

## LOUISE

my seventh great-aunt, i have loved you since i first heard your name on a field trip to fort edmonton park. these tours are so catered to white students they assume no one in the audience is your relative, despite your wealth of descendants. affluence = the number of cousins you have. you knew this, i am sure, though you lived in one of the most impressive houses this city has ever seen. within our kinship systems, you are really my grandmother since i am descended from your sister. nohkom nitanskotapan x 2. your ancestry.ca profile on my family tree says that you were born in 1783 in the beaver hills and died in 1849 in the same place. how funny i have gotten to know you this way. there are no photos of you and i have not found any descriptions, beyond that you had brown skin. you are the daughter of a nameless cree woman and an unknown father (this remains wholly common to this day). some people say your maiden name was Belly, others say your name was Shining Star. you are most famous for bagging John Rowand, who became the chief factor of fort edmonton thirteen years after you saved him following a horse accident. this is the story i loved as a child—you saved this white man, not the other way around. this is before we were less sure about the validity of saving white people. when they say you were ‘wed in the laws of the country’, they mean you were wed by Indigenous law, which means: the white guy you married entered a web of kinship (obligation) and you could leave if you wanted (you were not property). he married you even though you were a decade older and already had seven children. what power! some people romanticize unions of the fur trade, but let no one erase your diplomacy, nohkom nitanskotapan. there is proof that your husband considered leaving you for a white woman (this is wholly common to this day). but he stayed with you until you passed. after this, he left your territory. he decided to flee the kinship web.<sup>1</sup> it was as if he knew, he did not belong here without you.<sup>2</sup>

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1 later white people would attempt to remove us from our kinship webs instead of entering them. this is partially why i know you through the internet.

2 however, he died upstream in fort pitt of a heart attack on his way to montreal. he didn’t make it out of our territories alive. his bones were exhumed months after being buried due to a pre-mortem request to be buried in montreal. he was known to be a hated man and some say his fat was made into soap at fort pitt. notably, one of the white men i dated moved to europe years after we broke up.