

WHITHER ARE WE BOUND

Written by

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EXT. LAKE - DAY

A forest. Silent and endless. In its midst, a lake, still and fog-laden. A single boat drifts out of the mist.

Inside the boat is BLASINGAME (late 40's, sogging wet, a man with a weathered face and soul, a black feather tied around his neck).

Opposite him is a FERRYMAN (head covered by a sack, hands tied to the oars, rowing as he whistles a soft, eerie tune: "The Witherman's Ballad").

BLASINGAME

Did I make it?

No response. The whistling continues. Blasingame reaches forward and tugs the sack off. A gnarled pumpkin head grins back at him. The eyes are hollow, but they flicker with an internal light.

The whistling ceases for a moment, before continuing. Leaves rustle in the boat. Blasingame reaches for the pumpkin.

FERRYMAN

I wouldn't do that if I were you.

BLASINGAME

That so.

FERRYMAN

It's attached. Most heads are.

BLASINGAME

Why the sack?

FERRYMAN

Someone didn't care for my singing.
Why the feather? A memento,
perhaps?

Blasingame grabs the feather, shielding it. The Ferryman leans back.

FERRYMAN (CONT'D)

Few souls come this way, fewer by
choice. What pulls you through
these waters?

BLASINGAME

I'm after The Witherman. Do you
know of him?

FERRYMAN

The Witherman? Quite the quarry,
Hunter. These are his woods.

BLASINGAME

And I won't leave them, not without
him.

The boat bumps gently against the shore. The Ferryman laughs.

FERRYMAN

Well then, sound's like you could
use a guide.

As Blasingame considers him, The Ferryman motions to his
bound wrists.

FERRYMAN (CONT'D)

A little help, first?

(beat)

Hunter, you don't know these woods.
And we both know you can't leave.
Not the same way, at least.

Blasingame cuts the ropes, and as they fall loose The
Ferryman rubs his wrists and stands, stretching as though he
hasn't moved in ages.

The ropes fall into the water, transforming into snakes
before slithering away.

FERRYMAN (CONT'D)

Thank you.

EXT. SHORE - DAY

The Ferryman steps out of the boat, and holds his hand out
for Blasingame to take. Ahead of them is a clearing, with an
aged cabin and fire pit. Blasingame looks to the woods.

FERRYMAN

Not so fast, you shouldn't go in
there so close to nightfall. We'll
go tomorrow.

BLASINGAME

Why's that?

FERRYMAN

(beat)

It's spooky.

BLASINGAME

Spooky. I'll take my chances. I've
hunted in darker woods than these,
and dinner won't catch itself.

FERRYMAN

Oh, you won't catch anything.

At Blasingame's glare, The Ferryman laughs.

FERRYMAN (CONT'D)

Careful in those woods, Hunter.
Don't stay past dark. I'll have a
fire ready, and something to eat.

BLASINGAME

We'll see who eats first.

Blasingame trudges into the woods, to the chorus of cackling
laughter.

EXT. WOODS - UNCERTAIN TIME

Blasingame moves through gnarled trees, still empty-handed.
He holds his compound bow at the ready, scanning the woods.
The rustling leaves mimic distant whispers. Shadows move at
the edge of sight, but no matter where he turns, nothing is
there.

BLASINGAME

Asa?

He hears a grunting sound. Something catches his eye, and he
aims at it, only to slowly lower his bow.

A figure stands perfectly still, straw sticking out from his
sleeves and collar, with a poorly carved squash on his head.

Blasingame approaches cautiously, and reaches for the gourd.
The figure's hands clench over Blasingame's wrists, and
Blasingame jolts back, cracking its head on his knee.

Dazed, STRAW MAN (50's, thin and disheveled, wild-looking)
stumbles back. He locks eyes with Blasingame.

STRAW MAN

I- What?

(beat)

You--you saved me! Lost... so long,
thought I was one of them already!

BLASINGAME

One of what?

STRAW MAN
(rapidly, almost
manically)
The woods seep into you. Roots in
your bones, leaves in your veins,
straw in your skin.

Suddenly, Straw Man grabs hold of Blasingame's shoulders.

