

THE RACE

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. LABRADOR, CANADA, WINTER 1903 DAY

The edge of the world. Bitter cold. Snow. Dark, grey day.

LEONIDAS "LADDIE" HUBBARD, the leader of the expedition, late 20's, slumps against DILLON WALLACE, late 30's, former lawyer, surrounded by the haze from the pitiful little fire.

Their ragged clothes hang off their gaunt bodies in shreds. Every movement is slow, painful, haunted. This what the final stages of starvation look like.

GEORGE ELSON, late 20's, their guide, Scotch-Cree Indian, weakly stumbles into view clutching a small, weathered box, the word "Mustard" still faintly visible. He gestures toward the bush he'd found it under.

They pass the box from hand to hand as if it is made of gold.

George, with great difficulty, pries the top off with his knife. He scrapes out the last shards of mustard from the walls of the box onto a flat rock.

They dumbly stare at the three tiny piles of brownish yellow.

With dirty, bony fingers George and Wallace each carefully scoops up his portion. Hubbard is too weak to reach for his dinner.

Like a mother bird, Wallace places the mustard from his own hand into Hubbard's mouth. Then he feeds himself.

The mustard is savored as if it's the finest delicacy in the world.

Hubbard's blurred eyes try to focus on the empty mustard box beside fire. Almost as if he knows what Hubbard's thinking, Wallace hands him the box.

Hubbard caresses the rough wood. A tear trickles down one gaunt cheek. Hallucinating, he speaks to his wife as if present.

HUBBARD
Mina...we...ate...sorry...

Hubbard tries to stand. He slumps to the ground. Wallace and George half carry, half drag the busted Hubbard to the tent.

A freezing rain begins to fall. The fire smokes even more.

INT. TENT DAY

Hubbard is beyond hunger, beyond pain.

Wallace clasps his friend to his chest.

EXT. CAMPFIRE DAY

George, using his knife, slowly cuts his blanket in half. Cuts two smaller pieces of blanket.

He takes off his moccasins. Wraps his feet in the smaller blanket pieces. Looks lovingly at his moccasins before he places them in the stew pot.

Wallace shuffles back to the fire. Squats beside George. He looks at George.

George stares into the miserable, smoking fire as he stirs his moccasin soup.

Without looking at him, George hands Wallace one half of the blanket.

Wallace looks questioningly at the blanket. It dawns on him that George has started preparations for the rescue attempt.

INT. TENT DAY

Hubbard picks up pencil and slowly begins to write.

EXT. HUBBARD'S TENT, LABRADOR DAY

George and Wallace stoop like old men under the weight of the half blanket.

HUBBARD (V. O.)
My dearest wife, I am not suffering. I am sleepy. I think death from starvation is not so bad. But let no one suppose I expect it. I think the boys will be able to save me ...

George's hand lingers on Hubbard's tent flap. Movement of his hand is half blessing, half caress.

Blurry world, nothing in focus.

A flutter of wings. Over trees. Into sky.

Across Labrador. To heaven.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. THE ROOM

Undecorated white walls. No windows. There are no markers to tell where this room is or what year it is. Is this an insane asylum? Police interrogation room? Heavenly anteroom?

MINA, a wild pony of a woman in her 20's dressed in clothing circa 1900, faces front, toward a VIDEO CAMERA and an unseen and unheard INVESTIGATOR. Leans forward to speak into the microphone.

MINA

Please repeat the question.

Listening to the unseen, unheard INVESTIGATOR, Mina leans back, pauses to consider her answer. She begins to speak again without moving forward to the mic. Her words are too faint to hear clearly.

She stops. Nods her head in acknowledgement of the unheard request to move closer to the mic. She begins again.

MINA

Why do we do anything?
To gather knowledge. To further human understanding of
the world for oneself and for generations to come. To
challenge himself physically, emotionally, mentally ... spiritually ...

But that's not all, there's more to it.

MINA

For the love of adventure.
Love ...

How can she put this in words? She tries again.

MINA

One of the greatest gifts is love. To care passionately.
To devote one's soul completely. To give and risk all.
To risk losing life itself.
The human race ...

Life is a very short race. We begin with small, uncertain steps and many never learn to run.
We ran. How we ran.
We ran.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. RIVER TO NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO, CANADA, 1900 NIGHT

MIGHTY ROAR of a torrential waterfall.

Pinpoint of light far away, swaying. Swinging lamp on carriage post reveals horse-drawn wagon, two working-class MEN, a hogshead cask, and a WOMAN, greying, middle-aged.

CLUMP CLUMP of horses' hooves over waterfall's ROAR.

MEN, nervous, peer into darkness beyond lamp light as they drive the wagon from the road into a field. They stop the wagon. MEN's eyes, wide and scared, look at WOMAN. She sits ramrod straight. Stares unblinking into the darkness.

WOMAN stands up. Steps out of wagon. MEN slowly follow. They stand and listen to waterfall. WOMAN points to barrel. MEN hesitate. Unload barrel.

WOMAN climbs over rocks. Beckons.

MEN carry barrel over rocks. Set cask down at her feet. Pry off lid.

WOMAN steps up onto rock. She folds her long black skirts around her legs. Squeezes herself into cask. Her last view is of the full moon before the lid clamps down.

MEN hammer four nails with four blows. BAM. BAM. BAM. BAM.

MAN eases into water along with cask. Steers it into center of river beyond rocks.

River rips barrel from his hold. He goes under water. Water smashes cask into rocks. MAN surfaces downstream. Gasping, hauls himself from river.

EXT. NIAGARA FALLS SUNRISE

First beam of morning's light break. Rays of sunlight slice through the mist rising from the churning pool of water at base of falls.

Rainbows.

On the rocks the empty barrel lies open like Venus's half shell glowing in the morning light. No sign of WOMAN.

In this moment one believes in all things bright and beautiful, Nature as benevolent, a god in heaven who sees even the sparrow fall.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. PITNEY HOUSE, ONTARIO, CANADA DAY

In a pool of bright sunlight, Mina is imprisoned in an unfinished wedding dress. She stands on a chair, reading a newspaper under the full-length veil.

CLOSE ON: Headline: WOMAN GOES OVER FALLS IN BARREL 1900.

CLOSE ON: Picture: dazed WOMAN, bloodied head, steps out of barrel.

MOTHER, hair neatly held in place, mouth half full of pins and needles, pins up the hem of the wedding dress.

MOTHER
Mina, hold still.

MINA
I can't breathe.

MOTHER
Aren't supposed to.

MINA
It says, she went over the falls in a-
Ow! Mum, you stuck me.

MOTHER
If you stop eeling around, you won't get hurt.

Mina yanks off the veil. Tosses it to the floor. Her hair escapes the confines of her Victorian bun.

MINA
I'm not wearing it.

MOTHER
Mina.

MINA
It's a new century, Mum.
New things happen.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION, NEW YORK - DAY

Carved marble Greek nymphs on either side of the door hold aloft a stone banner which reads, ENTER ALL TRAVELERS AND DREAMERS.

WOMEN'S BRASS BAND and SUFFRAGETTE (some wear Bloomers) carry signs, march through the doorway.

Mina hovers beside wooden steamer trunk. She cranes her neck left and right.

Hubbard, the well-fed, well-dressed, live-wire version of himself, bounds through the crowd.

Eagerly, Mina steps forward and is drawn up short. She is tethered in place by the trunk on the hem of her long skirt.

HUBBARD

Your mother let you travel unaccompanied?

Street URCHIN peddles newspapers.

URCHIN

Peary to try for Pole again!

MINA

She's a modern woman, too. I'll have to try bloomers.

Hubbard lifts trunk off her skirt. Feigns horror.

HUBBARD

You shock me.

Hubbard buys newspaper, Mina at his elbow.

MINA

What's it say about Mrs. Peary? And their Snow Baby?

INT. TENT MORNING

RAIN DRUMS on canvas overhead and mixes with LOUD SNORES.

Mina, in her bedroll, uncovers Hubbard's head to kiss his ear; the new gold wedding ring on her hand catches her eye. She teases her groggy husband.

MINA

It's raining again. Everyone should have one day of good trout fishing on his honeymoon. One pond where the fish always bite that only our Indian guide knows about. Too bad he can't take us. "Ten miles away. Rough hike. No white woman's ever been there."

He opens his eyes. They look at each other. Smile.

MINA

Well, someone has to be the first.

INT. HUBBARD HOUSE, N.Y., PARLOR EVENING

REVEREND HOTCHKISS and his mother, MRS. HOTCHKISS, both large of girth and generosity, grey-haired patrons of the upcoming Hubbard Expedition, MR. PHILLIPS, editor, a dapper 55 year old "bachelor" friend of Rev. Hotchkiss, Hubbard and Mina all brandish pencils to race magnetic miniature sleds in the board game, RACE TO THE POLE.

The game brings out a ruthless, cut-throat side of Rev. Hotchkiss. He triumphantly moves his sled ahead of Mina's.

REV. HOTCHKISS

Eat your dogs!

MRS. HOTCHKISS

Ten miles, Mina?

HUBBARD

Hey! What'd you...

MINA

We had to climb on hands and knee. My skirts caught on every branch. The underbrush is unimaginably thick in North Carolina.

Rev. Hotchkiss flourishes his pencil.

REV. HOTCHKISS

I'm ahead!

MRS. HOTCHKISS

I bet your dress was ruined.
That's my path! Clear off, Sonny!

MR. PHILLIPS

By all means. Ladies first.

MINA

Thank God for adventure.

MR. PHILLIPS

Amen. Adventure books feed me. The public eats a "true" life tale daily. The more fictionalized, the faster they devour it.

MINA

Mr. Phillips, the book rights for the Hubbard Expedition are still available.

MR. PHILLIPS

Labrador is of no interest to my readers. They neither know where it is located nor why anyone should explore it.
I'm hopelessly behind.

Mr. Phillips abandons the game. Others continue without him.

HUBBARD

The last unmapped spot in North America.

MR. PHILLIPS

The public has eyes only for the Poles. Personally, the Poles, North and South, East and West, are of less than no interest to me.

MINA

You jest. There isn't a man in this country who wouldn't give a toe or two to frostbite to make a name for himself as Peary has.

REV. HOTCHKISS

Don't cut me out!

MR. PHILLIPS

"The pole is a mere point without height, breadth or thickness and therefore without special interest." Sir Clements Markham. His wife had a name similar to yours, ma'am. Minna. She also accompanied her husband on his expeditions. Markham's interests were practical. Quinine to treat malaria.

MINA

I'm at the pole!

Rev. Hotchkiss is surprised and disappointed. How rude.

REV. HOTCHKISS

My word, you did win.

MR. PHILLIPS

It's a very good book, Mrs. Hubbard. I'll send you a copy to read while your husband's away.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY HARBOUR WHARF, 1902 SUNRISE

Seagulls, sailors, rotting fish, a DEAD HORSE blocks dray. THREE WORKMEN yell and gesture around horse.

Mina and Hubbard stand next to wooden steamer trunk. Wallace strides up. Wallace and Hubbard slap backs.

HUBBARD

Dillon Wallace. I knew you wouldn't be late. Bully good to see you, you old scoundrel.

George slips in quietly. George & Mina make eye contact. Immediately like each other.

HUBBARD

George! There you are.
Mrs. Hubbard, this is George Elson, our guide. George came down on the Canadian Pacific, Mina. Just like you did that fateful day you married me. He came from Missanabie. 1,059 miles in only two days.

MINA

We're lucky to have found a guide such as you, Mr. Elson.

Mina reaches out to shake hands. George fiddles with his hat.

WALLACE

(Snorts)

Mrs. Hubbard, no need for such manners. George is just a camp-boy and cook.

MINA

I agree with you wholeheartedly, Mr. Wallace. Thank God for civilization and all civilizing activities.

Wallace suspects she's making fun of him. Hubbard makes peace. Out of the corner of his eye, George regards Mina.

HUBBARD

Wallace, we're in danger of being outnumbered by these Canadians.

WALLACE

Oh, that explains it. Canadian.

MINA

We Canadians have odd democratic ideas.

Again, Wallace suspects she's making fun of him and Hubbard jumps in to smooth things over with a joke.

HUBBARD

I annexed my own bit of Canada when I married Mrs. Hubbard.

MINA

If that's true, than by marrying you, dear, I got the rest of the world.

George watches a bird soar over the dock and into the sky.

EXT. PASSENGER SHIP DECK, OFF THE COAST OF MAINE NIGHT

18 foot canoe and boxes of supplies stacked port side.

An identical 18 foot canoe & supply boxes stacked stern side.

At the railing, Mina, green about the gills, gulps the cold sea air.

WILLIAM BROOKS CABOT, grey haired, robust, 50 year old fellow explorer, puffing his pipe, stumbles upon Mina.

CABOT

Rough bit of sea. This next stretch should be kinder to you, Mrs. Hubbard.

MINA

I'm not much of a sailor but it is easier to be sick of body than of soul.

This is his cue to reassure her that her husband will be fine; but, he's an honest, straightforward man so he can't. Or he could say, "good evening" and move on. He does neither. He quietly puffs his pipe and waits for her questions.

MINA

Mr. Cabot, my husband tells me you've spent many summers exploring the shoreline of Labrador.

CABOT

Oh, a few.

He smiles as he runs a hand ruefully through his grey hair.

MINA

Your canoe is exactly like my husband's. Made by the same company.

CABOT

It's a good canoe.

MINA

If I may ask your opinion... I'm bothered... I'm not sure how to ask...

(She takes a deep breath)

My husband, with little experience, will be portaging and canoeing white-water in the interior with two other men. You, with years of experience, will be canoeing around the shore, alone with no portaging, in the exact same sort of canoe.

Has he chosen the wrong canoe?

Cabot, impressed with her, carefully forms his answer.

CABOT

The canoe is the least of his problems.
Your husband doesn't question his choice
of canoe. He doesn't seem to have noticed.
But you noticed.

MINA

Laddie's enthusiasm blinds him.

At that moment Hubbard & Wallace bound up.

HUBBARD

Cabot. Filling my wife's head with tales of Labrador?

CABOT

Her head is already well filled. Her thoughts well formed.

WALLACE

Women love to talk.

CABOT

Will you add to your supplies in Canada?

Hubbard enthusiastically pantomimes hunting.

HUBBARD

Bang! Roast caribou, partridge, seal.

Hubbard and Wallace mime eating. Mina silently watches. Hubbard, seeing his wife's look, adds with confidence,

HUBBARD

One must strike a balance between
weight of calories one carries and
amount of calories one consumes to
carry the weight.

WALLACE

You should venture into the interior
sometime, Cabot. Don't hang about
the coast like an old woman.

CABOT

I plan to meet the Naskapi Indians
who come out to the shore to trade.

HUBBARD

We're going in to the Naskapi hunting grounds. Come with us, Cabot.

CABOT

Come with you?

Cabot looks at Mina, out of the corner of his eye.

CABOT (cont'd)

Perhaps.

