

ABBI OF THE WILDERNESS



**An Orphan's Journey
of Discovery in Canadian
Victorian Times**

A. Pääbo

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Preface

This novel project began quite innocently when my mind began to wander when I had watched a television movie of *Anne of Green Gables* for about the third time. Because I was familiar with the story by now, my imagination drifted to wondering what the orphan girl character might have been like earlier when she was in the orphanage. My mind came up with some humorous incidents in a Victorian era orphanage and that made me wonder what orphanages were like in those days. Why not look it up on the internet? By then, the world wide web was well established and it was easy to research any question I had.

Since *Anne of Green Gables* was set in the Canadian Maritimes, my internet research lead me to investigate the nature of the Canadian Maritimes in the late Victorian era. The term 'Victorian' refers to the period during which Queen Victoria of Britain ruled the British Empire. The British Empire included the British American colonies that remained after the formation of the United States. Some of these remaining British American colonies became provinces when the Dominion of Canada was founded in 1867.

From my initial questions about orphanages I became fascinated by the Victorian period of history in general as it unfolded on both sides of the Atlantic. I could see the foundations of many of our modern institutions:

The steam engine and the 'Industrial Revolution' it caused, lead the way to the use of engines and machinery in all facets of life, from manufacturing to transportation.

Railways introduced the idea of being transported without the use of horses.

Telegraphy, originally developed for managing railway traffic, layed the foundation for electronic communication and the resulting uniting of humanity on a larger scale.

Carriages and wagons pulled by horses established the numerous ways in which the horseless carriages and wagons were used, to set the stage for the later

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automobiles and trucks.

Interest in electricity stimulated by telegraphy lead not just to the telephone, but also to the light bulb and electric motors.

Electric motors introduced to horse drawn city trollies, created horseless trollies or streetcars.

And we could go on and on.

I believe that learning about this period helps us understand the origins of much of what we have today and often take for granted. One could say that the Victorian era, or more generally the Industrial Age, gave birth to the modern age as we know it today.

Because much of it began in Europe and crossed the Atlantic, in North America all these new developments tended to develop first along the eastern seaboard, and then migrate west. A novel about the Victorian Age in North America would need to be situated in the Canadian Maritimes and the American “New England”.

Meanwhile, during this time when I was doing my internet explorations, North American Native peoples were finding their voice in the media in regards to historical mistreatment, theft of land, genocide, etc. It made me also investigate the history of attitudes towards the Native peoples during the Victorian Age. The reality of that time was that governments and the church were bent on ‘civilizing’ the ‘Indians’. The view was that the ‘primitive’ way of life of the ‘Indian’ was coming to an end and the ‘Indians’ needed to be helped into the ‘modern world’. This view was not unique to North America. That was the view of Europeans to all peoples in the world who were living close to Nature. Whether in Africa, Australia, Canada, or South America, the ‘civilized’ person saw a great purpose to ‘help’ ‘primitive’ people to ‘advance’ themselves.

At the same time, in 1855, the poet, and former Harvard University professor, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow published his epic poem about the Ojibwa ‘Indians’ called *The Song of Hiawatha*. While governments and churches were seeking to benevolently extinguish the ‘Indian’, suddenly here was a popular work that celebrated and

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romanticized them! The whole English-speaking world (and beyond, when some translations were published in other languages) was enthralled by *The Song of Hiawatha*, and the traditional North American 'Indian' it depicted.

Thus in the latter half of the 1800's there were two diametrically opposite views of the 'Indian' – on the one hand the government and church view that wanted to 'save' and 'convert' the traditional 'Indian' from its 'pagan' and 'primitive' ways; and the other hand to have him remain as he was, as depicted in *The Song of Hiawatha*.

On the one hand the government established reserves and government acts to regulate 'Indian' behaviour which laid the foundations for the institutions regulating 'Indians' that exist today. On the other hand, the popular interest in the traditional Indian promoted tourism into the North American wilderness to pursue Native ways – canoeing, camping, hiking, fishing, and hunting. Thus, while governments and churches would have wanted the 'Indian' to become like Europeans as quickly as possible, the growing tourism industry wanted the Indian to continue making their traditional costumes and crafts, to be fishing and hunting guides for tourists, and to generally behave 'Indian'.

The Native of today, the 'Indian', was spared quick genocide and Longfellow's poem can take much credit for that. However, as far as concerns the poem itself, Native people themselves have always viewed the work with reservation. It was designed for the English-speaking literary culture of the time. It was not created for 'Indians'. Still, the depiction of the Indian culture was generally accurate since Longfellow used scholarly resources, notably the ethnographic investigations by Henry Schoolcraft, who had direct involvement with Ojibwa of eastern Lake Superior in the early 1800's.

The more I learned about the Victorian period, including the fame of *The Song of Hiawatha* and the treatment of the 'Indian', the more I was able to place myself into this time period and wondered if I should proceed with a tale set in this time. I had already developed some talent in story-

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telling from early artistic explorations in creating comic strip stories, and later trying to visualize television stories. I had the imagination, but very little writing experience. Should I attempt something? It was a tempting challenge. If I pursued an orphan story, what could be more appropriate than a Native girl discovering she was an orphan and setting out to discover her 'Indian' identity?

I finally decided to proceed. Not having written a novel before, I made many mistakes, and I had to rewrite it several times. Many years have passed, and I still find awkward sentences and spelling errors. The whole process has been an education in novel-writing. I think it is quite good now.

As with all authors, I developed my characters from my own experiences – creating composites from people I know or have encountered. I can see how different characters have origins in this or that person or experience, but I leave these observations to myself.

As the setting of the story, I cannot imagine I could have written the story for another location than New Brunswick around 1865–75. It had everything my novel required – large cities, wilderness, railway building, the rule of Queen Victoria, and more. Furthermore towards the south of New Brunswick several hours away by train or steamship, there was the American “New England” with Boston, Harvard University, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow – all with some role in the story.

Abbi of the Wilderness , comprises three distinct parts 1. *Growing Up in the Age of Railways*, 2. *In the Wilderness*, and 3. *The Winter Carnival*. It follows her from the beginning until she discovers who she is. I attempted to keep each part quite self-sufficient, but naturally the journey is richer if you read all the parts in sequence.

author, artist, designer, Dec 2012

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PART

1

Growing Up in the Age of Railways

Abbi was found and adopted by a regular family from colonial society in the British American northeast, specifically in New Brunswick. From Abbi's appearance, it was quite apparent that she was of Native Indian descent, but nothing else was known. Bradden Woodrow, railway engineer, and his wife Jenine raised her as if their own, and created a very interesting family in the rural town of Littleton where they were the subject of endless gossip. They soon had to move to Fredericton, where they continued their lives until a tragedy befell them.



*The late 1800's was
the Age of the Steam Locomotive*

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Abbi Arrives

THE BABY BEHIND THE CHURCH DOOR

It was in the spring of 1865 that Bradden Woodrow, a young railway engineer, recently graduated from Harvard University, and Jenine, a young woman of Littleton¹, New Brunswick, had married. Bradden had originated in New Brunswick too. He had been born and raised, in Richdale, New Brunswick, a hundred miles away, 15 minutes by carriage outside of Saint John. Richdale was a wealthy suburb associated with Saint John. And because his family was wealthy, he had grown up in the lap of luxury, being sent to private boarding schools when young, and then to the prestigious American university, Harvard, near Boston, instead of the University of New Brunswick, closer to home.

Littleton was a rural town, and all of Littleton's citizens were happy that one of their own had been chosen by this dashing man in his late 20's – tall, dark, with slightly wavy hair, and penetrating brown eyes. Why had he chosen their Jenine? Her education was limited to the local grade school. She was a country girl who only knew farming life, and part time employment in the town's hotel, or cleaning at the Littleton Church. Still, she knew how to read, and loved to read books. Her father, now deceased, had been an educated man of British Loyalist descent who had come north from New England, procured some land, and married a woman of Acadian descent.

Littleton was, well, a little town. It had been a sleepy town serving farming and logging, but now it was buzzing with activity – wagons coming and going carrying workers and railway ties to and from railway construction sites.

You see, Littleton lay on the planned path of a new

¹ Littleton and Richdale are fictional, for this story

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railway link that would connect Amherst, Nova Scotia, to Moncton, New Brunswick. Railways were new in these times. Nova Scotia had built a major railway line between Halifax and Amherst and New Brunswick had built a line between Saint John and Moncton. Both colonies had built additional tracks too, but so far, there was no way of travelling from Nova Scotia to New Brunswick. Connecting independent railway systems was the beginning of the uniting of the remaining British American colonies ever since the United States broke away from Britain, and the creating of the Dominion of Canada a few years later.

Having a railway coming through Littleton was exciting to the citizens of the Littleton area. Soon it would no longer be necessary to travel by stage coach to reach Moncton.

And it was the new railway construction that had brought Bradden Woodrow to the area. After graduating in the subjects required for railway engineering, he succeeded in being hired by the railway construction management company who was building this railway link. It was his first step in what he hoped would be a long career in the exciting world of railway building.

His first job was to go out to where the railway beds, culverts, and bridges were being constructed and with survey equipment, make sure they were done according to plan. Because it was field work, it was advantageous to be closer to the construction, instead of living in Moncton. Living in Littleton, half way along the railway route, was perfect. And it was in Littleton, while stopping for an ale at the small hotel, that he met Jenine, came to know her, and after a courtship of only half a year, decided to marry her. The question was why her? Why a young country girl so different from what he knew from his life either in the wealthy circles of his mother in Richdale, or the intellectual circles in Boston? Jenine herself wondered why he paid her so much attention. But then, she was pretty: a young woman of 18, with blue eyes, sandy blonde hair, and a rounded, womanly, figure.

Throughout the courtship, they were the subject of gossip. Everyone knew everyone else in Littleton, There wasn't much going on. There was a grist mill on the river, a small sawmill outside of town, a blacksmith, a livery,

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wagon repairs, general store with a post office, a small hotel with a tavern, a small constable's office with a room with bars to hold drunks, and of course the church that served as much for social gatherings as religi

Perhaps Bradden was attracted to the area, and to Jenine, because he was tired of cities and finery that had been his life so far. In his early years living near the large city of Saint John, he had lived with his parents in the Woodrow family mansion. Then when he went to Harvard, for close to a decade he lived as a student, returning home for short times only in summers. He had rarely seen his parents. His contact with them was mainly by letter. University life was simple, basic. A student does not need much. He lived most of the time in student dormitories. As a result he learned not to need to be surrounded by finery like there was back at home.

Originally he simply chose to pursue a degree in arts, with special interest in literature; but, inspired by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who had been a professor of languages at Harvard, and then became the famous poet who wrote *The Song of Hiawatha*, Bradden created for himself a personal pursuit of learning about the North American Native peoples, which in those days were known as "Indians". But when he graduated he saw that there was no career to be had with a mere arts degree – unless he became a teacher or professor – and he wondered what lie in his future. His parents all along expected he would simply return home with the prestige of a degree from Harvard, and take over running the Woodrow family company called the Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company. Now he was witnessing the fever of railway building that was going on everywhere in the world. He couldn't help getting caught up in the excitement of it, and decided to continue his education, gaining the required mathematics and science needed to be a railway construction civil engineer. His parents did not understand. They had always expected he would take over the company. But he continued on this new path. When he finally graduated with his second degree, now close to 30 years old, he was committed to a career in railway building. But it was at that time that his father died. His mother wanted him to take his place heading the company.

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When he returned home they had a fierce argument.

“You are our only child,” she said to him. “Who else will take over the company but you?”

“I have worked towards being a railway civil engineer for several years now, Mother. I cannot give it up now. You are only 50. You have been running the company by Father’s side for years. You can continue just fine without me, When you die, well then I will have to deal with it. In the meantime I have been dialoguing by letter with the company in Moncton that has the contract to build the link that will connect the Nova Scotia railway system to the New Brunswick system. They are interested in hiring me.”

His mother, Audora Woodrow, from whom he had obtained his dark looks, did not like this response one bit. She realized she had been partly to blame, for not including him in the operations of the company and cultivating in him an interest in wood products. The company was now three generations from its beginning, from when Bradden’s grandfather cut down tall pines in virgin forests to sent to Britain to serve as masts for the Royal Navy ships. Those tall pines were now all gone, but when his grandfather had developed his property outside of Saint John, he had preserved some original forest on a portion of his property, that still contained pine trees a hundred feet tall, so that when he built the mansion he called the property “Tall Pines”.

And now he was the third generation but interested in something else. He was now a railway engineer and when townspeople heard he was interested in their Jenine, it set tongues wagging. Why he had come here was obvious – he had been hired by the company who was constructing the railway link. His mother too was puzzled by her son’s actions. Why her? Why Jenine?

The gossip women gathered daily at Farthing General Store and it was always a topic to discuss as they selected foodstuffs from Mrs. Farthing’s shelves.

“Who is to say how people fall in love,” said one of the ladies. “He was smitten.”

“He could have had any woman, even from wealthy society,” said another.

“If you want my opinion, mere attraction is not enough. What will they even talk about if he talks about intellectual

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things, and she can only talk about how to wash laundry, or tend to a garden?”

“I agree. How can the marriage endure, he being highly educated and from a wealthy family, and she from this rural area, where nobody has much education and there is no finery.”

“His mother appears not to like it either. She didn’t even attend the wedding. And the excuse given that she was ill, I don’t believe.”

“I can imagine! She was probably expecting him to marry a young woman from high society and to live in a mansion.”

“And few people from his world came to the wedding, beyond his fellow employees in the Moncton railway company.”

“Well that aspect is easily explained. Anyone from farther way, would have to come here by stage coach from Moncton. Even coming from Saint John might require devoting two days – first the railway from Saint John to Moncton, then overnight at a hotel and then the stage coach.”

In spite of the lack of folks from Bradden’s side of the family, the wedding had been a joyful one at the small multid denominational Littleton church.



After the wedding, there had been a reception outside on the lawn. Jenine had a sister named Gwendolyn. Gwendolyn Cartsmith, married and with young children of

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her own, was happy to see her sister marry. Before meeting Bradden, Jenine had lived with them and their aged mother. Gwendolyn had brought their mother to the wedding with a wheelchair. She had suffered a stroke some time ago, and could only go places with a wheelchair. She was old too – almost 70. While she had had Gwendolyn early in life, she had had Jenine late.

It had been a sunny day and the reception had gone perfectly.

After the reception, Jenine's brother-in-law Wilbur Cartsmith, who was a wagon-maker, had taken them on a tour in his fanciest carriage, ending up at the pretty cottage that she and Bradden and Jenine had leased. This was where they would live for the foreseeable future.

It wasn't a large property – it was a section of a larger farming property. There was a wonderful view from the back yard over the valley of Littleton Creek that ran through Littleton. A white picket fence defined the borders of this parcel, and in addition to the regular gates in front, there was a small gate at the back by which one could access the semi wild meadow that sloped down towards the creek.

Bradden and Jenine agreed – the marriage had gone without a hitch. Married life began. As Bradden left for work at dawn, Jenine indulged in being in charge of her own household, after so many years living with Gwendolyn's family down the road.

It was only a few weeks after the wedding, that Abbi arrived.

As Bradden went off to work every morning, riding a horse from Wilbur's livery out to the railway construction places, Jenine was beginning her new life at the cottage, but continued some of her earlier activities, such as cleaning at the church and the adjacent reverend's cottage.

When she went there to clean, she didn't linger to say much to the gossipy ladies she met. She knew what they were gossiping about – the marvellous man she had married, and why she had chosen her.

She herself still didn't know why. His explanation had been that he didn't believe one's circumstances in life mattered in matters of love, and that marriage was about being complementary in spirit, and that raising a family

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was very basic and universal. She didn't have to understand when he spoke about mathematics, or science, or literature; and he didn't have to understand her when she spoke of how to weed the garden or treat a child's illness or whatever.

His mother of course, thought he was going mad, or that he was doing it to spite her – to rebel like young people do. Well he wasn't young anymore. Better late than never, perhaps. Was that something to do with it? No. Perhaps it was as simple as embarking on his career and deciding now was the time to get married and start a family, and he did not have any other woman in his life. Was it a matter of her being at the right place at the right time?

Recently, Bradden had received a letter from his mother, and read part of it to her.

“While I approve of you embarking on a marriage,” Bradden's mother's letter had begun, *“I do not think marrying a country girl with no formal education other than the basic one all children get, was the right choice. You live in two different worlds. What you do is up to you, but forgive me if I reserve my judgment regarding the marriage until you have proven the marriage will work, that there are children, and that you and she remain together. In any event, visiting you will be difficult until the railway to your little town is built. Should your marriage succeed, well there will be plenty of time for me to visit and meet your bride.....”*

“I don't agree with my mother's view, of course,” Bradden had said to her after reading it to Jenine. “Marriage is about complementary spirits, and domestic life and raising children is very basic. You don't need a university degree or any formal education for the basic human skills. I don't aspire to having a luxury home with servants like my mother envisioned for me. I am perfectly fine heading a household without servants or maids – a household like the one you know from your upbringing, Jenine. Not the one I know from my upbringing. You will run the family in your way, the plain way. My role is to be a railway engineer and bring home the money we will live on, and some fatherly guidance to any children. Together we will prove my mother wrong. I certainly do not feel this is a mistake. Don't worry, Mother will come around. Her

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annoyance will be short-lived.”

Today was the Monday, two weeks after the wedding. Bradden had left for work and Jenine now planned her day. Today was the day she cleaned the church. It had rained yesterday and people had tracked in some mud. And today it was raining too when she left the cottage to cross from one side of town to the other. She had the foresight to put on a raincoat in case it got worse.

The church was on an incline after you crossed the bridge where there was the old grist mill around which the town had grown. This was the case for many small towns. A mill that everyone shared, and to which everyone went, tended to be the place other shared services sprung up and presto, a town is born!

Arriving at the church, she went up a pathway to a side door of the house. Reverend Jones heard her coming, and opened the door.

“Come in Jenine. My, it is raining and blowing outside today. I hope you didn’t get too wet walking over here from your and your husband’s cottage.

“Good afternoon, Reverend Jones,” she said, hanging up her raincoat and umbrella. “I don’t mind wind and rain.”

“I know that your new husband is probably bringing in a good income, and I may not have you helping out with cleaning for much longer, but thank you for still coming.”

“I can’t give up some of my past employments and routines. But if I and Bradden begin having children, my days will be full, I’m sure.”

The cleaning supplies were in a closet near the entrance, and she went there next, as they continued conversing.

“You will be raising a family soon, I’m certain. But have you considered what you will do when the railway is completed? The work your husband has will end.”

“Perhaps he’ll work in Moncton then. When the railway is operating he can commute back and forth. But, I realize, Reverend, that if he finds work at some faraway project that is when we may have to move. We will have to bear that in mind always. Maybe to Fredericton. There is much railway building going on up there to serve the logging industry.”

Reverend Jones was in his 60s but still spry and

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healthy. He had a shaven narrow face and lean body, and straight dark hair that sometimes fell over his eyes and had to be pushed back.

Jenine by now had the mops, bucket, and cleaner in hand and was ready to head over to the church. She didn't need a raincoat for that. She would simply walk quickly from the Reverend's house to the back door of the church only ten feet away and bear the rain for only a half minute. "Well, I'll begin with the church, and then clean here in your cottage."

"That would be splendid, Jenine." A black dog appeared apparently having wakened from slumber and hearing voices. It was the reverend's companion.

Jenine dashed through the rain and wind from the house to the back door of the church, to begin her work. The rain was drumming on the roof, and she could hear the wind howling outside and rattling the shutters. It was even shaking the double doors of the front entrance. It was not the kind of weather in which anyone wanted to travel if they did not have to. When she had walked over she had only seen one wagon making a delivery of lumber, its driver practically hidden under a large hooded raincoat. The stagecoach from Amherst had clattered past as well, arriving at Littleton on schedule. Once in town it always stopped for fifteen minutes near Wilbur's livery where the horses received some attention while the passengers might get out to stretch their legs or have an ale at the hotel. The coachmen always left a bag of incoming mail on the sidewalk which was picked up by Mrs. Farthing of the General Store for the post office wicket at the back. And she always left an outgoing mail bag for the coachman to take.

Unseen by anyone, a figure approached the church, identity hidden under a hooded cape, and crept up the steps to the church's front door. The figure was carrying a basket, which it placed in front of the door. The figure retreated and hurried off.

Jenine thought she heard something outside the front doors. Putting down her mop she went to investigate, opened one half of the double doors, and found there the basket containing the baby, she estimated about four months old. She glanced one way and then the other.

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There wasn't a soul in sight. Who had left the baby?

She immediately took baby and basket and indoors into the church, closing the doors behind her. She first tried to soothe the baby, stop its crying. Then, dropping her mopping activity, she ran with the baby over to the reverend's cottage. "Reverend Jones! Reverend Jones!" she shouted as she entered. "Someone has left a baby at the church door!"

Reverend Jones came from the parlour and met her in the hall. He had a look in the basket and immediately ran out to the street, with his black dog at his heels. With wind blowing his hair all about, he looked first one way and then the other, hoping to see some receding figure. "Hello!" he shouted, his long hair tossed about by the wind. "Is anyone here? Come out! Perhaps we can help you?"

There was no response of any kind.

When Reverend Jones arrived back, Jenine had by now taken the baby to the reverend's parlour and was holding it in her arms. "It's a healthy little baby girl," she reported, "maybe only four months old. She has dark straight hair, brown eyes, and could be Indian. And look here – her shirt has the word A-B-B-I embroidered on it. It is a girl."



"I will get the town constable to search the area. They couldn't have gotten far," he decided without further ado. With his big black dog at his heels, he put on a raincoat and hastened out the front door and down the road in the

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direction of Littleton.

Jenine sat down on the reverend's couch with the baby in her arms and the basket beside her. She could now inspect it more closely and investigate what else was in the basket.

"ABBI must be your name," she spoke. "Look there's more in the basket with you under the blanket—a bottle filled with milk, all warm and ready for you. And some fresh diapers and a bib – everything a baby needs. Whoever left it, can't have left you more than five minutes ago! Would you like some milk, Abbi?"

Jenine had had experience with her sister Gwendoline's last babies, and tried to soothe it by giving her the bottle. She enjoyed this moment as much as the baby did. But it didn't last long.

The Reverend and Constable McRoy were back, both in the constable's black official-looking wagon that had a barred cubicle at the back for transporting prisoners, usually drunks from the hotel's tavern.

The constable charged in, the reverend close behind, the wet dog next.

"As you can see, Constable McRoy," said Jenine getting up and showing Abbi to him, "She is a fine healthy baby and whoever left it was considerate and left all the baby necessities like some milk and diapers."

Constable McRoy wasted no time. "I will take my wagon up and down the nearby roads to see if the person who left it is still in the area. I'll be back shortly to report what I find."

The reverend stayed, of course. He was no longer required. After putting his raincoat away, he joined Jenine and the baby in the parlour.

"I will put the kettle on the stove in the kitchen, for some tea," he said.

Abbi began to wriggle, as if wanting some exercise. Jenine set her down on the couch and sat down beside her.

While Reverend Jones and Blackie were in the kitchen, Jenine had time for reflection. She enjoyed holding Abbi. How long would it be before she and Bradden had a baby of their own? But there were hurdles to overcome. Was the gossip right? Were they really compatible? She had seen that Bradden was capable of adapting to her and the

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rural environment generally. The reverse clearly was not possible. If she visited his mother, Audora Woodrow, at the Tall Pines mansion, she wouldn't know how to behave or even how to dress. And she could not imagine how one could have a strange servant living in her household. Around here in Littleton, people might only hire someone for work to be done in the fields. For domestic chores, there were always friends and neighbours to help each other out.

After Jenine and the reverend had had some tea the constable was back.

"Aha," said the reverend, setting his cup down to open the door for him. "The constable has returned."

The constable came in dripping from the weather, and gave them his report.

"I took the wagon up and down the road. I even took stock of the passengers of the stage coach that happens to be stopped at the livery and hotel at this time of day. None of the passengers reported seeing any baby on board anytime along the journey from Amherst. I looked up every road. Whoever left the baby has simply vanished. Possibly they might still be in the area, hiding somewhere, intending to flee a little later, and I can look into that next. I can make inquiries about missing babies in this area and beyond too. In the meantime we have to care for the baby."

"I can take her for now, Constable," said Jenine. "Babies are not new to me, since my sister Gwendoline has had several, and I have tended to them when I was younger."

"Very well, I will leave the baby with you while I make further inquiries. It should not be difficult to determine if there has been a birth in the towns around about."

"About three or four months ago," said Jenine.

"Yes, a birth several months ago. It is, after all, not easy to give birth and for the neighbourhood not to know about it. I'll look into it in the next few days. At last something more interesting than dealing with the railwaymen who come into town these days to get drunk at the hotel's tavern!"

LOOKING FOR ABBI'S MOTHER

Jenine spent the rest of the afternoon completing mopping in the church, and then sweeping and dusting the reverend's cottage, all the while keeping an eye on Abbi, moving her, basket and all, wherever her cleaning activity took her. The rain let up later that afternoon, so it was a pleasant walk back home. She found it easier to carry the baby and have the basket in the crook of her arm. She was a big baby at 3 or 4 months of age and heavy.

On her way home, Jenine had to drop in at the general store to pick up the mail. Bradden corresponded with past friends and colleagues a great deal and there was always plenty of mail for him. It was also an opportunity to show Abbi to Mrs. Farthing, who ran the store and post office wicket.

"Where do you think she came from," Jenine wondered. "Abbi is a mystery."

"She looks Indian to me," said Mrs Farthing, "what with her straight dark hair, brown eyes and round face. I think I've seen a Micmac baby from the Indian village down by Fundy that looked just like her."

"It could be," replied Jenine. "Anyway, Mrs. Farthing, I will be needing some things that babies need. I can get some baby things from my sister Gwendoline who has had babies several times now. I wonder if Abbi has been introduced to any solid food yet...."

Mrs. Farthing was quick to make suggestions, as she was a mother to a 5 year old and had been through it herself.

"And don't forget Mr. Woodrow's mail," added Mrs. Farthing as Jenine was about to leave the store. "I notice he even has a letter from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the famous poet."

"Yes, Mrs. Farthing. He is acquainted with him. He had him as a professor the very first year at Harvard, and has corresponded with him on and off, discussing with him his famous poem *The Song of Hiawatha*, and about Indians in general. Bradden has had a special interest in Indians and in the poem itself ever since Mr. Longfellow published the poem back in 1855. If Abbi is an Indian girl, well that would be an interesting coincidence."

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Jenine added the mail to the things in the basket, departed for the main street, carrying Abbi in her arms and all the things she bought in the basket in the crook of her arm. It was all pretty heavy. Tomorrow, she needed to get the old baby carriage Gwendolyn had in storage.

Bradden arrived home at sunset, looking quite soiled from the mud and rain he had experienced that day. He put his surveying equipment and notebooks in the corner of the entry, went out back to remove his muddy clothes and get into fresh ones. Then he returned inside and proceeded to the kitchen where he found his wife cooking.

“Look what we have acquired, Bradden,” said Jenine, showing him the baby in the basket on a table. “Someone left her behind the church door. I offered to keep her while Constable McRoy searches for her mother. Her name is ‘Abbi’ according to the letters on her shirt.”

Bradden was exhausted from a hard day in the rain, and wanted nothing better than getting some rest in the big upholstered chair, and having some supper. No time to think about babies left behind church doors right now. He left the matter all to Jenine.

The next day, after Bradden had left for work, Jenine took the baby over to show her sister Gwendoline. She, her husband Wilbur and their several children lived further out of town, about a half mile in the other direction. It was about a 10 minute walk.

Her sister, Gwendoline naturally fussed over the baby. What woman wouldn't? They showed it to their mother too, who held her for a while. However, because of her stroke a couple years ago, she could not speak but a few words in French. She was of Acadian origins, while her husband had been of British Loyalist origins. Both Gwendoline and Jenine knew some Acadian, but they had been primarily raised in English, since that was the language of the Littleton area as well as the language of their father.

They then had tea at the kitchen table and caught up on all the news since they last saw each other.

“I have been working on developing a garden around our cottage,” said Jenine to Gwendoline. “Unfortunately it isn't a very large property – just a section of the larger farm that was hard to plow that the farmer leases out as a residence. It is large enough for a vegetable garden and

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some fruit trees and berry bushes, but not large enough to maintain any farm animals like chickens or a cow, or for that matter horses. Thankfully Wilbur runs a livery in the center of town, and Bradden can get a horse from him for riding out to the construction sites or wherever he has to go with his surveying equipment to take measurements.”

“Wilbur is making lots of money serving the railway construction requirements,” said Gwendoline. “He has even had to look for trained wagon horses to handle from farms around the area. Much work is to be had from the railway construction. But making money is not always enough in life. Wilbur dreams of one day living close to a large city and build fancy carriages for city folk. It is more creative and challenging, Maybe someday....”

After tea and conversation, Jenine was anxious to show the baby off some more to people around here.

“Can I borrow the baby carriage you have somewhere in storage, Gwendoline?” Jenine wondered. “A three or four month old baby is somewhat heavy. It would be very helpful to put her into a baby carriage when I go into town to fetch the mail or buy foodstuffs from Mrs. Farthing.”

“Of course, Jenine! Let’s go search. There may be other things Abbi can use as well while she is in your care.”

Gwendoline was taller and leaner than Jenine. She was also decades older, and almost like a mother to Jenine. She still liked to advise Jenine on all kinds of matters, and now did not hesitate to teach her how to take care of the baby. Perhaps it was this natural tendency towards mothering Jenine that made Jenine not want to stay too long. While she appreciated the advice from her big sister, she didn’t always enjoy her giving it.

They found the wicker carriage, dusted and cleaned it off, and soon Jenine was on her way back towards town with Abbi in it. She would pick up mail again and buy something more from the store, while the gossipy ladies of town milled around the carriage oogling at the baby.

“Mrs, Farthing said she looks like an Indian girl,” said one.

“Yes, I think so too,” said another.

“How do you know? Maybe she is from some other people. Asian maybe.”

“No anyone can see she is obviously Indian.”

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“Besides, there are no Asians around here. Most of us around here are from Irish ancestors.”

“There are some Acadians too. Acadians are dark.”

“But they don’t have such round headed babies.”

“And she has high cheekbones. Indians tend to have high cheekbones.”

“Ladies, ladies,” exclaimed Jenine as she returned with her purchases and Bradden’s mail to the carriage. “The answer will come when the constable finds the mother. I’m sure he’ll even investigate at the Indian village at the Bay of Fundy.”

At least, thought Jenine, the babies now had something else to gossip about than her mysterious husband and why he married her, and whether or not their marriage will fail.

During the week the constable was doing his investigations, Jenine took Abbi with her wherever she had to go, and she showed the baby to everyone they met. Soon everyone knew about Abbi’s arrival. Everyone was wondering if she was Indian, and why her mother had to give her up.

“Maybe she had too many children by now, and couldn’t support one more,” someone said.

“Maybe she had her by accident and couldn’t raise her by herself,” was another theory.

“One thing is for sure,” said a third, “she left with her some milk and diapers. She must have been very concerned and caring.”

“Why leave it at the church here in Littleton? Why not another town?”

“Maybe because we are a good community,”

“Or maybe she was from the area and couldn’t afford to travel far.”

“I guess we won’t know until the constable has done his investigations.”

“He seems happy to have something else to do than round up drunk railway workers on Saturdays.”

“Don’t the railwaymen live at the construction sites? They have tent villages there.”

“Those are the labourers that they bring in from the unemployed in big cities. Usually family men to earn money for their immigrant families. The supervisors and such, like those from the engineering company like

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Bradden Woodrow can live closer and come and go from home if not too far.”

“Ladies, ladies,” said Jenine, breaking up the chatter yet again. “We’ll know soon.”

Jenine made a point of dropping in now and then to Constable McRoy’s small office on the main street from time to time to inquire if he had made any progress in his inquiries.

Constable McRoy had a very small building next to the blacksmith. It had a small office and a single cell, which was most of the time used to hold men who had consumed too much drink at the hotel tavern, in order to sleep it off. Keeping the peace in this town was mostly about taking care of drunkenness, and Constable McRoy appreciated having a challenging assignment this time – to determine the origins of a baby.

“I’m sorry, Jenine,” he said when Jenine came in. “Nothing yet. I have sent a number of letters of inquiry out to neighbouring jurisdictions. It will take a while before I have responses from them all.”

Jenine was both happy and sad – sad that he had not discovered anything, but happy to have Abbi a while longer.

She made a point in dropping in on the constable once or twice a week. But after a month, he had discovered nothing more.

“Sorry, Mrs. Woodrow. I have continued to correspond with various police departments in various places, but nowhere is there any evidence of a baby being reported missing. I also took my wagon to two more Mikmaq villages to see if any baby of about three months old was missing. Nothing seemed amiss anywhere from Moncton to Amherst and further. I inquired from churches and social services agencies usually connected with churches. Nothing.”

“Nothing? How do you explain that?”

“I conclude, Mrs. Woodrow, that whoever left the baby probably came from outside the area. They had to part with the baby and quite deliberately looked for the best place to leave it – a nice rural place – and thought this area was perfect. She probably designed it that a young couple would adopt the baby and give it a good life in the Littleton

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area. If she is Indian, well many Indian villages are suffering from poverty and so leaving it in an Indian village is not necessarily the good choice; and if she left the baby in a large city, it'd wind up in an asylum orphanage and then who knows where she'd end up next? I think, Jenine, the mother deliberately chose the Littleton area, expecting someone here would adopt her, and then she would know it would have a good life. There is prosperity here, on account of the railway construction, and will continue to prosper once the railway comes through here. Having decided to leave Abbi here, she went to a great deal of trouble to prevent being tracked down too!"

"It seems logical," replied Jenine, "that she didn't leave Abbi on impulse but had it all planned out. Her leaving things with Abbi in the basket demonstrated that she had her best interest at heart. But what now?"

"Perhaps you and Mr. Woodrow would like to continue to look after her, to be her adoptive parents. How do you feel about that?"

"I have talked it over with Bradden, and we would be happy to adopt her and raise her. We have been planning to start a family. If it appears the mother deliberately wanted Abbi to join this community, it would go against the mother's wishes if she doesn't stay here in Littleton. My husband asked me, supposing the mother realizes she had made a great mistake, would I be prepared to give her up again, if the mother returned maybe months or years in the future? I told him it would be difficult, but if I can empathize with the mother and her original plight, I guess yes. I suppose I will just have to keep in the back of my mind, the possibility. But in the meantime, we'd be happy to adopt Abbi."

"Well then, I will put it in my records that Abbi has been adopted by Jenine and Bradden Woodrow of Littleton."

"Constable McRoy, if you must put down a name for her in the formal records, let's call her 'Abigail Woodrow', 'Abbi' for short, since that was what was embroidered on her shirt."

"I can do that, yes,"

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THE SONG OF HIAWATHA

And so began Abbi's life as a member of the Woodrow family of Littleton.

Jenine, who had never had a child before, and now wanted many children, spent her days happily looking after Abbi. She had her nearby all the time – at home when she did the housekeeping chores, later when she went to visit her sister Gwendoline up the road, and then back at home where she did some gardening. Towards the afternoon she pushed Abbi in the wicker baby carriage into town, where there were always people who gave Abbi their attention and spoke adoringly of the little “Indian” baby.

She went regularly to Farthing's General Store to pick up some foodstuffs she needed for that evenings dinner, and the mail from the post office wicket at the back.

After some exchanges of conversation with Mrs. Farthing and others in the store, she might drop in at Gwendoline's husband's Wilbur's business, which was called *Cartsmith and Son Livery and Wagon Repair*. That was where people went, either to obtain a horse to ride or to pull a wagon, or to have a broken axle or wheel on their wagon or buggy repaired. She could always rely on Wilbur to provide her or Bradden with a horse or wagon if they had to go somewhere more distant that could not be reached by walking. The railway construction contracting company was leasing horses and wagons from Wilbur for use on the railway construction, and during these times Wilbur was more busy than ever. The construction company had hired him to find and supply them with strong wagons capable of carrying railway ties, rails, and lumber along the rough dirt road out to the railway construction sites, and the required work horses needed to pull the carts. Yes he and his older sons and hired help were very busy these days!

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The pretty stone cottage which Bradden and Jenine had leased was an old single story cottage, made of stone, and there was much ivy climbing the walls, There were also rose bushes against the wall as well, and a nice tall elm tree in front. Jenine worked on a large garden in the back where she had planted vegetables in spring soon after they moved in. She took vegetables to her sister, and her sister gave her eggs and milk from their chickens and cow. Gwendoline's family lived on the original family property, which was large enough for farm animals. It was an additional place Wilbur could keep horses for his livery business. And there were old broken down wagons lying around that yard too.

While Jenine busied herself around her cottage and the Littleton area, Bradden was at work at various construction sites along the route of the railway that would connect Moncton to Amherst. He made his way out to the construction sites at first light.

Jenine and Bradden rose before the sun had fully risen, had breakfast and then Bradden took up his case of surveying equipment and notebooks, and headed to work. He procured a horse from Wilbur's livery – he had a key to enter, since it was too early for Wilbur and his workers to be there – and rode it out from where the future railway station would be, along a roughly constructed road that followed the path of the future track. While a few other men of the company made journeys to the sites as needed, most of the men hired for the construction, the labourers, lived in tent camps close to the construction sites. The labourers were hired from unemployment lines in various cities and would spend the summer swinging pickaxes and heaving shovels. They were grateful for the work, for by the end of the summer they could return to their families with nice paychecks.

Bradden, on the other hand, and other engineers working for the construction contracting company, were permanent employees. He worked with other engineers to first design the route of the rails, and various bridges and culverts, and then ensure that everything was built according to plan. The latter was what Bradden, as a starting engineer, did, to begin with, as he took his survey equipment out to the sites and compared what the plans

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required with what was actually being constructed, and when necessary required small changes. He was also qualified to design bridges and culverts, but that was work more suited for the winter months in a warm office, when most construction was stopped.

Jenine didn't know very much about what her husband did, however – unless he explained something to her. She mainly knew him as the husband came home very dirty when the sun came down, and needed to wash up and change his clothes before they had supper by the light of the oil lamps that hung over the dining room table.

Soon Abbi was old enough for a high chair and porridge or mashed potatoes, and was part of the early breakfast and late supper. Her early and late hours were made up by her napping a great deal during the day when Jenine did her chores.

On the weekend there were other routines. Bradden had weekend days free, during which time he caught up with his reading and writing. He continued correspondence by post with friends and acquaintances from his scholarly past. Mrs. Farthing continued to be amazed at the amount of mail coming and going from him.

Sunday was the time for meeting friends and neighbours from the local community. In all small towns, the church was where the community met and socialized. Bradden did not know how to fit in with these rural people, but Jenine took charge of social interactions with them. He followed her lead. Fortunately, when Abbi had arrived, most attention was on Abbi.

In general the Woodrow family of Littleton stood out. Little towns did not normally have a university graduated engineer living among them, especially one who had chosen a plain country girl as a wife. There was much speculation about the reasons for it.

“It is obvious,” said one of the gossip ladies in town, when the subject of the Woodrow family came up again. “He decided to live in Littleton because he could reach the railway construction places from the middle of the route easily, instead of traveling all the way down from Moncton or up from Amherst, and having to spend nights away. This way most of the time he can go to work early in the morning and return as the sun went down. He uses a horse

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from his brother-in-law's livery. If you get up early in the morning, you might catch a glimpse of him going into Wilbur Cartright's livery stables, saddling a horse, and heading out in the morning sunlight along the rough road that the construction people use to transport lumber and railway ties, that follows along the path of the railway."

"But," countered another of the gossip ladies, "why would he marry Jenine, when he comes from a wealthy family and is educated in one of the most famous universities? If you ask me, it was for convenience that he married locally. Wait until the railway is done and he has to work elsewhere? Will the marriage continue?"

"I think so," said a third gossip lady in this group who were huddled together in the general store. "You can see how they love one another. I tend to think it will endure."

"But I don't think his own relatives and friends from where he came from are very optimistic. Look how few of them came to the wedding. Even his mother didn't come - only sending gifts, and claiming to have come down with the fever."

"But it could be because it is difficult to come from anywhere far, when the only way to get here is by stage coach or your own wagon. That will excuse many of them not coming."

"We have to watch that marriage, that's what we have to do," concluded one of them.

Contrary to what the pessimists predicted, Bradden and Jenine's marriage continued. The years flew by and the Woodrow family in the little cottage was very much a part of the community, as was little Abbi. There was no evidence that there was any marital difficulty. Moreover, soon Jenine was pregnant.

Yes Bradden and Jenine were excited their family was growing. And it would continue to grow. Jenine gave birth to a new baby boy by the time Abbi was a year and a half old. They called him Mark. It was when Bradden's mother heard that she had become a grandmother, that her feelings about Bradden's marriage and his unexpected and seemingly defiant choices in life changed. Up to then, Abbi had not counted. She had seen the adopting of Abbi as an act of charity, and had felt no connection with her. Now the arrival of Mark not only represented a grandson with

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her blood in his veins, but also hope. About a year later there was another son and Grandmama Audora was even more delighted. Here, she thought, were two boys who might take an interest in the Woodrow Timber Millwork and Manufacturing Company if her son Bradden never wavered in his career in railway engineering.

Now Audora Woodrow began making several trips a year to visit her son's family in Littleton to indulge in her grandsons. But she hated to waste valuable time; so she would line up business meetings in Moncton, take a hotel room there, and time it so that she would travel down to Littleton early Sunday morning, spend the day sitting in the wicker garden furniture in her son's back yard, indulging in her grandson(s), and conversing with her son over tea. Come afternoon, she would return to Moncton, to her hotel room there, spend the night, meet business appointments the next day and then return home to Tall Pines.

She definitely had to have a hotel room in Moncton. Staying overnight in the small rural stone cottage was out of the question. Nonetheless, there were occasions such as in winter at Christmas where she was forced to stay overnight and tried to tolerate the austere surroundings and simple life her son had chosen for raising his family.

She tried to keep to herself the fact that she could not understand the reasoning behind her son's choices. Her own life involved living in the mansion at Tall Pines, surrounded by household staff, and being taken daily to and from her offices in Saint John, a 15 minute carriage ride away. She had a gardener, a coachman, some stable boys, a cook, and some servants for cleaning. She couldn't understand why Bradden was happy in a small leased cottage and had absolutely no staff at all. Bradden explained:

"Jenine would feel uncomfortable having a paid stranger in the house. Here neighbours help each other out. In her case, her sister's family is just a ten minute walk up the road. Besides our cottage is too small. There is no place to accommodate a live-in employee."

When Bradden and his mother chatted, they were usually out in the garden in the wicker garden furniture – there was a table for tea there too. But Jenine felt out of

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place with them. She felt uncomfortable in Audora's presence and left Bradden and Audora alone.

"I have to admit, Bradden, that you have so far proven me wrong," said Audora during one visit, when they sat out in the garden. "I did not expect the marriage to last a year, but it has, and here are now children of your own as proof of it. I am surprised."

"Yes, Mother. I happen to believe that marriage is between personalities, spirits. Being compatible is all that is required. The differences in backgrounds are merely practical matters that work themselves out on a day-to-day basis. I don't try to act like the rural folks, nor does Jenine try to pretend to be from an upper educated class. We act as we are and let the townspeople gossip as much as they want."

"Well I hope you are right. "

In the course of her growing up, Abbi gradually learned more and more about Bradden, the man who she knew as 'Papa'. She was far too young to understand what it meant to be adopted, and so she was, to all intents and purposes, a full member of the family.

Because Bradden, like his mother, had dark brown hair and brown eyes, from a distance Abbi could be construed by strangers as being his daughter. It was only when one was up close to her, that one saw features that seemed Indian – if one was looking for them. Bradden and Jenine had in her early years considered the possibility that Abbi was not really 'Indian', but had come from dark Europeans or even Asians. Whereupon Bradden did some investigating, and finally concluded that Abbi's face had some uniqueness to it characteristic of the Algonquian peoples – that is, the Indians of the northeast quadrant of North America which included Mikmaq, Maliseet, Innu, Algonquin, Ojibwa, Cree.

"These tribes have cultures and languages that are all dialects of each other," explained Bradden to Jenine one time. "When people spread and separate from one another their languages develop in their own unique ways into dialects, and in the long run the dialects become so different they are considered distinct but related languages. They will still have similarities in many words, grammatical structure, and also in the culture. For

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example, many Mikmaq customs local to this area are similar to that of the Ojibwa way out at Lake Superior. Abbi, I would say, is of the Algonquian race, which tends towards the high cheekbones and broader face. If we consider her to have originated nearby, that would mean either the Mikmaq around here or the Maliseet living on the Saint John River.”

“I am amazed, Bradden, you know so much about Indians. And as providence would have it, an Indian girl has been placed in our care.”

In his original pursuit of literature and languages, Bradden had taken a great interest in the work of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, author of *The Song of Hiawatha*. He had discovered that Longfellow had drawn from the real-world accounts of a man named Henry Rowe Schoolcraft who had, as ‘Indian agent’ at the north end of Lake Michigan, on the American side of Sault Ste Marie, learned a great deal about the Ojibwa of the area and of Lake Superior thanks to his role as ‘Indian agent’, as well as his marrying a half-Ojibwa woman. Bradden had studied the books by Henry Schoolcraft to learn the truth about the Ojibwa described by Longfellow. He discovered that in his design of *The Song of Hiawatha*, Longfellow had taken his references to Ojibwa culture and stories from the writings of Henry Schoolcraft. While Schoolcraft described the legends in relation to various independent characters and locations, Longfellow had applied them to the few featured characters in his poem, especially the central character, Hiawatha. The hero Hiawatha, Bradden found, was contrived from two sources – a real Iroquoian leader who united the Iroquois nations, and the mythological Nanabozhoo of the Ojibwa nations. In the actual structure of his poem, however, Longfellow had borrowed a little from the Finnish folk poetry called *Kalevala*. In any event *The Song of Hiawatha* had made Longfellow famous on both sides of the Atlantic, and one could find boys putting feathers in their hair and making bows and arrows in England or Germany as much as in North America. It also promoted wilderness tourism.

As the railways were developed to reach the natural resources of the wilderness, tourism was not far behind. Railway companies also operated steamship lines, and one

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could take a train to Lake Michigan, and then board a steamship that went to the north end of Lake Michigan, the land of the people depicted in *The Song of Hiawatha*.

The Song of Hiawatha, thus celebrated and promoted a new romantic view of the 'Indian'. Owing to its popularity, excerpts from it were included in school readers. Thus, Jenine had learnt a little about *The Song of Hiawatha* in the local school.

"The class memorized some of the part about Hiawatha's childhood, Bradden," said Jenine at one dinnertime as she tended to Abbi who was now two and a half. "I may still remember some.... I'll sing it to Abbi."

*By the shores of Gitche Gumee'
By the shining Big-Sea-Water,
Stood the wigwam of Nokomis,
Daughter of the Moon, Nokomis.
Dark behind it rose the forest,
Rose the black and gloomy pine-trees,
Rose the firs with cones upon them;
Bright before it beat the water,
Beat the clear and sunny water,
Beat the shining Big-Sea-Water.*

*There the wrinkled old Nokomis
Nursed the little Hiawatha,
Rocked him in his linden cradle,
Bedded soft in moss and rushes,
Safely bound with reindeer sinews;
Stilled his fretful wail by saying,
'Hush! the Naked Bear will hear thee!'
Lulled him into slumber, singing,
'Ewa-yea! my little owlet!
Who is this, that lights the wigwam?
With his great eyes lights the wigwam?
Ewa-yea! my little owlet!'*

*Many things Nokomis taught him
Of the stars that shine in heaven;
Showed him Ishkoodah, the comet,
Ishkoodah, with fiery tresses;
Showed the Death-Dance of the spirits,
Warriors with their plumes and war-clubs,
Flaring far away to northward
In the frosty nights of Winter;*

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*Showed the broad white road in heaven,
Pathway of the ghosts, the shadows,
Running straight across the heavens,
Crowded with the ghosts, the shadows.*

“How does it continue, Bradden. When I was younger and in the local school, I memorized the entire chapter.”

“That was very good. It continues like this,” replied Bradden.

*“At the door on summer evenings
Sat the little Hiawatha;
Heard the whispering of the pine-trees,
Heard the lapping of the waters,
Sounds of music, words of wonder;
‘Minne-wawa!’ said the Pine-trees,
‘Mudway-aushka!’ said the water.*

*Saw the fire-fly, Wah-wah-taysee,
Flitting through the dusk of evening,
With the twinkle of its candle
Lighting up the brakes and bushes,
And he sang the song of children,
Sang the song Nokomis taught him:
‘Wah-wah-taysee, little fire-fly,
Little, flitting, white-fire insect,
Little, dancing, white-fire creature,
Light me with your little candle,
Ere upon my bed I lay me,
Ere in sleep I close my eyelids!’*

*Saw the moon rise from the water
Rippling, rounding from the water,
Saw the flecks and shadows on it,
Whispered, ‘What is that, Nokomis?’
And the good Nokomis answered:
‘Once a warrior, very angry,
Seized his grandmother, and threw her
Up into the sky at midnight;
Right against the moon he threw her;
’T is her body that you see there.’*

*Saw the rainbow in the heaven,
In the eastern sky, the rainbow,
Whispered, ‘What is that, Nokomis?’
And the good Nokomis answered:
‘T is the heaven of flowers you see there;*

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*All the wild-flowers of the forest,
All the lilies of the prairie,
When on earth they fade and perish,
Blossom in that heaven above us.'*

*When he heard the owls at midnight,
Hooting, laughing in the forest,
'What is that?' he cried in terror,
'What is that,' he said, 'Nokomis?'
And the good Nokomis answered:
'That is but the owl and owlet,
Talking in their native language,
Talking, scolding at each other.'*

*Then the little Hiawatha
Learned of every bird its language,
Learned their names and all their secrets,
How they built their nests in Summer,
Where they hid themselves in Winter,
Talked with them whene'er he met them,
Called them 'Hiawatha's Chickens.'*

*Of all beasts he learned the language,
Learned their names and all their secrets,
How the beavers built their lodges,
Where the squirrels hid their acorns,
How the reindeer ran so swiftly,
Why the rabbit was so timid,
Talked with them whene'er he met them,
Called them 'Hiawatha's Brothers.'"*

"You certainly seem to know a great deal about *The Song of Hiawatha*, Bradden."

"Indeed! I know many of the verses by heart, from reciting it so much. I and my schoolmate Sandy back in university even had the privilege of attending a fancy touring production of the poem in a Boston theatre. It was to do research for a student theatrical that was a satire about the poem and the romantic ideas it has created. Anyway, the production dramatized the words of the poem with actors, and special effects. It was a touring production that had gone to many major cities reachable by railway. It was very well done, and the production remained in Boston for a month or so before it went on to New York. It had started in New York and then ended in New York. I must tell you more about it sometime."

2. *Abbi Gets Settled*

“Was it authentic-looking? Did the Indians look like the real Indians? Very often it is actors dressed up.”

“From my knowledge about Indians, I think yes, the designer of the production seems to have consulted Schoolcraft’s books and tried to be as authentic as possible. They tried to have Indians in the cast, but Indians do not exactly pursue a career in the theatre, so most I think were dark complexioned actors from French, Mediterranean, Spanish, or even Asian backgrounds. But the advertising claimed they had an authentic Indian in the cast. I met many of the cast when the university theatrical company went ahead with our suggested student production related to *The Song of Hiawatha*, and we spoke to them for ideas, even loaning costumes. I believe that there is as much variety in the faces of Indians as there are in the faces of dark Europeans and it is only their cultural behaviour that sets them apart. We are all the same underneath. I would not be able to tell a woman is Indian if she spoke and acted like we do, and wore our clothing. And that may be the case with Abbi when she is grown. She will behave like us, according to our culture, and people will not guess she was Indian, unless told she was, in which case they will look more closely and say ‘Oh yes, I can see it....’ whether they really can or not.”

“Hiawatha!” said Abbi, finding it an interesting word. “Yes, Abbi. You are our little Hiawatha!”

Abbi was too young to understand discussions between Papa and Mama at the dinner table but found them at least entertaining.

“Still,” continued Jenine, “Abbi will have to be told, and then she will be interested in her origins. I am so glad you know about Indians, Bradden. That means you can teach Abbi about the Indians so that when she is old enough to be told how we got her, we will be ready. Imagine if someone else around here had gotten Abbi. What would they know about Indians? Yes, Abbi, you have a Harvard scholar for a Papa, who first studied all about languages and literature, then studied railway engineering, and all along learned about Indians on his own. Is it possible, Bradden, that whoever gave her knew about your knowledge about Indians and that I worked at the church?”

“I did tell the reporter who was writing about the

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progress of the railway link between Moncton and Amherst, about my having first pursued a degree in arts, and was interested in *The Song of Hiawatha*. There might have been a sentence in the article mentioning it. But it isn't good to speculate. It would be best to consider it God's doing. It is good to interpret coincidences that turn out well to be God's work, and coincidences that turn out badly to be Satan's work."

Bradden's interest in Indians had not ceased since those days as a university student. He continued to study the books in his study, especially the major works by Henry Schoolcraft. Schoolcraft had become famous for his revelations about Indian cultures, and had been commissioned by the government to write a series of books about the Indians of North America in general. There was plenty to study for Bradden, whenever he could get his hands on those books.

Mrs. Farthing at the general store and post office wicket could see from the correspondence that Bradden was quite involved with scholarly issues.

"My, my," said Mrs. Farthing to Jenine one day. "Your husband is quite a scholar, still, even after working as a railway engineer now several years."

"He has always been like that, Mrs. Farthing. He created a study in the smaller room next to our dining room, put a large oak desk in there, and turned an entire wall into bookshelves. While I developed my garden, he developed his study. Last year he fetched all his books and even some boyhood things that were at Tall Pines, where he grew up. He had an old stuffed beaver for example, which he brought here. It now sits like a sentry on top of his desk watching over everything. Every evening after supper, he retires to his study for an hour or two, to read, take care of his correspondence, and generally pursue his other passions like poetry. But he doesn't withdraw from his family. His door is open and his children can interrupt him at any time. If Abbi comes, he will then put Abbi in his lap and teach her things. Now I am in need of some cinnamon. Do you have any cinnamon Mrs. Farthing?"

"I sure do. Let me get it for you. How much of it would you like?"

3

Abbi's Littleton Life

LIFE IN THE WOODROW FAMILY

In the midst of it Abbi's growing up, the Dominion of Canada was born. As of 1867, the British American colonies of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, were now a single country, and one of the consequences of this union was a plan to join up the railway systems in each province to form an Intercolonial Railway. So far the Maritime provinces, formerly colonies, had been quite separated from Ontario and Quebec owing to lack of transportation connection, aside from steamships going up the Saint Lawrence. Thus a new Intercolonial railway track connecting New Brunswick to Quebec was the main challenge. That meant a railway link was to be built from Moncton towards Riviere du Loup in Quebec. In charge of this project was a man named Sandford Fleming. Bradden was very interested in working for him, when the Moncton-Amherst railway link was completed.

And now it was 1871. Abbi was nearly 6, Mark was 4, Jimmy was 2, and a new baby boy they had named Jack or Jacques was close to 1 year. The children, all four of them, occupied one of two bedrooms in the upstairs of their Littleton cottage. Bradden went up there to read to them from *The Song of Hiawatha* when they were ready for bed. Even if the younger children did not understand, they were inspired by their father's dramatic reading. It seemed exciting.

"From where should I read today?" he asked one evening. "The poem has 22 chapters. I will enumerate them: After the introduction there are 1-*Peace Pipe* 2-*The Four Winds*, 3-*Hiawatha's Childhood*, 4-*Hiawatha and Mudjekeewis*, 5-*Hiawatha's Fasting*, 6-*Hiawatha's Friends*, 7-*Hiawatha's Sailing*, 8-*Hiawatha's Fishing*, 9-*Hiawatha and the Pearl-Feather*, 10-*Hiawatha's Wooing*,

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11-Hiawatha's Wedding-Feast, 12-The Son of the Evening Star, 13-Blessing the Cornfields, 14-Picture-Writing, 15-Hiawatha's Lamentation, 16-Pau-Puk-Keewis, 17-The Hunting of Pau-Puk-Keewis, 18-The Death of Kwasind, 19-The Ghosts, 20-The Famine, 21-The White Man's Foot, 22-Hiawatha's Departure. Where shall I read from this time, children?"

