

Skinwalkers

by

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EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, OPEN DESERT - NIGHT

A vast expanse of nothingness stretches out across a dark desert. A peaceful night on the rez, blanket of stars overhead.

Out in the mesa the only movement is a scorpion or centipede scurrying from rock to rock in the darkness.

Suddenly an old pickup truck cuts its way through the barren vista. Faint traces of rock music leaks from the truck into the quiet night.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - MOVING - NIGHT

GREGG CHIWEWE (chuh-WEE-wee) barrels down the desert highway. Early 30s and FBI...Full-Blooded Indian that is. Long flowing black hair, silver hoops in his ears, Metallica t-shirt. Drumsticks in hand, taps out the beat on the steering wheel. A rock and roll Indian warrior. He sings along to the rock song using his best bad-ass growl.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A lone coyote sits atop an outcropping of rocks. As the noise and headlights of Gregg's truck approaches, the timid coyote scurries away into the night.

There is a faint glow over the horizon.

INT. GREGG'S PICKUP TRUCK - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

Gregg is illuminated by a soft glow. As he sings, the glow gets brighter and brighter.

Soon it is unbelievably bright. As if the sun itself is illuminating the night sky. But it's FLASHING.

EXT. ISLETA GAMING PALACE - NIGHT

"ISLETA GAMING PALACE" - This massive flashing, singing and dancing sign would give any Vegas sign a run for its money.

The parking lot is packed, hundreds of cars. Every nook and cranny of the building is covered with lights or neon signs. This casino is a majestic oasis of LIGHT and NOISE and LIFE and EXCITEMENT in the desert.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Seconds later, the crazy fiesta is over. Gregg's not stopping here. A melodious slew of notes linger in the wake of the truck as Gregg's taillights wind their way through the night.

The music fades, but a steady, strong drumbeat remains.
 THWACK...THWACK...THWACK...THWACK...

INT. ISLETA RECREATION CENTER - NIGHT

...THWACK...THWACK...THWACK...

Gregg stands in the center of the huge room wearing his full Isleta Indian ceremonial regalia. Deerskin pants and jacket with fringe, beads, the whole works. He holds his ceremonial tribal drum and DRUMS a steady, ritualistic BEAT.

Several other tribal ELDERS in ceremonial dress accompany him. Some sit with their drums, some stand.

Young male and female INDIAN DANCERS dance in a circle around the drummers as the Elders sing a Straight Song. [A song using no words, only vowels sounds like hey, ya, hi with varying pitches and tones.]

A CROWD watches, full of proud family and friends.

Despite the obvious grandeur of the moment, Gregg drums by rote. Good, but not enthused. DRUMBEATS are STEADY and LOUD. The elegant-looking tribal elder next to him, GRANDDAD, leans over to Gregg and shouts over the din.

GRANDDAD

Put some heart into it, Gregg.

Elders wind up their song. Gregg gets a burst of inspiration, adds a rock and roll flourish to the end of the song.

Audience giggles. Elders watch Gregg with surprise. Granddad doesn't hide his wide grin. Gregg's pleased with himself.

INT. ISLETA RECREATION CENTER - LATER

The after-ceremony buffet is in full force. There's tons of food laid out on tables, the Indian dancers stand in line at the buffet tables with everyone else. Cheery and loud. Kids run around. People sit on folding chairs balancing plates of food on their laps as they chat and eat.

Gregg can't get out fast enough. He whips off his fringed deerskin costume. Underneath he's wearing leather pants and his Metallica t-shirt. He's gone from Indian drummer to rock and roll drummer in eight seconds flat.

A plump elderly Indian woman with a wide beaming face approaches, GRANDMA. Gregg's crouched on the floor putting his things into his bag. A syringe falls to the floor from Gregg's jacket.

GRANDMA

Gregg, I made posole. Want a bowl?

Gregg snatches the syringe, pockets it before she sees it.

GREGG

Um, no thanks, Grandma. Going into town to meet my band.

Grandma sits on a chair. But Gregg doesn't sit, he stands, puts his black leather jacket on. She tries to entice him.

GRANDMA

It's red chile, not green.

GREGG

Save some for me, 'kay?

She nods and gives him a reassuring smile.

Granddad, still in full ceremonial costume, strides up to them. He licks pink frosting from a cupcake.

GRANDMA

Albert, you know you can't eat that.

GRANDDAD

Get off my back, woman. I'm a sacred drumming warrior, I can have a cupcake.

His tone is gentle, joking. He gives her a quick kiss that smudges her with pink icing.

GRANDDAD (CONT'D)

(to Gregg)

You leaving?

GREGG

Yeah. Got to go do some *real* drumming, old man.

GRANDMA

Gregg, you coming to dinner tomorrow?

He nods.

GRANDDAD

How many of your freeloading friends should we also expect to feed?

GREGG

Mmm, about four?

GRANDDAD

We're going to give them a bill
after the meal this time.

Gregg chuckles at Grandfather's fake threat.

GRANDMA

Oh, hush. No one thinks you're
funny, Albert.

(to Gregg)

Bring as many as you like, sweetie.

A young Indian mother sitting nearby wipes ketchup off her
toddler's face.

TODDLER'S MOM

We should have done a protection
dance, not a harvest dance. Another
attack, Blanche.

A solemn nod from Granddad confirms it.

GREGG

Huh? What attack? Who?

TODDLER'S MOM

Another coyote attack last night.
Found him shredded to bits this
morning out by the casino.

She hugs her little boy to her dearly.

GRANDDAD

Old Victor Vargas. Used to work
with him at the foundry. He came
to your very first birthday party,
Gregg. We used to be good friends,
back before he started drinking.

Granddad put his head down in reverence.

GRANDDAD (CONT'D)

Shame.

Granddad gives a few seconds of appropriate silence. Then
takes a bite of his cupcake.

GRANDDAD (CONT'D)

Good cupcake.

EXT. PARADISE NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

Establishing shot of the night club in a busy part of
Albuquerque.

INT. PARADISE NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

A baby-faced Hispanic youth, NATHAN, 17, steals cocktail olives from the bar, stashes them in a napkin. Before he leaves the crowded bar he grabs a bunch of maraschino cherries by their stems, pops them into his mouth.

He slinks toward a door with a sign "Authorized Personnel Only" and goes through.

INT. PARADISE BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Lazily leaning against a crate of beer is DUKE, 44. He's way past the age of being in a cool young band and he's whiter than white with a straggly ponytail.

Nathan hungrily chomps down his ill-gotten olives, quite a big handful, as he heads toward Duke.

A battle-weary COCKTAIL WAITRESS scurries past.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS

And tell young Mr. Chavez to stop stealing from the bar!

DUKE

Olives! He's a growing boy. Would you rather he was stealing drinks? Or cash? Lighten up!

COCKTAIL WAITRESS

He's underage. You're lucky we allow him in here at all.

Duke puts his arm around Nathan.

DUKE

He's my son.

An obvious lie.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Somebody buy this kid a burger!

Nathan shyly finishes his stolen snack, wipes his olive juice-laden hands on his jeans. He picks up a beautiful electric guitar. This teen plays it like Jimi Hendrix reincarnated.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Jesus, kid. You make me look bad.

