

EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE SCOURGE CAME FROM THE NORTH. THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY. I first met "The Great Black Beast" in the arid heart of the Athabasca Sand Dunes, north-western Saskatchewan, on a cold June night in 2031. I was camping there, at the end of my rope. I was thirty-seven years old, had lost my wife and son to a divorce, then a car accident, and to make a long story short, didn't want to go on living. I was done with God and definitely done with humanity, so I set out for what I thought was the most forgotten place in the world. Once in the Athabasca Sand Dunes, I planned to take my own life.

Just three weeks earlier I had abandoned my duties as a lay minister in the United Church of Canada and, before that, quit a high-paying job with NorCom, a Kanata, Ontario-based high-tech firm. (Before *that* I'd been a professor of humanities so shaken by the world I wished for nothing but the shield of money). But now all my streams had run dry and I wanted the sun to hit me like a hammer; I *wanted* to be burnt to a crisp.

During my third night in that makeshift desert, however, a moose walked out of the darkness and into my shattered life for-

ever. Somehow, with nothing but sadness, he saved me. I had no notion of the destruction this strange creature intended for Canada and had, in fact, already set in motion. And when he spoke to me in words — actual English words! — I was floored! I questioned my sanity for days. It simply never occurred to me that this beautiful creature might be a terrorist — why would it? The “animal terrorism” reportedly taking place in the south seemed unreal, as unreal and unimportant as everything else did whilst I contemplated suicide. I was alone in “The North.” Vancouver and Jasper were worlds away and besides, this moose was too wise, too gentle for violence.

Or so I thought.

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Nicholas A. Cibiades’ Tablet Journal: May 25, 2031.

They say the sand dunes are constantly moving. Driven by wind, they slowly smother the boreal forest in one area while uncovering a buried part somewhere else. That’s what I’ll do. Go up there and see if I can’t get this desert to run me over.

The guide I spoke with this afternoon says he wouldn’t recommend canoeing to the dunes — “the wind can give ya four-foot waves in no time” — but they could ferry a canoe out there for me by motorboat and pick me up in a week or two. There’s a small river channel about forty-feet wide that leads through the heart of the dunes.

NAC’s Journal: May 27, 2031.

Didn’t say bye to anyone. Just packed and left like I was going to presbytery in rubber boots. Who *should* I call? We all said bye years ago anyway, to prepare for the big winter of getting older, to keep our heads out of the wind, to make money. All the way to the airport it made me happy to think of how my funeral will fuck up everybody’s plans.

Flew over the tar sands this afternoon in a little Cessna 182 and it was disorienting. *What did I used to think about these things?* The tailings ponds turned my stomach. Toxic puddles the size of lakes. You think you understand the scale of what you're seeing and then you see a little yellow speck and you think it's a hard hat — but it's not a hard hat, it's a pickup truck. And then it's like "whoa, then that dump truck must actually be the size of an office building."

My lady pilot said one of the tailings ponds is the size of Vancouver.

NAC's Journal: May 28, 2031.

This lodge is way too comfortable. Stuffed moose and caribou heads everywhere, a snarly grizzly bear by the stone fireplace. Everything's Disney-sized and the rooms are like a hotel. Satellite everything, private jacuzzi. I could just stay here and shoot myself, but that'd be too easy.

I feel like I went to sleep one night and when I woke up the whole world had mutated into an alien in the womb of everything that created it. The sadness of the zoo *will* descend on every last inch of every last wilderness. Those cameras in space *will* find me sleeping in the woods. Cloning has outfitted atheism with a new engine — the cloned super kids will have no god but us arrogant fucks and that's just the beginning. There'll be no mercy now. Ecclesiastes: obsolete. Nanotechnology: our final plunge into blindest godhead. Surely the Anthropocene will be the briefest of all epochs. Oh, God, tonight my faith has but one thing propping it up: the fact that I have the option of becoming a terrorist. To have that choice is a great blessing. Thank you. Sometimes I think you took little Brian just to show me that.

