

*Algernon Blackwood's*  
**THE WENDIGO**

Adapted for the screen by

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from the radio play adaptation by  
Andrew McMurtrey

*The Frightmare Theatre Podcast*  
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original novella  
by  
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A haunting wind whispers. The breath of nature itself.

SNAP IN

1 EXT. ONTARIO WILDERNESS - NORTH OF RAT PORTAGE - NIGHT 1

A vast snow covered Canadian wilderness stretches out in all directions. Ancient black trees peek out from beneath the blanket of white snowfall.

SUPER: *North of Rat Portage. Ontario, Canada 1910*

The full moon is the only light for hundreds of miles in any direction, save for a dim glow emanating from a small clearing in the dense forest below.

A GREAT HORNED OWL hoots longingly from it's high perch.

Below the tree line in the clearing is a small camp. TWO MEN warm themselves by a roaring fire. They are HANK and DR.CATHCART. Hank sings, "*C'est L'Avirion.*"

HANK

*Riding along the road to Rochelle City, I met three girls, and all of them were pretty.*

He takes a long swig from his skin. Across from him, Cathcart is lost in the inspection of his hunting rifle.

CATHCART

I'm sure it was my rifle. I've used this for every hunting trip and for target practice. Must be getting rusty. Er, the rifle that is.

HANK

Sure, sure.

Hank stuffs a pipe in his mouth, lights it, and continues his drunken voyager song.

HANK (CONT'D)

*Pull on the oars as we glide along together, Pull on the oars as we glide along.*

Remembering his manners, he offers Cathcart a cigar.

HANK (CONT'D)

Smoke?

Cathcart accepts, biting off the tip.

CATHCART

Or maybe it's the cold. I'm not used to hunting in this frigid of weather.

He strikes a match and puffs eagerly.

CATHCART (CONT'D)

I hope young Simpson and his guide have some tobacco. Cures everything. My nephew's never been much of a smoker though. Perhaps by the time we rendezvous he'll have become a cigar fiend after all. Damn this cold.

HANK

Awe, now it ain't that bad. Good for the circulation. Good for the blood! Good for getting away from the women. Eh?!  
(Singing)

*By chance I chose the one who was the beauty,  
Lifted her up so she could ride beside me.*

CATHCART

I do hope the lad is all right. You say Défago is the best guide you've ever come upon, yes?

HANK

Indeed he is. The man's a legend 'round these parts. Not only does he know the land, but he knows the people and the history too. I'm sure Simpson and he are gettin' along just fine, Doctor.

CATHCART

Maybe they'll beat us to landing a moose, eh?

HANK

Not if I have anything to say about it! That damned Canuck ain't gonna best, ol' Hank Davis! Défago may be the superior guide, but no one matches my marksmanship, sir. I assure you of that.

CATHCART

We'll just have to see about that. So far there's been a great deal more drinking and smoking than tracking and shooting.

HANK

And you are most welcome for it. Live a little, Cathcart. Money well spent, if you ask me. Moose or no moose.

Hank offers Cathcart a small flask. Cathcart smiles and accepts. Hank continues the song.

HANK (CONT'D)

*With never a word we rode along together,  
After a while, she said, "I'd like a drink,  
sir."--*

From the darkness behind them, SWIFT FOOTSTEPS grow closer, crunching loudly in the snow.

CATHCART

I say, what the devil is that?

MUFFLED WHIMPERING rings out from the darkness.

HANK

Look!

From the shadows, a FIGURE appears. It manages to slump a few more steps toward them, before collapsing.

They quickly rush toward it.

CATHCART

My God! Where did he come from?

Hank turns the Figure over, revealing SIMPSON (21), delirious and mumbling incoherently.

HANK

Simpson!

CATHCART

Oh, my dear boy. Come.

They struggle to lift his dead weight.

CATHCART (CONT'D)

Here, take a seat by the fire. I'll get you a blanket.

Simpson's eyes are wide with fear.

SIMPSON

Thank God! Thank God you kept the fire going. Otherwise I'd have never found you. I'd have been lost forever. *Out there.*

Cathcart covers him in a blanket.

CATHCART

My dear boy, you're half frozen. What on earth has happened? Where's Défago?

Simpson sobs and mumbles incoherently.

HANK

Here. This will warm you up.

Hank hands him the flask. He greedily gulps through his cracked lips.

HANK (CONT'D)

Don't forget to come up for air.

CATHCART

Out with it, lad.

