

MANY WOUNDS

Inspired By

ONCE WERE WARRIORS

By

Alan Duff

PRODUCTION DRAFT

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Written

By

Jeremy Torrie
[*Waabishki Makwa*]

For *Anang Ikwe*,
and all those past & present
who have had to bear witness
to the violence.

EXT. WOODED AREA -NIGHT

Wood POPS and CRACKLES. Yellow and orange streams of dancing flame come into focus. Sparks fly up with tendrils of grey woodsmoke from a fire. A RAVEN CAWS.

This could be the bush -then we realize it's the city! MUFFLED SOUNDSCAPE of DISTANT SIRENS and HONKING become clearer. Cinder blocks surround the fire pit. A rickety, faded fence lingers behind a solid elm tree. A thick orange extension cord is the clothesline for laundry hanging to dry.

Sitting on a stack of old tires is an Oji-Cree boy [MIGUN MANY WOUNDS, 4] holds onto a thin branch he's fashioned into a stick. Pointy end is getting blackened by the fire. Then his marshmallow explodes into flames!

Oh no! Too late Migun!
MIGUN
NC

A smiling ZOÉ MANY WOUNDS [32, fit, Ojibwe] arrives with a drink. She stirs ice cubes with her finger and slurps it before sitting into a faded orange vinyl camping chair.

Migun pulls in his stick so he can blow out the flame engulfing his marshmallow as older sisters WAAWAATESI [15] and Ruby [9] LAUGH. This is most of the Many Wounds Family.

Migun reaches for the box of no-name brand biscuits so he can make himself a S'more. Squeezes two cookies together as the blackened marshmallow oozes from the sides. Takes a bite:

MIGUN (CONT'D)
It's still good!

RUBY
Tell us a scary story mom!

Zoé swallows her drink. She's up for it. Migun licks his sticky fingers. Chocolate and marshmallow stick to his lips.

ZOÉ
Your great great *Mishum* was *Ogimaa*.
Chief. Our traditional territory
was beautiful. He didn't want to
make treaty with the White men, and
wouldn't allow the church into our
homelands. Both wanted him dead so
they could steal the land.
(MORE)

ZOÉ (CONT'D)

But he was known as *Windigo Killer* 'cuz defeated that spirit thirteen times.

Eyes are wide. Ears perk up.

MIGUN

What's that, mom?

ZOÉ

When you're weak and hungry -that's when *He* comes. Goes into your body like he's putting on a snowsuit, and soon you start looking at people differently.

Her tongue glistens as she runs it over her teeth for effect, eyes wide as she sees them all in the firelight.

ZOÉ

Your don't look like a boy anymore. You... like meat. The sun is too bright now and you want the dark. The colder it is, the better you feel inside because your heart is becoming ice. More and more you think about your hunger. Obsessed.

Images around the fire as they're drawn into the story.

ZOÉ

Each day, hunters go out in the snow and come back with nothing. We dig down to scrape moss off the rocks to boil it. We become pitiful. Hunger takes us. Do we want to live, or die? Then the black robes come, offering food...as much as you can fill your belly. Just sign these papers. Here, read this book. Let us come and build a house. Confusion. The hunger scratches at your guts with a bony finger. Then it grabs you. Makes us desperate. Look at those arms! Still pudgy from mother's milk.

Reaction from little Ruby. She doesn't like this image!

ZOÉ

The best meat has a bit of fat. All the flavour's in there! I bet just a nibble would ok. Wouldn't even hurt. Mmm...tastes just like moose!

(MORE)

ZOÉ (CONT'D)

Fat drips onto the fire as a human
leg cooks...and you haven't even
noticed *-it's your own!*

Hiding in the dark an assailant jumps out and grabs Migun.

VOICE (O.C.)

AAIIGH!

It's his older brother MASHKA [Oji-Cree, 17]. Girls SCREAM!

WAAWAATESI

Mashka!

Mashka SNICKERS. Migun tries to punch him in self-defence.

MASHKA

That was to perfect.

MIGUN

You scared me!

MASHKA

My bad, *niishime* (little brother).

Mashka rubs his head in a loving gesture, then hugs his bro.

ZOÉ

Whatcha up to tonight?

MASHKA

Gonna shoot hoops with friends...

ZOÉ

Then give your momma a kiss.

He leans in. She bear hugs him. It feels *good* as LISA, a mid-20's Cree neighbour arrives with a star blanket, a beer, and her pudgy year-old toddler Oscar. She has faded bruising across her eyes and a swollen nose.

LISA

Hey, Zow. Mind if we join you?

Zoé kisses Mashka, then gestures for their guests to sit.