The sad fact is that if you took everybody in your office, or for that matter my congregation, and put them back in 1939, ninety percent, ninety-five percent, ninety-nine percent would either be in the perpetrator class or going along with the perpetrator class. And you

reading this right now — if anyone is reading this right now — you may believe you'd be in the one percent — and maybe you would, how do I know? — but that's not how the historical facts sort themselves out. The Zimbardo prison experiment had to be stopped after three days because those perfectly normal college students turned into Nazis in no time — even though they knew it wasn't real and just a dramatic farce, just an experiment. The captors enjoyed torturing the student-prisoners even though they had every reason to know — whatever “know” means — that the prisoners were completely innocent.

And *I* get accused of negativity?!

NAC's Journal: May 29, 2031.

Why doesn't all this sand just blow away? They just dropped me off with my canoe and four packs of gear, and said they'll be back in a week. I wasn't even sad watching them go, last people I'll ever see.

The guide, Jerry, wouldn't leave me unless I took a goddamn satellite phone and we almost didn't set out at all because he didn't like the weather.

There's a two-hundred-foot sand embankment I have to pull my canoe and gear up. Then I'm gone.

I'm coming, my little, little son.

NAC's Journal: May 30, 2031.

Jerry was right about the weather. It rained all day yesterday so I made camp at the edge of the dunes close to the forest. That way I had fuel for a fire.

Matt sent me an email about these animals that went crazy in Vancouver yesterday. Apparently a bunch of rabid raccoons and deer came into the city and started crashing through store windows. Some attacked buses and cars and some people got hurt, too — a cop lost an eye. I thought it was all a joke but then I saw it on my phone. Looked

like a scene out of *World War Z*. And apparently it's still not over. There are rats chewing through everything, blackouts becoming common. Of course right when I go away something awesome happens.

Loading the gun that will kill you feels like a religious rite.

NAC's Journal: May 31, 2031.

The animal attacks have moved into the Rockies. I saw pictures of Jasper looking like Baghdad and they've brought in the Mounties to stop it and now there's even talk of the army being called in.

I've loaded my flare gun, too, just in case, but there don't seem to be any animals out here which is fine by me. Glad I'll be following the creek today.

I wonder if it's some sort of lunar radiation thing, like with zombies. Maybe it *is* zombies. Or maybe the animals have just had it, too. They're saying "Enough's enough." Weird that domesticated pets aren't affected, just wild animals, and they only seem to get violent in the cities.

NAC's Journal: June 3, 2031.

A moose came out of the desert last night. I almost fired but something stopped me. I kept thinking "it's just the darkness dancing against the fire light." But it was a moose, I could feel him. I could feel him changing shape and I knew he could overtake me if he wanted to. I was paralyzed — I have no idea how much time passed — then he was gone.

When you see an animal out in the wild it's not like all those nature documentaries — there's not tons of them, and so when you see one it's really special. I could barely see this thing, but I knew he was there just beyond the firelight.

I can't do it with this animal around. It's not that I'm afraid he'll eat me or anything. I just don't want him around.

Almost out of firewood.

NAC's Journal: June 4, 2031.

I still hardly believe it but as I write this I am riding a moose. I am sitting on the back of a black moose riding through the woods. He smells so bad it's amazing...

Last night he was just suddenly there again. I'll never forget the way he untangled himself from the darkness. I'd been waiting and listening for him since sundown but still hadn't heard his hooves or his breathing or anything — he was just there, towering over me and the fire like we were nothing, the flames almost catching that furry thing that hangs from his throat. Strange thing is, I wasn't scared this time.

He drew a circle around me in the sand with his hoof, then twisted his head slightly to one side and locked his left eye upon me. He was very close and I thought I saw his pupil change shape.¹ Finally, he spoke, and his voice was mighty as a church bell. Like there was a church bell gonging in his throat. Each word hit me like a Mack truck.

"I have never belonged around a fire before."

I kept telling myself — yes, Nick, this is really happening.