SIMPSON

Défago. He's gone.

CATHCART

Gone? Gone where?

Simpson points out to the vast blackness surrounding them. The wind howls. The trees creak and groan.

CATHCART (CONT'D)

Why, what's happened to him? An accident?

HANK

How long've you been out there by yourself?

SIMPSON

Since that second night after we left you east toward Fifty Island Water.

CATHCART

My God! You mean you've been out there on your own for three days?!

SIMPSON

Is that all? ...felt like weeks. I've not slept. I finished the last of the few rations I had on me at daybreak. I lost my rifle on the water. Oh, God. I thought the forest was like to swallow me whole.

CATHCART

That damned Défago. He's shown his true colors, Mr. Davis. Leaving my nephew to fend for himself in this vast nothingness.

SIMPSON

No, not at all. That poor man is not to blame. He- He was taken.

CATHCART

Défago? By whom?

HANK

I see what happened here. I bet that crazy Canuck got drunk and headed out into the woods to commune with the wilds, if ya know what I mean. I've seen him do it before.

SIMPSON

He didn't drink anything! Neither of us did!

HANK

Still. Drink or no drink. The damn fool will likely stumble up this way come morning with a foolhardy story to tell.

CATHCART

He did say he was wary of traversing so far into that particular area; going on about dark spirits or some such thing.

HANK

The big superstitious baby.

CATHCART

You all but forced him to take my nephew out into that godforsaken territory. Maybe he knew something terrible-

SIMPSON

We'd just made our way back to camp from yet another unsuccessful hunt. The sun was going down fast over the mountains...

Simpson stares into the fire, recounting his story.

The FIRE'S BRILLIANT GLOW envelops us, taking us into...

2 FLASHBACK - EXT. FIFTY ISLAND WATER - EVENING

2

THE GLOWING SUN hangs low over the dark mountains, severing the horizon in the distance.

SUPER: *Three Days Ago.*

From HIGH OVERHEAD; peering down between the dense forest, two DARK SHAPES emerge into the fading light.

They are Simpson and JOSEPH DÉFAGO (*French-Canadian*). Both men are wrapped head to toe in furs, carrying rifles and large camping packs over their shoulders.

Simpson struggles to keep up with his companion. He stops to catch his breath.

Just ahead of them is their CAMP: A tent, a makeshift table, and a fire pit with two stumps on either side.

Simpson smiles and rushes to catch up with Défago.

SIMPSON

Just in time, eh? The sun's really going down.

DÉFAGO

A little longer out there and we might not have found camp.

Défago drops his pack and starts building a fire.

Simpson sits on the log opposite him.

SIMPSON

Moose or no moose, it's still a good time though. Being out here. I don't get to see much of the wilderness at college.

Défago motions for more firewood. Simpson quickly fumbles with an armful from the stack.

SIMPSON (CONT'D)

Maybe I should watch you do this. I may need to build a fire someday. On my own.

Défago tosses the wood into the burgeoning fire.

DÉFAGO

It's very easy. Good wood, good fire.

Défago sits back onto his stump and pulls a pipe kit from his satchel. He takes his time readying his pipe. Simpson squirms at the long silence.

SIMPSON

You know, it's cold but it's not unbearable. You may make a true outdoorsman of me yet. God willing.

Défago smiles, lighting his pipe and puffing deeply.

DÉFAGO

This bible college teaches you a lot of things?

Simpson eagerly pulls a pipe from his own satchel, and fumbles with the stuffing of it.

SIMPSON

Yes. I believe so. I hope so. Yes, I mean. If you can be taught religion, that is. It seems like such a strange thing to be taught in school. Either you have it or you don't.

Défago stands, stretching his arms wide.

DÉFAGO

This. *This* is my religion.

A HAWK screeches far in the distance. Défago inhales deeply and lets out a deep bellowing sigh.

SIMPSON

It is very beautiful out here. Peaceful.  
Like a church. No, not like a church. I  
don't feel this way when I'm in a church.

As Simpson rambles, the sound of his VOICE fades, and  
is replaced by sounds of the WILD NATURE around them.

DÉFAGO'S EYES move to the darkness of the tree line.

THE FAR SIDE OF THE CLEARING- the shadows are deep.  
The rustling of branches is deafening, almost like the  
heavy breathing of some massive beast.

DÉFAGO'S EYES squint. Smoke curls around his face.