STRAW MAN (CONT'D)
Please, tell me you know a way out!

BLASINGAME
There's a ferry, back at the lake.

STRAW MAN
AH! No time to waste! Let's go!

Blasingame shakes his head, trying to lean away from his grasp.

BLASINGAME
N-no, I'm not done here. But you'll
be fine.
(he points)
Just head that way.

Straw Man looks at him with a mix of gratitude and fear.

STRAW MAN
I hope someone comes for you before
he does. The woods are starved, and
so is he
(beat)
Listen to the crows, they're
calling.

The woods are silent.

Straw Man runs off, leaving Blasingame alone. He takes a deep breath, before loosely following after the man.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

As he walks back through the woods, Blasingame begins to hear humming. He creeps forward through the trees and spies a group of sheet ghosts gathered around a rock hanging by a rope from a tripod of branches. It swings like a pendulum. They worship it, bowing and encircling it, swaying in sync, rippling in nonexistent wind, humming "The Witherman's Ballad".

They look to Blasingame, sweat beading on his forehead, now clutching his head as the humming grows. He flees.

EXT. SHORE - DUSK

Blasingame stumbles out of the woods, and heads toward the campfire. In the distance, Straw Man is rowing away on the boat. Blasingame sits across from The Ferryman, who tilts his head.

BLASINGAME
How is there nothing?

FERRYMAN
You're the only living thing here.

BLASINGAME
That's impossible. There's...
grass, trees, you.

FERRYMAN
(cackling)
The grass is dead, the trees are
dying, and I'm the furthest thing
from alive.

BLASINGAME
(pointing towards Straw
Man)
What about him?

FERRYMAN
He won't make it. It was kind of
you to offer him my boat, though.

The Ferryman gets up and hands Blasingame a bowl of soup. He squints at it.

FERRYMAN (CONT'D)
Pumpkin soup, soothes the soul. Bon
appetit Hunter.

The Ferryman sits back down, by a collection of hollowed-out pumpkins. Blasingame glances down at his feather pendant in hand, the bead above the feather is inscribed with the name "Asa". He sets the bowl down and stands.

BLASINGAME
That's alright, I think I'll head
to sleep.

FERRYMAN

Stay out a little longer, fire
wards off more than just cold. It's
good for keeping evil things at
bay.

Blasingame snorts.

BLASINGAME

Like ghosts and trolls?

FERRYMAN

Like that wendigo that's been
following you.

The Ferryman points to the edge of the woods. There, barely
visible, a WENDIGO lurks, watching them. It emits a low,
guttural whine.

FERRYMAN (CONT'D)

A loner, and small. But there will
be more deeper in, especially as
the cold comes.

Its eyes pierce the darkness.

FERRYMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

It's a wonder it hasn't killed you
yet. I suppose anticipation adds to
the flavor, I know fear does.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Blasingame tosses and turns in his sleep. He scratches at his
arms relentlessly. He wakes, and realizes what he is pulling
out is straw.

Stumbling to the mirror, he pulls out more straw. And notices
his missing necklace. The shadow of a figure hovers behind
him in the reflection.

BLASINGAME

Asa-

He turns around, but the room is empty.

EXT. SHORE - NIGHT

Outside the fire has gone out, and there is no sign of The
Ferryman. Blasingame leaps into action, grabbing a lantern
and his hunting gear, he heads to the lake. Reaching into the
water, he pulls out two snakes, which turn back into ropes.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Blasingame stalks through the forest, determined. A familiar grunting, whining sounds. A being moves through the woods around him, little more than a shadow. There are claw marks on the trees.

Blasingame tries to fire, misses. The Wendigo attacks. It moves fast yet unnaturally. Claws leave gashes in the trees as it lunges and strikes. Blood splatters against moonlit swaves of grass.

They tumble together down a hill. Claws tear his skin. A skeletal jaw snaps at him.

Blasingame manages to shut its jaw, tying it shut with the rope as its claws rake chunks of him off. He manages to tie it down, it shrieks and writhes, limbs contorting and bones cracking as it tries to escape.

WENDIGO

(snarling, voice like gravel)
Noooo! Make it quick. Sso hungry.
Just a tasste, before itss over?
Just a bite.