EXT. DECK OF A SEAL SHIP OFF THE COAST OF LABRADOR SUNRISE.

Grey skies streaked faintly pink. Cold wind. Fog.

Hubbard's canoe, incorrectly stacked on deck is now filled to the brim with rainwater. Rain-slicked surfaces. No sign of Cabot or his canoe. George bails water from canoe.

Wallace smokes his pipe as he jealously watches the couple at the rail. Hubbard and Mina, squint for their first sight of Labrador.

DECKHANDS lower down a longboat into the water.

MINA

I wish you'd wait for Cabot.

HUBBARD

Ice out was two weeks ago.

Mina presses a box of mustard into Hubbard's hands.

MINA

For plasters. At the first sign of a cough.

Wallace separates them.

WALLACE

It's time. There's the Post.

MINA

Battle Harbor. Named for the battle in my heart. Next trip I won't be put ashore.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. THE ROOM

Mina continues to answer questions from the unheard EXAMINER.

MINA

Yes. Some have suggested I hated him.
That I held Wallace responsible for what
happened.

She stops to listen to another question.

MINA

All I know for sure is that passion travels
in more than one direction.

She reconsiders what she's just said.

MINA

No, that's not quite accurate.
Passion moves in only one direction.
But it can do so at more than one time.

CUT TO:

EXT. ISLAND OFF THE COAST OF LABRADOR, POST SUNRISE

The HUDSON BAY COMPANY POST is nothing grander than a hut perched precariously on a
precipice of black rock.

No plants. Patches of dirty snow. Fog. Cold wind.

Mina peers intently into the gloom.

Mina's POV: BLACK OILY SMOKE as ship leaves harbor.

Mina straightens her shoulders. Lifts her head. Turns to Post. She misjudges her step on the
rocky path. Trips. Falls face-down. Panting, she lays on ground. Mina alone on the barren
rock of the Labrador island.

LONE CRY of a bird searching for it's mate.

Labrador island alone in vast Atlantic Ocean.

INT. HUBBARD HOUSE, N.Y., PARLOR, SUMMER DAY

Sunshine shines through window onto Mina's new journal.

MINA (V .0.)
Dearest Laddie, Love joins and separates ...

Moth flutters on inside of window pane. She watches it.

MINA
Poor sweet, you don't want to be in here.

Mina gently cups the moth in her hands. Opens the window. Sets moth free.

Mina rubs her waist where the stays of her corset pinch.

MINA
These stays will kill me.

Mina's P.O.V.: Out the window, birds flying north.

EXT. LABRADOR, GRAND LAKE SUNRISE

Summer in Labrador is short, rapid, intense. Plants shoot up bright green. Bug armies swarm and attack. Migrating birds land in large flocks. Life pulses everywhere.

Hubbard & George look up at birds flying ahead of brewing storm. Grey clouds. Waves threaten to swamp canoe.

George steers canoe as close as he dares to shore. Wallace in front paddles hard. Hubbard rides in middle of canoe looking for a break in trees. Suddenly he sees it!

EXT. LABRADOR, SUSAN BROOK, CAMP SITE NIGHT

Tents pitched near water. Hubbard, writing in his travel log, and Wallace bask in the glow of the fire and a job well done. George moves away from the fire and the men to study the water. A concerned look on his face. Is this the right river?

EXT. LABRADOR, SUSAN BROOK, CAMP SITE NIGHT

Later. As the men sleep, SUSAN BROOK flows into GRAND LAKE.

LAKE

Lake is calm. Storm has passed. Waves lap gently.

Around the bend, the real NORTHWEST RIVER pours volumes of water into the lake. By comparison the "river" the men are camped on looks like the large brook it is.

INT. HUBBARD HOME, N.Y., KITCHEN AFTERNOON

Mina butchers meat. Deftly wields large knife. Behind her pantry shelves are lined with gleaming jars of red jams, golden jellies, ruby tomatoes, emerald pickles. Smoked meats hang from rafters. Barrels (like the one the woman got into) of flour, cornmeal, rice line the wall.

BAM. BAM. BAM. BAM. Mina hacks the meat into pieces for stew.

EXT. LABRADOR, BANK OF SUSAN BROOK DAY

Hubbard and Wallace, carry heavy packs. The men, tan, lean, muscular, collapse on ground.

George, by himself, portages canoe around rapids.

Hubbard wears netting over his head. Wallace's face is red and swollen. He swats furiously at the BUGS which swarm. George doesn't waste energy swatting.

Wallace lays extra ax and ammo on ground. Hubbard discards a tin of lard and flour bag next to rock. They heft their packs, significantly lighter. They smile as they walk away.

INT. HUBBARD HOUSE, N.Y., PARLOR, SUMMER DAY

Rev. Hotchkiss and Mrs. Hotchkiss, Mina. Ship in bottle.

MINA

Rev. Hotchkiss, this may interest you.
Hand carved by an old Labrador sailor.
Said he sailed around the world twice.
He whittled while I waited for my ship to
bring me back here.

REV. HOTCHKISS

Amazing. How is that done? How did he
get her through such a small opening?

MRS. HOTCHKISS

Get whom?

REV. HOTCHKISS

The ship, Mother. Ships are shes.

MRS. HOTCHKISS

That doesn't make sense.

MINA

Some days it's all I can do not to
break the bottle to free the little ship.

REV. HOTCHKISS

Without the confinement she would j
just be a little ship. No accomplishment in that.

MINA

Of course.

MRS. HOTCHKISS

She? It doesn't make sense.

EXT. LABRADOR, DARK VALLEY DAY

Wallace, Hubbard and George look thin. Clothing, ragged.

Hubbard makes a new hole in his belt.

Food (alarmingly small amount) is spread out.

George seasons the stew. Tosses away the empty mustard box.

INT. HUBBARD HOME, N.Y., PARLOR, SUMMER DAY

Mina and the Hotchkisses have tea. Mrs. Hotchkiss feeds gingerbread from her plate to the
dog, BITSY, on her bosom.

MRS. HOTCHKISS

Mr. Hubbard is probably eating caribou
right now. Does that sound good to you,
Bitsy? Living by your natural instincts?
The way we were made by The Creator.

REV. HOTCHKISS

Ah, yes, the wilderness. Remember God's
chosen people wandered in the desert.

MINA

If they don't reach Ungava Bay Post before
the ship sails in September they'll spend the
winter at the Post.

MRS. HOTCHKISS

Frozen in at the post. How dreadful.

MINA

I wish I could be there. My Mum says, "Women wait; men test Fate."

REV. HOTCHKISS

Your mother's theology is weak. God's will be done on earth.

EXT. LABRADOR INTERIOR, RIVERBANK, FALL DAY

Hubbard takes off his shirt. He examines his emaciated body. His bones almost poke through his skin. He washes in river.

One drop of water rolls off Hubbard's gaunt face, falls onto one tiny flower in a crevice of a rock by the river.

Beyond Hubbard, George and Wallace breathe hard as they struggle together to carry the canoe around the falls.

INT. HUBBARD HOME, N.Y., KITCHEN AFTERNOON

Mina makes gingerbreads. Vase of fall asters on windowsill. On the counter is butter, molasses, dried ginger, sugared violets.

Mina beats the batter. Sweat on her brow. One drop of sweat rolls down her face, plops on the violets.

EXT. LABRADOR, UNKNOWN RIVER DAY

Cold wind blows brown leaves from trees. Patches of snow on frozen ground. Winter is coming. George, Wallace and Hubbard, all three together, put canoe in water.

Weary, weak, and discouraged, they get in the canoe and paddle.

Suddenly the water opens up in front of them broad and wide.

A CARIBOU DEER swims up ahead.

INT. HUBBARD HOUSE, KITCHEN, N.Y. LATE AFTERNOON

Sunlight through window falls on piles of red berries.

Jars of red jelly on the shelves, stove top, windowsill.

Red berries and juice spill through Mina's hands.

She SINGS.

MINA

"Oh, I wish I was a little sparrow,
or one of those birds that flies so high..."

EXT. LABRADOR, UNKNOWN RIVER LATE AFTERNOON

CARIBOU DEER swims in a lake.

GUNFIRE.

INT. HUBBARD HOUSE, KITCHEN, N.Y. LATE AFTERNOON

Mina freezes as if she'd heard gunfire.

MINA'S POV: Tree, outside window, aflame in autumn red.

Sound of BERRY JUICE DRIPPING from Mina's fingers.

EXT. LABRADOR, UNKNOWN RIVER LATE AFTERNOON

Wounded caribou splashes to shore. Falls to knees.

Hubbard leaps from canoe. He grabs caribou's head.

He slits the deer's throat.

The men on their knees around deer.

George scoops out liver. Slices piece for each.

Red blood spills onto green moss and Hubbard's hands.

INT. HUBBARD HOUSE, KITCHEN, N.Y. LATE AFTERNOON

Trembling, Mina, her hands red, begins to SING again.

MINA

"It's after my true love I'd follow and
when he spoke then I'd be nigh..."

EXT. LABRADOR, UNKNOWN RIVER DAY

George carefully wraps caribou hooves in skin; gently places them under bush for safekeeping.

Hubbard steps out from behind scrub tree. Fastens his pants.

Steps into canoe. He waves to Wallace on shore. Leans on pole. Pushes off into rapids.

Wallace swings pack onto his shoulders. George follows suit.

Hubbard, too weak to push, falls forward.

Canoe whips around. Out of control, canoe is swept through rapids. Disappears over small waterfall.

INT. HUBBARD HOME, N.Y., PARLOR EVENING

Mr. Phillips, Rev. & Mrs. Hotchkiss & Bitsy, the dog, with Mina. Mina offers plate of gingerbread to guests.

MR. PHILLIPS

I'm as stuffed as one of the animal heads
on the wall of the Explorer's Club.
The rescue mission—”

MRS. HOTCHKISS

—Not that one is known to be needed.

MR. PHILLIPS

Of course. Merely a precautionary measure.
But Mina is correct, we can not waste time.
The ship sailed from Ungava Bay Post and
Mr. Hubbard wasn't on it.

REV. HOTCHKISS

I'm sure they're holed up somewhere for the
winter.

Mina's hand shakes. One of the gingerbread falls to the floor.

INT. LABRADOR, TENT ON SHORE OF LAKE MICHIKAIMOUW DAY

Storm rages outside. George, Wallace, Hubbard huddle together for warmth. They drain the last of the tea from their mugs.

They look at each other. They know they must give up and turn back. Look away.

Disappointment and relief.

INT. HUBBARD HOME, N.Y., PARLOR EVENING

Mr. Phillips, Rev. & Mrs. Hotchkiss & Bitsy, the dog, with Mina.

MR. PHILLIPS

We'll send someone. Just to make sure.
And to write a book. People love to read
about rescue attempts.

MRS. HOTCHKISS

You wouldn't go to that frozen wasteland;
you'd stay home with mommy, wouldn't you,
Bitsy?

REV. HOTCHKISS

I'm contented with reading other's adventures.

MRS. HOTCHKISS

Oh. I almost forgot. I'll read aloud the
new installment of "Call of the Wild North".

(Hauls out a magazine)

Last month the trappers were lost in the
blizzard"

Mina inhales sharply. The two men notice the effect this story has on Mina. Mrs. Hotchkiss does not.

REV. HOTCHKISS

It's late. Mother, you'll have to read to us
some other evening.

MRS. HOTCHKISS

Bitsy loves dog stories. I thought--

MINA

Thank you, I do appreciate your attempts
to cheer me.

MR. PHILLIPS

We should go. It's getting late.

He offers Mrs. Hotchkiss his arm.

REV. HOTCHKISS

(To Mina)

Look at the lilies of the field and birds of the air.
They neither spin nor reap. Yet your heavenly
father cares for them.

Mr. Phillips pats Mina's hand.

MR. PHILLIPS

Look to your fellow human beings. They will
deliver your husband back to you. You will
make a very persuasive speech at the
Explorer's Club. An excellent introduction to a book.
Remember your namesake, Bram Stoker's Mina,
"The perfect woman, the brain of a man and the
heart of a woman."

EXT. LABRADOR, UNKNOWN RIVER DAY

Wallace, Hubbard and George, all three together, struggle to lift the canoe.

Their arms shake. Canoe crashes down. They can't lift it into the water.

EXT. TRAIN STATION DAY

Mina, in traveling suit, waits on platform alone.

Train pulls in. TRAVELERS sweep by Mina.

Street Urchin hawks newspapers.

URCHIN
HUBBARD EXPEDITION FEARED LOST!

Mina walks, calmly composed, to train.

EXT. LABRADOR, UNKNOWN RIVER CAMP SITE DAY

Campsite where George left skin & hooves under bush.

George searches. Finds skin & 3 hooves covered with MAGGOTS.

Wallace and Hubbard smile when George shows them this treasure. Food!

INT. EXPLORER'S CLUB, LOBBY NIGHT

Dark wood. Marble mantel of carved, male Greek hunters.

Mounted heads of big games leer down at Mina and Mr. Phillips, in elegant evening wear. She is the only female.

MEN TALK about Mina, joke about her, point her out.

MR. PHILLIPS

"RESCUE!" Will be the title. Dr. Binion
won't be penning a theoretical foray into
the uncharted someplace or rather.
And you, my dear, personalize the plight.
The wife of the man lost in the wilderness
whom we must save etc., etc.

MINA

If I could, I would go myself to Labrador
to save my husband.

MR. PHILLIPS

That won't be necessary. But we
understand your sentiment.
Come. Dinner is served. Gird your loins.
Let us face the lions in their den.

MINA

Like a lamb to the slaughter.

MR. PHILLIPS

No. Looks like pork roast.

INT. EXPLORER'S CLUB, DINING ROOM NIGHT

Mina steps through a plaster scale replica of Roman Proscenium onto the dais.

She faces MEN, brandy snifters & cigars. All blankly stare.

MINA

Thank you for that kind introduction.
But I'm not æthe bravest little lady."
Right now, my knees are knocking
under my petticoats. .
That's how brave I am.

Men chuckle in spite of themselves.

MINA

When Mr. Hubbard first mentioned to me his interest in exploring uncharted lands we were on our honeymoon ...

Snickers. Mina blushes.

MINA

When the ship left the Post at Ungava Bay without him, we began to raise a rescue mission to be led by Dr. William Binion of Boston.

Dogsleds are being arranged for hire by the Hudson Bay men...

The MEN lean forward with interest.

MINA

...A ship's crew must pull together or the storm will sink all.

For the life of your brother explorer, let us pull together.

INT. EXPLORER'S CLUB, DINING ROOM NIGHT

Later. Mina and Mr. Phillips alone on dais. Men are gone. BLACK WAITERS emptying ashtrays and glasses.

MR. PHILLIPS

Immediate action is required.

MINA

How much money do we need?

MR. PHILLIPS

Confound them. A good business venture.

MINA

As much as a house?

EXT. DARK VALLEY NIGHTFALL

Bitter cold. Frozen ground. Patches of snow.