THE FAR SIDE OF THE CLEARING - the darkness grows ever  
closer. And perhaps *something* is in that darkness.  
Perhaps *it* watches them too.

Suddenly, Simpson plops down next to Défago.

SIMPSON (CONT'D)

Are you able to see anything out there at  
all? I could light a lantern and-

DÉFAGO

No, I don't see anything.

SIMPSON

Well, I'm going to boil water for tea, if  
you should care to join me. Are you  
hungry?

DÉFAGO

No.

SIMPSON

Me either.

Simpson places a pot of water into the fire.

SIMPSON (CONT'D)

I can't help but think how terrible it'd  
be to find one's self alone out here.  
Easily lost and never found again.

Défago snorts.

SIMPSON (CONT'D)

I mean, these woods are a bit too vast to  
feel quite at home in. Eh?

DÉFAGO

You've hit it right, Simpson. That's the  
truth. There's no end to them. No end  
at all. There's many a man found out  
that, and gone to pieces.



SIMPSON

Uncle used to tell me stories of men who'd left behind the bustle of their daily lives and come out here to the Canadian wilds, and were sometimes stricken with a strange fever of the wilderness. Where the seemingly infinite solitude of these uninhabited lands caught them so fiercely that they went forth, half fascinated, half deluded, to their deaths.

The fire dances wildly in DÉFAGO'S EYES.

DÉFAGO

"The silence of the vast listening forest stole forward and enveloped them."

SIMPSON

How's that?

Défago snaps out of his haze. Simpson pours two cups of tea, and hands one to him.

Défago sets aside his cup, stoking the fire. He softly sings a melancholy version of "*V'là l'bon l'joli vent.*"

DÉFAGO

*V'la joli vent V'la l'bon vent V'la joli vent M'amie m'appelle. Go good wind. Go pretty wind. Go good wind. My friend is calling. Three handsome ducks went for a swim. The king's son went hunting...*

As he sings to himself, the frigid wind howls through the towering black trees. The NIGHT SKY is littered with infinite stars.

A BRANCH SNAPS far off in the distance. Défago stops. Maybe it's just his imagination. Or maybe it's something else. Out there in the dark. Waiting. Wanting.

He cautiously continues. His eyes fixed on the surrounding darkness.

DÉFAGO (CONT'D)

*From 'neath its wing it loses blood, and from its eyes, diamonds-*

The wind's howling grows closer.

DÉFAGO (CONT'D)

*-Go good wind... Go pretty wind... Go good wind... My friend is calling.*

Défago's nose twitches. He suddenly juts up.

SIMPSON

What?! What is it? What's wrong?

Défago sniffs at the air.

DÉFAGO

Nothing.

Simpson nervously laughs.

DÉFAGO (CONT'D)

What are you laughing for?

SIMPSON

Oh, I was just- Nothing.

DÉFAGO

You shouldn't be laughing. Not out here. There's places out here no man will ever set eyes on. Nobody will ever know what dwells out there neither. And they should be thankful for that, boy.

Simpson's stares at him, wide-eyed. Défago sniffs again.

SIMPSON

What can you smell? Moose?

DÉFAGO

Nothing, I guess. The wind's shifted. It carries a faint odor. Utterly unfamiliar. That song I was singing. I hadn't thought of it in years. Not since I was a boy. It used to frighten me so.

SIMPSON

What is it about?

DÉFAGO

Old legends from a time when old gods danced in the dark of the forest. Silly stuff.

SIMPSON

I'm intrigued. Really. Please tell me.

DÉFAGO

That's the song frightened men sing in god forsaken places like this, when they fear the Wendigo is somewhere about.

SIMPSON

And what's the Wendigo?

Défago hesitates. Then sits back down.

DÉFAGO

It's a kind of great animal- but more than that. A monster.

(MORE)

DÉFAGO (CONT'D)

Quick as lightning and bigger than anything else in the dark of the forest. ...and not too good to set eyes on, that's all.

SIMPSON

An old backwoods superstition!

DÉFAGO

I warned you about laughing, boy. The trees don't like it.

SIMPSON

Come on. It's time we were in bed and asleep if we're going to be up early.

Simpson grabs his rifle and pack.

DÉFAGO

Yes. I'll join you shortly.

Simpson smiles and disappears into the tent.

SIMPSON (O.S.)

Good night, Défago.

Défago stares into the blackness beyond their camp. Something isn't right.

DÉFAGO

Good night, Simpson.