"We want to hear about when Hiawatha was a boy again," said Mark.

"Very well, I don't know how many times I have read it, but Chapter 3 it is, once again. This time think about what it says, and don't just listen to my act of recitation:"

It was the same chapter that Jenine had learned in school. Bradden was amazed at how popular it was – perhaps it was because of the simplicity of it. But to his children, it was also because it was about Hiawatha as a child growing up which they could relate to.

*“By the shores of Gitche Gumee,
By the shining Big-Sea-Water,
Stood the wigwam of Nokomis,
Daughter of the Moon, Nokomis.
Dark behind it rose the forest,
Rose the black and gloomy pine-trees,
Rose the firs with cones upon them;
Bright before it beat the water,
Beat the clear and sunny water,
Beat the shining Big-Sea-Water.
There the wrinkled old Nokomis
Nursed the little Hiawatha,
Rocked him in his linden cradle,
Bedded soft in moss and rushes,
Safely bound with reindeer sinews;.....”*

"Oh Papa!" interjected Abbi from her bed. "That sounds so romantic – an old grandmother holding little baby Hiawatha in a cradle with soft mosses and rushes for his bedding.. I suppose Nokomis was more like Mama's mother, Grandmama Marie, who is quite old and wrinkled, and not like Grandmama Audora who is still quite young."

"Gitche Gumee!" shouted Jimmy, who was still only two years old. The littlest of their boys couldn't understand anything, but responded to the rhythm and tone of their Papa's dramatic manner of reading.

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"Yes, Jimmy. That refers to Lake Superior, the largest of the Great Lakes."

Here in Bradden Woodrow was an educated man, who wished to share his 'educatedness', and as a result much knowledge passed to his children over the course of their upbringing.

Townpeople noticed.

As a result of Bradden's education and origins all his children developed good manners, dressed well, spoke well. They had to wash up, tidy their clothes and comb their hair before they came to the dinner table. And there was a tablecloth on the dinner table, and proper cutlery and dishes. Bradden taught them all how to eat properly, just as he had been taught.

"You are all human beings," he would say, "not apes. You have intelligence and culture, and have to show it, so as not to be mistaken for apes."

"What do apes act like, Papa," Mark might ask.

"They act just like humans when humans have no intelligence or culture. It is the only thing that distinguishes us from them, as Charles Darwin says."

"Who is Charles Darwin, Papa?" wondered Abbi.

"He's a fellow who finds a good case for a theory that humans descended from apes. If that is the case, then it is wise we move forward and not regress to where we came from."

"Yes Papa."

"Would you like some more potatoes, Mark?" Jenine interjected, seeing he had eaten his potatoes already.

"Only if they are covered with gravy, Mama," he replied.

"Say 'Yes, please, Mama,' said Bradden. Say 'If it is no trouble could I have some gravy on top.' Say it or Mama will not give it."

"Alright Papa. Yes, please, Mama. Your potatoes are delicious. I would enjoy some more, and could I please have some gravy on top."

"That's better, Mark," said their Papa.

Because Abbi was the oldest, townspeople saw the children's' manners first of all in Abbi. As she grew, around town, she was always well dressed, courteous, and very articulate for her age, compared to the regular rural

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children of the area. It was the subject of gossip.

“Good afternoon, Mrs. Farthing,” Abbi would say when they visited the general store. “I hope you and your family are well.” She was actually imitating Bradden who was, in her mind her Papa. She had no idea at this early stage that she had been adopted.

“My word,” whispered the gossip ladies in the corner, with their straw shopping bags. “that little girl is so articulate. You wouldn’t believe words like that could come out of a girl so young and who looks so Indian. It’s her adoptive Papa, that’s what!”

“He’s Harvard educated, you know,” whispered the other one back, “and knows about literature, languages, and such from his first degree, before he took a degree for engineering. All his children are like that. Whenever they come into town they are so well dressed and articulate! I dare say they speak more clearly and intelligently than any of the children of the farm workers or loggers around here.”

“Yes! But especially the Indian girl. She is so chatty and speaks so well. No bad grammar, and she hasn’t even started school!”

And that was not all. Bradden also taught his children to read and write as soon as they showed interest. When they came to investigate him when he was in his study at home, he would take whoever came into his study onto his lap, put his correspondence or reading aside, take a blank sheet of paper and teach some letters of the alphabet.

Once again, because Abbi was two years older than anyone else, the reading and writing skills appeared first in her.

One day, Abbi appeared to read the headlines in a newspaper on the counter in the general store.

“Mama, the newspaper says they are talking about maybe building a railway across Canada.”

“Yes, maybe it is Papa’s friend, Sandford Fleming, who he works for now, who is speaking about it. Papa will be coming home with that paper, so he will see it. You can then discuss it with him if it interests you. Now go and see that Mark and Jimmy are not stealing anything from Mrs. Farthings bins, while I give Mrs. Farthing another handful of Papa’s letters.”

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It was a large general store, with shelves everywhere, counters all around, and some barrels with apples and potatoes in them. Mark and Jimmy were always attracted to the counter with the penny candies. It became Abbi's job to keep them in line.

"My word!" said the gossip ladies who happened to be nearby and heard. "The Indian girl has read the headlines on that newspaper page. And she is only five and a half! It's Jenine's husband's influence again. The Harvard-educated man who is the railway engineer, they say a senior one now. Now that the Amherst-Moncton connection is done, he is working with the Intercolonial people in their Moncton office."

"The Intercolonial line?"

"The line that connects Moncton to the Quebec and Ontario railways. It should now be called Interprovincial Railway, since we just became the Dominion of Canada and the colonies became provinces just a few years ago."

"You are changing the subject, Myrtle. We are talking about how precocious all their children are! Pretty soon that smart Indian girl will be reading and writing better than my husband!"

THE AMAZING COVER

Now working in the offices of the Intercolonial Railway in Moncton, Bradden was happily continuing to work in the area, and the family could postpone moving away from Littleton a little longer. He was now commuting to Moncton every day.

Abbi was there in the morning to see him off at breakfast in the morning and to greet him when he returned home every day. She had mastered the clock and the idea that everyone did things according to its time. She knew what time the train went to Moncton, and what time it returned in the evening, and she was up in time in the morning to see Bradden off, and waiting for him when he returned. It took him five minutes to walk up from the railway station. When she heard the train whistle, she looked at the ticking clock in the living room and added five minutes to determine when he would arrive home.

Since he always came home with a newspaper and

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sometimes a magazine, she looked forward to seeing what he brought. She adored the magazine called *Canadian Illustrated News*. It was a very famous magazine published in Montreal. It was full of pictures. She loved to look at the pictures and try to read the captions.

One day, Bradden came home with a copy of *Canadian Illustrated News* that she absolutely fell in love with.

She was always able to have a first look at copies of this magazine since Bradden always liked to change from his professional railway engineer clothes – which involved a suit and vest with a pocket watch on a chain in its pocket – to his home clothes. He wasn't interested in the magazine right away, besides. He would usually read a newspaper on the train from Moncton, and finish it while Jenine was completing supper preparations.

"I want to see the copy of *Canadian Illustrated News* you brought, Papa, while you go to change," said Abbi as she normally did when he saw him with the magazine under his arm on arriving home.

"Very well. Here it is, the latest edition."

Abbi couldn't wait to see what picture was on the cover this time. She took it over to the dining room table, which was not yet set for supper, and was instantly enraptured by the illustration on the front cover this time. "Mama! Look at this picture on the cover! I want to know what's going on in it?"

Abbi was referring to the cover of the April 1, 1871 edition and was struck by it like a bolt of lightning! "There is a wonderful picture on the front, Mama!" she exclaimed. "It's a big hall with lots of people skating about in costumes," she continued. "What is it, Mama? There's two people in the centre under a light, a woman and a man, like a princess and a prince."

"You have to read what is written underneath to understand what is in the picture," said Jenine from the kitchen. "How have your reading lessons with Papa been going? Can you read any of it?"

Abbi tried to read it: "Fancy – Dress – Enter – tain – ment – at – the – Vic – toria – Skating – Rink"

Jenine repeated her: "Fancy dress entertainment at the Victoria skating rink'. I believe that's a large hall at Montreal in Quebec."

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Fancy Dress Entertainment at the Victoria Skating Rink, 'Canadian Illustrated News', April 1, 1871 (NLC-4377)

Jenine came over from the kitchen to take a look. “Well that is an interesting question, what’s going on in the center? Why would there be a wedding in a skating rink? Perhaps it is a performance. It seems there is a light on

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them. I expect that it is all explained somewhere inside the magazine. Look. The title also says: 'From a sketch by our artist - see page 195'. The picture is all explained on page 195. Find page 195. Your Papa will be back in a moment and help you read all about it. I have to get back to my cooking."

Bradden returned. Abbi picked up the magazine and ran to him. "Papa," she exclaimed. "I must know what is happening in the picture on the cover. Can you tell me? It is all explained here on page 195. Please read it for me Papa. I must know what is going on! I must know!" She was utterly desperate!

"I can see the skaters in costume, Mama. But I don't understand what's going on in the middle. There's a lovely woman in a white gown, and a man in a kilt. Maybe it is a wedding."

The magazine was no thicker than a newspaper. The high page number - 195 - came from the fact that the page numbering continued from one edition to the next comprising a 'volume' for that year.

Bradden took the magazine from Abbi and motioned her to follow him into the living room. He looked at the cover picture to become oriented, and then to page 195 where Abbi had opened it. "Alright," he said, as he sat himself down in his favourite big after-work chair. "*The Royal Marriage Celebration at the Victoria Skating Ring, Montreal.*"² It says here that the couple in the middle are celebrating a wedding. But the couple in the picture is not the actual couple being married. They are only acting out a very important marriage - that of Princess Louise and Marquis of Lorne. Princess Louise is the second youngest daughter of Queen Victoria. You know Queen Victoria, don't you? She rules the British Empire. Well Princess Louise married a man named John Campbell, who is formally called Marquis of Lorne³. The marriage of

² During the life of Canadian Illustrated News, skating rink events in the wintertime were very popular. Illustrations of skating carnivals in Montreal at the Victoria Skating Rink appear in issues for Feb 8, 1873; Feb 3, 1877; March 1, 1879. There were other locations too. More about it later.

³ Marquis of Lorne became Canada's Governor-General some years later.

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Princess Louise and John Campbell was celebrated in different communities everywhere in the Empire in various ways, and this celebration shown on the cover is one such celebration. It says here the couple who pretended to be Princess Louise and John Campbell are Miss Fairbairn and Master McPherson."

"That means they were actors?" Abbi said, remembering what he had told her another time about actors pretending.

"Yes, Abbi," said Bradden. "They couldn't have the real Marquis and Princess at this skating rink because the real ones are far away in England or wherever they were, getting married for real. Actors pretend to be someone else, or even someone that doesn't really exist. Here is what it says: *'The great event of the day, which has furnished our artist with a subject for an exceedingly pretty illustration, was the skating carnival held in the evening in the Victoria Rink. Skating carnivals have, for the past few years, been of such frequent occurrence as almost to have ceased to be objects of any public interest, but the entertainment held last Tuesday week exhibited such novel features as to be worthy of more than ordinary notice. The skaters, who appeared in the usual variety of bizarre costumes, arrived at the Rink at eight o'clock. Shortly after this the gas was turned down, and what appeared to be a dazzling column of light shot up from the centre of the ice, attracting the attention and admiration of all present. The ray of light proved on further examination to be a beautiful prismatic fountain, which played during the greater part of the evening, throwing streams of many hued light on the already motley collection of colours that covered the ice. . .'* Let's look at the illustration, again, Abbi. It seems that what looks like a beam of light is a fountain of water, dropping down in a circle around the couple. The water is lit up, so it looks like a beam, see? Perhaps there is limelight shining on the water and the couple."

"Limelight?"

"Yes that's a way of achieving bright light – brighter than any regular lamp. It is used in theatrical performances to put a spotlight on an actor or performer."

"Oh," Abbi said. "But won't the actors become wet?"

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“I suppose the water falls into a pool and doesn’t touch the actors.”

“Are there other queens than Queen Victoria, Papa? And do they have daughters who are princesses too?”

“Yes there are many countries in Europe with royalty – meaning a royal family, where a son is a prince, and a daughter a princess.”

“Is there a royal family in the United States?”

“I’m afraid not...except, the original people of North America had chiefs where the title was passed down by heredity, just like how in our society property is passed down from fathers to sons, including the last name. A hereditary chief is a patriarch, and when many families form a tribe, one of the patriarchs of family chiefs becomes the chief of the tribe. Often the role of tribal chief was passed down too by heredity, from father to son, and that is why some early explorers called the tribal chiefs ‘kings’. It was essentially the same concept. And a woman would be a ‘queen’. That is why Indians understood the concept of the British king or queen, and making treaties with the king or queen of England or France was a meaningful concept – king to king, royalty to royalty. And their daughter would technically be like a princess. Thus we might say North America had many many tribal kings. But as for today, the United States only has a President who is not like a king, because the title is not hereditary, not passed down within a royal family. A President is elected from among all citizens, chosen by citizens in an election. And here in Canada too, we elect a Prime Minister, but we also celebrate Queen Victoria because Canada belongs to the British Commonwealth. We have both.”

Abbi found it a little complicated and getting off track, so she said: “Read more, Papa. I must know everything!”

“Alright, let me see,” said Bradden, leaning back in his big upholstered chair, and returning to page 195 . “Here we are. . . *In the centre of the rink was a small bower—that means a shelter of boughs and vines—which, on opening, disclosed a youthful couple representing the Marquis and the Princess, the latter in bridal costume and the former in full Highland dress.*” And it says at the end of the article that there was music as well.”

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"Music?"

"Yes, it says '*The band of the Grand Trunk Volunteer Corps furnished music during the evening.*'"

"I would have loved to be there, Papa, to see it all. Can I have this picture? "

"Certainly," he said, "but let me read the magazine first, before we cut it up."

"I want to continue looking at it, Papa. This magazine is always full of pictures. Will you read it with me?"

"Maybe in a while," said Bradden. "I have a Moncton newspaper to read. But why don't you continue looking at the pictures. Interrupt me if you have any questions."

She took the magazine back from Bradden and spread it out on the dining room table again. It was a big dining room table with a fancy oil lamp hanging above it for evening dining. She always chose that location when reading, or at least looking at, a magazine or book. She kept studying the picture. It was stirring every imaginative atom in her mind as she tried to place herself in the event. Finally she turned to other pages to look at other pictures. She did this until Jenine required her to set the table.

VISITS FROM GRANDMAMA AUDORA

Abbi was now at an age when she was more aware of things and had more questions. She knew where to find Bradden – at his desk in his study after supper. This time she was wondering about Grandmama Audora and where she lived and the company she ran.

"Can you tell me about the company Grandmama Audora runs, and how you grew up, Papa?"

"Alright. I will put my writing aside. Make yourself comfortable in the chair on the other side of my desk."

Abbi climbed up into the chair where she had seen scholarly visitors sit. She had often listened to them talk intellectual things, but hadn't understood much. There was a nice window in the study too, that overlooked their yard.

Bradden began: "The Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company that Grandmama Audora currently operates, as its president, was started a few generations ago by my great grandfather, for fetching tall pines for ship masts for the Royal Navy in Britain. Then when all the

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large pines were gone, logging companies began to cut trees for regular lumber, and my grandfather's company did too. A great amount was sent to Britain. When the company was under my father, it was very involved in regular lumber originally, but my father and Grandmama Audora shifted the company towards using new steam-engine powered machinery to make finished boards and moldings for architectural uses. My father died and Grandmama Audora runs the company by herself now, as its president. They still have a hand in rough timber too from past relationships. For example they make special boards for carpenters and there is a sawmill in the interior of New Brunswick that the company half-owns that supplies unusual hardwoods that require special attention. The company offices and operations are located at Saint John, fifteen minutes by carriage from Richdale, where Audora lives, at the Woodrow estate called Tall Pines. The property with her mansion on it is called Tall Pines because the first trees my great grandfather cut down were the tall pines. When he developed the property he found some uncut tall pines there, and instead of cutting them down he preserved them and that is why he called our property Tall Pines. I think some are hundreds of years old. I grew up there at Tall Pines, Abbi, with servants all around me, until Grandmama began sending me to private schools and then supported me going to university. When I was going to school I was hardly there at home any longer. That is why I don't feel comfortable anymore going there. It is too fancy with too many servants. Ever since my father died, Grandmama Audora has been running the company and continuing to live at Tall Pines. She wanted me to continue in the footsteps of my father, but I had my heart set on becoming a railway engineer. Grandmama Audora didn't have any other children but me and is always concerned who will take over the company when she is gone. She likes her grandsons very much because she can see the possibility of them taking over the company if I never develop an interest and remain a railway engineer. Does that answer some of the questions you have?"

"I think so," she replied, although she didn't think she understood everything he had described. But at least she

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knew a little more than before and could now read more into Grandmama Audora's words and behaviour when she visited. She always arrived by a buggy or carriage from the train station, even though it would have been only a five minute walk. There was always some kind of small carriage or buggy for hire at the train station for passengers coming and going, who needed to come or go to or fro from further than was comfortable for walking. Once at the front of the cottage, Audora paid the driver generously, and told him to return to pick her up in time for the evening train returning to Moncton.

"She is coming this weekend again. Maybe you can ask some questions from her directly when she comes."

Abbi nodded, trying to think of possible questions.

And so the next Sunday morning she came, and Bradden went out to the front yard to greet her as she arrived in the carriage she hired at the train station.

"Welcome once again, Mother," said Bradden as she paid the driver and instructed him to return to pick her up some fifteen minutes before the late afternoon train going the other way was due.

She only carried a light bag for her short train journey from Moncton. The rest of her luggage was at the hotel room in Moncton to which she would return. She had as usual arranged business meetings there for Monday so as to make good use of her time and her visit to the area.

"Good to see you again son," she said. "And where are my precious grandsons?"

"They are all playing in the back yard. We will sit in the garden furniture there as usual, seeing as you don't like being inside our cottage."

"Don't take it the wrong way, Bradden. It is just that with the spacious nature of my mansion, your cottage feels confining. You are simply used to it."

The six-year old Abbi tagged along with the adults and listened to their conversation. Grandmama didn't even notice her. She attempted to draw her attention with the picture from the magazine.

"Look Grandmama! Look at my picture from the cover of *Canadian Illustrated News*. It depicts the marriage of Princess Louise."

"Yes, yes. I subscribe to the magazine and saw it. The

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custom of a skating carnival is very interesting. People in Saint John are thinking to have such a carnival themselves. Have you heard about such carnivals, Bradden?"

"No more than what I have myself seen in *Canadian Illustrated News*. I think it is a common event in Montreal at the Victoria Rink."

Abbi was a little disappointed at her not showing as much interest as she had expected.

"Abbi we must find a nice frame for the picture," said Bradden, seeing how precious the picture was to her. "Put it away now in a safe place, or else it will become all wrinkled before we even have a frame on it."

"Now take me to your back yard, Bradden," said Audora. "I expect your wife is preparing tea. I have become thirsty during my train ride from Moncton."

Jenine did not particularly enjoy Audora visiting. She seemed to look down on her because she was a country girl and not a wealthy socialite. She often felt that her value to the woman was as a womb for producing her grandsons, and for fetching tea for her when she came. So aside from delivering tea, she tried to keep out of the way. Abbi, on the other hand was at an age where she was fascinated by adult conversations. She especially liked to study Grandmama Audora when she came. She dressed fashionably, but mostly in black. Her hair was done up well, and she had some expensive jewelry. There was a striking resemblance between her and Bradden, Abbi thought. Both were commandingly tall – six feet at least –, had brown eyes and dark, mildly wavy, hair.

In contrast to her coldness to Abbi, when Audora reached the back yard where the boys were playing she became all smiles and outreached arms.

"Grandmama!" shouted the boys when they saw her. They boys rushed to meet her. "Did you bring anything for us, Grandmama?" was their first question.

"No. I'm sorry. Your Papa forbids me to bring you anything unless I get his approval first. He does not want me to spoil you. And I did not get a chance to clear anything with him. But I promise to next time."

Bradden had insisted already a few years ago, when Audora had brought a few expensive toys, that he did not want her spoiling the boys, and that she should check with

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him whether the gifts she brought were suitable for their more austere way of life.

The boys were disappointed. As far as they were concerned, what was the use of Grandmama Audora if she did not bring anything? It didn't take long before they were back to playing with their balls and toys in the yard.

Audora and Bradden settled into the wicker garden furniture in the backyard in the shadow of a large apple tree.

"Abbi," said Bradden. "You should take your picture from the magazine inside where it is safe. Otherwise you will be very unhappy if you get mud on it or tear it. I will get a frame for it later. And tell Mama that Grandmama is here."

"Alright Papa." Abbi ran inside, entering by the back door.

Bradden took Abbi's absence as an opportunity to talk about his mother's attitudes to Abbi.

"Jenine and I are a little upset that you always avoid Abbi," said Bradden. "you smother the boys and leave Abbi on the sidelines."

"I do? Well I suppose it is because she is not kin. It was a wonderful thing you and Jenine did in adopting her – a good act of charity – and raising her. But she is not from you and Jenine. I don't feel the same about her as I do to my grandsons."

"I and Jenine consider her as much a part of our family as the boys. You make it seem as if we are merely giving her room and board. I would like you to include her, to treat her as part of the Woodrow family."

Abbi came running back now, without her picture. "Mama will bring some tea," she announced. "I told her Grandmama had arrived."

Grandmama continued as if Abbi had not reappeared. "Very well, I will make a conscious effort, if it will please you, Bradden. I would certainly not want to anger you and jeopardize my ability to come visit my grandsons. One of them will take over the family company, even if you never take an interest and continue with your railway career until you die. But don't get me wrong. In spite of my disappointment that you did not wish to follow in your father's footsteps, I am glad that at least you have pursued

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an honourable and practical profession. Both I and your father were proud of your achievements at university when he was alive. Being a railway engineering is an honourable profession. I dare say, I can now see your enthusiasm for railways. They are shaping our world like you said. In my business, I am now able to find customers from further afield. Soon I'll be able to sell our fine architectural millwork, perhaps as far away as Montreal or Toronto. When will that be possible?"

"The gap between Moncton and Riviere du Loup is closing. It is expected it will be complete in about two-three years. My own involvement in designing bridges is declining, and I will probably resume working for the original engineering firm for which I worked, who are now engineering the railway that goes up beside the Saint John River, to serve the timber industry mainly. In the not too distant future we will be moving probably to Fredericton where the contracting company has already a couple years ago set up an office to manage the project."

"Is that so? Well it will be much better to be in a city instead of out in the country. And Fredericton is closer to me. And I do have business connections there too. I will be able to visit more often."

Jenine arrived with the tea, and she exchanged formal greetings with Audora. Then she excused herself again to tend to the children. She did not want to sit and chat with them. She felt uncomfortable around this woman.

On the other hand, Abbi decided to sit with them and have tea too, even though she would be largely ignored as mother and son got into in-depth discussions about politics, science, and even philosophy. She understood more about what was being discussed than Audora would have thought.

And then in late afternoon the hired carriage came to pick her up and she left, and everyone was relaxed once again.

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THE SPELL OF THE ILLUSTRATION LINGERS

As promised, Bradden obtained a frame for Abbi's picture of the skating carnival with the reenactment of the wedding of the daughter of Queen Victoria in the middle. It was now up on the wall in front of her bed in the children's bedroom.

Before going to sleep, she often gazed at it in the soft light of the oil lamp, and let her imagination roam. She imagined she was there, wearing skates, skating around in a costume of her own.

All the children shared the same large room and each one had their own bed area to themselves. Abbi's was next to the end window.

Jenine was there this evening putting the boys to bed.

"Quiet down, boys, and get into bed," Jenine commanded the older boys. "If you are good, maybe I will fetch Papa to recite a little from *The Song of Hiawatha* or read from the legends book of Mr. Schoolcraft like he often does."

"I'm a little tired of stories about Indians," said Abbi who was already in bed and gazing at the picture in the frame on the wall opposite. "Maybe he could tell me a story about a skating carnival like the one in the picture. I think if I were there, I'd like to be wearing a costume depicting a Snow Princess. Do you know what a Snow Princess costume would look like. Mama?"

Jenine came over carrying little Jacques or Jack who she was preparing for bed. "Well I suppose her costume would be white like snow, and fancy befitting a princess."

"Another possibility, if I were there in a costume, would be if I were dressed like an Indian, like *Minnehaha* in the Hiawatha stories. I can imagine myself dressed in the clothing of an Indian girl. And if she was the daughter of

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an Indian royal family, the daughter of – Papa said ‘hereditary’ chief – then she would be an Indian princess. I think it would be interesting to be dressed as an Indian Princess, Mama.”

Jenine wanted from all her heart to tell her she really was Indian. But she held back yet again. Was Abbi ready? And what would she tell her? She didn’t know anything about her background. The Constable had never discovered anything, and over the years no woman had ever shown up who had displayed any special interest in Abbi. When the time came for her to explain that she was adopted, would she make something up about her mother? In any event, Abbi was only six. Maybe she would not need to tell her until she was eight or ten, and knew a little about a child being born from one mother, but being raised by another.

“What is an Indian woman’s dress made of?” Abbi continued.

“I suppose it is made from deerskin – the hide of a deer all tanned and made soft.”

“But what’s the use imagining,” sighed Abbi. “No skating carnival will ever happen around here, and not even in Moncton. I’ve never heard of one in Moncton. According to *The Canadian Illustrated News*, they seem to only occur in very large cities like Montreal.”

“I don’t know Abbi. But you’re right, I’ve never heard of any near here. But everywhere everyone always finds ponds to clear and have small skating events anyway.”

“But I’d like to be someplace really fancy, all decorated, where everyone comes in costume and I can pretend to be an Indian Princess or a Snow Princess.” She then changed the subject. “When will I get my own room, Mama? I must have my own room. I’ll soon become seven. I don’t like being in a room with all the boys.”

“Be patient a little longer. With all the growing children we will have to have a larger house elsewhere. And look, I am pregnant again. There will be another baby.”

“You are? Oh I hope it will be a girl this time. We have far too many boys so far. I would love a sister.”

“We’ll see what God decides to give us.”

“I will pray to God and ask him to make it a girl, Mama.”

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BRADDEN DESCRIBES A THEATRICAL PRODUCTION HE SAW YEARS AGO

Ever since Bradden had ceased to be a university student, and performed in student theatrical productions, he had now and then attempted, as a hobby between writing letters, to see if he could imitate Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and write epic verse of a story from Schoolcraft's legends. In other words he wondered if he could do as Longfellow had done in writing *The Song of Hiawatha*. And then he began thinking about the stage production of *The Song of Hiawatha* he and his schoolmate Sandy had seen in Boston, where the recital of the poem was accompanied by actions and special effects on the stage. Increasingly he became inspired to create something similar. It had been many years now since he had done something truly original and creative.

One evening at the supper table, when everyone was nearly finished eating, Bradden had something to discuss.

"As you children know by now, when I was a university student, I was involved with student theatre – with the theatricals they called Hasty Pudding – which is what the student theatrical group was called at Harvard. I participated in it every year throughout my university years, taking on every duty and role, and not just acting. Finally in my final year, I was able to actually write a theatrical, along with my friend, Sandy. You remember Sandy who has visited us a few times over the years?"

Most of the children remembered Sandy, the stout sandy-haired fellow. He had visited last year with his wife and new son. Abbi remembered plenty of conversation between him and Papa about their university days, as well as plenty of conversation about railways, since both had pursued railway careers and were railway engineers.

"Well," continued Bradden, "ever since that time, I have been itching to try something creative again. Up to now I have been too busy with my railway work."

"What do you have in mind?" Jenine wondered.

"I would like to emulate the production I and Sandy saw in Boston of *The Song of Hiawatha*. I have mentioned it to you Jenine."

"Yes, I remember," said Jenine, as she got up from the

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table and began carrying plates and cups to the kitchen for washing.

“Tell us about it, Papa!” the children chorused.

“Well it was a recitation of the poem – just like I have done for you children from time to time before bed – except that there was a stage with actors, props, scenery, and sound effects mirroring what the poem was saying.”

“Were there real Indians, Papa?” Mark wondered.

“Yes, Papa,” repeated Jimmy. “Where there real Indians?”

“There were actors. Do you mean whether they came from real Indian tribes? Well, unfortunately, Indians do not take much interest in entering the world of the theatre, so they had to have actors with dark hair and eyes play the part of the Indians. However the advertising claimed there were genuine Indians in the cast and that the costumes and props were authentic.”

“Were they?” wondered Abbi. She already knew from the newspapers how advertising exaggerates and even misleads. Papa had explained it.

“I had the opportunity to investigate, since some of the cast and crew had some curiosity about our Hasty Pudding humorous satire about how the whole world had responded to the romantic notion of the Indian. Well, I inquired, and they did have at least one authentic Indian-born cast member, for sure. A young woman who played important woman parts like Minnehaha. She seemed genuine. But she had spent so much time in the civilized European culture that she didn’t seem very Indian. You children should remember that. Underneath, Indians are people just like us. It is their way of life that makes them seem different. If a European with a dark complexion was raised in an Indian village, he would seem Indian, and if an Indian were raised in a European-type setting, he would seem like you and I. But even though none of the cast seemed Indian away from their roles, I think the producers had to get at least one genuine Indian so they could not be accused of false advertising. Their advertising said ‘*Including a genuine Indian actress, Wenona Storm, playing Wenona and Minnehaha and other female parts.*’ Had it not been true, a reporter would have found out, and it would have given the production bad publicity. But enough about the cast. Don’t

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you children want to know how the production went?”

“Yes Papa,” the children chorused.

“Yes Papa,” added Abbi. “Tell us about it. Describe what went on, on the stage. Describe the theatre. Describe the people. We want to go to a real theatre in Moncton one day. Can we Mama?”

“Well we did see the children’s play in Moncton recently,” replied Jenine.

“I mean, a real theatre,” said Abbi. “Not one meant for children.”

“Boston like all larger cities,” began Bradden, “has many many theatres. Moncton has several, and Saint John has quite a few too. Just you wait, children. You will have plenty of opportunity to see good theatre as you grow up.”

“Tell us about the one you are talking about, Papa.”

“Let us finish up here, and then we can all gather in the parlour or living room.”

The children hurried up, including helping Jenine take dishes to the kitchen. Finally while Jenine and the littlest, Jack, remained in the kitchen, the rest gathered in the adjacent living room. Bradden took his place in his favourite chair, and the children sat around about on stools or on the carpet on the floor. Bradden began:

“Well it was Saturday and there was a matinee performance. Attending it would not interfere with my university studying schedules on weekdays. We joined the lineup to purchase tickets and then, tickets in hand, we made our way inside. We found ourselves surrounded by men in well tailored suits and women in fancy gowns. They were the wealthy and elite of Boston society. And this was advertised as one of the most extravagant theatrical presentations of Longfellow’s *The Song of Hiawatha* poem, there had been so far.⁴ “

“What did the women’s fancy gowns look like, Papa?” Abbi wondered.

“Nobody wants to know, Abbi,” said Mark. “Papa tell us what came next.”

“Well in a short while, after the theatre was filled up, the gas lights⁵ of the theatre were dimmed. The stage was

⁴ Invented for our story. No such production really occurred

⁵ This takes place before the invention of electric lights

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dark. The audience rustled. Then a sonorous voice began reciting Longfellow's famous poem *The Song of Hiawatha* beginning thus – the beginning of the poem:

*“Should you ask me,
Whence these stories?
Whence these legends and traditions,
With the odors of the forest,
With the dew and damp of meadows,
With the curling smoke of wigwams,
With the rushing of great rivers,
With their frequent repetitions,
And their wild reverberations
As of thunder in the mountains?”*

“Across the back of the stage was a large white linen sheet stretched to serve as a screen. Images from a magic lantern⁶ were projected on the sheet from the back. You all know about the magic lantern, where images are projected from little paintings done on glass onto a wall. But in this case, they had managed to make slides from photographs, and color them too. The resulting projected coloured images were very authentic-looking. At this moment, they showed scenes of the wilderness of north central North America, the region where *The Song of Hiawatha* was set. And let us not forget visual and sound effects. When the speaker spoke of the curling smoke of wigwams, some real smoke was created on the stage. When he spoke of rushing great rivers, there were sound effects of rushing water. The voice continued:

*“I should answer, I should tell you,
‘From the forests and the prairies,
From the great lakes of the Northland,
From the land of the Ojibways,
From the land of the Dacotahs,
From the mountains, moors, and fen-lands
Where the heron, the Shuh-shuh-gah,
Feeds among the reeds and rushes.*

⁶ The ‘Magic Lantern’ was an invention as old as the glass lens. Before photography, images were painted on strips of glass, and projected on screens. After the advent of photography, photographic images on glass could obviously be similarly projected. By the time of this story, photography was an established institution and photographs on glass, with some colour tinting were feasible. We assume back projection here, onto a thin stretched sheet of linen.

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*I repeat them as I heard them
From the lips of Nawadaha,
The musician, the sweet singer.'*

"The images on the sheet in the background continued to change, including photographic images of 'Indians'. Next an Indian-accented voice began to add some arbitrary chanting behind the speaker's voice and the magic lantern images.

*"Should you ask where Nawadaha
Found these songs so wild and wayward,
Found these legends and traditions,
I should answer, I should tell you,
'In the bird's-nests of the forest,
In the lodges of the beaver,
In the hoof print of the bison,
In the eye of the eagle!"*

Bradden knew the introductory chapter to *The Song of Hiawatha* so well, he could recite it from memory.

"What was to be seen on the stage, now?" asked Mark.

"Let me recall. Images of the animals were shown. All were, as I explained, black and white photographs with colour added. It looked more authentic than if the slides had been hand drawn. The voice continued with the poem. It continued like this:

*"Should you ask where Nawadaha
Found these songs so wild and wayward,
Found these legends and traditions,
I should answer, I should tell you,
'In the bird's-nests of the forest,
In the lodges of the beaver,
In the hoof print of the bison,
In the eye of the eagle!*

*'All the wild-fowl sang them to him,
In the moorlands and the fen-lands,
In the melancholy marshes;
Chetowaik, the plover, sang them,
Mahng, the loon, the wild-goose, Wawa,
The blue heron, the Shuh-shuh-gah,
And the grouse, the Mushkodasa!'*

"Lights now were added with small lanterns, lighting up sculptures or actual stuffed representatives of the animals. Dark silhouetted figures were going around on stage

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handling the lighting – lanterns made to look primitive, moved from near one object to another adding to the drama.

*“If still further you should ask me,
Saying, ‘Who was Nawadaha?
Tell us of this Nawadaha,’
I should answer your inquiries
Straightway in such words as follow.*

“A figure was standing in front of the white linen screen of lantern images now, representing *Nawadaha*.

*“In the vale of Tawasentha,
In the green and silent valley,
By the pleasant water-courses,
Dwelt the singer Nawadaha.
Round about the Indian village
Spread the meadows and the corn-fields,
And beyond them stood the forest,
Stood the groves of singing pine-trees,
Green in Summer, white in Winter,
Ever sighing, ever singing.”*

“What was going on now?” Abbi interjected. She wanted to picture it better.

“As the deep voice spoke these words, actual stalks of corn, branches of pine, rocks, etc sitting on the stage were revealed. More and more lanterns were added, revealing a stage made to look like a woodland. And the poem continued:

*“ ‘And the pleasant water-courses,
You could trace them through the valley,
By the rushing in the Spring-time,
By the alders in the Summer,
By the white fog in the Autumn,
By the black line in the Winter;
And beside them dwelt the singer,
In the vale of Tawasentha,
In the green and silent valley.*

“Sound effects were added where suitable, and the Indian’s voice continued to quietly chant, as if singing in the Indian language the songs of *Hiawatha*.”

Bradden chanted a little to convey what the singing was like, and continued:

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*“There he sang of Hiawatha,
Sang the Song of Hiawatha,
Sang his wondrous birth and being,
How he prayed and how he fasted,
How he lived, and toiled, and suffered,
That the tribes of men might prosper,
That he might advance his people!”*

“Drumming was added,” Bradden began to tap a drum beat on the tea table next to him. The tea table also had a silver tea tray on it which could be useful for sound effects too. “... and the Indian singing increased in volume as did the voice reciting the poem. It built up the tension. Now the voice and the drum were speaking in the same rhythm. And in the next verse, the sound-effects people were doing their utmost— rushing of water, wind through leaves, rainfall, thunder, echoes, etc.

*“Ye who love the haunts of Nature,
Love the sunshine of the meadow,
Love the shadow of the forest,
Love the wind among the branches,
And the rain-shower and the snow-storm,
And the rushing of great rivers
Through their palisades of pine-trees,
And the thunder in the mountains,
Whose innumerable echoes
Flap like eagles in their eyries;-
Listen to these wild traditions,
To this Song of Hiawatha!”*

“Crash of thunder at this point.” Bradden picked up the tea tray on the tea table, and knocked on it causing it to clatter like thunder. “... A pause. Now the speaker spoke softly, the drumming having stopped. You heard assorted voices of people. And the reciting continued:

*“Ye who love a nation’s legends,
Love the ballads of a people,
That like voices from afar off
Call to us to pause and listen,
Speak in tones so plain and childlike,
Scarcely can the ear distinguish
Whether they are sung or spoken;-
Listen to this Indian Legend,
To this Song of Hiawatha!”*

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“Crash of thunder!” Bradden, holding up the tea tray shaking it again to make a thunderlike sound. “Then there was another pause, and the speaker continued. In this next section, two figures appeared in silhouette in front of the sheet with the images, and did a pantomime reflecting the words:

*“Ye whose hearts are fresh and simple,
Who have faith in God and Nature,
Who believe that in all ages
Every human heart is human,
That in even savage bosoms
There are longings, yearnings, strivings
For the good they comprehend not,
That the feeble hands and helpless,
Groping blindly in the darkness,
Touch God’s right hand in that darkness
And are lifted up and strengthened;—
Listen to this simple story,
To this Song of Hiawatha!*

“Crash of thunder! Next the background image screen went dim, and lanterns in front went up, to light up actors in Indian dress moving about the rocks, branches, cornstalks, dirt, etc. arranged on the stage representing the woodland. Some bushes represented berry bushes. There was a stone wall, etc. An actor representing an Indian woman moved about, inspecting the berries, running her hand on the mosses. A male actor stood in the shadows looking on, being the muse, pondering it all.

*“Ye, who sometimes, in your rambles
Through the green lanes of the country,
Where the tangled barberry-bushes
Hang their tufts of crimson berries
Over stone walls gray with mosses,
Pause by some neglected graveyard,
For a while to muse, and ponder
On a half-effaced inscription,
Written with little skill of song-craft,
Homely phrases, but each letter
Full of hope and yet of heart-break,
Full of all the tender pathos
Of the Here and the Hereafter;*

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*Stay and read this rude inscription,
Read this Song of Hiawatha!*

“Crash of thunder, and all the lanterns and spotlights were blown out, and the stage was dark. This ended the first act.”

Bradden relaxed. That was the end of Chapter 1.

“What happened next, Papa?” Abbi asked.

“When the stage was dark, stage hands moved around to change the props and so on. In about a minute the gas lights were turned up again and the voice continued. I’m afraid that is all for today, children. It is a very long poem. It went on for three or four hours with an intermission in the middle. I can’t possibly recount it all to you children. You’ll have to use your imaginations. Whenever I read from the poem in future, imagine what might be going on, on the stage.”

The children were a little crestfallen. They enjoyed it when their Papa put on a performance for them. Perhaps they could get him to continue at bedtime.

“So you see,” finished Bradden, “my memory of that performance has inspired me. Mr. Longfellow himself attended the one in Boston, and I and Sandy met him there. He invited us to visit him at his home. We told him about our own project for the university and I think he put on a disguise and was in the audience for the performance of it. He didn’t mind that we based our theatrical on his poem and himself. Those were the days! I have fond memories. It came in the middle of winter and my studies. It was only some months later that I passed my exams and graduated. After that I went home to Richdale, and then came into this area to work on the railway and that is where I met Mama.”

Jenine, holding little Jacques, had watched them from the kitchen doorway. “Why don’t you join some theatrical group in Moncton, Bradden?” she asked. “Some amateur group. You could put on something in Moncton.”

“But that means I will become separated from you and the children on weekends. I have a better idea. Why don’t we create a production right here in Littleton? We can all become the cast and crew. We can put it on at the community center! What do you think, children?”

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“Yes Papa!” they all chorused. “We can perform the Hiawatha poem!”

“No, we should perform our own original play, one suited to children,” said Bradden. “I can write a long poem and then we can perform it.”

“Yay! Yes Papa!” chorused the children.

A LOCAL CHILDREN’S PRODUCTION

Well that began an idea that grew and grew and grew. He would create a children’s entertainment based on one of the legends in a book by Henry Schoolcraft.

In the following weeks, he asked his children which story, from among those he had read them, they thought would be entertaining as a play for children. They decided it should be based on the story called *Aggodagauda and his Daughter*, which was about an Indian whose one leg had ceased to function, and he developed his good leg so strong he could get around by hopping.

“It is a very good story for children,” he told Jenine later. “First of all the idea of someone hopping instead of walking is entertaining. But more importantly there is a good message – that if you are handicapped in some way, you can always develop what you have and overcome the handicap. Aggodagauda had only one good leg, but he developed that leg to be very strong so he could get around by hopping. He didn’t even need a crutch.”

“I agree. It is a good story with a good message. It sounds like a legend that could have been inspired by a real person.”

Starting out small, the project became ever more ambitious as time went on. Before long, backdrops had to be impressive, and the costumes as authentic-looking as possible, even if using local barnyard animal skins and chicken feathers. This would be a very professional looking presentation. Some admission would be charged. The proceeds, after subtracting material expenses, would then be donated to the needy.

It became most important to Bradden they had to have small posters printed in Moncton, and put them up everywhere in the Littleton area.

The posters read :

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- Children's Entertainment -

'AGGODAGAUDA AND HIS DAUGHTER'

*New Original Presentation of an Ojibwa Indian Legend,
in verse form in the style of 'The Song of Hiawatha',*

PRESENTED BY

the Woodrow & Cartsmith families

- IDEAL FOR CHILDREN, ENJOYABLE FOR ALL -

The location and time was attached below it with a separate piece of paper. Then they could re-use the posters if they presented it elsewhere another time. In addition to posters, Bradden had programmes printed that gave the entire text of the poem to the audience..

After many weekends of rehearsals, the day came. Everyone in town who had children, and some who didn't, came to the community hall, paid admission at the door, were given a programme, and sat down in rows of chairs filling the hall, facing a platform area that served as the stage. The first backdrop was a painted scene of a wilderness lake, with trees in the foreground. It was painted on a sheet of canvas, and there were other sheets of canvas too with other scenes. Bradden had originally wanted to do a magic lantern approach, as magic lanterns of all kinds were available those days, but the difficulty was in getting the suitable slides made. It had been easier to paint rough scenes from the imagination onto canvas sheets. These sheets were stretched onto light wood frames, and given rollers on the bottom edge to make it easy to slide the required background scene to the front on cue. Bradden had found two friends of the families to assist in scene changing.

In front of the background there were some small real trees, to add some realism. Also, real bushes cut from the banks of Littleton Brook filled the sides, enough to let actors disappear into them as needed.

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On the floor of the stage there were some rocks, some pieces of wood, and some dirt, all collected from around the area. There were no curtains, so the actors prepared and hid behind the backdrop until it was time to come out.

The performance needed good lighting. The bright light from “limelight” was found only in professional equipment used in large halls and theatres. Next best was gas lighting. Littleton was too small to have gas service. Oil lamps or candles was all people used around here. The best lighting was of course daylight. It was a Saturday afternoon presentation, and Bradden decided that daylight would be fine and they would devise some way to block and unblock daylight from the windows of the community hall for scene changes. His idea was that all the windows would be well curtained, except that the window closest to the stage could be fitted with curtains that could be opened and closed rapidly to give light to the stage or make the stage dark.

That was what they did. If the front curtains were closed, it was quite dark; if opened the stage area was lit.

The production followed a similar format to what Bradden had seen many years ago in the Boston presentation of *The Song of Hiawatha*. Someone off to the side recited his poem, and figures on the stage portrayed the story. Working behind the scenes were those handling the backdrops and those dressing the stage and making sound effects. Jenine’s sister Gwendoline elected to recite the poem, as she had a strong authoritative voice. Jenine would operate the curtains. Both women would give their children on the stage their cues, using gestures.

Bradden played the part of *Aggodagauda* the man who hopped, and Abbi played his daughter. They were both costumed in a general Algonquian style. The chief of the buffalo, was played by Wilbur. He wore on his head a headdress with buffalo horns, skillfully made from paper machée made from newspapers and paint. Brown fur made from a sheep’s pelt dyed brown, was over his shoulders. All the feathers they used came from farmyard fowl or gulls.

The followers of the chief of the buffalo were played by Gwendoline and Wilbur’s many children, and Bradden’s own older boys. The whole group ranged in age from 5 to

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20. They didn't have to do much other than follow the chief of the buffalo, Wilbur, around the stage dressed like Plains Indians.

Finally the audience was seated, and it was time to begin.

The curtains were closed and the performance began with a stage very dark. A strong low female voice, presented by Gwendoline, began:

*“There was a time, once long ago,
Neighbouring tribes they were at war,
Tribes of plains and tribes of forest,
Were in endless, angry, conflict.
Indian people of the area,
As they carried on their living,
Had to guard and keep attentive,
So as not get caught between them.”*

Then with front curtains pulled back, a little light came down on the stage. Bradden stood there, dressed as *Aggodagauda*. He had his left leg tied up, as required.

*“Was a man Ag-go-da-gau-da,
Lived beside this place of conflict,
Lived between the warring peoples,
Always had to watch for danger.
In one way he was peculiar.
Through some mischance once befell'd him,
Only one leg could he function,
T'other had become quite useless.”*

Bradden, as *Aggodagauda* turned to show his left leg was tied up, and he hopped a little.

*“One leg lame, he could not use it;
Had it tied and looped up tightly,
And instead of normal walking,
Carried on his life by hopping.”*

Seeing the antlers of a deer amid the foliage, he took up his bow, and placed an arrow in it. And then he hopped after the deer vanishing into the foliage on stage right. Then he emerged again, hopping across the stage to stage left, disappearing into foliage there. (Lots of bushes of

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about six feet tall had been collected and placed at both sides of the stage into which actors could disappear.)

*“Constant use made leg that’s working
Grow in strength and health and power,
So’s could hunt and fish and travel,
Just as well as any other.”*

Now the curtains were drawn closed and the stage became dark. When the window curtains were opened again, the backdrop had changed. The painting on the next canvas showed an open plain. In front of it stood the buffalo chief played by Wilbur, in his buffalo headdress and robe, facing the audience, arms crossed.

*“Now at this partic’lar moment
This man had, had in the prairie,
A man who he did not admire,
A foe who represented danger.
A foe known as the chief of bison,
Leader of the buffalo-men,
King of creatures crossing prairie,
Shaking ground and raising thunder.”*

There were now sound effects to reproduce thundering hooves of buffalo. Then Jenine closed the curtains again to remove the light. When Jenine opened the curtains again and the light came up again, there was a wood frame construction about six feet high, with platform at the top, covered with canvas painted to resemble the exterior of a small log cabin. It had a ladder at back for climbing up. There was a backdrop of fir trees behind it. This ‘cabin’ and its background scene was actually permanently located on the stage. Scenes without the cabin involved pushing new background scenes in *front* of this. That way the ‘cabin’ did not need to be physically moved from the stage; but just hidden by the large backdrops being placed in front when the cabin wasn’t involved.

Abbi entered from behind the bushes at stage right, and sat in front of the ‘cabin’, pretending to do some work.

*“Also ‘bout Aggodagauda
Was he had an only daughter,
Had a daughter, of great beauty,*

4. *Abbi is an Actress*

*Sought by men throughout the region,
Sought by all, by many suitors,
Even by him, bison-leader,
He who led the men of thunder,
In the prairie lands adjacent."*

The head of the chief of the buffalo appeared from the bushes to the side, and then vanished when Abbi turned in that direction. Children in the audience laughed at that visual comedy.

*"She was such a lovely beauty,
She had hair that was so lengthy,
When untied it tumbled downward,
To the ground t'was almost reaching."*

To achieve the long hair, quantities of black yarn had been used to add to Abbi's own hair.

*"Aggodagauda, worried father,
Was afraid his foe was planning,
For to come in from the prairie,
For to steal away his daughter."*

Once again the head of the buffalo chief appeared from the bushes and once again it disappeared when Abbi looked in his direction. The audience laughed. Then Bradden as *Aggodagauda* came hopping into the scene from the other side. He sat on a rock beside Abbi, showing fatherly concern.

*"Aggodagauda, careful, cautious,
Sought protect her 'gainst the bison,
Protect her from her being taken,
Being kidnapped, stolen, captured."*

The head of the buffalo chief once again peeked out of the bushes on the right side. As the narrator spoke next of the house of logs, *Aggodagauda*, the father, stood up, and swept his hand towards the structure, with the thin painted canvas covering making it look like a dwelling.

*"So he built for her a cabin,
Where she was to spend her hours,
Safe from danger ever present,
Should the bison-chief come calling."*

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*Said the hunter to his daughter:
‘If being inside was confining,
If it’s outdoors air you’re wanting,
If you wish to see the sunshine,
Go and stay upon the rooftop,
Spend your time in rooftop’s safety,
Up above the horns of strangers,
Designing for to come and take you.”*

Aggodagauda gestured that his daughter should climb up to the roof for safety. Abbi climbed steps to the top of the structure via a ladder built at the back and sat there on the platform at the top, representing the roof, and pretended to comb her hair. Bradden, as Aggodagauda nodded approvingly.

The window light was again removed as Jenine blocked the windows, and a new scene was set. When the lighting was restored there was only the cabin. Then *Aggodagauda* came out of the cabin through an opening in the canvas representing a doorway in log walls. He was carrying a fishing net. Abbi came out after him. He started to hop to stage left, and then hopped back to her to talk to her.

*“One fine day Aggodagauda,
Had to go off do some fishing,
Leaving daughter at the cabin,
All alone with no protection.
So before he left for fishing,
Once again he gave her warning,
Telling her beware of strangers,
Should the enemy come calling.”*

The narrator, Gwendoline, was now silent as Bradden as *Aggodagauda* actually spoke the following lines to Abbi as his daughter.

*“I am off to fish this morning.
As the sun continues rising,
Enemy may well be coming,
Coming in from yonder prairie.
Daughter thus I wish to caution.
Not to exit from this cabin,
Not to open doors to no one,
Not to put yourself in danger.*

4. *Abbi is an Actress*

*If it's fresh air that you're wanting,
Go then just up to the rooftop,
Up beyond the reach of strangers,
Above the heads of bison-people."*

Abbi, as his daughter replied with these lines.

*"Father thank you for reminding,
Of the danger that resides here,
Close to where there is the warring,
And the enemy who seeks me.
I will heed your concerned warning,
Stay indoors while you're gone fishing,
And go only to the rooftop,
High above the heads of strangers."*

Gwendoline resumed the narration. Bradden as Aggodagauda then, nets in hand, hopped off into the bushes stage left.

*"Warning given, caution taken,,
Wished her father luck in fishing,
Bid him bye till his returning,
From his day upon the water.
He then left to do his fishing,
To his favourite fishing places,
Throw his nets to try to catch them,
Catch the bass and pike and musky."*

Abbi climbed up the steps behind the structure to the top of the boxlike structure, sat there, and began to comb her hair.

*"After Aggodagauda's leaving,
Morning sun was brightly shining,
Daughter didn't stay in cabin,
But she went up to the rooftop.
As the sun shone down upon her,
There she whiled away the hours,
Feeling safe from danger lurking,
Free from all concern and worry."*

Then the buffalo chief emerged from the bushes, rushing towards the cabin, followed by his followers, played by the children dressed like Indians with paper machée horned hats and brown sheepskin on their shoulders, thus made out to be buffalo-men.

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*“Buffalo chief, king, and leader,
Rode in from the prairie flatlands,
Hoofs a-stomping, making thunder,
Buffalo were all around him,
Came they to where was the cabin.,
To the lodge and lovely daughter,
Of the man who was one-legged.
Known by name Aggodagauda.*

*When the foe arrived, he studied,
Saw Aggodagauda’s daughter,
Up upon the cabin rooftop,
Safe above the heads of all them.*

*Pacing this way, pacing that way,
Chief of buffalo, the leader,
Was frustrated, even angered,
That she was beyond his reaches.”*



The buffalo chief, played by Wilbur, paced back and forth in front of Abbi on the top of the ‘cabin’, leisurely combing her hair. Wilbur walked bent over to more resemble a buffalo, trying to reach his horns up to the roof. Then as Abbi made a move with her brushing-combing, a half of her long hair fell over the edge.

4. *Abbi is an Actress*

*“She felt safe and tried ignore them,
Sitting, combing, basking, sunning,
‘bove their reach, beyond their grasping.
Unafraid of being captured.
But her hair so long and raven,
Long and sleek and black as midnight,
Being loose, while she was combing,
Fell down to the cabin roof-edge.
Then her hair, it tumbled further,
O’er the edge and further downward,
To the eaves and even lower,
Down to where the foe could reach it.
Reached his horns up to the roof-edge,
Reached to catch upon her tresses,
Wrap his horns on hair like midnight.
Pull her down from where she’s sitting.
By her hair he pulled her on him,
Pulled her down upon his shoulders,
Took upon his back the daughter,
Captured her, made her his captive.”*

Wilbur made it seem like the hair got entwined on his horns, and Abbi acted to seem to be pulled, and leaped off the stage to be caught by Wilbur the buffalo chief, who placed her piggyback, and then rushed off synchronized to the following narration:

*“So he went, with hooves a-beating,
With his buffalo behind him,
Earth was shaking ‘neath their hoof beats
Raising clouds of dust and thunder.”*

Everyone was now disappeared into the bushes stage left. Sound effects of hooves followed. The stage was made dark as the hoof-sounds continued. When the light was restored, the first background showing forest had been pushed in front of the ‘cabin’ and a canoe placed right out at the front of the stage. Bradden as *Aggodagauda* was sitting in the canoe handling a net and pretending to be fishing. The strains that *Aggodagauda* heard were made by Wilbur in the background, as a male voice was needed.

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*“Aggodagauda, on the water,
In canoe engaged in fishing,
Heard the sound of someone singing,
Strains and words that seemed to mock him:
‘Aggodagauda - one legg’d human,
Man with one leg tied up tightly,
What is he but ra-pa-ke-na,
Grasshopper, the hopping insect’
Right away the man, the father,
Sensing danger for his daughter,
Paddled ‘shore so very quickly,
Set off home in giant hopping.”*

The stage was made dark again. When light was restored, the canoe and the backdrop placed in front had been removed again, restoring the previous scene with the cabin. *Aggodagauda* came hopping into the scene very agitated, then hopped around looking at the ground, looking for evidence and trying to pick up the trail.

*“Hopping great leaps through the forest,
Came back to his cabin dwelling,
Found his daughter now was missing,
Gone and missing, cabin vacant.
As he’d feared she’d had a visit,
By the chief the king the leader
Of the tribe of buffalo-men.
And he’d managed steal his daughter.”*

Bradden as *Aggodagauda* stood up and expressed rage. He paced around casting angry looks at the evidence on the ground.

*“Hoof-prints spoke they of the culprit,
Spoke they of these prairie creatures,
Creatures hooved and horned and thunderous,
Having been there very recent.”*

Aggodagauda makes up his mind to follow them. He follows the trail first with his eyes into the bushes stage left and realizes they went that way.

