

## ACT 1

### The River Flows

*The set is a large circular white screen (the moon) which can be used for shadow puppetry (or projection).*

*Before Moon speaks, we see the evolution of the lunar eclipse that creates a blood moon, the entire moon turning a soft red colour. The audience is enveloped in the colors of this. We also hear something, a steady beat. A heartbeat. Pulsing, pumping, it gets quieter as the moon speaks and then disappears.*

## Start

Moon: I remember. I remember because I was red. I was known as the blood moon. But then, we are all given so many names in our lifetimes. Called so many things. I am no different. I too have many names... I answer to many things. Many call me the moon. Wolf moon. Harvest moon. Strawberry moon... But me, I like Grandmother. Grandmother Moon. That name suits me just fine.

Now, this story began at a time when the earth came between me and the sun, casting a bright red shadow across my face. The stars stretched out for miles, yet across the sky, the night wore the veil of red. There I was, shining down, landing like a kiss on the forehead. Some noticed, some didn't. Some think it means something, some think it doesn't. But under this blood moon, a baby was born.

*Moon engages with the baby on the screen who is held by a Swampy Cree Grandmother. These characters are animated by the actors who play Tip and El. The baby stares intently, and squints at the moon as though looking to recognize someone or something.*

Moon: The baby would stare up from the arms of her grandmother with intention, squinting, looking up, up, up. "What are you looking at, little one? **What are you trying to see?**" The baby's nohkom asked. What the little one was trying to see, was me. The baby's nohkom smiled, as the baby's name suddenly came to her. Tipeemso. You are Tipeemso. Ah, I remember because this baby did not cry. And not because it couldn't or because there's anything wrong with crying, but because in the glow of the gentle red light of me, the child was busy seeing.

*We experience a change in environment. A sound shift. Away from the home of Tip far from the landscape of the banks of the Red River.*

Moon: That same night in the same year, 1848, the night of the blood moon, up the winding river, across a vast ocean and a salty sea, another baby was born. Another baby who did not cry. And I, the same moon that looked down upon Tipeemso and their Nohkom, looked down on a family farm in the Scottish Highlands. I saw another wee one being held by her grandparent, hands and feet busy with excitement.

*Moon engages with the baby on the screen who is held by a Scottish Grandmother. These characters are animated by the actors who play Tip and El.*

Moon: "What are you trying to do, little one? What are you trying to do, little one?" her grandmother asked. What that little one was trying to do, was to catch me. The baby reached for me as hard

as it could, not knowing how far away I was. I shined as bright as I could, and the colour made her face glow.

"You are Eilidh."

Moon: Eilidh. I remember. Because this baby also did not cry. And not because it couldn't, or because there's anything wrong with crying, but because in the glow of the gentle red light from me the child was busy trying to do.

**End**

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*We hear a telephone, a radio, a boat; all of which die away and finally, water. It drowns out the sound of the rest and then quiets down over Moon's dialogue. We explore the different landscapes and environments that the two characters are born into and grow up learning.*

These two babies were born in a time before telephones, before radios, when a boat was the only car, and the river was the only road. *[We see a canoe and paddles and hear this]* A time when water was the only highway. The original highway.

*During this speech we should see the way of life of the Swampy Cree with Tip doing actions onstage or in shadow.*

Tipeemso grew up traveling the land of the maple, the spruce, the poplars, the birch and the willows. The land that stretched between the Meeting Place at the two rivers, and way up to the thick forests of the North. Following the rhythms of nature and its creatures, they learned from the old ones. They learned the ways of trapping rabbits and squirrels, of snaring fish, and of making birch bark containers for carrying water, berries and plants, for food, teas and medicines. Their family did not stay in one place for very long. Tipeemso learned to trade at the gathering of peoples, which always came during the time when the sun is its warmest and the leaves haven't yet changed their colors. Ever curious to see who would return, Tipeemso, looked forward to spending time with the visitors, and learning about the new and different things they would bring to exchange. Eager to practice the sounds of the different languages, they imagined that someday, like their grandfather, they, too, might be amongst the visiting travelers.. discovering the edges of new waters, and living as an interpreter for their people known as The Swampy Cree. The Swampy Cree.

*During this speech we see the way of life of Scottish farmers with El doing actions onstage or in shadow.*

Meanwhile, far away, across the land and sea, Eilidh grew up on the bright green mountains of the Scottish highlands; home to the sycamores, the Scot's pine, the Birnam oak and the silverbirch. Eilidh learned how to farm and cook according to the ways of her people. Her favourite meals always included tatties and neeps.. potatoes and turnips. Especially in a hearty soup or a thick stew when the weather brought in the cool winds of early fall. Eilidh had learned how to harvest them herself. From as early as she could walk, Eilidh was busy gathering and making, rarely content to be still. At the age of 10, her farm was burned, so her family left Scotland in search of a new place to rebuild. Eilidh helped pack up all of their belongings, and prepare them for the long journey ahead. She wished there was something more she could do.

*Eilidh's fidgets with her hands as she sits on a boat. She pulls out her collection of silverbirch bark strips, and begins sketching a map.*