He picks up his rifle, holding it close across his chest. The darkness seems to be closing in around them.

CATHCART (V.O.)

He never said what it was that spooked him?

SIMPSON (V.O.)

Never once.

CATHCART (V.O.)

I thought nothing could scare Joseph Défago.

SIMPSON (V.O.)

I'd have believed that. If it wasn't for what happened next.

The campfire fire blazes in defiance of the swallowing darkness.

3 FLASHBACK - EXT. FIFTY ISLAND WATER - NIGHT

3

The campfire's dying embers glow dimly. The moon shines down on the clearing where the men are camped.

The night is deathly still, save for the wind rustling softly through the trees.

A SMALL WHIMPER emanates from inside the tent.

4 FLASHBACK - INT. DÉFAGO'S TENT - NIGHT

4

Simpson snores. Behind him in the shadows, Défago tosses and turns. He whimpers softly.

In the BLURRY DARKNESS behind Simpson an ominous shadow creeps over Défago.

The wind outside moans deeply. A SOFT WHISPER, barely audible, floats within it.

WHISPERING VOICE

*Défaaaaaagoooooooo.*

Défago shudders. Simpson stirs slightly.

Behind him, Défago's blanket slowly creeps down his body, as if being pulled by an unseen force.

Défago's cries softly in his sleep.

Unaware of the horror behind him, Simpson mutters, half asleep.

SIMPSON

Défago? Is that you?

Silence. Simpson falls back to snoring softly.

Suddenly, in the darkness behind him, Défago is violently yanked downward toward the tent flap.

He screeches. Simpson bolts upright.

SIMPSON (CONT'D)

Défago?! Are you feeling poorly?

For the first time, we see Défago clearly. His eyes are wide, staring out in terror. He shivers, and sweat streams down his face.

SIMPSON (CONT'D)

Défago, what's the matter?

Défago's blanket is bunched at his knees. His bare feet protrude through the tent flap into the frozen darkness outside, as if someone or something were trying to pull him from the tent.

SIMPSON (CONT'D)

My God, your feet are outside the tent. What on earth has gotten into you, man? Aren't you freezing?

Défago's wild eyes turn and lock on Simpson. His face, a horrific struggle between grotesque ecstasy and desperate plea for help. Simpson shrinks back.

SIMPSON (CONT'D)

Dear God. Défago. What-

All at once, there is a sudden VIOLENT RUSH like the flapping of large wings above the tent. Simpson ducks. Défago groans in painful ecstasy.

SIMPSON (CONT'D)

What the bloody hell was that?!

Simpson quickly wraps himself in his furs and slips into his boots. He gently pulls Défago's blanket over his bare feet, and peers out through the tent flap.

5 FLASHBACK - EXT. FIFTY ISLAND WATER - NIGHT

5

The moon's glow illuminates the clearing. ABOVE THEM, a large tree shakes, sloughing off a blanket of snow, as if recently disturbed by some massive unseen force.

SIMPSON

(whispering)

Défago? Défago, wake up. I think something just flew overhead. It must have been a large bird or--

The wind picks up and blows through the camp, extinguishing the very last of the fire embers. In the wind's howl, a SOFT VOICE calls out more clearly now.

VOICE

*Défaaaaaagoooooooo.*

Simpson freezes. Did he hear correctly?

VOICE (CONT'D)

*Défaaaaaagoooooooo.*

Behind Simpson, Défago thrashes and groans.

Simpson scans the tree line. The VOICE seems to be coming from all directions.

Something far in the distance catches Simpson's eye.

ACROSS FROM THE MOONLIT CLEARING- at the very edge of the tree line, A MASSIVE SHAPE moves behind a tree. *Or did it?*

Simpson rubs his eyes and looks again. Nothing there.

The VOICE on the wind is closer now.

VOICE (CONT'D)

*Défaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaagoooooooooooooooooooooo!*6 FLASHBACK - INT. DÉFAGO'S TENT - NIGHT

6

Simpson cowers back into the tent, quickly tying closed the flap. He glances down.

Défago's feet are gone.

He slowly turns to see his companion huddled at the back of the tent, rocking and muttering to himself.

This pale sweat-drenched figure is more like a terrified child than the rugged outdoorsman we met earlier.

The VOICE on the wind is deeper now. Much closer. Almost right upon them.

VOICE

*Défaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaagoooooooooooooooooooooo!*

Simpson glances to his rifle, and is about to go for it when-

A DEEP RASPY VOICE booms very close.

