, but there is none.

Bird Man points at one of the raiders.

BIRD MAN (CONT'D)

You.



He tosses his club at the raider.

BIRD MAN (CONT'D)  
Carry my war club.

BIRD MAN (CONT'D)  
The rest of you bring all of the  
spoils from your raid on the Great  
Bear's Camp to my shelter along  
with all of Dark Paw's belongings.

No one moves.

BIRD MAN (CONT'D)  
Now!

The raiders hustle off to gather the spoils.

Bird Man yells after them.

BIRD MAN (CONT'D)  
And I mean all of it!

Bird Man walks up to Medicine Talker and hands him the  
headdress, then turns around.

Medicine Talker places the Great Black Wolf upon his head  
like he's crowning a king.

The crowd parts as Bird Man exits the circle victorious.

EXT. WAR PARTY CAMP - DAWN

The fire is out.

No one is awake yet.

Half Moon sleeps with the hilt of a sword gripped tightly in  
his hand.

Next to Half Moon lies a necklace with a tiny Aztec figurine  
made of gold.

In fact, a gold figurine necklace lies next to each member of  
the war party, except Screeching Hawk. Each figurine depicts  
a human face visible from the open mouth of an animal; a  
snake, jaguar, llama, and eagle.

South Wind stirs. She spots her snake figurine.

SOUTH WIND  
What's this?

Too loud. She wakes the others.

The four friends reach for their figurines. Upon touching the figurines, a flash. They enter a trance. Each sees their own face in the mouth of their animal figurine. In a flash, they snap out of the trance.

The teens look from one to the other, not sure if what they had just experienced is real.

No one speaks of it.

Each studies their gold figurine.

HALF MOON

Where did these come from?

DEW CLAW

Who did this?

Screeching Hawk looks around coyly, then timidly raises her hand.

SCREECHING HAWK

I found them among the dead.

Screeching Hawk pulls her necklace to the outside of her skin shirt showing off her wolf figurine.

Screeching Hawk opens her hand revealing the remaining bear figurine.

LOST FEATHER

It is beautiful.

South Wind tosses hers into the air and catches it, testing the weight.

SOUTH WIND

Heavy.

HALF MOON

We have seen many new things.

LOST FEATHER

And we've only been gone two nights.

SOUTH WIND

Great Bear! What adventures lie ahead?

Dew Claw gets up and gathers his belongings.

DEW CLAW

There's only one way to find out.

All put on their figurine necklaces.

Half Moon rises taking the hilt of his sword.

He looks at the sword curiously and flips the blade in his hand.

Lost Feather sees Half Moon staring at the sword.

LOST FEATHER

What is it?

HALF MOON

I don't know. Seems lighter.

DEW CLAW

You slept with the thing, you're just getting used to the weight.

Half Moon nods, still unsure.

SCREECHING HAWK

There is something else.

All eyes turn to Screeching Hawk.

Screeching Hawk stands and removes the Night Blade from its scabbard.

The Night Blade pulses and HUMS.

They move closer to Screeching Hawk to get a better look.

Half Moon looks Screeching Hawk in the eyes.

HALF MOON

From the fallen men?

Screeching Hawk nods.

LOST FEATHER

The Night Blade.

Dew Claw shakes his head.

DEW CLAW

How can you be sure?

SCREECHING HAWK

I'm sure.

SOUTH WIND

How?

SCREECHING HAWK

When I hold it, I can feel the  
medicine.

HALF MOON

What does all of this mean?

LOST FEATHER

We have been blessed by the Great  
Bear. He has returned the Night  
Blade to us.

SOUTH WIND

An omen that dark times are to  
come.

LOST FEATHER

Preceptress.

DEW CLAW

The Great Bear has chosen  
Screeching Hawk to lead us.

Screeching Hawk returns the Night Blade to its scabbard.

HALF MOON

The outcast?

Screeching Hawk looks at the ground.

SOUTH WIND

Screeching Hawk you did not believe  
the story of Knife Runner and the  
Night Blade were true.

LOST FEATHER

The Great Bear chose her anyway.

DEW CLAW

Are we all in agreement that  
Screeching Hawk is our leader?

SCREECHING HAWK

I don't want to be the leader. I  
didn't ask for this.

South Wind steps forward.

SOUTH WIND

Give me the Night Blade. I will  
lead us.

The Night Blade HUMS.

Screeching Hawk steps back, turning the hip with the Night Blade away from South Wind.

Lost Feather steps between Screeching Hawk and South Wind.

LOST FEATHER

We don't choose. The Great Bear  
chose Screeching Hawk whether she  
likes it or not.

Southwind backs down.