ZOÉ

Course! Mashka, stay outta trouble?

He nods, then is gone. Oscar helps himself to a Pepsi and then stuffs some marshmallows in to make a 'chubby bunny'.

MIGUN

Then what happened, mom?

ZOÉ

Government heard he performed an exorcism. They called it murder. Sent a red coat to find him, bring him to trial. Some say he was stabbed thirteen times as he tried to escape. Some say he turned into a raven and flew away. Nobody saw him again. We became Many Wounds for all the hurt our ancestors had fighting the feds and the church.

Migun stuffs raw marshmallows into his mouth copying Oscar. Waawaatesi roasts her own. Oscar giggles at Migun.

ZOÉ

The Black Robes got their revenge. They built a church. Put up a cross. Rang the bells. Gave us bibles. And without leaders gone, there was no more church.

Waawaatesi slides her perfectly golden marshmallow off the stick. Shrugging to her younger siblings:

WAAWAATESI

You said you wanted to a ghost story.

ZOÉ

Spirits never die, kids. They carry on...

EXT. NORTH END STREETS, WINNIPEG -NIGHT

BOUNCE. BOUNCE. BOUNCE. Mashka's dribbling as a food truck rolls up. Red taillights bloom. *Let's Taco 'Bout Jesus* painted on the side. BASS THUMPS LOUD as *Snotty Nose Rez Kids' REAL DEADLY* plays:

SNRK (LYRICS)

We born in a system created for killing. The vision might kill us, creator we willing. To kill for this shit it's all part of the business...

Driver leans out; it's clear he knows Mashka. He jacks a thumb, gesturing to the back door. Mashka hops in.

INT. GROCERY STORE -NIGHT

SMASH! Shards fall into our lens as a bay window shatters.

ECU: Silent ALARM flashes! Fingers PUNCH a CODE to disable.

TIME CUT: Lights off, a metal shopping cart moves down an aisle. A brown, tattooed hand with a flashlight tosses items in without slowing down: baby formula, diapers, jars of food.

Cart arrives at the end of an aisle intersecting with the meat counter as a hoodied thief tosses fresh beef in.

Overflowing now it passes another shopping cart loading up on canned products. Another filled with produce. Crisp synchronicity to their efforts. Head for the checkouts.

Someone in a Trip Max gestures to move it. They go.

EXT. GROCERY STORE -NIGHT

The food truck is backed up, rear doors open. A stolen Jeep IDLES. Driver hops out joining our masked thieves who form a chain to hand off goods in the van.

MALE VOICE (O.C.)

Yo! Time to-

-From above a bright spotlight catches them in the act. A Police Helicopter! THUMP THUMP THUMP. Propellers whir. The group scatters like rats-

EXT STREETS OF WINNIPEG -NIGHT

Chopper spotlight on the van; other vehicles split up-

-A bullet FIRES at the chopper! The unseen pilot jerks to the side; his bright light temporarily moves off target below.

MALE VOICE #2 (V.O.)

Incoming fire from a black late model Jeep. Priority.

Down on the street our Jeep RACES through an intersection - the traffic light is red!

A teenage Cree artist wearing a bandana across the lower half of their face spray paints a brick wall lit by a street light overhead. Colourful graffiti reads WHERE ARE OUR WARRIORS?

The pursuing cop car flies through, wiping our frame.

I/E FOOD TRUCK [MOVING] -NIGHT

Mashka pulls his mask up, jacked with energy! In the back he eyes the trailing cops.

MASHKA

Pigs are on us!

The masked driver makes a hard left turn.

EXT. ST. NICHOLAS UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, NORTH END -NIGHT

The food truck parks at the back of a Byzantine-domed church. An old pickup is bumper to bumper. Thieves quickly unload.

A young Native man, ZIGGY STREETWISE, [20-ish] decked out in Hip Hop wardrobe and a vintage Cleveland Indians baseball cap. His faux-forged grin on his teeth greets the :

ZIGGY STREETWISE
Yo ng brown thurs. Stodis!

EXT. JIG TOWN, NORTH END WINNIPEG -PRE DAWN

A sprawling shot of The Projects. Oppressive walls of faded red brick buildings; side-by-side homes for the poorest of the poor. It's the Indian Ghetto.

Competing red and black spray-painted gang tags weave across the urban canvasses of fences and bullet-pocked cinderblock.

An old couch with rusted springs torn through faded fabric with a Scottish pattern sits askew on the curb. Mongrel mutts sniff around for scraps of food.