*“Then Aggodagauda, angry,
Was resolved, was much determined
Was determined for to fetch her,*

4. *Abbi is an Actress*

*Fetch and save his kidnapped daughter,
Fetch her back from he who took her,
He who captured her so slyly,
He who was the thundering leader,
Leader, chief, of buffalo-men. “*

Bradden as *Aggodagauda* follows the trail and disappears stage left

*“Aggodagauda quickly followed
Trail of hoof-prints, made quite freshly,
Made quite recent, and quite lately,
Leading off into the prairie.
Right away, he set out hopping,
Tracked the foe across the prairie,
Following the trail of hoof prints,
Also clouds of dust and thunder.”*

The stage was made dark again, as the narrator continued; and in a few moments as the stage was lit up again, the earlier backdrop depicting the plains had been pushed in front of the cabin scene. *Aggodagauda* appeared from stage right and hopped across to stage left as if continuing to following a trail. Once off stage Bradden circled around the back of the backdrops and reappeared in the bushes on the other side, and repeated it. Traveling right to left many times gave the illusion of traveling far. The curtain was closed and opened each time.

*“Hurried in the cloud’s direction,
Too towards the sound of thunder,
Kept on going, never stopping,
Slowly gaining, getting closer.
On and on, he went on thusly,
Till he came upon a river,
Where the beasts had crossed the water,
Where they’d forded, wading slowly.”*

The third time Bradden came around and repeated the travel left to right, he paused as if arriving at a river. When the curtain had been opened this time, a bolt of blue fabric had been unrolled across the front of the stage to represent the river.

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*“Looking closer, looking sharper,
Bending down, he read the markings.
Two days past had been their crossing,
That was when they’d crossed the river.
Since the last two nights were freezing,
There was ice now on the river,
So he could not wade nor swim it,
Nor was the ice enough to hold him.
Aggodagauda, was frustrated,
All his efforts now were thwarted,
All his rushing all for nothing,
Now he had to do some waiting.
But he looked upon the bright side,
More days passing, more delaying,
Might be good: he needed resting,
Build his strength for to continue.
So he camped and started waiting,
Camped to wait for further freezing,
Let the water ice get thicker,
Thick enough so it would hold him.”*

Bradden, pretended to camp, pulling the robe on his back around him as it was chilly, then lying down. On the stage, a plate with smoking tobacco, surrounded by several rocks represented a campfire. The stage was then made dark to represent darkness, and then made light again to represent morning.

*“Sleeping by a warming fire,
In the morning went and tested,
See if ice was getting thicker,
Thick enough that it will hold him.”*

Bradden as *Aggodagauda* mimed testing imaginary water on the stage, jumping back after sound effects suggested the ice was breaking. He returned to the ‘campfire’ to wait some more, and test some more. The stage was made dark again and then lit again. The subsequent morning, after testing the ice once again, it was good. He laughed and clapped. Bradden mimed carefully crossing as sound effects of cracking is heard, creating suspense for the audience. But he got across. The stage was made dark again. When the light was restored

4. *Abbi is an Actress*

the bold of blue fabric and ‘campfire’ removed, Bradden as *Aggodagauda* took up the trail again. Again he went off on stage left and repeated it by going around the back of the backdrop. It was done three times. In one scene, there were twigs strewn on the stage, and Bradden as *Aggodagauda* picked them up and inspected them. The accompanying narration went thusly:

*“When he found the ice could hold him,
On he went, took up the chasing,
Chased a trail of twigs and branches,
Strewn about to show the pathway.
Twas a scheme employed by daughter,
Hair untied, dragging behind her,
Caught on twigs and caught on branches,
Showed the way the foe had traveled.
They had dashed, pursued a course-way,
To their village, to their home ground,
Village of the bison people.
And the dwelling of their leader.
Aggodagauda, chased the trail,
By eve he reached the destination -
Lodge of chief, the thief, the stealer,
Who had whisked away his daughter,
Stolen ’way his late wife’s baby,
Thinking he could be successful,
Not be followed, not be thwarted,
Nor be ever punished for it.”*

The stage went dark again, and when the stage was lit up again, the backdrop sheet represented the interior of the buffalo chief’s lodge, a skin teepee such as used by plains Indians. The backdrop was generally tan in colour but painted dark towards the upper left and right, suggesting light from a fire did not reach there. It gave an illusion of depth. There was a slit in it for the doorway and a few other slits representing breaks in the wall of the teepee, one of which opened enough so that the audience could see *Aggodagauda* peer inside. The buffalo chief and others mimed the actions described in the narration. A couple of Gwendoline’s older boys, wearing wigs to resemble women, played the women who gave the daughter attention. The narration went this way:

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*“Now the daughter, gentle captive,
She was in the leader’s teepee,
Was attended by some women,
Treated well that she would like them,
Live like them under their leader,
That she would not hate them thusly,
That she’d even like her captor,
Come to like the man who stole her.
And her captor, chief, and leader,
Also paid her much attention,
Tried to bring her round to like him,
Tried to charm her with some music.,
Took his flute, began to playing,
Played soft strains to please her hearing,
Charm her with pleasant melody,
Adding to it pleasant chanting:
‘No ne mo sha makow’ it went,
‘Aghi saw ge naun’ it’s saying,
‘sweetheart mine bosom is truthful,
Only you – it’s you I’m loving’
Women brought refreshing water,
From the spring in some bark dishes,
Set they also there before her,
Choicest food, and meals so tasty.
He again sought to impress her,
Gave her sweet nuts of the pecan,
Went to hunt for meats, procuring,
Finest meats, and water fowl.
Aggodagauda’s lovely daughter,
Was not moved by shows of kindness,,
Was not moved by leader’s singing,
Was not moved by cool spring water,
Was not moved by pecan nutmeats,
Nor was moved by meat of wildfowl,
Was not moved by gentle chanting,
Nor by women’s kind attentions.
Did not eat, was not responding,
Sitting, fasting, was unmoving,
Stayed remaining unforgiving,
Stayed determined not to give in.
For so forcibly be taken,
Taken and with no permission,*

4. *Abbi is an Actress*

*Without proper courting custom,
No hello, no introduction.
Stayed this way the lovely captive,
Yet the chief, buffalo leader,
Kept on waiting, ever hoping,
That her anger soon would lessen.”*

After the singing and fussing, everyone left the daughter, played by Abbi, sitting alone. Wilbur, the chief of the buffalo sat to the side with several of his followers chatting, ignoring the stubborn girl. The backdrop, depicting the interior wall, had a slit cut into it, as we said. Aggodagauda's head appeared through it to look inside, in accordance with the continuing narration.

*“Aggodagauda was arriving,
He now stood outside the teepee,
Where was his daughter? he was wondering.
Was she in the leader's dwelling?
Peeped he through the dwelling's cover,
Looked inside, in through an opening,
Saw his daughter sitting quietly,
Saw she was not very happy,
Saw his daughter sitting grimly,
Sitting fasting, never yielding,
Saw the thief was not forgiven,
Saw his daughter was unbending.”*

Children in the audience laughed when Aggodagauda's head looked about and then quickly withdrew when the Buffalo-Chief looked in that direction. That was done twice and children laughed. We continue:

*“Daughter saw her father spying,
Knowing he had come to save her,
Sought a way to flee to join him,
Flee her captors who were watching.
Thought she'd act to seem relenting,
Changing thoughts about her captors,
Coming round to start forgiving,
Excusing them their brutal actions.”*

Abbi as the daughter now stood up and went to the side (stage right) where the Buffalo-Chief and his entourage

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were sitting, to the accompaniment of the following explanation:

*“Asked her captors for a dipper,
Told the chief she would now get him,
Water clean and cool for drinking,
Bring it back to quench his thirsting.”*

The backdrop also had a slit cut into it to serve as the doorway by which Abbi would exit and later the chief and his followers. Abbi as the daughter went out through the slit. The Buffalo-Chief laughs and points to show he believes she is having a change of heart.

*“This apparent change delighted,
Both the Chief and all his followers,
Let her go, and then they waited,
He was pleased she seemed be changing.
So he waited, kept on talking,
Kept on chatting with his followers,
Passing time inside his building,
Waiting for the quenching water.
But he saw that time was passing,
Lovely woman not returning,
Did not come back with the water.
What had happened to the woman?”*

The Buffalo Chief stands up and shows he is puzzled. Where is she? He heads to the doorway slit with the followers behind and they all exit out through the doorway.

*“Went out of the dwelling doorway,
Followed by his rough companions,
Looking for his missing captive,
Where was she in this night darkness?”*

The stage again was made dark for a scene change. When the light was restored, the backdrop was the one depicting the prairie again. *Aggodagauda* meets his daughter, puts her piggyback and hops off into the bushes at stage left, leaving the stage empty.

*“Aggodagauda hunter, father,
Met his daughter in exterior,
Took her up upon his shoulders,
Carried her away from danger.”*

4. *Abbi is an Actress*

The Buffalo-Chief and several of his men enter stage left looking around, studying the ground, trying to find the woman's trail.

*“Buffalo went on with searching,
Searching further for the woman.
They went out onto the prairie,
Under sky now lit by moonlight,
Could not find where she had gone to.
But came upon a hunting party,
Led by Aggodagauda's relation,
Father-in-law, his late wife's father.”*

Suddenly, in accordance with the narration, with war whoops, the party of hunters – some of Wilbur and Gwendoline's boys, minus the horn headdresses – leapt into the scene from the bushes, and after some confusion, drove the chief of the buffalo and the remainder wearing the horns, off stage, synchronized to the following narration:

*“Hunting party come upon them,
Come upon them from the rear side,
Started shooting arrows on them.
All upon the buffalo-men,
Felling many, many falling.
Many fell, but not their leader.
Chief, and king, buffalo leader,
Fled he off in west direction.”*

he dead lie on the stage, but the nasty Buffalo-Chief, faking death, gets up and flees into the bushes. The father-in-law of *Aggodagauda* sees him flee, and run after him but then return – he has disappeared! All the action was exaggerated for the benefit of the children in the audience.

*“Where he went, there is no knowledge.
All that's known, is what they're saying:
Vanished he from that whole region,
Never 'gain to pose a danger.”*

The stage went dark again, and when the light was restored, it is the prairie again. *Aggodagauda* with daughter on his back hops from stage left to right. This is

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repeated as before, but in the opposite direction with Bradden and Abbi circling around the back when the stage was made dark, to give the sense of a long journey home.

*“Helped along by guardian spirit,
Hopped he back the way he’d come there,
Hundred steps to every hopping,
Till he came up to the river.
River was now very solid,
And he hopped across the river,
Then continued east and homeward,
Back along the trail he’d followed.
Over prairie into forest,
Through the forest, place familiar,
To the place where was the clearing,
Back home to their forest cabin.”*

The stage became dark again, and when the light was restored, the scene with the structure representing the cabin, was restored by removing the backdrops that had been placed in front of it to represent the prairie. Again, Abbi as the daughter, sat on a rock in the foreground. Her father sat off to the side, seemingly mending a fishing net, or carving something.

*“Daughter of Aggodagauda,
She was back in log house safety,
Safe from strangers uninvited,
Safe from those without the manners,
Without proper courting customs,
Customs asking her and father,
Customs asking for permission ,
For to wed with hopper’s daughter.”*

One of Gwendoline’s boys, dressed as a handsome young hunter came onstage from the left, acting as an interested suitor.

*“Soon a young man came a-calling,
Asked permission for to take her,
Take his daughter for to marry,
If she too would care to choose him.”*

He takes her hand and helps her stand up. She nods

4. *Abbi is an Actress*

approval of this hunter. *Aggodagauda* in the background too stands up and joins them, nodding. Then all three stand together in the foreground like a family, as the narration drew to an end.

*“Aggodagauda, hunter, fisher,
Saw his daughter, fair and lovely,
Marry with this worthy hunter,
Free him of his fret and worry,
Worry ‘bout the unknown future,
When old age should overtake him,
And he could not hop no longer,
Could no longer be provider.”*

The stage was slowly darkened for the final verse. While the final verse was being spoken, with all attention on Bradden standing center stage as *Aggodagauda*.

*“Sing again about the famous,
Aggodagauda, hunter, fisher,
Had but one leg that was working;
Went about his life by hopping.
Constant use made leg that’s working
Grow in strength and health and power,
So’s could hunt and fish and travel,
Just as well as any other!!”*

Bradden, instead of remaining on the stage, leaped out into the audience, hopped up the aisle, to the surprise of the audience, disappearing out the front door.

The window curtains were closed to darken the stage. The audience clapped. Children expressed glee. In a minute or so, the window curtains were opened and light restored to reveal the entire cast on the stage, including Bradden who had returned via the back door. They took their bows.

All the light was restored to the hall, as all the curtains were opened by Gwendoline’s children, still in costume. Some of the audience stayed to congratulate Bradden and his actors. Others began to file their way outside. Then outside the hall one saw a remarkable phenomenon. Every child, once reaching the outside, began to hop. It only took several doing so to make them all want to hop. The adults who had brought their children could only look on,

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as every child out in front of the community hall was hopping about on one leg. If a detective had investigated, he would have found a great number of footprints in the snow in front of the theatre made with only the right boots. He would have ended up scratching his head about that.

And that was not the end of the hopping. When Littleton's church had their annual picnic the coming summer, they had to introduce a new event – the one-legged race where every participant had to have one leg tied up.

ANOTHER PERFORMANCE

When they performed it again in January in Moncton, thanks to the help of Bradden's railway colleagues, there was a larger audience, as a result of putting up many posters and having Moncton citizens to draw from. Before the performance, Bradden hired a photographer, who took a picture of the cast, to remember it by. The photographer had a large camera on a tripod, asked everyone to hold as still as a statue, and used a gunpowder flash.

While Jenine knew most people in the audience in Littleton, at this performance, everyone in the audience was a stranger. They were also city folk, men and women of a middle class, and were well dressed.

When a woman with dark hair came up after the show to congratulate Abbi on a fine performance, for a moment Jenine wondered if this woman was the woman she was always expecting might show up one day to see how Abbi was doing.

"You are a fine little actress," the woman said to Abbi.

"Thank you," Abbi replied.

"Would you like to meet more of the cast?" Jenine asked, since not many of them had remained up front after the curtain call. "Many of them are removing their makeup and costumes. My husband, Bradden is probably resting his right leg for a few minutes from all that hopping at the end."

"No that is fine," the woman replied. "I have an appointment to keep and won't have time to linger. Thank you anyway. By the way, I see you are pregnant.

4. *Abbi is an Actress*

Congratulations about that. I hope it will go well.”

Jenine was indeed showing by this time.

“We are hoping it is a girl this time,” said Jenine. “I have now had three boys in a row. A girl now, would be just fine.”

And she left with all the other strangers from the Moncton area who had come to the rented hall.

THE GOSSIP LADIES HEAR SOME NEWS

In the weeks following the production of the play, Littleton was abuzz with both discussion and gossip about it. Here is what one could hear in the general store when the local gossipy ladies met.

“That Woodrow family never ceases to amaze me,” said one of the gossip ladies to another. “Who would have expected to see a production of a play here in Littleton!”

“And children are still hopping around in their games because of it. Have you seen their footprints in the mud of the streets? They are all from the right boot. A line of footprints of only the right foot is very strange to see!”

Another woman in the store, overhearing these two, came over. “Have you heard? Soon the Woodrow family will be leaving?”

“What?”

“Yes. Mr. Woodrow will resume working for his original employer, who has now relocated to Fredericton. It is now building the railway that goes up alongside the Saint John River and because of it, the family will move to Fredericton!”

“When?”

“I expect soon after Mrs. Woodrow’s new baby is born.”

“Oh what will we gossip about when they are gone? No more precocious Indian girl.”

“No more articulate well dressed children who speak really good English, and even some Acadian French.”

“No more visits by the eccentric mother who runs the big company in Saint John.”

“No more dramatic poetry recitals by Mr. Woodrow.”

“No more scholarly men with whom Mr. Woodrow corresponds visiting the Woodrows.”

“...Oh what will we gossip about now?! There has never

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been a more interesting and colourful family in Littleton in all my years!”

The winter dissolved into spring. Jenine gave birth. The Woodrow family acquired one additional child. And it was a girl as Abbi had hoped! Three boys had been enough! she thought.

Jenine called her Mary, or Marie in French. Since Jenine had Acadian heritage on her mother’s side, she like to choose names that had French equivalents. For example Jack, who was now over a year old, was also Jacques.

“Hello Marie!” said Abbi when the family crowded into the bedroom when the midwife had left. “I am so happy you are a girl. And then she peeked under the blanket to assure herself that it was really a girl this time!

5

A Railway Family in Fredericton

GOODBYE TO LITTLETON

The need to move out of Littleton was already years in coming. Not only would Bradden's work take him elsewhere that was too far for commuting, but the Littleton cottage was becoming too small for all the growing children. They needed to move to a larger home anyway.

His work for Intercolonial Railways where he had worked after the Moncton-Amherst line was completed some years ago, was now completed too. He would now return to his former employer, which was currently supervising the construction of the new railway that went up along the Saint John River towards Edmunston. He would now be supervising men in a design office in Fredericton.

Life in Littleton had been wonderful, but all wonderful things must come to an end, and who knows, their new location may be even more wonderful.

The children were excited about moving because it represented an adventure. Jenine, who had grown up in Littleton and had a sister Gwendoline and mother down the road, as well as friends and neighbours around the area, was not so keen. But soon, there were further changes in her life that would help her accept moving away from Littleton.

Jenine gave birth to the baby girl who she named Mary or Marie, after her mother. But then soon after, her mother died. Thus the children acquired a new sister Marie while their Grandmama Marie passed away. It was the cycle of life.

The two families laid Grandmama Marie to rest in the

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church cemetery on a solemn grey day. Afterward the two sisters, Jenine and Gwendoline, discussed the future. What was certain so far was that Jenine would be moving away to Fredericton soon. That had caused Gwendoline and Wilbur to consider their own family's future. Perhaps it was time for them to move too, to embark on a new stage in their lives.

"Wilbur has always been frustrated that he cannot make fancy carriages for wealthy urban folk," said Gwendoline to Jenine after the funeral. "Furthermore, with the railway having been completed, he no longer has all the business the railway construction activities gave him – their hiring work horses and wagons to haul things. Things have been back to normal for some time now. We have saved up, though. We may decide to travel west as far as the new railways will take us, and settle outside a developing city. They say once you get on the Grand Trunk Railway you can go all the way to southwest Ontario."

It was early 1873, and railway developments going even further west had not yet begun. Nor had the Intercolonial Railway that connected Moncton to Riviere du Loup Quebec been quite finished yet. They might have to begin by taking a steamship to Quebec.

"Well our mother is gone," replied Jenine, "and our father went many years ago. It is a good time to sell the family property and both of us embark on new beginnings."

Gwendoline wondered how she would do without her daily contact with her sister.

While the adults were talking, Abbi studied the gravestone of Grandmama Marie. Abbi remembered her as quite an old woman, restricted to a rocking chair or wheel chair, compared to the spry but stern Grandmama Audora. Grandmama Audora had been generous to donate such a nice expensive tombstone for Grandmama Marie, even though the two had never properly met each other. It was the nicest one in the church graveyard, Abbi thought. Grandmama Audora had had it engraved in Saint John. It even had French words on it in recognition of her Acadian heritage.

"Come, Abbi," Jenine called "You can visit Grandmama Marie's grave again before we leave Littleton."

Folks of Littleton continued to be sorry that the

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colourful Woodrow family was leaving. What would the gossip ladies gossip about now?

“We won’t be able to talk about how Mr. Woodrow sends and receives volumes of mail,” said one of the gossip ladies to Mrs. Farthing at the general store.

“We won’t be able to remark on the precociousness of their children,” said another gossip lady.

“Nor will we be able to remark on the smartness of the Indian girl.”

“Nor be able to wonder out loud where she came from and the circumstances.”

“And what about that mother of Mr. Woodrow – the woman who comes and has such airs, like she is better than anyone else?”

“Or wonder what is going on between them – how she hates it her son married a country girl instead of a wealthy young woman from high society around Saint John.”

“Nor will we be able to hear Mr. Woodrow give recitals of poetry with his dramatic voice which he acquired from the theatrical productions when at university.”

“Yes,” finally replied Mrs. Farthing to the women. “Littleton won’t be the same, that’s for certain.”

“Now it will be Fredericton’s turn to gossip about the family!” finished the first gossip woman.

Among the folks sad to see the colourful Woodrow family go was their landlord. Their landlord had been the man who owned most of the land in the Littleton area. His great grandfather had begun Littleton by putting a small grist mill on Littleton Brook.

“Well I’m sad to see the Woodrow family go,” he told them. “But I expected it. This cottage is already becoming too small for your growing family.”

“Well you have been a good landlord, and the cottage is pretty, and with a pretty view over the valley.”

“But you have made it prettier by keeping it in good shape. The next tenant will value the garden you have created, Jenine.”

“Much of the furniture came with the house and will remain for the next tenant. We do not have many large items of our own to ship. I suppose the large oaken desk my husband bought is the largest piece of furniture we

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have added here, and which he will want to keep even if it will be expensive to ship.”

Instead of starting over with respect to his comfortable study, where he did all his work, Bradden decided to take the entire contents and reproduce it as closely as possible in the new house in Fredericton. Abbi found him one day putting books into boxes.

One of the most important items in the study, as far as Abbi was concerned, was the stuffed beaver that had always sat on top of the oaken desk like a sentinel. She had already developed a relationship with it by talking to it when Bradden was at work, as if it were living. She called it Amik, because that was how beavers were called in *The Song of Hiawatha* poem.

“You are taking the stuffed beaver aren’t you?” asked Abbi, concerned it might remain behind. “I’m very fond of Amik. I like imagining it is living and sitting very still. I even pretend I can talk to it and it understands.”

“Yes the stuffed beaver is familiar to me too – sitting on my desk like a sentry and companion. I got it from somewhere when I was a boy. Definitely he will come. And most everything in the study including the wonderful beat-up oaken desk.”

When the moving men had come and taken the furniture and boxes that would be shipped, and organized for their shipping by the railway system, it was now time for the family to go too. They went around town saying goodbyes to everyone.

Early the next morning Gwendoline and her family, along with some other friends and neighbours who were free at the time, saw them off at the railway station, “We will be going soon, too, Jenine,” Gwendoline said as she hugged her sister. “Just as soon as Wilbur finds a buyer for his livery and wagon works, and I have found a buyer for our property, and Wilbur has done some research to determine the best place to start up his carriage works in the west. We’ll keep in touch by letter.”

When all goodbyes had been made, and the train pulled in at the station, Jenine, carrying baby Mary, shepherded all her children into the passenger car. “Abbi, help little Jimmy get on board.”

When they had all sat down, the conductor shouted “all

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aboard” and the train began chugging and moving, Everyone waved from the windows.

“Goodbye Littleton,” Abbi said. When would she ever see it again? she wondered. But before her lay a new adventure – living in Fredericton while Papa worked for the railway going up the Saint John River towards Edmunston!

The journey would take them pretty well all day, Jenine had told the children. They had to change trains a couple of times along the way. “I ask you children to be very very patient. It will be a long and boring journey, but there will be plenty to see out the train window.”

Abbi had watched the scenery on the train between Littleton and Moncton several times by now during those times they had gone to Moncton for various reasons. They had to change trains at Moncton, and Abbi looked forward to what new kinds of scenery would be found between Moncton and Saint John. Jenine and Bradden let the children get beside the window, as she knew the scenery that went past outside would keep them preoccupied.

The journey between Moncton and Saint John, even on an express train was a long one, and eventually the children began to get bored. Abbi tried to keep the boys preoccupied with games like counting the number of cows they saw.

After several hours, Abbi heard the conductor shout “Richdale! Next stop Saint John Station!”

“Papa!” exclaimed Abbi. “This is where Grandmama Audora lives! Richdale!”

“Yes, Abbi. We were wondering earlier if we should stop here and stay a short while with Grandmama, but we decided that it would be better to go directly to our destination and get settled in our new home. Grandmama is busy anyway all day at her office in Saint John. We can pay a visit to Grandmama later for a longer stay. Don’t you worry. We are getting off at Saint John Station, the next stop, children. That is where we will change to an express train that goes to Fredericton.”

As passengers got off and on at Richdale, Abbi studied the houses of the wealthy nearby the station, many of them mansions, which explained why this suburb outside of Saint John was called “Richdale”.

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The train started up and moved on to the final station, Saint John. There they transferred to the final leg of their journey – from Saint John to Fredericton..

THE MARVELS OF THEIR FREDERICTON HOME

Bradden had made all the arrangements to prepare their destination. It was a leased house in a ‘modern’ subdivision of identical houses. In cities, the working class tended to live in the centre of cities in row housing – housing units connected to one another – which were not very large nor had very big yards. But this subdivision had larger lots and larger houses that stood on their own, meaning ‘detached’. Those that lived here were a little better off than the regular worker inside the cities close to the factories. Indeed, as an experienced railway civil engineer Bradden was one of these. He received a quite good salary, and was proud of it. It meant he had succeeded in his career in railway engineering.

But this new place they would live was still leased, like their Littleton property. Bradden knew that in his line of work, they might move once again in a few years when the current project and his current position, came to an end. Who knows where he would be working next? Perhaps his next position could be with the railway that had been talked about in government circles for years, going west to the Pacific from the Thunder Bay region. The Dominion of Canada was destined to grow all the way to the Pacific and the railway system would have to be continued westward, just as was happening in the United States. But for the time being he would be working a few years here in Fredricton.

When they finally arrived, Abbi thought: What a wonderful big new house! The children set out to explore every nook and cranny. There were more rooms upstairs. The boys would be in one room and Abbi and Marie in the other. Abbi immediately envisioned how she would decorate the girl’s room. She would mostly have it to herself to start, because Marie or Mary was still only a baby.

After much excitement and unpacking. There is no need to describe the joy of moving into a brand new house in a

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brand new city. The first months were filled with discovery. But eventually the excitement would settle and life would become routine like it was before in their former home.

There were significant differences between this new home and their home in Littleton. First of all there was more room in this larger house. Secondly, because this was a recently built therefore modern house, it had more household conveniences. Thirdly the city was only minutes away and one could walk downtown. Bradden's workplace too was not far away. He could reach the offices where his designers worked with a ten minute walk,

But other things remained a constant. Suppertimes were like they had been in Littleton. The children had to clean up, be neat and tidy and courteous.

Seeing their Papa going to work down the road and coming back up the road, the children began to wonder more about where their Papa went and what he did. Besides, the boys were getting older and developing the curiosity that comes with age.

"I want to see the railway being built," said Mark one suppertime shortly after they had arrived and settled in.

"But Mark," Bradden replied. "There is nothing to see where I go every day - a large bright room filled with railway engineers and technicians bent over lots of maps and plans. We mainly do the designing there. We don't manage the construction. That is the responsibility of the construction manager. We do on occasion travel out to the sites, which are many hours away by train, to check that the work is going according to specifications. But not often."

"Specifications?" Abbi wondered.

"That means according to how we the railway designers have specified - that the beams are the right size and everything is properly aligned and so on."

"Oh," said Abbi and continued eating.

"Mark would you like some more potatoes?" Jenine wondered.

"Yes, please, Mother," he replied. "And some gravy too, please."

"This dining room is more spacious than the one we had in Littleton," remarked Abbi. "And we have a large

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lamp above the table as before. We can even dine when it is dark.”

“Yes, Abbi,” said Jenine, now turning her attention to baby Mary sitting in a high chair. “It is a newly built house. I think we are the first tenants here. It has the latest conveniences. It has plumbing – water coming in from the water works, and pipes to take away sewage somehow. It is a mystery to me where it comes and goes. All my life we have pumped water from a well, and visited the outhouse, and thrown grey water into the garden.”

“I like the water closet, Mama,” said Abbi. “You have only to pull the chain and everything disappears.”

“Well don’t use it too much. They charge us for the water.”

“We have central heating in this house too, children,” said Bradden.

“What does that mean?” Mark wondered.

“It means we throw coal or wood into the furnace in the basement, and then the heat is distributed through the house with pipes and radiators. But there is one fireplace too in the living room above where the furnace is, for when the weather is extra cold. At Littleton, and everywhere in the olden days, we only had fireplaces and kitchen stoves, and we relied on heat distributing itself through the house by itself.”

“Grandmama said her mansion has lots of fireplaces, Papa,” said Mark. “When will we be able to visit Tall Pines? We have never been there.”

“Perhaps soon, seeing as it is now much closer than it was when we lived in Littleton. Tall Pines has many fireplaces because my grandfather built the mansion long before central heating. Every room needed a fireplace, and servants put fires in them all. But Grandmama has recently installed central heating and radiators too. Originally all the lighting was by oil lamps and candles. Now she has also converted most of the oil lamp and candle fixtures for gas. Unfortunately for us, there is no gasworks yet around here and so we still have to use oil lamps and candles. But before long we will have gas here too.”

“I think oil lamps and candles are more romantic,” said Abbi.

“May I have another slice of bread, Mama?” asked the

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younger boy, Jimmy, who was now 4-and-a-half.

Jenine passed the bread to Jimmy. "We also have the latest in stoves," remarked Jenine. "It has a wonderful oven."

"Yes," added Abbi. "Papa, it has everything – there is a tank in it for making hot water, and a place for keeping something warm, and the largest oven I have seen, and you can put either coal or wood in it. And for keeping things cool, the kitchen has an icebox. An ice man comes around and sells people blocks of ice. And there is a milkman that comes from a dairy and brings milk. And another man comes around and delivers eggs."

"I know," said Bradden. "It is why I chose this location. It has the latest and most modern of conveniences. One day every place will be like this. Have you explored the back yard, children?"

"Yes it is twice as big as at Littleton."

"I can't wait to start a garden," said Jenine. "We can grow some of our own vegetables. In any case, for food, there is a large farmer's market in town where we can get groceries. And there is a post office in its own building instead of just a wicket in a general store."

"Are there any gossipy ladies?" Abbi wondered, thinking of the ladies who gathered at the general store every day to gossip.

"I'm sure there are gossipy women everywhere in the world, Abbi, and that Fredericton will not be an exception."

"What about school?" wondered Abbi. "I've become seven and according to the laws, I am supposed to start school."

"There is a brick building with several classrooms down the road," said Bradden. "I am sure that is where you will go just as soon as September arrives."

"Have you met the neighbours, Bradden?" Jenine wondered. "I've spoken briefly or waved to neighbours, but haven't had much chance to get to know anyone besides the Jacksons, our neighbours to the right. Mr. Jackson is a manager at the large sawmill in town. He and his wife Joan only have one child. A girl name Charlotte. She is your age Abbi."

"She is!! A girl my age just next door? Oh I must meet

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her! We can become fast friends! Why didn't you tell me earlier, Mama?"

Jenine was very happy with their new situation. It was genuinely a new adventure. And she preferred having conveniences to assist with her housekeeping instead of having to hire household help – even if Bradden made enough salary now for them to afford household help. Where she had grown up near Littleton, neighbours helped each other as needed and hired help was only needed for special practical purposes like bringing in the harvest. She didn't care for hiring strangers for household work.

Abbi, having now explored the house and settled in her very own room – along with baby Mary – was now ready to become friends with Charlotte next door.

"Why don't you just walk over there, knock on the door, and say that you would like to meet Charlotte," said Jenine.

And that is what Abbi did. Mrs. Jackson answered. She was a little surprised at Abbi's boldness, but called Charlotte to the front door. And soon they were fast friends, doing girl things together whenever they were free.

"We are both seven," Abbi pointed out to her, "and that means we will start school together!"

A VISIT DOWNTOWN

The children could not get enough of going downtown. Happily Jenine still liked to walk downtown to buy needed food and things, as well as visit the post office. She still had the wicker baby carriage, and now put baby Mary in it. She had Abbi keep the boys in line, keeping them following behind in orderly fashion.

But soon visits into town – to the food market and then the post office – became routine, and the children became restless to visit other places. They had to wait for the weekends when if lucky their Papa would propose a family outing.

But sometimes he went by himself. His scholarly interests compelled him to visit the public library and bookseller from time to time, which would not appeal to children. Abbi however was curious, and one day asked to

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come along.

“I know how to read a little,” she told him. “I would like to get a book to read – a new book that is my very own compared to your books from when you were little, like *Treasure Island*.”

“Very well, Abbi, next Saturday I plan to visit the bookseller to see if they have any writings by Henry Schoolcraft, the expert on Indian peoples. There are some books of his I would like to own, rather than only see them when I visit libraries. You can come along this time.”

“I want to go too!” exclaimed Mark when he heard.

“You are two years younger than Abbi,” said Jenine. “Wait until you can read a little better. Papa is not going to a place that only sells children’s picture books. He is going to a very fancy bookseller downtown.”

Thus, the next day, Bradden and Abbi walked downtown. Abbi was still amazed at all the people and carriages on bustling city streets. She had had some experience of them in Moncton, but most of her experience had been with Littleton where one would only see the occasional wagon or buggy coming into town for one reason or another from the surrounding farmlands. Here there was plenty to observe.

After they had walked a while, Bradden revealed to Abbi a secret. “There is another reason for our going downtown today, Abbi, and I needed you for your advice.”

“What is it?”

“Tomorrow happens to be Mama’s birthday, and I want to buy her something special. She is a very practical woman, so tell me what would she love to have?”

“She was admiring the sewing machines in one of the store windows a few days ago when we all went to visit the food market. She said it would be a wonderful convenience to make it easier to mend and make clothes for all the children.”

“Perfect! Before we go to the bookseller, let’s investigate the sewing machines. Show me where the store is.”

Before long, they were walking along a sidewalk with a strip of stores with large windows. Other people were strolling along here, and looking at the goods on display in the windows.

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“Look Papa,” said Abbi. “The sign says ‘Pianos, Sewing Machines, and Furniture’. Mama has read about how sewing machines make stitches very fast.”

They went inside. Inside the shop there was furniture all around, not just pianos and sewing machines. A clerk approached them and Bradden said: “Well I could not help noticing that you have the much-discussed household sewing machine. I have frequently seen your small advertisement in the Fredericton newspaper.”

“Yes indeed,” said the clerk. “We have the new sewing machine that makes sewing clothes many times faster than stitching clothes by hand⁷. Such a machine will pay for itself very quickly.”

“I now have five children, all growing fast. My wife would appreciate such a machine, I’m certain. It’s for her birthday.”

They went over to the most popular sewing machine model. It was mounted on a wooden table and activated by pumping a pedal underneath. The clerk demonstrated the pedaling, and even produced some stitching on a sample. “As you can see,” he continued, “I have produced a hundred stitches within mere seconds. Imagine how long it would take to do so many stitches with a needle and thread by hand.”

“Mama will love it, Papa!” Abbi said excitedly. “Buy it Papa!”

“Very well, sir,” said Bradden, “We’ll take it.”

Bradden paid for it and arranged for it to be delivered the next day to their address. Then he and Abbi walked further to the bookseller.

The bookseller had shelves of books from floor to ceiling. This was the golden age of reading. Everyone read books for learning and for entertainment.

Bradden was interested in out-of-print books about Indians, particularly books by Henry Schoolcraft. Abbi explored books on a lower shelf that were intended for school-age children.

“I have all the children’s classics, Abbi. But perhaps

⁷ The first chain-stitch sewing machine in North America appeared in 1830, and the first lock-stitch sewing machine in 1846, but the first practical household sewing machine was invented by Isaac Merritt Singer in 1851. They were common by 1873, the time of this story.

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there is something newer that interests you.”

When they left, both Bradden and Abbi had books, and he also purchased the latest newspaper and a copy of *Canadian Illustrated News*.

Next day, which was Sunday, a horse drawn wagon with the name of the store written on the side, arrived in front of their house. Bradden went outside to help bring in the sewing machine, all wrapped up for the short trip. Before electricity, sewing machines were attached to small tables, as they were powered by a foot pedal down below. The entire thing was like a small piece of furniture.

“What is this?” Jenine wondered when Bradden and the wagon driver had it inside.

“It’s your birthday present,” said Abbi. “We bought it yesterday. Let’s remove the packaging and see.”

Jenine soon saw it was the one she had admired in the window last time they went into town. She couldn’t wait to try it out.

“It makes stitches really really fast, Mama,” said Abbi.

Soon she had found some fabric and was making her first sewn items – napkins nicely stitches around its edges.

“Can I try, Mama?” Abbi asked. Jenine let Abbi stitch the edges of a few of the napkins.

Then it was time for supper and experimenting with the sewing machine had to be postponed until later.

At supper, Jenine spoke a great deal about the sewing machine, and what they could make. But the boys were not interested in that topic.

“What about showing us how railways are built,” said Mark to his Papa once again.

The family was, as always, neat and tidy for supper. Food was passed around and knives forks and spoons were used properly.

“Do you want some beans, Mark?” asked Jenine. “They are from the farmer’s market?”

“No thank you Mama. I have plenty, and they are delicious.”

Bradden answered Mark’s question. “I am sure an opportunity will arise, boys, to see some railway construction. Be patient. I have only begun my work in the offices here in Fredericton. I’m not fully aware what is going on yet at the construction end of things. I will

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inevitably have to make some trips to the sites to check the accuracy of the work being done relative to the plans.”

“I also need a desk in my room, Papa,” said Abbi, changing the subject. “for when I start school.”

“It is still summer. We’ll have a chance to do that too. We can’t do everything all at once. Be patient, children.”

Everyone set about familiarizing themselves with the neighbourhood and everything available here in the Fredericton area during the summer of 1873.

By the time summer ended, the Woodrow family was part of the local community, and life became increasingly routine, somewhat similar to their life in Littleton except for the fact that the town was much larger and had many more services and things to do.

ABBI AND CHARLOTTE

The summer provided Abbi the opportunity to get to know her next door neighbour’s girl, Charlotte. She was indeed Abbi’s age. “We will both be starting school together when September comes, Charlotte!” Abbi said to her for the tenth time. “We can walk to school and back together!”

Charlotte was quite the opposite of Abbi. She had blonde, curly, hair and blue eyes, and was quiet compared to Abbi’s expressiveness and adventurousness. She liked it when Abbi took initiatives and she followed along.

There were gossiping ladies in every town in the world, Jenine had said, and there were some in this neighbourhood for sure! – the kind who peer out from behind curtains and then hustle over to their friends to exchange what each one has learned.

The post office was no longer a wicket in a general store, but a separate building. As before, Jenine picked up from the post office and delivered the plentiful correspondence her husband carried on in his study when at home from work.

As before, Bradden could not be without a study to which he could withdraw to read and write after work. In the new house his study was set up very much like in the old. The entire contents of the original study had been shipped – nothing left behind – and that included Amik the

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stuffed beaver sitting on the desk like a sentry overseeing Bradden's work.

Abbi showed it to Charlotte one time when she was over during the week and Bradden was still at work.

"Here is where my Papa does his reading and writing. It is called a 'study'. And that is a real beaver on his desk, except only the skin part. His insides is only straw wrapped with twine. He is very light as a result. Come in and see."

Abbi lifted it up with one hand. It was easy even though it was about two feet high. "Papa said that beavers can grow even bigger than this – a big man beaver can be as big as I am." She put it back down, returning it to where it was. Charlotte touched its fur.



"Papa lets me read whatever book I want," Abbi continued, turning her attention to an entire wall of bookshelves filled with books. "He doesn't mind as long as I put everything back exactly where I got it. That is why I just put Amik back exactly where it was sitting. He will notice if he is moved. I like to speak to Amik. Sometimes I think he is living and just holding very still and looking at me. Whoever made him, posed him so he is holding and gnawing on a twig. Beavers eat twigs, the bark part. Apparently it is nourishing for them. They are very industrious. He is on the Canadian stamp because he was trapped for his fur, but I prefer to see him as a symbol for industriousness."

Charlotte nodded.

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“Hello, Amik,” said Abbi

“Hello Abbi,” said Amik back to her. No he didn’t! Abbi simply imagined he did say hello back in some way.

“Let’s see what book for children Papa has that I haven’t read,” Abbi continued “...The books for children, that he had when he was a boy, are on the bottom shelf and I can take one whenever I want, as long as I bring it back and don’t leave it lying around. I like the one called Treasure Island. Papa has read from it to us during bedtime. My brothers like it because it has pirates in it. I’m sure Papa would let you read a book from here, Charlotte.”

“I can’t read yet.”

Abbi was puzzled. She couldn’t read? Little did she realize that on account of growing up in the Woodrow family she now knew how to read and write well ahead of other children her age.

“My Papa said I will learn when I start school,” Charlotte continued.

“Alright, now let’s look at other things in this house.”

They went upstairs to look at the room she and Mary shared. She pointed out how it was more elegant and to girls’ tastes, while previously she had to tolerate the messiness and antics of her brothers when they were all in the same room in Littleton. Then after inspecting the upstairs, they came down and looked at the backyard.

“There isn’t much here in the backyard yet, but I can show you where Mama plans to start a vegetable garden just like she had in Littleton. And look: we have wicker lawn furniture there now, for when Grandmama Audora visits, just like at Littleton. She likes to sit out in gardens and have tea and talk endlessly with Papa who is her son.”

Just as Charlotte sometimes came over to the Abbi’s home, so too at other times Abbi went over to Charlotte’s house. Charlotte’s mother might make them some lunch. Charlotte’s mother, Joan Jackson was sometimes very helpful for Jenine when now and then she babysitted all the children when Jenine had to go somewhere important. And Jenine returned the favour at other times by looking after Charlotte.

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STARTING SCHOOL

Summer flew by quickly. There is plenty to do during the summer. And the days are long.

Throughout the summer, Abbi wore herself to exhaustion every day and slept soundly. Jenine, needing to tend to the new baby Mary, came in and out of the girls' bedroom often. Abbi liked to speak to Mary but Mary couldn't say much yet. She couldn't wait until Mary got older and they could have a sister-to-sister conversation, when she could say more than 'Ga-ga!'

As she mastered the sewing machine, Jenine made many trips to buy fabrics. She adored making clothes for her children, and while it was common that younger children get hand-me-downs from their older siblings, Abbi was the oldest so everything she got had to be made new. It enabled her to become very involved with Jenine's clothing-making.

They went to a store where almost the entire store was about fabrics and about sewing clothes using sewing machines. Jenine couldn't believe how many kinds of fabrics there were. Back at Littleton, the bolts of fabric were limited to a couple of shelves in the general store.

September meant Abbi and Charlotte would start school. "I need a new dress to mark the occasion," said Abbi.

"Very well, Abbi, we'll make you a special school dress. You can help me." Abbi expressed her opinion about fabrics and patterns and they decided together how it should be. Jenine showed Abbi how to run the sewing machine and she did some parts herself. She couldn't have been happier with the result.

And then the day for starting school came. Jenine helped Abbi put it on the morning of that special day. She combed her hair and put a green ribbon in it. Abbi only regretted Papa had already gone to work and couldn't see her in the dress..

Since Jenine had four other children on her hands, Charlotte's mother Joan, walked both girls to the school to enroll them.

The school was made of brick, and the neighbourhood was large enough that it had four classrooms, a large hall,

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and various smaller rooms – washrooms, teachers’ lounge, principal’s office, etc. The four classrooms were divided between junior, intermediate, and senior grade levels, instead of the rural one room school situation where all grades were mixed together and the teacher had to teach all grades at the same time.

When the registrations were over, Joan Jackson left Abbi and Charlotte there, and returned home.

The teacher for the junior grades – comprising the first two grades – was named Mr. Slatescreech.

“Welcome to a new year of school,” said Mr. Slatescreech. He was blonde with thin hair and wore round glasses. It was his habit to take off his suit jacket and teach class in his vest.

Abbi glanced around the classroom. There was a clock on the wall, a picture of Queen Victoria at the front, a map of Canada on a side wall, a flag of the new Dominion of Canada, a shelf with books. Each student had their own desk. There were even inkwells for holding ink bottles. There was a blackboard at front, with chalks, and above it sheets of paper showing in large size how letters were printed and written. Abbi already knew about how letters were written from Papa having already taught her. She even knew how to write some sentences.

“For the new students, welcome to the beginning of your schooling. Here you will learn to read, write, arithmetic, and some geography, history and science. Let us begin by getting the names of everyone new, and if you like you can tell the class a little about yourself. Who would like to begin?”

Abbi raised her hand.

“My name is Abbi Woodrow. My Papa is a railway engineer working at the offices of the company here in Fredericton. He previously worked for the same company when it was situated in Moncton. He is helping make designs and plans for the railway construction going on right now up the Saint John River, in the direction of Edmunston – that is a town along the river, high up on the river.”

“Very good. Next? The girl with the curly blonde hair next to Abbi.”

Charlotte was reluctant, but Abbi encouraged her.

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“My name is Charlotte Jackson. I live next to Abbi. My father manages workers at the sawmill on the south side of Fredericton....”

“Good. Next new student...”

The next one, a boy, said his father worked as a clerk in the store downtown that sells sewing machines.

Maybe it was the same clerk that she and Papa had met when he bought Mama’s sewing machine, thought Abbi. There was another girl who was a new student as well. Her hair was far too red, Abbi thought. Nobody could have hair that red!

And so it went, the handful of new students each telling their name and a little more. Then they began classes.

As the day went on, Mr. Slatescreech discovered that Abbi already knew how to read and write as well as students two grades higher, and that she knew a great deal about other things too. She explained to him her Papa had graduated from university and had taught her a lot already.

“That would explain it,” agreed Mr. Slatescreech.

From then on, she was placed with older students in reading and writing assignments.

When in the coming weeks, the teachers met for their own lunch in their own teacher’s lunchroom and lounge, they gossiped about Abbi.

“It is amazing. She is so articulate, polite, and knows how to read and write well above children of the same age,” said a teacher who had visited Mr. Slatescreech’s class and observed her.

“Apparently her father is a Harvard graduate and a senior railway engineer,” said Mr., Slatescreech.

“She has picked up her skills and brilliance from him, without any doubt.” said a third teacher.

“And she isn’t even aware of how advanced she is. She believes all children are like she is!” said Mr. Slatescreech.

“Well I for one would like to meet her remarkable father. Perhaps he will come on teacher–parent day!”

Abbi was unaware of the gossiping going on about her, or that she was advanced. Since they lived close enough, Abbi and Charlotte went home for lunch. Joan, who only had Charlotte to take care of, had taken a job as a store clerk, and so she left Charlotte to have lunch with Abbi.

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Jenine was happy to have both Abbi and Charlotte for lunch every day. That gave Joan the freedom to be away all day earning additional income for her family.

“Mama said she will feed the children first so we can have our lunch by ourselves,” said Abbi as they entered.

“How was school today, Abbi?” asked Jenine as she gave each of them a fat sandwich.

Abbi always began talking so copiously and quickly that Jenine almost regretted having asked the question.

“I plan to learn everything there is possible to learn, and then go to university like Papa did,” Abbi finished.

“Well then you will have to eat well so your brain is well nourished!” declared Jenine.

6

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ABBI CORRECTS A CLASSROOM MAP

Abbi was very happy to be going to school. And then when she returned home from school she couldn't wait to do her homework.

In all her life her adoptive father, who she saw as her Papa just like the other children, withdrew in the evening after supper to his study where he engaged himself in reading or writing important things. Abbi wanted to imitate him now, now that she had serious homework assignments. Jenine smiled to see how she now had two scholars in the house – one downstairs in his study, and the other upstairs at her desk in her room. Furthermore, in the morning Abbi woke up earlier to have breakfast at the same time as her Papa, which was before the little children got up, and just like her Papa was off to work, she would be off to school.

At school, every morning began with singing “God Save the Queen” and looking at the same old picture of Queen Victoria on the wall that she had seen everywhere in institutional buildings. There was also the “Lord’s Prayer” And only when all that was done, the lessons began.

Abbi devoured everything she was taught, and couldn't wait for what new discovery was just around the corner. One day, a Tuesday, when there was geography, was especially memorable.

“This morning, class,” began Mr. Slatescreech, “we will study geography. Geography is about how the earth looks – not just its topography but its people and economy. New Brunswick is famous for its forests. First the tall pines were cut down and shipped to Britain for use for masts in the Royal Navy. When all the tallest trees were gone the smaller ones followed. The logs were sent down

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the Saint John and Nashwaak Rivers in spring where they were sawn into boards at the sawmills. Boards then were used to build houses and many other things. I thought since Fredericton owes a great deal to the timber industry, for our geography today, we will discuss the subject today – where the logs are cut, how they reach the sawmills and so on. Many of you children have fathers who work in sawmills and probably know a great deal. To begin with, let us look at a map of New Brunswick.”

The classroom already had some maps on the wall – a map of the world, and a map of eastern Canada showing New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. He picked up a pointer and went to the latter.

“This is New Brunswick children. It used to be a British colony, like Nova Scotia, but since 1867 it is now a province of the Dominion of Canada. The developed areas are naturally those closest to the Bay of Fundy. Here we have Moncton, and here we have Saint John. Fredericton, where we are now, is up here, some distance up the Saint John River. Fredericton is smaller than Saint John, but it was decided it should be the capital because it is more central. Helping the timber industry move logs and lumber, New Brunswick has railways. Here the map shows the railway from Moncton to Saint John, and from Saint John to Fredericton.”

Abbi threw up her hand.

“Yes, Abbi?”

“The map must be old because some railways are missing. My Papa works on the railway construction going on right now.”

“You may be right. The map is some years old. Can you come up and show with the pointer where the new railways are?”

Abbi was thrilled to be just like a teacher. She took the pointer and stood in front of the map.

“First of all,” she began. “The empty space between Moncton and down here in Amherst, Nova Scotia, is linked. My Papa worked on it some years ago, and we lived here in a small town called Littleton which was along the path. It was completed only a couple years ago. That’s why it isn’t printed on the map. Over here above Fredericton, there is a railway that goes on the other side of the river

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from Fredericton all the way over here to Woodstock. My Papa said that railway is in service now. Then from Woodstock the railway will go up beside the Saint John River all the way to Edmunston up here. The track is done as far as a big bridge approximately over here where the Saint John rushes through a gorge. Papa said it will be one of the big bridges called a trestle bridge. The main purpose of the railway is to bring logs down to the sawmills. My Papa said in winter when there is ice in the rivers, it is impossible to move logs down the river, and the logging companies would love it to be able to ship logs by train. And he said that if timber can go by train, it doesn't have to be logs, but lumber, and small sawmills can turn logs into boards already in the wilderness, and ship boards. It would be impossible to float sawn boards down the rivers – unless they are put on barges.”

“Very good Abbi!” Mr. Slatescreetch clapped to encourage the children to applaud her. “Abbi has illustrated the importance of the new railways. Not only are logs being sent down the rivers, but also very soon by train, and the trains will encourage sawmills in the interior, and that in turn will encourage more settlement. That is how an economy works – one thing affects another. Is that all, Abbi?”

“No. There is also the very important Intercolonial Railway which the government of the Dominion of Canada is building. It will go up north from Moncton and meet the Quebec railway that goes as far as here – Riviere du Loupe. Its purpose will be to connect the railways of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia to those of Quebec and Ontario to unite the new country together. My Papa did some engineering design work for it when we were in Littleton after the Amherst-Moncton line was done. But that railway is only half- done, but my Papa knows exactly how it will run when done.”

“Indeed, children,” added Mr. Slatescreetch. “how can we have political union if here is no transportation union as well, to allow free movement of people and goods. Let us continue, then. You may sit down Abbi. Thank you very much. Our own map appears to be about a decade old. Perhaps I can give you the map to take home, Abbi, and you can draw the new railways on the map, Perhaps your

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Papa will show you.”

“I would be pleased to do that, Mr. Slatescreech. I will use my Papa’s best India ink.”

Abbi sat down as pleased as could be.

Mr. Slatescreech continued: “Now let us discuss the geography in the interior of New Brunswick. What kind of terrain is there, what kinds of trees? There are forests of course, but when you go northwest, you enter the top of the Appalachian mountain chain, and there you will find mountains of various sizes. The water runs down from these mountains, and that is why in some places the water tumbles roughly and has over a long period caused gorges. Before Europeans came, the only people there were the Indians. Today the Indians no longer roam nomadically like they used to but tend to stay congregated at several Indian villages.”

“Indian villages!” thought Abbi. They were learning about Indians! Real ones! She was quite interested in Indians from her Papa having read to the children from *The Song of Hiawatha* and his explaining things about Indians. She did not yet know she had been adopted and might be Indian herself. She was interested in Indians purely on account of her Papa being interested in them, because people always said she looked much like an Indian girl, and because she had played Aggodagauda’s daughter in her Papa’s poem-play.

Mr. Slatescreech continued on to discuss how the Saint John valley was first settled by French, and how Fredericton was originally Saint Anne, and how when the British took over, the French withdrew upriver. And then he talked about how Irish and other immigrants came. Nothing more about Indians.

“That was a good presentation you made, Abbi,” said Charlotte after school on their way home. “Do you think you will be able to put all the railways on the map in the right places?”

Abbi had the map under her arm, all rolled up and inside a tube for protection.

“It won’t be difficult. My Papa already has a map of his own that shows where the railway goes. In fact, the railway men have lots and lots and lots of maps and plans of every size that they work from. It won’t be difficult.”

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And she was right. After supper, Bradden brought out several maps, showing different railway lines in considerable detail. She only had to copy from them. When she had lightly outlined the locations and her Papa said she had put them in the right places, she carefully went over the outlines with black India ink. She even added some large dots for some stations that did not exist before the railway was built, and carefully printed their names. She then asked her Papa to show exactly where the railways not yet completed would go. "Then I can tell Mr. Slatescreech that the map will be up to date for several years to come."

When done, Abbi was very pleased with herself. When she returned it the next day, Mr. Slatescreech was very pleased too.

THE FIRST WINTER IN THEIR NEW HOME

Abbi's life at school had started out well, and continued well. Charlotte benefited from Abbi's enthusiasm. With Abbi supporting and encouraging her, she did better than she would have otherwise.

The fall went by all too fast for Abbi. Grandmama Audora finally visited one day to see how her son's family was now living. She took a hired carriage from the Fredericton station to their home, and before coming inside, she instructed the driver to return to pick her up again in a couple of hours.

"I have a hotel room in Fredericton," she said to Jenine by way of explanation, "and a number of appointments to keep on business matters for the Woodrow Timber Manufacturing and Millwork Company, and can't stay long. I only came to see how you were all settled in. I must say, this is a roomier house. Perhaps I will stay for a few days when next time I visit."

As always she fussed over her grandsons, remarking on how they had grown, and even held baby Mary. As usual, she only acknowledged Abbi. Jenine tried to draw her attention to Abbi by telling her she was excelling in school, but that did not generate any excitement in Audora. To her Abbi was, and had always been, only a stranger her son Bradden had adopted. Jenine sometimes

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wondered if Audora even had an interest in her, the country girl her son married against her approval, other than for the fact that she gave birth to her son's boys, her grandsons. She sighed a sigh of resignation. Happily soon Audora Woodrow was gone again, the unpleasantness was over, and things returned to normal.

As Christmas approached, the school put on a Christmas pageant in the school hall and presented it to all the parents.

Railway engineer families met socially during the holidays.

At home there was a Christmas tree in the corner, and talk of Father Christmas, and the expectations among all children of getting wonderful gifts.

Grandmama Audora visited again for Christmas and this time actually spent a few days at their home. She brought gifts for everyone, but was very careful not to be too extravagant, knowing her son did not like her to spoil his children.

Christmas holidays flew by too fast, and soon the regular routine returned. Abbi and Charlotte began again to walk to and from school. The learning in geography, history, science, arithmetic, literature, reading and writing continued. The school was well heated. There was a janitor and maintenance man who saw to that.

Their home did not lack warmth either. Bradden shoveled coal into the furnace in the morning before going to work. He got the fire raging so that the water that was carried to the radiators upstairs was good and hot. If it had snowed, he also cleared a path from the door to the road. There was a young man in the neighbourhood who could be called on to help with winter chores too.

If the days were particularly cold, Abbi liked to sit in the kitchen. Since there was always a fire in the stove to cook and bake food, it was the warmest room in the house. Jenine often had baby Mary there, sitting in a high chair. The boys hung around in there too, or they went outside to play in the snow. The children made a snowman and put a hat on its head and made a nose for him out of a carrot.

Construction on the railways did not go on during the winter, but there was plenty to do for the engineers and other permanent staff in the construction contractor's

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offices. Plans had to be prepared for the construction activity that would resume in spring as soon as the snow was gone. To satisfy the curiosity of his children, Bradden took them one day to see the office where he worked. It was one large room with tables all around the sides, and men on stools bent over all kinds of plans. There were also scale models of bridges and culverts. Bradden was a senior railway engineer now and supervised these men. Mark and Jimmy asked endless questions about what the men were doing, but men working on plans, and doing calculations in books, did not look very exciting. They wanted to see real action.