INT. PARADISE DRESSING ROOM - LATER

REN paces like a nervous Chihuahua. Like Gregg, he's a full-blooded Isleta Indian. Longhaired and lanky, the way sexy lead singers should be.

REN
We're on soon! This is so unprofessional.
Where the hell is he?

LISA, a cute blonde in her 30s, sits on the makeup counter.

LISA
I don't know. Sorry. I let him
off his leash today.

Ren bites his nails, forgetting about his fresh nail polish.

REN
Ech!

He spits out pieces of his nails.

REN (CONT'D)
Dammit! Look what I did!

Ren searches for his black nail polish on the counter strewn with their rocker paraphernalia.

DUKE
(to Ren)
"You're on in five, Miss Streisand!"

Lisa finds it for him and quickly repaints his nails. Nathan is still immersed in his guitar-playing.

DUKE (CONT'D)
Relax, dude. We're all set up.
Cool bands never start on time
anyway. Gregg is just channeling
his inner diva.

Gregg flies into the room, slings his jacket off, and rubs his hands together in excitement.

GREGG
Let's rock and roll!

Lisa leaps off the counter and into Gregg's arms and they melt into a kiss. Ren gives a heavy sigh.

REN
I *just* did my nails.

INT. PARADISE NIGHT CLUB - ONSTAGE - NIGHT

Gregg is in full rock and roll mode -- he's GOING CRAZY on his drum kit. The young rowdy AUDIENCE is going nuts.

His band is rocking the roof right off of the club. Guitars WAIL, lead singer Ren SHRIEKS. White, Hispanic and Indian girls alike in the audience SCREAM their throats raw.

Sweat pours down Gregg's face, he's giving his all on the drums, and the crowd loves it. No steady tribal drumbeat here, Gregg's letting loose on his drums with unbridled passion.

Suddenly Gregg STOPS. Duke carries the beat on his bass.

Gregg stands up from behind his drum kit. Using a tiny piece of leather thong, he wraps a long feather into his hair. It hangs down freely.

The audience knows what's coming. They cheer. Gregg brings his tribal drum around front.

Young Nathan and Duke subdue their guitar playing a bit, and Ren steps back from the microphone.

It's Gregg's turn now to give their rock song the tribal treatment.

Gregg dances and spins around the stage as he drums with his beater. At first it is a spiritual beat, with a bit of an Indian step-hop-dance to it. It's a hypnotic mixture of tribal drum dance and rock and roll.

But the guitars start piping up again. Gregg's playing becomes more aggressive on his tribal drum. Harder. Faster. Angrier. The song circles back into the same aggressive drive it started as. Gregg now wails on the tribal drum with rock and roll fury.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION - NIGHT

Stillness and quiet out on the reservation. A slight breeze rustles the sagebrush. Peaceful.

INT. PARADISE NIGHT CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Gregg, completely spent, brings the raucous song to a close with a final heartfelt yet artistic POUNDING of his drums. The crowd eats it up.

The drumbeat echoes --

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION - CONTINUOUS

A coyotes sniffs the air and turns his ears -- as if he can hear the echo of the drumbeat from the city.

The coyote calmly turns and trots away, uninterested.

EXT. ISLETA MEDICAL FACILITY - DAY

Really just a double wide trailer, this reservation medical facility sits in a dusty dirt parking lot. Nearby there is only a small market and a gas station. Gregg's truck pulls up to the trailer.

EXT. ISLETA MEDICAL FACILITY - DAY

Gregg's having his blood pressure taken by NURSE WILLOW, Native American, late 40s. Calm smile, otherworldly demeanor.

She takes the cuff off and then takes his pulse.

GREGG

Last night I --

NURSE WILLOW

Sssh.

She checks her watch as she holds his wrist. He waits.

GREGG

I --

NURSE WILLOW

Sssh!!

She finishes counting his pulse and marks it on his chart.

NURSE WILLOW (CONT'D)

Heartbeat's fast.

Gregg turns on his charm.

GREGG

That's because I'm with you.

NURSE WILLOW

That's what you said last time.

Gregg rolls his sleeve back down.

GREGG

It's still true, darlin'.

She doesn't buy his charm.

NURSE WILLOW

I think you understand. Slow down.

GREGG

Hey, they don't call rock and roll
"life in the fast lane" for nothing.

She closes his chart and sits. She looks him in the eye,
unnerving Gregg.

NURSE WILLOW

I think you understand.

Gregg is finally quiet.

EXT. ISLETA MEDICAL FACILITY - DAY

Nurse Willow walks with Gregg down the front steps.

NURSE WILLOW

Did you call the casino?

Gregg springs to life.

GREGG

Oh hey, yeah, I did! Thanks!

NURSE WILLOW

Will they let you play?

GREGG

I think so. I 'm going up there
right now. Supposed to talk
with some guy...Ivan?

She thinks, then shakes her head, no, doesn't know him.

GREGG (CONT'D)

I guess he's the big chief up there.

NURSE WILLOW

Do you have to play for him?

GREGG

No. Your cousin already gave him
our CD. I guess he just wants to
meet us in person to make sure we're
not a bunch of losers or weirdos.

As Gregg climbs into his truck, she calls after him.

NURSE WILLOW

Gregg! You have clean needles?

He pats his leather jacket pocket.

GREGG

Always.

INT. ISLETA GAMING PALACE - DAY

Even during the day, this place is hopping. Blackjack tables and roulette wheels pepper the sea of noisy slot machines. PING PING PING! Lights, noise, and people fill the cavernous casino.

Gregg, Ren, and Duke stride in through the main entrance with young Nathan straggling behind. Hit by the impact of the massive casino, Nathan stops dead in his tracks.

NATHAN

Wow.

INT. ISLETA GAMING PALACE, IVAN'S OFFICE - DAY

IVAN, 45, Al Capone meets Sitting Bull (so he thinks), welcomes the band into his sprawling office. Business suit with cowboy hat with a feathered band, cowboy boots. Ever-present bank-manager smile.

IVAN

Hello! I'm Ivan, manager extraordinaire!
Welcome to my inner sanctum.

One side overlooks the buzzing casino in skybox fashion. The other side overlooks the vast desert land of the reservation.

DUKE

Not a bad spread, dude.

The guys spread out, checking out the two disparate views. Except Gregg. He sits with Ivan at the desk, ready to talk business. Nathan watches the hordes of people on the casino floor.

IVAN

Well, boys. I've listened to your music, and one of my colleagues vouches for your live performance.

GREGG

We kick ass onstage. I think Isleta Casino is a great place for us to --

IVAN

Isleta Gaming Palace.

Ivan leans back and puts his feet up on his desk.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Got an Indian drum gimmick too, I hear.

GREGG

It's not a gimmick. I'm a drummer. I'm Indian.

IVAN

No, that's super. Tourists will love that. And your lead singer?

Ren chimes in, eager to keep the peace.

REN

That's me. The soul of Jim Morrison in a handsome Indian lad.

IVAN

Wow, you're Isletan too. Terrific.