When I woke up this morning the fire was cold but he was still there standing above me, the sky a soft pink behind him. He moaned at me in these low, plaintive tones and I thought I'd dreamt his speaking, but then he asked if I would extract something from inside his ear. I hesitated at first, having only a Swiss Army knife and not knowing what it was and not knowing anything about surgery, but he got really mad. *"Just get it, just grab it and rip it out!"* It was this amazing device he'd been implanted with and the thing was in there so deep I couldn't help but cut up the inside of his ear — not that he cared. Every time I stopped because I thought I was hurting him — the blood was gushing out over my hands — he just

¹ A. B. Bubenik has observed that "with decreasing light intensity, the shape of the [moose's] normally elliptical and horizontally kept pupil changes to circular" (Schwartz 175). It therefore stands to reason that, conversely, as The Moose cast his gaze down toward me and the light of the campfire, his pupil may have changed from a circular shape back to an elliptical horizontal one.

got angrier. Finally, all I could do was push the knife all the way in and turn till the device cracked. Then every time I cracked off another piece he'd stand up and shake out loose bits of electronics like someone with swimmer's ear. This went on for about half an hour.

When I asked him what this thing was he said it was a gift. I figured Parks Canada had been monitoring moose populations. But after I picked all the broken bits out of the sand I realized it wasn't a tracking device at all, but a radio receiver/microprocessor attached to some kind of hearing aid. I'd never seen anything like it. Extremely high-powered. This only made me more curious and I asked him again where he'd gotten it but this time he pretended not to hear me. One thing's for sure though, whoever designed it must be working in high-tech. It wasn't much bigger than a cashew.

Once the bleeding had stopped and he'd covered the dark spot over with sand, he said "*You comin'?*" and all I heard was my own voice, sounding like a stranger's, saying "Yes." He knelt down on his front legs, I climbed up on his back, and we were off...

We're a long way from the dunes now and floating between the darkest trees I've ever seen. I don't know where we're going, it's so wet, so quiet in here — he made me ditch my GPS and satellite phone. I've abandoned all my other gear, too, except for my day pack and this tablet, which he doesn't know about.

It is a cold, misty June morning and I am sitting on a moose's back streaming over the soggiest, unseen lands of Canada.

* * * * *

Thus began my role in the infamous "Animal Rebellion" of 2031. Unwittingly, unknowingly, I'd fallen in with its ringleader on the run from the Vancouver Police, as well as the RCMP, and fresh from the largest civilian massacre in Canadian history, the Battle of Jasper, Alberta.

By now every Canadian is acquainted with the tale of their country's decline. Violent wildlife attacks upon essential services in

Vancouver and Toronto began on May 29th, 2031. These attacks came without warning and were perpetrated by a suddenly ubiquitous enemy: raccoons, chipmunks, porcupines, pigeons, coyotes, wolves, deer, birds of prey — the list goes on — all acting with unimaginable coordination and violence. Power grids and water treatment facilities were the primary targets of what one commentator dubbed the animals’ “War on Public Health.” Initially, the strategy proved effective. Not only were vast edifices of sophisticated infrastructure instantly transformed into so much useless junk in both cities, de-electrifying Toronto had particularly horrific effects: the mass death of the young, the ill, and the elderly proved unstoppable as water systems and sanitation collapsed. Less than two weeks after the initial attacks, water-borne diseases such as cholera were not uncommon in the Greater Toronto Area.

Despite such calamity, response to what would become known as the “Animal Rebellion” was slow at the provincial level and non-existent at the federal level. Vancouver and Toronto mobilized what personnel and resources they had, while armed vigilantism became common. (Certainly everyone remembers Don Cherry and his Second World War tank confronting that lone raccoon protester in Nathan Phillips Square.) For a time, the rebellion seemed just a bizarre two-city problem. Then Jasper happened.

On May 31st, 2031, three-quarters of the Alberta town’s inhabitants were murdered and one of the “crown jewels” of Canada’s tourism industry razed, including the headquarters of the local RCMP detachment. As if travelling by airborne contagion, coordinated animal violence quickly spread to every major city in Canada.² It looked like things couldn’t possibly get any worse. Then the fires began.