Hubbard and Wallace slump against each other while George tends the fire. They are in the final stages of starvation. Every movement is slow, painful, haunted.

George finds the mustard box.

They savor their one spoonful as if it's the finest delicacy in the world.

EXT. HUBBARD'S TENT, LABRADOR MORNING

Freezing rain.

George and Wallace each wrap half of blanket around their thin shoulders. Stoop like old men under this light weight.

George's hand lingers on the tent flap. Movement of his hand is half blessing, half caress.

INT. HUBBARD HOME, HALL DAY

Mina watches MOVING MAN carry her wooden trunk (the same one Hubbard had lifted off her skirt) out the front door.

She looks around the empty hall. Walks out the door.

Closes the door behind her.

INT. TELEGRAPH OFFICE IN NEW YORK STATION DAY

Mina excitedly speaks to TELEGRAPH OPERATOR.

MINA
To Dr. Binion. B-I-N-I-O-N.
"Funds secured. Sail immediately."

EXT. OCEAN NIGHT/SUNRISE

Dark water far out to sea. No land in sight.

First beam of morning's light breaks over the horizon. Sun rays of gold and red dance across the surface of the deep.

SEABIRDS fly across water.

EXT. HARBOUR OF NEW YORK CITY SUNRISE

CRY OF SEABIRDS

Birds and boats flow in from sea toward land.

Buildings of the city rise up beyond ships at wharves.

TOOTS of tugboats are answered by HORNS of ships.

EXT. NEW YORK PIER DAY

Mina talks to SEAMAN while Mrs. Hotchkiss tugs gently on her arm.

MRS. HOTCHKISS
Come on, dear, let's go home. You've done
all you can do.

In answer to Mina's last question SEAMAN gestures toward the open sea.

Mina's gaze follows Seaman's gesture out to sea. Her furrowed brow relaxes.

EXT. LABRADOR, CAMPSITE DAY

Campsite where they left flour. George stumbles in alone. He can hardly stand but the will to live blazes in his eyes.

He digs in snow. Uncovers small bag of flour. He cuts bag open. Flour, black with mold, spills out in white snow.

George scoops snow and flour up in his mug. Makes flour/mold soup. Holds cup up to heaven in thanks. Drinks soup.

INT. HOTCHKISS HOUSE, DINING ROOM NIGHT

Mina shares a meal with Rev. and Mrs. Hotchkiss. She lifts a spoonful of soup to her lips. She crumbles her roll on her plate. No one has much of an appetite for food or conversation. They are being brave but the strain of the long wait tells in their every action.

Only sound is the LOUD TICKING of the clock.

They all jump when the clock STRIKES the hour.

EXT. LABRADOR WILDERNESS DAY

George finds Wallace slumped over smoking fire. Is he dead? Wallace, barely lifts his head. No life spark in his eyes.

George cooks flour/mold soup. Feeds Wallace.

Wallace falls asleep. George divides flour into two small bags. George wakes Wallace.

GEORGE
No more rest, Wallace. Go back to Hubbard.
Feed him. I'll bring help.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HOTCHKISS HOUSE, BEDROOM NIGHT

Mina writes at the desk. The only sounds are of her pen SCRATCHING on the paper and the clock on the mantle TICKING.

KNOCK on door.

Rev.Hotchkiss pushes open the door.

REV. HOTCHKISS
Mina...

His mother follows closely on his heels.

MRS.HOTCHKISS
We don't knowâ€”

REV. HOTCHKISS
â€”A telegram for you.

He holds out the piece of paper toward Mina. They look at it as if it is a poisonous adder.

REV. HOTCHKISS
The message came by dogsled courier to
the telegraph station in Chateau Bay.
They wired Quebec who sent this wire
to New York.

MRS. HOTCHKISS
It could be a hoax--

They continue to apprehensively regard the envelope.

Mina puts down her pen and stands up, but instead of reaching for the telegram she crosses to the mantel.

REV. HOTCHKISS
Shall I read it to you?

Mina continues to face the stopped clock.

Rev. Hotchkiss takes her silence as an affirmation, he opens the envelope.

REV. HOTCHKISS
HUBBARD EXPEDITION FOUND.

Mina opens the clock case.

MRS. HOTCHKISS
Oh!

REV. HOTCHKISS
HUBBARD DEAD.

Mina stops the clock pendulum.

MRS. HOTCHKISS
Oh.

SILENCE.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY HARBOUR WHARF DAY

Wallace walks down the gangplank. Before him stretches a CROWD of NEWSPAPER REPORTERS, WELL-WISHERS, FRIENDS, and FAMILY (Mina is conspicuously absent).

BIG BRASS BAND's music sets the celebratory mood.

Wallace's two SISTERS, tears flowing down their cheeks, fight their way through CROWD to embrace their brother.

POST REPORTER
Mr. Wallace, were the reports of your
physical distress overstated?

Wallace seeing the eager CROWD launches into a speech.

WALLACE
I doubt the average person can imagine what I've
been through. Physicians have been amazed. My
frost-bitten legs swelled to twice their normal size.
Turned gangrenous. Were to be amputated.
(Crowd murmurs)
And yet here I stand before you having

taught myself to walk again.

(Crowd gasps)

When I went into the wilderness I weighed
165 pounds. My sisters can testify to my potbelly.

(Crowd laughs)

When I came out of the wilderness I weighed
less than 95 pounds. I am a medical miracle.
I doubt that any of those reports could even begin
to state the awful truth of what I've been through.

TIMES REPORTER

What would you say contributed to Hubbard's
untimely and tragic death?

Crowd stills.

WALLACE

We were ill-prepared. Excuse me.

Wallace attempts to leave. Reporters block his way.

TIMES REPORTER

But you survived. Hubbard didn't.
What mistakes did heâ€”

WALLACE

â€”Hubbard may have been overtrained
and perhaps the strain made him stale.
But, I want to quickly add, Hubbard's
noble character, his indomitable will,
his simple faith, shall not be forgotten.
They shall remain a living example to all
who love bravery, courage, and self-
sacrifice.

Buoyant CROWD sweeps Wallace off wharf to the BAND's music.

INT. HOTCHKISS HOUSE, MINA'S ROOM DAY

Mina's hair escapes the confines of her bun. Mrs. Hotchkiss imprisons Mina in heavy black corset, camisole, petticoats, black dress (long sleeved, high necked), floor length veils.

MINA

Can't breathe.

MRS. HOTCHKISS

I know, dear.

EXT. MOUNT REPOSE CEMETERY DAY

Hilltop overlooking Hudson river. Raw winter wind. Grey clouds cry rain down on casket and MOURNERS.

GROUP OF WHITE MEN including Wallace, Mr. Phillips, Rev. Hotchkiss around open grave.

Mina, alone, black dress and full-length veils, stands apart. The only woman. (Women don't generally attend grave-side services.)

George, alone, well-worn suit, stands apart. He and BLACK GRAVE DIGGER are the only people of color. (Segregation is practiced extensively.)

Across the grave and the men, Mina and George make eye contact. Look away. Rev. Hotchkiss prays.

REV. HOTCHKISS

Naked we came into this world, naked we
leave. Ashes to Ashes, dust to dust ...

Wallace holding Hubbard's JOURNAL approaches Mina.

WALLACE

The last time we were together... Hubbard
kissed me... we had grown close, maybe
closer, than husband and wifeâ€”

Wallace awkwardly shoves journal toward Mina. Journal becomes entangled in her veils. They fumble. Mina ready to cry.

Mina agitated, desperate to flee. Wallace places a hand on her arm to calm her, desperate to retain her. Mina twists free from Wallace. Turns away. Relief floods over her when she finds George at her side.

George returns journal to Wallace. Without touching Mina, he clears a way to the waiting carriages at the foot of hill. With immense gratitude Mina escapes.

INT. HOTCHKISS HOUSE, PARLOR DAY

An angry Mina in black dress and veils confronts Wallace.

Journal and a MANUSCRIPT on desk. A vase of dark blue irises on table.

MINA

I have been a fool to trust you. You haven't prepared Laddie's journal for publication you've "filled it out" with your lies and self-aggrandizement. What is this dedication to the book I commissioned?

She flips open the manuscript.

MINA

"L.H. Here, b'y, is the plighted troth..."
Issue? Plighted troth? Did you marry him?
Were you having a baby together? You
use my husband's death to promote yourself.

WALLACE

It's my story also.

MINA

It's my husband's story.

WALLACE

He died before he finish it. A book must
have an ending. I supply the ending.

Mina is drawn up short as if he's slapped her. She spins on her heel. Faces the window still hung with heavy black mourning crepe.

When she turns around Wallace stumbles back away from her. She is Medusa incarnate, the wrath of God flashes from her eyes, as she thrusts the manuscript at him with a frozen fury.

MINA

It is clear to me now how infinitely my
husband's inferior you are, and have
always been, in every way.

INT. THE ROOM

Undecorated white walls. No windows. Identical to the room in which Mina was questioned. WALLACE, dressed in clothing circa 1900, faces VIDEO CAMERA and an unseen INVESTIGATOR.

WALLACE

In those last days we became very close.
Maybe closer then husband and wife.

INVESTIGATOR

The homoerotic element is evident.

As the word "homoerotic" didn't enter the language until 1920, Wallace hasn't a clue to what's being suggested but he's the sort of man who always knows the correct answer.

WALLACE

You mean homogeneous. We were very close.

INVESTIGATOR

Death and sex. The French call orgasm "le petite mort." The indications of love of a man who risks his life for another man--

Wallace explodes.

WALLACE

"What... are you... ? Do something. Move. Go. Explore. Map the world--

INVESTIGATOR

"It's all been mapped.

WALLACE

Here, we've barely touched the surface.

Wallace points to his heart. Investigator smug.

INVESTIGATOR

I think you'll—

WALLACE

Stop thinking. You construct theories—"

INVESTIGATOR

—We deconstruct.

Wallace disgusted, appalled ...

WALLACE

What... ?

What race of people are you?

INT. HOTCHKISS HOUSE, PARLOR DAY

Mrs. Hotchkiss and Rev. Hotchkiss look out the window at the black shrouded form of Mina sitting unmoving on a bench in the garden.

MRS. HOTCHKISS

The Angel of Death sits on her shoulder.

REV. HOTCHKISS

Come Spring we'll be planting her next to her dearly beloved and late departed.

MRS. HOTCHKISS

(Hopeless)

He's dead. What else can a woman do?

CUT TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: SPRING ONE YEAR LATER

EXT./INT. MR.PHILLIPS'S CONSERVATORY DAY

Possibly Heaven is like this: a jungle of tropical flowering plants. Exotic birds SING. A table set for lunch with Irish linens, crystal goblets, platter of roasted small game birds, fresh oranges.

Outside the heated glass building, new grass pokes up through snow.

Mr. Phillips, Rev. and Mrs. Hotchkiss sit at the table. Rev. Hotchkiss reads newspaper.

Mina, in widow's black dress, directs George, JOB CHAPIES (Cree, George's best friend, speaks a little English, playful personality), and JOSEPH ISERHOFF (Russian-Cree, speaks English with a Scottish accent, quiet).

Camping equipment is stacked everywhere. Canoe in entry way.

The room BUZZES with voices.

MRS. HOTCHKISS

Mr. Phillips, Mina can no longer behave like a foolish, head-strong girlâ€™

MR. PHILLIPS

â€™It's an homage to her dearly loved husband. A tribute to his bravery and courage. Novelty sells copy, Mrs. Hotchkiss.

MINA

Joseph, put it over there.

JOSEPH

Aye, ma' am.

MRS. HOTCHKISS

What'll people say? Going off into the bush!
with these,,these...men.

Rev. Hotchkiss reads newspaper aloud.

REV. HOTCHKISS

They say Wallace sails to Nova Scotia
on the Rosalind. Another ship takes him
to Newfoundland. Then Virginia Lake to Labrador.

MINA

Three chances for him to fall behind.

REV. HOTCHKISS

Says Wallace left New York 5 days ago.

MINA

5 days. Our Harlow sails directly to Labrador.
We'll beat him to the start.

MR. PHILLIPS

Excellent. The race is on. Who will win? Mr. Hubbard
may not have mapped the interior of Labrador
but he put Labrador on the map for my readers.

REV. HOTCHKISS

(Reading aloud)

"Poor Hubbard's fate doesn't scare me. It teaches me
a valuable lesson. In the first place, I shall take care
to make the expedition much better provided than was
Hubbard's—

MINA

--The things he'll say in public!

REV. HOTCHKISS

"We plunged madly into the interior of an
unknown country, into regions never before
trod by white men, with almost no provisions.
We should have had 550 pounds of flour, we
had 120. We should have taken 200 pounds
of bacon, we had 25"

MINA

He ruins my husband's good name to make a name for himself. Who was he before my husband took him under his care? A lawyer.

MR. PHILLIPS

Any word about our Expedition?

REV. HOTCHKISS

Not that I've seen.

GEORGE

Kept our promise. We told no one.

Mina opens a can. Offers Mrs. Hotchkiss a spoonful.

MINA

Try this. Not bad for emergency rations.

MRS. HOTCHKISS

Awful!

REV. HOTCHKISS

I'm glad you're prepared to not repeat your husband's expedition too closely.

MINA

But close enough to prove Mr. Dillon Wallace wrong. Laddie was not unprepared.

George unobtrusively wraps leftover bird's wings in his handkerchief. Mr. Phillips sees him.

MR. PHILLIPS

Fond of the wings are you, George?

GEORGE

Don't want them to go to waste. I see these little bits of food and I think, if only Mr. Hubbard could have had them.

Mina, overhears, regards George out of the corner of her eye.

MRS. HOTCHKISS

Mina, I hope you find what you're looking for. But remember it may not be out there, it may be in here.

(Points to heart)
Don't come back brown as a bear.

Mrs. Hotchkiss gives a soft brimmed hat and leather gloves to Mina. Mina smiles.

EXT. WHARF, HALIFAX, CANADA DAY

Barrels of fish are loaded on to the ship.

Crates of pigs SQUEAL as unloaded.

MR. SMITH (red-nosed reporter) swoops down on Mina, in black dress and full-length veils, as she picks her way among the barrels, crates, seagulls, rope and tackle. George and Job follow at a respectful distance.

MR. SMITH
What you got with you 4? 5 Indians?

MINA
Excuse me, I don't speak to strangers.

She would like to sweep on by him, her head high, her manners perfect; but, he blocks her path.

MR. SMITH
Al Smith, reporter for the Chronicle. Picked you right out, Mrs. Hubbard. Your dress and...your, um... escorts. Will you be traveling further with Mr. Wallace or just meet him at his hotel?

Wallace here already? Mina is confused. Disappointed.

MINA
Mr. Wallace is here?

MR. SMITH
His speech last night at the Arctic Circle Club was...
(He reads from newspaper)
"Inspirational and informative." If I do say so myself.
Do you have a statement for the press about your
"involvement" in this expedition, Mrs. Hubbard?