GREGG

We play rock and roll, ya know.

IVAN

Yes, I told you, I listened to your music. CD *and* YouTube. And the young man?

GREGG

He's the best. Our guitarist. Nathan Chavez.

DUKE

Nathan Chavez... "N.C."...or...

DUKE AND REN TOGETHER

"No Cash!"

IVAN

Is he old enough to be in here?

GREGG

He's part of the band.

Ivan considers this, never losing his snake-like smile.

IVAN

Not old enough to be in a club, not old enough to be in a casino. You want me to hire him to play in a club in a casino?

GREGG

Gaming Palace.

Touché. Ivan keeps his charming facade. Ren pipes up.

REN

N.C. is the heart of our band. I may be the voice, the soul of the band, but Nathan, he's the heartbeat.

DUKE

Wait, Gregg plays drums...I'd say he's the heartbeat.

REN

No, Gregg is the backbone.

DUKE

But the heartbeat, come on...

Duke thump-tha-thumps on his chest.

DUKE (CONT'D)

That's a drum thing. I'M the backbone. The bass player is always the backbone. The strong, underlying -

Gregg scoots forward in his chair, out of the bickering range of Ren and Duke.

GREGG

Look, Ivan, Nathan is our guitarist. He'll only be on the casino floor walking in and walking out. In the club he'll only be onstage and backstage. Nowhere near the bar. I'll see to it.

Slowly Ivan nods.

At the window overlooking the reservation, Duke watches...

P.O.V. DUKE --

Several Albuquerque Police Department cars are parked, the COPS milling around talking to Isleta Gaming Palace staff. Crime scene tape cordons off the area.

DUKE

Got some trouble down there?

Ivan notices where Duke's attention is.

IVAN

Ah, yes. Had an unfortunate accident yesterday. Coyote attack. Killed a man I'm afraid.

REN

Whoa.

IVAN

A tourist wandered out of the palace last night.

Gregg's hackles are up now.

GREGG

A *tourist*?

IVAN

Yes. Probably looking for arrowheads or something. We warn them not to wander off onto the rez.

Ivan hops up out of his chair and offers his hand to Gregg. Meeting is over.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Alright. You can play the Blue Cactus Room for a week starting tomorrow night. Then we'll reassess.

Gregg tentatively shakes his hand. Duke and Ren high five. Nathan grins.

IVAN (CONT'D)

I'll have someone show you around.

INT. ISLETA GAMING PALACE, BLUE CACTUS ROOM - DAY

"Room" is a misleading name. It's a good size auditorium with all the latest high-tech equipment, and an elegant bar running along the back. Quite a step up from their last gig. It's quiet and empty.

Ivan leads the band up the aisle toward the bar.

IVAN

You'll get two free alcoholic drinks per show, and all the soft drinks you'd like. Except for Nathan of course. Soft drinks only.

A lovely WOMAN, 30-ish, sits at the bar dressed in jeans a t-shirt. On her lap is a gold lame bra, which is she sews.

IVAN (CONT'D)

You've got the contracts, you can talk to the staff about your lights and sound. I'll leave you to it.

(to the woman)

Hello, gorgeous. Darning your socks?

She smiles politely as he kisses her on the cheek.

IVAN (CONT'D)

(to Gregg)

I'll leave you in capable hands.

Two LIGHT AND SOUND TECHNICIANS appear onstage. Ren and Duke trot down the aisle and hop up onstage. Nathan sits in the back row and watches the stage. Gregg watches too.

WOMAN

Not a bad room, eh? You scored big. The Moody Blues played here last week.

GREGG

Yeah?

WOMAN

Yep. The rooms in Vegas are about this size. Not so big that they can't see the stage, and not so small so that you're sitting in their lap. Good size room.

Gregg just nods, still admiring the stage.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

We'd kill to play a room like this in Vegas. You must have had connections.

He shrugs.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

A man of few words. I like it. Or is it just an Indian thing? "Me play guitar. Warriors don't speak" kind of thing? I'm Irish. We speak. And speak and speak and speak.

Gregg laughs.

GREGG

I can see that, Miss Vegas.

He offers his hand. They shake.

GREGG (CONT'D)

I'm Gregg. And I play drums, not guitar.

VEGAS

I'm Michelle. And I know what you're thinking. No, I wasn't a stripper. I was a showgirl.

GREGG

Whatever you say, Vegas.

INT. ISLETA GAMING PALACE - LATER

The band wades through a sea of gamblers, working their way toward the exit.

A nearby slot machine blares a celebratory scale of notes. It's paying out big time. Nathan stops, mesmerized by the rain of coins. A hell of a loud payday.

Suddenly he digs in his pockets, desperately scrambling for a coin. He finds one.

Gregg grabs Nathan by the scruff of his collar and ushers him out with the rest of the band.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, RIVERSIDE COTTONWOODS - DAY

Gregg is jogging at a gentle pace out on the rez on a dirt road that meanders next to the Rio Grande. Cottonwood trees cluster along the banks of the otherwise desolate desert landscape.

Gregg's pace quickens. Now he's doing a fast jog. His breath is more labored.

Soon he is flat out running, pumping his arms and legs as fast as they'll go. Sweat pours down his face. He's running for his life now, heart pounding.

A car pulls up next to him, and slows down. Nathan rolls down the window. Finally, utterly exhausted, Gregg stops.

NATHAN

What are you doing?

Gregg pants and struggles to catch his breath.

GREGG

Running.

NATHAN

From what?

GREGG
My ethnic curse.

NATHAN
Huh?

GREGG
Nothing. Where are you going?

NATHAN
School. You want a ride?

Gregg shakes his head.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Hey, that girl at the casino. She was nice, huh?

GREGG
What girl?

NATHAN
At the bar, the pretty one.

Gregg is still out of breath.

GREGG
Oh. Yeah. But I gotta tell ya. If you're hoping for a "oh you're so young and innocent, I'll be happy to be your first and indoctrinate you to the ways of love" situation, dream on.

NATHAN
Jeez, Gregg. Sure you don't want a ride?

He shakes his head. Nathan drives on. Gregg looks around at his surroundings. His land. His people's land.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, OPEN ROAD - EVENING

Gregg and Ren sit in the front, Duke and Nathan in the back. In the twilight, Gregg notices a coyotes running alongside the truck, over about 20 feet. He speeds up. The coyotes speeds up. The coyote looks over at the truck once or twice. Gregg can't lose him. He suddenly slams on the breaks. Screech! Duke and Nathan slide and slam into the cab.

DUKE
Whoaaaa!

NATHAN

Greeeeeegg!

The coyote continues on without them. Gregg looks uneasy.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, GRANDMA & GRANDDAD'S HOUSE - EVENING

The small adobe house sits warm and inviting in the purple-gold twilight. Gregg stands on the porch quietly watching the sunset. He smiles when he sees a car park in the dirt driveway.

Lisa hops out of her spiffy little car.

GREGG

Thank god you're here.

Gregg envelops her in a groping hug.

GREGG (CONT'D)

Duke and Granddad are debating whether it's better to drive a stick or automatic. Riveting stuff.

