

WINNING SUBMISSION:

"The Wendigo was gaunt to the point of emaciation, its desiccated skin pulled tautly over its bones. With its bones pushing out against its skin, its complexion the ash gray of death, and its eyes pushed back deep into their sockets, the Wendigo looked like a gaunt skeleton recently disinterred from the grave. What lips it had were tattered and bloody [...] Unclean and suffering from suppurations of the flesh, the Wendigo gave off a strange and eerie odor of decay and decomposition, of death and corruption." — Basil Johnston

HE WHO DANCES

by : Astrid Nicolson



This was years ago. I was an undergrad at the time, living with some Forestry workers for the cheap rent and company. Poker night was something of a ritual between me and my remaining roommates after Pete got kicked out and a particularly nasty Quebec winter set in. We clustered around the kitchen table drinking and throwing down mostly crap hands until someone passed out or won. Nevertheless, it was usually fun, more fun than anything else going on in town those nights. Anyway, one Friday Marc asked if he could bring his buddy Caro, saying Caro was new to the town and an old friend from high school. I figured why not. If Marc liked him, there had to be some redeeming feature about the guy. However, it took me all of about five seconds after Caro stepped through our door to realize I didn't like Caro at all.

I couldn't take my eyes off of Caro's nails. They were very long, like a girl's fake ones, but nicotine yellow and hard-looking. They were very long, like a girl's fake ones, but nicotine yellow and hard-looking. They didn't seem to hold his cards; they just fluttered over them.

His head was shorn short with black fuzz, and he held a large pair of watery blue eyes over long, thin lips that were chapped and bitten-looking. He was so skinny his jacket looked like a wet umbrella hanging over him. I would have pegged him for a druggie if he wasn't so ghastly calm at the table. There was nothing unfriendly about him: just something strange. It was like looking at a perfectly calm lake in the summertime while knowing something large and deadly swam underneath.

The games proceeded as normal. I remember that at one point I had an ace of Hearts, a Queen of Hearts, the three of Clubs, two of Diamonds and a five of Spades. Not the best hand, and I was looking at losing a dollar or three. Stephen won that round, and seeing as he was already drunk, proposed another one. We coughed up some more dough in a circle, until it came to Caro. His eyebrows lifted lazily. He shrugged.

"Sorry, gentlemen. I can't spare another dollar", Caro said. "Hey! C'mon man! Where's your sense of adventure?!" Stephen roared happily, winner's pride and a little too much strong booze cheering him on.