Mina's eyes blaze. Her name linked with Wallace's like this ...

MINA

Mr. Hubbard was proud to be a journalist.
He was ashamed of "reporters" who lowered
the standards of decency and civilized behavior.
Good day, sir.

Mina storms off the dock.

MR. SMITH

I'll call that a "no comment."

EXT. HARLOW, DECK DAY

Wallace Expedition gear and 2 canoes stacked to starboard. Wallace, PETE (Ojibway Indian, slight build, young), EASTON (student, tall and thin, 21), RICHARDS (student, robust, 20), STANTON (lumberjack, 40's) lounge on gear.

2nd Hubbard Expedition gear and 2 canoes stacked to portside. George by gear.

Door leading below deck opens as Wallace passes it. Mina steps through the door and face-to-face with Wallace.

She looks him directly in the eye. Her hatred burns him.

Wallace, face red, looks away in shame, quickly steps aside.

Mina marches to George at the railing. Mina's 6 foot black veils whip around in wind.

MINA

What is he doing here?

GEORGE

Ship was delayed. Wallace boarded
a little while ago.

Behind her veils, Mina eyes Wallace's crew.

MINA

They'll be sitting here whenever I come
up to get air. I thought we had the jump on him.

GEORGE

He's surprised and disappointed, too.
(Mina glares at George)
Here, you'll want to read this.

MINA
That slimy reporter.

George hands newspaper to Mina.

MINA (cont'd)
It's a wire story from New York. Quote,
"Widow suspicious Wallace responsible
for Hubbard's death. Her allegationsâ€œ"
Which I apparently made while not there.
It's not that I haven't thought them but I
never voiced my suspicions to the press.
They're rumors which Mr.Wallace's own friends
in New York are spreading.
"Upon her return she will be arrested for
criminal slanderâ€œ"
That's something to look forward to. First
the papers have me sharing his bed and then
they have me hanging him. Laddie said,
"Truth hides, Lies make front page."

Mina turns her back on Wallace and his crew.

MINA
I hope it rains the whole way.

EXT. DECK OF THE HARLOW DAYLIGHT

The ship has weighed anchor in the harbor.

Wallace and crew lower their canoes into the water.

Mina & George watch from the deck. Mina tapping her toe.

MINA
I want to hop right in the water and swim
to the Trading Post. But I'm tied down and
waiting. Waiting. Waiting. While Wallace
paddles away.

GEORGE
Mrs.Hubbard, Job and I could paddle to the
Trading Post. Hire Duncan. Talk to trappers
about trails--

MINA

—Go, George. Go, don't stay to tell me about it.

Mina's POV: Wallace's crew in canoes beside ship.

WALLACE

I said left, Pete. Left turn.

PETE

Leve-toi?

STANTON

Easton, pull! Or go home!

EASTON

Shut up and paddle, Stanton.

George & Job, in their canoe, paddle expertly to shore.

EXT. M.DUBAC'S FRENCH POST DAY

English Hudson Bay Company Post glares across the river at the French Company Post. Wallace has friends at HBC Post from first trip. Mina must settle for what's left.

MONSIEUR DUBAC (a French poodle of a lumberjack), helps Mina out of canoe. George on hand to greet her.

M.DUBAC

Bienvenue. Madame Hubbard. I am called Monsieur Dubac. I be happy you come to my Post. You be comfortable here.

MINA

Comfort is nice but not necessary. Tres bien, Monsieur Dubac.

M.DUBAC

I make you tea, yes?

MINA

Tea. Yes.

Mina smiles after him as M.Dubac rushes off.

GEORGE

Talked to Chief John Adeen. The tribe used to travel the river every year. 13 winters they've lived here near Post. He's making us a map of the portage route. I'll get it later.

MINA

A map. Good work, George.

GEORGE

M.Dubac has a feast cooked in your honor.

MINA

That's too bad. I was hoping Labrador was the end of civilization.

EXT. M.DUBAC'S FRENCH POST NIGHT

Light and MUSIC pours out of Post. Mina stands in doorway.

George, alone, sits by the bonfire.

Mina joins him. She breathes deeply.

MINA

Smell that air. Smells good.

GEORGE

Smells like Labrador.

MINA

I saw a little white flower by the water.
I don't know its name.

GEORGE

Don't know English names.

MINA

But you know its Cree name.

George doesn't let his surprise (or delight) show.

MINA

Tomorrow morning I'll show it to you.

LATER

Roaring bonfire.

INDIAN CHILDREN. FOLKS play ACCORDIONS and FIDDLES.

3 OLD SALTS SING. Dance.

Monsieur Dubac rolls out a barrel. Everyone crowds around with mugs in hand.

INDIAN WOMEN flirt with George, Job, & Joseph.

Mina watches from a distance.

#1 OLD SALT nudges #2 OLD SALT. Points to Mina by herself.

Suddenly Mina marches into Post. M.Dubac and Old Salts laugh.

#1 OLD SALT

Fire too hot for the likes of her!

#3 OLD SALT

Nah! 'Ers just gone t'wash 'er purty white hands!

M.DUBAC

She say she go to George River Post.
She doesn't know what she's up against.

Mina returns with tin mug. Walks up behind men. Eavesdrops.

#2 OLD SALT

I was there when they rescued Wallace.
Skin and bones walking.

#3 OLD SALT

They tracked him to 200 yards of the tent.
That's how close he came. Then he turned
round and went back.

#1 OLD SALT

He didn't want to look inside. To look
Death in the eye would've killed himself.

Mina frowns, sets her jaw.

#3 OLD SALT

Hey! Georgie! Takin' the little lady on a fishin' trip?

#1 OLD SALT

I bet she'll be back before the week's out!

#3 OLD SALT

What'z 'ya put on it? A mink skin?

M.DUBAC

She go. Maybe she make Ungava Post.

#2 OLD SALT

You putting your money on it?

M.DUBAC

Oui!

#1 OLD SALT

We? You!

#3 OLD SALT

Yeah!

EXT. M.DUBAC'S FRENCH POST EARLY MORNING

Mina, in black dress & veils, bellows out hymn as she packs canoes. GILBERT aka "Gil" or "Bertie" (moon-faced, sweet, Cree teenager) helps her.

CRASH. BAM. SLAM.

MEN, hung over, stagger out of Post. Hands over their ears.

MINA

"Awake my soul awake! Shake off your guilty bonds! The Bleeding Sacrifice"--

M.DUBAC

—Madame. Sing small. Please. In pity—

MINA

—""Arise my soul arise!"

A perfect day for paddling. Isn't it, Bert? Perfect for canoeing to Ungava Bay. Don't you think so, George?

Mina glares at George.

GEORGE

We call him Gil.

MINA

His name is Gilbert. As I hear the child's
a member of my crew, I'll call him Bert.
Bertie. After my father.

Gilbert looks in confusion from George to Mina.

GILBERT

Gil, good. Bert, good.

MINA

Either way, his name is not Duncan.

GEORGE

Wallace hired Duncan.

MINA

Yes. I know that now, George. The best
woodsman up here was hired out from
under your nose. So you hired a child.
When were you going to tell me?
Next week when you got around to leaving?

Mina throws gear together.

M.DUBAC

No leave no, Mrs. Hubbard.

MINA

Yes, leave. And by myself if I must.
A beautiful summer day in Labrador.
And the early bird is up and gone.
Mr. Wallace and his crew left this morning.

M.DUBAC

Mr. Wallace goes?

MINA

Yes, he goes. And we stay.
"Those that wait upon the Lord ... "
They didn't have a bonfire last night.
They aren't hung over this morning.
They're paddling to Ungava Bay.

GEORGE

Gil was born here. He's a good trapper.
Been up river many times.

MINA

It doesn't matter how many times he's been
up river, George, since you obviously have
no plans to go anywhere. But, I do. I didn't come
all this way to dance by a bonfire. The Pelican
is expected in Ungava Bay the last week in August.
I will be there. I'm not waiting for anyone.
George, give me the portage route map.

She holds out her hand.

George looks down at ground.

GEORGE

Chief John gave map to Wallace. Thought we were
in same expedition.

Mina is beyond disappointment.

MINA

Mr. Wallace has my map?

GEORGE

Don't need map.
I can find river without map.

MINA

If you're not coming with me, George, I'll go alone.

Mina pushes canoe into water.

She wades into water. M.Dubac wades in after her.

M.DUBAC

Mrs. Hubbard, you can't go alone. I won't
win furs. Must go together. Agree Mrs. Hubbard?
George?

M.Dubac pulls Mina back to shore. Dress muddy and wet.

MINA
(To George)
We take no alcohol.
We leave in the morning. Hangover or no
hangover. Map or no map.
We'll take Bert.

GEORGE
Gil.

MINA
Bert.

EXT. M.DUBAC'S FRENCH POST DAY

Old Salts and M.Dubac watch George, Joseph, Job, Gilbert pack gear in canoes. Children play.

Dogs BARK.

Door to Post opens. Mina marches out in her Annie Oakley style short skirt. On her belt a revolver, hunting knife.

SILENCE. Even the dogs stop barking and stare at her.

M.Dubac breaks the silence. Grabs Mina's hand. Shakes it.

M.DUBAC
Mrs. Hubbard, first I doubted.
You change my mind. You make Ungava Post.

Mina hands George flower, a peace-token.

MINA
This is the flower I asked you about the other
night, George.

GEORGE
Don't know its name.

MINA
Its Cree name.

GEORGE
*Wahkithuntah.**

(*Translation: stupid white woman)

Mina sees the Indian men exchange glances.

MINA
Wahkithuntah. Lovely name. I'll remember.

Mina tosses the flower to the ground and picks up a piece of bloodied hide.

OLD SALT
What's left of last night's dog fight.

MINA
You mean that infernal snarling?
Where's the rest ... ?

Mina, sickened, quickly drops the piece of fur.

M.DUBAC
The Labrador is cruel to creatures:
dogs and humans.

OLD SALT #2
Don't leave your bones to whiten up there.

OLD SALT
Damnedest thing ever, going into the interior.

OLD SALT #2
Them who's gone in never get back.

Mina picks up paddle.

Steps into canoe.

Men stare at her.

MINA
George, I'll take the bow. Bertie, you get
the center for the first leg.

Gilbert, in Cree, asks George a question.

MINA (cont'd)
What'd he say, George?

GEORGE
We didn't know you could paddle.

MINA
There's a lot we have to learn about each other.

EXT. GRAND LAKE TWILIGHT

The long Labrador dusk, 8 PM and still light. Time to make camp. Mina and crew pause in their paddling.

GEORGE
Do you smell the wind, Mrs. Hubbard?
The little wind before the big wind.

MINA
A big wind on a big lake like this will
be difficult.

GEORGE
The Indian way is to travel with the weather.
The white man's way is to stop by the clock.

MINA
I'm not a white man, George.

GEORGE
Night in Labrador's short in the summer. Indian way
is to sleep a little while dark. Go at first light. Sleep a
long time later while rain falls.

MINA
I won't sleep while I know Wallace is ahead of us
with our map anyway. Let's paddle on.

Mina looks out at the thick fog obscuring the lake.

EXT. GRAND LAKE, WALLACE'S CAMP TWILIGHT

Beyond fog on the other side of the lake, Wallace, like a white man, has made camp. They eat beside their campfire.

EASTON

I bet she's still at the Post. Think she'll ever leave?

WALLACE

She's a stubborn one. She's come up here to try and kill me. And then to die beside her husband.

Fog on lake prevents them from seeing Mina and George paddle by on other side of lake. Wallace doesn't know he's been left behind.

EXT. GRAND LAKE TWILIGHT

Mina and crew paddle in time to a Cree SONG.

Unbeknownst to her, they've just pulled ahead in the race.

EXT. GRAND LAKE, MINA'S CAMP EVENING

Same day. Further down the lake. 11 P.M. Mina writes in her diary by the campfire. George joins her. He sharpens a pencil.

MINA

(Bothered by interruption)
I don't need another pencil.

George just nods. When he begins to write in his own journal Mina realizes her mistake.

MINA

(Surprised)
You keep a diary.

GEORGE

Not like you and Mr. Hubbard. I just write what I've done today.

MINA

You kept a journal with Mr. Hubbard?

GEORGE

Yes, ma' am.

MINA

You have a journal from that trip?

GEORGE

Yes, ma' am.

MINA

Where is it?

GEORGE

At my brother's. In a trunk with all my other journals.

MINA

Could I see it when we return?

George nods. Returns to writing. Mina watches him for awhile.

MINA

George, I didn't even know you could read and write.

How could we've been working together, getting everything ready for this expedition and know so little about each other? I don't understand.

GEORGE

I don't understand you, either.

Mina begins to laugh. It is the first time she's laughed in 2 years. The sound is strange to her ears and it stands out in the quiet of the wilderness. She stops. And then starts laughing again, this time she laughs with full abandon.

George is confused by her behavior but pleased she seems happy. He gives her a quizzical look.

EXT. GRAND LAKE VERY EARLY MORNING 3 AM

Men pack up camp.

Mina eats breakfast.

GEORGE

Grand Lake is very big. It's hard to see where the Naskapi flows into the lake. Didn't find it with Mr. Hubbard. Paddled by.

MINA

You know what you're looking for this time.
We'll find it before the rain.

George notices how stiffly Mina lifts coffee cup.

GEORGE

Gil, you take bow.

Mina picks up canoe paddle with determination.

MINA

Bert, no. I'll do my shift.

GEORGE

Gil not awake. Paddling good for him.

MINA

George, I won't be coddled. You're not going
to carry me.

GEORGE

No shame. Carried Mr. Hubbard.

George's comment is not meant to be unkind, just matter-of-fact. But reality, stated so bluntly, hurts Mina. She steps back as if George has slapped her face.

She quickly recovers and thrusts out her chin. Grabs paddle.

MINA

When I get that weak you can carry me, George.
But not before.

EXT. GRAND LAKE MORNING

Later. Grey sky and water. Wind blows Mina's hair around.

GEORGE

Hard to see.

Wind whips Mina's hat off. Splat. On Gilbert's face.

MINA

Hang on to that for me, Bert.

Mina paddles harder.

Waves break over the canoe. Rain.

Job yells in Cree. Points to break in trees ahead.

JOB
River!

Canoes pull into shelter of trees along river.

MINA
Now, if only Wallace isn't camped at
Chief John's portage.

EXT. GRAND LAKE, WALLACE'S CAMP DAY

Rain. No one stirs at Wallace's encampment.

Rain drums on tent roofs.

Campfire smolders.

Canoes fill up with rain.

EXT. PORTAGE PLACE ON BANK OF THE NASKAPI RIVER DAY

Rain. Mina stands on a large rock which juts out into one mile of rapids. She's thrilled.

Worried, George watches her.

MINA
I see why there's a portage.

GEORGE
Mrs. Hubbard, come down.'

MINA
It's beautiful.

GEORGE
You'll get dizzy and fall in.

