

I wrote the following back in February of 1990. It was published in the Spring 1990 writers and artists insert of Plymouth State College's *The Clock* weekly newspaper under the penname, **Aldin**.

The Spirit of the Wilderness

The two hunters had been tracking a deer for hours through the north woods.

"Ray, I'm nervous. You've heard the stories about this area. Besides, what we're doing is illegal."

"Look Joe. First off, those old stories are just Indian tales. Second, deer hides bring a king's ransom on the black market. A month at this and we can retire for life."

"But if we're caught, we'll..."

"We'll what!!! I'll tell you what! We'll probably lose our licenses to hunt for a year, we may also be fined and/or spend a little time in jail. BIG DEAL!!! That's a slap on the wrist compared to the rewards of those hides on the market."

The two continued on for another quarter-mile down the old tote road.

"Look, Joe, fresh droppings. Be ready."

Five-hundred yards further they sighted a large buck. Ray aimed and dropped the beast with one shot.

"Now, we're committed. Come on Joe, we've got to dress it before we can drag it back to the truck."

Ray proceeded forward, but Joe just stood there with shock in his eyes and dropped to the ground. Over his carcass stood a seven foot tall creature with deer's antlers; a black bear's head, torso and forepaws; a bobcat's hind quarters; a grey squirrel's tail; and a set of eagle's wings. Fresh blood dripped from its six-inch claws.

"Joe?" Ray turns around. "What the hell!???"

Ray fires several shots at the creature before him, but it appears unaffected as it advances upon him. It rips the gun out of his hands and breaking it in half, it tosses the gun aside. Next, it grabs the cowering human by the shoulders and forces him to face the bullet wounds in its chest.

"Observe foolish white human," it growled deeply, "your weapon is useless against me!"

To Ray's horror, the wounds in the creature's chest healed before his eyes. The creature then picked Ray up off the ground by the throat with one paw and spoke:

"I am the Spirit of the Wilderness. I have slept for thousands of years only to find your raping of the land has reawakened me. You overhunt the creatures of the forest for sport instead of actual need. You strip cut the forests. You build useless weapons that can only destroy yourselves and our planet. You pollute the land, water, and air.

*And unlike the red humans before you, you never replace what you take! Of course, they only did so after I punished them the same way I shall punish your people. You and your kind shall be my reminder to the rest of the world that you can not rape the wilderness without paying for it. That payment began with your companion and shall now continue with **YOU!**"*

Game Warden Davidson had found the empty truck a few miles back down the tote road he was now following, searching for two men reported missing several days before. He eventually found them. There they were, strung up to a tree by their feet. Their bodies were gutted and clawed into their foreheads were the words -- ***JUST THE BEGINNING.***