

Étienne

How do you tell the story of a man who's like a ghost
A man with many vices and discoveries to boast
The first explorer who saw all the Great Lakes were assured
He spoke French and he spoke Huron but he never wrote a word

To find him we will have to look to those who used a pen
They mention him in passing, some don't even use his name
He's like a fire burning, then like smoke that drifts away
It's hard to find the footprints of that Étienne Brûlé

Come with me, mes amis, for I aim to pull you in
We're going in the woods to find the trail of Étienne
Round and around and around we'll go again
Grabbing bits of smoke that lead us close to Étienne

In the French town Champigny the boy named Étienne Brûlé
was born to come of age and later on to sail away
In sixteen hundred eight with Samuel de Champlain
across the ocean to a land which France had come to claim

He helped to found the village that we've come to call Quebec
The first to shoot the rapids at Lachine and don't forget
he lived among the Huron and in 1622
he was the first explorer to ever see the Sault

C'est voila, coureurs de bois, he's a French Canadienne
the first white man to reach Superior was Étienne
Come along, come along, come accuse or else defend
we're tracking down the truth about that man named Étienne

Lost and starving Étienne, he found some Senecas
They fed him, then began to pull the beard out from his jaw
For they did not believe him when he said he was their friend
They burned him and tore out his nails, then burned him once
again

When one reached out to take the Agnus Dei away from him
He shouted out that God would kill them all for that sin
Just then the sunny day became a storm that filled the sky
With that they set him free and begged him not to make them
die

He's a hero, he's a traitor, he's your enemy's best friend
come tell me one more tale about that woodsman Étienne
He was crazy for the ladies, and not much of a Christian
and he didn't care if you called him saint or sinner Étienne

Étienne was not so popular among the blackcoat priests
they said he'd gone from being a good Catholic to a beast
And even old Champlain he had good cause to hate the man
for when England took Quebec it was with help from Étienne

Brûlé went back to the bush and the village Toaniché

It was there that Étienne met his demise or so they say
The Hurons treated him just like their enemies in war
They killed him and devoured him so they could gain his power

You believe, you deny, either way you can't pretend
There's something keeps you chasing on the heels of Étienne
He goes on like a song that you think might never end
'cause once you've heard that name you can't get rid of Étienne

So tell me, mes amis, did I really pull you in
We've gone into the woods to find the trail of Étienne
Round and around and around we've gone again
Grabbing bits of smoke upon the heels of Étienne
Finding words they spoke about that mystery Étienne
Following the ghost that history calls Étienne

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