MINA
I do not get dizzy. This is the most gorgeous
white water I've ever seen.

GEORGE

Come down...
Or ... I'll turn round and go back.

Mina turns and glares at George.

MINA

I could stay home and have people
tell me not to do things.

He looks at her. She looks at him.

She gets down.

Job, Joseph and Gilbert return from scouting.

JOB

Mrs. Hubbard, we look. No Wallace.

Mina does a little dance of joy.

JOSEPH

No one been here many years.

GILBERT

I come up river. Winters.

GEORGE

The trappers, like Gil, snowshoe the river
when frozen, Mrs. Hubbard.

MINA

You don't know how much I've dreaded
meeting Wallace on the trail. Do you think
he missed the river like last time?

JOSEPH

Path here. See, Mrs. Hubbard?

Joseph holds branches back. More branches beyond.

MINA

Joseph, that's no path at all.

GEORGE

Portage route is old. Brush grown up.
Markings are old. It'll be hard work
for a long way.

MINA

That is not a path. I've bushwhacked. It's
hard work. We don't have the map. We'll
get lost. The portage route is not an option.
We'll stick with the river. I've never seen
anyone handle a canoe better than Job and
Joseph and you, George. You can canoe
these rapids.

They all stare at the rapids.

JOSEPH

No one's canoed this river before.

GEORGE

Dangerous rapids.

MINA

I'm told standing on the riverbank looking at the rapids
is dangerous.

GEORGE

We can go back.

MINA

No. I can't.
It was Mr. Hubbard's dream to explore the
interior by way of the Naskapi River. My dream
also. We'll go by the river.

GEORGE

Less dangerous than getting lost on portage.

EXT. RIVERBANK, MINA'S CAMP DAY

Rain. Mina, tarp over head, writes in diary.

MINA (V.O.)

Sometimes it seems as if Laddie must be
standing just near and if I turn I must see him.
It seems so perfectly natural.

Mina looks up from diary.

Mina's POV: Gilbert and Joseph stare with mouths hanging open.

Job stands in fully loaded canoe, poles through rapids. Pushes off on the left. Water sprays up. Push on the right. Rock. Flash of pole.

MINA

How does he do that?

GEORGE

Job good at poling. Done it all his life.
Fun for him.

JOSEPH

But never done it on rapids like these.

GEORGE

Come on. We'll meet him on up the river.

George hands Mina her pack. He shoulders a huge pack.

EXT. NASKAPI RIVERBANK DAY

Mina and crew. Black moss. Scrub brush. Mina makes calculations with SEXTANT.

MINA

We came 12 miles yesterday.

GEORGE

That's about right.

MINA

You don't believe my calculations, do you,
George? I've figured out the latitude and
longitude. I know exactly where we are.
Like to learn?

GEORGE

Don't need tools to know where I am.

George begins to make camp.

MINA

I need to keep a record for the book.
What are you doing? We can't camp here.
We have to go on. Tomorrow's the Sabbath.

GEORGE

Job is tired.

MINA

I can't bear to stay all day in this ... this evil-looking place.

GEORGE

Looks like Labrador.

They're all tired but she doesn't like the scenery. George hoists his pack onto his back. Marches off.

Mina scurries to grab her pack and follow.

EXT. SCRUB BRUSH TRAIL DAY

George blazes through underbrush.

Mina lags behind. Her dress catches on branches. She stumbles.

MINA

Oh!

George doesn't look back. Mina sets her shoulders. Marches on with determination.

Mina trips. Falls. Hurriedly stands.

MINA

Ugh.

George stops. Comes back.

GEORGE

I'll carry your pack for you.

MINA

No. I can do it.

George shrugs. Continues on.

Mina sticks out her tongue behind his back.

EXT. PRETTY FALLS DUSK

George and Mina step out of scrub brush. Waterfalls. Green moss. Wildflowers. Job is waiting with canoes.

George begins to unpack. Mina can't help but pester him.

MINA

Oh! Now isn't this fine, George?

GEORGE

Other place fine, too.

MINA

You have long legs.
I could hardly keep up.
(George continues to unpack)
But you were hoping I'd fall behind.
Weren't you, George?

GEORGE

You do good. You walk faster than Wallace.

MINA

(Pleased)
Thank you.
Although I'm not sure that's a compliment
for me as much as an observation of him.

JOB

Shh!

They all fall SILENT.

Job aims gun.

POW. POW. POW. POW.

Gilbert runs into bush.

Returns with 3 ptarmigan BIRDS.

GILBERT

3! Missed male. Flew to tree.

MINA
What kind of bird?

JOB
Good supper.

GEORGE
Ptarmigan.

JOSEPH
Family. Mother and young.

Mina looks at the birds in his hands.

MINA
Oh. A family.

LATER

They all sit by the fire. Scraps of roast birds.

BIRD WAIL.

MINA
What's that sound?

JOB
Father ptarmigan crying for his family.

MINA
It's the saddest sound I've ever heard.
I wonder what he will do with himself
now that he's all alone.

Mina stares into fire.

George look at Mina.

He gets up and goes to get more wood.

MINA
I wonder if he wishes he had stayed
to share the fate of his little family.

George returns, adds wood to fire and hands Mina wildflowers.

GEORGE

Found them by the wood.

MINA

Thank you, George. They're beautiful.

GEORGE

I don't know their name.

EXT. CHIEF JOHN'S PORTAGE DAY

Wallace and crew stare at Mina's footprints in the mud.

Easton scouts around.

WALLACE

She passed us.

STANTON

Nothing we could do about it.
Couldn't paddle in those waves.

WALLACE

She beat me here.
Nothing to do but press on and
overcome her.
We can pass her in a day or two.

STANTON

She doesn't have the map. We do.

EASTON

(Returns from scouting)
Looks like she's sticking with the river.

DUNCAN

(Looks at the rapids)
That's suicide.

WALLACE

Path's old. Overgrown. Without a map
impossible to find.
George knows he'd waste time scouting.
Backtracking.

DUNCAN

I've only traveled these rapids in winter when frozen.
They're killers.

WALLACE

We didn't come all this way to huddle in the valley
by the river.
No, our way is the higher path. Up the hill.
Our Portage Trail will lead us where Mrs. Hubbard isn't.
And no white man has gone before.

EXT. NIPISHISH LAKE DAY

Mina and men canoe. Mina paddles.

JOB

Caribou!

GILBERT

Deer!

Mina stops paddling. The men paddle harder.

Caribou plunges into the water.

MINA

Where? I don't see.

GEORGE

There. Ahead.

JOSEPH

Shhhh.

JOB

My gun, Joseph.

MINA

Are you gonna shoot it?

GEORGE

Pull left.

JOB

Deer caught wind of us.

GILBERT

Come on, Deer. Swim over to us.

MINA

I want photographs. Don't shoot it.

Caribou swims away from canoes.

JOSEPH

Good supper. Better than photographs.

JOB

George.

George FIRES at caribou. At SOUND of GUNFIRE Mina freezes.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. LABRADOR LAKE, YEAR BEFORE LATE AFTERNOON

A CARIBOU DEER swimming in a lake. GUNFIRE.

INT. KITCHEN OF HUBBARD HOUSE, YEAR BEFORE LATE AFTERNOON

Mina crushing red berries.

Tree outside the kitchen window is aflame in autumn red.

Sound of berry juice dripping from Mina's fingers.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. NIPISHISH LAKE DAY

George's shot PLOPS in the water in front of deer. Deer turns and swims back to opposite shore. Mina awakens.

MINA

Oh. Good. You missed. It's getting away.

GILBERT

Swim, Deer!

The caribou can't swim faster than the men can paddle.

MINA
Go. Swim. You're almost there.

Canoes pull abreast of the tired deer.

George shoots. BAM! At SOUND of GUNFIRE Mina again stiffens.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. LABRADOR LAKE LATE AFTERNOON

The wounded caribou splashes out of the water. Hubbard leaps from the canoe.

He slits the deer's throat. Red blood spills onto green moss and Hubbard's hands.

The men on their knees, breathing hard, around the deer.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. NIPISHISH LAKE DAY

Blood flows into water. Deer thrashes. Mina awakens.

MINA
George. Shoot it. It's in misery.

George shoots again. Deer stops thrashing.

Mina pulls her hat down over her eyes.

Gilbert leans out and grabs antlers. They tow the deer to shore. Men jolly. Mina silent.

GILBERT
Good supper.

JOB
Don't eat too much before we cut it up, Gil.

JOSEPH
Caribou better than dried beef.

EXT. NIPISHISH LAKE CAMP NIGHT

Mina looking out at the lake SINGING to herself. Tears on her cheeks.

MINA

"Oh, I wish I was a little sparrow,
or one of those birds that flies so high.
It's after my true love I'd follow
and when he spoke then I'd be nigh..."

George watches Mina.

He looks at sky.

GEORGE

(To men)

Rainy weather ahead.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ON PORTAGE ROUTE DAY

Wallace and crew trudge up the mountainside in the RAIN. Throw down their heavy packs.
Flop down. Pant.

EASTON

That's it. Damn heavy.

STANTON

All these mountains are blending into each other.
I could have sworn I was here yesterday.

WALLACE

At least there are no black flies. Yet.

PETE

Sure is beautiful.

DUNCAN

Sight better than risking our necks on rapids.

WALLACE

I wonder if Mrs. Hubbard has turned around
and gone back yet.

EASTON

Or drowned herself.

EXT. RIVER DAY

Job and Joseph stand in packed canoe in river. Push with poles. George & Gilbert, on shore,
pull same canoe by rope. All four men together battle the strong current.

MINA

I'm going up to the top of this hill
to take some pictures for the book.

GEORGE

I'll go with you later.

MINA

You men have portaging to do. I'll be fine.
I'll go right up and come right down, promise.
I have my pistol.

EXT. HILLTOP OVERLOOKING RIVER DAY

Mina sits on a rock outcropping. Far below her stretches out the river and the men poling.
Mina focuses camera lens on the men at the river.

Mina's POV: Suddenly canoe turns over. Joseph & Job disappear.

They surface. Grab rope. Job stripped off robe by the strength of the current. He clutches
Joseph's LEG. But he's swept downstream.

Mina can clearly see the look of terror on Job's face.

MINA

Oh, Dear God, he can't swim.

EXT. RIVER DAY

Joseph pulls hand-over-hand up rope. Staggeres to shore. Coughs up water.

Gilbert and George are anchored to the over-turned canoe in the river. If they let go all is lost. '
Job re-surfaces downstream in an eddy. Around and around he's spun.

Job thrashes out of the eddy. Swish. He's sucked under. He doesn't surface.

Suddenly Job is spit out into the shallows.

He stands up on shaky legs. Slips. Current sweeps him away again.

EXT. HILLTOP OVERLOOKING RIVER DAY

MINA

JOSEPH! RUN! RUN!

EXT. RIVER DAY

GEORGE
Joseph! Run!

Joseph looks up when he hears the others yell.

Joseph runs along shore.

Wades into water.

Grabs Job's arm as he's swept by.

They stagger ashore.

Collapse on rocks.

Gilbert and George pull canoe ashore.

Run to Job and Joseph.

Job coughs up a lung-full of water. Pants out questions:

JOB
Mrs. Hubbard? Where's she? She alright?

EXT. CAMP ON RIVERBANK DUSK

Wet gear is laid out on ground.

They eat supper in silence. Mina has a new understanding of her responsibility for these men. She resorts to traditional maternal action. For the first time on the trip she cooks and serves food. She wears an apron.

MINA
You have enough stew, Joseph?

JOSEPH
Yes, ma'am.
No axes. No fry pan.

MINA
At least you and Job are here.
As long as we are all safe, we can
make do without some things.

GEORGE

My fault. Should have put axes in different canoes.
Should have thought about this.

MINA

It's not your fault, George. We didn't lose the sextant
and compass. I can still figure out where we are.

The men exchange glances.

MINA

And we are all alive.
I couldn't stand one more death.

Men confer in Cree with each other.

Mina translates for herself what she thinks they are saying.

MINA

(under her breath)

We came 200 miles. That's enough for her stupid book.
Summer more than half gone. Who knows how long
food will last.
Remember what happened last time. Stupid white
woman's not paying enough money to buy my life.

GEORGE

Mrs. Hubbard, Gil says there's a trapper's tilt near.
We can look for an axe there tomorrow. It's not too
far out of the way.

To their surprise Mina jumps up and strides off.

The men don't know what to do. They push the reluctant George toward her.

George stands behind her and clears his throat. She turns to him.

MINA

I thought you'd want to turn around.

She bursts into tears. George embarrassed.

GEORGE

Didn't think you would go back.

MINA

If you want to go back I can't go on without you...
Mr. Elson.
It's really your expedition.

GEORGE

Turn back when you say, Mrs. Hubbard. Without
you we'd just be Indians fishing and paddling
like our grandfathers.

She dries her tears.

MINA

Thank you, Mr. Elson.

They return to men by fire.

Mina takes off right glove. Stretches out her hand.

MINA (cont'd)

If you're all agreed, we'll go on. Let's shake on that.

The men look at each other.

MINA

If you don't want to go on--

JOSEPH

--No. Just ...never touched white woman.

MINA

It's about time. I've never canoed across Labrador.
We're in this together.

Handshakes. Mina holds out hand. George hesitates.

MINA

Friends?

GEORGE

Friends.

They shake.

MINA

We've a long way to go yet.

They relax by the fire.

The men light pipes, speak in Cree.

Job clowns around. Demonstrates in hilarious detail his visit to the fishes at the bottom of river. Men laugh. Mina smiles.

GEORGE
(Translating for Mina)
Job's telling of his visit to the fishes. He says--

MINA
--I understand what he says.
He appears to have had a most
wonderful time down there.

EXT. RIVER DAY

Rapids. Mina sits in the center of canoe.

GEORGE (V.O.)
We run some wild rapids today. Some nearly
too rough for such small canoes. They are
really good canoes and fast canoes to travel in,
what makes me so scared of the rapids is on
account of having a woman in the canoe and
running the rapids because I don't want to get
Mrs. Hubbard in any trouble if I can help it. Such
a dear little lady and a sister to me.

Men yell commands in Cree. Water sprays up. Rock.

JOSEPH
Pull left!

GEORGE
Over!

Wave lifts canoe up. Canoe slams down into whirlpool.

Men do an about face in canoes. Paddle hard.

MINA (V.O.)

My nervous system contracted steadily til,
 at the foot where we slipped out into smooth
 water again, it felt as if dipped into an astringent.
 Where is Wallace?
 I can't help but wonder, as we round every curve,
 descend every series of rapids, if he is waiting
 for me there.

Mina, facing backwards, sits calmly in center of canoe.

EXT. CAMP ON RIVERBANK DUSK

Job, Gilbert by fire smoke pipes and talk in Cree.

Joseph plays on the mouth organ, "Annie Laurie" and "Coming Through the Rye."

George and Mina by themselves to the side of fire.