HALF MOON

Look. We still need to get out of  
here.

Everyone gathers their gear and hustles off toward the sky dogs.

They quickly discover that it would be easier to wear the bulky new armor than try to pack it on a sky dog.

Half Moon pulls the chest and back plates over his head. The armor swallows his teen body.

SOUTH WIND

A little large.

Suddenly, Half Moon drops to one knee. A shiver races through his entire body.

LOST FEATHER

What's wrong?

The armor begins to bubble into millions of tiny particles.

The shiny metal armor turns mat black.

DEW CLAW

What's happening?

Half Moon's eyes go wide with fear as the armor grows smaller.

He tugs at the armor, shouting.

HALF MOON

Get it off. Get it off.

Everyone is frozen, mouths agape.

The armor tightens around Half Moon, gripping his torso.

In a snap, the bubbling ceases. The armor is solid again.

Half Moon breathes heavily, slowly recovering from the fright.

He touches the armor, runs his hands over it. The armor now fits his body like a glove.

SOUTH WIND

Great Bear!

SCREECHING HAWK

Are you alright?

The question does not break Half Moon's focus.

LOST FEATHER

Half Moon?

Half Moon looks up. He rises and takes a step forward, testing the new armor.

HALF MOON

It fits perfectly.

His friends step forward, running their hands over Half Moon's new shell.

SOUTH WIND

Amazing.

Half Moon looks at his friends, flexing his hands.

HALF MOON

I feel different. Energized.

DEW CLAW

What medicine is this?

SOUTH WIND

Dark medicine.

SCREECHING HAWK

No, the Great Bear continues to smile upon us.

Lost Feather picks up her armor.

LOST FEATHER

I'm next.

She slips the shell over her head. Lost Feather stands waiting.

## LOST FEATHER (CONT'D)

Well?

At first nothing, then she drops to her knees. The armor begins to bubble.

The others look at each other and race to put on their armor.

EXT. WAR PARTY CAMP - LATER

The five friends stand in a circle looking at each other.

Their helmets have turned to match each animal figurine.

Screeching Hawk raises a finger, pointing at each helmet.

SCREECHING HAWK

An eagle. A jaguar. A llama. A snake.

Screeching Hawk points at her own helmet.

HALF MOON

A wolf.

Screeching Hawk grips the wolf talisman that hangs around her neck. The others do the same.

SCREECHING HAWK

There is some connection between the talisman and the armor.

DEW CLAW

What's a llama?

SOUTH WIND

I don't know, but I saw a snow white one in a dream.

The others nod in faint recognition.

LOST FEATHER

I don't know about you guys, but I'm tingling all over.

HALF MOON

Me too.

DEW CLAW

I want to ride.

The friends bridle and saddle the sky dogs, then mount up.

SOUTH WIND

Great Bear. How did I know how to do that?

SCREECHING HAWK

Do what?

SOUTH WIND

Put on a saddle. How did you know how to saddle a sky dog? Why do I call it a saddle?

SCREECHING HAWK

Strange. Feels like I've done it hundreds of times.

The war party's questions and confusion is overcome by the sheer energy one feels wearing the armor.

Screeching Hawk squeezes her sky dog's flanks with her heels.

The group gallops off heading further west.

EXT. GRASSLANDS - DAY

Falling Rock, the gash on his head crusted with dried blood, walks in front of the droopy headed Storm.

FALLING ROCK

Storm. Your name doesn't match at all.

Storm blasts snot from her nose.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)

Sure, I bet you were something back in the day.

Storm nods.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)

Now, a name like Sleeper or Drooler would be more appropriate.

Another snort from Storm.

Falling Rock pauses. He checks the ground.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)

Their trail is much harder to follow after the rain the other night.



Storm whinnies.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)  
No, we are not turning around.  
There is nothing to go back to.

Storm paws at the ground.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)  
You don't have to remind me that I  
swore and oath. I just need to  
find help first. Then I send those  
bastards to the vultures.

After walking a bit further, Falling Rock comes upon the site where the war party camped.

He drops the reins and lets Storm feed on some grass.

Falling Rock studies the campsite. He sees two trails in the grass. One trail leads to where the war party's sky dogs were tethered.

Falling Rock chooses the other trail.

After a few paces, he freezes. He instinctively pulls his knife.

Just ahead, a vulture stands on the remains of one of the men killed by the war party.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)  
No. No. No.

Falling Rock runs up on the vulture flapping his arms.

The vulture unhurried, finally takes flight.

Falling Rock drops to his knees next to the dead man.

He examines the face - relief.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)  
Great Bear. It's not one of them.

Falling Rock stands and sees the second dead man lying a few paces away.