Lisa catches a movement out of the corner of her eye.

LISA

Gregg? What are those for?

Tin can lids dangle in the branches of a tree.

GREGG

Oh, it's a gardening thing. You put tin can lids in the trees to scare away the birds.

LISA

Duh, I know *that*. To keep birds from eating the fruit.

The lids jingle gently in the breeze.

LISA (CONT'D)

But that's an elm tree.

Gregg stares at the tin lids...now unsure.

INT. ISLETA RESERVATION, GRANDMA & GRANDDAD'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Gregg leans against the bathroom sink, shirt off. Lisa kneels in front of him.

GREGG
Gently...gently...

LISA
No...I can't do this.

GREGG
Yes you can, honey.

Lisa cringes.

GREGG (CONT'D)
Just try it this once.

She pinches a bit of flesh on Gregg's stomach with one hand, and holds a needle in the other.

She falters.

GREGG (CONT'D)
You know, someday I might need help.

She falters again. Shakes her head and hands the needle back to him.

LISA
Sorry. This isn't my thing.

GREGG
Don't worry, babe. I'll do it.
But hey, while you're down there...

She stands up.

LISA
Oh haha.

Gregg takes the insulin shot and gives it to himself. Lisa quickly averts her eyes.

LISA (CONT'D)
You should tell them.

GREGG
Why worry them?

INT. ISLETA RESERVATION, GRANDMA & GRANDDAD'S KITCHEN - DAY

The entire band is sprawled around the kitchen table. Grandma makes sure everyone's plates are full. Granddad takes another helping of pie.

DUKE

(to Granddad)

So you're telling me that you can make a tighter drum than the manufactured ones? Bullshit!

GRANDDAD

Tighter. Truer.

DUKE

Truer? What the hell does that mean?

GREGG

It's one of those multipurpose vague "spiritual" Indian words.

NATHAN

Are there more tortillas?

Grandma immediately produces more tortillas for the growing boy.

GRANDMA

Need some more gravy to sop up?

Nathan greedily nods as Grandma drowns his food in gravy.

REN

No, I know what he means.

DUKE

Aw jeez, here comes more poetic crap.

REN

The drums you make are infused with your very soul.

Lisa openly gazes at him. Ren averts his eyes.

LISA

That's beautiful, Ren.

GRANDDAD

Also...better craftsmanship.

Granddad's kind eyes and jovial tone never allow the debate to escalate into "real" hard feelings.

DUKE

How can you say that?

Duke stabs a few chunks of his opponents pie onto his fork.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Have you seen Gregg's drum kit?
It's gorgeous. It's *perfect*.

GRANDDAD

It's plastic.

DUKE

Yes, the skins are made of plastic.

Granddad shakes his head, feels sorry for these kids. Duke is up for a debate.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Manufactured plastic that is perfectly even across the entire head. Perfectly consistent, perfect sound every time. Homemade deerskin is going to be uneven, no one can perfectly tan a hide by hand, even if you ARE Mr. Dances with Wolves. Sound'll be...uneven.

Granddad sighs.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Gregg, back me up here.

Gregg laughs and leans his chair back on two legs.

GREGG

I have tried plenty, Duke, believe me. Give it up. Old man's set in his ways.

GRANDDAD

Uneven? MY drums are uneven? Your drum has one sound. Ying and no yang. Sunlight and no darkness.

Nathan looks up from his food long enough to chime in.

NATHAN

Dances with Wolves was Kevin Costner's character's name. Not the Indian.

DUKE

Oh. What was the Indian guy's name?

Nathan shrugs. Grandma has a glint in her eye.

GRANDMA
 (to Duke)
 Costner was very sexy.

GREGG
 Yeah, yeah. Earth without sky,
 water without fire. Sonny without
 Cher.

He glares at Nathan and mockingly yells at him.

GREGG (CONT'D)
 Salt without pepper!

Nathan scoots the pepper he has been hoarding down to Gregg.
 Gregg leans to catch it. Suddenly off-balance - his chair
 clumsily SLAMS back down on all four legs. BAM! Everyone
 jumps.

Granddad points to Gregg.

GRANDDAD
 See? Unbalanced.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, GRANDMA & GRANDDAD'S PORCH - NIGHT

GRANDMA
 Good luck, boys!

REN
 No, no! Say "break a leg!" "Good
 luck" is...bad luck!

GREGG
 Oh hey, speaking of bad luck, we
 saw your old friend, Victor Vargas.

DUKE
 Or what was left of him.

Duke shudders.

DUKE (CONT'D)
 Dog food.

Granddad turns suddenly serious.

GRANDDAD
 Boys. Listen. Be careful. Don't
 anger the Skinwalkers.

Gregg rolls his eyes. Oh boy, here it comes.

NATHAN

What? Don't anger who?

GREGG

Nothing. He's kidding. Get in the truck.

They pile in, some in back, some in the cab. Lisa hops in her car.

LISA

See you at the show. Good lu-- I mean break a leg!

Ren cringes. She and Ren exchange glances a bit too long.

As Granddad and Grandma wave from the porch a breeze kicks up. The tin lids in the trees chime wildly.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - MOVING - NIGHT

Cab of the truck - Gregg drives, Ren beside him. Duke and Nathan back in the bed.

Ren bites his fingernails. Spits out the pieces. Bites. Spits.

GREGG

Eeewww. C'mon!

REN

I'm nervous! Disaster looms.

GREGG

Don't be so dramatic. We've done this a million times, we're already set up, what's up your butt?

REN

Your grandmother.

GREGG

My grandma's up your butt?

REN

No, I mean she jinxed us! Damn it!

GREGG

Oh, please.

REN

How could you let her do that?

(MORE)

REN (CONT'D)

Didn't you teach her not say "good luck" to someone about to go on stage? Stupid old woman is going to end my career!

GREGG

Hey! Shut your mouth! That's my Grandma you're talking about!

Gregg punches Ren in the arm.

REN

Aaarr!

The truck swerves onto the rough shoulder. Duke shouts through the open back window.

DUKE (O.S.)

Hey! Don't kill us, would ya?!

Ren bites what left of his nails as Gregg gains control of the truck.

REN

Jesus Christ, Gregg!

Ren's eye's dart from side to side, frantically trying to find something in the dark landscape to focus on.

GREGG

What the hell is wrong with you? Calm down! Jesus, you're high strung. It's like riding with a nervous chihuahua.

Gregg simmers. Ren chomps his nails. Spits. Gregg seethes.

GREGG (CONT'D)

No wonder you don't have a girlfriend.

Ren fumes. Simmers. Stewing, stewing. Finally, a sudden SHRILL OUTBURST:

REN

I don't need a girlfriend, I've stolen yours! I've been screwing Lisa!!

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The truck SCREECHES to a halt. Duke and Nathan slide into the cab.

DUKE

Whoa!

NATHAN

Gregg!

A fog of tire smoke slowly lifts.

DUKE

I do wish you'd stop doing that,
Chief.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, OPEN DESERT - NIGHT

The truck, far in the distance, idles on the highway.
Furious SHOUTS and shrill SCREAMS echo across the mesa.