GEORGE

Mrs. Hubbard, I have seen lots of men
 who would jump out of the canoe if we tried
 to take them where you have been today.

MINA

Mr. Elson, I feel quite at home in the canoe.
 I seem to have lost one of my gloves.
 What would Mrs. Hotchkiss say about me
 if she could see me now? One glove.
 Holes in my moccasins.

GEORGE

Mend your moccasins if you like.

MINA

I would like very much. The mice eat holes
 in everything.

George sews.

MINA

What I would really like is some rice pudding.

GEORGE

Mr. Hubbard talked about your rice pudding.
He talked about food a lot. Can't help but think
about food when you're like that.

MINA

Tell me about traveling with Laddie.

George pauses to carefully choose his words.

GEORGE

We were cold. We shared blankets to share
our heat. Once Wallace asked us to turn over.
Mr. Hubbard started talking about his mother's
apple turnovers.

MINA

He loved turnovers.

Mina becomes lost in memory for a moment.

MINA

What's your favorite food?

GEORGE

I love a Cree dish my mother made.
You won't know it ...nekapooshet.
I asked Hubbard how gingerbreads were made.
He didn't know. He said, "George, you must stop
at our home for a while before you go back to
Missanabie and Mrs. Hubbard will teach you to
cook gingerbreads."

MINA

Why didn't you ask me? We could've cooked
in Mrs. Hotchkiss's kitchen.

George looks sideways at Mina. She laughs.

MINA

You're right. She wouldn't have let you in the kitchen.
Afraid you'd drink the vanilla.

JOSEPH

Good night, ma'am.

MINA

Good night, Joseph. I wish you'd stop "ma'aming" me.

JOSEPH

Yes, rna' am.

GILBERT

Good night, Mrs. Hubbard.

MINA

Good night, Bertie. Don't let the mice eat holes in you. 'Night, Job.

Job nods to Mina. He teases George.

JOB

(In Cree to George)

You shook her hand so you think you might shake other parts of her?

GEORGE

(In Cree to Job)

I'll be in the tent in a little while.

Men go to tents.

UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE.

George and Mina speak at the same time.

GEORGE

Would you like to make a rabbit snare?

MINA

Would you teach me some Cree words?

Laughter.

GEORGE

Don't know what to tell you.

MINA

Pull left!

Oh, just anything. What is the name of this plant?

GEORGE

I don't know that plant. This one here is ahtsigahsipuk.

MINA

Ah-ta-sig-ah-sap-uk-ah

George laughs. Mina pretends to pout.

MINA (cont'd)
You think I'm funny? You should hear
yourself sometimes. Ahtsigahsipuk.

George laughs harder.

GEORGE
Uipelashiu. Good, Good.

MINA
Uipelashiu.

George laughs.

MINA
You have a wonderful laugh. Like music.
I could listen to you laugh all night.

GEORGE
There's a bird that we call ahhaway. If you
heard that bird call you could just sit and listen
and listen. Sounds better than me laughing.

MINA
I can't imagine that.

A COMPANIONABLE SILENCE.

MINA
I should turn in. Be rested for tomorrow.
Good night, Mr. Elson.

GEORGE
Good night, Mrs. Hubbard.

She holds out her hand. George pauses before he shakes it. She looks up at the night's soft sky. A gentle breeze brushes her face.

MINA
I never imagined Labrador to be so full of beauty.

GEORGE
Never seen it so beautiful.

Mina goes into her tent.

George sits back down to think over what has just happened.

EXT. TRAPPERS TILT DAY

Gilbert comes out of the door triumphantly holding aloft axe and fry pan.

George, Job and Joseph cheer.

MINA
We can just take them?

GEORGE
Borrow.
We'll replace them before winter when
the trappers will need them. That's how things are done here.

MINA
How civilized.

GILBERT
I carved our names on the wall.

MINA
Where, Bert?
I want to add the date.

EXT. HILLTOP DAY

Mina & George look down at men portaging on river below.

GEORGE
Mr. Hubbard passed close to here.

MINA
Where? You recognize places?

George points to mountain off in distance.

GEORGE

That mountain there.
That's where Mr. Hubbard shot the birds and rabbit.
The last game we got.
We were so hopeful.

Mina clutches her chest.

MINA
I have a pain.
From climbing I'm sure.

SILENCE.

They look at men on river.

MINA
I have to keep reminding myself
that the hills he climbs now must
be so much grander and more
beautiful in view.
But I have this ever-recurring feeling
that it is wicked for me to be here when
he is not.

George and Mina look out at river, lakes, mountains.

GEORGE
That lake there Hubbard named
Disappointment Lake.
We were wind-bound for one week.
Beyond is Lake Michikamau, "Big Water."
There we turned around.

SILENCE.

MINA
What really happened? At ... the end ...

George silent and thoughtful for a long time. Finally, he speaks like a man in a dream.

GEORGE
After we left Hubbard, Wallace and I went on
together. Until I left him and went on alone
to the flour. I returned ...

EXT. LABRADOR WILDERNESS, 1ST HUBBARD EXPEDITION DAY

George feeds Wallace black flour.

Wallace groggy, half dead.

GEORGE

Wallace, take this flour back to Hubbard. Feed him.
Can you find your way back to the camp in this snow?

WALLACE

A little sleep ...

GEORGE

No more rest, Wallace.
Find Hubbard. Feed him. Stay with him. You two
hang on. With God's help, I'll get out and get help.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. LABRADOR WILDERNESS, 1ST HUBBARD EXPEDITION DAY

Snowing hard. George struggles in knee-deep snow. Talks aloud.

GEORGE

Sure could use some snowshoes. Don't care what kind.
So hard to walk in this snow. Smells like a warm wind
coming up from the south. No good. Snow'll get wet and
heavy. Got to get out. Hang on fellows.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. LABRADOR WILDERNESS, 1ST HUBBARD EXPEDITION DAY

George falls face forward in the wet snow. Struggles to stand. Sees BIRD (small partridge) on low branch.

With both weak hands he lifts pistol. FIRES. Bird falls. He staggers forward, scoops up bird. Tears roll down his cheeks. He rips wings from the body and drinks the blood.

GEORGE

Thank you, God. Thank you, God.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. LABRADOR WILDERNESS, 1ST HUBBARD EXPEDITION DAY

George stumbles through snow.

FOOTPRINTS in snow.

GEORGE
Footprints. Hello. Help.

George, elated, weakly runs following footprints.

GEORGE
Why doesn't he answer? This prints are fresh.
He can't be far away.

Breathing hard, he stops. Something tugs at his mind.

GEORGE
Why isn't he wearing snowshoes?

In his weakened state the answer is slow to surface.

GEORGE (cont'd)
They're mine. I'm going in circles.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. LABRADOR, GRAND LAKE, 1ST HUBBARD EXPEDITION DAY

George steps out of the woods onto the shore of Grand Lake.

GEORGE
The Lake. I'm almost there. I still have food
in my food bag. Hang on boys.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. LABRADOR, GRAND LAKE, 1ST HUBBARD EXPEDITION DAY

George loping along excitedly. Stopped by river feeding lake.

GEORGE
Where'd this river come from? This must be
the big river we met back there in the interior.
Where we left the canoe. My dream was true.
We could have come right down this river to the lake.
Sure wish I had a canoe. How am I gonna get across
this river now?

George runs up and down. Looks for place to cross.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. LABRADOR, GRAND LAKE, 1ST HUBBARD EXPEDITION

DUSK

George clings to a rickety raft (driftwood lashed together with his pieces of blanket) in swirling river. Ice floes, crash into raft.

GEORGE

Lord, have you saved me from starvation
only to drown me?
Don't drown me til I get help for the fellows.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. LABRADOR, GRAND LAKE, 1ST HUBBARD EXPEDITION

NIGHT

George struggles from freezing water.

Rag clothes freeze to his body. His temperature drops. Hypothermia will kill soon. He must make a fire.

His movements jerky as he numbly searches. No firewood.

Suddenly his nostrils quiver. Smoke.

Dazed, he follows smell of smoke.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. BLAKE CABIN, SHORE OF GRAND LAKE, 1ST EXPEDITION

NIGHT

YOUNG GIRL tends BABY BROTHER on steps of crude cabin.

Light, warmth, and the smell of supper cooking surround them.

George's emaciated, frozen body staggers into light.

Young Girl clutches Brother to her in fear.

YOUNG GIRL

Ma! Ma! Come quick!

MARIE BLAKE runs to door. Axe in hand.

MARIE BLAKE
The men folk are 'round here. They'll be
here right quick if we yell.

George, even half dead, remembers his manners.

GEORGE
Ma'am, I haven't the strength to hurt you if I wanted to.
What men folk, ma'am? The Blake brothers?

MARIE BLAKE
Why, yes.
I'm married to Tom Blake.

GEORGE
I've been up in the woods a long time.
Wallace and Hubbard are stillâ€”

MARIE BLAKE
Mr. Hubbard? You're his guide.
I didn't recognize you. Come in. Come in.
Annie, call your dad.

GEORGE
Ma'am, your floor ... I'll track mud--

MARIE BLAKE
I can't leave you out here to freeze.
Come in. You're more than half starved.

INT. BLAKE CABIN, SHORE OF GRAND LAKE, 1ST EXPEDITION NIGHT

Marie seats George at table. Puddles form around his chair.

GEORGE
I have to get food to the other fellows.

MARIE BLAKE
You aren't going anywhere. When my husband
and his brother get back they can get a party
together for the others.

Marie puts a platter of biscuits in front of George. George picks up one biscuit. Carefully

butters biscuit.

GEORGE
Thank you, ma'am.

MARIE BLAKE
Go on, eat. I have to tend the baby.

He slowly lifts the biscuit to his mouth. The first bite of food by a starving man.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. BLAKE CABIN NIGHT

The biscuit platter is empty.

Marie brings another platter of biscuits to the table. George looks at the biscuits and stands up.

GEORGE
Excuse me, ma'am.

EXT. BLAKE CABIN NIGHT

George, clutching his aching stomach, paces.

GEORGE
Lord, have you saved me from starvation
and drowning to kill me of overeating?

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. LABRADOR, GRAND LAKE, 1ST HUBBARD EXPEDITION DAY

Cold, grey day. Ice covered shore.

George stares at canoe being paddled slowly across lake.

Tom Blake steps out of the canoe. BERT helps the passenger, Wallace, out. Wallace, smoke blind, 95 lbs, with swollen, frostbit feet and legs, can not stand by himself. He grips George's hand. Tears in both men's eyes.

WALLACE
Hubbard's gone.

GEORGE
Yes, Hubbard's gone. Poor Mrs. Hubbard.

The touching moment is broken by Wallace commanding George to do the impossible.

WALLACE
He's still up there. You'll have to bring him out, George.

George stiffens. Tom looks at the grey sky.

TOM BLAKE
Can't be done.
Few days he'll be under 8 feet of snow.
Have to wait 'til spring.

WALLACE
An animal will get him by then. George must go.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. LABRADOR WILDERNESS, 1ST HUBBARD EXPEDITION DAY

Months later. George, 20 pounds heavier, Leads Tom and Gilbert to snow-covered field. He points to an unmarked spot.

GILBERT
Here? How can you tell?

GEORGE
I remember.

TOM BLAKE
Wallace's stupid idea. 8 foot of snow down.
We'll dig a lot of 8 foot deep holes til we find him.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. LABRADOR WILDERNESS, 1ST HUBBARD EXPEDITION DAY

Tom, Gilbert and George at bottom of 8 foot pit of snow have uncovered Hubbard's tent exactly where George pointed.

GILBERT
How did you do that, George?

TOM BLAKE
I thought I was a good guide. You beat all, George.
Under 8 foot of snow. Whew.

George at tent flap, pauses. Thinking.

GEORGE
I remembered.

Gilbert wide-eyed.

GILBERT
You're not going in there are you, George?
His spirit...he'll come out...maybe
angryâ€”wronged...

George's hand lingers on the closed tent flap. Movement of his hand is half blessing, half
caress.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. MOUNTAIN, 2ND HUBBARD EXPEDITION DAY

Mina and George on mountain.

GEORGE
He looked like he was asleep. Peaceful.
His letter to you in his hand.
No white man beside my father ever treated
me so well. He was a grand man. Sometimes
I can't help but think I should have stayed with him.
Died with him.

MINA
No. Don't say that. I still hold Mr. Wallace at fault
for not doing more. But no one could have done
more then you did. I'm glad you didn't die. Where
would I be now if I had lost both of you?

Mina impulsively puts her hand on George's arm.

Electric charge between the man and the woman.

Mina takes back her hand.

SILENCE.

MINA
You've been a very good friend to me, Mr. Elson.

GEORGE

We should go back. They'll be looking for us.

EXT. NIPISHISH LAKE CAMP MORNING

Rain. George outside the door of Mina's tent.

GEORGE
I'll bring you a plate of food.

INT. MINA'S TENT MORNING

Mina, in her bedroll, listens to the rain drumming on the canvas over her head. She contemplates her wedding ring-less hand. She sighs.

MINA
No, George. I'm not hungry.

EXT. NIPISHISH LAKE CAMP MORNING

George builds a big fire in front of her door. He stretches a tarp over all.

GEORGE
Mrs. Hubbard, I think you'd better
come out of the tent. It's important.

MINA
What is it? Is something wrong?

GILBERT
You're not going in there are you, George?

Mina crawls out of the tent in her shift. Her face lights up.

MINA
You...

GEORGE
Eat your breakfast. I have work to do.

MINA
Yes, sir, Mr. Elson.

EXT. LABRADOR MORNING

Mina talks with George while crew packs up camp.

MINA

I'll hike up this side and then down the other side of the hill to the lake to meet you fellows. I want to take some photographs.

GEORGE

Gilbert can't pole the canoe without me.

MINA

I don't want you to baby sit me. I'd like to have some time alone. It would cheer me up.

George looks at the hill. He looks at Mina's eager face. Looks at hill again.

GEORGE

Probably be fine. We'll be close by.

MINA

Thank you, Mr. Elson. I'll wave to you from the top.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOP DAY

A somber Mina shoots off gun. BANG! BANG! She waves to the men portaging below on the river.

EXT. RIVERBANK DAY

At the sound of the gun the men look up at hilltop.

JOB

Wahkithuntah.

GEORGE

No. Don't say that. Brave. Smart. Strong.

Job and Joseph exchange looks.

EXT. LAKE SHORE DAY

Hard rain. Mina is here before the men. Water runs off the brim of Mina's hat like rain from the spout of a gutter. Mina heads for the shelter of the trees.

A tree sways on the other side of the brook. Mina looks closely at it.

MINA

Laddie, I almost feel that you're here watching me.

The tree sways again.

MINA
Laddie? Wait for me, Laddie!

Mina plunges wildly across brook.

EXT. LAKE SHORE DAY

In the rain the men scout around for signs of Mina.

JOSEPH
Only sign is of Bear. No sign of Mrs. Hubbard.

GILBERT
Bear!

JOSEPH
Went over brook to ridge. Berries up there.