"I want to see where the railway construction is going on, Papa," pleaded Mark yet again.

"You'll have to wait until summer. There is no construction going on when there is snow on the ground. But come spring, the construction company will post signs in large cities, and hire a large gang of labourers from the unemployed there, and bring them to the construction sites. They will live in tent cities all summer. Come fall they are taken back home with money in their pockets."

Mark made a point of asking his Papa from time to time at the supper table, whether construction had resumed and when he could see work being done.

"In a while," replied Bradden once again. "I told you before. It is not easy to get out to the construction sites, Mark. It takes a good four or five hours to get there. Be patient."

Soon spring was upon them again. Abbi welcomed the sun and warmth and the chirping of happy birds in the trees.

The family had always celebrated birthdays and Abbi's had always been celebrated on the first day of spring, March 21st. It came and she was now eight years old! There was plenty of birthday cake. It had been made in the oven of their large modern stove.

With everything there was to do, time flew by and soon summer was approaching again. They had now been in Fredericton for more than a year. They were now well settled, and expected to be there for many years to come, since there was plenty of railway building going on. Soon there would be a railway going up the Nashwaak River as

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well, a river that flowed into Saint John near Fredericton.

Soon Abbi and Charlotte faced examinations at the school and then school was out for the summer. Abbi and Charlotte set out to find new things they could do to make this summer even more interesting than the last.

RAILWAY FAMILIES PICNIC TRIP

One day, Bradden made an announcement at the supper table.

“Well your opportunity will finally come, Mark and Jimmy. I proposed today, to the chief engineer who looks after all the offices, Mr. Dalton, that we hire a fancy passenger car and take all the railway engineer families up the railway line as far as it can go, to let them have a look at the work being done. He liked the idea. ‘Why not make it a railway family picnic’ he replied. So here is what has been planned. In about a month this summer, we will have a railway engineer and technician families picnic. A special construction locomotive that normally pulls wagons full of rails and railway ties, will pull a passenger car with us all in it, to the limits of the construction – even if some tracks are temporary tracks – to view the whole project so far. The trip has been christened the ‘Railway Engineers Picnic’. We will stop in midday to picnic as well, but the main purpose is to see the work to date.⁸”

“Yay!!” shouted Mark. “At last! We can see railways being built!”

“You shouldn’t shout, Mark,” said Jenine. “Reply to Papa properly.”

“Thank you Papa. I find the promise of such a journey extremely enlightening and am looking forward to it.”

“You need not go so far, Mark,” said Bradden. “Just say ‘Excellent!’ Who knows what ‘Yay!’ means? Everyone who wants to come can come.”

“I can leave our two littlest, who will not understand such a journey and be a burden, with our neighbour Joan,” said Jenine.

“Can Charlotte come, Papa?” asked Abbi. “I can’t imagine going on such a trip without being able to share it

⁸ This event is also fictional, invented for this tale.

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with Charlotte.”

“Certainly. Friends are welcome. But I warn you, the journey will be very long – it is a very long distance. We will have to leave at the break of day, and only arrive back home when dark. While we can go quite fast on the finished track, such as the Fredericton to Woodstock leg, we will be quite slow going through sections under construction. Thank goodness summer days are quite long – I mean there is plenty of daylight from 5 in the morning to 8 at night. There will be plenty to see out the windows all the way.”

Abbi couldn't wait to tell Charlotte. But it was a month away, and Abbi and Charlotte had to find other adventures to pursue in the meantime.

But finally the day arrived.

Jenine left the two littlest, both under 4, with her neighbour Joan, and took Charlotte under her care in exchange.

“I will tell you all about it, Mother,” said Charlotte to her mother.

Mark and his brother Jimmy couldn't wait either for the day to arrive. They wanted to see big locomotives and workers in action. They wanted to see hills only half excavated, and teams of oxen carrying dirt from one location to another. Yes, he had accumulated a long mental list of what he wanted to see, based on what he had heard about railway construction so far from his Papa when growing up.

Thus on a warm July day, the railway families gathered one Saturday at the break of dawn at the railway yard on the other side of the river, where the construction locomotive was located. They took their seats in the passenger car attached to it.

“Come Charlotte,” said Abbi, as they climbed into the car. “Let's get the window seats. We can look out the window.”

The train was initially parked at the first station, waiting to receive a 'go' from the stationmaster. Train movement was regulated with the help of the telegraphy lines that sent instant messages about trains coming from up or down the track. There was regular railway service now as far as Woodstock.

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Bradden explained to Abbi the responsibility of stationmasters at every station, and how they communicated with one another via the telegraph line alongside the track. "Through those lines, we can learn about anything anywhere along the track, instantly. One only needs to attach Morse code equipment and tap out the message. Usually it is a stationmaster up the line sending a message that a particular train is now arrived at such and such a station. Another stationmaster can then send a message that another train is in another location. And that way they know where all the trains are so as to prevent them running into each other. But in this case, there is only one train traveling regularly along this track, so it isn't a problem like would be the case when there are several trains going in both directions."

"How do two trains going in opposite directions pass each other then?"

"One of the trains has to pull off onto a spur at a station to let the other pass before continuing. Since this special train we are on is not going to stop at any stations, but pass through, the stationmasters will arrange for us to pass the regular train going in the same direction when we come up behind it. And then at the end of the line, we'll continue on up the newly laid track, just as if we were a train carrying construction materials or labourers. But we can still communicate ahead. Telegraph lines are put up very early so that we can communicate with foremen at the construction sites and to regulate the trains bringing railway rails and ties. Labourers will then step aside to let us through. Some of the tracks will be temporary and we'll go through slowly. That's when all the families will have a chance to look out the windows at on the construction work going on."

"I can't wait to see the construction," declared Mark. "We're starting to move," said Charlotte. The locomotive was going chug, chug, chug at an increasing rhythm until they were moving at a good rate of speed.

When Abbi looked around she saw that the railway families filled up the entire passenger car. All the windows were open to allow the breeze to flow through. It was July after all and very warm. All the women wore loose cotton dresses and the men the lightest of suits. Not all the

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families had children to bring along. Some had children too young to bring along and who remained behind, and others had children who were already mature and had other things to do. There was one family with boys that Mark and Jim could relate to, but no more girls Abbi's age. Abbi was happy Charlotte could come along.

On this passenger train, benches faced each other with a narrow table between them. It was more comfortable for longer journeys than when benches were facing one way. Charlotte and Abbi sat facing each other right beside the window, to be able to see everything going on outside. Mark and Jimmy had found their own window seats too. Generally all the children on the journey were encouraged to be given window seats. Children, being small, adults could easily see over their heads.

It was understood by all, that the first part of the journey to Woodstock would be a regular ride – except that this special train would breeze through all the railway stations and not stop, just like an express train.

“Let's count things,” suggested Charlotte to Abbi. “I'll count cows and you count horses.”

“No let's count clotheslines with fresh laundry.”

“No let's count wagons.”

“No let's countfarmhouses.”

The ideas of what to count flew fast.

Abbi called to her Papa who was conversing with another man. “Papa we want to count things. What should we count?”

“Well if you count telegraphy poles, you can figure out how far we have traveled because the poles are a hundred feet apart. Multiply the number of poles by a hundred and you will know how many feet we have traveled.”

“It sounds like arithmetic to me,” said Abbi to Charlotte. “Papa is teaching me arithmetic because it is my poorest subject. I'm not an arithmetical type of person.”

“Arithmetic is my best subject,” said Charlotte. “I think it will be fun to determine how many feet we have traveled. But are the telegraphy poles exactly a hundred feet apart? Your Papa may have said it to make it easy to calculate.”

“Mama, when will we stop for lunch?” wondered Abbi, turning to Jenine on the seat beside her.

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“Close to midday I expect. We will all get off at a special place and have a big picnic. All the women have prepared picnic baskets. Perhaps we’ll stop after Woodstock where there is a scenic view of the Saint John River.”

Then a well dressed middle aged man with lots of white hair and sideburns, stood at the front of the passenger car and called the attention of all. He steadied himself against the swaying of the car as he spoke.

“I am Henry Dalton, the head of the engineering group in Fredericton, and welcome to this picnic ride we have arranged. It will be an opportunity for the families of our engineers and technicians to socialize and to see first hand what we do. We have also invited a couple of reporters from newspapers as well, so they can report on the progress of this very important railway line connecting Fredericton and Edmunston.⁹ Since the journey itself will take a long time, we will spend most of the time in this car. We will stop midday at a beautiful spot overlooking the Saint John River and have a real picnic. Then we will continue up the tracks to where we will see places where there is actual construction in progress. We will move very slowly through sections still under construction, and we cannot go further than a large trestle bridge under construction crossing the upper Saint John. You will, thus, see the railway, still under construction, but that is the point – to see how the work is being done. So settle back, and enjoy the ride. It is an opportunity to socialize with one another. This car is a first class car, and there is plenty of room to stretch your legs and walk about – as long as you can maintain your balance against the swaying of the car.”

Mr. Dalton then went around and met the various families independently. Although he knew the men who worked under him, he hadn’t met many of their families, and this was an opportunity to do so.

⁹ This picnic ride and all details are fictional compared to the real railway construction. We don’t know what activities were arranged during the construction of this leg of the railway towards Edmunston, nor the names of people involved, other than that the real chief engineer of this New Brunswick Railway construction was a man named Henry Ketchum originally of Fredericton.

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The day unfolded as wonderfully as everyone expected. The families got to know each other, and there was plenty to see outside going past the window. After a couple of hours, the train stopped at a prearranged location where the locomotive and its passenger car could park on a spur off the main track and where there was a pretty hill overlooking the Saint John River. Women spread out table cloths on the grass and passed around the sandwiches and juices they had prepared. The Woodrow family was joined by Mr. Ridgeway with whom Bradden worked, and his wife and they shared what they had brought.

And then after an hour, the journey continued. After a further hour they began seeing construction activity. Abbi saw tent camps where workers slept, and then gangs of men here and there with shovels and pickaxes, or carrying railway ties, or wagons pulled by horses or oxen bringing loads of gravel, or carrying soil cut away from high ground and moved to low ground.

Abbi noticed how attentive Mark and Jimmy were towards gazing out their window. This was exactly what they had wanted to see for a long time. Men at work wasn't particularly interesting to girls.

When the locomotive came through where there was work being done, the workers stepped back to let the locomotive through. When it was suitable, Mr. Dalton went to the front and explained to everyone in as loud a voice as he could what they were seeing. Two newspaper reporters accompanying the trip took notes. As far as the construction workers were concerned, normally such a locomotive might be bringing rails or railway ties or timber for bridges. This time there was this passenger car. Abbi and Charlotte waved to men who had stepped aside to let them back, leaning on their shovels and pickaxes. Some waved back at the girls in the window, but wondered what this was all about.

Finally in mid afternoon they stopped where a large trestle bridge was being built that would cross a gorge. This was as far as they would go as the bridge was still under construction.

When the locomotive had stopped, the families got out to stretch their legs and marvel at the gorge and the bridge.

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“That’s what I and my team have been designing and supervising recently,” said Bradden to his children and Jenine. “Hear the water? There is a deep gorge here and water rushing along below. Keep away from the side, children. We don’t want anyone to slip and fall down into the gorge.”

“Can I peek Papa?” asked Abbi.

“Very well. Hold my hand. We’ll walk out a few yards onto the bridge. You’ll be able to see down through the gaps in the railway ties.”

Jenine forbade Mark and Jimmy from accompanying them. Charlotte stayed back too.

Abbi saw he was right. It was quite a long ways down below, and water was rushing along and making lots of noise.

“Can the locomotive cross? We can then look down from the car window.”

“No it is still under construction. This is as far as the railway picnic is going today. There is still work to do from here on. The locomotive will run in reverse now and take us back.”

After this short peek of the gorge, they returned to safe ground.

Before they returned to the passenger car, Mr. Dalton addressed the group of railway families again. “Attention everyone! Once you have breathed some fresh air and stretched your legs, we will all begin our journey back. The company will provide supper on the train, at our expense. We have hired the cooks who prepare food for the construction workers to prepare something special for us. We will pick it up momentarily and serve it for the first part of your journey back. Later, I have arranged for some wine and coffee to finish off the day. It will be a long journey back, and alas not as exciting as the coming as it will be a repeat of what you already saw. It might take until 9PM before we are back at Fredericton. But it is summer and it remains light quite late.”

During the trip up to now, Bradden had been preoccupied with meeting the families of colleagues, and now on the trip back he gave more attention to his sons. As the train began returning through the same stretches of construction, Bradden sat with his sons to explain in more

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detail what they saw out the window. Abbi, always curious what Papa had to say, joined them. Charlotte, not interested, sat with Jenine and had a conversation with her and another woman.

"There," Bradden was explaining to Mark and Jimmy, "the men are removing that hill, and moving the dirt and rock into that valley. The whole idea of building a track bed, is not to bring in any fill, but to simply level things out, take down the high spots to fill the low spots. And if the valley has a creek, well then we have to add a culvert to let the water through."

Abbi and the boys saw plenty of muscular and sweaty men with pickaxes and shovels. Dirt that was to be moved went into carts, big ones pulled by oxen or sturdy horses.

"Look Papa," exclaimed Abbi. "Those men look like Indians in your books – except they are dressed in the regular way."

"Yes, Abbi. The railway will hire any able-bodied man. If Indians have learned how to get along with the immigrant men, and can even socialize with them, this is a good job for them. But more often Indians like to work in logging and at sawmills closer to them. In any case, the old days of living entirely off the land is coming to an end."

"What is that man doing, Papa?" inquired Mark, pointing at a man that was not among those swinging pickaxes.

"He's a surveyor – he is determining with survey equipment how much hill to remove, and how much valley to fill so that the track bed is at its right elevation. He drives stakes into the ground showing the desired final elevation at various locations. When I began in Littleton, they sent me out to do plenty of that."

Yes, Abbi and the boys learned a great deal from their Papa about how railways were constructed that day.

When they were through the construction areas, and the train began to travel normally, dinner was served. Tablecloths were put down on the tables, and everyone was given proper dinnerware.

"It is like being in a moving restaurant," observed Abbi, remembering one time when the family went into a restaurant when visiting Moncton.

The dinner was capped off with a dessert of ice cream – just perfect for such a warm July day!

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As the day came to an end, after a whole day lasting from seven in the morning to nine at night – 14 hours – everyone was tired. Many children were sleeping in their seats by the time the locomotive and the passenger car arrived in Fredericton and the ‘Railway Engineer’s Picnic’ came to a close. .

A REVIEW OF THE RAILWAY ENGINEERS PICNIC

The next day, which was a Sunday, all the tired children of the Woodrow family slept longer. When they finally got up they talked about the journey all day long.

Memories of yesterday’s events swirled around in everyone’s mind, and everyone had questions. Suppertime was always an opportune time to air one’s questions.

“How was the big trestle bridge at the gorge built Papa?” Abbi wondered. “Did any workers fall into the water?”

“The bridge was built from below upward. There will always be some accidents, Abbi, but if you anticipate everything that could go wrong, you can prevent serious accidents. The workers building the bridge would be men who already have experience putting up structures. We won’t use just anyone. Those workers who only come with a healthy body and have no suitable experience, do straight labour – they swing pickaxes and heave dirt with shovels. But even if men have experience, there will always be the unforeseen. When accidents happen it is because of something unexpected and unforeseen. But by taking precautions we can make accidents very rare.”

“Like what for example, Papa,” Mark wondered.

“Well once an ordinary worker had a big rock fall on his leg and crush it so badly they had to amputate it. He has to live the rest of his life with one good leg and an artificial one for the other.”

“Like a pirate,” exclaimed Jimmy. “Like Long John Silver and his peg leg in the book.”

“No,” said Abbi. “Like Aggodagauda in the Indian legend. He could develop his good leg and not even need an artificial one. The Aggodagauda story is inspiring, I think. I’m so happy we presented the story in a poem play before we moved to Fredericton.”

6. The Railway Engineers' Picnic

"Has anyone died?" Mark asked his Papa.

"Mark, don't talk about dying at the dining room table," commanded Jenine. But Bradden answered anyway.

"It happens, just as it happens anywhere. Someone could trip on the street outside here and hit their head in a fatal way and die. The same on a construction site – anything is possible. Even something simple can lead to tragedy if Fate or God chooses their time has come. Supposing the man who had a rock fall on his leg, instead had it fall on his head. Well the outcome of that would have been much worse."

"I think it is best to die in a noble way like in the books," said Abbi, thinking of the way death was portrayed in the novels she had read by now.

"What do you mean, Abbi?" Mark wondered.

"I mean it is better for a mouse to die in the mouth of a lion than a small cat. Or it is better for a soldier to die in combat than to trip accidentally and fall onto his bayonet. Or it is better for someone to die in an avalanche than from getting hit by a big piece of ice falling off a roof. It is best if you die in a noble and romantic way doing something important."

"That's enough talking about death, children," commanded Jenine.

"If you ever die, Papa," Abbi finished, "you must make sure it is in a noble romantic way. Dying in a plain accidental way just won't do."

Bradden laughed. "Well if I ever face death, Abbi, I'll make sure it is a noble and romantic one just like in the novels. Now let us change the subject children."

"Let us talk about other things we can do as a family this summer," said Jenine, trying to steer the conversation towards more pleasant subjects.

"Yes, Mama! We should go on a trip. We can take the train somewhere."

"Indeed," said Bradden. "railway companies are promoting tourism. You can now pick up railway and steamship guides that are filled with information about places to go."

"I would like to go visit Niagara Falls," said Abbi. "I saw a picture of it in the *Canadian Illustrated News* that you bring home, Papa."

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“Well maybe when you children are older and more responsible, and the Intercolonial Railway link from here to Quebec is complete, we can all take a railway journey to a special place like that. But for now there are plenty of things to do that are close by.”

“We haven’t yet visited Grandmama,” Jimmy complained. “We didn’t visit when we came and Papa said we will visit later.”

With that, the boys got it into their heads that they would like to visit Grandmama near Saint John.

“Well,” said Bradden, realizing he had promised it, “Perhaps later this summer we could go for a few days and you can see where I grew up.”

“Yay!!”

“I would rather see Niagara Falls,” said Abbi. “Or Montreal or Toronto.” Grandmama Audora had never taken an interest in her, so why should she take an interest in Grandmama Audora? she thought.

The trip to Tall Pines was made later that summer. It wasn’t as long a journey as the railway engineers’ picnic train ride – it was merely an express train from Fredericton to Saint John, and then to the small suburb-village of Richdale with all its mansions of the wealthy.¹⁰

Bradden had already described to the children long ago the nature of the mansion and property where Grandmama Audora lived and where he had grown up until his parents began sending him away to boarding schools and university. Abbi had had enough imagination to imagine how it looked, and when they arrived, it was as she had expected – a mansion with lots of lawns and gardens around it, and an area where Bradden’s great grandfather had left original growth pines standing, and called the property Tall Pines.

Abbi noted that Grandmama Audora was the only resident since her husband had passed away, and that there were more servants living there than residents. There was a cook, a maid, a head servant, old Desmond who drove the carriage that took Grandmama Audora to

¹⁰ Richdale, as a district outside Saint John, is a fictional place, but all large cities in those days had districts on the fringes where the wealthier population lived on larger properties and more extravagant houses.

6. *The Railway Engineers' Picnic*

her company offices in Saint John about fifteen minutes away every morning, and his assistant who looked after the horses in their carriage house with the stalls for horses attached.

Abbi made a point of visiting the horses. She talked to the young man who looked after them, and asked everything she could think of about the horses.

“We had a horse when we lived in Littleton, but it stayed in town at Uncle Wilbur’s livery. Our property was too small to pasture a horse on it, and look after it. Papa said he rode a horse in the early days when he had to travel to construction sites with his survey equipment to make sure the construction of the Amherst-Moncton railway connection was accurate. So we kept it at Uncle Wilbur’s livery which was beside his wagon-making and repair shop – you could get your buggies or wagons repaired there – and whenever we needed a horse or a buggy or a wagon, we simply walked there to fetch it. It was only a ten minute walk. So I never saw horses every day like you do. I see two carriages in here – the one that Grandmama Audora sent to bring us from the station, and another smaller one. Do you sometimes use both?”

Abbi found Desmond’s assistant nice – a young man in his twenties. He explained: “The big carriage is officially the company carriage. You can see the company name written on the side door. The smaller one is for use around here – for when the cook has to go to the market to purchase food, for example.”

“But if the large carriage carries only her to Saint John, why does she need such a big coach-carriage that can hold as many as six people?”

He chuckled. “It is to impress. Besides, she sometimes entertains presidents of other companies when they do business, and then there will be more passengers.”

“Yes she can show visiting businessmen from far away the sights around here, like Saint John harbour.”

Abbi liked it when she could walk around outside alone away from the rambunctious boys. She was happy her brothers were engaged in running around inside and exploring every nook and cranny of the mansion and making Grandmama Audora fearful the boys would break her valuable vases. She had the whole outside to herself to

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explore. After visiting the horses, and then talking to the gardener about what he was planting, she took a path that went through the Tall Pines Park as they called it. The gardener had told her how to get there. He also maintained the pathway – keeping it clear for strolling – not that anyone strolled along it these days. When she reached it, she walked the path, gazing up.

“I’ve never seen trees so enormous!” she thought to herself. “They seem almost to touch the clouds!”.

When the path ended, she found herself in front of the sea, the Bay of Fundy, and the tall trees became reduced to normal trees, bushes and grasses such as one finds near the coast.

She decided it was unwise to explore further by herself. She would return to the mansion, and persuade Papa to take all the children on a hike. It was always happier when he was the guide. He always had informative things to say. She ran back to the mansion just in time to find a big fuss about the boys having slid down the banister and broken a large vase next to the banister. It lay shattered to pieces on the carpet at the base of the stairs.

Grandmama Audora had been thrilled that her son had finally brought her precious grandsons to visit her, so her concern over the loss of a valuable vase was short-lived. Still, she was happy at Abbi’s suggestion the family goes on a hike, as that would get the young boys out of the mansion before they could do more damage.

Abbi explained to Bradden how she had explored the grounds and walked through Tall Pines Park.

“I was wondering where you had gone,” said Bradden. “You have been gone a while....But yes, that is a good idea. Let’s all go on a hike. I will tell you about things I did as a boy. I too liked to run away into the Tall Pines and to the shore, and even pretend I was an Indian, and talk to the squirrels. And then, if we can take the carriage, we can explore Littleton. We can visit where they have the Winter Carnival, see the main street...There is the theatre, the marketplace, and even a small hospital so that the wealthy here do not have to go all the way into Saint John when they are ill.”

“How can a small town have all those things, Papa? Littleton had hardly anything.”

6. *The Railway Engineers' Picnic*

“All it takes is wealth. The wealthy here have promoted and funded their own important institutions, quite apart from what can be found in Saint John. There is even an Orphan Home run by the women of Richdale who like to carry out charitable activities.”

They then went on a hike and later visited the main street of Richdale. Time flew by fast.

The family only spent four days visiting Grandmama Audora. Bradden didn't want his children to get too used to living in the lap of luxury and get spoiled. And Grandmama Audora was fine with that since the boys were a little too enthusiastic, and breaking expensive things. Having lived now for a long time alone with her meticulous staff, a family with children all of a sudden in her mansion was a little overwhelming for her.

“Couldn't we stay longer?” the boys whined on day four.

“If you boys had not broken your Grandmama's thousand dollar vase,” said Jenine, happy to have discovered a very good excuse to use, “maybe we could. But Grandmama Audora is concerned you may destroy some of her other valuable things!”

“We didn't know it was valuable. We're sorry..”

“Everything in her house is valuable. Now, when we return home, everything in our house is regular price, and I put things that children should not handle on high shelves or inside locked drawers.”

That was the great thing about their house in Fredericton. They didn't have to be careful about breaking things, since Jenine had taken precautions and put them away from children's reach.

Old Desmond drove everyone to the Saint John Station in the spacious company carriage. Grandmama Audora saw them off and continued from there to her offices in Saint John. The company had an office building and a yard where lumber was milled with steam powered equipment into fancy architectural moldings. The boys had wanted to see that too, but their Papa said “Another time.”

When they were on the train back home, Bradden summarized their visit to Grandmama Audora. “So now you children have seen where Grandmama Audora lives and where I grew up. Don't become charmed by the fanciness of it all. I originated there, but in the long run I developed

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my own plainer preferences while I was a student. The most important things in life in my opinion is what is inside – our spirit, our soul, our intellect. Luxuries are just veneer. They are fine to have, but what we possess inside – goodness, wisdom, intelligence, creativity, expressiveness, and so on – are more important. It is fine to appreciate the fine things in life, as long as you keep it all in perspective.”

“What do you mean, Papa?” Abbi wondered.

“I mean that when you eat fancy food, the artistry of the chef is more important than the fanciness of the meal. That is why chefs feel a great sense of accomplishment when they can turn very plain food ingredients that might be horrible by themselves into something wonderfully palatable and delicious. Sometimes I wonder if my mother appreciates the artistry behind many of the things she purchases for high prices.”

Abbi decided that she agreed, and she was glad that her Papa and Grandmama Audora did not see eye-to-eye philosophically. It made it easier for her not to see eye-to-eye with her either!

By this time there wasn't much left of summer. Abbi told Charlotte all about their trip to visit their Grandmama's mansion, and then they found further adventures of their own before the summer was over and school began again.

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OLD WAYS BECOME CULTURE

When Abbi and Charlotte commenced school again in September they were both eight and beginning their second year. Since the students in their school had been divided between junior, intermediate and senior grades, Abbi and Charlotte got the same class again, although they were now one grade level higher. They were happy too that they got Mr. Slatescreech again as the teacher. Abbi was by now quite fond of him, and she was quite accustomed to her.

The first assignment was to write an essay about what children did in the summer, and Abbi wrote a long essay about the railway engineers' picnic. She described in detail the view of the gorge from the trestle bridge.

Anne's essay happened to be passed around in the teacher's lounge and all the teachers marveled at how well it was done.

"She expresses so well the view of the gorge as she looks down at the rushing water, I can almost feel I was there myself," said one teacher.

"Are there any grammatical errors? I don't see any. And the spelling is superb," said another who had read it.

"And she uses words beyond the vocabulary we expect from a girl her age," said another.

"Apparently," said Mr. Slatescreech, "her father has two degrees from Harvard, first obtaining a degree in the arts, and when he got that only then did he continue and learn the science and mathematics required for being a railway engineer."

"We know. You already explained it to us last year."

Abbi was unaware teachers were making a fuss over her. But it wouldn't have mattered anyway. She did things

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because she was inspired and interested, not to get attention or accolades.

Jenine listened happily to Abbi's descriptions of what they had done that day at school. Secretly she fretted that one day Abbi would learn in school or elsewhere about genetics – how children resemble their parents – and begin to wonder why she didn't look very much like anyone in her family other than Bradden having brown eyes and dark hair, and then in conjunction with learning about orphans, come to the idea that she had Indian parents. Yes, Jenine dreaded when the time would come that she would have to tell the whole story of how they got her. Jenine reflected on it often. It would be much easier if she knew something to tell, other than that she was left anonymously at the church door. She really wanted to be able to identify a mother at least.

Meanwhile, Abbi kept thinking about the Indian men she saw included among the construction workers along the railway tracks when they were on the railway engineers' picnic. They did not resemble at all the Indians in *The Song of Hiawatha*. They were dressed like regular men, with their hair cut like regular men, but their faces were like Indians in pictures in books. She asked Bradden after school one day, after he got home from work, but before supper. He was reading a newspaper he had picked up in town to see what was going on in the world today. He never minded his children interrupting him in his study.

"Papa," she began, after sitting down in the cushioned chair he had opposite his desk for visitors. "You have taught me about all the different Indian nations all over North America, that you learned from books by the man named Mr. Schoolcraft, and how interestingly they dressed and so on. But I am wondering where they are? It seems that Indians are dressed and act like regular people these days."

"What Longfellow described in his *The Song of Hiawatha* about the Lake Superior Ojibwa, and Henry Schoolcraft describes additionally about many other peoples around North America, pertains to the past. They describe how North America was before Europeans arrived a few centuries ago, and began to settle here. The Europeans brought different culture and technology and it

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has had an impact. Indians, being humans, were not reluctant to obtain things that European traders brought, and by doing so, their original culture of obtaining things entirely from the wilderness was eroded. It weakened their original culture, compromised it.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean for example, when French and English came, they had iron axes and pots, and the Indians found them marvelous, because they had cut trees with stone tools, and cooked food by dropping red hot stones into bark or wood containers. So the Indians who saw the axes and pots simply had to obtain them, and were happy to trap furs to trade for them. Thus, the mere contact between them was enough to alter the way things were in North America. Beavers were in some places trapped to near extinction simply because the beavers were a way of getting iron axes and pots.”

Bradden indicated the stuffed beaver on the desk, the one Abbi had named ‘Amik’ after the Ojibwa name for the beaver, used in *The Song of Hiawatha*.

“And then along came rifles,” he continued. “Now it is far easier to hunt animals with a rifle than a bow and arrow. They couldn’t resist that too. And now we have factories that turn out miles of cotton fabric at small cost. Why should Indians spend days weaving their own fabric, or tanning animal skins until they are as soft as cloth, when they can obtain inexpensive fabric from first the trader and now at any store?”

“I see. That is why they wear regular clothes – it is so cheap and easy to get now.”

“So you see a lot of change in the Indian culture is very simply the fact that the contact happened, and it was bound to happen one day anyway. Sooner or later the Atlantic Ocean would be crossed. We can criticize what happened later, when the settler was so numerous he began to smother the Indian, but a great part of the reason Indians do not look like the romantic past is simply from the contact simply occurring. And it went the other way too, a little. The European changed too.”

“How has the European side changed?”

“Well, we eat maize or corn, which the Indians farmed – the farming Indians especially, like the Iroquois.”

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“I like maize that pops. Mama bought some and we made it pop.”

“The tomato and potato too came from the Indians. And tobacco. They gave the Europeans tobacco and we gave them alcohol. European men are now coughing with lung problems and Indians are getting drunk. And then there are some sports. Europeans have tried the Indian game of lacrosse. Lacrosse played on ice combined with European ice skates has resulted in a game that I think is called ‘hockey’ by some. So remember that, Abbi. For the Indians, things are not like they were. Nor are they for Europeans in North America. And the romanticization of the Indian as Longfellow did through his *The Song of Hiawatha*, has spread even to Europeans still in Europe. Everyone now wants to paddle in canoes, and go camping. But the contact did not influence both sides evenly. Because the Europeans are now more numerous, it tends to be that the Indian has to change more in the European direction than the Europeans in the Indian direction. Imagine if Indians had been ten times more numerous. North America would be a much different place. Instead of men wearing top hats they might be wearing hats with feathers – which was fashionable among Indian men in the original cultures. The final result of contact depends on which side is stronger in numbers and influence.”

Abbi laughed when she imagined men she saw on the street wearing feather headdresses rather than their various kinds of felt hats.

“Europe was overpopulated,” Bradden continued, “and once they knew North America existed, the flood of migrations began. It was inevitable.”

“Then are Indians not learning old ways anymore if new ways replace the old ways?”

“I hope not. There is nothing wrong with Indians wearing cotton shirts, or taking jobs in construction or logging or anything else in the European’s world. But it will be sad if they don’t also know about their own origins. Wouldn’t it be grand for an Indian girl to learn how to make an Indian girl’s dress out of deerskin, even if she doesn’t need it because she can get regular dresses easily from the store? It is true of any culture on earth. Let’s say you were a Norwegian girl. or Swiss, or French or

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whatever culture you choose. Wouldn't it be grand if a girl from those countries knew how to make a folk costume that was normal dress in past centuries even if today she wore regular fashionable dresses? Often what is now culture was once real practices. Did you know that in one of the Ojibwa dances women form a circle and dance around a fire, just stepping in time to a drum – and then turn and circle it the other way. That is viewed as culture now, but at one time it was a way to keep warm. You move your feet to keep your blood circulating, and the fire warms one side of you, then you turn and the fire warms the other side of you. Other kinds of dancing had other uses originally such as telling stories in a theatrical way. Much of what we do today that we call culture, had a real purpose at its origins.”

“What about.....paintings?”

“Yes, paintings. There are cave paintings in Europe made by cave men; but they didn't do it to decorate their caves. They had a real purpose, to communicate with the spirits of the animals they painted. Today it is culture and its original deep purpose has vanished.”

“You said before that Indians believed in spirits, and how a spirit was seen as the difference between when something is living and dead.”

“Yes – it is obvious that something living and something dead are very different. We can't see what it is directly, but we see there is something that departs when something dies, and this something is called either spirit or soul. This is something universal. Different cultures may only relate to it differently. Even though the world has many different cultures, we are all human beings and we have a great deal in common. Everyone recognizes that something is missing when a living thing dies. Europeans say the spirit departs and flies up to heaven. All humanity shares in being mystified by the phenomenon of birth and death. What happens to us? Do we float up high? Do we journey with the sun into the west? It is the eternal mystery of life.”

Abbi didn't care to think about that at this moment. She returned to the earlier thoughts – the idea that culture was to remember something that was originally important but now isn't.

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“You said that culture is to remember something that was earlier necessary, Papa. That means the Indians who were working at the railway would feel happier if they also sometimes put on their old time clothes.”

“Yes, during festival times. And that applies to all humanity, like I said. Culture helps us know who we are. Knowing where we came from helps us know where we are going. Otherwise we will be bobbing around aimlessly like a cork in an ocean. When we no longer live in the wilderness, we can still keep some wilderness whole to remind us where we originated from.”

“Like setting aside wilderness as a park.”

“Yes, and therein lies a reason why *The Song of Hiawatha*, and the idea of the pure wilderness Indian, is so popular among Europeans. Once long ago Europeans too lived like Indians, complete with totems, bows and arrows, campfires, and so on. Indian culture has provided the European with a cultural outlet. I predict one day there will be more and more tourism in which Europeans will act like Indians, not to become like Indians specifically, but to become like all humans once were, even in Europe. That would then be part of our culture, where, through the Indian, we get in touch with our similar wilderness roots.”

“How long ago were there Indians in Europe?”

“I imagine that there still are, in the remote north, maybe in the backwoods of Finland or Russia. But earlier they were far south – even in France and Germany. Germans are especially taken by Indians, I think because there was such a way of life, with tribes, canoes, fishing, trapping, more recently than elsewhere in Europe.”

“How long ago?”

“Well maybe two thousand years. That’s only about a hundred generations. According to writing from back then, from a Roman man named Tacitus, there were people called *Fenni*, and his description of them in his book called *Germania*, was exactly like a description of canoe-using hunting Indians in northern Canada. At one time, all across northern Europe there must have been people like these *Fenni*. In fact in later history the Swedish and Norwegian historians always called the natives of their land *Finns*, which is very close in sound.”

“It would be interesting to know how the European

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Indians looked, whether they had feathers in their hair or what. Maybe they used birch bark vessels, and had sweat lodges like the Ojibwa described by Mr. Longfellow.”

“I think Longfellow was surprised when he visited Finland, and consulted with learned men there. He found regular European-looking people but with a culture that had all those things in their past, including birch-bark vessels, and the sweat lodge which they called *sauna*. That may have been the reason Longfellow borrowed from the Finnish folk poetry called the *Kalevala*. It has heroes too, called the *sons of Kaleva*. He borrowed the same basic structure, and used the same poetic meter. I think he found it easy to place the Ojibwa legends into the Finnish template because both originated from very similar situations – similar wilderness, similar hunting ways, similar use of canoes to travel through a land of lakes.”

Bradden knew that Abbi might not fully understand everything he said, but thought it better to challenge her than to simplify. If his children had questions about anything he would elaborate.

“Abbi! Bradden!” called Jenine from the other room. “Come to supper! Supper is ready!”

“We can continue another time Abbi. We are wanted for supper. Have I answered your question?”

“Yes, Papa. I now understand that *The Song of Hiawatha* is more about the original Indian culture, than how it is today with inexpensive clothes and rifles and so on being much easier to use than what they had originally, and how even Europeans were once upon a time like Indians, in old time northern Europe.”

”Good! Now let us go to supper!”

FALL, WINTER, AND CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

When fall and winter comes, the major construction on the railways stopped, and most of the work gangs returned home to the cities from which they were hired. But the contracting company that designed and managed it all, continued to work – there was plenty to do at least on paper, to plan for the next stages of construction. Designs, plans, and scale models had to be prepared for the next construction season. Thus engineers like Bradden and his

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team had plenty to do in the offices in Fredericton throughout the year, even when there was no actual construction going on.

The daily routine of life continued on with Bradden going to work, Abbi going to school with Charlotte, and Jenine tending to the needs of her remaining children, as well as walking with them into the downtown in the afternoons, chatting with neighbours, and the rest.

After work and on weekends at home, Bradden put work from his mind, and became involved with his family, according to the time of year and what was going on in the world around them. For instance, when December came, everyone began anticipating Christmas again. There was the Christmas tree to fetch and to decorate and social activities to participate in that expressed the goodwill of the season. It was a time to reflect on the message in Charles Dickens' book *A Christmas Carol*, wherein the miserly Mr. Scrooge was visited by ghosts. Charles Dickens had published it not long previously and it was by now very famous in the English speaking world. Bradden read from it, as he did every Christmas, to his children.

As always, the children took on the task of decorating the tree their Papa had procured for their living room. The children made handmade ornaments. Abbi had learned at school how to make paper snowflakes by folding a sheet of paper into six segments – to represent the six sides of a snowflake – and to cut the sides when folded so that it would unfold to give a perfectly symmetrical snowflake.

It was a good time to ask questions about Charles Dickens's story.

"Are ghosts real, Papa?" Abbi asked, "or did Mr. Scrooge only dream he saw ghosts."

"Ghosts are real, Abbi," interjected Mark.

"Have you seen one?" Abbi countered.

"No, but I heard there are ghosts."

"Many cultures believe in spirits, children," said Bradden. "The very fact that the concept is so widespread suggests there is something to cause it. An imagined fiction cannot endure for so long in all humanity if there wasn't some consistent experience to cause it."

"Perhaps," suggested Abbi, "the ghosts were Mr. Scrooge's guardian spirits, come to help him get on a

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better path. One spirit that took three forms.”

“Indians too believed in spirits in nature, as well as guardian spirits,” said Bradden. “Perhaps we all have a guardian spirit. But I expect they don’t show themselves and help unless you really need them, and perhaps they could appear in a dream. Yes, Abbi, Scrooge’s ghosts must have been spirits interested in him because their ultimate purpose was to help him .”

“What kind of spirits would those in haunted houses be, Papa?”

“Well frightening ones – nobody likes to meet a ghost in a haunted house. And once again many cultures have some ideas about frightening spirits. They are invariably seen as spirits that were unable to continue to the afterlife and roamed the earth looking for unsuspecting bodies to possess.”

“What did they look like Papa?” wondered Mark. “Were they pale and transparent?”

“Well in some Indian cultures, the way they knew there was a wandering spirit, was a shadow with nothing to cast it – a shadow on the ground without any visible person to cause the shadow.”

“That would have been frightening,” agreed Abbi, “even with the day being bright and sunny!”

Bradden took care of hanging the higher ornaments. The children handed them to him. “To conclude, children, Scrooge’s ghosts were the good kind of spirits, who wanted Scrooge to see the error of his ways and that in the long run it is better to be good and charitable.”

All conversations between Bradden and his children tended to be of this sort, the children asking questions and getting knowledgeable and insightful replies from their well educated Papa without him particularly simplifying what he said for them. If some children did not understand, well maybe they would remember and realize what was meant at a later time as they thought back. Add to this the fact that he expected his children to be clean, well-dressed, and courteous, and we can see why the Woodrow children continued to stand out to friends and neighbours even here in Fredericton!

Yes, the local gossip ladies talked about the Woodrow family as much here as in Littleton.

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And then came snow, and then Christmas. Grandmama Audora came and brought toys again— being careful not to be too extravagant and thereby upsetting her son, who did not like her exerting too much influence on his children. She indulged in her grandsons, and as always, took Abbi for granted. Bradden reminded her once again to treat Abbi as part of his family. He could stand up to his mother's authority easily. Jenine on the other hand was intimidated by her. She was happy when Bradden could be a buffer between them, and even happier when she returned home to her mansion in Richdale.

January brought with it the new year of 1875. The regular routine of work, school, and daily chores resumed. Nobody could have predicted that Fate would now intervene and begin a new chapter in the life of the Woodrow family and especially Abbi.

AN ACCIDENT

One suppertime in early January, Bradden said to Jenine and the children that he and some men had to take the construction train up the track to the large bridge crossing the gorge of the Saint John – the trestle bridge the family finally looked at in their summer railway picnic outing.

“In winter?” Jenine wondered. “Why in winter?”

“In winter rushing water produces lots of ice, and if the ice beats against wood of bridges, it can wear the wood away, and the bridge can collapse. It is one reason why some designers are favouring the use of iron. We'll be taking a construction locomotive and it will pull a car in which we will live and sleep for those several days. It'll only take a few days like previous times when I have had to go to the construction sites to inspect the work.”

Bradden had indeed often gone on such inspection trips, but Abbi felt uneasy this time. He had packed his suitcase and was going to go directly tomorrow morning, as the journey would take a good part of the entire day.

He went first thing the next morning.

Abbi went to school with Charlotte and the day went as normal, but that night she had a dream. In it she was riding in a train. It was like when the railway families went on their picnic ride up the railway line. She was absorbed in

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looking out the window at the world passing by. There were stations, there were farm fields, there were forests, there were lakes, and there were meadows. Everything could be seen in this railway ride. The train went past railway platforms filled with people. It went past men working hard. Then it went over the large bridge that crossed the gorge with the rushing river below. She was watching a log floating down the river, and suddenly the log turned into a man. It was Papa. "Papa!" she exclaimed, but the train was now past, now across the bridge. Abbi looked for a conductor, went to him and implored, "We need to go back! I saw my Papa! We need to go back!"

She must have shouted out loud because when she woke up, Jenine appeared at the doorway carrying a candle. "You shouted out, Abbi. Are you alright?"

"It was a dream. I'm fine, I think, Mama."

"Well go back to sleep. Goodnight."

"Goodnight."

The next day was a normal school day, but around supertime, there were visitors.

Jenine was preparing supper, when she saw through the window that a covered carriage had stopped in front, this snowy day. There was snow on the street but not deep enough to cause difficulty for a carriage. Three men got out and were coming up the path.

Most of the children were playing elsewhere, and were not initially aware anyone had come. But Abbi was upstairs and had seen them come from her upstairs window. She recognized some of the men from the railway picnic journey ride. They were associated with the company Papa worked for. Drawn by curiosity, she gradually made her way down the stairs to see what it was about.

Jenine went to the door and recognized Henry Dalton, the older man with thin white hair but bushy white sideburns that ran the engineering office for which Bradden worked. He had been the host for the railway picnic trip last summer. He now stood in front of the door, holding his hat in his hands, letting his white hair and bushy sideburns be blown about by the wind outside. The others were Mr. Burke, the other Mr. Ridgeway who Jenine recognized – men who worked with Bradden. She knew Mr. Burke's wife quite well now socially. These

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other two stood a little to the back of Mr. Dalton, and held their hats in their hands too. The carriage with driver waited for them at the street.

Mr. Dalton asked if they could come in. They had something important to say. Their grim disposition was ominous. Jenine backed up and motioned them inside.

“What’s wrong?” Jenine wanted to know.

“We have come to deliver you some bad news. You certainly know Mr. Burke and Mr. Ridgeway...” Jenine nodded.

Mr. Dalton continued: “I’m afraid to report, Jenine, that Bradden, your husband, has been in an accident on the site of a bridge on the new railway line we are building up the Saint John River where it crosses the gorge. The word has been sent down to our office by the telegraphy line along the track.”

Jenine felt limp and dizzy. She held her hand to her forehead and one of the men assisted her to the sofa. “He has been killed! ...”



“We’re not certain yet. He fell off the bridge into the Saint John River where the river is rushing strongly, and does not freeze. The telegraph message from the telegraph operator there, said the men searched for a day many miles down the river. They found his hat, and his long winter coat, but not him. While we can hold out some hope he got out, it is wintertime. To survive, he would have had to first survive the rocks in the rapids, and then be out of the river within a quarter hour, clothes changed,

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and warmed up at a fire. The men are still looking. They will continue looking for a few days for something hopeful.”

Jenine calmed a little. Yes, he must be alive if they have found no proof he wasn't! And yet finding his coat and hat and not him, seemed ominous. She didn't know what to think, how to react.

“I suppose, Mrs. Woodrow,” Mr. Dalton continued, “that there are others we should inform about this. We can do it to save you the burden.”

“Bradden's mother should be contacted,” said Jenine. “That's Madam Audora Woodrow. She is reachable at the Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company at Saint John.”

“We'll send a telegram to her. And we're watching the telegraph constantly for further word from the site. But a whole night and day has now passed since the event. The telegraph operator up there is waiting for the search parties to return.”

Abbi's first reaction as she listened from the top of the stairs was to remember the dream she had had last night. And now it seemed the dream was somehow connected to what Mr. Dalton was saying.

The other children, the boys, were becoming aware that something was wrong and were coming to see as well.

Jenine had by now found a chair to sit down. She saw Abbi who was descending the stairs, and explained with a grim shaky voice, “Papa has fallen from a bridge into the rushing Saint John, and he is missing. They fear he might be drowned. These men with whom Papa worked have come to tell us.” Jenine was beginning to sob at the thought he was really drowned.

Abbi knew a little about death, because she had experienced Grandmama Marie's death. But this was Papa. One does not imagine one's father to die until they are old and grey. And she began to remember what he had said at the dinner table last summer after their railway picnic trip – that if he died before he was old, he would make it a noble death, and not an ordinary one. He would not slip on a banana peel or something trivial like that. And now Abbi asked herself: how could falling off a bridge be a noble death? This was not right no matter how you looked at it.

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Finally Jenine was able to ask for more details. “How did it happen? How did he fall off the bridge?”

“It isn’t certain,” said Mr. Dalton, “The telegraph does not send very much information at once. We are still gathering information, but we won’t really know everything until the locomotive comes back with the eyewitnesses. But the locomotive and men have remained there to carry on the search. That’s why it hasn’t come back and we can only rely on the telegraph line, and its short messages, for now.”

No, Abbi could not accept that he simply fell off a bridge and drowned. It could not be true! She ran to Mr. Dalton and proclaimed tearfully: “No he couldn’t have just fallen off the bridge! You’re wrong! That’s too ordinary! He can’t have died in that way! Maybe he isn’t dead! Maybe he isn’t drowned! Papa promised that if he died before he was old, he would die in a noble way! He promised me! He said it, didn’t he Mama?! He said: *Well if I ever face death, Abbi, I’ll make sure it is a noble and romantic one* Falling off a bridge and drowning isn’t a noble way! You must be mistaken! You must have it wrong! He wouldn’t die like that! He couldn’t have just slipped and fallen! He promised he wouldn’t die unless it was in a noble way, like a soldier in war. Not just slipping from a bridge into a river! No!”

Mr. Dalton was startled and felt apologetic. He knelt down and looked intensely but warmly into her eyes and said gently. “Calm down Abbi. It’s possible he has not drowned. But you have to accept that maybe he has. The river is cold, and the air is far below freezing. But I’m sure he didn’t simply slip off the bridge. Perhaps he did indeed do something noble. And bear in mind that the bridge is over a great canyon and there is a rushing river far below. If he drowned it was in quite a dramatic rapids. But perhaps it is wrong for us to give up hope yet. Do you want me to ascertain the details of what happened?”

Abbi could only stare at him with a intense, grim, tearful eyes, but she nodded.

“Well, give me a few days, then. I’ll find out every little detail and come back and tell you. We’ll do absolutely everything to determine what his fate was. He may even be still alive somehow. Alright?”

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Abbi nodded. But still the thought that he may simply have slipped was something she could not bear. That would be far too ordinary and unromantic. She couldn't stay. She ran upstairs to her room and threw herself on her bed. She was furious, angry, disbelieving. She was everything else *but* tearful.

Mr. Dalton repeated to Jenine. "Judging from your daughter's reaction, perhaps we should have gathered more information about what has happened, and about the search before fearing the worst has happened. But we thought it wise to let *you* know of the accident at least. Give us a few days more, for our men to search some more, and to determine what happened, for little Abbi's sake. Can one of the men go fetch a friend or neighbour for you?"

"There's Joan, our neighbour," said Jenine.

Upstairs, Abbi turned over on her back and glared at the ceiling. It was like he had broken a promise and hurt her to the bottom of her being. As far as she was concerned, Papa was either still alive, or did not die from a simple fall. Hearing the door close, she leaped off the bed and went to the window. She saw Mr. Ridgeway bringing Joan over to comfort Jenine. Then a couple minutes later she saw the three men who had come, climbing back into the carriage and driving off. She just sat there and glared out the window, body rigid, fist clenched, heart beating hard, angry to the deepest reaches of her soul, burning up inside.

During the next days, Jenine was comforted by Joan, and came to accept the possibility that her husband might be gone, even as she hoped otherwise. Abbi remained in her room, by herself, silent, angry, even refusing to eat. She didn't even talk to Amik, the stuffed beaver on her Papa's desk. She was never-endingly angry. It was as if she had been greatly wronged by her Papa, or had been told a blatant lie by Mr. Dalton. Eventually she ate a little from what Jenine brought her and left on the side table, but stayed in her room and refused to go to school.

Joan explained the situation to her daughter Charlotte. Charlotte was unhappy to have to go to school by herself the next day.

Jenine appeared at the door of Abbi's room many times,

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and invariably found her lying on her bed looking at the ceiling. "Abbi," she said, "we don't know for sure yet. Let's wait until the men find out more. In any case, your Papa would not like it if you act so remote and angry like that. You have to let out your feelings somehow. You can't keep it inside. And you've hardly eaten anything. And you must go to school. You aren't physically ill."

Abbi only glared at her.

"Say something, Abbi. You're making me worried. Charlotte is worried too. Won't you see Charlotte? She had to go to school by herself. She brought homework back for you."

"If Papa fell and drowned, Papa had no right to," she repeated yet again. "He promised us that he would not die before he was old, unless it was a noble death. I heard him say it last summer with my own ears."

"But Abbi, maybe he has not drowned. Let's not assume the worst yet. And if he *did* drown, we have no say in how and when we die. It is God who decides."

"Well I hope he lived, because dying in that way, by simply slipping, is too plain, too unromantic. Papa is a poet, and actor as well as a railway designer. He acted in theatricals when he was in university, and he played Aggodagauda. He would have made certain to die in a proper romantic way."

"Just you wait, Mr. Dalton promised to gather more information. It's been two days now. Perhaps he will arrive anytime now to report in detail what happened, and what the men have found. Perhaps Papa survived. But if not, I'm sure he has discovered Papa died in a noble way, like you want."

Abbi turned away from Jenine and stared out the window. Jenine patted her shoulder and let her be. She left. She was greatly worried. She feared what this would lead to if Abbi remained in this state on and on.

Before long a carriage arrived in front of the house. Abbi heard voices from her window and went to look. There was Mr. Dalton and two men. These two men were strangers this time, one a young man. Mr. Dalton did not come to the door this time. He stood near the carriage and let the two men go up the walk. Curiosity got the better of her and she made her way slowly down the stairs. When

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Jenine opened the door she did not recognize the men. One was in his 40's and the other in his 20's.

"Mrs. Woodrow?" the older one began.

"Yes?"

"I'm Gerry Marino. I was one of a number workers assisting the team of construction inspectors led by your husband. This is my son, John, who was assisting too. We do not work for the company all the time. I come from New York. I'm immigrant. I come when railway companies need ordinary workers. I was hired because I have experience with bridges."

"Is this about my husband?"

"Yes."

She motioned them inside.

"I want to tell you Mrs. Woodrow, that I owe my life to your husband."

"Can you wait a moment, Mr. Marino. I want my daughter Abbi to listen too."

Abbi had descended the stairs a ways out of curiosity. Jenine motioned her towards her.

"Like I say, Mrs. Woodrow, if it had not been for your husband, my boy here, and my other seven children would no longer have a papa, and my wife not a husband. I would be dead."

"Tell us what happened."

"Both of us, and your husband, were walking across the bridge, I was carrying surveying equipment for him, when the locomotive that had brought us began to move across the bridge towards us – the brakes were not working – or maybe the rail had ice on it. There was a very slight incline. The bridge has little room at the side to get out of the way. When your husband saw the locomotive coming he warned the whole group to get out of the way, but I stumbled and almost fell off the bridge. Your husband returned to me to pull me back, but in doing so he himself went over the side. I was saved, but he fell a full 100 feet into the greatest torrent of water on the Saint John. We all watched him vanish, then come up and float down the river, and vanish again. The water was moving fast and he was out of sight very quickly. All of us workers, as well as the inspection team, and as well as the locomotive men, we all headed downriver along the edge of the canyon,

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looking for him. We must have gone five miles before dark. And next day we searched again. If your husband had not warned everyone, many of us would have been struck by the locomotive, and if he had not leapt to pull me back, it would be me in the river, not him – maybe many more, because he warned the others too. He is a hero.”

Jenine looked at Abbi for her reaction.

“I knew it,” Abbi said. “I knew there had to be a noble reason.”

She continued to the bottom of the stairs and went towards Mr. Marino and hugged him around the waist (Abbi was still quite short). She began to tear up. He was taken aback a little, could not understand her reaction. He knelt down. “Your Papa was a hero, Abbi. He saved my life. He saved many lives perhaps, since he warned us all and everyone was able to get out of the way.” That only made Abbi want to hug Mr. Marino, even harder. It made him teary-eyed as well.

“Look, Abbi,” Mr. Marino said. “You’re making me cry too. Don’t cry. But there is some small chance he is still alive. The company has sent a large search party up there now. We will search and search and search until we find him. But if he drowned, he drowned a hero.”

“Let her cry, Mr. Marino. She has not expressed any emotion in two days,” said Jenine.

When Mr. Marino let Abbi go, she could not hold back her tears. They flowed like a stream. She ran upstairs back to her bed, to cry.

There was nothing more to say. The two men nodded to Jenine, and headed back out, and back to the carriage where Mr. Dalton was waiting. Jenine waved to Mr. Dalton, communicating that all was fine. He waved back. Jenine went after Abbi to comfort her now that comforting was welcomed finally.

The visitors climbed back into the carriage and left again.

Abbi resumed eating, and next day went to school with Charlotte. Charlotte tried to comfort her, but Abbi was not her lively self anymore. At school Mr. Slatescreech, other teachers, and other students expressed their sadness, and hope that her railway engineer father would be found alive soon.

MONTHS OF WAITING

Was he alive or not? The searching did not find him. Finding his winter coat, hat, shoes and other items did not look good. He could be drowned and at the bottom of the river.

Jenine held on to hope but prepared for the worst. And she advised her children to do the same – to hope for a miracle, but be prepared to accept he would never be coming back again.

Grandmama Audora contributed to the searching. She provided money to finance the largest search party money could buy. But because the river rushed strongly in that region, and was filled with ice, it was difficult to search the river at this time of year. But nothing was found even when searching was resumed in spring. Where had he vanished to?

In the meantime, Jenine, Abbi and the children continued on as best they could, paying for expenses from the family savings. They also received support from both Bradden's employers and from their community. The neighbourhood women came over often to express their condolences and to lift Jenine's spirit.

Thus life went on. It reminded Jenine of when back at Littleton the constable searched to determine Abbi's origins, but week after week, month after month, there was no further news.

Abbi carried on in school and after a while managed to resume her lively spirit a little. Jenine continued with her daily routine raising her children. All along they hoped for a miracle. But as the months went by – February, March, April, May – everyone began to accept the worst.

At Abbi's birthday, celebrated at March 21, she became nine; but it was a sad day, as her Papa was missing from it. Usually he would have taken Abbi to town and bought her something wonderful. Now the family had to watch their pennies. There was no breadwinner for the family. Support from the company, and from Grandmama Audora, for continuing to live as before in their nice middle-class house, could not continue forever. Grandmama was starting to suggest the family move to Richdale, to the Tall Pines mansion, saying that she had plenty of room for

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everyone. That was what her recommendation when she visited in May when the latest search had failed to find anything more.