He rushes over.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)  
Not them. Not them.

Falling Rock follows the trail to the skeletons of the fallen conquistadors.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)

Great Bear.

Falling Rock examines the remains. He gathers up the six pairs of gloves and six pairs of boots worn by the dead men.

He carries the load back to the campsite and drops it to the ground.

He struggles to put on a pair of gloves and shows them to Storm.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)

Not bad, eh?

Storm lifts her head for a moment and then returns to eating grass.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)

They are obviously hand coverings,  
stupid. How should I know what  
they are for? I just found them.

Falling rock pulls on a pair of boots. They are a little large. He stretches his legs out getting a full view of the boots. The boots are on the wrong feet.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)

What do you think?

Storm stretches out her neck and curls her top lip toward her nose.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)

What's that? They are on the wrong  
feet.

Falling Rock sees that the long part of the boot that covers the big toe is on the outside portion of his foot.

He pulls off a boot and holds it next to his foot.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)

Yeah, yeah, yeah, you were right.

He switches the boots.

FALLING ROCK (CONT'D)

That's much better. Thank you  
Storm.

Falling Rock removes a skin bag that was draped over Storms shoulders.

He fills the bag with gloves and boots.

EXT. GRASSLANDS - DAY

The war party rides five abreast through the endless ocean of grass that covers the gently rolling hills.

Half Moon swings a sword.

Lost Feather practices with the lance.

LOST FEATHER

I feel as though I've used this lance all of my life.

SOUTH WIND

Strange isn't it.

HALF MOON

Strange medicine.

Screeching Hawk spots something - holds up a hand.

SCREECHING HAWK

Hold up.

DEW CLAW

What is it?

A large buffalo stands atop the next hill.

SCREECHING HAWK

(pointing)

Tatanka.

HALF MOON

Let's see what these long swords and lances can do.

Screeching Hawk nods.

The war party charges down the slope. At the bottom of the hill, small trees grow along a stream.

The sky dogs clear the creek without missing a stride and continue up the hill toward the buffalo.

HALF MOON (CONT'D)

(to Magic)

Has the medicine made you stronger  
as well?

Half Moon urges Magic on.

When they are about half way up the hill, the buffalo spots them, turns, and gallops off.

The war party's sky dogs are at full speed.

Half Moon rides up along the right side of the buffalo.

The buffalo tries to turn away, but Dew Claw has taken a position along its left side, lance drawn.

A long sweeping swing of Half Moon's sword opens a gash in the buffalo's shoulder.

HALF MOON (CONT'D)

He's not done yet.

The mighty animal stumbles but rumbles on.

Dew Claw runs a lance into the animals side.

The animal goes down. The buffalo's momentum sends it sliding on its belly to a stop.

Screeching Hawk dismounts and runs toward their fallen prey.

DEW CLAW

What are you doing?

The animal wails as it regains its feet.

The buffalo spins its head around and with a powerful upward motion, strikes Screeching Hawk square in the chest plate.

Screeching Hawk is thrown ten feet into the air and flips head over heels before striking the ground.

LOST FEATHER

Screeching Hawk!

Lost Feather dismounts and races to Screeching Hawk's side.

The animal is angry and smells blood. It charges at Half Moon and Magic but the duo bolt away.

Lost Feather turns Screeching Hawk over onto her back.

The buffalo spots the pair on the ground and charges.

Before the animal reaches Lost Feather's position, she stands between the beast and Screeching Hawk and pulls her sword. She grasps the hilt with both hands and assumes a fighting position. Lost Feather screams.

LOST FEATHER (CONT'D)

Come on!

Out of nowhere, South Wind rides a seemingly fearless Champ, across the path of the wild beast. South Wind stands in the stirrups, raises her lance, and drives it deep between the buffalo's shoulders, reminiscent of the Spanish Picadores in the bull fighting ring.

DEW CLAW

When did she learn that move?

The majestic animal stops in its tracks. Blood oozes from its three wounds. The buffalo staggers sideways a few steps.

Lost Feather sprints - goes low and swings her sword taking off one of the animals front legs.

The bison crashes to the ground in a dusty heap.

The war party encircles the injured animal. Even Screeching Hawk approaches slowly, Night Blade drawn and pulsing in her hand.

Screeching Hawk sheaths the Night Blade and places her hands on her knees.

HALF MOON

You ok?

Screeching Hawk taps a knuckle on her bloody chest plate.

SCREECHING HAWK

Saved my life.

HALF MOON

Great Bear. This is some medicine.

DEW CLAW

Remember what Preceptress said,  
that when strong medicine comes,  
bad medicine follows not far  
behind.

Nods from all.

FADE OUT.