Finally, a car door SLAMS.

REN

Noooo!

The trucks speeds off, leaving a lone figure at the side of
the road. Not far in the distance the neon oasis of the
casino glows.

Curious coyotes turn and look in the direction of the noise.
They watch the ruckus from afar.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - MOVING - NIGHT

Duke and Nathan peer cautiously through the back window,
stunned expressions frozen on their faces.

Gregg drives on, silently raging, a death grip on the wheel.

Duke dares to break the silence. He shouts through the
window.

DUKE

Dude. That was our lead singer.

Gregg can barely spit the words out.

GREGG

He'll have to find his own way.

INT. ISLETA GAMING PALACE, BLUE CACTUS ROOM, BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Showtime! Gregg, Duke and Nathan are in their familiar rock
'n' roll outfits. The DULL ROAR of the audience filters in.
Vegas barrels through with a tray full of drinks.

VEGAS

Man, you guys packed 'em in pretty good. Didn't think you could do it.

GREGG

Gee, thanks.

Duke takes a beer from her tray. At the sight of free drinks Nathan suddenly appears at her elbow.

DUKE

Our fans are loyal. How about a virgin margarita for the kid?

VEGAS

(to Nathan)

Don't worry, I won't read anything into that, sweet cheeks.

Gregg doesn't join the friendly banter.

VEGAS (CONT'D)

What's with him? This an Indian thing? Pray to the big buffalo in the sky before a show? Meditate with an eagle feather?

DUKE

Nah. Chief is pissed.

She considers this, but there's not much to be done.

VEGAS

Well. Knock 'em dead boys.

She scans the room.

VEGAS (CONT'D)

Where's your singer?

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, OPEN DESERT - NIGHT

Ren wanders through the mesa toward the casino. In the darkness he stumbles over rocks and weeds, mumbling as he goes.

REN

...can't help it if she digs me.
Of course she digs me, chicks always dig the lead singer.

The night is still, quiet.

REN (CONT'D)

Thinks he's so great...so what if
I'm a little emotional. Chicks dig
that too.

He starts to sing.

REN (CONT'D)

*No matter what you say or do, I
ain't going away...*

INT. ISLETA GAMING PALACE -- BLUE CACTUS ROOM - NIGHT

DUKE

(sings)

*No matter what you say or do, I
ain't going away...*

ONSTAGE - Concert is in full swing...minus a lead singer.
The crowd is none the wiser, they are loving it. And Duke is
loving the extra attention that lead vocal duties bring him.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Love this true always finds a way....

AUDIENCE - A cute, young Indian waitress, DANIELLE, smiles
at Duke as she waits tables. Yeah, Duke is loving this.

ONSTAGE - Gregg is unleashing his anger behind his drum kit.
Pounding the drums with a bit more intensity than usual.
Sitting pretty as a picture right up front is Lisa. His jaw
clenches. He wallops his drum kit. Glares at her.

AUDIENCE - She is slightly unnerved...why is he looking at
me like that?

ONSTAGE - Rapid, angry, DRUMBEATS...

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, OPEN DESERT - NIGHT

Ren is humming and singing absent-mindedly out on the mesa.
His stride is pretty regular. He has calmed down.

A coyote on the ridge sniffs the night air. Content.

The mesa is almost pretty at night, peaceful.

INT. ISLETA GAMING PALACE, BLUE CACTUS ROOM - NIGHT

ONSTAGE - Nathan and Duke continue to play. Gregg stops for
a moment, exhausted, covered in sweat. Takes a feather from
his back pocket, ties it into his long hair.

BACK BY THE BAR - Vegas watches, impressed. Or interested at least.

VEGAS

(to no one really)

See, I knew there was an eagle feather involved there somewhere.

ONSTAGE - He takes off his shirt, he's slick with sweat. Out comes the tribal drum and the large beater. Nathan's blistering guitar is wailing, and Duke's backbone bass beat drives the music. The music is deafening, Nathan and Duke are jumping and swaying. But Gregg is still as a statue.

He glares at Lisa with a look that could turn her to stone.

AUDIENCE - Her smile fades. She drops her head down, stares at her drink. He knows.

ONSTAGE - Gregg's wrathful tribal drum solo begins. He's a whirlwind of rage.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, OPEN DESERT - NIGHT

The coyote's ears prick up. Alert...uneasy.

Ren stops dead in his tracks. Did he hear something? Movement? Can't be...there is nothing on the mesa, and nothing bigger than weed to hide behind.

The coyote whimpers and scurries away.

The breeze grows stronger...throwing echoes? Misleading sounds? A low growl rumbles over the mesa...or is it just the wind?

INT. ISLETA GAMING PALACE, BLUE CACTUS ROOM - NIGHT

Gregg's rage feeds upon itself, each drumbeat stronger, faster than before. Gregg pounds on different areas of the tribal drum skin, creating different pitches, varying volumes. He closes his eyes, his feet shuffle to a tribal dance step - circling, circling, faster and faster.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, OPEN DESERT - NIGHT

Ren squints, trying to focus, but there's nothing but darkness.

He reaches outward, feeling for something, anything. But there's nothing but emptiness.

But he's still frozen, afraid to move.

He almost laughs at himself. He's alone of course.

Suddenly, a soft rush of air - "PPHHHTT" - as if someone blew out a candle on a birthday cake. But at very close range.

Ren blinks hard - there's something in his eyes. He wipes his eyes and tries the blink the dust away.

He's confused. Touches his face. Is it dust? Dirt? No.

Ren has white powder all over his face.

REN

What the hell...?

INT. ISLETA GAMING PALACE, BLUE CACTUS ROOM - NIGHT

Duke and Lisa exchange glances as Gregg's tribal fury continues. This is not what they are used to.

Vegas is transfixed by Gregg's act, her customers ignored.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Ren continues his trek, now mumbling to himself more frantically.

REN

I'M the singer! How can they play without me?! God, look at the casino, it's so beautiful... shimmering. How can anything be so perfect?

Something in the darkness circles him. Slowly, waiting.

REN (CONT'D)

I'm out on the rez on a beautiful night! This is glorious! Oh my god!

He has noticed the stars above, without city light, they pop out of the sky. He's frantic.

REN (CONT'D)

Look at my stars! Why can't I have them? They are being wasted! They are going to fall, to pierce my soul!

He shrieks. He's panicking, flailing. Emotional overload.

The Skinwalker lurks.

REN (CONT'D)

I'm all alone!

Beady yellow wolf eyes watch. Blink. Matted fur smeared with war paint.

REN (CONT'D)

It's true...the Sacred Tree...!

A hand - not human, not coyote...but grotesquely both.

Over a bare, well-formed human chest hangs a large turquoise and silver squash blossom necklace.

The Skinwalker lumbers slowly toward Ren - large wolf-like legs support the humanesque figure.

Ren is spiraling out of his poetic emotional orbit. Babbles, shrieks, praises, sings!

A snarled lip exposes slimy sharp canine teeth.

Gregg's angry DRUMBEATS intercut here but without leaving scene.