This is not the place to attempt a comprehensive analysis of the Great Burning (2031-2033). I leave that task to more capable hands. That first night I awoke with a scratch in my throat, I, too

² Except, oddly, the Ottawa-Gatineau region.

— although I lay next to the furry arsonist himself — had no idea what dark days lay ahead. I simply stared at the moon for a time — it had turned ochre-red in the haze — and fell back asleep.

Suffice it to say however that the rebellion and the smoke, not to mention the ash that fell like snow for nearly twenty months, wreaked havoc upon Canadian society. Water supplies dwindled and now all cities suffered the scourge of water-borne disease. Nationwide, health services were stretched beyond their breaking point as thousands succumbed and morgues overflowed. Brown-outs became a daily occurrence. Energy and water rationing led to rioting; industry jostled for exemption and, in most cases, won. Overnight the national economy withered and as looting and general lawlessness became the new normal — not to mention black market profiteering, especially in fresh produce — a climate of fear descended with the smoke placing Canadians under house arrest.

By July 2031, none ventured out into the eerily quiet streets of downtown Canada except to scavenge, barter or steal necessities and then only in number. Canada had never before seen anything like the Great Burning and hopefully never will again.³ Nearly one-fifth of Canada's boreal forest went up in smoke within a two-year period. The Great Burning was a disaster of truly apocalyptic proportions and, as such, lies beyond description.⁴

3 There are simply not enough trees left upon the planet in any concentration resembling that of Canada's boreal forest prior to the Great Burning.

4 The Great Burning (2031-2033) consisted of seven separate principle conflagrations. These stretched from the northern reaches of the British Columbia / Alberta border to north-eastern Québec. At various times each of these fires has been attributed to The Moose which is, of course, a physical impossibility. The Moose could not have set all of the blazes of which he is accused. For instance, Stephanie Pyne's assertion in *The Scourge of Canada* that The Moose ignited what would become known as the St. Jovite fire places the accused more than 2,500 kilometres from the ignition point of the Flin Flon blaze, which all sources agree The Moose set the first week of May, 2031. Nonetheless, as J.M. Peek observes, all of the fires associated with the Great Burning did, at least in principle, benefit moose: "Fire is an important source of moose habitat in boreal forests. Fires burn at different intensities, exhibit irregular patterns and produce a variety of plant communities. Investigations have suggested that each kind of community — including closed canopy conifer forest, mature deciduous stands of aspens and birches, aquatic areas and high forage producing shrub fields — contributes to the quality of moose habitat" (Schwartz 363).

Before I proceed any further let me be perfectly clear. I am not here to exonerate “The Arsonist of Canada.” I am not contesting that “The Original,” as his followers knew him, was responsible for the Great Burning.

Nor do I believe that anyone other than him was more singularly responsible for the Animal Rebellion. There is no doubt that he brought untold suffering to millions of Canadians. Having reflected upon these events thirty years, I no longer believe that the end justifies the means. The Moose’s tactics simply must not be permitted to siphon legitimacy from their subsequent exposure of this nation’s true governance. Quite simply, regardless of the outcome, the Great Burning was, is, and always will be an unjustifiable horror. But it is also a part of mine and The Moose’s muddied stories that must be told.

So, yes, I decided to travel with “The Scourge of Canada” on his fire-lighting journey, but I had no knowledge of it as such. Moreover, I never actually saw him set a single fire.⁵ Not only did I have no knowledge of the purpose of our travel, frankly, I didn’t care to find out. I didn’t care about anything. I hated the world for being and thought existence itself corrupt. My ramble with this moose I took for but a passing thrill before the end. I simply had no idea what a beginning I had stumbled upon. Or rather, what a beginning had stumbled upon me...

I can appreciate that for millions of Canadians the preceding explanation inspires little but incredulity and outrage. How dare I credit a terrorist with saving one life when he destroyed countless others? How dare I split hairs over a mass murderer?

Let me assure my fellow citizens that it is not the intention of this book to pardon The Moose of his many crimes. My life was changed forever that dark night in Saskatchewan, it’s true — I was saved, given a renewed sense of purpose — but my personal experience is irrelevant to the larger picture. I know that. I am not the brainwashed disciple I’ve so often been portrayed as. My relationship with “The

⁵ To this day I haven’t the faintest idea as to how he went about igniting his fires.