“Perhaps we have to accept the worst,” Audora told Jenine finally. “That he is at the bottom of the river, and his remains may not show up anywhere for months or years or never. It is impossible to drag the entire bottom of the Saint John River. Until we see the body, we can keep a grain of hope, but the highest probability is that he drowned. Almost a half a year has passed. As the grandmother of your children, it is my duty to help you out, and it is very difficult to do so when I have to run the Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company in Saint John, so far from here. You have no further reason for remaining here in Fredericton, Jenine. I have a large empty mansion with nobody in it other than myself and the servants.”

“It’s clear you are right,” said Jenine. “We can’t stay here in this house with its high expenses and keep hoping for a miracle, if there is no money to pay for everything. You are so kind, Audora, for your help. I suppose then, I should begin making arrangements to give up our handsome home, and to sell whatever belongings we don’t really need to keep. It will soon be June. Abbi’s school session will end too for the summer months.”

When Grandmama Audora left to return to her company in Saint John, the realization that they would have to leave hit Jenine hard. She was tearful about it that evening. Abbi tried to comfort her.

“I don’t want to leave here, Abbi,” she said to Abbi. “I have developed friends. But even more I don’t want to live in Papa’s mother’s mansion. I don’t belong there. Whenever I’ve had to go there, I have always felt uncomfortable. I’m a country girl. I don’t fit in. I don’t know how I can endure being there without Papa with me.”

Abbi too didn’t want to leave. She had started school and made lots of friends.

Jenine pulled herself together to attend to little Mary sitting in a high chair in the kitchen. While Jenine did that, Abbi was drawn to her Papa’s study. She pushed open the door, and saw it as it had always been. There were some books and papers on the table. It seemed like unfinished

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work. The stuffed beaver, Amik, was there too, as always, sitting on the desktop, like a sentry. She was drawn inside. She seemed to notice everything now in a way she never had before. She was suddenly very interested in everything Papa had been doing here. What had he been reading? What had he been writing? She picked up the book on the desk. It was the book of Indian legends by Henry Schoolcraft. A piece of paper with writing on it suggested he was attempting to write another legend into verse form like he had done with *Aggodagauda and His Daughter*. She sat down in Bradden's chair.

She was used to talking to Amik now and then. She had even heard her Papa thinking out loud as he composed letters, as if speaking to Amik. Now Abbi thought she heard Amik speak.

"What are you going to do now, Abbi?" he seemed to ask.

Abbi began talking to Amik, and I couldn't hold back.

"Oh, Amik, it is simply horrible. I don't know what is going to happen. Mama said we will have to move because we cannot afford to live here any more without money. And she can't go to work herself because of having to look after five children. Grandmama Audora wants the family to move to her large empty house with her at Richdale—into her big mansion. That's what will happen. We have to move away and live with Grandmama Audora. Nobody wants to move away. I don't care about all the fancy things in her mansion. Papa never liked it, even though he grew up there when he was little. I don't want to leave here. I have school and friends here."

Amik had become a source of security to her, a constant in her life, as well as something she and her Papa had shared. He had after all, always been there sitting on Papa's large old oaken desk.

Amik was not the best stuffed specimen that a taxidermist could make. His eyes were made of two black beads and his insides were plain straw and twine. But to Abbi that did not matter. She loved him like a pet or a favourite stuffed toy.

"You're my best friend, Amik. Now I will kiss you."

She moved her face close to the stuffed beaver's and lightly gave the tip of its nose a peck

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“Goodbye Amik. You were my best friend.” she sobbed.

Just then Jenine came in and saw Abbi hugging the stuffed beaver. “Abbi!” she exclaimed. “Why are you hugging and talking to the stuffed beaver!”

“I was talking to my friend Amik.”

“My word,” replied Jenine. “You have developed an attachment to that dirty stuffed animal as if it were a stuffed toy. Bradden has had it since he was a boy. We don’t know what germs it has on it from over the years. Get away from it, or you may catch some germ or another and get sick.”

Jenine tugged at her a little, as Abbi held tightly to Amik. Then Abbi broke loose and shouted: “We’re leaving here! I don’t want to leave! I won’t be able to go to school here any more! I don’t want to leave!” And she ran out and upstairs to her room, to throw herself onto her bed and cry.

8

Jenine's Made-up Story

“YOU’RE NOT MY MOTHER?”

Jenine, realizing she had been harsh, sat down in Bradden’s chair in his study after Abbi had run upstairs, and put her head in her hands. The stress of it all was getting to her. She shouldn’t have snapped at Abbi for finding comfort in the stuffed beaver. After a minute she pulled herself together and made her way upstairs to see how Abbi was doing. She took little Mary with her and commanded toddling little Jack to come too. The older boys were busy elsewhere with their toys.

Jenine sat on the bed beside Abbi. Abbi remained face down. She stroked Abbi’s black hair.

“We really have no choice, Abbi,” she began. “Everyone has been very charitable to us – the company Papa worked for, the neighbourhood ladies, Joan next door, the church group, and last but not least Grandmama Audora who spent much money trying to find Papa, beyond what the railway company did. But this cannot keep on forever. We cannot keep looking for Papa forever. Grandmama Audora is right, we have no choice but to give up this house and our life here, and move down to Saint John, or rather Richdale outside of Saint John, where Grandmama Audora has her mansion called Tall Pines, and live with her. I think that is what Papa would have wanted. Although Papa and his mother never saw eye to eye and he rejected her fancy way of life, Grandmama Audora is still his mother, and they did manage to get along these last number of years. I don’t particularly like the idea of moving into Grandmama Audora’s mansion any more than you, Abbi.

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There will be finery all around, household staff, servants, — all those things that wealthy people have. I'm such a country girl with country ways. I'm certain not to do anything right. I won't fit in; and with Papa gone, Grandmama will finally try to exert all the influence on the boys that she was unable to exert when Bradden was around. She will try to steer them into her world of wealth and finery. She has never liked it that Papa married me and not some refined young woman from her world of wealth and finery."

"Why didn't he like fancy women?" replied Abbi without moving from where she lay.

"He said they were all surface and little underneath. That means if you took away all their finery, they weren't interesting. Papa was more interested in what was underneath, and I think he found what I had inside very interesting. But Grandmama Audora only saw her son marrying, out of impulse, a plain ordinary country girl. So I don't like the moving and the changes that will come any more than you do, Abbi. She has always only tolerated you and me, Abbi. Her attention has always been on the boys. We have forever had to remind her not to ignore you...."

"But why does she not like me? How am I different from Mark, Jimmy, Jack and Mary? I once thought it was because I was a girl, but Mary is a girl, and Grandmama likes her better than me."

Jenine suddenly realized she could not wait any longer. The time had come to tell Abbi about her being adopted, especially if they were to live at Tall Pines with Audora who would discriminate against Abbi even more than ever now. It would be wise that Abbi be told the reason now, before she experiences Audora's rejection of her, so that she will understand.

"We were going to tell you when you were ready — when you understood the idea of being born from someone else and being adopted. But clearly the time has come, before we move in with Grandmama Audora, to tell you. It's now time to explain it all to you."

"Tell me what?"

"That you were adopted. Do you understand the meaning of being 'adopted'?"

"I have people call me the 'Indian girl'. And sometimes I

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have overheard people say I'm 'adopted'. I don't understand. The dictionary says that 'adopted' means for parents to take another's child as your own. But I don't remember ever being anyone else's daughter! How can that be true?"

"Look in the mirror, Abbi," Jenine said, turning Abbi in the direction of the dressing mirror opposite the bed. "The fact of the matter is that you are indeed Indian, and we adopted you. You are a very beautiful Indian girl. See your tan skin, your straight black hair, your high cheekbones? That is why people think you look Indian when they see you. I'm sorry Abbi, we were going to tell you everything when you were ready, perhaps when you were 11 or 12, but I can see the time has come even though you are still only 9."

"People say I'm ahead of my age."

"The fact is that indeed Papa and I adopted you and raised you as our own, but Grandmama Audora always saw us raising an Indian orphan girl out of charity, and never really saw you as part of our family. She never saw you as being connected to her because you were not born from me and her son."

"If I was adopted, please tell me, Mama. Tell me where I came from."

Jenine thought hard. She had thought about what she would say for a long time now. She had decided that she could not tell Abbi that she was left by an unknown person at the church door at Littleton. It would raise a host of unpleasant issues - Was she abandoned? Was her mother in great difficulty? Did she not want her? Did she die? Was she still alive somewhere? She simply could not tell Abbi she may have been abandoned, now that Bradden was vanished and they were about to be uprooted! This was not the time! so she decided she *had to tell Abbi a lie that was better than that*. The best course was to simply make it that her mother died, and they adopted her, and imagine for her some details about her mother.

"Well," Jenine began, "your name was Abbi with an 'I', as it is still. We called you 'Abigail' for the long form."

"If it's 'Abigail' I've always wondered why 'Abbi' with an 'I' and not with a 'Y'?"

Jenine remembered that Bradden had once said that

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ABBI could be an abbreviation of *abbinochi* meaning ‘baby’ – in other words, she had embroidered ‘baby’ on the shirt Abbi was found in. She finally answered:

“That’s because it is Indian. Papa said that it was short for *abbinochi* according to one of his books. That is Indian for ‘baby’ or ‘child’. Your mother obviously liked to call you that. It was embroidered on your shirt when we got you when we lived in Littleton. Your parents . . . uh. . . lived there too.”

“I know the word *abbinochi*, from Papa’s books about Indians. It’s an Ojibwa or Chippewa word. Does that mean my mother was from the Ojibwa or Chippewa tribe?”

Jenine saw that Abbi knew more about Indians than she did, that Bradden had obviously talked a great deal more about Indians to Abbi than to her. She’d have to be careful that Abbi did not trip her up with her questions. Finally she replied: “I don’t know very much about Indian languages. I know about Mikmaq and Maliseet here in New Brunswick, and the people in Mr. Longfellow’s poem, *The Song of Hiawatha*. Are there many?”

“Papa explained that there are different tribes, and because they lived so far apart, even though they may have begun speaking the same way, each developed their own dialect and sometimes their own new words. He explained it was similar to how Americans talk compared to British. That happens because they are so far apart. He told me that where we lived first – in Littleton – the Indians there and in Nova Scotia spoke Mikmaq, and that hereabouts along the Saint John River, the language is Maliseet. But if my mother called me *abbinochi*, like you said, she came from the Ojibwa tribe. That was their word according to the man named Schoolcraft. They are the people in *The Song of Hiawatha* and also in the book of myths written by Mr. Schoolcraft. They are situated at *Gitche Gume* which is Lake Superior. If she used the word *abbinochi*, then did she come from there? Was my mother Ojibwa? Was she from *Gitche Gume*?”

“Oh!” said Jenine. “Evidently Papa has taught you a great deal! . . . Well. . . yes. . . That’s right! She was from the same people. Yes. I remember that is the case. She did come from Lake Superior, from *Gitche Gume*. Yes, and like Hiawatha’s tribe, her tribe lived on the north shore of

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Lake Superior, yes. I remember that was the case. But I'm afraid I don't know more. Papa knew much more about this."



Jenine did not know very much about *The Song of Hiawatha* other than the verse about Hiawatha's childhood and other parts that Bradden had often recited.

Abbi furrowed her brow and looked a little puzzled. "But Mama, if my mother was at Littleton like you were, why would my Ojibwa mother come from Lake Superior to Mikmaq territory? They are quite far apart."

"Well. .. it was on account of the man she married. They fell in love when he was at Lake Superior. He was a fur trader for a while."

Jenine remembered Bradden telling her about Henry Schoolcraft, and how he married the daughter of an Irish trader and an Ojibwa woman – daughter of a chief. That gave her some ideas.

"But," Jenine continued, "they came east on account of wanting to settle down somewhere, and he found work on the same railway project Papa worked on, and so they came east to Littleton."

Abbi's interest perked up. "A fur trader? What was he like? And what was my mother's name? Did I have another name besides 'Abbi', because if it comes from *abbinochi*,

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then saying ‘Abbi’ is like calling a little boy or girl a ‘child’. It isn’t a real name.”

“Abbi you are asking so many questions at once. Well let me see. . . .Your father was. . .uh. . .Pictish.”

Instead of saying “Irish” she said “Pictish” – Picts were people in northern Britain before the Scottish. She remembered it from the school history book when she was a schoolgirl. She did not know that the Picts disappeared in northern England already many hundreds of years ago. But in this case Abbi was none the wiser.

She continued. “Yes, he was Pictish – the people in northern Britain before the Scottish came. His first name was uh . . . Irwin. His last name was uh . . . Pictford. I don’t know what your mother’s Indian name was, but everyone called her Paula, Paula Pictford.”

“If her homeland was *Gitche Gumee*, Mama, then she could have had an Indian name like in Mr. Longfellow’s poem. Was it *Wenona*? Was it *Minnehaha*? I like *Minnehaha*. Perhaps I had that name. *Minnehaha* would have been a very good name for me, I think.”

Jenine could not keep up. Abbi’s imagination was better than hers and getting ahead of her. “I’m sorry, Abbi. Nobody in Littleton called her by her Indian name, and you were so new, perhaps she hadn’t even given you your Indian name yet, but called you ‘Abbi’ for the time being.”

THE TALE OF PAULA AND IRWIN

“Tell me more, Mama. Leave nothing out. When did you get me? How did my mother die? What happened to my father?”

Jenine thought quickly what to say.

“Well, she was fine when you were very little, and she could nurse you, but then she became ill. You see, Indian women are very susceptible to diseases from Europe. They do not have the same resistance Europeans have developed over the centuries. She got, I believe. . .uh. . . smallpox. Indians everywhere died from smallpox after the Europeans arrived. Irwin your father was so very sad when Paula died. Then, since a father has to work and can’t look after a baby of four months, he looked around for assistance, and found that I and Papa had just married

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and wanted to start a family; so he visited us one day with you in his arms and said. *'I have to go away to work and to get away from everything. I have got myself hired on a ship that carries wood to Britain, and I wonder if you can look after Abbi, when I am at sea. I will send money to help support her from time to time, and visit whenever I'm on this side of the Atlantic.'* That's what he said. You were so lovely so we were happy to take care of you for him. Before that we did not know Paula and Irwin or you too well – only from gossip around town – so we never learned things like your mother's exact tribe or Indian name and so on. Afterwards, because Irwin was away at sea so much of the time while you were in our care, we had little chance to ask more about you, him, or Paula. I would have loved to ask him many more questions if I had had a chance."

"What happened then? What happened to him?"

"I'm afraid that the second time he crossed the Atlantic as a sailor on the ship that carried wood, the ship was in a storm, a hurricane, and broke apart, with lumber scattered all over the North Atlantic, and everyone on board, they say, was drowned."

"Oh!" Abbi reacted. She had now lost two fathers to drowning, although it wasn't confirmed yet for the second one.

"I'm sorry, Abbi," Jenine said, comforting Abbi. "It must be terrible to learn that your earlier father also suffered an accident."

"Don't worry, Mama. I am getting used to deaths in my life. Besides, I think it is romantic to drown in the enormous Atlantic ocean in a hurricane while struggling to keep the ship together. I will now forever picture the storm in my mind, with waves 50 feet tall, and how all the sailors struggled against the mighty sea."

These revelations from Jenine, were absolutely amazing to Abbi. Suddenly there was so much more to her identity. In reality Jenine still had no more idea where the baby left at the church doorstep came from than the day she found her. Since then, she had never noticed anyone taking any special interest who might be her father or mother. Without knowing anything, she had no choice but make up this story. If she had told Abbi the truth, then, she knew, Abbi would be consumed by questions that had often

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consumed her. Questions like: What was the reason Abbi's mother was unable or did not want to keep the baby? Was it a child obtained out of wedlock? Or was the mother so poor and already had a dozen children, and decided to give up the newest one? Was she still alive somewhere? A thousand questions can fill the void of knowing nothing. It was important not to leave a void, especially considering Abbi's imagination. She had to tell Abbi a story that was clear, known, and solid. She would postpone the truth until their lives were stable and happy once again. By then Abbi would be older and wiser and better able to understand the difficulties faced by women who give up their babies, and be able to process the truth in a more mature way.

"Yes, Abbi that's the story," Jenine finished. "The fact of the matter, Abbi, is that I didn't give you birth. Another woman did. You came out of another woman. But I got you when you were only a baby, so I might just as well have given you birth. Yes 'adopted' means that I and Bradden took you to be our own. And you can't remember it because you were too young to remember it. If people have gossiped about you, it is because you do look very much like an Indian, like you already understand."

Abbi now realized the woman she had always called 'Mama' was not really her mother. "Does that mean you are not really my mother? What should I call you now?"

"*Of course*, I'm your mother. There are different forms of mother. One is the birth mother who actually brings you into the world, and the other is the one who raises you, brings you up. Your birth mother and birth father are the ones who determine how you look, your facial features, hair color, and so on. Your fostering mother and father, those who raise you, determine how you develop in your habits, values, and so on—whether you are good or bad, and such. And obviously Bradden had much to do with that part. All his interest in reading, writing, studying, and his romantic spirit has clearly left its mark on you, Abbi. That is very plain to see. He has influenced you immensely."

Thoughts were now racing through Abbi's mind – countless questions about her natural parents. "Tell me more about my parents. Don't leave anything out!"

Jenine was by now very much committed to her inventive story and invented some more details: "Well, let

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me think...Mr. Irwin Pictford I think he was in charge of arranging for the shipment of wood and rails and such for the railway building. That is how he came to know ships. Some of the materials came by ship to the coast, and then by wagon. As for Paula, she had you to look after, but I think she made wonderful things pertaining to Indian culture. Yes she made wicker baskets for people in the area, and even wicker furniture. And she wrote poetry – yes she wrote Indian poetry. She was proud of being Indian.”

Abbi fell back on the bed, gazed at the ceiling, and imagined it all. “I’m trying to imagine how Paula looked. If she came from *Gitche Gumee*, maybe she was an Ojibwa princess? It would be so grand if she were the daughter of a chief from *Gitche Gumee*. *By the shores of Gitche Gumee, By the shining Big-Sea-Water, Stood the wigwam of Nokomis*—*Noko* means grandmother. She probably called her grandmother *Noko*, but it is sad she was so far from her home at Lake Superior. She must have missed her *Noko*, while living at Littleton.”

“Yes, Abbi. Lake Superior is very far away. Perhaps Mr. Pictford managed to get a message back by post when she died, but there was no reason for Irwin Pictford to send you there when she died, since Mr. Pictford expected to be back to visit you from time to time while we looked after you. He probably wanted to spend a few years at sea forgetting about Paula, and then remarry and take you back from us. But he drowned, and you were with us, and he had never told us where you were from other than Paula was from the Lake Superior area of course. But we knew nothing about where on Lake Superior her tribe was. Irwin had not had a chance to tell us. So you stayed with us. But we loved you and it was fine with us if you stayed permanently. And Bradden – Papa – did look into discovering where you were from. And the Constable did too. Perhaps Papa would have discovered it by and by – by the time you were ready to be told you were adopted. But now he has disappeared and I don’t know what he had discovered about you by now.”

Abbi lay back on the bed again with a faraway look in her eyes. “Well, then I will have to continue looking, myself. Perhaps one day I will discover my tribe and my

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relatives at *Gitche Gumee* and let them know I am fine,” she declared.

“There is no rush, Abbi. We can right away begin to investigate like Papa did, to look for more clues, although I’m sure Papa has already done so. Perhaps after much detective work, we can trace your past and find relatives. Right now, we have to deal with the current situation and with Grandmama Audora. I hope telling you all this hasn’t upset you, Abbi.”

“Don’t worry, Mama. I feel relieved that you told me. It explains clearly why Grandmama Audora doesn’t like me, and never really has. But, it will take me a while to get used to the idea that my mother was really an Indian, and my looking the way I do isn’t a coincidence but that I’m really Indian. I have so much to think about now. I have never even seen a real Indian before—except I saw those men working on the railway last summer.”

“So now you know why Grandmama Audora doesn’t care too much about me or you – me for not being the refined wealthy woman she thought her son should marry, and you for being adopted and not coming from her son. It would be wise we kept this to ourselves, alright?”

“Don’t worry,” Abbi replied. “I will keep this conversation a secret. I’m so grateful you and Papa decided to take me. Knowing what you have just told me, Mama, I can tolerate whatever Grandmama Audora has in store for me. But now that I know about Irwin and Paula, is it right for me to call you ‘Mama’? Perhaps the spirit of Paula feels unhappy about it. Perhaps I should call you ‘Jenine’, or when talking to strangers ‘Mrs. Woodrow’. It wouldn’t be out of disrespect. I just like the idea of thinking of Paula Pictford now as ‘Mama’ for a while, and Irwin Pictford as ‘Papa’, to see how it feels and to imagine how my life would have been if they had lived.”

“Whatever feels best in your heart, Abbi,” Jenine replied. “You will always feel like my daughter to me, no matter what you call me.”

“If it’s all right, Mama, I’d like to lie here and imagine my origins as you have described them. It will take a while for it all to sink in. “

“Imagine as much as you wish, Abbi.” Jenine said getting off the bed and picking up little Mary. “When you

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are ready to come down, there will be some supper ready for you. We will both deal with what Grandmama Audora has in store for us as we move to her mansion.”

Jenine commanded little Jack to follow, and then Abbi was alone with her thoughts.

For the first time in her life, Abbi began to think about her past. She tried hard to remember everything she could; but try as she might she couldn't remember much of anything from earlier than when she was about three. All she had was what she had been told. What had she been told earlier in life? Over the years she had been told that her Papa, her adoptive one, Bradden, had spend many years in a university called Harvard, where he had been interested in theatre and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and where he had studied for one degree, before becoming interested in railway construction engineering and studying for another degree. Then he had met Mama, that is, Jenine, and that she had been their first child for a couple years before Mark had been born. That was what Abbi had known about her past before this.

Now there was more to add to it – an Indian woman, a Pictish man. . . her mind was swirling with visions of them and how they might have been. At that moment she didn't even have the slightest suspicion that these people had not really existed, and that Jenine had created them for her.

It was just what Abbi needed at this point of time. She could forget that her Papa had vanished, and that they had to move to Richdale and live in Grandmama Audora's mansion. She could devote her mind to imagining everything Mama, er Jenine, had told her. She got up from her bed, looked in the mirror and imagined her mother would have looked like her, except grown up. She wondered how her father looked. She had to ask Jenine to describe him. and would Jenine know how they lived? What their house was like? She had endless questions.

She also imagined Irwin on that ship in the hurricane and how wind blew and waves broke over the deck. She imagined how one large wave may have split the bow, and water gushed in, and lumber piled on deck being carried away by the waves and becoming distributed over the North Atlantic.

She now had somewhere her mind could go to escape.

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“You are unusually happy, Abbi,” said Jenine when she finally came down for supper.

“Yes, Mama, I have been imagining my parents Paula and Irwin Pictford. I imagine Paula looked like me, or rather that I look like Paula, and that Irwin was a tall man with reddish color hair, I think. Was he?”

“Well...er....yes! You made a very good guess.”

She continued in the next days to ask questions about Paula and Irwin, and Jenine continued to think up good answers, unless it was a question for which she could claim she did not know, for some reason, and that Bradden might have known the answer better.

Thus Paula and Irwin Pictford became increasingly vivid and real to Abbi even though in reality they had never existed.

Jenine was happy that Abbi was back in good spirits. She smiled to herself and thought: “When I reveal it to her in years to come, when she is mature, we will both have a good laugh about it.” She did not realize that this invention would have consequences later on.

9

Audora Makes Decisions

JUNE 1875 – MOVING TIME

Jenine, Abbi and the rest of the family came to accept that without Papa there was no breadwinner to support them there in Fredericton anymore, they would have to soon move into Grandmama Audora's mansion at Tall Pines, Richdale, far away near Saint John.

The children soon came to understand how they would no longer experience this house, their rooms, their activities outdoors, the nearby city, and so on. But what was not clear was what the future would hold living in Grandmama Audora's mansion complete with its servants and finery. Before he vanished from the mishap on the Saint John River, Bradden had deliberately kept his children from experiencing his mother's wealthy way of life. Usually it had been Grandmama Audora who had visited them. Bradden had even forbid his mother filling his children's heads with ideas. The family had only visited their grandmother's mansion once – last summer. That was when Mark and Jimmy broke the fancy vase when the slid down the banister.

Now with Bradden, gone, who was going to keep an eye on Grandmama Audora? Would she now begin molding her grandsons to her world? And what would she do with Jenine and Abbi, the country woman and the adopted orphan, neither of whom had her blood in their veins?

Jenine let her friends and neighbours know that they would be soon moving. Everyone was sad about it, Was there no alternative. Everyone had suggestions.

“Maybe I and other neighbours can look after your little ones during the day while you take on some work.”

As much as Audora Woodrow made Jenine

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uncomfortable, she was still her husband's mother. "No," replied Jenine. "Bradden's mother has done so much. She contributed to the search for Bradden. Her people are helping us terminate the lease, and dealing with the moving. Even if it was possible for me to work, the reality is that they – except Abbi – are her son's children. Bradden would not have objected to it – just as long as his mother did not fill their heads with ideas about wealth and luxury."

Jenine was discussing it with her neighbour, Joan, this time. Joan had come over with Charlotte for tea.

"On the other hand," remarked Joan, "who of us wouldn't mind living in a mansion with servants!"

"But I'm a country girl," said Jenine. "I wouldn't know how to behave. And what would I do if servants did everything? I know of nothing else than being a mother and running a household. I confess I have a dread of how it will go."

"I'm sure it will work out fine, Jenine. Can I help you with packing?"

"Thank you, but we can manage. I think we should take it slowly so we can say goodbye to this place as we do so. There are decisions to be made about what to take and what to leave behind."

"Well fetch me if you need any help, Jenine."

Thus Jenine proceeded with the packing. Abbi helped out. It was a sad time. "It reminds me of when we were moving from Littleton to here, Mama," said Abbi; "but without Papa."

Although Audora had her company to run in Saint John, she did make one visit in June to see how things were progressing. As usually was the case when she came, she had a business meeting in Fredericton that day as well. She arrived as always in a carriage she had hired at the railway station.

She commanded the carriage driver to wait and came in. Jenine took her into a living room strewn with boxes and packaging materials.

"Well I see you have made progress with the packing." Audora said after looking around. "Have you decided on what will be shipped, what will remain, and what will be sold or given away?"

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“On most things.”

“There will be no point in shipping any furniture since my mansion is quite furnished,” decided Audora. “But then many of the furnishings here came with the leased house, I suspect...like the dining room table, and those chairs.”

“Yes, those came with the house,” said Jenine. “We haven’t purchased many furniture items. I must keep the sewing machine, thought. It was a birthday gift from Bradden.”

“Certainly, anything of sentimental value can come.”

They now inspected Bradden’s study and library that was in a room off the dining room. Abbi watched from the doorway.

“Alright, we should take everything in this study,” Grandmama Audora said. “Some of it brings memories to me of when Bradden was a boy, and the rest may be of interest to his children when they get older.”

“Even the stuffed beaver?” Jenine wondered, glancing towards Abbi, knowing how much it meant to her.

“Certainly. As old as it is, I remember it from when Bradden was a boy. Besides, they say the beaver are gone around here, so it is actually an important scientific specimen. Certainly it should not be thrown out.”

Abbi heaved a sigh of relief and was happy Jenine had not revealed her attachment to it, or else Audora may have decided another way.

“Well, let us put all the books in the crates,” Grandmama Audora continued, “and seal them tight for shipping. I expect you have little nails and a hammer to seal them up.”

“Yes the movers supplied them. Will you stay for supper?”

“Thank you, Jenine, but I cannot. I have a business meeting here in Fredericton And then I am scheduled to return to my Saint John office. However, I have given instructions to the moving firm to assist you in every way. And another company will come to make an offer on all remaining things, other than the furnishings that came with the house, of course. Feel free to give away to friends and neighbours whatever you wish, of course.”

“Some items, like railway books, could go to Bradden’s railway offices,” Jenine suggested.

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“Certainly. Now where are my grandsons?”

Whenever Audora visited she simply had to see her grandsons Mark, Jimmy, and Jack.

“They are now in the living room,” said Jenine.

“I was thinking that I would be happy to take your oldest boys, Mark and Jimmy, off your hands during the moving process. They can come with me and get to know a little of what I do and the mansion where we will live.”

Jenine stuttered. She didn’t know what to think of that. Would Bradden have agreed? “Y..you’re right, it would lessen the burden of tending to the children with all the packing that has to be done.....”

“Fine then. Let us tell them.”

They proceeded to the living room.

“Do you boys wish to come with Grandmama ahead of everyone else?” Audora asked them. “Jenine and the remainder will come in a week.”

Boys are always up for an adventure and shouted “Yes!”

“Well then you must tell Jenine everything you want to keep, to transport down to Tall Pines. Or else you will later discover them gone. I have to visit some businesses next, but you can come along. Then we will take the express train back to Saint John.”

“Yes boys,” said Jenine. “Go and put everything you want to keep from your room into one of the boxes, and take some of it in a trunk to take with you right away as you go back to Saint John with Grandmama Audora. Grandmama and I can have some tea while we wait.”

The boys rushed off and clattered up the stairs. Abbi stood around watching it all. Baby Mary and little Jack were out of the way in playpens in the corner.

Jenine brought tea that she had started brewing when Audora had arrived, and they sat down at the dining room table. Abbi joined them, first placing Bradden’s large dictionary on the chair, as she was still small.

“When all the moving arrangements are done,” said Grandmama Audora, “we will all sit down and talk about the future as I proposed earlier. Not here but at Saint John. We have not talked about the future very much, other than the general idea that your family moves into my home at Tall Pines. We have to look at the matter in a businesslike

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way – the children’s schooling for example – perhaps enrolling the older boys in private school. And things for you to do, Jenine. And how we will deal with Abbi. We will discuss a new beginning for us all.”

“I understand,” said slightly bewildered Jenine, apprehensive about having this strong woman take over their lives like this. But the family had no choice.

Audora continued: “The moment you are all packed and the moving company has been here and carted the boxes away, say your goodbyes to friends and neighbours and take the train to Saint John. Let me know by telegram when you are coming. When you get there, I will have Desmond with the company carriage pick up all of you from the Saint John railway station and transport you to my offices, joining myself and the two oldest boys, who I will bring to my office that day. There we will all meet, review everything that we have accomplished so far, and come to some further decisions as to what is still to be done, and what the future will hold. We can get it all out of the way at my office and then proceed to Tall Pines.”

The boys were soon done packing. Jenine made sure they had a change of clothes. The carriage Audora had hired was still outside. Audora and the two oldest boys were off.

During the course of the week that followed, the moving work got done and Jenine said her goodbyes to all the friends and neighbours in particular to neighbour Joan. Abbi said goodbye to Charlotte and some other children she knew by now.

And finally the day came when the family – at least the remainder since Mark and Jimmy had already gone with Grandmama Audora – had to go. Jenine sent a telegraph from the railway station to let Grandmama Audora know they were on their way, and which train.

Joan, Charlotte and other neighbourhood women saw them off at the railway station “I and Charlotte are sorry to see you go,” said Joan. “Do come back for a visit.”

Jenine gave Joan a hug. Abbi gave Charlotte a hug. And then Jenine gathered up Mary and Jack, and climbed onto the train, Abbi following behind. The conductor blew the whistle and the train was off.

The train ride seemed a long one for fidgety children,

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even though it was express and would take only a couple hours. Jenine got little Mary or Marie to sleep most of the time. All the while she herself was quietly apprehensive.

“This reminds me of the first time after Papa and I were married, before we got you,” she told Abbi, “that he and I went to see Grandmama Audora in Richdale. Papa wanted to show me to her. She was convinced the marriage would fail based on absolutely nothing but her general views about things. I was all butterflies the entire journey. I felt so helpless. Grandmama Audora is just such a powerful, commanding, woman. What she says, is how things will be. She wants to see us first of all at the company offices in Saint John. That’s where we will be taken the moment we arrive at Saint John.”

While she knew Tall Pines by now, she had not been to the company offices in Saint John. All she knew was that Audora worked there, and that she was managing the Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company, and that it was specialized in milling finished lumber and manufacturing architectural wood for buildings, and was therefore not a raw operation like a sawmill that turned logs into rough lumber.

MEETING AT AUDORA’S OFFICES IN SAINT JOHN

When they arrived at the Saint John station Desmond, the coachman, was there to pick them up along with the baggage with which they had traveled. All the other things had been shipped days ago and were at Tall Pines by now.

Desmond, an older man who had been with the Woodrow family and company for a long time, explained that Madam Audora was waiting at the company offices, along with Mark and Jimmy.

After a short drive from the railway station, the carriage stopped in front of a three story brick building. Abbi looked up and read the sign out loud: “Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company”.

“There are people inside who will show you the way as it is still business hours,” explained Desmond as the family climbed down from the carriage. “Just enter those doors. I must take the carriage on another errand.”

Jenine carrying baby Mary, and Abbi leading little Jack,

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entered the front doors. A young man acting as a receptionist at a desk in the lobby told them "Make your way to the third floor, and enter the door marked 'Administration'."

"Thank you."

They made their way up the stairs. Finally they were there. Abbi could tell by a sign on a large oaken door.

"This is it. It says 'Administration'" said Abbi. She opened the door and they walked in. It was a large area filled with desks, cabinets, chairs, and a number of busy-looking people.

A young spectacled man in a tight-fitting vest at a desk closest to the door said "Can I help you?"

Abbi took the initiative: "We're here to see Madam Woodrow. She is expecting us."

"Indeed," he replied, "you must be her son's family. My sympathies about your husband's accident and disappearance. Come with me, I will show you into her office."

Abbi had never seen a fancy business office before. Audora's office had tall windows and high ceilings typical of interiors of that period in time. Her large desk was situated next to the windows, so that when she sat behind it, her back was to the windows and she faced the entrance doorway. There were various new cabinets, bookshelves, clock, wall decorations, and of course plenty of chairs and couches for visitors. Abbi was amazed by the exotic knickknacks she had – quaint things she had obtained in her travels no doubt. She would have loved to study everything in the room, if there had been the time.

The two older boys, Mark and Jimmy, were already there with Grandmama Audora and when they entered Jimmy shouted: "Mama, this is where they make all kinds of lumber!"

Mark added excitedly: "We looked at where they mill the lumber here! They have steam powered machinery and everything!"

Audora advanced to receive everyone. "Come in, come in. The boys have quite enjoyed this past week with me at the mansion. And they seem to be quite excited to see our operations here as well."

"Yes, Mama," exclaimed Jimmy. "We saw where all the

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lumber is piled up high and men were working!”

“That’s nice,” said Jenine, forcing a smile. In reality she was quite nervous.

The boys’ enthusiasm obviously pleased Grandmama Audora. Here were the heirs to whom she could pass the company. “Come see, everyone,” she said, motioning everyone to the tall windows. “The whole of the lumber yards is visible from this window. We are three stories from the ground. And in the distance is the Bay of Fundy.”

Abbi joined the boys to look out the window. It did indeed look over the lumber yard and its operations. While the building fronted on the main street, these windows were at the back and overlooked the lumber operations. Beyond that was the sea, the Bay of Fundy. It was a band of blue in the distance.

“Well enough, boys.” Grandmama Audora ushered everyone to the chairs and herself sat behind her fancy business desk. “Sit down everyone. There are lots of chairs and couches in here. Everyone make themselves comfortable. As you can see I have made my office a pleasant environment complete with feminine touches. “

“Yes,” said Jenine, “It resembles a parlour.”

Other than baby Mary, who remained in Jenine’s lap, the children found themselves chairs and sofas on which to sit.

“This office wasn’t this way before,” continued Audora. “I made it to suit my feminine tastes after Stanley died. Besides, I spend more time here than I do at home! This is where I consider issues and make business decisions. My home, alas, has largely become a place to go to sleep! So let us proceed. Once we have talked about all the serious business related to our future, we can all continue to Tall Pines to complete the moving process – unpacking everything the movers have delivered in the past weeks and deciding where to put it all, and of course making yourselves at home there. I trust all that had to be done in Fredericton got done?”

“Yes, we no longer have the house,” replied Jenine. “And we have said our goodbyes. We donated railway related things, including Bradden’s model trains, bridge models and scientific books, to the railway engineering office where Bradden used to work.”

Audora folded her hands and commenced with a

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summary of the whole situation. "Well I've lost my son, and you've all lost a father or husband. Even though there is no closure – his body not having been found – let's forge ahead into the future. Life must go on. Cheer up, be positive, and make the best of it. So to start with, tell me, Jenine, how do you view your situation? You've now had some weeks to think things through. Can you summarize your thoughts?"

Jenine sighed. "With Bradden gone we no longer have any income to live on. We have lived for many months now on savings and charity from both you and the railway company. Because the children are all so young and can't be left alone, I wouldn't be able to go to work myself. Someone would have to look after them if I worked. So your invitation to move into Tall Pines is much appreciated. In this world, one cannot be a bread-winner and child-raiser at the same time. My parents are dead, my sister's family has taken the opportunity the new railways have offered and have moved far out west. But above all else, you are Bradden's children's grandmother and I expect Bradden would have approved of this course of action. Thus I agree that your taking me and the children into your home is a natural next step."

"I'll be happy to give my son's children all the benefits they are entitled to as Woodrows," replied Audora. "I *do* have the financial ability to take care of them without difficulty. But more importantly, as you said, they are my grandchildren. Thus my supporting you and my son's children is without question – to give them every benefit Bradden had when he was young: sending them to private boarding schools and every other privilege they deserve as Woodrows. The younger ones can immediately receive the benefit of a nursery governess and tutors. As for you Jenine, you can benefit too. Relieved of some of the burdens of child-raising and housekeeping, you are free to pursue things you have only dreamt of doing previously. It would be a wonderful new beginning for you, I think. Perhaps educate yourself a little; do things you have never had time for before. You can be involved with your children, certainly, but let the hired staff deal with the drudgery."

"But I like doing all those things for my children . . . ! I

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have never contemplated any other pursuit . . . But I suppose there may be something else that interests me . . . I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be negative. You are very, very, generous. The boys will have the best things money can offer. Money is very important. One can't eat, buy clothes, and have a roof over one's head without having some money coming in. Thus I appreciate that I and my family are very lucky in having you to assist us. The boys are lucky to have you as their grandmother."

"You will like Richdale where Tall Pines is located. You saw some of it last summer. And it is only a 15 minute carriage ride to Saint John, where we are right now, where you will enjoy even more amusements and shops than even Fredericton. Fredericton is small by comparison."

"I'm sure it will be quite an experience, living at Richdale," Jenine replied.

"Well, then that's settled," Audora declared. "When we are done here, we will all go home to Tall Pines and get everyone settled in. It will work out very well. And it is quite possible your boys will become interested in the wood business. It is a business that is very appealing to the male of the species – cutting down trees, making building materials, and building things. Frankly, even though I like doing business deals, as a woman, I don't find much appeal in the industry of making lumber; but that is what my husband and his father developed and what I took over. And I had hoped my son would take over from my husband, his father; but he had his own ideas, and distanced himself from it all in favour of his interest in railways; and that is why I have been running this company by myself these past years. But you already know all that. Truth is, between you and me, as a woman, I'd rather manage, say, a textile mill or women's fashion manufacturing—something closer to women's interests. But I have nonetheless found an interest in designing new and interesting ornamental moldings such as can be used by architects. There is a feminine aspect to that. You can see some samples hanging on the wall."

Abbi went over to look at them out of curiosity. They were short pieces each about a foot long. Audora probably showed them to businessmen who visited. Abbi then returned to her seat.

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“You are very generous,” repeated Jenine. “You are very generous. The children are very lucky to have you as their grandmother.”

Whether it was truly good or bad she actually did not know. “You are so kind,” she said again. Jenine was resigned to the situation. “Is that all?” she added. She wanted to get out of there. Audora was quite intimidating when she had all the power.

“There is one final matter,” Audora added, “and it relates to Abbi.”

“Uh-oh,” Abbi thought. “Here it comes!” Abbi was prepared for the expected discrimination. She was glad Jenine had explained how she was an orphan and that it was the reason over the years Grandmama Audora had always ignored her.

“I know,” Audora continued towards Jenine, “you would like to keep Abbi with the others, and even I have developed a special affection for her, even though she is adopted, and not kin – a poor Indian girl you and Bradden took in out of charity. We may have to decide on her future separately from the other children. She needs to be prepared for a different future because of who she is. On the positive side, Abbi is mature beyond her years even though she is only nine. From what you have told me, she goes to school already, and she has considerable experience looking after the three boys and Mary, and assisting you around the house in other ways. Perhaps there is an alternative path to be found for Abbi.”

Jenine became white-faced. “What are you proposing...?”

“You can rest assured that I would not make this suggestion if I did not have a delicate problem on my hands, and if I didn’t think it would be an educational experience for Abbi as well. Here’s the situation: One of my company’s smaller operations, which we half own, is upriver from Fredericton towards Grand Falls, on a branch of a small river that runs into the Saint John. The other half is owned by Martha Koski Loggerman, the daughter of a partner in earlier years – Harry Koski, A man named Percy Loggerman operates it for us. Harry Koski, now too deceased, came from Finland, which is unusual since most people in those parts are of English, American, French

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Canadian, Acadian, Scottish, and Irish origins. The small company is now called Koski Logging and Sawmill, now run, as I said, by Koski's daughter's husband Percy Loggerman. He runs the operation, while Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company continues to run the business end of it. It supplies us with raw lumber to mill into fine wood products for architecture and cabinetry down here. The large sawmills deal more with regular softwood for regular lumber. Naturally its successful operation is important to our business. But it's more than about business. Harry was an early family friend of ours as well as business partner, so I *do* feel obliged to help his daughter. Lately Percy Loggerman's logging and sawmilling operation – logging in winter, sawmilling in summer – is in disarray because Percy has been greatly distracted by a great burden that has been placed on him personally as a result of his wife producing one baby after another so that she had five in four years. And now Martha is pregnant with another. She desperately needs household assistance. I have been trying to find hired help for her, but all the urban women I send to her from here or Fredericton, will not stay, as they have been spoilt by urban life, and will not accept a life in the wilderness. The Loggermans are some three miles out from the nearest town. Local women there have their hands full themselves and it is hard to find help from among them either. But now, the other day, a possible solution occurred to me.”

“You mean. . .Abbi? But she is only nine!” Jenine feared where it was leading.

“A nine-year old can keep an eye on babies and keep them out of mischief, I'm sure. I trust that Abbi is now aware she was adopted and we have to think of her future, what she might be doing as she gets older...”

“I want to go to Harvard like Papa,” said Abbi. “If Harvard is too expensive, then the University of New Brunswick, that Papa pointed out to me in Fredericton.”

“I have recently explained it to her that we obtained her as a baby,” said Jenine. “But I don't know....It would be better if she were a teenager at least.....”

“An adopted individual,” Audora continued, “one without any relatives beyond that of her adoptive family, is not able to enjoy the same privileges and protection in life as

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normal individuals. In case they chance to be alone in the world, Lord forbid, separated from kindly guardians, they need to learn more about the ways of the world and develop self-reliance and independence, especially if they are of Indian origins. And furthermore, since Abbi is of the Indian race, perhaps an encounter with real wilderness will be good. And there are Indians up there too working in the logging industry. Thus this and any new experience that she can gain will prove a benefit in the long run. By contrast, how will she be furthered by living in my mansion? I see Abbi to be perfect for Martha and Percy Loggerman's situation—that is, to assist them with their many young children. This situation will ease up as the oldest ones become old enough to look after the youngest in some years time. Thus, it could be just until she gets the matter of babies under control. I acknowledge, being nine, Abbi may be a few years too young in the opinion of some, on the other hand she is several years older than her age in maturity, and should be able to handle the situation well. And I wouldn't even suggest it if I did not know Martha and Percy Loggerman personally. In fact when I and Stanley started the logging and milling along with her father, Martha played with Bradden among the stumps. Their house is not far from the sawmill. I remember when my husband and Harry Koski were getting the sawmill operating – back in the days when sawmills were water driven. Then Stanley's father died, and we moved back here to Tall Pines to take over from his father – as I already said. But for two years we were there, when Bradden was a boy; and so I am not speaking about a place unknown to me. Even though both Stanley and Harry Koski are passed away, the Koski Logging and Sawmill Company continues to supply us with rough lumber, specialized hardwood lumber for cabinetry and special architectural use, and the business relationship continues, although at a distance. It has become of greater importance now that the railway has recently reached it and we can ship the hardwood lumber we need down here at any time of year now.”

“But, but,” replied Jenine with alarm in her voice, “I'm so fond of Abbi, and so used to her being by my side!”

“Come, come Jenine. Every parent wishes their child

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will remain a child forever. Sooner or later they grow up and follow their own course in life. You'll see, this will be good for her. Abbi will learn to live with another family, learn to become more self-reliant, and Mrs. Loggerman will also have a companion, besides help with her children. I will hopefully have a more productive Percy Loggerman. And Abbi will have a memorable experience living in the wilderness, an experience she will remember fondly in years to come."

"I will have to think about it. It is an idea that takes getting used to."

Audora was keen on getting Jenine's acceptance, and wondered what more to say. "I know that Abbi likes nature too," Audora continued. "So did little Bradden. I remember how when you lived in Littleton, Abbi loved to walk through the meadow with Bradden and visit the brook. I guarantee you that Abbi can fit in much better there in the wilderness than in my stuffy old mansion!"

Abbi could do nothing more than observe and listen in silence. They hadn't even heard her comment that she wanted to go to university one day. Now Audora turned to Abbi, thinking that if Abbi did not object then perhaps Jenine would not object either. "Isn't that right, Abbi? You'd prefer running through wilderness better than having to walk around in a city all prim and proper and restrained, hardly able to breathe, inside a corset, wouldn't you? It would be an adventure for you to live in a house in the wilderness, isn't that right? Even if it didn't work out, you'd have been through a memorable adventure in the wilderness. If it absolutely doesn't work out, we can bring you back. But right now Mrs. Loggerman is desperate for help. Utterly desperate. What do you think, Abbi? Would you like to meet Mrs. Loggerman, and go to live with her for a while in the wilderness with a river going past the property and nature all around?"

Abbi was not surprised by all this, ever since Jenine explained that she was discriminated against for not being 'kin'. The prospect of living in the wilderness was indeed somewhat romantic on the face of it. It might not be so bad, as long as she could still return to Jenine whom she had always known as her Mama. But she didn't say anything because Grandmama Audora was completely

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controlling the situation. It would be a waste of breath. She glanced at Jenine, and it seemed they understood each other – Grandmama Audora’s discriminating against Abbi was inevitable, and perhaps they simply had to accept it.

“Well you are not reacting negatively,” continued ogre-woman, “as I expected; so I have already taken the liberty of bringing Mrs. Loggerman down to the city to meet you. I have hired and sent a woman, a trained nanny, up to her from Fredericton last week to look after her five children to enable Mrs. Loggerman to come down. I arranged it the last time I visited you when you were packing crates.”

“She is here? Mrs. Loggerman is here?!” Jenine exclaimed. She hadn’t expected it to be already decided!!

“Indeed. She came yesterday and I put her up in the Richdale Hotel. She was keen to travel the new railway, and to visit Saint John at our expense, and could not pass up the opportunity. Desmond brought her here before he picked you up at the train station. I told her to wait in the other room until we got the general matters out of the way. I took the initiative to bring her down, because I realized that you would not let Abbi go without actually meeting the woman who would look after Abbi. I will bring her in. You will see what a nice woman she is, and you can discuss the matter between yourselves. Once you meet her, you’ll see that Abbi will be in very good hands.”

Grandmama Audora got up and went to a side door, and motioned for Martha Loggerman waiting in the adjoining room to come in. She came through the door, as pregnant as could be.

“Boys!” said Audora, “Move over to the chairs. Make room for Mrs. Loggerman to sit down on the couch.”

The boys scampered off to still-empty chairs, while Audora helped the overly pregnant woman to settle down on the couch.

“I hope it isn’t yet another girl,” the woman moaned. “If so she is a big and heavy one! Oh! Perhaps I shouldn’t have come down here. I felt another contraction. The first ones came on the train down. I hope it was a false alarm. I thought the baby would be still weeks off. I so longed to visit Saint John and do some shopping.”

“Are you fine now?” asked Audora, “Indeed. I too was under the impression you weren’t due for weeks yet.”

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“Yes I’m fine. Knowing when they will come is not an exact science. In any event, this will be my sixth in five years, and I hope it is a boy this time. All the previous ones were girls.”

Audora continued with the matter at hand: “This girl here is the Abbi I was talking to you about, the orphan taken in by my son many years ago.”

“Hello, Abbi,” said Martha Loggerman. “My you look somewhat like the Indian girl I saw a while ago up there.”

“There is an Indian girl there who looks a little like me?” Abbi exclaimed. That seemed promising. A real Indian girl from a real Indian tribe! Nothing would suit her better now than to become friends with a real Indian girl, now that she knew she was one herself.

Audora continued: “Abbi is the girl that I thought might be able to assist you to relieve your burden of tending to your babies. And this is Jenine, and her other children, who will be living with me at my home in Richdale.”

Martha Loggerman turned towards Jenine and extended her hand to shake hers. “I’m pleased to meet you Jenine. Madam Woodrow made a proposal to me a week ago by letter and then offered recently by telegraph¹¹ to bring me down here to meet you and to enjoy Saint John. It certainly would not do for me to have Abbi without meeting you, Jenine and you meeting me. So Madam Woodrow wanted me to come down to meet you, so that if you approved, the girl could return with me. It was a long trip down, an entire day travel, but I wanted to see Saint John anyway and buy some things, and Madam Woodrow offered to pay for my trip and hotel room. I’ve only been to Saint John once before in my life. But that was before there was any railway track. Back then we had to travel down the Saint John in barges that took passengers. The first part was not very fast since the train was a freight train, but railway from Fredericton to Saint John was very fast. I was able to take an express that did not stop at every little place. Unfortunately the baby began to consider coming while riding the train. And then changed its mind.” She laughed

¹¹ Samuel Morse invented the telegraph already in 1837 and sent his first message in 1844; thus telegraphy was, by 1874, very common, and available to the public at least at railway stations since railways needed it to time the trains.

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and patted her belly.

Jenine did not know what to say. This was all very sudden and unexpected.

Martha Loggerman continued: "I should let you feel assured, Jenine, that I don't want to obtain a daughter. All I have so far are girls, five of them, under four years old; thus what would I want with another daughter? What I require is live-in help, who I will still treat every bit as a daughter, who doesn't mind living in the wilderness on our property near our sawmill. We have a nice large log home. I am told Abbi loves nature. Well there is a lot of nature up there, that is for certain. I won't do anything to come between her and you, Jenine. But I should add that it is isolated and it is not easy to make contact, but there is mail service at Pinewood, the nearest town, now that the railway has arrived, and there is telegraphy at the railway station for short messages."

"Can she continue to go to school?" Jenine asked. "Abbi has already gone two years in the school. Is there a school up there?"

"Indeed," Martha replied. "There is a small log house school in Pinewood, so she can continue going to school if it is not too difficult to reach it. Pinewood, you see, is all of three miles away." She then had a contraction. "Oh! Another contraction. Lordy, lordy, maybe I'm going to give birth right here. . . . Ooooh!" With that she lay back onto the couch, continuing to make her distressful moans and exclamations.

"Oh my goodness!" responded Audora leaping to her feet. "She's giving birth right now! We have to call for a midwife and doctor! Jenine, hurry to the front and call in the woman assistant there! Get her to fetch a nurse, doctor or midwife. Boil water! Find blankets! Oh my word, what's going to happen to my fine couch. . . oooh!"

Suddenly bedlam all around, and Abbi soon witnessed Mrs. Loggerman give birth to the dreaded further girl right there in the offices of the Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company.

As a result of this sudden turn of events, Abbi did not leave with Mrs. Loggerman right away, but stayed at the Tall Pines mansion with Jenine and everyone for a week, while Mrs. Loggerman rested from her birth-giving and did

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some of her planned shopping and sight-seeing in Saint John. The delay gave Abbi and Jenine time to adjust. They were able to discuss it over the next days, and reconcile themselves to the necessity of it.

“Let’s look on the positive side, Abbi.” said Jenine to her in private. “Mrs. Loggerman seems nice. And Audora already knew her. And you have never been to a real wilderness before. You’ll have an adventure. And there is a school there. I will try to persuade Grandmama to bring you back for Christmas, although it is a long journey. It should work out fine, shouldn’t it? It would be like going on a summer vacation.”

Abbi sighed. “I’m sure I will be fine, Mama. Mrs. Loggerman will probably be nicer to me than Grandmama who seems to have no use for me in her life!”

ABBI’S LIFE TAKES A TURN

The time to depart soon arrived.

Audora’s carriage man, Desmond, took everyone by the household carriage to the Saint John Railway Station. It was better to go from Richdale directly to the Saint John Station by carriage when traveling north to Fredericton, since the Richdale Station was on the line that went the other way towards the northeast, towards Moncton, and one would have to go first to Saint John anyway.

For luggage Abbi had a small trunk and a large travel bag of heavy canvas-like cloth¹². Shortly before the train was about to go, she and Jenine said their goodbyes while Desmond assisted Mrs. Loggerman with her luggage and baby things.

“I wish you could take more with you, Abbi,” said Jenine. “But we can’t put more into the trunk and the travel bag. And I know how much you like all your books.”

“I’ve read most of my books,” I said, “It’s best I leave them for Mark when he begins to read. I’m sorry I couldn’t take Amik, though, Mama.” Abbi was referring to the stuffed beaver from Papa’s desk with whom she had developed a connection.

“It’s too big,” said Jenine. “He would fill up the entire

¹² Of carpet-like material, called a “carpet-bag” in those times.

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trunk space. We need the trunk for clothes.”

“Please take care of it, Mama, even though it is quite old.”

“Audora seems to like Amik too. It reminds her of when Bradden was a boy. But he is only a stuffed beaver. Perhaps you will discover a real live beaver where you are going. You *did* take *some* books, didn’t you?”

Abbi nodded. “Thank you for telling me my mother was Indian. I took some of Papa’s books, I mean Bradden’s books, about Indians. I took the ones he already showed me. I took ‘*The Song of Hiawatha*’ and the book about Indian legends by the man called Henry Schoolcraft, and another one that is more difficult to read that Papa referred to often. Now that I know I am Indian, I want to learn everything about Indians.”

“Well here is something else, Abbi.” Jenine took from the handbag she herself was carrying, a cardboard folder, the kind in which people kept letters and other writings, bound on one side and tied with a ribbon on the other, to hold it closed. “I found Papa’s originally writing of his poem-play *Aggodagauda and His Daughter* – and there is a copy of the program we handed out too when we performed it – and guess what?”

“What. . . ?”

“I discovered more verse among his papers. I think he wanted to write another one in the *Hiawatha* verse style. Maybe one day you can finish it. And there are other papers and letters, besides. I thought you will find more meaning in them than I; so I brought them for you to take. There is in here even correspondence with the famous Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Maybe you will find it interesting what they discussed. I didn’t tell Audora about this either. She never showed much interest in Bradden’s writing, or his interest in Indians. It’ll be our secret.”

Abbi found it special that Jenine thought to give this folder for her to take. She did not realize it right away, but this folder would become very important to her in the next months. She put it in her travel bag.

“And there is one more thing, Abbi,” continued Jenine. “A hunter found a button in the woods some distance from the Saint John River down from where Papa fell in. He knew of the searching during the winter, and brought it to

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the railway people. It could have come from his shirt. They sent it to me, and I told them it seems similar.”

“But they also found his coat and boots earlier....”

“But this button was found almost a half a mile away from the river. Maybe he made it out of the river and then got lost. Don’t give up hope that Papa – Bradden – is still alive somewhere. If something is unknown, it is always better to think in terms of the positive than the negative. I will imagine that he is wandering in the wilderness and that one day he will return. Otherwise, it would be a torment to think he is dead and be unable to visit a grave to talk to him.”

“I understand, Mama.”

“Think positive. Look on your visit with the Loggermans like a summer vacation. Maybe by the time you return, he’ll be back and we can be a family once again.”

“Alright, Mama.”

“Well, be good, Abbi. We’ll see you again soon. I’m sure that if you have to stay longer, Madam Audora will be able to pay for you to travel down for Christmas. I’m sure I’ll see you soon. I’m sure I will.”