The Skinwalker lunges -- straight for Ren's throat. In seconds flat he's ripped apart in a frenzy of hysterics - blood - eagle feathers - huge jaws - ripping flesh - muscular canine features and a terrible Indian spirit warrior.

Then...Silence on the mesa.

INT. ISLETA GAMING PALACE, BLUE CACTUS ROOM - NIGHT

Silence...in the auditorium.

Gregg's performance has reached it's crescendo - it's over.

A few seconds of stunned silence from the audience. Then an overwhelming eruption of APPLAUSE, SHOUTS, AND CHEERS.

Gregg slumps exhausted over a speaker. Emotionally spent, he can only manage a sincere smile and a little wave.

EXT. ISLETA GAMING PALACE, PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Duke puts some small pieces of equipment in the back of Gregg's truck. Leans against the truck, worn out. Gregg crosses the parking lot carrying his tribal drum and beater. Vegas trails behind with a few odds and ends.

DUKE

Can't you just leave that here? We play again tomorrow night.

GREGG

I don't trust Ivan. Not with my tribal drums anyway.

Gregg tucks his drum into a safe little nook.

DUKE

I'm freaking exhausted. What kind of dick won't let the musicians load and unload behind the auditorium?

VEGAS

The Ivan kind. He insisted on getting rid of the loading dock back there. Had it bricked up. Can't tell you how many drum kits I've seen hauled through the main room.

GREGG

Unbelievable!

Duke throws his hands up in a "WTF?" gesture. She shrugs.

VEGAS

You're lucky there's an auditorium at all. He fought really hard against it.

GREGG

Not a music lover, I guess.

Duke rubs his hands together in anticipation.

DUKE

Well, ice cream calls!

He heads back into the casino. Vegas and Gregg lean against his truck.

GREGG

This place is a well-oiled money-making machine. Ivan must know what he's doing. But why did he not want the auditorium?

She shrugs.

VEGAS

Maybe not such a good manager after all.

INT. ISLETA GAMING PALACE, ICE CREAM SHOP - NIGHT

Duke and Nathan hover over the ice cream counter looking at all the flavors. The cute Indian waitress Danielle is on Duke's arm.

NATHAN

Man, it's like a whole city in here.

DUKE

That's right, hotel rooms,
restaurants, gift stores, concert
halls and best of all, gambling!
Not to mention the cutest waitresses
in the state.

Duke nuzzles Danielle. She blushes and giggles.

GREGG

We all loaded up?

DUKE

Truck's out front.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Got the money?

Gregg nods. Nathan perks up.

NATHAN

Cash?

DUKE

(to Gregg)

What's up, Gloomy Gus?

NATHAN

Where's Lisa?

DUKE

Oh...right! Problems in Loveland?

Gregg shrugs him off.

GREGG

Ice cream for everyone!

Gregg pulls out his wallet. The others choose flavors and order cones.

DANIELLE

This is fun!

GREGG

Yeah. What a bunch of wild rock
and rollers we are. Sprinkles for
everyone!

IVAN (O.S.)

That was certainly an interesting
show.

Cones in hand, the guys turn to face Ivan in his best Armani
suit and cowboy hat.

IVAN (CONT'D)

The crowd certainly loved it.
(to ice cream
employee)

Put this on the house account please.

Slighted, Gregg puts his wallet away.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Although I have to admit, doing an
entire show without a lead singer
was a bit of a surprise.

GREGG

I can explain that.

Ivan hands Gregg napkins.

IVAN

Shh. Not here.

Ivan nods for them to follow him.

INT. ISLETA GAMING PALACE, IVAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Ivan shuts his door behind him.

IVAN

I was sorry to hear the news. I
can't believe it...he was just in
here.

Duke and Gregg exchange puzzled looks.

IVAN (CONT'D)

First the tourist, now Ren.

NATHAN

A tourist was sleeping with Gregg's
girlfriend too?

Now Ivan is the confused one.

GREGG
What are you talking about?

IVAN
No one told you about Ren?

GREGG
We've been onstage! What?

Ivan sighs heavily, shuts his eyes and assumes a meditative posture.

IVAN
I'm afraid your lead singer was
attacked by coyotes tonight. He's
dead.

Gregg can't speak. Even Duke is stunned into silence. Young Nathan almost tears up. Their ice cream cones melt, drip. Danielle seems disappointed.

DANIELLE
(whispers to
Duke)
I thought YOU were the lead singer.

INT. ISLETA GAMING PALACE, CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Gregg bursts through Ivan's door into the corridor. He still carries his ice cream cone. Tears flow down his face. He stomps down the hall. The others struggle to catch up. He flies down a stairwell toward an emergency exit.

IVAN
Gregg! Stop!

Ivan motions for two of his casino bouncers to chase him down.

DUKE
(shouts)
It's not your fault!
(quietly to
Nathan)
It's not his fault.

NATHAN
But he left Ren out there.

DUKE
Oh man, don't say that to Gregg.

IVAN
STOP!!

Ivan's two thugs block Gregg's exit with a bit more urgency than it seemed is necessary. Gregg turns, expecting an explanation.

Ivan regains his composure. Smiles reassuringly.

IVAN (CONT'D)

That's an emergency exit...the alarm'll go off. Please use the front entrance.

Gregg considers this explanation. Not buying it. As Gregg passes Ivan, he drops his cone to the carpet, making sure to step on it and grind it into the carpet.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Gregg. A word please, before you go.

Ivan ushers Gregg aside. Nathan, Duke and Danielle sit on the stairs, sadly lick their cones.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Listen. Did you go to school on the rez, or in town?

GREGG

You said a tourist was killed this morning. Why'd you lie? It was someone from the rez -

IVAN

Gregg, I said listen to me! You go to school in town growing up?

GREGG

Yeah, my parents sent me to public school in Albuquerque.

IVAN

Me too. Learned all the normal bullshit kids all across America learned. But we missed something.

GREGG

What are you talking about?

IVAN

Growing up off the rez...there are things we don't see, things off our radar. You ever learn about the Skinwalkers?

GREGG

Oh Jesus, not this again. My Granddad was just talking about them. Nonsense!

Gregg leaves, headed for the casino floor.

IVAN

Gregg, stop! You're right, this morning it wasn't a tourist. A Skinwalker attacked Victor Vargas.

Gregg can still hear him, but he's soon gone.

DUKE

Oh really? That's fascinating. Can't you give us an amulet or something that will protect us?

IVAN

I can only assume you think you're amusing. But this is serious business.

DUKE

No shit! Our lead singer is dead!

IVAN

You just don't understand.

DUKE

We gotta get home. It's a school night for Nathan.

Duke barrels past Ivan and the Casino Thugs, shoves the emergency door open.

DUKE (CONT'D)

C'mon, guys. Let's take the sensible way out.

Nathan and Danielle hop up and follow him. They swoop through the emergency doors and out into the darkness.

The two Casino Thugs wait for Ivan's signal. Ivan motions for them to follow. But slowly.

IVAN

Make sure.

EXT. ISLETA GAMING PALACE, REAR EXIT - NIGHT

Not much light back here. No parking lot, no nothing. The team marches around the huge complex, aiming for the front parking lot.