VOICE (CONT'D)

***DÉFAGO!***

Défago bellows a blood curdling scream and bursts from the tent, knocking Simpson backward.

SIMPSON

WAIT! DÉFAGO! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

Défago screams, running barefoot toward the darkness beyond the clearing.

Simpson quickly grabs his rifle and lantern, and runs after his comrade.

7 FLASHBACK - EXT. FIFTY ISLAND WATER - NIGHT

7

Simpson stumbles over the woodpile and crashes into the snow. Défago is now only a distant shape, disappearing into the tree line. The ECHOES of his cries reverberate through the forest.

DÉFAGO

*Oh! My Feeeeeet! My burning feeeeeet!  
My burning feet of fire! Ohhhhhh!*

Simpson clamors to his feet and races after him.

SIMPSON

Défago! DÉFAGO!

Défago's distant screams fade as Simpson disappears into the enveloping darkness. The wind howls.

SIMPSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I followed his trail the best I could.

8 EXT. NORTH OF RAT PORTAGE - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT) 8

Simpson weeps softly into his hands.

HANK

It should've been easy enough to follow.  
We've had almost four meters of snowfall.  
And the man was barefoot after all.  
According to your story anyway.

CATHCART

Now, Hank. It was surely a terrifying experience, what being roused from a dream state like that. Even the most experience tracker would find it hard to orient himself in--

SIMPSON

NO! I wasn't disoriented. I wasn't dreaming. I followed the tracks!

CATHCART

Where did they lead?

9 FLASHBACK - EXT. DEEP WOODS - NIGHT 9

Three nights ago. Simpson, lantern in hand, trudges through the thick forest.

SIMPSON (V.O.)

I followed them for hours. Yet, I couldn't seem to catch up to him. Every now and then I would hear him, far off in the night. Screaming.

DÉFAGO'S SCREAMS echo in the darkness. Simpson picks up his pace, following the tracks in the deep snow.

SIMPSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

As the tracks moved deeper into the forest, their stride seemed to lengthen. As if he were running at an incredible rate of speed and bounding through the brush. That's when I noticed another pair of tracks directly beside Défago's.

Simpson crouches down, examining a MASSIVE HOOF PRINT directly beside Défago's tracks.

10 EXT. NORTH OF RAT PORTAGE - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT) 10

Around the fire, the men hang on Simpson's every word.

HANK

A separate pair of tracks?

SIMPSON

But they weren't that of a man. I'm hardly an expert, but these tracks must have been made by some great animal.

HANK

A moose-

SIMPSON

No.

11 FLASHBACK - EXT. DEEP WOODS - NIGHT

11

Simpson inspects the massive hoof prints.

SIMPSON (V.O.)

They weren't moose tracks, but that of some other large beast to be sure. I leaned in to inspect the impressions. Deep hoof prints, but not pointed like that of a moose or elk. The imprints had the unmistakable lingering odor of the thing.

Simpson recoils, shielding his hand over his nose.

12 EXT. NORTH OF RAT PORTAGE - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)

12

Simpson shakes off the terrible memory.

CATHCART

What kind of odor?

SIMPSON

I've never encountered anything so pungent. Offensive and yet... I can only describe it as a composite of something of a- of a lion, decaying leaves, deep earth, and that of all the scents of the forest bound up together. Something utterly wild and terrible to be sure.

CATHCART

My boy, listen-

SIMPSON

Then the stride became even longer. I tried, myself. Even with a running start, I couldn't jump to half their length.

A sudden memory washes over him. He cringes.

CATHCART

What?! What is it?



13 FLASHBACK - EXT. DEEP WOODS - NIGHT

13

Simpson slowly creeps along the supernaturally wide stride of the tracks.

He suddenly stops and gasps, staring at the undisturbed blanket of snow ahead of him.

SIMPSON (V.O.)

Both sets of tracks suddenly stopped. As if they'd disappeared magically or had leapt right off into the very air.

FROM ABOVE THE TREES, Défago's distant cries fade into the windswept rustling of the towering forest.

DÉFAGO (O.S.)

*Ohhhhhhhhhhh! My Feeeeeet! My burning feeeeeet! My buuuuuuurning feeeeeet of fiiiiiiiiiiiire! AAAGGGGGHHHHhhhhhhhh!*

Peering up into the star filled sky, Simpson collapses to his knees in utter despair.

