

G U N A N O O T

by Daryl Henry

FADE IN:

EXT. MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS - DAY

Inland from the fjords of the Alaskan panhandle, lost between the azure glaciers of Coast Range and the towering bulwark of the Rockies, is a vast green and gold plateau.

It is a profound land, seldom travelled. The mountains are luxuriant, the lakes clear and cool, the meadows broad and lonely. Animals rule in timeless hierarchy: moose and caribou, cougar and grizzly, wolf and eagle. Human beings enter this land cautiously, harmoniously, or not at all.

EXT. SNOW-FILLED RAVINE - DAY

A low-flying BALD EAGLE pulls up sharply, dives toward a RABBIT lying motionless on the snow. Plunging earthward, talons dragging, the only sound is the WIND in its feathers.

CLOSER

As the eagle is about to snatch its prey, the snow EXPLODES and a laughing, fur-clad MAN breaks the surface, grabs the astonished bird by one leg, wrestles it to the ground, plucks out a shimmering feather, lets it go.

The eagle beats its raucous way back into the sky. The man sticks his trophy feather in a leather headband he wears to keep his matted hair in place, dusts himself off. He disinters his SNOWSHOES, laces them on, sets off through long, sundown shadows.

OPENING CREDITS
BEGIN OVER:

FOLLOWING THE MAN

We will come to know him as SIMON PETER GUNANOOT, fur-trapper, a raw-boned giant, black-eyed, fearless, intelligent and stubborn. A convert to Christianity, faithful husband, father of two, his only vices-- blind pride and an occasional drinking binge-- are overshadowed by his warmth and good humour.

EXT. TRAPLINE ABOVE BEAR LAKE - DAY

Gunanoot snowshoes down a shaded draw, checking his TRAPS. The first two are empty; he disarms them, stows them on his belt. The third contains a MUSKRAT. He puts the animal in his pack, the trap on his belt, continues on.

EXT. CAMPSITE AT BEAR LAKE - NIGHT

Gunanoot, humming to himself, warms a frypan of muskrat stew over a crackling fire. Nearby, his winter catch-- several large BUNDLES of pelts.

EXT. CAMPSITE AT BEAR LAKE - MORNING

A tentative sun explores the forest. A pale shaft comes to rest on a WHITE LACE TABLECLOTH. Closer inspection reveals it's covering Gunanoot's face. The trapper shucks his improvised mosquito netting, throws back his sleeping robe, and, foregoing breakfast, sets out.

SURROUNDING FOREST

Gunanoot rounds up his scattered PACK PONIES.

CAMPSITE

He loads two FUR-BUNDLES to each pony, starts them down a sun-pierced trail toward civilization.

EXT. MARTINEAU RIVER TRAIL - DAY

As man and horses glide effortlessly through the stillness of the greening forest, the silence is broken by the melodious PLAYING of a VIOLIN. The tune is haunting, reminiscent of *Green Sleeves*. Gunanoot stops, listens.

EXT. CABIN AT MOOSEHORN CREEK - DAY

Seated on a slab of hemlock outside a sod-roofed cabin is an elfin HERMIT dressed in woolen clothes, wooden shoes and a faded Alpine cap, playing an enchanted VIOLIN.

EXT. MARTINEAU RIVER TRAIL - DAY

Gunanoot tethers his ponies and follows the sound.

EXT. CABIN AT MOOSEHORN CREEK - DAY

The ancient little man looks up but does not stop playing as Gunanoot approaches. The trapper listens intently. When the song is finished the hermit rests his violin on his knee.

GUNANOOT

Teach me that one.

HERMIT

*Ach, du weiss ich kann nicht
Englisch verstehen.*

Gunanoot holds his left arm up, saws back and forth across it with his right hand, then points to his chest.

(CONTINUED)

The hermit holds his violin out. Gunanoot handles it as though it were made of glass. He places it under his chin, drags the bow across the strings.

The hermit winces, shows Gunanoot a simple chord. The result is not disastrous. The hermit rearranges Gunanoot's fingers in another pattern. The trapper plays both chords, alternating. The tune is awful but the spirit mighty.

When he's finished, Gunanoot returns the instrument. The hermit stands on tiptoes to examine the eagle feather.

HERMIT (CONT'D)

Adler, ja? Sehr schon.

Gunanoot removes the feather from his headband, holds it out. The hermit handles it as solemnly as Gunanoot handled the violin. The musician hands it back, but the trapper shakes his head. The little man bows formally, a gold-toothed smile transforming his wrinkled face.

EXT. SKEENA RIVER TRAIL AT PINENUT CREEK - DAY

Gunanoot, whistling the HERMIT'S SONG, leads his ponies along the bank of the Skeena.

OPENING CREDITS
CONCLUDE

ON A BLUFF AHEAD

A skookum young WOMAN gathers WILDFLOWERS. Strong face, compassionate brown eyes, long braided black hair. Inappropriately dressed for the bush, she wears a sun-hat tied under her chin, a faded blue woolen dress and high-button shoes.

The sound of WHISTLING causes her to tense. She looks off.

GUNANOOT

Rounds a bend, glimpsing her. Stopping.

THE WOMAN

Not moving.

GUNANOOT

Approaching slowly, despite the cold months he's been alone.

GUNANOOT & THE WOMAN

He lets go the reins of his lead pony, lowers his packboard, advances. She makes no move to escape. He raises his arms to enfold her. She allows it.