Great Black Beast” has been plagued by doubt since we first met three decades ago, and it continues to be. In all honesty, some days I still don’t know what to believe because I also know what follows here; I believe what I saw in Ottawa with my own two eyes on July 8th, 2036. On that day, brief as his words were, The Moose alluded both to an identity that would transcend the boldest claims his few admirers made about him and to a destiny that would be accomplished sooner than any of us could have guessed.

For years now I’ve been cautioned to justify my role in the aforementioned events. The immediate period following the Great Burning, which saw aspects of The Moose’s story come to light, brought numerous threats and acts of intimidation to my door, even a couple of *bona fide* assassination attempts. The last of these drove me underground in 2038, where I remain to this day.

Nonetheless, I refuse to be galvanized. I appreciate Canadians’ anger with The Moose, and, by extension, with me. Thus I have attempted to keep the aim of this book simple: to contribute to the possibility of a more nuanced portrait of events than has hitherto been available by adding my unique evidence to the debate. This is my only goal. I am merely a courtroom clerk; you must be the judge. Because of my association with The Moose I have now lived nearly half my life in exile, but don’t let the forlorn connotations of that word fool you; I’ve never been happier. All that is to say, I have no vested interest in these matters any longer. I know that I will never set foot upon Canadian soil again and I am at peace with that.

Presented here for the first time are all of the primary documents in my possession relating to The Moose, his remarkable “girlfriend” Marianne Brûlé, and myself in connection with both the Great Burning and the Animal Rebellion. I have not altered a single one of these documents except in the most superficial aspect and they appear here in an essentially chronological order. In the interest of

clarity and only where absolutely necessary have I added illustrations or editorial notes. And, as you will no doubt notice, where I appear, the arrogance, naïveté and fickleness that characterized my younger days also remains on display.

The book before you divides naturally into three sections. The first is a mingling of two prison memoirs: one penned by The Moose whilst a prisoner on board a westbound cross-Canada Via Rail passenger train, the other by Marianne Brûlé, herself a two-time prisoner of the Royal Canadian Mint at Ottawa.

The Moose's memoir — entitled *Le Rumen* — can scarcely tolerate an introduction. Part memoir, part indictment and all riddle (I see now that he was always in control), it must simply be read and reread. Regardless of its artistic merits or lack thereof, *Le Rumen* will remain a document of interest for generations to come due to those events it preceded and in many ways sparked.⁶

Marianne Brûlé's journal meanwhile, which I have chosen to call *The Reticulum*, is not simply an addendum to *Le Rumen* and the events in question. It is also a stark window onto the particular delusions of a very intelligent young woman.

Perhaps a word about Ms. Brûlé would not be out of place at this point. In the final years of her life, Marianne Brûlé believed herself to be an android. She functioned at all times through a computer she wore on her person and considered a part of her body. To be clear, Ms. Brûlé did not see her wearable computer, nor any of the other numerous technological devices she wore about her person, as accessories. Rather, she considered them *her body itself*, no differently than you consider your heart and lungs to be *of* your body.

Ms. Brûlé developed this elaborate psychological complex during her late teens and in time became a truly shocking sight to behold.

⁶ Whilst captive, The Moose was furnished with a silver pencil and several tanned moose skins upon which he composed his mysterious journal. I saved all sixteen skins from the furnaces of The Royal Canadian Mint some years ago. These remain in my possession, as does the pencil, and will be bequeathed to the Canadian Museum of Civilization upon my death.

At once monstrously sexual and monstrously technological in appearance, she both frightened and attracted men. Her green eyes were perhaps her least striking feature.

By age eighteen, Ms. Brûlé had disavowed her French-Canadian heritage — she claimed her fluency *en français* a programming glitch — and had already taken to wearing a knee-brace she didn't need as well as two ear-clip cell phones (one on either side of her head). An electrified swimming cap soon followed — Ms. Brûlé grew her hair out through it — and this formed the substrate upon which other technological devices were mounted. (Marianne used conductive metallic dyes on her hair to help make it form part of a ground-plane for a transmitter).