In retro Jordan high-tops and a hoodie Mashka listens to Sten Jodi's *Where My Natives at Pt2* via cheap wireless headphones:

STEN JODI (RAPPING)

*So put your fist in the air. Let me
hear you say: Where my Natives at?*

He's shouldered a backpack but carries a canvas tote filled with groceries. A leafy head of lettuce pokes out the top.

EXT. MANY WOUNDS'S HOME -PRE DAWN

Mashka sets the food down beside a yellow planter, careful not to wake anyone. Beside it is a plastic milk carton; inside, a worn-out basketball. He palms it, looks to the second floor, as if trying to make up his mind.

His cell BUZZES: a text. Reads it, then leaves, ball in hand.

EXT. JIG TOWN, WINNIPEG -CONTINUOUS

SLOW MOTION on exhaust from a vintage black '87 Buick Grand National idling a few feet away, running lights on. Mashka keeps a low profile. Doesn't see a pair of little brown hands playing with a red Hot Wheels '81 Camaro in a sandbox nearby.

Mashka hops in; RUMBLE of the Buick as they split.

The little boy is Migun! Playing quietly without a care.

Glass CRASHES LOUDLY from inside a 'misery box' -one of the many, low rent apartments. Muffled SCREAMS-

-Lisa, with a bloodied lip eats her home in sheer panic. She races down concrete steps barefoot the to her left, but not fast enough. The BATTERED MAN who's been following her -a wife-beater, gun etc.

BLAM BLAM BLAM!

ECHOES from the blasts REVERBERATE. Lisa falls forward, her skull bounces off the concrete, hair tumbling over her startled, now lifeless face.

Silence as Migun with his toy looks at the shooter. His eyes are wild, lost, glossy from crack. Sees Migun but simply lowers the thick, shiny gun and returns inside like a zombie leaving his partner in a pool of black, viscous blood -oil from a ruptured engine.

EXT. MANY WOUNDS HOME, FRONT YARD -PRE DAWN (CONTINUOUS)

A light goes on from the second floor.

SECONDS LATER: A weary Zoé in a bathrobe steps from her front door. Steps to the sidewalk craning a slender neck for clues.

Instinctively she rounds the corner and finds Migun standing over the dead woman. Her eyes go wide with dread. *Oh my god!*

BY THE PLAYGROUND. Migun looks curiously at Lisa in her sweatpants with 'Juicy' embroidered on the butt. A black ant scurries over a lifeless hand. Head to the side, her eyes are scared and vacant. Migun's unafraid of the body.

Zoé grabs him forcefully by the arm and leads him away, half-crouching, protective. Looks over her shoulder to see if the gunman is nearby.

EXT. MANY WOUNDS HOME, FRONT YARD -CONTINUOUS

In relative safety, Zoé finally lays into her little boy:

ZOÉ

Migun, you scared the hell out of me! You coulda been shot! How many times I told you?

MIGUN (SHRUGGING)

It's Lisa.

ZOÉ (CONT'D)

What?! Did you see the whole thing?

(He nods.)

Jesus. Never, ever sneak out like that again.

Migun is upset and momentarily raises her voice at him until:

MIGUN

Froot Loops

His eyes go to the groceries beside the yellow planter. Zoé finally notices. Migun runs, taking the box of Froot Loops. Casts a look back to see if anyone's around to yield a clue. She grabs the rest, heads inside, LOCKS her door.

EXT. JIG TOWN, WINNIPEG, BY PLAYGROUND -PRE DAWN

Somewhere a lone WOODPECKER hammers a telephone pole. Wrapped in a wool blanket Zoé scans to see if Lisa's killer is near. Her body remains forgotten, growing cold. Squatting down Zoé observes black blood pooling. Eyes filled with frozen terror.

A finger TWITCHES -Zoé jumps! She recovers, places TOBACCO down next to her. Zoé drapes her blanket over Lisa.

POV Lisa's home: Oscar, wearing only a diaper, watches from a window. Puts a tiny hand on the glass.

EXT. WINNIPEG -SUNRISE

Bird's eye view of an oppressive black armoured pig wagon (police tactical vehicle) crossing a rusting steel bridge over a vast yet dull rail yard dividing the city with iron.

Ribbons of track host hundreds of rail cars. Fat pigeons fill an abstract sky. *Redskin Cowboys* PLAYS as DREZUS RAPS:

LYRICS (V.O.)

*...Baddest injuns you ever saw.
Native outlaws. Rebels with a cause
against all odds. We the redskin
cowboys. We the redskin cowboys...*

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PARK, WINNIPEG -CONTINUOUS

The Buick Grand National is parked in front of a grafitti'd brick building. Mashka and the driver wait at a garage door. Door glides up revealing a chop shop; they roll inside and park beside the stolen Jeep now on blocks with missing rims.