14 EXT. NORTH OF RAT PORTAGE - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)

14

Hank and Cathcart blink in disbelief.

CATHCART

The spell of these terrible solitudes cannot leave any mind untouched. I know because I felt the same when I was your age, and out in similar woods for the first time. But a trauma like yours can, I think, blur one's vision. It is entirely possible that in such a state things may have twisted themselves in a way that hinders one's ability to differentiate reality from- I'm not saying that hallucinations are to blame here. No, my boy. Something did happen out there, that's for certain. And we won't be sure of just what it was until we set out tomorrow to have a look around the camp ourselves. But, my boy, I have to say that you've acted with great courage.

HANK

Now, you said that Mr. Défago had mentioned some ancient local legends. Was there anything in particular he was on about?

SIMPSON

Well. Erm. Yes. The Wendigo.

Hank laughs to himself, shaking his head.

CATHCART

What is this Wendigo?

HANK

It's an old native superstition. The tales of the Wendigo run all over this part of the country. Hell, I was talkin' to some of the native guides back at the village who said several of their friends had seen the Wendigo along the shores of Fifty Island Water in the fall of last year. Whenever one of them's "gone crazy" out here, it seems to always be because the Wendigo had a hold of the poor soul. Just stories and superstitions. But out here, in the wild country, superstitions hold a lot of power, believe you me. They can get under a man's skin and cause more damage than any card game, bottle, or honey pot ever could. And I'm afraid poor Défago was superstitious down to his toes.

SIMPSON

But I heard a voice too! My God, it was as the voice of the devil himself. Sweet and tempting, and terrible all the same.

Simpson breaks down into heavy sobs.

CATHCART

There, there.

HANK

As the legends go, once the victim hears the Wendigo's voice, he's off for good. It beckons them incessantly until the poor fool is driven mad and runs out to meet their certain death. They say the feet are taken for the lust of wandering, and the eyes, the lust of the wild's beauty. The creature takes it's prey along at such a high speed that the eyes burst and bleed out, and the feet completely burn away.

CATHCART

Hank. Really.

HANK

It's all right though. He gets new ones. After the last of the humanity is burned away and the victim is hollowed out, they gain new eyes and feet just like those of the creature what took him. And it don't always keep to the ground neither.

(MORE)

HANK (CONT'D)

Sometimes it takes great leaps and runs along the tops of the trees, carrying its victim with it. Then dropping them just like the prey from a hawk's talons, to be fed upon later.

Simpson gulps. Cathcart swats Hank.

SIMPSON

I'd take another snort of whiskey, if I may.

HANK

Attaboy.

He pours everyone a drink.

CATHCART

We'll head out tomorrow morning to see what's what. Ol' Défago may well be waiting for us with a fire going and fish ready to eat. Just you wait.

They laugh and drink.

Suddenly the WIND picks up, swirling snow and ash around the fire. The flames bend with the immense force.

HIGH ABOVE THE CAMP, large tree branches SNAP and crash heavily onto the frozen ground. The men struggle against the sudden terrible cyclone engulfing the camp.

CATHCART (CONT'D)

My God! What is happening!?

SIMPSON

No. NO!

SCREAMS echo on the wind as it thrashes the towering trees; faint and distant, yet unmistakable.

DÉFAGO (O.S.)

Oooooohhhhhh! Ohhhhhh. My feeeeeet!  
My burning feet of fiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiire!

CATHCART

My God in heaven.

HANK

It's coming from all around us!

The wintery force threaten to extinguish the campfire's flames.

CATHCART

For God's sake, get the fire going again!

Hank rushes to tend to the fire. Simpson leaps up.

DÉFAGO (O.S.)  
Oooooohhhhhh! Ohhhhhh.

SIMPSON  
Défago! Défago! Come down here to us!  
Come down!

From above, a MASSIVE RUSH OF WIND falls upon them like the flapping of a prehistoric bird's wings, knocking them to the ground.

Just beyond the far side of the camp in the darkness, SOMETHING MASSIVE lands in the snow with a heavy THUD.

The wind has stopped. All is silent, save for the crackling of the fire. The men slowly rise to their feet, peering over the flames into the darkness beyond.

In the dancing balance between light and shadow of the fire, the silhouette of a HULKING SHAPE rises from the snow.

Hank grabs his rifle.

HANK  
Who goes there?!

Silence. In the light reflected from the fire, the Shadowy Figure's eyes glow like that of a cat; unnaturally bright and penetrating.