“Mama, I mean Jenine, I will think a great deal about the Pictfords who you said I came from. Thank you for telling me about Paula and Irwin Pictford, and about Paula having been Indian.”

Jenine felt a little guilty about having made up the story, but it was the only way to do it. Abbi was too young, and it was a stressful time for describing in detail how they got her, and the mysteries behind her arrival. She concluded that it was all for the best that she had made up real people for Abbi. How terrible it would have been had she told her that she was found at a church door and her parents were actually completely unknown, other than that from her appearance she had Indian origins. It was time to support her Indian origins, and not deal with how they got her.

“Yes, perhaps you’ll meet some Indians up there—and perhaps one your age. So go now. We’ll all be very fine down here at Tall Pines. Grandmama Audora may be harsh but Mary and the boys are her grandchildren and she adores them.”

“I’m sure you’ll do fine in Madam Audora Woodrow’s

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mansion,” Abbi replied. “The children will have everything children can possibly want.”

As Abbi joined Mrs. Loggerman and the baby to climb up onto the train, she made a note that she should refrain from calling Audora Woodrow ‘Grandmama’, and sadly ‘Mama’ would have to be called ‘Jenine’ or ‘Mrs. Woodrow’. It seemed hard to think of Paula and Irwin Pictford as her mother and father, after having always thought of Jenine and Bradden Woodrow as her mother and father all her life so far.

She followed Martha Loggerman and her new baby up into the train; and then she stood for a moment at the top of the steps and waved goodbye to Jenine, Mark, Jimmy, Jack and Mary.

“Au revoir.” Abbi said, using some of the French she had picked up when she was little from Jenine’s mother now passed away, who was of Acadian origins. “I will not stop believing that Papa is still alive somewhere, will be found and that when I return he will be back. He could be in a hospital somewhere.”

“I hope so, Abbi. Au revoir, Abbi,” replied Jenine, trying hard to remain equally positive.

A NEW STAGE BEGINS

With Bradden Woodrow having disappeared and her having learned she was an Indian girl who Bradden and Jenine had adopted, and now her being sent into the wilderness of New Brunswick and separated from her former family, the first stage of Abbi’s life was over and a new stage of her life was about to begin.

She had never been to any wilderness before. She wondered what it was like. And what was Mrs. Loggerman like? What kinds of chores would she have for her?

“May I have the window seat, Mrs. Loggerman?”

“Of course, Abbi. With this newborn baby to care for, I will not have much time to view the landscape going by outside the window.”

She loved to study the landscapes outside the train window.

As the train began moving and she gazed at the scenery, she reflected on what she was leaving. Growing

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up in Littleton had been very happy, and also the last two years in Fredericton.

She was not completely leaving it all behind. She could write letters to Jenine, describing her experiences. She could describe how things went at Tall Pines. And of course, she would write to Charlotte too. Uh-Oh! She hoped there was mail service to where she was going! Of course there would be! Wherever the railway went, the mail went.

And if her adoptive Papa lost a button while escaping the river, then perhaps he would soon return and the family would be together again and everything would return to normal.

In the meantime, she would make the best of what lay ahead for her in the wilderness of New Brunswick.

She was ready to begin her new adventure.

PART

2

In the Wilderness

Abbi's being sent to the hinterlands of New Brunswick may have represented Grandmama Audora trying to put Abbi on a different path because she was a Native Indian and an orphan, but with books she had brought about Indians from her Papa's library, Abbi made the best of it, to try to learn about Indians as far as possible from the combination of the book knowledge and her contact with the wilderness. It would be far better if she could actually meet real Indians, though



*Abbi greets the morning sun
rising over the mist*

10

Abbi is Off to the Wilderness

ARRIVING IN THE WILDERNESS IN JULY 1875

The journey to the Loggerman's began with the express to Fredericton and then a single passenger car on a freight train that transported logs and lumber between Fredericton and New Brunswick's interior. She recognized the route as being the same one she had experienced earlier with the railway engineers' picnic trip. More of it was now completed and in operation, including the branch that went to Pinewood, where they were going.



What she saw from the window of the passenger car was rugged forest country where people made a living mostly from cutting timber, sawing it into lumber, and sending – by river or rail – either the logs or lumber to the booming cities.

During the long journey, lasting all day since the train stopped often, Abbi told Mrs. Loggerman more about herself, especially about how she had learned just some weeks ago that her mother was Indian.

“Well yes, from your appearance, your brown eyes and straight hair, anyone can see that.”

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“Yes, Mrs. Loggerman. Jenine, my adoptive mother, explained it all to me a few weeks ago, My mother was Indian and her name was Paula Pictford, Pictford on account she married a Pictish man named Irwin Pictford.”

She spoke innocently and enthusiastically about it, not having the slightest inkling that her origins were actually unknown and that Jenine had made up these parents in order to give her something more concrete in regards to her origins than her simply being left behind a church door. But she had now embraced the story thoroughly and thought about it endlessly.

“Pictish? I never heard of such a thing.”

“Mama—Jenine—said they were the people in the British Isles before the Irish and Scottish.”

“And there are some still around?”

“I suppose so. Anyway Jenine said my mother and father met at *Gitche Gumee* - that’s the Indian word for Lake Superior - on the north side; and after marrying they went east on account Irwin had an interest in railway work, just like Bradden, my adoptive Papa. Jenine said I was only three months old when my adoptive Papa and Mama got me, after Paula had died of smallpox; so they still referred to me as ‘baby’ or ‘child’. That is how I got my name ‘Abbi’— short for *abbinochi* which is how the Ojibwa language at *Gitche Gumee* says it. She may have had an Indian name for me and even an English one, but because I was only three months, nobody thought to call me anything but ‘Abbi’, and when my mother died nobody really knew of any other name; so my adoptive mother decided my English name should be ‘Abigail’ because the short form for that is ‘Abbi’—although, the short for ‘Abigail’ is normally written with a ‘Y’; but I like it with an ‘I’ as then it is also an Indian word. That is the story of how I got my name. I think I’m satisfied with ‘Abbi’. I’m so used to it now. But now I think my last name should be ‘Pictford’, in honour of my natural father. I have been saying ‘Abbi Pictford’ or ‘Abigail Pictford’ over and over in my mind. It would be more correct, when I am no longer living with the Woodrows, don’t you think?”

Perhaps Jenine back at Tall Pines would have thought twice about making up a history like this for Abbi, if she had known Abbi would embrace it so thoroughly as truth!!!

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“My, I have never heard a nine year old talk like you,” replied Mrs. Loggerman. “You sound more like you are 12 or 13.”

“I suppose it’s because my Papa, I mean adoptive Papa, whose name is Bradden Woodrow, who raised me, educated me considerably before I began school without my knowing. When I finally got to school I was surprised myself that I was ahead of everyone else my age – except in arithmetic: I am still behind in arithmetic. My Papa never taught me arithmetic—only all about literature and other things he learned about when he was in university. He said he was in university for ten years, and got two degrees. I think that means he did double what was needed and became very smart.”

“Well in any event, from what you have just told me you have quite a romantic history, Abbi. But don’t you go changing your name yet. You are only to be with us until my difficulties managing my children are over. Then you’ll be back with the Woodrows. I suggest you remain Abigail Woodrow a little longer.”

“Alright, as long as I still feel I have a place in the Woodrow family that raised me,” replied Abbi, “after I return from helping you with all your children.”

Abbi, who had ensured she had a seat beside the window, gazed at the pine trees in the lovely scenery passing the train. Most of it was very wild. One did not see very many farm fields.

“Did Indians have last names?” Mrs. Loggerman wondered.

“Indians belonged to totems, my Woodrow Papa told me once. He had a special interest in Indians ever since Mr. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow made Indians famous in his long poem *The Song of Hiawatha*. I’m wondering now what my totem was. Perhaps it was the beaver. I have always been fond of beavers. Are there real live beavers where we are going?”

“There are. A family has made a dam down below our clearing, and caused a little flooding of a valley of a small creek entering the larger one, but it does not affect us.”

“Real beavers? There is? There is? There is?” Abbi exclaimed. “I would be so thrilled to see a real live beaver! I have only seen one filled with straw, although it was very

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handsomely made. I was unhappy to depart from it. It belonged to Papa. But now I'm elated. I will see a live one. In the language of my people, a beaver is called *amik*."

And so it went, Abbi telling nearly everything she could think of about herself, her experiences, even about her adoptive Papa having been taught by Professor Longfellow at the very beginning before he retired to be a full-time poet; and that she had brought books and letters and notes that belonged to her adoptive Papa to study. "Unfortunately," she finished, "he had an accident and disappeared and has not been found yet."

"I am so sorry about that, Abbi."

All the while, Mrs. Loggerman held her newborn who had unexpectedly decided to be born in Saint John. She happily let herself be entertained by Abbi, whose inventive mind kept coming up with new angles on things, so that she was never repetitive, never dull.

Throughout the long train ride Abbi looked at the brighter side of things. She was glad that the weather was warm and the landscape was at its best. Imagine if it had been winter or spring! They'd all be bundled in heavy coats, and be fighting mud or snow when they arrived! Also, because all the recent changes in the lives of her Woodrow family had occurred in the summertime, when there was no school, she did not miss any school. But if she stayed longer than the summer, would she be able to continue school up here when summer ended? Was there even a proper school around here? Mrs. Loggerman had said earlier there was, but that it was some distance away from where they were. Abbi thought not to pursue the subject of school until she knew Mrs. Loggerman and the place they were going a little better. Instead she questioned Mrs. Loggerman about the area where they were going.

"There is some nice scenery where we are going, Abbi," Mrs. Loggerman revealed. "Did you know there is a big falls called Grand Falls? There is a gorge there with rushing rapids. But we are not going that far. . ."

"I know about it, Mrs. Loggerman. That is where my adoptive Papa fell into the river and hasn't been seen since."

"I'm sorry Abbi. I didn't mean to remind you. In any

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event, we're not going up that far. We're going up beside another river that flows into the Saint John, a short ways. But it is interesting there too. There are hills and gorges and lots of lovely pine trees. There is logging going on, and salmon coming up the rivers. . ."

"Is there farming? When I lived with the Woodrow family in Littleton there were plenty of farms. "

"Yes, a little, where it can be done – where there are no ridges or marshes. Many Irish came there, and they tried their hand at farming potatoes and have been quite successful."

"Irish were also in Littleton, where I grew up."

"There are people from many origins here. The French came first, and then the British drove some of them out when they took over New Brunswick. And then along came people from the United States, who didn't agree with it becoming separate from Britain. They were called United Empire Loyalists. It's then that many Irish came next, when there was a potato famine in Ireland. Many Scottish have come too. My mother was Scottish. Both my mother and father are dead now, Abbi. My father was unusual in that he was Finnish. This isn't one of the locations Finnish usually went. But he came and joined all the logging that was going on. Do you know about Finnish, Abbi? Normally everyone confuses them with the Swedish, but they are a very different people, my father told me. The Finnish speak a completely different kind of language, he said. "

"I think I know a little, Mrs. Loggerman," replied Abbi. "Papa said that Mr. Longfellow was inspired by their big poem when he wrote *The Song of Hiawatha*. They must have been analogous to Indians if Mr. Longfellow was inspired by their big poem. I learned about Sweden and Europe in geography at school, and I asked the teacher to tell me where Finland was, and I know where it is. My teacher said it is part of the kingdom of Sweden but on the east side of the sea there."

"Well, in any event, my father came, and married my mother, whose father came from Scotland. Her mother was Acadian. . ."

"My grandma. . .I mean my adoptive Mama's mother whose name was Maria, who died a couple years ago, was Acadian too. I learned to speak a little to her, but in our

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family we spoke English on account that was what Papa was used to.”

“Well the French people tend to reside further north in the direction of Quebec, and above Grand Falls, these days. There aren’t many French near Pinewood, where we’re going.”

“Tell me about Pinewood¹³. In French that would be *Bois-Des-Pins*. Does anyone call it that?”

“Yes I think I’ve heard that name used.”

“Pinewood is a descriptive name, Mrs. Loggerman. It is possible to express the name in any language, even in Indian.”

And thus the conversation went, as the wheels of the train click-clacked, and rugged scenery flew past the window.

Abbi learned from Mrs. Loggerman that Pinewood was a small town, even smaller than Littleton where she had first lived. In addition to businesses associated with the industry of the area, in this case logging and sawmilling, it had the general store, small hotel with a tavern, blacksmith, and whatnot, typical of any small town. Recently, after the arrival of the railway, it had grown a great deal.

“Oh yes, it is changing, Abbi. When the railway arrives at a town in these parts, the town grows very quickly. So many things become possible when a train can be used.”

“Yes, I know, Mrs. Loggerman. There were many changes in Littleton, where I was originally, after the railway came, except I was only a few years old when it did, but my Papa told me how much it had changed. Papa worked in constructing it – It was to connect Moncton and Amherst, and it went through Littleton. Most recently he helped build the railway track we are on right now. I feel proud about that. I keep thinking about how every bridge we cross was designed by my Papa over the past two years.”

“Well it has caused much change. Most importantly the railway here allows us logging people to transport logs to the city by train. It hadn’t always been like that. Originally

¹³ Made up place, located on an imagined river/brook in the Toblique River area south of Grand Falls we have called Logger’s River

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the logs continued down the river and entered the Saint John River and then traveled down to large sawmills downriver. And it couldn't be done in winter. Now trains can be used to transport logs, and even cut lumber, even in winter."

"Wouldn't the tracks be covered with snow?"

"Well there are locomotives that plow the snow off the track after a big snowfall, of course. Anyway, now it is possible to send actual rough boards to the cities by train even in winter. Earlier we had to hire barges to carry our boards down the Saint John to Madam Woodrow's company. Now we only have to have our horses take our lumber to the Pinewood railway station and load up freight cars. We tend to deal with special woods that Madam Woodrow wants for fancy uses in cabinetry and such. Boards of that nature go all the way to her in Saint John."

Madam Audora Woodrow! Her adoptive Papa's mother, and president of the Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company, who had decided to send her away with Mrs. Loggerman, rather than letting her live with the Woodrow family at her mansion. It was clear her adoptive Grandmama Audora had always disliked her because she was adopted. But now she was on her way to the wilderness to live with Mrs. Loggerman and she had to make the best of it.

"I learned a little about how big sawmills work, Mrs. Loggerman, when I was in Fredericton which has some large sawmills. How big is your sawmill?"

"Oh, it is very small. And it is very old. It doesn't even use steam. Water moves the saw blade for us still. Percy, my husband, says the advantage of it is everything can be repaired with wood and leather. Steam engines need precisely made metal parts."

And so, besides Mrs. Loggerman learning a great deal about Abbi's past experiences, Abbi learned a great deal about the logging industry where she was going even before she arrived there.

After a day-long journey with many stops during which freight cars were connected or disconnected from the train, they arrived by the late afternoon at the small Pinewood railway station.

"Alright, Abbi, here we are in Pinewood," said Mrs.

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Loggerman, as they descended from the train. "Our handyman Jeffrey will take us the rest of the way in the wagon. Jeffery's an old retired logger who works for us."

Mrs. Loggerman and Abbi collected their baggage and then looked around for the wagon. They did not have to wait long as Jeffery arrived almost immediately, having first collected weekly provisions from the general store while waiting for the train to arrive. Although the sawmill operation employed big wagons for transporting the lumber to Pinewood, this wagon was the Loggerman's general purpose wagon. It was still a working wagon requiring two horses, and could be used for every purpose from hauling equipment to simply going into town to fetch provisions, pick up mail, send telegrams at the railway station, or other routine purposes. It was more than large enough to hold Jeffrey, Mrs. Loggerman, Abbi, the baby, and all the luggage, and could have held considerably more besides. They were soon under way.

The road, deeply rutted by wheels of larger heavily loaded lumber-transporting wagons, made the wagon bounce this way and that. There were many twists and turns as it wound its way around marshes on the one hand and rock outcrops on the other.

When the wagon arrived at its destination, Abbi saw that the Loggermans truly lived in the wilderness.



The main house was situated on a high ridge location where there was scarcely any soil, but it looked down a slope that had been cleared of trees. Abbi decided this location with pine and fir trees and little soil was *not* an

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area for settlers seeking to establish farms. This was a very different place than she had experienced before. It was much more wild and much more rocky.

The Loggerman main dwelling was made of logs and was lacking in the refined trim and polish found in urban dwellings; but it would prove large and spacious since there had not been any need to economize on the amount of wood, or space, used—both wood and space were in plentiful supply here.

Abbi noticed next the buildings in the further distance. Sounds came from there. The repetitive sounds of equipment must signify the location of the sawmill, and the sound of rushing water signify the river.

As the wagon with Abbi, Mrs. Loggerman, and the new baby reached the dwelling house, Percy Loggerman, taking a break from his work at the sawmill, came up the lane from the sawmill to meet them.

Percy Loggerman was a stout, balding, lifelong logging man, who knew how the business of logging and sawmilling should be done. "Another girl, just like your telegram said!" he lamented when Mrs. Loggerman handed her husband the new baby that had arrived unexpectedly in Saint John.

"Now we have six girls," he continued. "How am I to run a sawmill with girls? Six boys would have been more practical. But I almost expected it when I heard in your telegram. Such is my luck." He then looked at Abbi. "So this is the girl who will help us?"

"Her name is Abbi." Mrs. Loggerman replied as she and Abbi climbed out of the wagon. "She is of Indian origins, but has been raised in a regular family so she looks more Indian than she acts,"

"My natural mother was Indian, from *Gitche Gumee*," declared Abbi proudly.

"From where?" asked Mr. Loggerman.

"That's the Indian name for Lake Superior, in the language of the Ojibwa in those parts. Mrs. Loggerman said there are Indians hereabouts in the interior of New Brunswick. What tribe are the Indians here?"

Mr. Loggerman was surprised at her bold manner, but he replied. "They are Maliseet. Sometimes some men work for me in the logging camp or here."

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“Then I should acknowledge the fact that I am from another tribe, and hope they will accept me as a guest from the western branch of the Algie people.” Abbi had since Jenine had told her about being Native Indian, by now thoroughly embraced her newly discovered identity as an Indian.

Mr. Loggerman didn’t know what to make of this bold girl who spoke like someone older, so Mrs. Loggerman intervened by returning to the matter at hand. “She was adopted by Madam Woodrow’s son when she was a baby, and she will return to her family in a while, but for now she will assist us to look after our girls and we will raise her some in return.”

“Well, of course we would not wish to adopt any girl,” Mr. Loggerman said sarcastically. “Six girls is already too much!”

“Exactly what I told Jenine, Abbi’s adoptive mother,” replied Mrs. Loggerman, “when she looked like her mother-in-law Madam Woodrow of the company was giving her to us! Abbi will certainly be moving back when I get matters well in hand. But in the meantime I will now have some welcome help and companionship around here, and someone who will not depart within weeks of arriving like the past hired women. Right, Abbi?”

Abbi said nothing as she wondered silently what was driving hired household help away from here.

Just then, a large matronly woman came out of the house with a one year old in one arm. She was followed by four other children between the ages of two and four stumbling along on their unsteady feet. This, Abbi presumed, was the nanny that Audora Woodrow had hired from Fredericton to look after the existing babies while Martha Loggerman made the trip down to Saint John. She was a big woman and seemed to handle all five at once without difficulty. How was the still-small Abbi to manage?

“Here are your five precious children,” said the large nanny. “All happy and healthy. And I presume here is the new baby the telegraph spoke of who arrived unexpectedly. Doesn’t she look so precious? Now you have six children all under five years old, and all girls.”

“I’m so sorry, Hilda,” said Martha Loggerman, “that this new baby chose to arrive in the city, and that I was

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delayed coming back, and that you had to stay longer than expected. But I'm sure the Woodrow Company will pay you well for the extra time you had to spend here while I was gone."

"I really would like to return to Fredericton now, madam, where I normally work, if I can," replied Hilda. "And right away, ma'am. I've noted the train schedule and there will be a Fredericton-bound return train in an hour. I'm sorry Mrs. Loggerman, but the mosquitoes here have been eating me alive. I'm not accustomed to it. I'm also greatly afraid of bears. I awaken at night to any unusual sound. Please let me return immediately. Please, madam."

It didn't sound very promising to Abbi, if nannies did not care to stay here very long, and were afraid of bears. Abbi felt a mosquito bite her and swatted it to mush. It left a red splash on her forearm.

"Very well, let's put the new baby into a crib and you can then get your belongings together to leave. Jeffrey will hold the wagon here to take you to town so as to meet up with the return train. I and Abbi will take it onward from here, won't we Abbi?"

"Yes, Mrs. Loggerman," replied Abbi, however not feeling very optimistic about life in this place.

"Well I must be getting back to my work at the sawmill," said Mr. Loggerman, handing the new baby back to his wife. He then walked briskly down the rutted laneway to the sawmill in the distance beside the river.

As Abbi and the women went inside the log house, Abbi noticed the broad verandah area, a place where one could sit and look down over the cleared area out in front, and even see the sparkle of the waters of the river in the distance. She could imagine Mrs. Loggerman sitting there on the verandah on summer afternoons looking after her children in cribs and playpens all around her; or Mr. Loggerman sitting there smoking a pipe and enjoying a conversation with a visiting neighbour on a Sunday afternoon when there was no work to be done. She continued inside.

Inside, Nanny Hilda put two of the babies in a crib in the living room and commanded the little toddlers to sit down and behave, and then she disappeared up a staircase, to fetch her belongings. Standing inside the door, Abbi was

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unsure what she should do, so she just stood around holding her large travel bag of belongings. Her trunk, as well as Mrs. Loggerman's luggage, as well as a box of provisions from the Pinewood store, had been left by Jeffrey on the verandah for the moment. Jeffrey was now turning the wagon around for the trip back to Pinewood with Hilda.

Abbi watched Mrs. Loggerman put the new baby into a second crib. These cribs were made of pine and were quite home-made in appearance, designed with rockers, so they could be easily rocked to put babies to sleep.

Mrs. Loggerman then said to Abbi, "After I have shown you the house, Abbi, where you will sleep, and so on, I'll let you roam around the area a little, so you can learn more about our situation here. The river and the sawmill are over there in the distance. You can hear the river, and the sound of the saw."

"Yes, Mrs. Loggerman," said Abbi. She was curious about the area outside, but for the moment she explored the interior of this house with her eyes. The unpainted logs and lumber made the atmosphere very rustic. It was rough and primitive compared to what she had experienced in her past.

Central to the main room was a large fireplace built out of local rocks, which were certainly plentiful in this rocky location. In city and even many farm houses, heat was distributed by ducts, or by pipes of hot water and radiators; but there was nothing like that here in this log house. To allow the heat to distribute itself easily throughout, the interior was not greatly subdivided. Only rooms at the ends, used for storage, and therefore not needing heating, were separated from the main area that held the fireplace. The kitchen, dining and living room areas were thus not divided by walls, and it was not very clear where one area began and the other left off.

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There were no books, no bookcases. That meant the Loggermans were not very literate. There was no stuffed beaver, but there was a moose head high up on the wall. She studied it as she had never seen such a thing before. “Is that a moose head?” Abbi asked. “I don’t like it that it is only a head, even if it isn’t living. It should be whole.” To her it was creepy to think that a moose could be separated from its body even if stuffed. She had loved to talk to Amik, the stuffed beaver that was on her adoptive Papa’s desk, but she would not talk to *that* strange thing!

“Yes,” replied Mrs. Loggerman, “The men around here like to hunt, and I suppose the moose head is proof they got such a large one. But, you’ll never see Indians with a moose head on the wall.”

“Why?”

“Because I am told the moose’s snout is delicious. They’d rather eat it. But I’ve never tasted it myself.”

“It is?” This was something Abbi had never heard before.

“According to Mr. Loggerman, they use every part out of respect for the animal.”

Abbi could not see any furniture that would have been finely made by a furniture-maker. Everything was constructed by hand in quite rough fashion probably by Mr. Loggerman himself or one of his workers. She noticed a

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large table that was obviously used for eating; wooden chairs for the table; the cribs, playpens, and high chairs for use by her children—all seemed to look home-made. But still, all that wood was broken up by colourful blankets and rugs and drapes. Abbi imagined that none of these were purchased, but that Mrs. Loggerman had made them all herself from raw materials.

Seeing Abbi admiring her rugs and wall hangings, Mrs. Loggerman said: “I have a loom. I like to make rugs, drapes and wall hangings when I have the time. They brighten the place, don’t you think?”

Abbi continued observing. The ceiling was of flat boards sitting on top of beams, and that meant there was an upper floor. Of course there was: there were stairs leading upward. That was where the big woman had gone a moment ago. The sleeping areas were obviously upstairs under the slope of the roof, a situation that was familiar to Abbi, since that was in her life generally where bedrooms were located, to take advantage of the fact that heat rises, so that sleepers are warm during cold nights.

“Take your bag upstairs, Abbi,” said Mrs. Loggerman. “Hilda is there now collecting her belongings together. She will show you where you will be. Your bed will be at the far end. Mr. Loggerman and I occupy the room at the other end. Between us in the middle are the cribs and beds of all the babies. That way both you or I can attend to them in the night as needed, you from one end I from the other. With both of us attending to them, it should be fine, eh Abbi?”

“Yes, Mrs. Loggerman.”

Abbi went up the roughly constructed stairs to the sleeping area. It was as Mrs. Loggerman had said, one large floor with dividing walls creating three rooms – a room at one end and the other, and the cribs and playpens for the babies in the central area.

Hilda wasn’t particularly interested in explaining things to Abbi. She wanted to get out of there as quickly as possible. Thus Abbi just watched her pack her two small suitcases; and when she was done, Abbi left her travel bag there, and followed Hilda back down, who carried her two suitcases, one on each arm, with ease.

“Good-bye, Mrs. Loggerman,” said Hilda when she

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reached the bottom of the stairs. "It has been a pleasure taking care of your babies for this while. But I must hasten if I am to make the train station in Pinewood in time. Although it is three miles, the road through the forest is quite rough and it will take some time even to travel three miles. It would be best to arrive at the station ahead of time rather than too late."

"Thank you again, Hilda, for all your help," said Mrs. Loggerman. "I fully understand your haste. You didn't expect having to stay longer—for the additional few days I was resting from giving birth."

"Goodbye Mrs. Loggerman."

With that the big woman left, and then Mrs. Loggerman said to Abbi: "Can you see my difficulty, Abbi? Every household assistant hired for me by Madam Woodrow in the last two years has left in haste. Lord knows what it is that makes them wish to leave. But then, I'm completely used to living in the wilderness. I grew up in this area. For them it is all new and strange. Yes I was a little girl in this area. In fact, that sawmill was started by my father. I inherited it, or at least the half my father owned. The Woodrow company owns the other half. I married Mr. Loggerman so he would manage it."

"I suppose the longer a person stays here, the more used to it they get," said Abbi, as she slapped another mosquito. There were mosquitoes indoors. Luckily, the Loggermans appeared to have plenty of loose woven material that served as netting, to drape over cribs and playpens, to keep mosquitoes off the children.

Mrs. Loggerman fetched the box of provisions from the verandah and carried it to the large pine table. "Oh how I missed this kitchen while I was away," she said. "I haven't made supper myself for a week now! And oh how I missed my two older ones, the ones who can already walk around and talk. Come to me my little dears." She invited the two oldest girls, 3 and 4, to come towards her and hugged them. "How are you my little dears? Did you miss your mama?"

There was crying going on from one of the cribs.

"Oh, Abbi, can you help me get the youngest babies to stop crying? Isn't that a nice crib? You can rock it. Mr. Loggerman made it himself when I had my earlier babies."

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Abbi rocked the cribs as she continued to inspect her new environment. The babies in the cribs were dressed in white shirts and had small white caps on their heads.

"Where is Jeffrey going?" asked Mrs. Loggerman's four-year old from her mother.

"Jeffrey is taking Hilda to the station, Cutsie. And this girl is Abbi. She will be helping instead."

"I want something to drink," said the other older girl.

"In a moment, Toddles."

The new baby in the crib started to cry again in spite of Abbi's rocking the crib, and Mrs. Loggerman went over to sooth it, taking her into her arms.

"Is that their names? Cutsie and Toddles?" Abbi wondered.

"Oh, I haven't settled on names yet. Haven't had the time. It's terrible isn't it, Abbi? But I've got so used to using nicknames. One is 'Cutsie', another is 'the Toddler', another girl is 'Blue Eyes'. It hasn't created much difficulty. But I suppose I should settle on some proper names soon, especially for the older ones. I dare say they will want to know their names when they are talkers. Who'd want to be nameless? And these two, who are 3 and 4 are talking more and more."

Abbi had never heard of anyone taking so much time naming their babies. She had an idea.

"Oh, can I name them, Mrs. Loggerman? I can help you out giving them all names that seem suitable to them. Papa said once that was the principle when Indians named their infants. The mother would wait until she had an inspiration, or a dream. But my mother, the real one I never knew, only called me 'Abbi', which means 'baby'. I wonder if she had an interesting Indian name picked out for me yet. Indians don't need to find a name right away."

"Oh I'm sure you have a proper Indian name too, Abbi!" replied Mrs. Loggerman, as she put her baby back in her crib and returned to the kitchen area to empty the contents of the box of provisions and put the items in their places on shelves and in cupboards. "Well *certainly* you can help me name my girls. Lord knows I'd only give them whatever ordinary girl's name pops into my head and that's not right. I fully agree. The Indian way seems wise."

"I'll name them all as time goes on, according to what I

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observe about their appearance and character, or if I get insight in a dream,” offered Abbi. “It’s not wise to rush it.”

Martha Loggerman was anxious to reacquaint herself with her home and did not need Abbi for that end; so she said to Abbi: “Never mind helping me out right now. I think the first thing you should do is look around the property, become familiar with where you are. It is now summer and the sun remains up quite late, and everything around here continues on later, so there is still lots of time for you to investigate this place before the sun sets.”

Indeed, here people rose and went to bed with the rise and fall of the sun. In summer, when days were long, work might go till 7 o’clock and suppertime might be 8 or later.

“Perhaps you need to use the facilities,” suggested Mrs. Loggerman. “It must be hours since you have been able to use any facilities other than the awful one on the train. It is in any event good to know where the outhouse is. To reach it you just follow the path at the back door. Then when you’re done, feel free to wander around a little, like I said, and familiarize yourself with where you are, the location of the sawmill, the river, and the yard. I have been trying to grow vegetables between the rocks. And there is a cow too somewhere, wandering between the rocks and in the marsh meadow looking for grass. I obtained the cow so as to have plenty of milk for the babies. There are also some chickens running around, for eggs. And then when you’ve had enough of what is around here, you can follow some paths and look at the beautiful nature we have around here. Just be very careful not to have an accident. Alright?”

“Alright,” Abbi replied.

The prospect of exploring a new place lifted her spirits a little and chased away her current worries about whether she would like living here given that nannies always left soon after arriving. It was also a relief to be able to walk around after so many hours sitting on a train.

She went out the back door, as directed. She noticed all the diapers hanging on clothes lines. Hilda must have hung them there. She could imagine herself doing a great deal of diaper washing in the days to come. She followed the path to a very, very, used outhouse. She *did* have to ‘go’, and had already wondered for a half hour how people ‘went’

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here in the wilderness, while she held it in. What facilities did wilderness people use? An outhouse of course! Outhouses or privies were common among rural people. They had even had one in Littleton. But this one was decidedly plain and primitive in nature. She opened the creaking door, held her nose for a moment, and then settled down on the bench.

She looked around, her eyes wandering around the interior. Light shone through the cracks in the boards. At this moment all was quiet except for the special whispering sound of wind in pines, an occasional bird call here and there, and in the distance the faint rush of water. But then the natural sounds were punctuated by the sound of sawing or of winches, every time a log was turned into boards.

She now took this opportunity to take stock of her situation. How quickly her life could change, she thought. Just this morning she was in Saint John saying goodbye to Mama, and now she was in a strange place in the wilderness. There was a fly or two buzzing around. "Flies," she said. "I suppose you enjoy the smell here. I don't; but frankly I can tolerate the smell just to get a few minutes of peace and quiet. If you must know, Mr. Fly, an awful lot has happened to me in the past few weeks. First because my Papa has vanished, maybe drowned, we had to move out of our home in Fredericton. Then I was told that my Mama and Papa are not my natural parents, and that I was adopted when I was four months old, and that I was Indian—at least, half-Indian. Then Grandmama Audora took charge of everything, and decided the fate of everyone. She decided I should come here. She acted as if she was giving me special treatment for my own good, when she really wanted to get rid of me because I was not 'kin', and maybe also because I am Indian. Then finally today came the long train ride from Saint John to Fredericton and then from Fredericton to Pinewood. After Fredericton it was not by the regular fast train, but a slow lumber freight train. And finally the bumpy wagon ride from Pinewood to here. I have been traveling from early morning until now; and now I'm here. And guess what? The house is full of baby girls under the age of five. I regret ever complaining to Mama about her producing only

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boys, before finally she had a girl. Do you think God is punishing me? I can understand why Mrs. Loggerman needs help. I suppose a woman only needs help when she has her babies all in a row, since, if she spreads out the children over more years, the older ones can look after the younger ones more. If I ever have babies I will put two or three years between each, Mr. Fly. Well, I guess I'll just have to make the best of it. I'll bet you've never heard of anything like this before, Mr. Fly. But then flies have their own problems, like avoiding getting swallowed by a toad."

"Buzzz" said the fly.

She noticed there was an old Fredericton newspaper on the bench beside her, many pages ripped away. "Oh," she remarked. "Someone here reads.... But I saw no bookshelves in the house..." With the front headlines ripped away, she caught sight of some advertisements and small articles.

She sighed. It was time to resume life, and meet its challenges head-on. It would do no good hiding from them, even if for a couple of minutes in an outhouse.

"As much as I'd like staying here forever, in the dim solitude of this outhouse, to escape all my problems, I guess I'll have to leave so that Mrs. Loggerman doesn't imagine I have some digestive malady."

Brightening her spirit was the prospect of exploring the area, that still lay before her. She jumped off the outhouse seat, pulled up her drawers, straightened her dress, opened the creaky old door of the outhouse and resumed her exploration. She decided to go in the direction of the whining saw blade of the sawmill.

She saw as she got away from the house, how the house was situated at the top of a wide ridge of rock where only grasses and bushes could grow. Perched on this ridge, the house looked down towards the river where once there had been trees, but also a marsh, now dried up, except there seemed to be a pond further away. That was what was in front of the house. Behind the house there was a wall of fir trees that enclosed a back yard. There had not been any reason to cut down any more trees or clear away the stumps since farming was not possible. The trees behind, at least served as a windbreak in the winter. They now blocked the afternoon sun and much of the place

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was in shadow. She imagined that mornings here, on the other hand, would be bright and sunny, since the house was facing towards the east.

As she continued exploring the area near the house, she saw that Mrs. Loggerman had endeavoured to create a vegetable garden in one place, at a place that had more soil than normal. She also saw some chickens wandering about.

“Here chicken! Here chicken!” she called. They did not respond in any way and kept on strutting around and pecking at grain scattered on the ground. “I suppose your job here is to lay eggs, isn’t it?”

The yard was quite disorderly, with pieces of lumber, woodpiles, rusting equipment, wheel barrows, tubs, and what have you, seemingly strewn about; although, Abbi imagined that to the Loggermans everything was in its place.

She continued wandering about studying whatever caught her eye, and gradually made her way towards the sawmill, its assorted buildings, piles of logs, stacks of lumber and wood refuse.

She was drawn towards the sound of the saw, and men’s voices. The sawmill building stood beside the river. The river rushed past, tumbling over rocks; but on this side where the sawmill was, the tumbling water was diverted to a waterwheel. Some of the water was directed by chutes to fall over the waterwheel and turn the wheel.

Abbi already knew about how water was used to turn the mills that ground grain into flour, from having observed the grain mill in Littleton. In this case, through wooden gears and leather belts, this turning would be moving a large saw inside.

Abbi saw above the mill that there were logs still in the water, captured to a broad pond-like area next to the sawmill; and they were held by ropes. But most logs were on the shore next to it in piles waiting to be sawn into boards. There were a great number of such logs along the banks beside the shore above the sawmill.

Away from the tumbling water, in the downstream direction, there were great stacks of sawn lumber across the clearing from the sawmill, at the beginning of the rutted laneway. There were tarpaulins covering some of

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the stacks to keep rain off when it rained. There was a wagon there, loaded with lumber, ready to be taken away



Abbi opened a door and peered inside the building from where the sounds of the saw were coming from. She saw a handful of men at work guiding logs into a large saw blade, and removing the resulting rough lumber.

Mr. Loggerman saw the girl.

“Abbi!” shouted Mr. Loggerman. “You shouldn’t wander around in here unattended. It’s dangerous!”

“I’m sorry, Mr. Loggerman,” said Abbi as Mr. Loggerman came towards her. “Mrs. Loggerman said I should familiarize myself with my new surroundings. I was just wondering where all the saw noise was coming from.” Abbi observed the awesome large saw that cut the logs into rough lumber. A long leather belt came to it, bringing the energy of the waterwheel inside.

Mr. Loggerman led her outside, away from the work area, where it was also quieter and easier to talk.

“Forgive me, Mr. Loggerman,” said Abbi. “My curiosity was getting the best of me. I was drawn to the sound of the saw and the river. I love rivers. Are there fish in there? Do you have to turn all those logs in the great big piles into lumber? Mrs. Loggerman said you also have a cow. I would love to see the cow. Where is it?”

“Miss Abbi, you are asking too many questions all at once. Yes, there are fish – trout especially, but also salmon come up the river from spring through summer.”

“My Papa said in the olden days Indians used to catch

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salmon in weirs and with torches at night. He knows a great deal about Indians.”

“That’s correct. They still do sometimes. As for your second question – yes, we will spend all summer turning the logs we have hauled onto the shore into rough lumber. As for the last question: the cow could be anywhere in the clearing. We let Annabelle wander among the rocks to look for grass. There isn’t much, so we also have to purchase hay or oats for the cow and the horses and some grain for the chickens. There is little good soil for anything else, other than what Mrs. Loggerman tries to grow in her garden which has been fertilized and improved with manure. By the way, those two horses you see grazing over here are not ours. They belong to one of my workers. The other three workers come with him from Pinewood in the morning and return at night.”

“We were brought by Jeffery. Jeffery has taken the wagon with the horses back into town to take the nanny to the railway station. Who is Jeffrey?” Abbi wondered.

“Jeffrey is our all around hired hand. He was once quite a woodsman and logger, but is now in his 60’s and can’t do such work any longer. He lives by himself in a cabin behind the barn over there. He tends to the animals, and many other things pertaining to the household. But he also assists me with the business because he reads and writes much better than I do. You need not concern yourself with the animals anyway, Abbi. That will be left to old Jeffrey. But Mrs. Loggerman will have you fetch eggs from the chickens and milk the cow. That’s work that is connected to housekeeping.”

“I like animals,” Abbi replied. “I look forward to collecting eggs and milking Annabelle. We didn’t have animals at Fredericton. We hired a horse and wagon from the livery whenever it was needed. But earlier in Littleton my aunt Gwendoline—I mean my *adoptive* aunt, since I recently learned I was adopted—had horses and cows and chickens. I saw them when I visited and we got eggs and milk from them, and Mama gave her vegetables from our garden.... I’d very much appreciate it if you could summarize what you do here, Mr. Loggerman. Otherwise I will always be wondering what is going on here when I hear the saw cutting the logs. It would be hard to ignore

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the sound. I know a little about turning logs into lumber, on account Fredericton has large sawmills, and some children of the mill workers explained the process in a school project. I expect you do the same here, but on a much smaller scale.”

Mr. Loggerman thought it might be good to give Abbi a brief explanation, so he agreed. “It’s all very simple,” he explained. As he talked, he led Abbi about, gesturing and pointing as needed. “It is basically the same as at a large sawmill, but on a small scale, as you said. Everything is smaller, including this river, which is more like a large brook, because it is only a subsidiary flowing into Loggers River which flows into the Saint John River. We call this Sawmill Brook or Sawmill Creek.”

“Mrs. Loggerman said that the new railway has made it much easier to send lumber to Madam Woodrow’s company in Saint John.”

“That’s correct. Before the railway, we had to send out boards south by river, on barges. Now we only need to take them to the railway station and load them onto freight cars. When the train comes, our freight cars and those of other businesses are connected to the train and the train takes them away. The best way would be if we had a rail spur to here, and we could load up the freight cars directly, but we are a little too far away.”

“You are very good at explaining things to someone. I suppose that is why you manage things here. Does the sawmill operate in the winter too?”

“No, we close down for the winter. All the men go upriver to the logging camps to cut down trees for the next year and take the logs to the river.”

“How do you do that? Isn’t the water frozen?”

“Horses drag the logs onto the ice, the frozen river, and in spring when ice goes they will be in the water. We guide them down the river and capture them here, just above the drop so they don’t continue down the river, and pull the logs out of the water with winches. Then, from spring to fall we saw them into rough lumber like I just explained. That is the whole cycle. The wood goes to various customers, as well as to Madam Woodrow’s company in Saint John. The rough lumber is made by her company into finished lumber, moldings, and so on, for building

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construction in the cities. That's why Madam Woodrow still has a half interest, and we continue to saw lumber for her company, she can order special wood from us, particularly cabinet wood that takes special handling."

"Thank you, Mr. Loggerman," she said. "You have been very thorough in explaining it all to me. The water looks very, very, clean; cleaner than the water of Littleton Brook where I first lived."

"Yes, moving water coming down from the higher rocky land is very clean, and tastes good. We do not have a well. We take all our water directly from the river. For lunchtime our men only bring their biscuits and such. We fetch our water directly from the river."

"The water is good enough to drink?"

"There is no need to boil it into tea, as with water elsewhere. But, the water from down there in the marsh would probably need to be boiled into tea before drinking. The Indians always made tea when the water did not look or smell too well."

"I am very interested in Indians," said Abbi, "since I recently discovered I am one myself. Mrs. Loggerman says that tomorrow she will start employing me in her many chores. I'm sure I will have much to learn from her too. I'm sorry I am keeping you away from your work. Perhaps I have taken up too much of your time and should continue my explorations."

"Well, until you become familiar with the grounds, be careful. We wouldn't want you to get hurt on your very first day here."

"Yes, Mr. Loggerman," said Abbi as she ran off to determine where she would explore next.

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Further Explorations

DISCOVERING WHERE SHE IS

Abbi returned to the house for ideas where else to explore.

“Mrs. Loggerman, I would like to explore the nature beyond the property now. Where do you suggest I go? What is to be found beyond the sawmill and the clearing?”

Mrs. Loggerman was happily making supper and having her little girls all around her and was pleased to help Abbi get to know the area. “Well you could follow paths that go along the river. The nature varies greatly as you walk. Upriver the river comes tumbling down through a very rocky ravine; while below the sawmill the river flows more slowly and there is a marshy area on this side. That is because beavers have dammed a small creek that runs into the river and . . .”

“Beavers!” shouted Abbi. “You told me about it earlier! I love beavers! I would love to see a real live beaver!”

“Well, Abbi, if you sit and wait in the area, you may catch sight of one. You will certainly hear them though. If they are surprised by you, they will slap their tails on the water to warn all the other beavers.”

“I must go there first,” exclaimed Abbi. “I must explore downriver before I explore upriver. I am so thrilled to explore, Mrs. Loggerman. I have never experienced a true wilderness before. I must get to know the whole area before I begin work here, or else I will forever wonder what is all around here.”

Abbi was now back in good spirits after initially having reservations about this place. Her only previous encounter with nature had been in Littleton when her Papa had taken her along to explore the Littleton Brook valley and catch trout. She couldn’t wait to explore this place!

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“Well, there is a path you can follow. Mind you be careful. When by yourself you must be double careful against having an accident. Getting lost is no danger, however. If you don’t know where you are, just go in the direction of the sounds of the sawmill – until the workers go home of course and the saw is quiet. But that won’t be for about another hour yet, at 7 o’clock. They work later during summer – and we pay them more money of course.”

Abbi did not wait a moment longer. She ran back out the door and down the slope of the rocky clearing towards the river again. When reaching the river she walked downstream along the bank until a path became clear, and then began to follow it, the flowing water to her left. The water was not tumbling now like underneath the sawmill drop, but smooth. Before long she saw a wondrous sight – a beaver dam. It was as Mrs. Loggerman had said, damming a small creek entering the big one, and causing the area above it to be flooded. Abbi saw what looked like a beaver lodge in the middle of the wide pond it created. Her heart pounded. At any moment she might see a real live *amik*, not merely a stuffed one. She continued very quietly. The ground was damp, but it was solid as long as she followed the path. She saw evidence of the beaver’s work – stumps with pointed ends, where they had toppled trees. There was no sign of the beavers. It was a very large flooded area, though, and they could be anywhere.

Abbi came to the beginning of the dam. She marveled at it – a mass of branches mixed with mud. Beavers are smart too about where they will build it. They look for the narrowest depression so that the dam they build can be as short as possible.

Below the dam, the drop was a whole four feet. She attempted to walk along the top. She wanted to get closer to the lodge.

The first part was solid and overgrown with grasses, but the middle part seemed like it had been repaired often. Suddenly she slipped and she broke some of the dam at the top and water began to flow through the break like a tiny waterfall. She herself slipped down the four feet into the wet mud and grass below. She pulled herself from the mud and climbed back up the dam to see what she had done.

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“Oh I’m sorry, beavers! I’m sorry! I’ve broken your dam!”

She felt badly. She thought she should repair it. She put the twigs and branches back, but she needed mud to create the seal. She climbed down below the dam, and began to gather mud with her hands, which she then added to the sticks. It wasn’t an easy task. Obviously the beavers had much better knowledge as to technique. How to add mud so the water does not right away wash the mud away?

“I need more solid material,” she said to herself, “and I must put it above the branches. I’ll figure it out. . .”

By trial and error she discovered a technique, but it took a good half hour to repair only a small break at the top of the dam. Of course the beavers would have repaired it themselves had she left it alone, but she felt responsible and it felt better to do the repair herself. When done, she stood up, her face, hands, feet, and dress all covered in mud.

“Where are you, beavers?” she called. There wasn’t a sound. “I suppose you are wondering what creature I am who is breaking and then repairing your dam. I suppose I’ve frightened you. I will go now and leave you alone. Please don’t be mad at me for breaking the dam. I hope I fixed it properly and you don’t have to redo my work.”

Abbi, thus decided not to continue along the dam to the other side and instead began her journey back. Being over the anticipation of seeing beavers, she was now aware of

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other animals. She saw birds and became aware of their song. She looked down into the water of the river and saw some kind of minnow swimming there. She heard a frog croak. Insects were buzzing all around, especially the mosquitoes she had to swat from time to time. She saw wildflowers she had never seen before. She noticed lily pads out in the water, and their yellow flower. She paused here and there to look and listen.

Soon she was back at the clearing with all the buildings, the sawmill, waterwheel, and free water tumbling over the rock dam beside it. She stopped to observe the situation again from below. On the side where the sawmill was built, the side with the waterwheel, an actual wall had been built using logs, in order to guide the water in an orderly way over the waterwheel and down into a pool below. She watched the waterwheel turning. The sawing sound indicated the work was still going on inside the sawmill, since it was still light outside.

“But it will start to become dark in an hour or so,” said Abbi to herself. “I must hurry and explore!”

Recalling that Mrs. Loggerman had said that there was a path also going upriver, and that upriver was also interesting, with rocks and tumbling water, Abbi went behind the sawmill to look for the beginning of this other path. She first went past enormous piles of pieces of wood – refuse from the sawing.

“I suspect they will use that for firewood in the winter,” Abbi thought. She learned later that hardwood refuse could also be sold at Pinewood to the railway company to use instead of coal for its locomotive.

Then she came to the small barn they had. There was a cabin attached to the back of it.

“That must be where they keep Annabelle and the horses and the wagon,” said Abbi to herself. “And that cabin must be where old Jeffrey lives.”

Curiosity drew her to the barn. She carefully opened the door and peered inside. It was a barn alright. There was plenty of hay strewn about. But there was nothing inside – no cow, no horses, no wagon.

“It’s empty,” Abbi said to herself. “Oh yes, Jeffrey took the wagon with Hilda to the station. It probably takes an hour to go to Pinewood and come back. Perhaps the train

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was late too and he waited for Hilda to get on board before heading back. I'll have to visit the horses later. But where is the cow? I suppose she is eating grass in the clearing away from the river, where I haven't been. I will see her soon enough when Mrs. Loggerman has me milk her."

It was a good thing that there wasn't anyone or any animal to see her. She might have frightened them, for the episode with the beaver dam, with all the mud, did not leave her looking too attractive.

She closed the barn door, continued behind the barn and found the beginning of the path. As she progressed along the well worn trail, the elevation rose, the ground became very rocky, and the trees became sparse.

"This path cannot be following the river," she thought, "but rising up beside it on a ridge. I can hear the water rushing to my right down in the valley. Mrs. Loggerman did say that the river is rough and tumbling for a while."

There were enormous dead stumps signifying that once earlier the area had had large trees but they had been cut down. The smaller trees were new growth. Soon she was on a ridge of nearly barren rock, overlooking a valley. The slanting rays of the low late afternoon sun, lit up the rocks and trees on the opposite side of the valley. It was beautiful.

"The river must be down there," she thought. "I can hear it even though I can't see it. I want to see what it looks like. Maybe I can climb down to its edge."

She decided to do so. The rocky slope was not all that steep for climbing down. It had few trees but plenty of bushes. Soon she was beside rushing water that made much noise. Looking upstream she saw even whiter water.

"I don't think Mrs. Loggerman would approve if she knew I was here. This looks dangerous. What would happen to me if I fall in? But this would be a wonderful place to fish. I think there must be salmon and trout in here."

Climbing from rock to rock along the shore, she came to a place where there was once again a large drop. The water poured over in many cascades, like many small falls.

"This would have been another location where the sawmill could have been situated. There is already a large drop. But a sawmill here would have ruined the beauty of

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it. I have never seen anything so beautiful. It's like many waterfalls. I will call this 'The Place of Many Waterfalls'. I wish I spoke Indian, then I would know how to name it in Indian. All I know is that in Mr. Longfellow's poem, *Minnehaha* is Hiawatha's beloved's name and means 'laughing water' in the Dacotah language. I can call this *Minnehaha*, but because there are many waterfalls, perhaps I should call it *Minnehahahaha*. It is a happy place."

Her recent discovery that she was Indian, or at least that her natural mother had been Indian, had had a great impact on her. Suddenly everything she had learned so far from Bradden about Indians, particularly information within the stories from Henry Schoolcraft's writing, or presented in Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*, became very important to her. They were no longer interesting stories to be viewed from the outside like a spectator does. Now she wanted to identify with the characters in those stories. She was one of them!

Abbi inspected the location more closely. As in the case of many places with cascading water, the water tended to rush mainly in the middle. At the sides there could be pools where water lingered before joining the flow. Abbi stopped to look at a small waterfall on her side of the river that dropped into a lovely pool.

"Oh I am so hot and thirsty from all this walking," she said. "I want to drink some water. Mr. Loggerman said the water from this river is very clean and good to drink."

So she crouched on a rock beside the pool, and began to scoop up water with her hand and drink it. Since you can't get very much water at a time by hand, she had to scoop many times.

"I wonder if there are fish in here," she said between scoops. She tried to look down into the pool for fish. Suddenly a fish dashed and tried to bite her fingers as she scooped. It took her by surprise, she lost her balance and fell into the pool. As she stood up she was waist deep in water, and was quite annoyed.

"There *are* fish in here. Mr. Fish you must have thought my fingers were some kind of interesting worm. But look what you made me do. I fell in. Now I am all wet. But I don't mind. It's a hot summer day today, and that was

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refreshing. I'll dry out anyway in no time. But that was scary. What if the water had been rushing here? I'd have drowned for sure. Mrs. Loggerman would not be pleased in the least if she knew I went off the path to explore down here. I suppose I'd better go back on the path before I suffer another mishap."



Instead of going back up the way she had come, she decided to climb up the ridge at this spot.

After she had managed to climb above *Minnehahahahaha*, she saw that the water was smooth and flat, like it usually is before a falls. This location was not as dangerous, and it was quiet too.

"I really shouldn't be here by myself," she said to herself. "I can't tell Mr. or Mrs. Loggerman I was here. They'd be very angry. I have to find a good way to get up to the ridge now. Look, here is a path. Perhaps it is a path people use for fishing. It must lead up to the top"

She followed this path now. The noisy water was left behind. With the reduced sound of the water she found that the sound of her steps reverberated on the rock walls on both sides.

Climbing the rocky valley back up to the top of the ridge was certainly more difficult than coming down; but at least here there was a path of sorts. Here and there she found blueberry bushes growing between the rocks, with some blueberries on them. Where there was more soil she found blackberry bushes. She stopped to eat both.

"Blueberries! Blackberries!" she said. "Nourishment. I have quenched my thirst; now some food. I feel very much

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like an Indian. It's a good thing I know what blueberries and blackberries look like. Nobody should taste any berry they don't know – it could give them a stomach-ache, Mama always said.”

She put berries in her mouth, and then moved on as she ate. When she came upon another bush, she picked again and moved on. Then she came upon a bush absolutely brimming with blueberries. She picked them and put them in a pocket of her dress. She wished she had an apron or smock, which has many large pockets for putting things when doing household chores. She still had on the dress with which she came, which had only one pocket. Soon she had a whole two handfuls in the pocket. She continued on. By the time she was at the top she was exhausted. She found a large rock near the top and sat down on it to rest.

The view was extraordinary. From this ridge, which was mostly rock, she could see over the whole canyon through which the small river ran. Further downriver, near the sawmill and below, there wasn't any valley like this. There, the land became flatter and the river smoother and slower, as we saw before.



She remembered the berries she had just collected and figured this was a good time to eat them, while taking in the wonderful view.

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“There are so many blueberries and blackberries in this valley, that I think the valley could be called blueberry or blackberry valley – but blueberries are mostly where it is rocky and dry. Blackberries are everywhere else. I think it is the same on the other side of the valley.”

At this spot of the valley the distance between her and the rock cliff on the other side was quite large, and the river down at the bottom was smooth and quiet. The rough water sound and the sound of the sawmill were faint and to her right, some distance downriver. It was somewhat peaceful here. She wished someone had come with her she could talk to, to express what she thought and felt.

She noticed she had mud in her hair from the work on the beaver dam, and tried to remove it. She now had a moment to take stock of her appearance.

“I must look very dirty. Happily I fell in the river and some of it washed off.”

She heard a little girl’s voice say “Some of it washed off.”

“Who said that?” she exclaimed.

“WHO SAID THAT?” came the voice.

“Are you a spirit? Are you a *Manito*?” she said looking all around. She had learned all about the *manito*’s or nature spirits found in the beliefs of the Ojibwa from the legend stories in Henry Schoolcraft’s book that her adoptive Papa had read her when she was younger. Now that she knew she was Indian, she was inclined to believe in them.

“ARE YOU A *MANITO*?” came the voice in response. She realized that it was an echo, and was relieved. For a moment she had thought it was a real *Manito*.

Apparently if she spoke loudly enough, enough to go above the sound of the wind and the water, she could hear her voice echo. Since there was only a two second delay, she would only hear the last two seconds from when she stopped talking.

“Are you a spirit or an echo?” she said in a heightened voice.

“ . . . AN ECHO” came the voice.

“I thought you were a spirit, a *Manito*,” said Abbi.

“ . . . A *MANITO*” came the voice.

“Which is it? An echo or a *Manito*?” she asked.

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“ . . . A *MANITO*.” came the voice.

Of course, she would tend to hear a repetition of only the last part of any sentence she spoke. She was inspired to have some fun with that.

“I will call you the Great Spirit then which is called *Gitche Manito*. Are you *Gitche Manito*?”

“ . . . *GITCHE MANITO*?”

“Probably not. I imagine the Great Spirit would have a deep resonating voice. But your voice is high like a girl’s. I will imagine then you are girl spirit of about my age, a daughter of *Gitche Manito*.”

“ . . . DAUGHTER OF *GITCHE MANITO*”

She stood up and raised her arms towards the valley. “O, Girl Spirit of the Cliff, my name is Abbi, and I hail from *Gitche Gumee*, the mighty lake to the west the English call ‘Lake Superior’; and I bear greetings from the western tribe, as that is where I am from – well my mother anyway, according to Jenine my adoptive mother. I am honoured to have met you.”