BLASINGAME

You speak.

WENDIGO

The warmth... it will quiet the
hunger.... I STARVE!

Blasingame grips it by the jaw and forces eye contact.

BLASINGAME

What happened to you?

WENDIGO

Cursssed. Hunger... gnawing... GET
IT OUT!

The Wendigo claws at it's skull and jaw.

BLASINGAME

Who? Do you remember?

WENDIGO

Wither... the one in the hollow.

BLASINGAME

Where is that? WHERE?

WENDIGO
I know. I never forget HIM.

BLASINGAME
Lead me to him. We can both get
what we want. You can end this.

WENDIGO
...yess.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - UNKNOWN TIME

Blasingame is following a stream, the Wendigo by his side,
still bound at the jaw and claws.

WENDIGO
Just a taste, all I assk. A nibble?

Blasingame looks ahead, doing his best to ignore it.

WENDIGO (CONT'D)
Only a finger. Jusst one! You don't
need all, not using them! A pinkie?
Jusst the tip?

BLASINGAME
Its late... I think. We should camp
here.

Blasingame drops his gear, looking around.

WENDIGO
Dinner?

Blasingame chucks a large bug at the Wednigo's face.

WENDIGO (CONT'D)
...Desssert?

BLASINGAME
Not. A. Chance.

Blasingame grips a tree branch.

BLASINGAME (CONT'D)
Look for some more bugs, I'll find
firewood.

As he tears the branch off, it makes a low, groaning sound,
almost as if it were alive. Dark red liquid seeps out from
the tear.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - LATER

Blasingame sits by the fire, eating a bug, his eyes heavy from exhaustion. Shadows stretch across the ground around him, shifting independently of light, pooling together into unnatural shapes. Despite his efforts, he drifts into sleep.

Moments later, he wakes to find the Wendigo looming over him, unbound, drooling. He reaches slowly for his bow, the Wendigo tracks his movement. Its head snaps back, its jaw opens, and before it can lunge a humming melody fills the silence.

The Wendigo recoils in fear and flees into the woods as "The Witherman's Ballad" continues to be hummed. A ring of sheet ghosts slowly encircle Blasengame.

Blasingame's ears and nose bleed, and the world around him distorts. The ground beneath him turns liquid, pulling him down. Before him a void opens up beneath the folds of one ghost, and he slides towards its maw.

Blasingame grasps desperately for his lantern, and once gripping it swings and smashes it into the ghost before him.

It bursts into flames, and Blasingame seizes the chance to flee, running wildly through the woods.

EXT. NEW SHORE - DAWN

Blasingame erupts from the woods, stumbling to the shore. Out on the lake before him, he recognizes the Straw Man rowing the boat far ahead.

BLASINGAME
Hey! Straw Man! Hey!

Without hesitation, Blasingame dives into the water and swims toward him.

EXT. BOAT - DAWN

Blasingame hauls himself onto the boat, the Straw Man continues to row, staring ahead.

STRAW MAN
Changed your mind, did you?

Blasingame glares at him.

STRAW MAN (CONT'D)

You ain't the first, won't be the last. Coun't yerself lucky you're making it out at all.

BLASINGAME

What makes you so sure?

STRAW MAN

Unlike some, I came here knowing my exit point. Just had to wait for my memory to return.

BLASINGAME

Why did you come?

STRAW MAN

Same reason as you. Same reason as any other poor soul still here, I'll bet. But he always wins.

A faint, familiar whistling catches Blasingame's ear. He turns toward the shore, where a familiar figure is standing. The Ferryman, twiddling the black feather in his hand. Slowly, he releases it, until it blows away in the wind.

The Straw Man picks up the tune, and begins to sing the lyrics accompanying "The Witherman's Ballad".

Blasingame slowly stands. In the reflection of the lake, he sees himself and another man, one who is giving him the necklace, and disintegrating into ripples.

With a deep breath, Blasingame dives into the water, swimming towards the beckoning forest.

On the shore, the Ferryman watches, whistling until the first lights of dawn touch the shore. The Ferryman begins to disintegrate, his form turning into swirling leaves, carried away by the wind.

END