NATHAN

Hey, the alarm didn't go off.

DANIELLE

Ivan doesn't like us to use the back exit after dark.

DUKE

Too late for that, darlin'.

Duke pulls her close. She revels in his attention. Suddenly Nathan burst into tears.

NATHAN

Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ!

Duke knows his friend all too well.

DUKE

If we had any idea that the coyotes were going crazy tonight we wouldn't have left him out there!

NATHAN

We left him to die! We literally fed him to the wolves!

The groups stops to let Gregg vent. He screams and kicks the wall violently.

DUKE

Easy, Tiger.

After Nathan settles down, his anger becomes sadness.

NATHAN

We should go to the police.

DUKE

Why? They already found his body -

NATHAN

No, not for that. About Ivan.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

What about him?

Nathan shrugs, shakes his head...can't put his finger on it.

DANIELLE

Ivan? What'd he do? He's my boss,
don't get him in trouble.

The group slowly heads to the parking lot again.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

He's a good guy.

Gregg and Duke scoff.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

No, really! He's like...all
spiritual and everything.

Duke laughs.

DUKE

Yeah! Sure! You know what he's
blaming all this on?

Duke makes his voice scary and exaggerated.

DUKE (CONT'D)

The Skinwalkers! Woooo!

He mimics a basic boogymen stance and 'goes after' Nathan.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Gonna get yooouuu!

NATHAN

Don't. You're creeping me out.

Instead of 'chasing' Nathan, Duke tosses his arm around him.

DUKE

Well, young Mr. Chavez, I can say
with absolute authority...I've lived
in New Mexico my whole life, and
I've never seen a single Skinwalker.

GGRRRAAW! From nowhere giant Skinwalker springs into their path. Seven feet high, a snarling mass of muscular beast and man - a flash of teeth, snarling, snapping at them. Claws swiping at them.

You've never seen three people run so fast or scream so loud.

Well, TWO people. Danielle's not so lucky. Or so fast.

Duke and Nathan are far away by the time Duke manages to look back. The Skinwalker rips Danielle to shreds.

EXT. ISLETA GAMING PALACE, PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Gregg sits in his truck, clicks his seatbelt, adjusts rearview mirror. Settles in.

Duke and Nathan appear out of nowhere, frantic, out of breath. They both try to pile into the front of the pickup.

NATHAN
(to Duke)
Get in back!

DUKE
Like hell!

The all squish in the front cab.

DUKE (CONT'D)
Go! Go! Go!

GREGG
What the hell's the -

NATHAN
GOOOOO!

Gregg peels out of the parking lot.

But they leave behind a parking lot that is calm and quiet. Customers leave the casino, walk to their cars, chat with friends before ending their night.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - MOVING - NIGHT

The truck flies down the highway with three freaked out guys in the front seat.

DUKE
Where we going?!

NATHAN
THAT'S your question?! 'Where are we going?' How about what the hell was that thing?! Was it a dog or...what?!

Gregg grips the wheel in an effort to stay calm.

DUKE
Oh man, that was one of those things your Granddad's always talking about!

NATHAN

So, that girl...it got her, huh?

GREGG

What?!

DUKE

Yeah! It killed her! And almost us!

GREGG

What? When? Who killed who?

NATHAN

Danielle! We were just walking to the truck and one of those things came out of nowhere!

GREGG

Oh, come on. Did Ivan put you up to this? It's not funny!

DUKE

Dude, that thing ripped her to shreds!

GREGG

What thing?!

DUKE

That coyote thing!

GREGG

Probably a rabid coyote. They can get crazy and scary when they're rabid.

NATHAN

No, Gregg. This was not a rabid dog.

Nathan's freaked out demeanor alerts Gregg to the seriousness.

GREGG

Oh my god.

DUKE

Man, I finally get a groupie and she's eaten by a...what did you Granddad say they were?

GREGG

Skinwalkers.

DUKE

Yeah, I know, but what did he say
they were...?

Gregg hesitates...it's not a word he wants to say.

GREGG

Shapeshifters.

And that wasn't word they wanted to hear. Nathan is almost
in tears.

GREGG (CONT'D)

We gotta go find Granddad, he'll
know what's going on. He's at the
feast night. He's dealt with the
coyotes going crazy before.

Nathan, traumatized shakes his head repeatedly.

NATHAN

Not a dog. Not a dog. Not a dog.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, PLAZA - NIGHT

There is a festive air around the main plaza of the
reservation. Feast night. Even though it's late, its packed
with lots of Indian families and Anglos and Latinos too,
even kids are out this late at night. Indian dancers in
ceremonial dress dance in the middle of the plaza.

All of the doors of the surrounding houses are open, lights
blazing. People mill around, go from one house to the next
to eat and celebrate.

Kids gather around the center of the plaza to watch the
dancers. They are all antsy and excited. Waiting for
something.

Loud drumming and music starts, the dancers begin. The kids
and adults recognize the song...they all giggle and glance
around nervously.

At the far end of the plaza kids squeal. There is a
ruckus...kids and adults alike scream and run.

The crowd stirs nervously. Nervous laughter rises.

Everyone cranes their neck to see.

Granddad watches the proceedings from the porch of one of
the homes bordering the plaza. He goes inside quietly and
shuts the door.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, PLAZA - NIGHT

Gregg throws his truck into park and jumps out.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, PLAZA - NIGHT

Gregg, Duke and Nathan run frantically into the crowd. People are shrieking, kids darting everywhere, adults scurrying around.

GREGG

Grandma! Granddad!

No answer.

Hysteria in the plaza makes it impossible for them to find either Granddad or Grandma. Yet not everyone panics. Some stay off the plaza, up on the porches of the homes and watch, smiling, laughing.

PLAYFUL TEENAGER

Don't look at him! Run!

Little kids scream and run, laughing. Gregg, Duke and Nathan watch the crowd begin to part.

There in front of them is THE TRICKSTER. A human made up as the ceremonial Trickster. Entire body covered in body paint, big uneven black and white stripes. Entire face covered in black. A huge coyote hide is over his head, adding about a foot to his height, the coyote head looking out from above. In his hand he holds a soft "whip" that he unfurls at anyone close to him.

The kids scream and do whatever they can to stay out of the reach of his whip.

Suddenly, Gregg understands.

GREGG

Oh, Jesus, it's the Trickster's
Feast Night.

The Trickster is trying to reach people with his whip, but no one will look at him, they all avert their eyes. All but the smart ass teenagers, probably drunk.

PLAYFUL TEENAGER

Oooh, he's looking at us!

Loving to single out the smart asses, the Trickster makes a b-line for the teen. He and his friends scream and run, but the Trickster playfully chases them. Some are truly scared, some are having fun.

Once in a while the Trickster throws a handful of trinkets into the air, which the kids scurry to snap up.

As he passes, older Indians pull their loved ones away.

OLD INDIAN

Avert your eyes, don't anger the
Trickster. Don't let his whip touch
you!

GREGG

Don't look at him.

But Gregg stares right at him. Nathan and Duke also stare at him...the resemblance to the Skinwalker they just encountered is a little too close. All three stand and stare, transfixed. This catches the Trickster's eye.