“HONOURED TO HAVE MET YOU,” said the echo.

“I have had a most enjoyable time exploring this great land that you rule, starting with the beaver pond and ending at this very wonderful place.”

“ . . . WONDERFUL PLACE”

“I have drank from your river, O daughter of *Gitche Manito*, and eaten your blackberries and blueberries, and I thank you for all that you have to offer a little girl like me.”

“...GIRL LIKE ME.”

Abbi noted the sun was low, and she could not linger any longer, even though she felt she could stay in a place like this for hours.

“Oh, it is getting late. I think the sawmill sounds have stopped. It must be seven. Goodbye, Girl *Manito* of the Canyon. I will come again soon. Goodbye”

“COME AGAIN SOON. GOODBYE. ” said the echo with the little girl voice.

“I will,” said Abbi as she got up and began to hop over the rocks along the top of the ridge.

She knew she would enjoy having conversations with the echo whenever she came this way again. She wished she could call the echo something – a real Indian name –

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and not simply ‘daughter of *Gitche Manito*’.

She followed the top of the ridge, keeping the sound of the river or brook in the valley to her left. She climbed up, she climbed down, she hopped from one rock to another, she went under some pines, she went over lichens and mosses, she went through berry bushes. She saw blueberries and stopped only for an instant to pick some more. She came upon raspberries too, but they were old and there weren’t many. But mostly she came across blackberries – all very ripe at this time of year. Soon she came upon an extra large patch of blackberries, and she couldn’t resist stopping again to eat some of them.

“Oh I have not seen so many blackberries in all my life. The berry patches are everywhere along the ridge in this area, especially blackberries. If I could call the echo girl by something, I think I would call her, ‘Girl spirit of the Blackberry Ridges.’ But maybe that is too long. But alas I don’t know what it is in Indian. And it should be in the language of the Indians around here....” She popped blackberries in her mouth one after the other. She was hungry from the long journey up from Saint John.

As she did so she suddenly came upon a very large poop on the ground.



“What is this!” she exclaimed. “An enormous poop, and it is fresh! What kind of animal would do that? It’s bigger than one from the biggest horse on the street of

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Fredericton.” Then she saw the large track of a bear too.

“An enormous track! It must be a bear track!” she exclaimed. It was clear she could not linger about here. There was a bear in the area enjoying blackberries too!!

She hurried on her way, now with a quicker step. Soon she broke into a run. She found the path she had followed up from the sawmill area, and hurried along. She turned every once in a while to make sure there wasn’t any bear following her. With every passing moment she became more and more anxious that a bear was on her heels. When finally she came back to the clearing, she ran to the house, went inside and slammed the door, panting.

“What on earth has happened to you?” exclaimed Mrs. Loggerman. “You look an utter mess. Your hair is all over and you have mud in it, and your clothes seem wet, and also covered with mud, and you are sweating and panting.”

“I saw an enormous bear poop on the ridge where there is an especially large patch of blackberry bushes, and I hastened back as quickly as I could. I was afraid he was following me.”

“Did you see the bear?”

“No, but I saw tracks.”

“Thank goodness! I thought for an instant that you had been fighting the bear. That is what you look like.”

“No, Mrs. Loggerman. The mud is from my attempting to repair the beaver dam I accidentally damaged. It proved not to be as easy as I anticipated. And as for my clothes being wet, I fell in the pond underneath *Minnehahahahaha*.”

“*Minnehahahahaha*? What is that?”

“That is the place where there are many laughing waterfalls all side by side. That’s the name I gave it, after the name in *The Song of Hiawatha*. *Minnehaha* means ‘laughing waters’ and it can also be a woman’s name. I added a couple more *haha*’s because there were so many waterfalls there.”

“What! Did you go there? I expected you would only follow the trail. You shouldn’t go by yourself off the trail unless you are with someone or know where you are going very, very, well. Had you fallen into the rushing water, you would have drowned and I would have lost you the very day I got you. What sense is there in that I ask you? Where else did you go?”

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“I knew you would not approve where I went by myself Mrs. Loggerman. I wanted to keep it a secret, but it seems I am incapable of keeping any secret very well. When I am excited every thought in my head comes out. I continued above *Minnehahahaha* where the water is smooth and quiet for a while and saw a path that came down and went up it. I remembered you had told me to follow the path and expected that you would be angry since I had fallen in the pool underneath one of the *Minnehahahaha*'s. And then at the top I rested and ate the berries I had collected and discovered the place echoes well there, and I called to *Gitche Manito* but he turned out to be a girl, so I assumed she was a girl spirit of the cliff, and then I imagined you'd be worried where I was, and I continued back and stopped to eat some more blackberries and discovered the large poop a bear made – I guess from eating too many blackberries and blueberries – and then I almost ran all the way back expecting I might be chased by that bear because I invaded his personal berry patch and . . .” Abbi turned and opened the door a crack, looked out, and closed it again. Explaining this action, Abbi added: “I just wanted to make sure that I didn't draw the bear back here, Mrs. Loggerman.”

“Well, I hardly understood you at all just now. We'll sort it all out later. First thing is you have to get out of your wet clothes and wash off the mud. Hereabouts in summer, we make use of the river instead of fetching pails of water. Take a cake of soap and go to the bathing place – that's on this side before the little creek from the beaver dam and pond – and wash yourself and your clothes, and hang them to dry. Do you have other clothes in your trunk?”

“Yes, Mrs. Loggerman. I have one change of everything. I'm sorry for causing you some hardship right on the day I arrive, but I promise it will all go better when I am more familiar with everything here.”

“And wear an apron or smock over your dress, or else, before you know it, it will be covered with stains. Are those berry stains on your pocket?”

“Oh, I wasn't thinking, Mrs. Loggerman. I collected some berries. You are right. I'll wear an apron or smock from now on when I'm busy around here. That way, I'll

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spare my good dress from harm. And I'll wear my less-good dress too, so my good dress will be in good shape for traveling and special occasions."

"Well that is enough exploring for today. Tomorrow we will begin chores, and you will be able to explore only after chores are done."

"Yes Mrs. Loggerman. I will now clean myself up."

As she went to wash herself by the river, she saw the workers leaving in their wagon – several men came from Pinewood to work here, she learned later.

ABBI'S FIRST SUPPERTIME WITH LOGGERMANS

Abbi scrubbed herself clean, hung up her clothes, put on a fresh change of clothing in her room, including a smock with many large pockets for doing work, returned to Mrs. Loggerman, and actually asked if she could help in order to make amends for not staying on the path when exploring. "Well you can help with the children. You can help feed the oldest two. They can operate their spoons, but tend to make a mess. I will take care of the others, and of course I'll nurse the newborn later. She'll stay in her crib till she wakes up. So get the toddlers into their highchairs. My husband, Percy, Mr. Loggerman, is washing up now too, and will join us very soon and we'll all have supper. I have been preparing it while you have been exploring.

"What does Mr. Loggerman do after supper? Does he read? My Papa, my adoptive Papa, the one who they think drowned, used to read in his study."

"I'm afraid we around these parts don't read very well. We just sit around, and chat. On Sunday he likes to chat with old Jeffrey and smoke the pipe on the verandah. Jeffrey picks up gossip from when he goes to town, and Percy gets gossip from the workers, and they have gossip to share; and both have stories and tales from their past too. That is how time is spent. If you are tending to the children, you may find it entertaining to overhear their gossip and stories. They will not curse or be coarse if they know we are listening in, thankfully."

"I love to hear stories," said Abbi.

"Well you can tell us about your adventure breaking the

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beaver dam, falling into the pool of water, and running from the bear, during supper," said Mrs. Loggerman.

For meals, the smaller babies were put in the high chairs made from rough boards. They had been sandpapered a little to avoid the danger of the babies getting splinters in their behinds.

Mr. Loggerman soon arrived for supper and helped lift the smaller children into high chairs as Mrs. Loggerman brought the food to the table. The table was nice and large. There was plenty of room for lots of people to sit. Hanging above the table was a large oil lamp. He lit it because it was starting to become dark outside.

Abbi helped with getting the little girls settled down to free Mrs. Loggerman to serve the food to everyone. "We have made wooden plates and bowls and cups, Abbi," said Mrs. Loggerman. "That way the babies will not break them. Our proper china, for when adults come for tea, stay in the cabinet. So let us begin. Help yourself Abbi, and help the two older girls."

Mr. Loggerman was hungry from a long day of work, and could not wait to start into the potatoes and slices of meat. Actually it was salted and smoked moose meat.

"Mr. Loggerman and a couple friends got the moose last fall, and we preserved it with salt and smoking," explained Mrs. Loggerman. "This is the last of it. But come fall, the men will get more meat. Everyone in these parts gets as much meat as they can from the wilderness."

"Hmm," said Abbi, tasting it. "It does taste a little like corned beef. In the city beef is preserved in that way and then kept in a cool place until used."

She glanced at the moose head on the wall on the end of the living room wall and imagined she was eating an animal like that.

Soon the supper table conversation turned to what had gone on this day, from the journey by train to Abbi's adventure exploring. Mr. Loggerman wanted to know a little more about the new girl they had gotten to help his wife out.

Abbi explained how she had been raised by a family called Woodrows, and about the recent tragedy of the father having an accident and falling in the Saint John River from a railway bridge and not having been found, and

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how the rest of the family except herself had to move to live with Audora Woodrow in Richdale.

“I am keeping up hope that my adoptive Papa, Bradden Woodrow managed to escape the river and will eventually be found.”

Mrs. Loggerman changed the subject: “Abbi had quite the adventure today when exploring the area.” she said. “What did you say happened at the beaver dam, Abbi?”

“Well, Mr. and Mrs. Loggerman,” began Abbi, as she wiped the face of the toddler so far named Cutsie, who had gravy all over her face. “Here is what happened – I thought to walk along the beaver dam to get a closer look at their lodge, but when I came to the middle my foot slipped and the dam broke at the top part. I fell down into the mud below and the water gushed through the break. I thought I would fix the break, since I caused it. I wouldn’t want to leave a bad impression on the beavers on the first day. As a person from the tribe at *Gitche Gumee*, Mr. Loggerman, I call the beaver *amik*. But that is not the language hereabouts. You said when I came that the Indians hereabouts were Maliseet, a different tribe. Mr. Loggerman, what do the Maliseet Indians here call the beaver? What is their word for it? Among my people, as I said, he is called *amik*.”

“I think I’ve heard them call it *qapit*. Quite different.”

“I must bear that in mind, when talking to the beavers,” said Abbi, “in case they are more familiar with that name.”

“What do beavers care what you call them?” wondered Mrs. Loggerman.

Abbi had an answer: “Animals *do* get used to a name, Mrs. Loggerman. For example if you always call your cow ‘Annabelle’, after a while when you say ‘Annabelle’, the cow has a meaning for that when you say it. Wild animals are no different. If you call them by a name over and over, they become familiar with it. Therefore imagine beavers hereabouts always hearing Maliseet Indians saying *qapit* when they are around. Well, the beavers will become familiar with that name. So when someone else comes along and calls them something different, they will not understand. It is therefore important to speak the language of the area to animals, in case they are used to it, rather than your own. If I went to Lake Superior and saw a

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beaver, I would say *amik* there. Therefore when I go visit the beaver dam here, I must make a point to use Maliseet words, in case they have much experience talking to Maliseet Indians.”

“It sounds logical,” agreed Mr. Loggerman, but was more interested in buttering his slice of bread.

“Are there many Maliseet Indians close to here, Mr. Loggerman?”

“They help in the logging in winter,” replied Mr. Loggerman, between mouthfuls, “and in spring when the logs come down the river, we have several helping out here. Sometimes even in summer if we have plenty of logs to get done by fall. There is a village downriver. The government wants them to settle down and farm, but many still like to fish and hunt. The Maliseet people especially like to fish the rivers, to spear salmon at night by torchlight. Could you pass the potatoes, Abbi?”

Abbi did so.

“How nice to have your cooking again, Martha,” he said to Mrs. Loggerman. “The food the nanny made seemed a little, too....city-like.”

“Oh, Mr. Loggerman,” continued Abbi. “I would love to talk to the Indians who come here to work. I have never in my life even spoken to a real Indian, even though I am half-Indian, according to Mama – I mean Jenine Woodrow who raised me. Do they have birch bark canoes around here too?”

“Yes, and they make them not just for themselves, but sometimes to sell.”

“I would simply adore to once ride in a birch bark canoe, Mr. Loggerman,” said Abbi. “It means the Maliseet are not so different from my people. It is the Iroquois who are quite different. My adoptive Papa said the Iroquois lived in villages and were farmers. There is so much I want to know, now that I’ve learnt that my mother was an Indian from the Chippewa or Ojibwa tribe at Lake Superior. I can’t wait to read through all the books my Papa, my adoptive Papa, had; but most are still back in Richdale. I brought three with me and it will take me a while to go through them. They are intended for older people than me, although, people say I’m ahead for my age in reading.”

Meanwhile the three and four year olds Abbi was in

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charge of were getting more food on the floor than in their mouths

“Cutsie and Toddles, don’t throw your food on the floor!” said Abbi to them, using their temporary names.

“Abbi has offered to give them all names that suit them,” said Mrs. Loggerman to Mr. Loggerman. “I think it’s about time we started settling on names, the older ones are already speaking.”

“Indeed, some of the names we’ve been using are beginning to sound silly,” replied Mr. Loggerman.

“You seem to have a knack with our older girls, Abbi,” said Mrs. Loggerman as she observed Abbi tend to Cutsie and Toddles.

“Yes,” replied Abbi. “I have had practice with my younger brothers, my adoptive brothers, in the Woodrow family in which I grew up.”

“Well, I think you will do just fine with us, Abbi,” said Mrs. Loggerman, “and enjoy living around here. Every other woman who came here to assist me had no interest at all in exploring the nature around here. You remind me of myself when I was young. But continue describing your adventure.”

“After I repaired the beaver dam, I went upriver along the ridge. I was so tempted to see the river I climbed down, and came to where there are many small falls. I decided to call them *Minnehahaha* because in Longfellow’s poem *Minnehaha* means ‘laughing water’ but added two more ha’s because there are many laughing waters there.”

“I too loved to explore,” mused Mrs. Loggerman, “and we called the place with the many falls, simply *Pikkut-Koskit*, which means ‘many little falls’ in Finnish. Our father created names for places. Sadly I didn’t learn to speak his language very much because my mother spoke to her daughters in English. But our father taught us Finnish things. For example, he called little children *Pikku*. It means ‘little one’. Sometimes I like to call one of my little ones, *Pikku*. Everyone in this country has many origins. Tell Abbi what your origins are, Percy.”

“French, English, Irish, Scottish – all mixed up . . .” said Mr. Loggerman as he ate.

“Continue your story, Abbi,” said Mrs. Loggerman.

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“Well then I picked and ate some blueberries and blackberries and went back to the top where I sat on a rock and rested. Then I discovered the valley echoes, and I thought it was a *manito* – that is what nature spirits are called according to Papa. Because for me it speaks in a girl’s voice, I decided to call it ‘Daughter of *Gitche Manitou*’ that means ‘daughter of the Great Spirit’ because I imagine the Great Spirit himself would have a deep resounding voice. And then I discovered lots more blackberries. Oh, Mrs. Loggerman, there are so so many of them...!”

“Yes they get ripe about now. We should pick them for jam.”

“And then I thought a perfect name I could call the girl echo – instead of simply ‘daughter of the Great Spirit’ I would want to see her as the guardian of the valley, which is filled with blackberry bushes – except for where it is more sunny and rocky where the blueberries are. Mr. Loggerman, do you know what the Maliseet word is for ‘blackberry’?”

“I do. I have heard my Indian employees speak of their wives going to pick the blackberries. They call it something like *Saqteminimus*”

“*Saqteminimus*” repeated Abbi. “Oh, Mr. Loggerman, I really wanted to give the girl spirit an Indian name. That would be the perfect name since there are so many blackberries in the valley. I can imagine her as an invisible girl like me, tending to her blackberry bushes.”

“I believe that when the Maliseet wish to describe a child, they add *-sis* at the end, so if you wish to name a little girl spirit, you’d add *-sis* as in *Saqteminimisis*”

“*Saqteminimisis*,” replied Abbi. “That is even better – since she is a girl spirit. Do you know any more Indian words, Mr. Loggerman. I am very interested in learning some Indian now that I know I am one.”

“I know a few words I’ve picked up over the years from the Indians who have worked for me.”

“Then I must ask you some more words from time to time, even though they are in the Maliseet dialect rather than my *Gitche Gumee* dialect that is in the words in *The Song of Hiawatha*. Papa, my adoptive Papa, told me that Mr. Longfellow, who wrote ‘*The Song of Hiawatha*’ was

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inspired when he wrote it by the Finnish folk poem collection called the *Ka-le-va-la*, and made it even sound much like it.”

Mrs. Loggerman laughed, “Yes I know *Kalevala*. My father had the book – he brought it all the way from Finland when he came here as a young man – and liked to read it out loud to us girls.”

“Papa said that the beat, the meter, of the lines is the same. You must tell me more about it, Mrs. Loggerman.”

“It sounded musical even though we barely understood anything when he read it. It is very famous to Finnish people. It is not hard to read, even if you don’t know any Finnish. That’s because Finnish is written more closely to how it sounds. On the other hand English words are not always written like they sound. That is why I can’t read English very well. It takes much practice to learn how the words sound differently from how they are written. For Finnish, you simply read the letter sounds out loud and listen what comes and understand—if you know the language.”

“I know what you mean, Mrs. Loggerman. Papa told me that the sounds of all the letters we use properly should have the sounds used by the people who invented it, the ancient peoples called Romans. But English doesn’t. For example *weak* ought to be written W-I-I-K, or *mouse* ought to be written M-A-U-S. English is hard to learn to read because of it. But you said Finnish is written like it sounds?”

“That’s right. I have my father’s book and you can look at it.”

“You have now made me very interested, Mrs. Loggerman, how Mr. Longfellow’s poem is similar to the Finnish one. Perhaps I can now discover how. I feel that my coming here is the beginning of my true education, and my discovery of who I really am, and this will be my first discovery – a discovery connected with Mr. Longfellow’s poem about my people.”

Mrs. Loggerman got up and went to a shelf. There were only three books on the shelf. She took a large book from it and brought it over.

“This is my late father’s copy of the *Kalevala*. You may look at it, if you like. You can then see how the meter

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works. But don't ask me what anything means. Our father explained in English in general, and sometimes translated, but that was long ago when he and my mother were still alive and my sisters had not married yet and moved away. To see how it sounds, you only need to know two things. It sounds exactly like the letters show, and you must emphasize the first syllable. Oh yes, the letters with the dots represent the higher versions. For example plain A is like 'father' while the one with the dots is like in 'happy'. You see English doesn't show how the A differs in sound from time to time."

"Oh, Mrs. Loggerman," said Abbi, "you have made me want to get all the chores done quickly so I can look at it and compare it to my Papa's book of *'The Song of Hiawatha'*. I intend to read the three books of Papa's I brought very carefully. Everything about Indians now has a different meaning when I know I am Indian, compared to before I knew."

"Well, let us then finish feeding the children and put them to bed, and you are free to borrow my father's book."

Abbi couldn't wait for supper to be over and for the children to be in bed so she could begin her education in Indian culture by comparing *The Song of Hiawatha* with *Kalevala*.

But before supper was over, Abbi also told Mr. Loggerman about discovering bear poop and becoming scared and running home.

Mr. Loggerman chuckled at that. "You need not be too afraid, Abbi. The bear may be as wary of you as you are of it. If you see it, just move away calmly. Make yourself look bigger than you are if you can by spreading your clothes. But I doubt a bear in a berry patch is interested in eating a small girl, since its belly will be full of berries. But be careful about going close to a cub. If the cub squeals, the mother will come at you like a locomotive to protect its cub! That is the only situation – accidentally coming upon a cub."

"Thanks for telling me, Mr. Loggerman. Up till now I have not known anything at all about bears."

Mrs. Loggerman added: "In all my years growing up here, I have never heard of anyone being attacked by a

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bear, perhaps because people getting in a dangerous situation with a bear is very rare. But you have reminded me Abbi that blackberries are getting ripe and it is time to pick as many as possible to preserve for the winter! Would you like to do that?"

Yes! I would love to!" exclaimed Abbi.

12

Getting Established

THE CHORES BEGIN

As we said, Abbi had the small room at one end of the upper floor, while Mr. and Mrs. Loggerman had a large room at the other end, and the babies occupied the middle area during the night. After the children were put to bed that first night, Abbi retired to her room, where she arranged things to her liking, and then by the light of the oil lamp thought to have a look at the *Kalevala* book Mrs. Loggerman had loaned her. She wanted to begin investigating Indian ways in *The Song of Hiawatha* and her two other books, and this was a good way to begin – by looking at the book that Longfellow took as inspiration to some extent.¹⁴

Mrs. Loggerman, carrying one of her babies, looked in on Abbi. “How is it, Abbi? How is the room? Are you settled in nicely?”

Abbi was sitting on her bed in her nightgown. In her lap was the *Kalevala* book from Mrs. Loggerman, and beside her on the bed the *Song of Hiawatha* book of her Papa’s open at a page.

“You are right, Mrs. Loggerman,” said Abbi. “When I read the *Kalevala* text, and then some of *The Song of Hiawatha*, they both seem to have the same rhythm. Listen. From *The Song of Hiawatha*.” She put the book in her lap at the open page so that her hands were free. She read:

*“There he sang of Hi-a-wa-tha,
Sang the song of Hi-a-wa-tha,*

¹⁴ *The Song of Hiawatha* was a work of literature designed for English speaking audiences, and Longfellow took ‘poetic liberties’ to achieve that end, which included borrowing poetic formulas from the Finnish folk poetry epic.

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Sang his won-drous birth and be-ing."

Abbi pointed at the fingers of her left hand as she spoke a line, each time pointing through eight fingers. She continued: "For each line, Mrs. Loggerman, I count eight beats. Now I will try the same with a line from your father's *Kalevala* book – even though I don't understand what it means:

*tuosta kas-vu kai-ken-lain-en,
tuosta kuu ku-mot-ta-ma-han,
tuosta päi-vä pai-sta-ma-han"*

She did the same counting on her fingers, once again counting eight beats. "See Mrs. Loggerman, I count the same eight beats. Now I can see how my Papa wrote his poem about *Aggodagauda and His Daughter* – oh I didn't tell you, my Papa wrote a long poem a few years ago in the same style as *The Song of Hiawatha*. Anyway, you only have to choose words so that each line has eight beats, not seven, nor nine. I have even thought of some lines of my own just now and wrote them down. I have them on this paper." She took a paper from between her Papa's book pages and read:

*"Ab-bi came up from the cit-y
To the Log-ger-mans log dwell-ing,
Came to help them with their child-ren"*

She counted on her fingers eight beats, as before. "See? It's easy. The hard part is trying to choose words in ways so the beat is right, not seven, not nine, but eight, per line. I suppose when you are a poet it comes easy. Happily, rhyming is not necessary for this kind of verse, unless it happens to work."

"Well don't spend too much time trying to write verse," said Mrs. Loggerman. "You have had a very long day and your body is probably much more tired than you think it is. Mr. Loggerman is already snoring soundly. He'll be up at the break of dawn, as usual."

"Can I run down to the river the moment it is light, Mrs. Loggerman? I want to check on the beaver dam, to make sure my repair to it is fine."

"Well if you manage to wake up, and you'll be away only a few minutes, and the little children are still asleep."

When Mrs. Loggerman left, carrying her lamp, Abbi did not burn more lamp oil herself. She put all her books aside

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on the handmade side table, blew out the lamp and climbed into bed.

Abbi slept well and even slept through the baby's crying during the night. Mrs. Loggerman was reluctant to wake her this first night. She attended to the baby herself. She wanted Abbi to be well rested for tomorrow.

Abbi awoke as the morning light appeared at the window. At first she wondered where she was, and then realized she was in a new place, and remembered all the adventures she had had yesterday. She remembered her plan to check on the beaver dam; and so, still in her nightgown, she pulled on her shoes, tore out of the room, tiptoeing past the sleeping babies, then quickly down the stairs, and out the door. She ran down the slope to the river, then followed the path towards the beaver dam.

The sky was light, but the sun had not yet appeared. The sawmill was silent, but the roar of the water below the sawmill was steady. Mist rose from the water further down where it flowed smoothly. Within minutes she arrived at the beaver dam. She walked quietly out onto the dam to the middle part where she had broken it. She crouched down where she had repaired it, and saw that the beavers had done additional work. It was very solid now.

She looked out over the beaver pond to her right. The water was smooth and covered with mist. Then she saw it. A head above the surface of the water was moving along, creating a wake. A real live beaver! She kept as quiet as possible and watched it. She saw it arrive at the opposite shore and climb out of the water. It was so close! Perhaps it had not seen her. Then it continued on and vanished into the bushes, and there was nothing more to see.

The birds were all waking up, and singing a happy chorus announcing the break of day. Suddenly a large crane flew over her head, its wings going wish-wish-wish. She wanted to stay here, but she realized that she should not annoy the Loggermans on only the first morning by being absent. She must return even before anyone else was up, thereby cause no disruptions in the schedule. Then perhaps she could come here every morning. So she turned back. When she arrived back at the clearing she ran up the slope and in moments was back inside the house. As she was entering, Mr. Loggerman was coming down the

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stairs having only slipped on his trousers and boots, now pulling his suspenders over top of his undershirt.

“Hello, Mr. Loggerman,” said Abbi. “I just ran down to the beaver pond to make sure the break I made in it yesterday was fixed. It was. What is the first thing we do around here in the morning?”

“Oh, good morning Abbi,” said Mr. Loggerman. “Well I usually build a small fire in the stove, just enough to boil water in the kettle for tea and for making oatmeal porridge. And then I go down to the river and splash water on my face.”

“I’ll build the fire, Mr. Loggerman. I have built a fire in a stove before for my Mama, my adoptive Mama, when she made bread in the oven.”

“Well if you want to try, Abbi. I will then take a towel and a cake of soap and go down to the river, and leave the fire in your hands.”

Abbi was keen to show she could put a kettle boiling. Mr. Loggerman would then show what to do next. So she took birch bark and some kindling, put it in the stove, and lit it with a match. She had a fire going in no time. She then filled the kettle with water from a large pitcher in which Mrs. Loggerman stored water from the river for drinking and cooking.

When Mr. Loggerman returned, the fire was under way. He was pleasantly surprised. He put the towel and cake of soap away, and removed a shirt from a peg on the wall, and put it on. He then joined Abbi at the stove.

“I’ll start the porridge, Abbi.” he said. “You should wash and get dressed. Any moment now the babies will become very noisy and want attention. Pull a towel off the clothesline for your use, and we have a large supply of homemade soap.”

Thus Abbi went back out, and ran to the river again, this time to the spot, closer to the sawmill, where people washed, where yesterday she had washed herself and her clothes after her adventure. She worried, however about how the animals in the water would feel about soap in their water. She would have to ask Mr. Loggerman about that. When she took a towel from the clothesline she checked to see if her clothes from yesterday were dry. They were. She took them with her when she returned to the house,

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and rushed right upstairs.

She tiptoed again past the cribs of the many little girls, hoping they would not be yet awakened, went to her room and got dressed. She heard Mr. Loggerman leave by the front door to do some chore or other. Then one of the babies awoke and began crying. That woke others, and the day had begun. Abbi was with the babies even before Mrs. Loggerman appeared. She was surprised Abbi was up already, and dressed.

“Good morning, Abbi. You are already up and dressed?”

“Yes, Mrs. Loggerman. I checked the beaver dam as I said I would, and came back. I started the fire, and Mr. Loggerman looked after the tea and started the porridge for the children. I suspect Mr. Loggerman has it done, because he left.”

“He must have something to attend to,” said Mrs. Loggerman. “Mr. Loggerman gets up very early, and eats breakfast before anyone else, to get out to do some chores and then go to the sawmill. Now the first thing is to get all the little girls from the upstairs cribs to the kitchen chairs downstairs.”

“Yes Mrs. Loggerman,” said Abbi. “I’m afraid I’m still rather small. I shall only be able to carry one light baby.”

“Well never mind carrying any babies down the stairs. If you are to fall carrying a baby down the steps, then we will have a real accident on our hands. You will instead lead the older ones who walk down the stairs – just to keep them from falling down. Before long they will do it well without assistance.”

“Alright, Mrs. Loggerman,” said Abbi.

“Well let’s get the girls dressed. You know all about changing diapers, I hope, Abbi.”

“I watched my Mama, my adoptive Mama, Jenine, change Mary many times.”

And so it went until all the children were clean and dressed and sitting in high chairs in the kitchen-dining part of the downstairs. As their mama and Abbi were rushing about, the little girls entertained themselves by banging their spoons on their wooden porridge bowls. One bowl fell on the floor and bounced.

“Precious!” exclaimed Mrs. Loggerman, using another temporary nickname. “Keep the bowl in front of you. In a

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moment we'll put porridge in it!" Abbi picked it up and put it back in front of her.

The porridge on the stove was steaming and appeared to be almost done.

"Have you milked a cow, Abbi?"

"No, Mrs. Loggerman. Gwendoline had a cow. Gwendoline was my aunt. But I was too small to remember seeing how she milked it."

"Well I will have to show you later, then. Then it'll be your responsibility to milk Annabelle every day, preferably first thing, about now, as milk does not keep long. When I was by myself, I had to get Percy to milk the cow in the morning, or else I'd have to leave these children alone."

Just then Mr. Loggerman returned. He was carrying a pail.

"Oh, Percy, you have milked Annabelle. Now we have milk for the babies for breakfast."

Mrs. Loggerman took the pail from Mr. Loggerman. "I'll teach Abbi how to milk the cow, so she can do it from now on."

"She was up even before I was, Martha," said Mr. Loggerman. "Well, I will leave you and Abbi to feed the children, and get myself out to the sawmill. My workers will be arriving soon in the wagon. I've already had a couple of biscuits and a mug of tea. It'll last me until midday."

With that Mr. Loggerman left again. Mrs. Loggerman added some milk to the porridge.

"Would you like an egg for breakfast, Abbi?"

"I suppose so."

"I want eggs too," chorused the oldest three girls, who could talk. "Egg!" said a younger one, banging her spoon.

"Well, go fetch some eggs from the chickens in the coop out back, Abbi. That is easier than milking the cow."

"How will I do that?"

"Take this basket. Just lift the chickens to see if there is an egg underneath, and then take it. Oh, it is so nice to have you here, Abbi. If I were by myself, I would have to leave the little girls alone for some minutes, and you cannot know what will happen with them wandering about like this. I'd have to put them safely into cribs and playpens to get away. But with you here, I can simple ask

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you to fetch something, and continue on. Now take the basket and fetch the eggs.”

“Will they peck me?”

“No. They’re used to being lifted for getting eggs.”

Abbi took the basket and headed out the back door, leaving behind the ruckus of little girls banging spoons and shouting baby talk.

Fetching eggs for the first time was an adventure in itself. She had seen Aunt Gwendoline do it when she was little, but not done it herself. Perhaps Aunt Gwendoline had thought she would drop them. She went to the coop and looked to where hens were sitting on nests.

“Hello Mrs. Hen,” said Abbi. “I am Abbi. I’m new here. Don’t be afraid. I just have to get eggs. I know you would like to sit there on the eggs until they hatch into chicks, but humans like to eat eggs.”

Putting the basket down, she lifted the first hen with one hand, saw an egg and removed it with her other hand.

“I’m sorry Mrs. Hen. But you’ll make another egg in no time. I was told that egg laying chickens have eggs all the time, more than regular birds. Just you wait. You’ll have another soon. And then we’ll come steal it from you again.”

“Cluck, cluck,” said Mrs. Hen.

She went on to the next hen and then the next until she had eight eggs in the basket. She hated the idea that these eggs would not become chicks, but she liked the taste of eggs. She liked chicken meat too, but she hoped Mrs. Loggerman would not ask her to kill and clean a chicken. Stealing eggs and milk from hens and cows was as nasty as she wished to be.

She returned to Mrs. Loggerman and the ruckus of little girls in the kitchen. By then, she had put out some tea and porridge for Abbi too. There were also some biscuits and a jar of jam on the table.

“Thank you Abbi. I will now boil some eggs for breakfast too. Do you like boiled eggs?”

Abbi nodded.

“While I do that, can you help the little ones with their spoons? They tend to miss their mouths a lot and get porridge all over themselves.”

“Yes Mrs. Loggerman.”

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And so it went until breakfast was over.

“Now,” said Mrs. Loggerman, “it’s time for the babies to get some fresh air. Today we’ll carry them down to the river. Today is laundry day for diapers. I have some tubs down there, close to the water. We put the babies on the ground and do the diapers, and then we hang it all on the clothesline. We’ll be done all the laundry by mid-day, and then we’ll have lunch. After lunch we try to get the girls all to nap. And then we can have some time to rest too, before we start preparing supper.”

Soon Mrs. Loggerman, Abbi and all the little ones were down by the river below the sawmill, at the place that was used for washing. While the older of the girls took the liberty of walking around looking at what their mama was doing, the younger sat in the grass and played with wooden toys with wheels that presumably their papa had made for them sometime. The littlest, the new one, slept inside a wicker basket.

Mrs. Loggerman had large metal and wooden tubs there. They were filled with water brought with pails from the river. A fire underneath the large metal tub heated the water.

“Oh Abbi,” said Mrs. Loggerman, “I am so happy to have you helping me! Imagine trying to wash all these diapers and bed sheets all by myself! I dread it when I’m by myself. And you may wonder why we do it here by the river. It is easier in summer with the water so close. Otherwise we’d have to carry water all the way to the house.”

“At home, my Mama, my adoptive Mama, took large tubs and washboards to the back yard not too far from the well pump, and we did the laundry there. We heated the water inside on the stove for washing, but we used fresh water from the well pump for rinsing. Then we hung the clothes up on a clothesline. This is similar, except you do it beside the river, and you heat the water with a fire under the metal tub.”

The oldest girl took an interest in the fire. “Stay away from the fire, Toddles!” exclaimed Mrs. Loggerman. “You’ll burn yourself.”

“Yes” added Abbi. “Then it’ll hurt and you’ll cry and cry.”

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Abbi added a piece of wood to the fire.

"It is easier," continued Mrs. Loggerman, "than heating water in kettles or pots in the house, and having to carry it here. Mind you, that's what we'd have to do in winter. Before you came, when I had no help, I had to get Mr. Loggerman, or our hired hand, Jeffrey, to help me. And that took them away from their regular work. Needless to say, they did not enjoy helping me maintain the house one bit!—and helping with the diaper-washing the least! That is why I needed household help so much, and I am so very happy Madam Woodrow let me have you to help me, Abbi."

"I know what you mean, Mrs. Loggerman. Men like to do men-things."

"Now Abbi," Mrs. Loggerman continued, "add some more wood to the fire. The water in the metal tub is still only lukewarm. Might as well add the rest of the soiled diapers to the tub now, too. And some soap. When the diapers have stewed a little, then what we do is take them over here to the wooden tub, where we scrub them on the washboard. Then we rinse the diapers in the third tub which is filled with clean water."

While Abbi went to fetch more wood, Mrs. Loggerman began scrubbing diapers on the washboard with a cake of soap. The bottom end of the corrugated metal washboard was in a large wooden tub which contained soapy water. She scrubbed, dipped the diaper down into the soapy water, then scrubbed again, and then when the dirt appeared to be out, she wrung it by hand, took it to the tub of clean water, rinsed it, wrung it and put it in the basket of washed diapers, ready for carrying to a clothesline to dry.

The two toddlers copied Abbi and fetched wood. Abbi took the wood from them, and added it to the fire under the tub. She then loaded the remaining soiled diapers from a basket into the steaming tub. With all the diapers in the steaming tub, she stirred the diaper stew with a big stick that, from its well worn look, had been used for that purpose a long time.

"Give me another diaper, Abbi," said Mrs. Loggerman.

Abbi lifted another diaper out of the heated tub with the end of the stirring stick, and threw it into the tub with the washboard. Mrs. Loggerman began to scrub it on the

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washboard with the cake of soap. In a minute the diaper was scrubbed, rinsed and piled in the basket of clean diapers, whereupon Abbi was holding another diaper on the end of her stick and throwing it into the wash-tub for Mrs. Loggerman to do another.

“Waaaaah!” The baby had woken up and was making her presence known.

“Oh dear!” said Mrs. Loggerman. “I hope she doesn’t want to be fed again so soon!” She hurried over to the basket. Happily she was able to calm her down, and return to the tubs.

Finally Abbi asked: “Is that everything?”

“Those are all the diapers. We also have to do sheets and shirts and other things. Then it will all be done for a week or two. We’ll have to empty the tubs and fill them with fresh water.”

“Where do you dump the water?”

“Right there.”

“But it will run into the river,” said Abbi. “The beavers who live in the water might not like it. I don’t think they like soapy water.”

“Soapy water,” said Cutsie, imitating the older people.

“Well it has never been a problem before. I think the water dilutes the soap. Besides, the beavers live on the creek that runs into the river, and not in the river,” replied Mrs. Loggerman. “Besides, homemade soap is not very harmful, I don’t think. It is all natural. I make it from ash and fat.”

“Please, Mrs. Loggerman. There is such a large amount of soapy water in the tub. It won’t dilute very fast. It is too much at once. Can we dump the used water on the ground where it will not go directly into the river? I will not be able to sleep at night thinking of baby beavers having their eyes hurting from soapy diaper water getting into them.”

This image of baby beavers with soap in their eyes took Mrs. Loggerman by surprise.

“I have never thought of it, Abbi. I always thought that because there is so much water in the river, that the soapy water, even so much from the tubs, will become diluted and disappear. I don’t know what to think, now. . . .Very well, Abbi, let us dump the water on the grass over there. It won’t be any more difficult. You take one handle and I’ll

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take the other.”

So Mrs. Loggerman and Abbi carried the metal tub, next the wooden tub, away from the shore and dumped it in the grass.

“Mama, I mean my former Mama,” said Abbi, “told me that plants do not mind soapy water. In fact it is nourishing for them. Wherever we dumped it, the grass grew thicker. It didn’t die.”

“Alright then,” said Mrs. Loggerman. “That went fast. Let us now take a break and then hang the diapers on the clothesline, and then see if we can get the sheets and shirts done before lunchtime. You see, around here, the faster chores get done, the more time there is to do more pleasant things. For me, I like to make some cookies or cakes or make something on my loom. So let that be an incentive, Abbi. If we get chores done fast, I will have time to make cakes or cookies or work on my loom, and you will have time too for your interests.”

“Yes, Mrs. Loggerman. I long to get started reading my Papa’s books on Indians. They have become so much more important to me since I learned I was Indian myself.”

Soon the laundry was all done. The clotheslines they used were not far from the river, so that the washed laundry didn’t have to be carried very far.

Abbi handed laundry items to Mrs. Loggerman as she attached them to the clothesline with wooden clothes pegs.

“Can I help, Mama?” asked Cutsie after a few minutes.

“I want to help too,” two others who talked, chorused in.

“Alright. You can hand me clothes pegs so I don’t have to hold them in my mouth.”

The little girls stood around a stump that had a small basket filled with wooden clothes pegs, and took turns handing them to their mama. It went fast.

“I have been thinking about names for the girls, Mrs. Loggerman, like I promised,” said Abbi as they worked. “If you were Indian, I would have looked for Indian names with wonderful descriptive ideas, but since you are not, and since I don’t know many Indian words anyway, I have been thinking about names suitable for the English language, that have some meaning. The oldest in the blue dress you so far call ‘Cutsie’, I have decided that she will

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have a bright happy temperament. I therefore suggest her name should be 'Gladiolus', that's a flower related to the irises, you know, but it contains the word 'glad'. She can be called 'Gladis' for short. I would call her 'Gladis' around the house, but on formal occasions 'Gladiolus'."



Mrs. Loggerman liked the name. "Gladiolus Loggerman. That is indeed a suitable name for her. She is always making those very glad faces, and is also pretty as a flower. Cutsie, would you like to be called Gladiolus?"

Cutsie failed to understand. To her 'Cutsie' was fine. Only Abbi and Mrs. Loggerman knew that 'Cutsie' would no longer be suitable when she was grown.

"That's one down, five to go," declared Mrs. Loggerman, happily.

"I promise not to rush with the names. I will give every one the deepest consideration, Mrs. Loggerman," Abbi replied. "Naming is so very, very, important. A person carries their name all their life. I will never know what Indian name my mother gave me, since Abbi really only means 'baby' from *abbinochi*."

"It is easy for me to forget that you are Indian, or at least, as you said, have an Indian mother. You speak and act just like any other European, not at all like the Indians around here who are rather quiet. But I suppose that is only because you were raised by Europeans, and taught to read and write very early and to be very expressive.

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Sometimes you seem like a dark Acadian girl, or someone like that. But then, many Acadians married Indians, and many are already part Indian even if they aren't aware of it."

"Alas, Mrs. Loggerman, I once did not know I was Indian. Now that I have been told, I have to catch up. I have to learn about who I am. That is why at every opportunity I must read from the three books of Papa's I brought with me."

"Well the sooner chores get done, the sooner you can do that."

"Now, returning to the babies' names, Mrs. Loggerman, I suggest the next oldest baby who you temporarily have called 'Toddles', be called 'Sylvia'."

"'Sylvia?'" inquired Mrs. Loggerman.

"That's because she, on the other hand, makes silly faces. 'Sylvia' reminds us of the word 'silly' but it is still a dignified name."

"Sylvia and Gladis Loggerman. At least we now have names for the oldest two, who at three and four years old – or maybe they are already four and five, I forget – are already talkers and walkers. Thank goodness!"

"But," added Abbi. "They should also have second names. The second names should be names from women of your family – your mother, aunt, grandmother, and so on – to honour them."

Mrs. Loggerman became thoughtful, trying to recall first names of her female relatives. "Well there was Aunt Pearl. ...Hmm. Sylvia Pearl Loggerman. That sounds pretty. I'll have to try to remember names of women who are relatives. Well that is a fine idea. But there is time for that. Second names are not often used. It is the first names that are most urgent. Thank you, Abbi. Sylvia and Gladis sound fine for these oldest two."

Sylvia handed her mama a clothes peg. "Thank you Sylvia. Yes, Toddles, we will from now on call you Sylvia. That is your permanent name. 'Toddles' is only your nickname for now. So I will either call you 'Sylvia' or, out of habit, 'Toddles', but both will refer to you. Do you understand?"

Sylvia 'Toddles' Pearl Loggerman nodded.

"What's my name?" wondered Cutsie, sensing there was

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a game going on here.

“You will be Gladis, Cutsie, as I already said. I have to think of a woman relative’s name that goes well with Gladis, though.” She continued towards Abbi. “Oh that removes a fear I have had – calling her ‘Cutsie’ even when she is a schoolgirl. Other children would make fun of her if she kept that name. I’m glad you came up with a good name, Abbi.”

“Mrs. Loggerman . . . ” Abbi began again.

“Yes?”

“When the chores are done, and the babies are napping, I’d like to go to the ridge again.”

“You’re not afraid of the bear, Abbi?”

“I realized last night before I fell asleep, that being afraid is not wise, because if I’m afraid I won’t be able to enjoy walking along the paths. So I decided this morning I will accept what fate decides. If fate decides I shall be a meal for a bear, then I will accept that fate. Otherwise I will be scared of doing what I enjoy.”

“Well, a bear is not likely to eat you,” said Mrs. Loggerman. “Bears do not eat humans. They would rather eat berries and insects and small animals. I have lived in this area since I was a girl, and seen many bears when picking berries, and they haven’t been a problem if you keep your distance. Unless they feel threatened or their babies seem threatened, they will not bother you, and in fact they are often afraid of you because they can’t figure out what you are. So remain calm. Now, I will agree that you can go to the ridge, because the blackberries are ripe and we need blackberries for dessert. From July into August they become ripe when raspberry time is coming to an end. So when you go onto the ridge again, could you take a basket and pick some blackberries? That would be a chore you can have, to combine with looking at your Papa’s books. We could have some with cream from Annabelle for dinner, and cook some for winter preserves. But keep to the ridge. I don’t want you to have an accident by wandering off the path.”

“Please can I go to the waterfalls, Mrs. Loggerman? I will be very, very, very, very, careful. I will use the path to go down there. I must see them again, I must see *Minnehahahaha* again.”

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Mrs. Loggerman pondered the plea. She knew Abbi was unstoppable. In fact she herself had been the same way when she was little. “Well, Abbi. If you fall in and drown, the guilt will be on your shoulders. I will be without any help and struggle as I did earlier before I got you.”

“It would be so grand if there were a girl close to my age I could be friends with. Is there any nearby?”

“I’m afraid not. We are in the middle of nowhere. You have to walk three miles almost to Pinewood before there is another house. But be patient, we have to send you to school in September – I promised Mrs. Woodrow, and besides I think it’s the law that children must go to school – and then you can meet other children of the area. We can talk about that, and how you will get there, when the time gets closer. You’ll be alright for now won’t you?”

“Yes, if I can explore. Can I go to the waterfalls again?”

“Very well, go have a look at the waterfalls again. We can only pray that we will still have you when this week is over.”

When lunch was over and the little girls were in the cribs sleeping or inside handmade playpens with their handmade wooden toys, where Mrs. Loggerman could keep an eye on them without difficulty, Abbi ran upstairs and fetched the books to take to study, put them in a canvas bag that had a shoulder strap, and then, coming back down with them, also took from Mrs. Loggerman a small basket for berries, and went.

Abbi felt exhilarated as she looked for the beginning of the trail. But first she said hello to horses and advised Annabelle that she would milk her soon. And then she headed towards the ridge. Life with the Loggermans was not going to be very bad after all. People did things in interesting ways here. There was a cow to milk. There were hens from whom to fetch eggs. And there was a school, and Mr. Loggerman said *real Indians* actually worked at the sawmill sometimes. She could learn from them about being an Indian directly – to teach her what her books couldn’t. But the best thing about this place was that there was nature all around, here. There was a real beaver family, spirits in the canyons, a place with many small waterfalls, roaring river, smooth river, a marsh, and lots of wild animals. And now she had an hour or two free. This

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was a wonderful place!!

To save time, she didn't visit the beavers – she had seen them in the morning and would visit them again tomorrow morning. She was anxious to get to the ridge, and she was there in no time!

She first looked for the echo place, and talked to the echo.

“Little spirit girl of the cliff, I have decided to give you a name. Since I imagine you picking blackberries, I will call you ‘Little Blackberry’ or *Saqteminimusis* which is what Mr. Loggerman says it is in the local Maliseet language.”

“...MALISEET LANGUAGE...” replied the echo girl.

“Saqteminimusis! Saqteminimusis! Saqteminimusis!”

“...SAQTEMINIMUSIS..SAQTEMINIMUSIS!”

“That sounds wonderful!”

“...SOUNDS WONDERFUL!”

“But I can't talk right now, Saqteminimusis. I really want to climb down and visit the *Minnehahahaha's*.”

“MINNEHAHAHAHA's”

“Yes, the Minnehahahaha...hahahahahaha!”

Abbi felt so happy at this moment.

“...HAHAHAHAHAHA!”

Evidently so did the blackberry girl spirit roaming the ridge on the other side.

She was anxious to visit the place with the many happy falls right off and walked down the side of the ridge into the river valley. Reaching *Minnehahahaha*, she was extra careful not to fall into the pond at the side. She talked to the spirits there, like she knew Indians did. Then she climbed back up the hill and ate some blackberries and blueberries. Finally she sat down to look at the books she had brought. She had nothing in particular in mind as to what she would read.

She remembered her adoptive Papa had once told her: “*The Song of Hiawatha* is an important work of literature, but if you really wanted to know what Indians are really like, and what the original legends that Longfellow used were like, you have to go to the source writing that Longfellow used – the books about the Lake Superior Indians around Sault Ste Marie by the man called Henry Schoolcraft.” Luckily the two other books she had with her were by Schoolcraft.

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First she opened Papa's well worn book of *The Song of Hiawatha*. Her adoptive Papa had read to his children so often from it, that her curiosity about that had worn off. Besides, Bradden had told her that Longfellow had used poetic license, and changed things from the original legends, as well as borrowing ideas from the Finnish folk poetry. But the lexicon of Ojibwa words at the back was useful, he had said. She could find Ojibwa Indian words used in the poem summarized there. She then browsed the other two books to see what was in them. The one about Indian legends was easy to read because it was written for the general public. She glanced through it to plan what she would read. She soon realized if she was going to teach herself about Indian ways she would have to become more organized and disciplined.

"I should focus on one aspect of Indian ways each time, and not be aimless. I should have one day for learning about language, another for learning customs, and so on...."

She almost forgot Mrs. Loggerman wanted her to pick berries. It was time now to head to some blackberry patches, keeping an eye out for the bear and Mrs. Loggerman's instruction to remain calm if it is there and walk slowly away.

First she checked if the big bear poop was still there. It was, but it was getting old. There were lots of flies around it. Then she looked and listened to make sure the bear was not there today, and cautiously began to fill the basket with nice fat blackberries, putting every fifth one in her mouth for herself. Every now and then she poked her head up above the blackberry bushes to look around to make sure there was no bear nearby.

By late afternoon, she was back at the house and Mrs. Loggerman was happy to see a whole basket brimming with blackberries.

"Wonderful!" she said. "I hope you didn't eat too many, Abbi, yourself, while you picked."

Abbi showed a guilty expression.

"I don't mind, Abbi, but you know as well as anyone, that if you eat too much, the same thing will happen to you as to the bear."

"I *hope* I didn't eat too much, Mrs. Loggerman; but

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they're so delicious it is hard to resist."

"Well be careful. In any event we now have some blackberries for dessert, and we should get more to make into preserves for the winter."

"I would love to pick them every afternoon, Mrs. Loggerman, while they are so ripe and delicious! I could go to the ridge and study my Papa's books like I did today, and then pick some blackberries for preserves tomorrow and the next day and next."

At this moment all the little girls were in the living room and being relatively quiet. Abbi was glad of that. The younger half were still napping, and the oldest two were playing together putting assorted things they found around the living room into a small basket, taking them out and putting them in again.

"Yes, Abbi. I appreciate you picking berries. When I am by myself with all the babies, I can't get away. Blackberries aren't ripe for very long. After we have gotten the girls napping after lunch every day, you can go do as you did today for two hours, and then we can start making lots of preserves and have blackberry jam to have with bread in winter."

"I appreciated your letting me also read a while from my adoptive Papa's book. I only became aware that I am Indian a few weeks ago, and it is very important to me to learn all about Indians."

"Yes it is very important to know who you are," agreed Mrs. Loggerman.

"When I was little, my Papa, I mean my adoptive Papa, read legends, and pieces from *The Song of Hiawatha*, to me, and I know a great deal already; but I never knew that I was an Indian back then. Now I want to review everything from a new perspective, and learn more, now that I know. I want to picture myself in the stories. I especially like the legends that feature an Indian girl, because I can relate to her; although, I can relate to an Indian boy as well."

"I understand, Abbi. As I said, if we get all the chores done quickly then you'll have plenty of time; and *I'll* have plenty of time too to follow my own interests. I am currently making a wall hanging on the loom in the corner. Instead of valuable yarn I use twisted rags from clothes

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that are too worn to repair. It is wonderfully relaxing. I can watch the children as I work as well.”

Abbi went over to the loom. She had noticed it in the corner before, but not studied it yet. It was big and had many wood pieces to it. It had been well made. She saw the wall-hanging half done on it.

“I inherited it from my mother,” Mrs. Loggerman explained. “One day when I’m working on it, I can let you watch. Perhaps you’ll want to try it too.”

Abbi returned to Mrs. Loggerman’s side in the kitchen part.

“So there you are, Abbi. We both have projects to pursue. What did you study today, then?”

“For the first day, I mainly walked around, pretending I was an Indian – well being an Indian since I don’t have to pretend if I am one. I also glanced through the three books. But I realized, Mrs. Loggerman that to properly learn I must be organized just like when we learn things in school. At school the subjects are divided up between literature, history, arithmetic and so on. I think I should divide up my Indian studies in a similar way.”

“That seems wise. I realize how important it is for you to have a study programme to learn about Indians, since you won’t find anything of that sort in regular school. Have you decided on a plan?”

Abbi had thought about it on her way back. “I decided I would study a different subject about Indians for every weekday. I’ll give myself the weekend off just like in regular school. Today is Monday, and I haven’t decided yet what I would study on Mondays, but I think I would like to start by studying Indian culture on Tuesdays. On Wednesday I can study Indian legends. On Thursday I think I can study Indian language. One Friday I could look to be taught by animals.”

“How do you get taught by animals?”

“We can learn a great deal from animals. For example humans might learn a great deal about constructing an earth dam from beavers.”

“But the beavers are not actually teaching you. You are simply observing and learning.”

Mrs. Loggerman had now put the blackberries aside for supper and was mixing dough for bread.

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“But isn’t that how we learn?” Abbi continued. “By observing and copying? Mrs. Loggerman, I have been watching how you mix and knead the dough for the bread, and I am learning by observing, even though you are not actually teaching me. We can learn something from all animals in the same way. Indians learned much about living in the wilderness by watching and learning from the animals. So what I will do on Fridays, is find an interesting animal and then watch it as long as I can and see if it does anything that seems wise, and which we can use.”

“Even a . . . fly?”

“Yes, Mrs. Loggerman. I have come to think that every single animal has something to teach us. All we have to do is figure out what it is. For example, perhaps butterflies and flying squirrels can give us an idea of how a man can jump off a cliff and glide to the bottom, by wearing a large piece of canvas, to serve as wings.”

“Well don’t you try anything like that, Abbi! Promise me to tell me what animals have taught you. I would not like you to do anything foolish. But in general, it sounds like a fine plan. The faster we get scheduled chores done, the more time we will both have for other things. Furthermore the more of the yearly chores we get done in the summer, the less there will be for the fall, winter and spring.”

“Like making soap and candles?”

“That’s right. It’s difficult to do that in winter.”

But right now it’s time to start the supper.”

“This will be my first day helping with making supper,” said Abbi. “What would you like me to do?”

“Well,” began Mrs. Loggerman. She was so very happy to have Abbi. She was not just help for her, but good company as well, and someone to talk to while she worked. And Abbi knew how to talk!

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NEXT DAY: TUESDAY

The next morning Abbi once again got up just as the sky was lightening up, put on her boots, tiptoed past the little girls, and ran in her nightgown to visit the beavers. Perhaps she would see one again this morning.

She ran so fast, she almost tripped over a beaver. She froze when she saw him. He was cornered so he didn't know which way to run, and just froze too to see what Abbi would do.

"Don't be afraid, beaver. I can see you are afraid and would like to get past me to get to the safety of the water. So I will back up, Mr. *Qapit*" She used the Maliseet word Mr. Loggerman had told her earlier. She saw it was bigger than the stuffed one that was on her adoptive Papa's desk. It had to be Mr. *Qapit*.

Abbi backed up very slowly. The beaver, seeing she was not going to charge at him, began moving towards the water. Reaching it, the beaver slipped into the water. But he had abandoned the branch he was dragging.

"You left your branch you were dragging, behind, Mr. *Qapit*," she called.

Abbi went to pick up the branch, took it to the edge of the water, and threw it as far as she could into the pond.

"Here is your branch, Mr. *Qapit*," she called. "I am sorry for damaging your dam the other day. But I saw that it was fine."

She looked out over the water, and saw the wake of a beaver swimming, and then another.

"There are at least two. Maybe they are husband and wife," said Abbi. "Perhaps there are babies inside the lodge. Or maybe the babies are already grown up and have

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gone off and married and built their own lodge elsewhere. Well goodbye Mr. and Mrs. *Qapit*. I didn't mean to startle you."

She enjoyed the sights and sounds of the marsh coming alive as the day dawned, but couldn't stay. She had to rush back before everyone else was up. But before going back she thought she might as well wash her face while she was near the place where washing was done.

And then she was back, started a fire, rushed upstairs, tiptoed past the babies, and got dressed. Meanwhile, Mr. Loggerman came down and set the kettle boiling. Abbi was back downstairs too moments later.

"Thanks for starting the fire in the stove," said Mr. Loggerman. "Mrs. Loggerman would like you to get the milk every morning. If you come with me, Abbi. I will show you how to milk Annabelle so you can do it from now on."

