Detroit 1763

Mustard's Retreat

My name is Henry Pontchartrain, a voyager Du Bois.
I married Shawanokwe near the place they called Detroit.
Her brothers call me brother all against the English Law,
and they named me Kagetchewan among the Ottowa.

In 1762 the English came to claim this place.
They made a proclamation that restricted men by race.
All Frenchmen here must sign an oath to serve the English king,
and Indians must pay double furs to trade for anything.

Now Shawenokwe overhead some talk along the shore:
of the anger of chief Pontiac and of his plans for war.
They'd play La Crosse outside the fort before the gates were closed,
and every Indian woman would hide weapons in their clothes.

When all the English soldiers had their blue eyes on the ball,
the signal to attack would be to throw it over the wall.
A hundred painted warriors would run whooping in full chase,
and take their war clubs with them as they ran inside the gate.

Now this dreadful rumor startled me and Shawenokwe wept.
But joining hands we rose, into the Indian camp we crept.
Though French, I was in danger going to that place at night.
So she rubbed ashes on my face. She said I looked too white.

Chorus:
We run from the wrath of Pontiac. We run from the English guns.
Paddle across Lake Erie and up the broad Maumee.
We will take the Wabash portage walkin' slowly through the trees,
float down the Ohio to the sea...
float down the Ohio to the sea.

Oh we listened as the firelight flickered underneath the trees.
Pontiac told of other forts his men captured with ease:
Saint Joseph and Sandusky and Michilimackinac,
where the dead men were the luck ones. All this the eagle saw.

Oh Pontiac, by moonlight, is a man too full of dreams.
He boasts King Louis' army will come up from New Orleans

to help his Indian brothers and retake this land for France,
and I know this is not true but I keep silent as they dance.

Now a man stood up to speak who had returned from Montreal.
He said there are more English than the red leaves of the fall,
but Pontiac grew furious and spoke loud for all to hear,
"Come with me now and we will count the English with our spears!"

[Chorus]

Now Shawenokwe trembled as we listened on our knees.
She said, "We must be gone from here before the rivers freeze.
Whichever side should win will show no mercy on our love".
And we walked away in silence to our home beside the cove.

And long I sat before my fire and smoked my Indian pipe,
and restless I went walking just before the morning light.
I only thought to stop the war that wicked men would win.
and I betrayed my brothers who named me Kagetchewan.

So it was that when the Indians came to start the game,
they found the English soldiers with their weapons on parade.
We thought no one would fight if just the English closed the gate,
Ohhh, but shots were fired and good men died; the war came anyway.

And who told these things by moonlight loud enough for English ears?
Who whispered in a language that an Englishman could hear?
Chief Pontiac burned our cabin down his voice was thick with rage.
Someone had seen a spirit who had ashes on his face.

[Chorus]

Oh the smoke rises into the sky; we paddle this canoe.
Maybe the world is big enough; maybe we will prove true.
It is too much for me, a simple voyager Du Bois, so called me Henry Pontchartrain, Kagetchewan more.

Lyrics submitted by Justin Tesmer.

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