



Coming home: Domagaya and Taignoagny spot familiar shores.

Blackships



Maybe when we get back Cartier and his French will have left for home, Taignoagny thought. But there was something gnawing in his gut, something bad.



PART ONE

July 1534

Somewhere near Baie de Gaspé

Sunlight glinted off the knife-sharp edge, its stone point quivering slightly as Domagaya pulled back the string. His right eye aimed past the feather, down the wooden shaft. Stillness. The forest held its breath. The woodland caribou raised his antlered head. Sniffed.

Thwring!

The arrow shot past the trembling aspen, between the mottled, unravelling birch, pierced the shiny, tawny coat behind the buck's left shoulder, carved through thin muscle, grazed a rib and sliced into its heart in mid-beat. The caribou dropped to its knees, lowered its head into a slanting shaft of light, and with a final sigh fell on its side into the bed of lichen it had been eating.

"Good shot." Taignoagny smiled. But his older brother was already running, leaping over a deadfall, toward his prize.

"Wahay," his voice rang through the woods, the timeless cry of a young hunter exulting in his kill. Taignoagny ran to catch up, stopped beside Domagaya as he stood by his buck, knife drawn, head raised.

"Thank you, Cudouagny, for this gift that you have given your people." Then he leaned over, lifted the buck's head by the antlers and, with one smooth stroke, slit its neck. *Yaeii!*

"Yaeii!" Domagaya dropped the buck's head as Taignoagny screamed. The two boys stared at its neck, at the liquid bubbling out of the knife cut. Thick, oozing liquid, not red, but black. Fear gripped the boys like winter. The animal slowly raised its head and looked at them; storm clouds roiled

Thwring!

Domagaya
the elder son of
Donnacona, an
Iroquois leader

Taignoagny
the second son of
Donnacona

Cudouagny
the name of the
Iroquois God, according
to Jacques Cartier's
journals