On her twenty-first birthday Ms. Brûlé underwent her most drastic alteration: the amputation of her right leg just below the knee. (To warrant this procedure she first submerged the limb in dry ice for thirty minutes one Friday night). The subsequently required prosthetic cost \$38,000 and Ms. Brûlé turned to exotic dancing to finance this as well as other aspects of her ongoing transformation.

I loved Marianne Brûlé deeply, I don't deny it. We played together as children — we were next door neighbours whose fathers worked for the same Montreal-based robotics firm. Close throughout our youth, we became lovers in high school but lost track of one another a few years later. That much *is* true.

I have struggled for years now with guilt over Marianne's death, and if any secret agenda beyond a concern for Canada and the truth lurks behind the publication of these documents, it is rooted in the hope that allowing her story to be told might finally allow her spirit to rest. It was in anticipation of this concern that I copied the entirety of her personal journal from her wearable hard drive prior to her murder. Perhaps now her brutal death will not have been in vain.

The second section of this book, entitled *The Omasum*, is composed of my personal correspondence and journals spanning the

spring to summer of 2031. These concern my initial encounter, travels and correspondence with both The Moose and a “fully functional” Marianne Brûlé. The third and final section — *The Abomasum* — consists of my eyewitness account of The Moose’s final visit to our nation’s capital in July, 2036.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the enormous contribution several wildlife biologists made to this book, particularly Albert W. Franzmann and Charles C. Schwartz, whose exhaustive study *Ecology and Management of The North American Moose* (2007) allowed me to steer safely through The Moose’s many conceits. I would also like to thank Cathy Moira of *Canadian Living* magazine as well as Amanda Caldwell at *Chatelaine* for their very generous assistance with this project.

N. A. C, Europe, October 2061

I

LE RUMEN / THE RETICULUM

CHAPTER 1

April 28th, 2031, Le Rumen⁷

Hock and haunch, all the parts they throw away, ears and hooves, I want you to consider them carefully. As if my body is spread flat before you on a red velvet square. Gaze slowly. Like I'm exotic weaponry being exhibited for the first time. Don't say until you're sure.

Over the heads of my captors, Deer Reader, this is the story that must fly to you like a prayer: a body transformed. Every bit of my body has been involved in some of their violence. It is all that's gone wrong in a big brown bag of fur and fat and you must tear it apart. Switch on the hot lights and deprive it of sleep. Every organ is a witness and will tell you something of the whole. Don't worry. Any place is a good

⁷ Moose possess a four-chambered stomach. The rumen is by far the largest of these chambers and the first that food enters upon swallowing. As Renecker and Schwartz tell us, "in adult moose, the rumen serves as a fermentation vat where bacteria break down food particles and volatile fatty acids are absorbed through the [stomach] wall" (Schwartz 405). Quite simply, everything a moose consumes passes through its rumen. It is, so to speak, the great sorting centre of the digestive system. It is not known why The Moose chose to ascribe this name to his memoir. Nonetheless, I have chosen to extend the form of the ruminant stomach in the organization of this book.

place to start. That's the great thing about torture. All organs dream of another existence. You'll catch one dreaming. All organs feel pain. You might even catch one resting. Slaving from moon to moon to maintain my indecent shape, my organs just want to become irresponsible, unhounded matter again. And Deer Reader, you can free them.

Hopefully, by the time you're done we're going to have more than a Moose, we'll have a Moose Disassembled Together. And that'll be even better, because all I know is where it first hurt and sometimes I can barely remember that.

Welcome to the Point of Call, Canada.⁸ Thank you for locking me in here.

CHAPTER 2

April 29th, 2031, Le Rumen

To be clear, I am the first and last Moose — the lone survivor of a loser species that can't forget a thing. And now they've imprisoned me upon a train called *Le Canadien*. Brockville, Kingston, Belleville — these are the meaningless new names along the old river. Truly I tell you, they won't last a minute. I remember when the French came up the watery stairway that leads into the heart of Canada, the Indians down it before them — ten minutes ago, the discovery of Canada's great rivers, it was all ten minutes ago, those gushing chambers of Fur Mania like the arteries in my heart. I remember it all and I'm ready to make my official statement. (Not that I'm going to tell you the ancient secrets of the animals — those will never be for you).