The SHAPE suddenly lurches toward them with heavy crunching footsteps. It's movement is disjointed and strange. As it enters the edge of the light, the men are relieved to see that it is in fact, Défago. His neck creaks toward Simpson. He stares, motionless.

DÉFAGO  
Here I am, Simpson. I heard you calling.  
His voice is a dry rattling rasp.

CATHCART  
Well... where have you been?

Défago shambles into the camp. He is different somehow. His pale face is utterly void of expression.

CATHCART (CONT'D)  
Hand me the blanket, Hank.

He throws a blanket over the hulking man's shoulders.

CATHCART (CONT'D)  
Oh, but you smell afoul, my friend.

He backs away from Défago, joining the others.

SIMPSON

That odor. I know it.

Défago's jerky movements are as if an unseen puppeteer were pulling him by strings from high above the trees. He drops onto a log across from the three men.

SIMPSON (CONT'D)

It is you, isn't it Défago?

Défago gives no hint of response.

CATHCART

Why, of course, it is! Of course. Only... Can't you see that- He's nearly dead with exhaustion and cold. Well, you know him better than either of us, Hank. That's him all right. Isn't it?

Hanks stares at the Figure across the fire.

HANK

I don't know.

CATHCART

Why, whatever do you mean?

SIMPSON

He looks pretty pale. Like wax.

CATHCART

Have you suffered any frostbite, Défago?

HANK

...I don't think his skin's on right.

CATHCART

You're soused, man.

SIMPSON

Défago? Where've you been? Can't you speak?

Défago stares at them as still as the grave. In the dancing light of the fire, his visage is all the more terrifying. It's almost as if it isn't the man at all, but something wearing Défago's face.

CATHCART

Why, he's probably just as scared as you were, my boy. Wandering out here in the dark, alone. Would you like something to drink Déf-

The Thing across from them wearing Défago's face smiles.

Hank jumps up, pulling his knife.

HANK

That ain't Défago! You ain't Défago at all! I don't give a damn but that ain't you, my pal of twenty years! That ain't Défago!

Cathcart holds him back.

CATHCART

What are you doing?!

HANK

If you two aren't going to do anything then I will.

CATHCART

Calm down, Hank. Put the knife back. Put it away and have a seat. It's all right. Now, Défago. Tell us what's happened. Just a little so we can know how best to- to help you.

The Thing wearing Défago's face tilts it's head; a dog trying to understand human speech. It sniffs the air.

CATHCART (CONT'D)

Out with it, man!

A hoarse raspy laugh emanates from deep within the Thing's chest. It's head snaps up with a loud crack. It stares hungrily at Simpson and giggles.

DÉFAGO

*I seen the Wendigo. ...I been with it!.*

The men are frozen in disbelief.

CATHCART

There now. He's just- He needs rest and something to eat.

The Thing across from them rolls out a deep devilish laugh. It shudders and twitches, causing Défago's face to hang slightly off. The eyes beneath it glow bright and terrible. Hank recoils.

HANK

His feet! Oh, God, look at his feet!

They all glance down across the fire.

Jutting out beneath Défago's furs, where two feet should be, rest enormous fur covered hooves.

The men jump up, screaming. The WIND suddenly whips violently again.

The FIRE swirls, popping loud embers into the air.

The Thing dressed as Défago rises, laughing wildly.

It's laughing morphs into screams of pain. Défago's mouth hangs ajar in a wide grotesque distortion.

Large branches SNAP and fall around them from above.

In a flash, Défago is yanked up into the darkness and is gone. The air is suddenly still.

The monstrous laughter and Défago's screams continue to echo in the distance.

Hank rushes toward the sounds from the darkness.

Cathcart tackles him to the ground before he can leave the safety of the firelight.

HANK (CONT'D)

But I want to know! *I want to see YOU!*

Cathcart holds his struggling comrade tightly.

HANK (CONT'D)

That ain't him at all but some devil that's crawled into him! The devil took his legs!

Hank collapses into Cathcart, weeping uncontrollably.

SIMPSON

What's he talking about?

CATHCART

Nothing.

He lifts Hank, and leads him back toward the tent.

CATHCART (CONT'D)

Come now. Come into the tent. We'll get you warm.

Simpson is alone, still wrapped in a blanket. He stares into the endless black of the night sky.

SIMPSON

But I want to know. *I want to know too.*

The fire crackles. The trees sway. The wind howls.

FADE OUT.

THE END