DUKE

Ut oh.

They still can't take their eyes off him.

GREGG

Don't look at him.

NATHAN

You keep saying that, but...we keep
looking at him.

The Trickster slowly makes his ominous approach to the trio. The crowd parts, kids scamper away. With the coyote head and hide, this approaching black and white striped creature appears inhuman...or is it just a man in a costume? The boys don't stay to find out. They haul ass.

Everyone laughs as the Trickster chases them through the plaza. But this time, the Trickster doesn't give up, he keeps following.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, NEAR PLAZA - NIGHT

A sleek SUV pulls up near the plaza. The two Casino Thugs get out. They follow the noise to the plaza and watch from a distance.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, PLAZA - NIGHT

Gregg gets separated from the others. This isn't fun and games, he's sweating and his heart races. He runs out of the plaza and down a back alley between two adobe houses. He's well out of range of the Feast Day games.

He stops to catch his breath.

GREGG

Stupid game.

A shadow falls across him. Up ahead, blocking the entrance to the alley is The Trickster. With nowhere to run, Gregg freezes.

The Trickster unfurls his soft whip and it lashes Gregg, harder than he should. Gregg grabs his stinging arm. The Trickster stares him down for a few long seconds. The yellow eyes of the coyote head seem to stare too. Slowly the Trickster wags his finger at Gregg: tsk, tsk, tsk. He suddenly reaches into a leather pouch and throws something at Gregg.

Gregg instinctively reaches out and catches it. He looks at it. It's a fun-size pack of sugarless gum.

He looks up. The Trickster is gone.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, PLAZA - LATER

Gregg, a bit calmer now, walks through the plaza. He looks at all the faces, but doesn't see Grandma, Granddad, Duke or Nathan. He's chewing that sugarless gum. He chuckles.

GREGG

Definitely NOT a dog. Jesus, Duke.
Can't tell a coyote from a dude in
a costume. Time to cut back on the
pot, my friend.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, PLAZA - CONTINUOUS

FEAST GUIDE has found Duke and Nathan and is comforting them, has her arms around both of them.

FEAST GUIDE

The coyote is the Trickster. He
teaches proper behavior by showing
us the opposite. You must learn to
appease him.

NATHAN

How?

FEAST GUIDE

Mmm, well, that's a tricky balancing
act. Ignore him and he gets angry.
But if you look him in they eye, he
will play with you. And you don't
want that.

DUKE

So uh...what do you do?

FEAST GUIDE

Respect him. Find that balance.
Find a way to show respect without
ignoring him, and without giving
him too much power.

Duke and Nathan look at each other. They haven't a clue.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, PLAZA - LATER

Shrieking kids in the distance indicates where the Trickster is. But still, Gregg is keeping off the main plaza now, staying up on the porches. He's looking a little skittish as he stays as close as he can to the houses.

ALLEY -

This is his terrain, he knows the shortcuts. Cuts through a narrow alley.

GREGG

What a weird night.

He tries to blow a bubble with his fresh gum as he turns a corner. But then his mouth hangs open, the bubble falls to the ground.

Standing before him, silently, is the actual SKINWALKER TRICKSTER - towers a good foot or two above Gregg's head. This one's body is that of a massive coyote, with massive antlers crowning the top.

Disgusting smears of black and white *something* cover him. The stripes smear together in some places, wide stripes, narrow stripes merge together in a grungy mess. Matted into the fur across its massive face. Yellow eyes peer at Gregg. A whip hangs limp in its hand.

Gregg is frozen in shock and fear. Skinwalker Trickster takes a few deliberate steps toward Gregg. Stops. Gregg can barely breathe. Trickster drops the whip.

Trickster fumbles with something in his gnarled paws. He's holding matchsticks. He lights a match by striking it against the rough mangled skin on his paw. Then he FLICKS the lit match at Gregg. Gregg watches the match fall to the ground. He struggles to find the meaning. Looks Trickster in the eye.

Trickster flicks another lit match at Gregg. Gregg easily avoids it, but can't back up any more.

Skinwalker Trickster stares at Gregg. Cocks his head to the side, steps even closer, leans in. Gregg stops holding his breath, can't help but pant in fear. Tricksters is a mere two feet in front of him by now. Lights another match. Hold it up in front of Gregg, too close.

Trickster raises his massive paw near Gregg's head. Gregg flinches, expecting a blow.

Trickster unfurls one dirty, broken claw. Slowly lowers it near Gregg's face. Gregg slams his eyes closed. But there's no slicing, no cutting.

TING, TING, TING! Trickster taps the large silver hoop in Gregg's ear. Again, almost politely, TING, TING, TING!

Gregg opens his eyes. Sees that Trickster is not looking at him, but at his earring.

GREGG (CONT'D)

You want my earring??

Gregg whips his earring out. With shaky hands, offers it to Trickster. Trickster - as delicately as a massive monster can - takes the silver earring from Gregg's hand.

Trickster takes the open earring, aims the post at his own huge coyote ear. There is no hole in his ear. Gregg watches in horror as Trickster simply pokes the post of the earring against his thin ear cartilage until there is a grotesque POP sound. Slides the earring through the new ragged hole.

Trickster backs away from Gregg. They stare at each other. Trickster flicks his claw against his new silver earring. TING! He tosses another lit match at Gregg - but not too close. Trickster picks up his whip and in a flash he's gone.

GREGG (CONT'D)

...THE FUCK?!

Gregg turns and heads in the opposite direction.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, HOUSE - LATER

Gregg sidles up to a house he clearly recognizes. He's still freaked out by his run-in with the real Trickster. He listens.

Odd chanting from a window that's cracked open. He hops up onto the porch. The blinds are down, but he leans closer, squints, tries to find the tiniest crack of light through the old plastic blinds.

The door is unlocked, he lets himself in.

INT. ISLETA RESERVATION, HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Gregg follows the sound and keeps out of sight. He cautiously peers into the room. The Elders from the drumming circle sit around in a circle, chanting and singing, one of them drumming.

They all wear hides. Large coyotes heads perched on the tops of their own heads, the pelts flowing down their backs.

Gregg breathes heavily, his brow furrowed: this is no ceremony he's ever seen. Before he bolts he gets a good look at the Elder drumming: *Granddad*.

Gregg backs out silently.

EXT. ISLETA RESERVATION, PLAZA - NIGHT

The human Trickster continues his taunting games.

Nurse Willow stands in the middle of the antics. She is still and calm. The Trickster never even glances at her.

From all the way across the plaza, despite the hordes of people, Nurse Willow spots Gregg.

She turns to look directly at the Trickster -- then to Gregg.

Her cool stare draws him to her. He weaves in and out of the swarming teems of people, finally reaching her.

NURSE WILLOW

Gregg. Never strike a drum in anger.

GREGG

You're not gonna believe this! I just saw -

Ignoring his desperate cry, she quiets him by putting her hands on his shoulders. She looks him straight in the eye.

NURSE WILLOW

Never strike a drum in anger.

She turns and is immediately swallowed up into the crowd. Gregg considers her advice.

GREGG

Great. NOW she tells me.