I remain, the Last Moose in Canada. I remain, my own son and ancestor, survivor of the survivors.

The Woman With Long Black Hair told me about the large cortex of the human brain. I know it's what accounts for your intelligence and abstract thinking. By nature, and through some religious prac-

⁸ A phrase commonly employed by hunters referring to the location from which they imitate the mating calls of their prey.

tice known as “education,” you humans are conceptualists, typical egoists, selfish users of what you foolishly call an “ecosystem” — see, I can conceptualize too. I can judge you, just as you judge me.⁹

My captors have simplified my mission — that’s all. They have forgotten I am colour-blind.¹⁰ By locking me in this train car, this over-illuminated casket, where the lights are on twenty-four hours a day, in a world deliberately deprived of colour, as if that could affect me, surrounded only by white and grey, half the colours of Canada, they’ve made everything easier. I remember my work.

CHAPTER 3

April 30th, 2031, Le Rumen

So please put on your protective gear, Deer Reader, your thick rubber apron, gloves and boots. And welcome to the rolling autopsy, in the red, red train car of Canada, where death guides the living and where pathologist and cadaver are one and the same. Place a block of Maple under my head and we can begin.

It’s a little tight in here but I’m pretty comfortable lying on my sternum with my legs folded beneath me. They’ve given me a Moose Hide to write on and a long silver pencil to clutch with my hoof, and I’m falling for it, word after word.

Yes, they’ve transformed me yet again, but this time into a tongue that will not be silenced.

(I once saw a dozen of them pressing close round an enormous tree, juice pulping out over their leathery little hands while more than fifty others watched, cheering. The air was rank with sweaty fur and evaporated sap. One Beaver even had a video camera.)

⁹ Bubenik notes that, in terms of brain size, “moose rank high in the mammalian hierarchy.” Indeed, in light of The Moose’s many achievements it should come as no surprise that in moose “individual brain size varies considerably” (Schwartz 113-114).

¹⁰ Although it is assumed that since “all investigated ungulates have cones and rods in the retina, it is likely that moose also see colours” (Schwartz 176), I take The Moose at his word here that he could not.

Before we begin I would like to dedicate this writing on the wall of my brother's skin to all Canadian Highway Bones, to all victims of the "Guaranteed Hunt," to every Moose mocked in fishing-cap sunglasses made to graze the green baize of a pool table, to the unknown ones whose blood pays for everything.

O light amongst the Canadian Hordes, O Deer, Deer Reader, only you can help me rob them back. "Them" are the Mint at Ottawa and its brilliant conceit, Canada; Argent and Gules, those two demons, the official colours, who inhabit the Canadian Flag; the Lion who thinks he sees but does not and the Unicorn who sees but feigns blindness; and of course, Jean, the Cursed Castor, the Beaver and all his pathetic friends, the Hinterland Who's Who come into some money. They have all helped trample my species deep into hate. Some for two million years, others mere centuries, but they have all lit the conflagration which, at this very moment, consumes the North. They have strangled all resisters but one.

Moose have suffered like no other. *We* were the number one victims of Fur Mania — not the Beaver — and before that we were the wretched of the Pleistocene; those long nights when the ice seemed permanently supreme. There was just one neon sign in downtown Canada back then and it flickered: *MASS-EXTINCTIONS*. Stumbling around the corner onto the bones of some loved one. Trying to escape and stumbling onto the seasons sharpening around you like spears. It can't be told. Only Moose escaped countless brutalities for this current age and for what? What has deep time patience achieved? Moose odours wiggle their way up downtown noses without winning even a twitch of wonder. We've splattered the hunters' cooling-knives, countless minivans and the iron aprons of 87,000 trains like this one, but for all our bloodshed still our wisdom wilts, and *we* are blamed for our own mass murder.¹¹

11 Moose mortality specialist K.N. Child: "Seeking a travel route of least resistance in areas of deep snow, moose are drawn to plowed railways. When confronted by a train, a moose may stand its ground or flee. [However], if flight is unsuccessful, moose stand their ground and fight... If not

Some say Moose are made of body parts left over from other animals. Those assholes are only half wrong. Indians think entrails are the best part. Scientists say the nose because they still don't understand it. Don't say until you're sure.