GEORGE
Where's Mrs. Hubbard?

JOB
I bet you she's sitting under a tree back on hill.

Job spies a figure running on ridge.

JOSEPH
Look. On ridge.

GILBERT
Bear? No, Mrs. Hubbard!

GEORGE
Mrs. Hubbard?! Can't be her ...

George runs.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE DAY

George runs up the hill.

GEORGE
Oh, God...

George rushes up to Mina. She runs off.

George follows and catches her. He is panting hard.

Mina is wild eyed. She struggles to get away.

MINA
He's leaving without me! Let me follow him!

George gently shakes Mina.

GEORGE
Mrs. Hubbard! It's me, George Elson.

Job, Joseph and Gilbert run up. They're shaking.

Mina composes herself. Draws herself away from George.

JOB
Is she hurt?

MINA
I'm fine.

GEORGE
Were you lost?

GILBERT
You were to come to lake.

MINA
I thought I saw... something ...

JOSEPH
Bear?

JOB
Scared us.

MINA
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to give you a fright.

Mina smiles bravely. George frowns. Mina stops smiling.

GILBERT
If you hurt. Die. We die.

JOB
Can't go back. Without you.

J

JOSEPH
We'd be killed, ma'am.

Mina notices how hard the men are shaking with fear. She's ashamed of herself.

EXT. RIVERBANK SUNSET TWILIGHT

Drizzle of rain. Men glum. Stare into campfire.

Mina comes out of tent. Creeps up to fire. Clears her throat.

MINA
Um...I just wanted to say...I'm awful sorry
I caused you so much trouble today. I lost
my head. And I know it doesn't do any good
now, but I'll never do anything like that again.

Men are silent. Mina brings out a bottle from behind her back.

MINA
I was saving this for an emergency. It's brandy.

JOSEPH
You said no alcohol.

MINA
I brought it for medicinal purposes.

Mina pours a shot in everyone's tin mug. George refuses mug.

EXT. TRAPPERS TILT DAY

Wallace and crew come upon the cabin. They go inside.

EASTON
Someone carved a sign. "2nd Hubbard
Expedition. August 12, 1903."

WALLACE
She's been here.

That was three weeks ago.

STANTON

How'd she get so far ahead?

WALLACE

Angels carried her. Or devils.
What does it matter to us. We're still going on.
The race doesn't always go to the fastest.

DUNCAN

I only signed on for the summer.
I have to get ready for trapping.

STANTON

The food supplies start getting low
and look at the rats flee the ship.

WALLACE

No need for that Stanton.
Duncan has a wife and kids. He's right;
he only signed on for the summer and summer's
almost gone.
I've been thinking for a while now about splitting up.
Our supplies are getting low. Some of you fellows
will have to return and some go on with me.
We can move faster.

EXT. SEAL LAKE MORNING

Mina and crew. Men pack. Mina writes in diary.

MINA (V.O.)

Seal Lake. We're nearing Michikamau now,
and instead of feeling most glad about it, I am
growing more and more to dread the thought
of seeing it. I could strangle with the heat and flies
and effort and most of all these thoughts.

Joseph, Gilbert, and Job pointing at water. Talk in Cree.

George scoops a wood chip out of the water. Hands it to Mina.

JOB

Wood chip.

JOSEPH

Fresh cut.

GILBERT

One day. Maybe two.

JOB
Axe cut.

Men stare at chip. Pass it reverently from hand to hand.

MINA
There's axe cut wood chips all around.

GEORGE
Wood chip floated down to our camp.

MINA
Floated? From where?

GEORGE
Up the lake.

MINA
Well, one of you men could've knocked
a wood chip into the water yourself.

GEORGE
Could've.

MINA
It's not Wallace's. We haven't seen any sign of him.
We're miles ahead of him.

GEORGE
The portage route comes out here at Seal Lake. Maybe
portage route quicker. Maybe he's ahead not behind.

They all consider this information quietly.

MINA
If he's behind or ahead we're still going forward.

EXT. WALLACE'S CAMPFIRE NIGHT

Wallace pokes the fire and remembers.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY HARBOUR-WHARF DAY

Wallace walks down the gangplank. Before him stretches a CROWD of NEWSPAPER
REPORTERS, WELL-WISHERS, FRIENDS, and FAMILY.

BIG BRASS BAND's music sets the celebratory mood.

Wallace's two SISTERS, tears flowing down their cheeks, fight their way through CROWD to embrace their brother.

WALLACE

My frost-bitten legs swelled to twice their normal size. Turned gangrenous. Were to be amputated. And yet here I stand before you having taught myself to walk again. When I went into the wilderness I weighed 165 pounds. When I came out, I weighed less than 95 pounds. It is a miracle that I survived while ... others did not. It is not for us to understand or question God's will. Hubbard's noble character, his indomitable will, his simple faith, shall not be forgotten. They shall remain a living example to all who love bravery, courage, and self-sacrifice.

Several in the CROWD wipe tears from their eyes.

EXT. MINA'S CAMPFIRE NIGHT

George stares into the fire and reflects.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY HARBOUR WHARF DAY

The Crowd of NEWSPAPER REPORTERS, WELL-WISHERS, FRIENDS, and FAMILY of Wallace and Hubbard sweeps Wallace off wharf.

BIG BRASS BAND's song fades as they leave.

CROWD leaves behind only one lone horse-drawn dray waiting patiently for it's cargo.

One SEABIRD swoops and soars above the ship.

George, standing alone beside the dray, tips his head up to watch the bird.

SEAMAN calls from the ship deck down to George.

George shifts his vision from the bird to the Seaman.

SEAMAN

Comin' down.

A crane hoists a large wooden box. It hangs suspended in midair above the ship's deck.

As the box descends, George reaches out his hands to guide Hubbard's coffin safely off the

ship. George's hands linger on the wooden box. Half caress, half blessing.

It lands with DULL THUD on back of dray.

EXT. MINA'S CAMPFIRE NIGHT

Mina rouses George from his somber remembrances at the fire. She tries to joke lightly.

MINA

Such a long face, Mr. Elson.
I'm the one who worries about Wallace, not you.

He shakes his head no.

GEORGE

Seen more signs. Indian signs.

MINA

It's the Naskapi. We're hoping to meet them.

GEORGE

Never met Naskapi. Gilbert knows Montagnais.
I know Cree. Maybe Naskapi not friendly. Maybeâ€”

MINA

--No. No more stories about Naskapi conjurers.
Unfriendly greeting parties. Killings. Kidnapping.
Those stories can't be true.

GEORGE

Don't know Naskapi.

MINA

We come in peace. We're friendly.

EXT. RIVER DAY

Mina and crew paddle. High bluffs. Job, in Cree, whispers to George. Mina looks around. Confused.

MINA

What is it, George?

She spots a band of PEOPLE far off on bluff.

GEORGE
They've been watching us for awhile now.

MINA
Who are they? What do they want?

Flash of sunlight off metal.

JOB
Rifle.

Men stop paddling. Reach slowly for their own rifles.

MINA
No guns. They're hunting caribou.
Just like you'd be doing, Job, if you
weren't in this canoe.

GEORGE
Don't know if they're friendly.

MINA
Of course they're friendly.

GUNSHOT from bluff. BANG! BANG!

MINA (cont'd)
Oh, my God. They fired on us.

Job fires off reply. BANG!

JOB
They did not try to hit us.
Too far away from us to hit with rifle.

JOSEPH
Wouldn't waste bullets. Want us to come closer.

GEORGE
Do you want to risk going closer, Mrs. Hubbard?

Mina tries to cover up her fear.

MINA

I'm sure they're friendly.

Men paddle slowly toward shore.

MONTAGNAIS WOMEN & CHILDREN on shore wave kerchiefs.

WOMEN

Go away. We're afraid of you.
Our men are gone. Go away!

Even before Gilbert translates, Mina laughs.

MINA

I know what they're saying. They're afraid of you men.

GILBERT

(Calls to WOMEN in Montagnais)
We're just traveling through.

MINA

They look like the women at the Post.
They have crosses around their necks.

GILBERT

Montagnais. Like me, Mrs. Hubbard.

MINA

Bert, ask them where their men are.

GILBERT

Men gone to Davis Inlet to trade.

MINA

Maybe they'll meet my friend, Mr. Cabot.
I want to meet them.

EXT. RIVERBANK DAY

FOUR OLD WOMEN come to the shore. Others hang back, afraid.

Mina, alone, gets out of canoe. She shakes hands with OLD WOMEN. They shake hands over and over again.

MINA

I think they like this. They could shake hands all day long.

GEORGE
Are the Naskapi People near?

GILBERT
They say the Barren Ground people live two sleeps down the river. They visit often.

MINA
How far is it to the white man's Post?

WOMAN
Long river. Hard rapids. Many sleeps. Two moons.

MINA
Two months?

The women and children walk up the bluff toward their camp.

GEORGE
They invite you to come talk with them, Mrs. Hubbard.

MINA
Two months.
I might as well. No need to rush now.

EXT. MONTAGNAIS CAMP DAY

TWO CARIBOU SKIN-COVERED WIGWAMS.

Women crowd around Job, Gilbert, Joseph and George.

Mina sees YOUNG WOMAN speak to George.

MINA
Mr. Elson, what did she say to you?

GEORGE
I'd rather not tell you, Mrs. Hubbard.

MINA
Is it bad news?

GILBERT

She said, "Stay for awhile. Our men are away.
You can have many wives."

MINA
Wives?

YOUNG WOMAN
(To George)
The one who doesn't want to share you.
Is she your wife?

Mina doesn't need this translated for her. Frowns.

EXT. SEAL LAKE DAY

Wallace and Easton paddle. (The others have turned back.)

WALLACE
If we keep on at this rate we should make
the Post at Ungava Bay almost on schedule.

EASTON
We'll do it.

EXT. RIVERBANK SUNSET TWILIGHT

Mina, veiled, and crew eat and breathe black flies in silence.

Finally Mina can stand it no longer. She throws her tin plate to the ground.

MINA
All I'm eating is bugs. Every time I open my mouth.
How you can endure the flies without veils is
beyond me. How you endure without words
is beyond my comprehension.

George dishes up more food for Mina. He gives Gilbert the dish to give to her.

Gilbert is afraid to come too close to her. George speaks to him in Cree. Mina angry.

MINA
What? What are you talking about behind my back?

George embarrassed.

GEORGE
I tell Gilbert to come closer to fan flies from biting you.

He is afraid. Afraid you will bite him like bugs do.

MINA

I'm sorry, Bertie. I didn't mean to frighten you.
I'm thinking about winter coming.
And if we should turn back.

GEORGE

Turn back or not, winter will come.

MINA

Where do you want to be when the snow starts,
Mr. Elson? We could be half way back if we turned
around now. If we go on it will be October before
we reach the Post at Ungava Bay. The Pelican will
have sailed already. If Wallace shows up ...

GEORGE

That Montagnais woman didn't seem to know
how far it was. Maybe she's wrong.

MINA

Winter's coming, George.

GEORGE

You want to meet Naskapi people.
We'll ask them how far to Ungava Bay.

MINA

We'll be wasting time, George.

GEORGE

I understand to not waste bird wings.
Good to eat when hungry later. I don't
understand how one wastes time.

EXT. RIVER DAY

Next Day. River picks up speed every mile. Fast current. Dangerous rapids. George & Gilbert in one canoe. Joseph, Mina and Job in other.

Job stands in bow to see around big rock. Current sweeps canoe to side. Canoe sucked down into whirlpool. Waves.

George, watching river and Mina's canoe, with concerned look.

Job yells. Gestures wildly.

JOB
GO!

Mina and Joseph throw themselves to opposite side of canoe. Canoe pops up out of water trench.

George relieved. George and Gilbert paddle around big rock and whirlpool.

Swift current swooshes both canoes downstream. George and Gilbert paddle hard to come almost abreast of other canoe.

GEORGE
Alright?

MINA
I'm fine. Stop worrying about me.

Suddenly ROAR of water plunging over steep falls.

JOB
Falls!

Canoes turns toward shore.

EXT. RIVERBANK DAY

George and Gilbert pull their canoe ashore.

EXT. RIVER DAY

Job, realizing they can't get to shore in time, turns canoe to center of river, into the torrents of water.

JOB
Hold on.

EXT. RIVERBANK DAY

George turns his head, expecting to see other canoe beside him.

George's POV: Mina's canoe disappears in spray, foam, waves over the edge of the falls.

George leaps from the canoe. Runs toward base of falls.

Thick underbrush. Briars tear his clothing. Cut his hands. He runs on madly.

Joseph and Job struggle out of water dragging the overturned canoe. No sign of Mina.

George throws himself into the water.

Mina surfaces further out.

George can barely swim. He goes under.

She swims toward him.

They clutch each other.

Go under.

Bodies close. Tangled confusion.

Did lips brush? Who kissed whom?

Mina & George collapse together on shore.

MINA & GEORGE

I...thought ... I ' d ... lost ... you ...

Job, Joseph and Gilbert run up to help.

GILBERT

Is Mrs. Hubbard alright?

EXT. RIVERBANK

NIGHT

Later. Roar of the falls.

Mina sits by George. George looks at Mina. An electrical charge passes between them. He speaks with great feeling.

GEORGE

I was hoping it would be different this time.

Must Labrador always be like this?

What would I do if I lost you both?

MINA

I thought I'd lost you, George.

Mina lays her hand on George's hand.

George stiffens as he feels the charge of her touch travel through his entire body.

GEORGE

You were right. We should have turned around.
There may be more bad water ahead.

MINA

Bad water ahead and behind. We don't know
how this will come out. Or if we'll even live
through tomorrow.
Everything that seemed so important to me ...
writing a book, proving Wallace wrong ...it all seems
so far away. What does any of that matter?
Mrs. Hotchkiss was right. What I'm looking for
is right here.

She places his hand on her heart. George conflicted.

MINA

Today, while underwater my only thought was of
that beautiful laugh of yours. And how I wanted to
hear it again.
Laugh for me, George.

George LAUGHS, nervous and delighted.

MINA

I didn't expect Labrador to be like this.

GEORGE

Labrador never like this before.

They kiss.

EXT. RIVERBANK

MORNING

George builds the fire as Mina cooks breakfast. It's obvious that they haven't slept and are too
happy to care if they ever sleep.

MINA

I could teach you a thing or two about cooking.
I cook different.

Mina drops pan into fire. Ashes fly up. She burns her hand.

GEORGE

Sure do cook different.

MINA

Don't you have some work you're supposed to be doing, Mr. Elson?

She knocks over a pan. BAM!

Job scrambles from tent with gun in hand, sees Mina and George, frowns.

They smile sheepishly at him.

Gilbert comes out of the tent. Looks questioningly from the glowing faces of Mina and George to the stormy face of Job, breaks into a big smile, SINGS.

GILBERT

"Glory, Glory, Hallelujah! As we go marching on... "

EXT. RIVER DAY

Job, in Cree, in low voice to George. Mina peers ahead.