A beehive of activity. Mashka soaks it in -BANG BANG BANG!

MALE COP VOICE (O.S.)

Open up! Police!

Before anyone can react cops lead by Mac Kevlar storm in, guns pointed, WEARING YELLOW ORDELS. Mashka runs into a cop who would love to know his head off. His ball rolls away as he raises his hands, falling to his knees.

EXT. MANY WOUNDS'S BACK YARD -DAY

Waawaatesi writes in a journal. Sits cross-legged atop a rough wooden pallet with Oscar colouring with crayons next to her, pacifier in his mouth.

Ruby and Migun run in and out of laundry hung to dry. Zoé's folding a white sheet when TWO POLICE OFFICERS -one a Native male, the other a White woman.

FEMALE COP

Zoé Many Wounds?

She freezes. Her eyes dart toward Oscar. With a knowing look Waawaatesi quietly picks Oscar up, carrying him out of view.

Zoé turns, expecting the cops to talk about the murder. Instead Mashka stands between them, head down.

ZOÉ

Oh...what's the charge this time?

MALE COP

Couple bangers stole a Jeep. Found your boy at a chop shop we were surveilling. Not gonna look good when he appears in juvie court on his other charges.

ZOÉ
Think that badge makes you better
than us?

MALE COP
It's just my job, ma'am.

Migun, who's been hanging off of Zoé's skirt looks up.

MIGUN
Is she a pig, Mom?

A slightly embarrassed Zoé smiles like the Cheshire Cat.

ZOÉ
No, son. Pigs are pink and have
curly little tails. She don't have
a tail now. She's sh...
Migun moves over to look at the badge and shakes his head.

FEMALE COP
We'll leave Blitz with you, for
now.

ZOÉ
Mashkawizi.

FEMALE COP
Pardon?

ZOÉ
My son is *Mashkawizi*. He is strong.

FEMALE COP
That's not how he's known on the
street, ma'am.

The cops leave. Zoé points for Mashka to go inside.

ZOÉ
Let's go, *Blitz*.

INT. MANY WOUNDS LIVING ROOM -DAY

Zoé shuts off the TV. Mashka is a slug on the couch.

ZOÉ
I didn't say you could watch TV.
(Mashka's indifferent.)
Wanna tell me why? Mashka?

MASHKA

Dunno.

Distracted by his cellphone Zoé takes it away. Mocks him:

ZOÉ

You *dunno*? That what you're gonna say in court tomorrow?
(he shrugs)
Sit up, Mashka!

He does, but still mopes.

ZOÉ (CONT'D)

When you were a kid you wouldn't take a piece of fruit without asking. Now you're jacking cars?

MASHKA

It wasn't my mom. I was... -

ZOÉ

-Along for the ride. I heard. Mashka, I didn't raise you to bring disrespect to our family.

Silence. Zoé decides to get a reaction.

ZOÉ

Dad's gonna be pissed when he finds out.

Immediately Mashka is concerned at the potential consequence:

MASHKA

You can't tell him! He'll kill me!

ZOÉ

Then I need to know what's going on. These are serious charges.
(beat) You know Lisa was murdered?
(Shakes his head)
Had you been home instead of doing God knows what maybe I wouldn't have found Migun standing over her dead body at five AM!

Mashka doesn't know how to open up but offers:

MASHKA

Sorry, mom. You'll come tomorrow?

She HUFFS, gathers herself.

ZOÉ
I'll be there. Just...go clean your
room. Put some laundry in.

EXT. MANY WOUNDS' BACK YARD -DAY

Waawaatesi reads to Ruby, Mig, and Oscar. Zoé arrives with
juice boxes.

ZOÉ
Who's thirsty?

Arms shoot up quickly. Zoé hands them out. She sits on a big
old tractor tire with them, on what little grass there is.

ZOÉ (CONT'D)
Minwaatimo nniija nis (un) she
tell a good story for child?

F'BY
I liked it.

MIGUN
WaWa, what's a *manitou*?

WAAWAATESI
A spirit being.

MIGUN
Like a ghost? Are they bad?

ZOÉ
Our world's filled with good and
bad, Migun. Your *koko* says we are
only ever a day away from our
ancestors. No matter if they've
been gone a week, a day, or a
thousand years.

Migun furrows his brow.

MIGUN
We have family a thousand years
old?

She nods and looks to the sky.

ZOÉ
As old as the stars. All around.
Even the stars are our relations.
They look down here, and protect us
from time to time.