CHAPTER 4

May 1st, 2031, Le Rumen

Okay, blood, my blood. Every autopsy is awash in it.

Gules is a demon with the power to manifest as the official red of Canada but he is also a living, breathing creature. He was a creature long before he acquired his strange demonic powers. He is an amalgam of blood. In fact, he is made up of two million years' worth — and counting — of my blood, Moose Blood. You must understand this before anything else. Gules *is* the blood of our study.

He has some basic fur-bearer characteristics, but these are extremely distorted. To look at Gules is to behold a sweaty, disgusting, nasty piece of fat; a barely functioning miasmatic heap of exquisite redness. One of his legs dwells in a slick, vagina-like cavity that stretches from his groin to the base of his skull. Picture a red, greasy slide whistle. His other leg is about the length of a bicycle kickstand and performs roughly the same function. Teeth of various sizes grow into and out of Gules' flesh. In several places teeth appear in clusters, all kinds of teeth, victims' teeth.

Gules hasn't any way of expelling what he consumes save for the viscous secretion he leaves behind him wherever he goes. He doesn't want to return *anything* he's stolen, but I guess he can't help leaking.

Violence, greed, optimal retention — that's what Gules is all about.

killed outright, most moose suffer serious injuries, amputations or excessive blood loss and die of shock some distance from the railway corridor. Many injured moose are dispatched by rail officials" (Schwartz 280-281).

“Body parts scattered under Spruce. Branches broken all around, many splattered with blood. This is where the moose made his last stand. You can tell because the snow is pounded flat.” I once overheard a scientist say this to a group of students he’d led into the bush. And he was half right.

You see, there really is no difference between this immortal scene and the Canadian Flag. In both, Moose Blood is splattered everywhere and the Maple Leaf keeps a straight face, pretends not to see the victim whose life is dripping from the end of its nose.

“Here is a moose that otherwise could have lived” proclaims the scientist measuring my bones, blind to the story in the blood.

Welcome to the Point of Call, Gules. And to you, too, welcome to the Point of Call, Dr. Suzuki.

CHAPTER 5

Marianne Brûlé’s Journal, May 1st, 2031

they must have sent a thousand mounties after me but they weren’t so agile. i swung from girder to girder beneath the interprovincial bridge and made it back to québec in no time, my steel fingers nearly cracking in the cold, my underwear wedged up my mainframe. i tried not to think about Ollie. what they must be doing to him.¹² i’d seen them shoot him in the neck and it broke my heart but one of us had to get away. he staggered a bit and then just dropped. we should never have come downtown. the last thing i saw in ottawa was his motionless body swinging in a net from the end of a forklift.¹³

¹² Ms. Brûlé often referred to The Moose as “Ollie.”

¹³ According to A. W. Franzmann, an expert in moose restraint and translocation, “modern chemical restraint of wildlife began with the development of projectile darts in the 1950s” (Schwartz 524). Today, “short-range CO₂ guns or longer-range powder-fired guns invariably are the choices for darting moose” and the “heavy musculature of the upper rear leg or the shoulder” the preferred target zones (Schwartz 525). There is no scientific data available on the effects of neck-shots.

While nicotine salicylate, and later succinylcholine chloride, were the first drugs used on moose by wildlife biologists for field studies — both are paralytics that did not anesthetize the animal — in 1970 “synthetic narcotics replaced them. First was etorphine, which is 10,000 times more potent than morphine, followed by carfentanil, which is 20,000 times more potent than morphine” (Schwartz 526). Given that an immobilized moose will usually travel “at least 4 minutes after injection” (Schwartz