

## WINDIGO SPIRIT

Ken Stange

The Windigo is a spirit of the North, the Cree told us  
The Windigo is a cannibal spirit, the Cree told us.  
The Windigo will possess a man  
    form ice inside his soul  
    cause fur to cover his skin  
    create a craving for human flesh

The Cree told us,  
Two bitter nights ago.  
Two nights ago, we left their dismal camp, to check  
Our trap lines. It was twenty-below zero  
Two nights ago, but now it has gotten  
Really cold. Windigo, Windigo,  
Passing through our thoughts  
Like wind at thirty-five below.  
Windigo.

The Windigo moves thru the five moons of winter  
    shrouded in a blizzard  
    blown by high winds over frozen lakes  
    or creeps inexorably on  
    thru those still days  
    when life is locked immutable in minus  
    fifty skies, those cloudless, breathless  
    days when neither air nor man dare move.

The Windigo crosses a portage  
    then a sun-blind lake  
    then the soul of any fool  
    alone  
        out here,  
            like us

Now.  
Two nights out, out from another man, we are still  
Strangers in front of our fire,  
    our meek fire melting  
    melting just enough  
    night air  
    to breathe.

A shadow moves.  
Windigo.  
Two nights ago, the Cree told of a trapper lost,  
Near here,  
Now surely, host of  
The Windigo Spirit.  
Cold.

Windigo. Windigo.

Two nights out, the dead trapper enters the ring of our fire  
his own lips and fingers chewed off in hunger  
a gaping chasm of a mouth ringed with frozen

Blood.

Two nights out, I turn to my companion,  
behind his eyes ice forms  
his hands are matted with hair

This night, I rise and scream.

My scream crosses the frozen lake and dies somewhere in the  
spruce

dies somewhere in the spruce.

Windigo. Windigo.

Windigo.

From *Bushed* (York Publishing, 1976)

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