MINA

I can't see what you see, Job.

GEORGE

Men. No women or children.

MINA

Naskapi?

GEORGE

Can't tell.

NASKAPI INDIANS on bank of river. Fire gun. BANG!

MINA

They don't look very friendly~

Mina and men slowly paddle toward shore.

GEORGE

Stay in the canoe, Mrs. Hubbard.

MINA

Be careful, Mr. Elson.

EXT. RIVERBANK DAY

George and Gilbert get out of canoes. Greet Naskapi men.

CHIEF

Certainly you have tobacco with you.

George offers gift of tobacco.

GEORGE

A little tobacco left. Long trip. We come from Northwest River.

CHIEF

Long, long trip. Where do you go?

GEORGE

The white man's Post at Ungava Bay.

George listens to the Chief, then turns to Mina.

MINA

It's not two months, is it?

GEORGE

Sleep 5 times.

MINA

5 days.

She's happy and disappointed. Just when she wanted the trip to never end, the end comes in sight.

EXT. RIVERBANK DAY

Mina snaps photographs. NASKAPI CHILDREN and WOMEN. George unloads bags.

MINA

Please have the rest of our flour and rice.
We're at the end of our journey. We have
more than enough food.

EXT. RIVER DAY

Mina and crew paddle. Ahead CARIBOU swimming in water.

JOB

Deer.

GILBERT

Many deer.

MINA

The caribou migration. I want pictures.

EXT. HILLSIDE DUSK

Golden light of magic hour. Mina, George and Gilbert run to top of hill. Job and Joseph try to hunt.

CARIBOU as far as the eye can see. Rainbow over all.

GEORGE

Look. Rainbow.

MINA

Bertie, do you want to be rich?
There's a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

GILBERT

No pot of gold. You're telling a story.

MINA

If you don't believe me, George can't
tell you about it. Can't you, Mr. Elson?

GEORGE

Mrs. Hubbard's having you on, Gil.

MINA

You haven't heard of it either, George?
It must be a secret the White people keep
from the Indians. They want to keep all
the gold for themselves. But now you know.
Run down the hill, Bert. When you find the end
of the rainbow, dig. There's a pot of gold at the
end of the rainbow. It looks like it's under that
rock there.

GILBERT

If it's true why don't you go?

MINA

I'm already a wealthy woman.

GILBERT

Come with me, George.

MINA

Run, Gil. Before it goes away. George's staying with me.

GEORGE

Run, Bert. I have all the riches I need.

Gilbert runs down the hill.

Mina grabs George's hand. Pulls him down other side of hill.

MINA

Come on, Mr. Elson. Hide.

Hide behind rock. Mina holding George's hand.

MINA

Look. More deer.

GEORGE

Deer. Deer ...

He looks at Mina.

GEORGE

... And more dear.

EXT. RIVERBANK

MORNING

Mina and the men.

MINA

I did the calculations. We're within ten miles of the Post. Be there before lunch.

Job jokes with Joseph. George translates for Mina.

GEORGE

We don't want to wait till we get to Post to eat lunch. May be long time.

MINA

Never-mind you, Doubting Thomases.
I am going to keep the rest of the breakfast tea
as a souvenir of the trip.

Job, in Cree, makes a joke.

GEORGE

Job says, "We'll have it for lunch."

EXT. RIVER DAY

MAN in kayak ahead.

JOB

Look!

MINA

We're near the post. I knew it.

JOB

I tasted. No sea water in river water.

EXT. POST, UNGAVA BAY DAY

Post squats on 40 foot cliffs. One mile of mud flats between water and Post.

They pole the canoes right across the mud.

MR.& MRS. FORD wave from front door.

MINA

(Yells up to Fords)
Has the Company ship been here?

MR. FORD

(Yells down to Mina)
Company ship? Yes. Been here.

Mina steps out of the canoe. Sinks into soft mud.

MINA

We've missed it, Mr. Elson.

GEORGE

Ask them how long ago the ship was here.

MINA
 (Yells up to Fords)
 When?

MR. FORD
 September. Coming again this September.

MINA
 Mr. Elson, we did it. The ship hasn't come yet.

Mina excitedly hugs him.

Mr. and Mrs. Ford exchange a look.

MINA
 Thank you. You brought me through an extremely
 difficult journey. You brought me through safely.
 Not even a hair on my head was hurt. I couldn't
 have done it without you.

She leans on George's arm. Shucks off her boots.

GILBERT
 You here before Wallace.

MINA
 Yes. If The Pelican comes and I get out soon
 I could get back and have my story and pictures
 in print before Wallace is even heard from.

George and men watch Mina barefoot skip over mud to Post and the other white people.

George watches her go.

The others exchange looks of sympathy behind his back.

EXT. LAKE MICHIKAIMOUW NIGHT

Wallace and Easton. Lips blue. Big wind. Huge waves break over canoe. The men, drenched,
 bravely paddle on.

XT. MEN'S TENT, UNGAVA BAY, CAMPFIRE NIGHT

George, Joseph, Job, Gilbert around fire.

JOSEPH

You should be inside, George. You guided.
She never would have done it without you.
She said so herself.

GEORGE

I don't belong in there. Be like Bear trying to paddle a canoe.

GILBERT

I bet she'd like to have you there.
I don't know why, but she seems
to like to have you around, George.

Laughing, Job nudges Joseph. George embarrassed, laughs.

Mina steps into firelight.

Men abruptly fall SILENT.

Mina sits down.

SILENCE.

MINA

I've been practicing the paddling song
you fellas always sang while canoeing.

Mina SINGS song in Cree.

JOB

Good.

GILBERT

You said words right.

JOSEPH

That sounded real nice, ma'am.

GEORGE

You sang it soft. Soft is right.

MINA

I wanted you to like it. I wanted to do
something for you, to thank you.

JOB

They have feast for you.

MINA

As guest of honor I should go back,
but I'd rather be out here with you fellas.
Tell us one of your stories, Mr. Elson.

GEORGE

Don't know what to say.

MINA

You don't have to tell a story.
We can just sit together by the fire.

Gilbert points to the horizon.

GILBERT

Look! Tree caught Moon!

Mina laughs and affectionately tousles Gilbert's hair.

MINA

It just looks that way, Bertie.
The moon is very far away.

GILBERT

Further than we came across Labrador?

MINA

Much, much further.

GEORGE

Once Moon was dark. Dark day and night.
There was no light on Moon. There was
a Cree brother and sister. One day the brother
climbed a tree and told his sister to come too.
They climbed high in the tree. The tree grew taller.
The tree grew right up to Moon. The sister and
brother stepped out onto Moon. It was dark.
They lay down and slept. They woke to a bright
light shining on them. The boy made a snare
and caught Sun for his sister and he to have light.
That is the light we see.

GILBERT

Think someday people will go to Moon?

MINA

Like we've gone to Labrador.

GEORGE

Boy-Who-Snared-Sun and his sister
are already there.

MINA

Like the Naskapi already here.
Mr. Elson, you should write a book of your stories.

George prods the fire.

GEORGE

Books are for white people. White people
are not interested in 'Cree stories.

MINA

I love your stories.

GEORGE

You're different from most White people.

George pokes the fire with more energy. Sparks fly up into the night sky.

GEORGE

Maybe someday I can be lucky enough
to marry a White girl who would help me
write in English. Someone who liked my
stories and was learned.

JOB

(to George in Cree)

You'd do better trying for the moon, Georgie, my friend.

Mina contemplates her hands for a moment.

MINA

I would like to live like this always.
I have never felt such peace. Out here
it seems so much simpler. I could stay here
forever. I truly could ...
But ... I can't ...
I almost wish we had never arrived.

GEORGE
Fire is dying. Needs more wood.

George stalks away.

CUT TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: ONE MONTH LATER

EXT. UNGAVA BAY, POST DAY

Snow on ground.

George tightly strings a rope from a big rock to a tree.

The Indian CHILDREN run under, swing on, hang upside down from rope.

GILBERT
Mrs. Hubbard. Mrs. Hubbard, you'd better come out.
Something you should see!

Second story window thrown open. Mina thrusts her head out.

MINA
Is The Pelican here?

GILBERT
Mrs. Hubbard, George is going to conjure
to see where Wallace is.

Mina runs out.

George deftly leaps up on the rope. Walks the tightrope.

Everyone CLAPS and CHEERS.

George jumps down and bows.

Others try to follow suit. Fall off. LAUGH.

GILBERT
Mrs. Hubbard's turn.

MINA
Oh, no. I'll fall and break an ankle.

GEORGE

Won't let you fall.

George lifts Mina onto rope. Holds her hand to steady her.

GILBERT
(Points to sea)
Look.

The Pelican sails into the harbor.

MINA
We did it, Mr. Elson. We'll get back
before Wallace is even heard from.

GEORGE
I hope he's alright.

MINA
I'm sure he's fine. He's probably holed up
somewhere for the winter. He'll have more
of a story to tell later.

EXT. RAPIDS ON RIVER SUNSET

Wallace and Easton paddle dangerous, fast currents. Ice.

They paddle around ice-covered rock.

Roar of steep falls.

EASTON
Falls!

They disappear in icy waves over edge of falls.

Canoe overturns. Packs wash down river.

Wallace struggles out of river.

Easton clings to overhanging branch.

Wallace, weak with hunger and cold, drags his friend from the cold water. Immediately their clothing freezes to their body.

WALLACE

F-f-f-ire! F-f-f-reeze--

EASTON
F-f-fingers ... can't .. .move--

Hypothermia sets in immediately. They will die without a fire in minutes. Wallace's numb fingers falter with the flint from his pocket. Strike after strike yields nothing.

Suddenly a spark. A flame. A fire.

INT. POST, UNGAVA BAY NIGHT

Mina, George, Mr.& Mrs. Ford, Gilbert, Job, Joseph and SAILORS are gathered in the warmth and light of the main room.

Mrs. Ford SINGS a love song from her girlhood.

They CLAP.

EXT. UNGAVA BAY NIGHT

Wallace and Easton slowly paddle the mended but leaking canoe with the one paddle.

Strong winds.

Wallace sees the light from the Post.

WALLACE
We did it.

Where river and sea flow together the currents are tricky. In the dark they misjudge. Canoe overturns.

They swim through the ice cold water.

Claw their way up rock face. They perch on a tiny ledge. Look across the bay at the light from the Post. Shiver.

WALLACE
I can smell their food.

Easton takes small candle from pocket. Lights it.

WALLACE

What good does that little flame do?
Can't warm you. Do more good to eat it.

EASTON
It cheers me.

INT. POST, UNGAVA BAY NIGHT

George looks out the window. Odd look on his face.

He leaves.

Mina watches him leave. Odd look on her face.

EXT. POINT OF LAND, UNGAVA BAY, LOW TIDE NIGHT

Wallace and Easton startled by George's face peering over edge of ledge.

WALLACE
George? You're here?

GEORGE
I saw your light across the bay. Glad you made it.

EASTON
Am I glad to see you.
I didn't think we were going to make it.

George pulls himself up onto ledge.

WALLACE
I was sure you'd signed your death certificate
when you signed on with Mrs. Hubbard.

George with gentle compassion regards Wallace. Hands them each a piece of bread.

INT. POST, UNGAVA BAY NIGHT

Wallace and Easton enter the room. George follows. Everyone stares at these ragged, thin men.

SILENCE.

WALLACE

Sure is good to see you folks.

EASTON

No offense folks, but I'd like to see some food.

Everyone, except Mina, laughs and crowds around the two men.

Mr. Ford beckons to Mina.

MR. FORD

Mrs. Hubbard's been here almost one month.
She had fun out there. To hear her tell it,
canoeing Labrador is something every woman
should do.

Wallace informs the room,

WALLACE

Have I got a story to tell. You won't believe
the battle I fought.

Mina steps up to Wallace. Looks him in the eye.

Afraid of her wrath which he's seen before, he looks away.

She had hated him the last time she looked at him on the ship to Labrador. Now, to her surprise, she finds the hatred is gone, a mix of pity, forgiveness and compassion in its place.

MINA

My battle was of the heart. I triumphed.

Reaches out her hand to him.

He looks at her offered hand of friendship.

BEAT.

They shake hands.

EXT. SHORE OF UNGAVA BAY MORNING

Wallace and Easton ready two DOG SLEDS. Mina and others watch.

WALLACE

Next time you hear from us we'll be
the first white men to have taken dog sleds
down the coast of Labrador

MINA

You know what I think of this quest,
so I'll just wish you luck. My prayers go with you.

EASTON

I'm glad to have met you, Mrs. Hubbard!

Wallace and Easton leave in DOG SLEDS. Mina turns to George.

MINA

He said that as if he meant it. But not especially as if
it were any compliment to me. I wonder why he was
glad to meet me. Some sort of curiosity I suppose.

GEORGE

I'm glad to have met you.

MINA

I've been thinking about modeling my book on
Pilgrim's Progress, where everyone's name
reflects their true selves.
My name, Wahkithutah.

GEORGE

Wahkithutah means--

MINA

--I know what it means, George.
I learned a little Cree during this trip.

GEORGE

No. Your name is, Little White Flower
That Blooms in Labrador.

MINA

Your real name is Great Heart.

They look fondly at each other.

BLAST from SHIP'S HORN.

MINA

I have to go. They're waiting on me.
It's not too late to change your mind
and come to England with me.

George shakes his head—No.-- Mina holds out her hand. They shake hands.

MINA
Friend?

GEORGE
Friend.

FADE TO BLACK.

FINAL SCROLL

Dillon Wallace almost froze and starved to death once again on his dog sled trip. He survived his adventure to write THE LONG LABRADOR TRAIL, which was an instant best-seller and is still in print. To read the book one would never know Mina Hubbard was in Labrador at the same time.

Mina Hubbard toured England with her new book, A WOMAN'S WAY THROUGH UNKNOWN LABRADOR, which was well received but did not become a best seller, nor is it in print today. To read the book one would never know Dillon Wallace was in Labrador at the same time.

George Elson continued to guide. His only written record is his diary preserved among Mina Hubbard's papers. Many of its pages are missing.

INT. THE ROOM

Undecorated white walls. No windows. There are no markers to tell where this room is or what year it is.

GEORGE dressed in clothing circa 1900, faces front, toward a VIDEO CAMERA and an unseen INVESTIGATOR.

INVESTIGATOR
You two had an affair.

George doesn't know this word.

GEORGE
Affair ... ?

INVESTIGATOR

What happened between you two? Was it love or lust?

George looks directly at the INVESTIGATOR.

He stands.

INVESTIGATOR

Did you remove the pages or did she?

Did you write details on those pages?

George leaves.

The video camera continues to record the empty seat.

A jostle of the image suggests that a person has picked up the camera.

The camera turns and looks out the window.

A lake. A canoe. A woman pushes the canoe out into the water. A man joins her. They paddle off across the lake.

The camera continues to record the image until they are small dots far away.

THE END.