She went with Mr. Loggerman to the barn. He showed her how to milk the cow, and when the pail was full, he set Annabelle loose to roam the yard for grasses and clover.

"I throw grass seeds around," he explained to Abbi, "and that seems to have encouraged grasses to grow. Now let's return to the house. Martha is no doubt tending to the babies now, and will soon be down."

"I look forward to milking Annabelle and also fetching eggs from the chickens, Mr. Loggerman, and the chores that have to be done. When the chores are done and the children napping in the afternoon, Mrs. Loggerman will let me head to the ridge to pick blackberries and do my Indian studies. I have a lot to learn about being an Indian, now that I'm aware I'm one. Yesterday I decided I must be organized in my studying just like they are in school, I will study a different aspect of being an Indian for each day of the week, as if I'm in school, and then I will give myself the weekend off like in regular school. I already explained it to Mrs. Loggerman."

Abbi liked to explain things thoroughly.

Mrs. Loggerman and the little girls were up and the morning began again the same way as before – Mr. Loggerman left to the sawmill, workers arrived by wagon, Mrs. Loggerman and Abbi fed the babies, and then they all set out to do a major chore needing to be done – this time making candles and soap from fat. Abbi liked it when she

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learned a new practical skill.

When the children were napping in the afternoon, Abbi was ready to go do her Indian studies.

“Remind me what you are studying today, Abbi.”

“Tuesday, I planned to be about Indian culture generally. I am very interested in spirits – that Indians called *manito*'s. But I'm wondering what I should study as my first step. I know. I will look at Mr. Schoolcraft's book about legends. But I won't be studying the legends – that's for Wednesdays which is tomorrow. I will read all his introductions and footnotes – to see what notes he makes about culture.”

“Well do you have any ideas about spirits yet from the reading you have done so far?”

“I've noticed in all the books and from what my Papa has said, that there is a great deal of attention to nature spirits, which as I said the Ojibwa called *manito*'s – I'm not sure how exactly it ought to be pronounced. I think they are central to Indian culture. They touch on everything. I thought that perhaps that is what I should concentrate on first – to understand better how the Indians looked on nature. According to Mr. Schoolcraft, the Indian nature spirits are everywhere, all around us in nature—not just in animals, but anything that feels living. Spirits make the winds blow, the clouds to float across the sky, the sun to shine, the forest to grow. Papa once said when he read a legend to us children, that in civilization people believe that spirits are found only in animals and plants, but Indians believe spirits are in everything. A person is part of something larger that is living, and that has a spirit too, and we are part of that spirit. He said it is something like how a part of us, like our stomach, is something separate, yet is still part of the whole living thing that we are.”

“That makes sense,” replied Mrs. Loggerman.

“Nature does seem to have some order and purpose in its overall behaviour, and I can see that it can be viewed as a very large living being that we are inside. My father talked about such things sometimes. It isn't only an Indian idea. It is something anyone can appreciate – that Nature is a whole single living thing and we are inside it all. And a rock in the environment, or a cliff, even though it doesn't seem living, is something like a fingernail or hair that we

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have, which by itself is not living and yet it is part of our whole living body. Well hurry up and be off.”

Abbi was happy Mrs. Loggerman was so supportive of her educational endeavours and that there were some things in Indian beliefs that all humans could believe in. Then it wasn't so much Indian beliefs as beliefs for all humanity.

Before long she was at the ridge again, the spot she had chosen for pursuing her self-education – the place where there was a good view over the valley.

“Hello girl spirit of the blackberry slopes! Hello *Saqteminimusis*. It is Abbi again!” she called. It was necessary to raise her voice, or else the echo would be hard to hear over the noise of the river down below.

The echo, who she liked to think of as a spirit replied:”....ABBI AGAIN!”

“I am determined to study about Indians today!”

“..STUDY ABOUT INDIANS TODAY”

“I must get started, I will talk to you more later.”

“..TALK TO YOU MORE LATER.”

She sat down and took out her books, as well as some paper and a pencil in case she needed to make notes. She opened Schoolcraft's book and looked for something relating to spirits. She soon realized she couldn't learn about nature spirits from books. She should simply observe the world around her!

“I don't think one can learn about *manito*'s from a book. One has to experience it, I think. I will walk around trying to feel the nature spirits, the *manito*'s. I will leave my books here and come back for them later.” In a loud voice she said “I will return here in a short while *Saqteminimusis*.”

Abbi began to wander and explore along the ridge. As she went she found herself talking out loud as if talking to someone. Perhaps she was remembering the beaver and speaking to it without realizing it. She had, after all, in her early life frequently talked to Amik, the stuffed beaver on her adoptive Papa's desk often. She was by now used to expressing herself to a beaver,

“You cannot see nature spirits, no more than you can see the spirit of a person,” she said to herself as she went. “But if you close your eyes and feel with your being, you

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can. I know, because once when we were playing hide-and-peek at school, I sensed someone hiding behind a bush, even though I couldn't see them. That must be how you can feel the *manito*'s. And if you have imagination, you can give them some kind of form, to picture them somehow."

Abbi therefore tried to feel her environment with her whole being. She tried to percieve her environment with her being and not with her normal senses. She took a deep breath and closed her eyes. She opened her eyes and continued on.

She first came upon a blueberry patch. "I think there is a spirit here. The blueberry spirit. I can feel it all around these bushes. I picture this spirit as a woman and she wears a blue gown."

She walked on and found herself beneath a pine tree. The wind blew through the pine needles and made it whistle. "Listen. The wind spirit and the pine tree spirit are talking to each other. O Spirit of the Wind, what messages are you whispering to the pine tree?"

She continued on.

She came to a large gnarled cedar tree. She looked up at it. It had much character. She wondered what kind of spirit it had inside it. She patted the bark. "Hello spirit of Gnarled Cedar. I mean you no harm. I greet you. I am on my way to the side of the river. I want to see the falls again, the ones I called *Minnehahahahaha* as there seem to be several falls all together. Don't worry, I will be very careful not to fall in. You seem to be motherly, Cedar Spirit. That is why I imagined you said 'Be careful' . Thank you Mrs. Gnarled Cedar, for showing me your concern."

As she went she recalled some episodes in *The Song of Hiawatha*, and how Hiawatha communicated with Nature.

She continued on.

She came across a blackberry patch. "Oh!" she said, "I can see there could be a spirit of a girl like me picking blackberries in there!"

It was fun to imagine things being alive. In the Indian view of things, you could even address a rock as if it were alive. Her Papa had explained once when reciting *The Song of Hiawatha* to his children, that the Ojibwa language

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paid attention to whether something was animate or inanimate, which meant living or non-living.

“Papa said that something animate would be seen to have a spirit in it, and something inanimate was simply without spirit. Even rocks are living if they are part of a living landscape. I suppose a rock is no longer living if you remove it, but then it gets its livingness back when you put the rock into a new use like the walls of a house. I wish Papa was here. He could explain how Indians saw things.”

Finally she arrived at *Minnehahahahaha*. It was uplifting to see them. The cascading water created much water noise and cool mist.

“Good morning, *Minnehahahahaha*’s,” said Abbi. “I see you as sister spirits. Each one a different nature, depending on how you fall. The falling water seems like your cascading hair. If I squint, it is easy to see something. If I listen, I can imagine a soft voice coming through the water noise. I wonder what you are saying.” She sat down on a rock beside the pool of water beneath the falls. “And as I sit beside this pool, and take my shoes off, and put my feet in the water, I can almost see the spirits of the water. The water, rocks and light seem to be playing with one another, and they all look happy. On the other hand, the roaring water further down, sounds like a noisy gang of boys, playing a rousing team sport of some kind. Mr. Slatescreech at the Fredericton school said that these are metaphors. I think metaphors are good ways of giving spirits some meaningful form. It’s very important to be able to picture spirits. Otherwise they are just feelings and we can’t relate to them in any real way.”

She recalled once in Littleton watching an old man carving a piece of wood. She asked him “How do you know what to carve?” and he said “I carve what the piece of wood wants me to carve - whatever I see wanting to emerge, I help it to emerge.” But first the carver needed to get a picture in his mind. Only then can you turn it into something more tangible. “Like for example turning the sights and sounds of the water into poetry....”

Abbi got up again and continued on.

“I’d better start back. I still have to pick some berries for Mrs. Loggerman....”

She climbed the path up the valley side again. She

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returned to where she had left her books, bag, and berry-picking basket.

It was a very good place to speak to *Saqteminimusis* because the noise of the river was fainter.

“*Saqteminimusis!* I’m here again!” she shouted.

“...HERE AGAIN!” replied the echo with the girl voice.

In a normal voice Abbi continued: “I wonder if *Saqteminimusis* is the best name for the girl spirit. But I don’t know any Malitset Indian words for other names.” She stopped and thought a moment and nodded. “I’m already getting used to picturing a spirit girl travelling through the blackberry patches like breezes. Calling her ‘Little Blackberry’ which Mr. Loggerman said was *Saqteminimusis* in the Maliseet language, seems perfect!”. She gazed into the distant opposite side of the valley and imagined her among the bushes swaying in the breeze going from bush to bush with a large wicker berry picking basket. She pictured her in an old-time Indian dress of deerskin, with long black hair and a feather in her hair. For an instant, some swaying of the leaves made her think she actually saw something.

“Is that you, *Saqteminimusis* picking berries on the ridge on the opposite side?” Abbi called.

“ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE?” was the reply.

“Yes.” Abbi shouted.

“YES!” the echo, replied as if affirming what Abbi imagined.

Abbi was learning to phrase her sentences so that the final words when echoed back could also sound like a reply. It made *Saqteminimusis* seem more real. Suddenly she thought she heard:

“WHERE ARE YOU GOING ABBI?”

Abbi was startled, like someone who had seen a ghost. That was not an echo! Was that a real spirit? Or did she imagine it from the sound of the wind?

“Are you a real spirit?” Abbi stuttered.

“... . . . A REAL SPIRIT?” came the reply.

The echoing was back to normal.

What had happened just then? Was her mind playing tricks on her, or had something real occurred? How much of the spirit world was out there, and how much was in her head? Is there a difference?

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Back at her learning spot, she sat down and opened the books she had temporarily left behind. Combining with her exploration and what she remembered from her adoptive Papa reciting *The Song of Hiawatha* to his children, Abbi come to the conclusion that everything the Indian did had some dialogue with or reference to spirits of one kind or another. Even if you washed your face, the spirit of the water was involved! One could wash one's face very quickly to get it clean so as to do other things, but also one could indulge in it very deeply and have a deep dialogue with the water and soap.

“What more can I discover about *manitos* in these books?”

She decided to thumb through Mr. Schoolcraft's book. This book was written for the general public a year after Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*, which borrowed from his writings. It was called *The Myth of Hiawatha and Other Oral Legends, Mythological and Allegoric, of the North American Indians*.¹⁵ It was easy to read compared to his very serious books, that her adoptive Papa had as well.

She began at the front, paying particular attention to footnotes in which he explained things in the legend stories. The book began with the legends of *Manabozho* (*Nanabozho*) which Longfellow had interpreted as Hiawatha, even though, as her Papa had told her, Hiawatha was actually an Iroquois word.

“Here are the stories about *Manabozho*, at the front of Mr. Schoolcraft's book! Look, here is almost an entire page of footnotes. It seems to be about spirits. ...hmm...It is about fasts....like Hiawatha had in one of the stories...What does he say?..... the footnote relates to a legend where an old woman tells someone to have a fast before going to war... And here is what this footnote says:

“*Fasts. The ritual of fasting is one of the most deep-seated and universal in the Indian ritual. It is practiced among all the American tribes, and is deemed by them essential to their success in life in every situation. No young man is fitted and prepared to begin the career of life*

¹⁵ *The Myth of Hiawatha and Other Oral Legends, Mythological and Allegoric, of the North American Indians*. Henry Schoolcraft, 1856 was a small book written for the general public in response to the popularity of *The Song of Hiawatha* 1855, by Longfellow

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until he has accomplished his great fast. Seven days appear to have been the ancient maximum limit of endurance, and the success of the devotee is inferred from the length of continued abstinence for which he is known to have attained. These fasts are anticipated by youth as one of the most important events of life. They are awaited with interest, prepared for with solemnity, and endured with self-devotion bordering on the heroic. Character is thought to be fixed from this period, and the primary fast, thus prepared for and successfully established, seems to hold that relative importance to subsequent years that is attached to a public profession of religious faith in civilized communities. It is at this period that young men and young women 'see visions and dream dreams,' and fortune or misfortune is predicted from the guardian spirit chosen during this, to them, religious ordeal . . .

"Oh. I didn't know it was significant for young people. And it is for girls as well as boys. . . . I must read more:

"The hallucinations of the mind are taken for divine inspiration. The effect is deeply felt and strongly impressed on the mind; too deeply, indeed, to ever be obliterated in after life. The father in the circle of his lodge, the hunter in the pursuit of the chase, and the warrior in the field of battle, think of the guardian genius which they fancy to accompany them, and trust his power and benign influence under every circumstance. This genius is the absorbing theme of their silent meditations, and stands to them in all respects in place of the Christian's hope, with the single difference that, however deeply mused upon, the name is never uttered, and every circumstance connected with its selection, and the devotion paid to it, is most studiously and professedly concealed even from their nearest friends. . . .

"That means when the boy or girl selects his or her guardian spirit, it remains private and personal. . . .

"Fasts in subsequent life appear to have for their object a renewal of powers and virtues which they attribute to the rite. And they are observed more frequently by those who strive to preserve unaltered the ancient state of society among them, or by men who assumed austere habits for the purpose of acquiring influence in the tribe, or as preparatives for war or some extraordinary feat. It is

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not known that there is any fixed day observed as a general fast. So far as a rule is followed, a general fast seems to have been observed in the spring, and to have preceded the general and customary fasts of that season.

“It will be inferred from these fasts, that the Indians believe fasts to be very meritorious. They are deemed most acceptable to the Manitoes or spirits whose influence and protection they wish to engage or preserve. And it is thus clearly deducible, that a very large proportion of the time devoted by the Indians to secret worship, so to say, is devoted to these guardian or intermediate spirits, and not to the Great Spirit or Creator.”

Abbi had come to the end of the long footnote about fasts. It told her so much she did not know, especially the part where it was a special custom for young Indians like her!

“I’m a young Indian. Maybe I have to have a fast!”

“YOU HAVE TO PICK BERRIES NOW FOR MRS LOGGERMAN!” came a voice.

Abbi looked up. Where did that come from? Was she imagining it, or was it the girl spirit she had befriended?

It scared her a little, so she quickly obeyed. She packed the books into her canvas bag, which went over her shoulder with a strap, picked up Mrs. Loggerman’s berry-picking basket and set off to the blackberry patches.

She scanned the bushes for any sign of a bear, and found none, so she began picking. There were plenty of them, and she filled up the basket in no time. She could not linger, as she had spent much time exploring, and headed along the ridge and then the path back to the Loggerman’s.

Arriving back, she found Mrs. Loggerman in the kitchen part. She handed the blackberries to her.

“These blackberries wish to be put inside a pie, Mrs. Loggerman,” said Abbi.

“They do? And how did you determine that?”

“They told me as I was picking them.”

“They did?”

“Yes, Mrs. Loggerman. Today I walked around everywhere trying to tune in to all the nature spirits around me. And in the Indian view, there is spirit in everything. When the basket was full, the berries seemed to say to me they wanted to be in a pie. I am quite sure

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that I heard the blackberries tell me in a high chorus of voices that they wished to be put inside a pie.”

Mrs. Loggerman laughed. “Very well. I suppose we have to respect the wishes of the blackberry spirits. Inside a pie it will be, instead of making jam.”

“Also, Mrs. Loggerman. I think I should have a fast.

“Have a what?”

“A very long footnote in Mr. Schoolcraft’s book says that Indian youths have fasts, living by themselves and waiting for a dream or vision that reveals to them their path in life. Losing my Papa, having to move, learning I am Indian, being sent up here ...has made me very confused. Should I become an Indian, or not, and how. A fast will help me determine who I am and where I am to go.”

“Well, let us speak more about that later. It sounds like a major undertaking. Now help me make the crust for the pie, seeing as the blackberries are insisting they become a pie filling.”

“Yes, Mrs. Loggerman.”

They all had a wonderful fresh pie that suppertime.

In the evening before bed, Abbi made notes about the realizations she had made during the day about *manito*’s.

WEDNESDAY – STUDYING INDIAN LEGENDS

Wednesday began the same as Tuesday. Abbi sprung out of bed the moment she saw light coming in the window, put on her shoes and ran down to the beaver pond to watch the early morning activity. There was no wind, and aside from the sound of falling water in the distance beside the sawmill, it was quiet. She could hear the sounds of nature in the morning better than she could later. A beaver must have noticed her, because she heard a slap of its tail.

“Now they are all wary of me. I might as well run back and get the fire and porridge started.”

She ran back, started the fire, went upstairs to get dressed, this time barely having time to say ‘good morning’ to Mr. Loggerman, and then out to the barn to milk Annabelle and fetch eggs from the chickens.

After breakfast there were the chores. She helped Mrs. Loggerman enthusiastically as she knew the sooner they

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were done, the sooner she could be free to return to the ridge to continue her programme of learning about Indians.

“What are you studying today, Abbi? I forgot what you told me about your schedule.”

“Today I plan to study about Indian legends and stories. I will read from *The Song of Hiawatha* and the two books I have by Mr. Schoolcraft.”

“But how do you know these books which you have inherited from your former Papa, are proper books to learn from?”

“Henry Wadsworth Longfellow who wrote *The Song of Hiawatha* used to be a professor at Harvard, and the other books are by a man whose last name is ‘Schoolcraft’. How can his books be anything else than suitable, if his name has the word “School” in it? Did you know his ancestor ran a school in Albany? ¹⁶ One book of the two I brought is easy to read. Papa read from it at bedtime to the children often. It is called *The Myth of Hiawatha and Other Oral Legends*. It has many notes in it about Indian culture. But mostly Mr. Schoolcraft tells legends he collected from my people, some of which Henry Wadsworth Longfellow used to design Hiawatha’s adventures in *The Song of Hiawatha*. It isn’t too difficult to read that. And it is genuine because Mr. Schoolcraft’s wife was half-Ojibwa and probably helped him collect the stories, and make sure he got everything right.”

“Well it sounds like a good book then if his wife was half-Indian.”

“Yes. Her mother was the daughter of a chief, which means she was an Indian Princess, and her father was an Irish trapper named Mr. Johnson. I can therefore identify with her because I’m also half-and-half. According to my adoptive Mama, my mother was Ojibwa, and my father was Pictish, like I told your before.”

“Well it sounds Mr. Schoolcraft’s book is a good one to study from, then. It will be very knowledgeable and

¹⁶ Henry Rowe Schoolcraft’s British ancestor of many generations ago, was James Calcraft, an educated military man, who eventually settled at Albany, N.Y. During his old age, James Calcraft conducted a large school, the first English school in that then frontier part of the country. This appears to be the reason for the change of the family name from Calcraft to Schoolcraft.

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truthful.”

“I brought another book that I saw my adoptive Papa reading, but it is much more difficult. It is very difficult to read because it is about everything he did – that Mr. Schoolcraft did. There are lots of American government and geology and geography things he did. But I found the part where he went to live beside the Ojibwa people at Sault Ste Marie, on the American side, easier to read and more interesting. He served as the Indian Agent for the American government, to make sure there was peace and that traders were properly licensed and did not bring in any whiskey. He went there in July 1822, so things have probably changed considerably since then. I wonder if my mother came from there. My adoptive mother, Jenine, only knew that my mother came from *Gitche Gumee*, from Lake Superior. Mr. Schoolcraft mentions *Gitche Gumee* because it is right west of Sault Ste Marie.”

“It seems you have plenty to study from. How will you know where to begin?”

“I already know some legends from when my Papa read from *The Myth of Hiawatha and Other Oral Legends, Mythological and Allegoric, of the North American Indians*. But when he read it before I didn't know I was Indian. Now when I read them again, I will picture myself as one of the people in the legend. It will be like reading the legends from a completely new perspective. It will all seem new.”

When she was free that afternoon, she ran out to the ridge – a fifteen minute walk – and after saying her hello's to the blackberry girl spirit of the ridge opposite, she sat down to begin today's studying.

She opened the book and began by studying the contents carefully, including the contents page and preface.

“This was published not just in America, at Philadelphia, but also in London, England,” she said to herself. “It is amazing that Indian legends are also of interest all the way across the Atlantic Ocean. Here is one that isn't very long. I don't recall Papa reading it. It is called *Shingebiss, an Allegory of Self-Reliance*. I think self-reliance is very important, especially for people living out here in the wilderness, without other people for miles around. I will begin:

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“There was once a Shingebiss, the name of the fall duck living alone, in a solitary lodge, on the shores of the deep bay of a lake in the coldest winter weather. . This story seems to be about a duck. The ice had formed on the water, and he had but four logs of wood to keep his fire. Each of these would, however, burn a month, and as there were but four cold winter months, they were sufficient to carry him through till spring.

“Shingebiss was hardy and fearless, and cared for no one. He would go out during the coldest day, and seek for places where flags and rushes grew through the ices, and plucking them up with his bill, would dive through the openings in quest for fish.. In this way he found plenty of food, while others were starving, and he went home daily to his lodge, dragging strings of fish after him, on the ice. . Kabebonicca (which is a personification of the Northeast direction) observed him, and felt a little piqued at his perseverance and good luck in defiance of the severest blasts of wind he could send from the northwest. ‘Why! this is a wonderful man,’ said he; ‘he does not mind the cold, and appears to be happy and contented as if it were the month of June. I will try whether he cannot be mastered.’ He poured forth tenfold colder blasts, and drifts of snow, so that it was next to impossible to live in the open air. Still, the fire of Shingebiss did not go out: he wore but a single strip of leather around his body, and he was seen, in the worst weather, searching the shores for rushes, and carrying home fish.

“ ‘I shall go visit him,’ said Kabebonicca, one day, as he saw Shingebiss dragging along a quantity of fish. And, accordingly, that very night, he went to the door of his lodge. Meantime, Shingebiss had cooked his fish, and finished his meal, and was lying, partly on his side, before the fire, singing his songs. After Kabebonicca had come to the door, and stood listening there, he sang as follows: -

Ka	Neej	Ka	Neej
Be	In	Be	In
Bon	In	Bon	In
Oc	Ee.	Oc	Ee.
Ca	We-ya!	Ca	We-ya!

“Mr. Schoolcraft now explains Indian language. It will

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be useful when I study language tomorrow. This is how Ojibwa song really sounded, not like when it is put into English form like Longfellow did!" She read: "*The number of words, in this song, are few and simple, but they are made up from compounds, which carry the whole of their original meanings, and are rather suggestive of the ideas floating in the mind than actual expressions of these ideas. Literally, he sings: -*

Spirit of the Northwest - you are but my fellow man"

Abbi found this explanation of Indian song worthy of pause and reflection. "Indian song is *suggestive of ideas*. I think he means that besides the strict meaning of the whole word there are meanings inside it that come from the smaller ideas in the way it is constructed. *Being broken into syllables, to correspond with a simple chant, and by the power of intonation and repetition, with a chorus, these words are expanded into melodious utterance, if we may be allowed the term, and may be thus rendered*. Unfortunately when it is translated into English, all this is lost. You have to know the Indian language to understand. Here is a translation of the song into English...

*Windy god, I know your plan,
You are but my fellow man;
Blow you may your coldest breeze,
Shingebiss you cannot freeze.
Sweep the strongest wind you can,
Shingebiss is still your man;
Heigh! for life - and he! for bliss,
Who so free as Shingebiss?"*

Abbi now understood what her adoptive Papa had meant when he said that English verse, like that in *The Song of Hiawatha*, didn't properly translate the nature of Indian song - English simply is so completely different!

Abbi continued reading. "*The hunter knew that Kabebonicca was at his door, for he felt his cold and strong breath; but he kept on singing his songs, and affected utter indifference. At length Kabebonicca entered, and took his seat on the opposite side of the lodge. But Shingebiss did not regard, or notice him. He got up, as if nobody were present, and taking his poker, pushed the log, which made his fire burn brighter, repeating, as he sat down again: -*

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You are but my fellow man

Very soon the tears began to flow down Kabebonicca's cheeks, which increased so fast, that, presently, he said to himself: 'I cannot stand this - I must go out.' He did so, and left Shingebiss to his songs; but resolved to freeze up all the flag orifices, and make the ice thick, so that he could not get any more fish. At last, Kabebonicca was compelled to give up the contest. 'He must be aided by some Monedo,' said he. 'I can neither freeze him nor starve him; he is a very singular being - I will let him alone.' ”

That wasn't a long story. She thought about what was the message of the story. "I think this story is about how man can cope with winter cold by being inventive and resolute."

Abbi closed the book, and put it back into her canvas bag along with the Hiawatha book. She conversed loudly with the echo girl again, and when she had had enough, she took Mrs. Loggerman's berry basket and went to pick more berries today. There was now enough collected that perhaps tomorrow the chores would involve making the first batch of blackberry preserves.

She liked reading the legends, They were also entertaining, so she read another legend before bed.

"Tomorrow," she thought when she blew out the oil lamp and got under the covers, "I will begin to learn Indian words."

THURSDAY: LEARNING ABOUT LANGUAGE

The day dawned bright and fresh again. Abbi rushed to visit the beavers and begin the morning chores. The more she became used to the routine the faster she became, sometimes running past Mr. Loggerman now with only a quick 'Good Morning.'

Today when the chores were done, the plan was that she would continue her Indian studies by learning Indian words. She knew there was at least a big vocabulary at the back of *The Song of Hiawatha*, She had not particularly wanted to learn the words before she knew she was Indian. Now that she knew, she wanted to learn them all by heart.

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When Mrs. Loggerman asked her about her plans, Abbi replied: "I want to start an Ojibwa Vocabulary, just like Mr. Schoolcraft did in the winter of 1822. Since the real Ojibwa of my mother's origins are thousands of miles from here and I can't talk to them, I will write down all the words I can find from the books. But since this is Maliseet country, I want to also start a vocabulary of Maliseet words. Mr. Loggerman has already taught me the word *qapit* and *saqteminimisis*."

"Well, be careful about asking Mr. Loggerman for Maliseet words. He only knows from his Maliseet workers who come work for him sometimes, and he doesn't pronounce them like they do. Do you have enough to study from? Do the books you have tell enough about the language?"

"Well yes for the Ojibwa words. *The Song of Hiawatha* has a long vocabulary at the back. I can begin with that. But Mr. Schoolcraft's books have notes about the Ojibwa language too. But alas, I will have to find some other means to learn Maliseet words later. But since my mother was Ojibwa from *Gitche Gumee*, the Ojibwa language will be most important to me anyway. I already know what I will do in regards to the vocabulary in Mr. Longfellow's book. I have to study the contents of Mr. Schoolcraft's books to find passages about language. In some places he talks about when he began to learn the Ojibwa language of his wife's family, and what he discovered from the English point of view. I will imagine I am just like him."

"That sounds like a good plan," agreed Mrs. Loggerman as she worked.

"And like in real school, I want to write down what I learn. Mrs. Loggerman, do you have a quill and ink I could use? I only have the pencil. And paper? I want to write a vocabulary of Indian words and add to it over time."

"Yes, there is some on the desk in the living room that Mr. Loggerman and Jeffery use for business and accounts and for our correspondence with Madam Woodrow's company from time to time – although Jeffery is usually the one who writes it. His writing and penmanship is very good. But wouldn't a graphite pencil do?"

"Yes for notes, but for my main list, ink is best. It won't smudge from always referring to it."

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“Very well. Take the small bottle of ink and a quill. And don’t forget to take the little basket again to pick blackberries.”

“Yes, Mrs. Loggerman.”

And so Abbi was off.

It became a ritual to first find the echo place and speak to the girl spirit, *Saqteminimisis*, to let her know she was back.

“Saqteminimisis! It is Abbi. I’ve returned.”

“..ABBI...RETURNED”

“Today I will try to learn some vocabulary of my people, the Ojibwa of *Gitche Gumeé*.”

“...OJIBWA OF GITCHE GUMEE”

“My teacher in Fredericton school said the best way to learn is to write it down. And I have come with pencil and pen and ink and writing paper to write down grammar pointers and some words.”

“..AND SOME WORDS..”

Abbi talked some more to the *Saqteminimisis* spirit, and then began serious study. This time she would spend most of her time looking at *The Song of Hiawatha*. She had the attractively illustrated version of her Papa’s. She turned to the back to where she knew Longfellow had put the list of the words used in the poem. But she would leave writing the vocabulary until later. First she wanted to read from the other book what Mr. Schoolcraft had written about the Ojibwa language when he was an ‘Indian Agent’ near Sault Ste Marie some decades ago. She opened to the page she had marked with a sheet of paper, and began to read, writing down in point form whatever new he said.

She quietly read. It was difficult because it was written for adults. And it was almost like a journal and points about grammar came up only when he devoted time to investigating it. But she didn’t mind it was a journal because reading about his experiences, especially his relationship with the Indians there, was interesting in itself. She made notes in pencil on the paper.

“Oh here, Mr. Schoolcraft says he could not find any proper information in the European world about the language at all...”

Abbi had said it loud enough that it echoed.
“...LANGUAGE AT ALL!”

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“Yes, *Saqteminimosis*, Mr. Schoolcraft really wanted to understand the grammar. He explained that up until he looked into it, every outsider who learned the Ojibwa language learned common phrases directly and never learned how the language was constructed. He had the hardest time finding any books that explored the grammar. All he found were phrase books – translations for entire phrases and sentences. That doesn’t allow anyone who doesn’t know the language to extend their speech to anything new outside the phrase books. Understanding grammar helps us to understand the phrases or sentences we read or hear, and form new ones of our own, without our ever reading or hearing it before. If I learn grammar, then I can make up my own phrases. That would be wonderful!”

“..BE WONDERFUL!”

When she had read a considerable number of pages, she felt it was time to write some pointers down properly in pen and ink. She could write smaller and neater with it, and summarize in point form. She began, talking to herself as she did:

“Point 1. Like most languages Mr. Schoolcraft discovered there has to be agreement between verbs and nouns in number and tense and so on. I’ll write ‘agreement as in most languages’. Point 2. In terms of gender, there is no gender in terms of male and female, it’s between animate and inanimate – whether something is to be living or not. I’ll write ‘animate vs. inanimate’ I suspect that is because everything either has a spirit or not.”

She wrote down these two points.

“Point three. Mr. Schoolcraft said that all languages have ways of changing verbs to nouns and vice versa. All languages have ways of doing that. In Ojibwa verbs are converted to nouns by adding *-win*. I will write ‘verb to noun with ending *-win*’ as in *kegido* ‘to speak’ becomes ‘speech’ with *kegido-win*’ which was one of Schoolcraft’s examples.”

She wrote it.

“Now what else did he discover? Point four. ‘We’ comes in two forms, one includes the speaker and the other doesn’t. That’s an unusual one. ‘We but not myself’ versus ‘we including myself!’ I will write ‘Two versions for ‘we’”

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She wrote it.

“Next, about pronouns. They are completely attached to nouns instead of being separate. For example *os* signifies ‘father’, *nos* ‘my father’, and *kos* ‘thy father’. I’ll have to look into that more. English on the other hand separates things into separate elements, and doesn’t tie them together so much. So point five will be ‘pronouns attached to nouns, *n* seems to mean ‘my’ and *k* seems to mean ‘your’.”

She wrote it.

“Schoolcraft also wrote that in the Ojibwa language two good words that are used are *awanan* and *wagonan* which mean ‘who’ and ‘what’ separately.”

She wrote it.

Her hand was becoming sore from writing, so Abbi sat back and relaxed. She listened to the wind in the pine needles and the murmur of water in the distance. She was tempted to call it a day and continue with berry picking. But she was determined today. This was her summertime schooling, and she wanted to at least start a vocabulary too. What is the good of grammar if you don’t also have words?! She sat up again and now opened again the fancy *The Song of Hiawatha* book and turned to the end where the vocabulary was.

So with Longfellow’s book in her lap open to the page where his vocabulary began, and a sheet of paper on top of the opposite page, she dipped her quill into the bottle of ink on the rock beside her and began writing in her best penmanship,

She now became so studious and quiet that a robin landed on her straw hat that Mrs. Loggerman had loaned her to keep the sun off her head. She didn’t even notice until it flew away and she heard a flutter.

“That bird is in Mr. Longfellow’s vocabulary *Opechee*’ Goodbye, *Opechee*! Now I will copy his vocabulary...

Vocabulary from H.W. Longfellow’s book:

Adjidau’mo – the red squirrel

Ahdeek’ – the reindeer

Ahmeek’ – the beaver”

“Oh,” she noted. “I was writing it ‘AMIK’ earlier. ‘AMIK’ Papa said is how you write it with Latin pronunciation... But Longfellow writes it in ways that suits English for

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example using ee for the long ‘I’ sound...I could rewrite everything in the other way later...I’ll copy it in Longfellow’s way first. And I already know the Maliseet word for ‘beaver’ – Mr. Loggerman told me – *qapit* I will put that word beside it, noting it is Maliseet. And also the word for ‘blackberry’ – but Mr. Longfellow doesn’t have that one...”



She continued:

“Apuk’wa – a bulrush

Baim-wa’wa – the sound of the thunder

Bemah’gut – the grape-vine

Chemaun’ – a birch canoe

Chetowaik’ – the plover

Chibia’bos – musician; ruler of the Land of Spirits”

“Oh my hand is already getting sore, and I have only reached ‘C’. This is going to be ha-ard!”

She sighed and forged on. An hour and a half later she had it done, all very neat like in her best school assignments.

Abbi had by now learned that these words were mainly from the Ojibwa language from the Lake Superior area. Since that was where – according to Jenine – her natural mother, Paula Pictford, had come from, it was meaningful for her to learn these words. (Abbi didn’t have the slightest idea that Jenine had entirely made up the notion that she had an Ojibwa mother from Lake Superior. Therefore, it’s possible that Abbi’s mother wasn’t from

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Lake Superior after all! It will be yet a while before Abbi learns the truth about where she is really from.)

Finally her word list taken from *The Song of Hiawatha* was done. “There,” said Abbi out loud to no one in particular. “That is the vocabulary from Longfellow’s poem. I will gather more words from the other books. I have left space to the right side of each to add other spellings and words in other Indian languages.”

She felt satisfied she had satisfied her programme for doing Indian language studies on Thursday. She wanted to continue studying the books, but a whole afternoon had gone by – Mrs. Loggerman would be expecting her back with a basket full of blackberries. Besides, her wrist was very sore from all the writing. She would continue language studies next Thursday.

“Maybe by next week I will have learned some Maliseet words that Mr. Loggerman knows and add them. I expect that *Saqteminimisis* is a Maliseet girl spirit and she would like me to learn some Maliseet too. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if I could speak some Maliseet sentences to her?”

She closed her bottle of ink, put her books and paper and pen into the canvas bag she had obtained from Mrs. Loggerman to carry the books and writing tools. Writing out Longfellow’s glossary was a major achievement, she felt. This was a good solid first step to learning Indian languages. It would be unlikely there would be that much writing, all at once, in future.

She now picked blackberries very fast, not even stopping to snack, so that Mrs. Loggerman would not be disappointed when she returned with a brimming basketful.

FRIDAY – INDIAN CRAFTS

Abbi couldn’t wait for the next day’s learning. In her inventive summertime self-schooling schedule, on Friday she could actually try to make things. There was so much Indian she could attempt to make. But there were no clear instructions in any of the books, so she had to figure it out by trial and error.

When the afternoon came and all the little girls were set to napping, Abbi said: “Today is when I study Indian crafts,

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Mrs. Loggerman, I would like to make something in an Indian way.”

“Have you decided on anything.”

“Something that is found in the legend book by Mr. Schoolcraft is the sweat lodge. I am wondering if I can make one.”

“What’s that?”

“From what I remember, it is a small wigwam like a dome covered really well to make it airtight. Rocks are made very hot in a fire outside, and then brought inside. One sits there and becomes very sweaty, and then with pores open, they jump into a lake or river to become clean and cool down. That’s what a sweat lodge is, Mrs. Loggerman.”

“Ahh,” replied Mrs. Loggerman. “It’s like a sauna. The Finns have been doing that too for thousands of years – except these days they have it in a small tall log building. The practice is called a ‘sauna’.”

“How do you know about that, Mrs. Loggerman?”

“Well my father was Finnish as I said before. That’s why his name was Koski. It means ‘Falls’. He was ‘Mr. Falls’. But my mother was not Finnish, so I have become half-and-half.”

“Like me, Mrs. Loggerman. I’m half-and-half too.”

“Well,” continued Mrs. Loggerman, “the sauna that he built down there by the river, is nowadays only used for smoking and storing meat – meat from the salmon caught mostly in spring, or moose and deer from hunting in fall and winter. We salt it first, then with the smoke coating it lasts a long time in the cool dry storehouse. But now and then I sometimes wish to enjoy a sauna like when I was a girl, but it is so much trouble to remove all the meat hanging there inside, and to heat it up to a high temperature; and nobody else around here understands the custom, and it is too much work unless there are many people participating. Well, anyway, back when I was little, we did exactly the same as the sweat lodge you described– we sweated and then washed and jumped in the river. You get very, very, very, clean that way because your pores open right up and release all the dirt on your skin.”

“Oh, you make me even more want to build one, Mrs.

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Loggerman. Since a sweat lodge is small and easier to heat up, we can both use it, and the babies too.”

“Never mind about me, Abbi. I’ve become used to being without. But do you know how to build one?”

“Not yet, but you have made me determined to build one. It doesn’t have to be very big – just enough that I can crawl in and sit there in the warmth. I just have to make a frame from bendable branches and twine to tie them together. I could get a handsaw from Jeffery to cut the branches, and some twine. I would bend them over so that it has a shape like a dome. When that is done, I only have to make it airtight. Maybe there are some large pieces of leather or fur. Or I can pile fir branches and dirt over top.”

“Well if you think you can do it.”

“I will build it beside the log storehouse near the river that you said was a sauna once, so that it will be like mother and daughter sweat lodges. And the river is handy from both. And then if I have a fast, I can use it to make myself clean and pure for the fast as well. That was the Indian custom.”

“The fast? Oh yes, we have to talk about your wanting to do the Indian fast. Well we still have to talk about that later. You’ll have to explain it to me in detail.”

Thus when all the chores were done for the day Abbi set to work building her sweat-lodge wigwam. Cutting the slender bendable poles from new birch trees that had sprung up in the meadow was easy. The hard part was fashioning them together. First she stuck the ends in the ground in a circle, and bent them over, tying the ends of opposite branches together. She didn’t make it taller than herself. It didn’t have to be. A sweat lodge has supposed to be small and confined. Then she added sideways branches all around. Inside in the middle she dug a hole in the sand, into which the hot stones would be placed.

She stepped back and was a little disappointed – it wasn’t a very neat dome; but quite shapeless. At least it didn’t fall down. She went back to the house to ask Mrs. Loggerman about how to make it airtight. “It isn’t easy to make it airtight, Mrs. Loggerman. What it really needs is a very large piece of leather like a blanket. Either that or use birch bark and fir branches and then pile dirt on top.”

“You could use a tarpaulin like the workers put over the

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lumber.”

“But, Mrs. Loggerman, that would not be Indian.”

“Mr. Loggerman has tanned deer hides, but he wants me to make him a vest from them. Why not use birch bark and branches and soil.”

“You’re probably right, Mrs. Loggerman. My frame is quite shapeless with points sticking up. I don’t think anything will sit smoothly unless I make the frame better. I will use birch bark and fir branches, and then put sods of grass and dirt. A large piece of birch bark can serve for the doorway. It doesn’t have to be absolutely airtight. At least, aside from using twine, it will be made of all natural materials like the Indians had.”

“Be careful you don’t add so much to the roof that it collapses.”

“I won’t.”

Thus Abbi continued for an hour more, and Mrs. Loggerman came to see, leading the older girls who could walk.

“My, my, my,” said Mrs. Loggerman. “It looks like a small mound.”

“But there is a doorway and at least three small people can sit inside. I will try it out next time we do laundry. I can heat up stones in the fire we use for heating the water for the diapers.”

Abbi brushed the dirt from her hands. Another successful day in her schooling programme. “Oh now I must go and pick berries, Mrs. Loggerman,” she said remembering.

“You can skip today, seeing as you stayed around here and didn’t go out to the ridge today.”

THE WEEKEND ARRIVES: CATCHUP AND TESTING

Finally Saturday had arrived for Abbi only to discover that Saturday in summer was almost like a regular weekday. The workers came and the sawmill was in operation.

“It’s because here in the wilderness,” explained Mrs. Loggerman when they fed her girls breakfast, “and I expect in other rural areas, summer is valuable. Outside work can get done easily, whereas in winter it is difficult.

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That is also why we make the best use of daylight too, and the workday is longer. However, Sunday is holy, and that is the day off, and Saturday work ends early so that folks can unwind and prepare for Sunday.”

“Does everyone go to church, then?”

“I suppose if they live near Pinewood, where there is a small church. Otherwise folks say grace at dinner and read their bible, and that is the sum of what we do religion-wise. But on significant holy days, everyone makes an effort, even if many miles away, to gather at the church.”

“What shall I do today then, after all the chores are over? I haven’t planned to do any Indian studies for Saturday since in regular school students are free on Saturday.”

“Well, around here there is no school on Saturday either – when school in Pinewood is in session of course, which is not until September. That is I think so that children can help their elders on Saturday. So you are correct in not having Indian studies for Saturday, as you wouldn’t have regular school either.”

“I haven’t figured out what I will do today when I am free after chores. I know, perhaps I should do what I planned for Monday, to catch up.”

“Catch up? But you have only begun.”

“Before I look for things to do for fun on Saturdays, I think I should complete my schedule of Indian studies. I missed Monday, which I designed to learn what animals have to teach humans, since I only thought of my plan of studying different things on different days Monday afternoon. I would feel better if I did Monday today, so that next Monday would begin my second round of studies.”

“Oh yes, you only began your schedule of Indian learning on Tuesday...What do you plan for your animal studies?”

“Since I have every day visited the beavers first thing in the morning, I think I will start with the beavers at the beaver pond. They are used to me by now, and not too afraid to make an appearance and even come close. I want to observe the beavers, and see what they have to teach.”

“Well let us get the babies fed and so on, and then you can go.”

So with the sawmill noise going on just like on the

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regular weekdays, Abbi headed in the afternoon to the beaver pond, and sat down at a spot not far from where she knew they came and went. They were used to her by now and not afraid.

“Beavers are very smart,” said Abbi to herself “They are just like farmers. Instead of cutting down trees, however, they flood a low-lying area, so the trees die. But they can also kill trees by simply gnawing away the bark of the trunk. With the trees dead, the sunlight reaches the ground and helps a wonderful meadow to grow. The beavers like the young shoots that come up. That is what they eat. They harvest them like farmers, and drag them in front of their lodges underwater, and then they have a supply to eat all winter long. They only eat the bark part, however. There are lots of lessons for humans in this. Let me enumerate them. First, if I wanted to farm an area, and did not have an axe to cut down trees, I could build a dam and flood a valley, so that the trees died. Then, if I did not want to grow marsh plants, but dry ground plants, I could break the dam and drain the valley again. When a beaver dam breaks naturally and is abandoned, the result is a ‘beaver meadow’. But a human can do it all deliberately. That produces a wonderful meadow in which I could plant whatever plants I want to grow. The dead trunks would still be standing, but they would not be blocking the sun since the dead trunks would not have leaves.”

Abbi hadn't brought a quill and bottle of ink this time, but she had the graphite pencil and sheets of paper, to make notes on.

“Now, what other lesson do we see here? Well, if the beaver finds great nourishment from the bark of certain trees, well that means in an emergency humans can eat it too, perhaps; even though for humans it may taste awful. But we must always be careful. Sometimes animals develop a tolerance for some plants and humans lack it. But as far as beaver food is concerned, Mrs. Loggerman said that in an emergency people in the past have boiled and eaten the inner bark of poplar. The third lesson is of course the same one other rodents demonstrate – collecting and storing food for winter. Animals that don't collect and store food, do something else – they build up fat on their bodies. They get as fat as they can in the

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summer and then hibernate and live off the fat through the winter. Humans can do both. We can store food, and we can eat a lot before winter comes. I will write this down. At the top I will give a heading 'Lessons Taught By Beavers'. There. Now I will sit here some more. You never know what else you might discover."

Just then a beaver came along, dragging a large branch. Swish, swish, the branch went past Abbi, and then got caught on a stump. Well the beaver stopped, went back and bit off the part of the branch that was getting caught, and then resumed his dragging.

"See there is another lesson. I will write it down. Lesson number four: 'If when dragging something with lots of branches, and one part gets caught on something, it is easier to just snap it off that to struggle loosening it.' Oh, I already know another lesson. I already learned it earlier. Lesson five: 'When making a dam to hold back water, create a matrix of small branches and twigs inside larger ones, and then seal the matrix with mud. Twigs by themselves are porous and mud by itself is fluid. If we wanted, humans could build enormous dams by the beaver method. And of course to make the dam permanent, encourage grasses and bushes to grow on top, because then the roots further bind it all together."

The beaver was about ready to drag the branch into the water. He stopped and turned to look at Abbi. Or maybe that was Mrs. Amik. She didn't know how to tell the difference. He tilted his head and looked at her as if asking "What are you doing Abbi?"

"I'm observing you, Mr. or Mrs. Amik, to see what I can learn from you."

The beaver seemed to find that answer acceptable, and continued into the water, pulling the poplar branch into the water behind him.

ABBI'S SWEAT LODGE WORKS

That evening at supper, Abbi reported for dinner conversation, what she had discovered about beavers that would be useful for humans. Mr. Loggerman liked Abbi's insights. He too knew beaver behaviour but had not thought about how it could be applied in human enterprise.

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“Well, there is the saying ‘busy as a beaver’,” said Mr. Loggerman. “And I have heard a beaver described as the engineer of the wilderness. Of all the animals, the beaver does most construction – he constructs a dam, and a quite elaborate lodge.”

“Yes that is why I have developed a special affection for the beaver,” said Abbi as she helped feed the toddlers, as was her duty at suppertime. “He means so many things. He is even the emblem of Canada. His image was on Canada’s first postage stamp.”

“Well, it was a good idea then,” added Mrs. Loggerman, as she attended to feeding her little ones, “that you chose the beaver as your first subject of your animal studies.”

“Monday I will start a proper week of Indian studies fresh. That means I will start with animal studies this time.”

“What will you study this time?”

“So far I have also developed a relationship with a bear – even though I have only seen his poop and tracks. I don’t expect I’ll see him. I won’t deliberately look for him. I’ll instead study his tracks and poop for ideas. I already got an idea. A bear uses his tongue under some berries to make them drop into his mouth. That shows a good way of picking berries. We can make a scoop similar that catches berries as they drop, and a lip at the front that helps them jar loose.”

“A scoop that tackles the berries like a bear’s mouth? That would be interesting,” said Mr. Loggerman with a laugh as he finished a second helping of mashed potatoes. Potatoes were easy to obtain around here on account of the Irish who came and developed potato farming – where there was soil and not rock, of course.

“I figure that the bear’s mouth has developed by evolution – that is something that according to my Papa, a man named Charles Darwin discovered not long ago – especially to improve eating berries. Therefore we can copy what Nature has perfected. But that is only one thing I have already thought about. I would like to actually watch a bear eat berries and see how his tongue and lips gets the berries. A big bear needs to consume an awful lot to get his stomach full.”

“Well don’t get yourself in harm’s way, Abbi. Even if

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you see a bear, keep your distance.”

“I don’t need to discover everything about the bear right away. I can spread my studies of the bear over the whole summer, making observations as I come across evidence.”

“Tomorrow is Sunday. Have you thought about what you would like to do Sunday, Abbi? Sunday is a day of rest. You should do something that is restful.”

“I haven’t thought of anything. Maybe I can explore the area some more.Sylvia, look at how you have gotten gravy all over you!.....” She proceeded to wipe the gravy off Sylvia’s shirt. When all clean, she continued. “I think maybe I can try out the sweat lodge I built to see if it works, Mrs. Loggerman. It would be thrilling to see if it works.”

Mrs. Loggerman nodded. “I remember when I was little, Sunday was the sauna day. The sauna was about health and it was religious too. My father used to say a prayer to the sauna spirits. He said it in Finnish so I really didn’t understand what he said.”

“Perfect!” exclaimed Abbi. “When I get the sweat lodge going, I can bring all the children inside, as many as can fit at once, and then wash them. Sunday will be a wash day. And you can go in too – although you will have to go alone since it is small.”

“Yes that sounds like it would be enjoyable – and practical as well. You will make me reminisce about the old days when the Koski family had their Sunday sauna in the log building that is now used for storing our smoked and dried foods.”

“Like the corned beef we are eating now?”

“That’s not corned beef, Abbi,” said Mrs. Loggerman. “That is corned moose meat! People around here also hunt a lot.”

“I will read up about how the Indians performed the sweat lodge. I know a little already – hot stones were heated in a fire. And when red hot the stones were rolled with a stick into the sweat lodge. That was how the heat got inside.”

“That is the only way it differs from the sauna. With the sauna, the stones are heated by a fire inside, and then if people wish to be in there rather than something needing

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to be smoked, the fire is put out and the smoke is driven out by creating steam. Then it is breathable for people.”

“Maybe after we have perfected the sweat lodge, you may want to restore the cabin into a sauna, Mrs. Loggerman.”

“It would be nice, but it would be too much work..”

That evening Abbi searched her books for anything she could find about the Ojibwa use of the sauna. She found some details in conjunction with the fasting practice. Before a fast, the Indian cleansed his body and soul in the sweat lodge so that he would be pure and open to all things in the spirit world.

The next day dawned and after the morning routines, Abbi tended to her sweat lodge. If they were also going to wash, then it was wise to heat water in the laundry tub as well as heat some nice big stones for the sweat lodge. She set to work. Mrs. Loggerman had set her Sunday aside for actually enjoying her children, rather than ‘managing’ them. She brought them outside and they watched Abbi do her preparations.

After the laundry tub of water was being heated by a fire, Abbi removed several large stones from the fire, and with some branches rolled them into her little sweat lodge.

“I will try it first,” she told whoever was nearby. Then she removed most of her clothes and went inside, closing a birch bark flap behind her. She sat cross-legged in front of the stones, and felt the heat radiating from them, and she began to perspire. She was happy that the ceiling only inches from the top of her head as she sat, was not collapsing.

“I want to go inside with Abbi,” pleaded Sylvia from her mother.

“Not yet Sylvia. Abbi is first testing it out to see if it works.”

Mrs. Loggerman and all her girls, seated in the nearby grasses, waited and watched.

“Is it fine, Abbi?” Mrs. Loggerman called to Abbi inside.

“It is very fine, Mrs. Loggerman. It is very calming in here. It is like I imagine it to be like when you are in a womb before being born.”

Ten minutes went by and suddenly Abbi emerged and the naked nine year old ran to the river and jumped in.

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When she emerged she said. “And that was analogous to being born!...It worked, Mrs. Loggerman. Now when I need to purify myself, I have a place. I think it is too small for an adult, Mrs. Loggerman. But you can try it if you bend your head down. But I can take Sylvia and Gladis in with me right now, if they are quiet and solemn. You can try it too, Mrs. Loggerman. Maybe I can make another sweat lodge. The first one looks a shapeless mound, but I think I will get better at it with practice.”

“Or we can bring the sauna building back to life one day, make it like it was in the old days,” said Mrs. Loggerman, thinking back to her girlhood.

Abbi brought the toddlers Sylvia and Gladis inside with her, and taught them to be silent and listen to the waterfall and birds.

“It is like a womb in here,” said Abbi. “Think back, Sylvia and Gladis, to before you were born.”

Sylvia and Gladis of course did not understand what Abbi meant. They were simple fascinated by whatever this was that Abbi was doing. And then when Abbi said it was enough, she pushed them all out, and told them to jump in the water. The water was shallow where the Loggermans went to wash. Mrs. Loggerman was there to receive her little ones and soap them up. Might as well use this opportunity to wash the babies – just like when she was a girl and it was sauna day at the Koski’s.

Soon Mrs. Loggerman just had to try it herself. She crawled in and had to sit hunched over, but she enjoyed it nonetheless. And then Mrs. Loggerman burst out too and ran naked to the water as all the children clapped and laughed.

But alas, heat is lost, and the hot rocks cool. It ceases to be so good if there isn’t enough heat. The activity, therefore lasted no more than an hour.

At supper, Abbi pronounced her sweat lodge a success.

“Even though it may not look the best, it works, and that is what counts,” she declared.

Mr. Loggerman shook his head and said nothing. Not having either Indian or Finnish in his background, he couldn’t understand it at all, other than how it might help in washing the children.

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NEEDING SOMETHING MORE

The next day began Abbi's new round of Indian studies. Since Monday was animal studies and she already had settled on studying the bear, she went to search for bear poop, and to poke it to see what the bear had been eating.

"By determining what the bear eats this time of year, humans can determine what there is in the wild to eat – well at least in terms of berries. Bears are omnivores, which means they eat all kinds of things. Anything bears eat humans can probably eat, including ants."

She also studied tracks and the way the bear had navigated through the berry patches, its nose seeking out the largest bunches. She always kept in mind a path of retreat in case she saw the bear and needed to back away. But she didn't see a bear. Would she ever see it? Their paths might never cross. She increasingly began to want to see a real live bear and not just its poop.

There was so much to be done during the week when assisting Mrs. Loggerman: getting wood for the stove, fetching eggs from the chickens, milking Annabelle, doing laundry, sweeping the floor, fetching water from the river for use in the house, helping Mrs. Loggerman make supper, – all the while also looking after the many little girls: getting them dressed, changing diapers on the littlest, helping them eat, putting them to bed, and – yawn – so much more.

She was always happy to have an hour or two free in the afternoon to continue her schedule of Indian studies. She imagined the discipline her Papa had in his study when he had pursued his research and writing, and was determined to exert the same discipline on herself. When it was time to study Indian language some more, she set out to memorize the vocabulary she had written down from

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The Song of Hiawatha. As for Indian culture, all she could do was to keep reading the few books of her Papa's she had brought with her. By the following Friday she had Indian crafts again and decided to investigate by trial and error the art of making woven mats after procuring lots of bulrush leaves from the beaver pond.

"What is that in front of the doorway?" asked Mr. Loggerman when she came across a woven square of bulrush leaves in front of the entry.

"That is a mat I made in the Indian way, Mr. Loggerman," said Abbi. "I also made one for my sweat lodge so that people have something to sit on when in there."

"But it is still green,"

"It will dry in no time."

"Well I hope it isn't the kinds of leaves that will crumble and fall apart when dry."

"I don't know, but I read that Indians used that material. I think the long fibres inside the leaves will hold it together. But maybe it isn't suitable for a doormat. I will try other materials next time. I might also try to make wicker things. That is when you use fresh twigs that bend easily and then become hard when dry. And I also know that Indians used cedar root to hold birch bark together. I can't wait for next Friday to do more Indian crafts. I would like to make something out of birch bark. I must look for places around here where there are old birches that are dying and their birch bark is coming off, and borrow some. I wouldn't want to cut birch bark off a living birch – unless it is only a small piece that is coming off anyway."

As enjoyable as her Indian studies were, she became torn inside. She was increasingly feeling she was living in two worlds at once. The more she pursued her Indian identity, the more she became confused about her overall identity. How was she to view herself if she was raised in a regular European fashion by Bradden and Jenine and yet also being Indian. She had to reconcile the two somehow; but sometimes it was difficult. For example, she had gone to church in Fredericton and Littleton and learned the Christian view of things. What was "God" compared to "*Gitche Manitou*" the Great Spirit? There were many questions like that.

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Thus, with everything that had happened, from her Papa vanishing, to learning she was Indian, to coming here into the wilderness, she was increasingly in need of some guidance, beyond what Mrs. Loggerman could offer.

She could learn about all the Indian things in the books and what she remembered from her Papa taking about them, but what then? How would she use what she learned? How should she now become, now that she knew she was Indian? She needed to be guided and had learned last week in the long footnote in Mr. Schoolcraft's book that Indian youths achieved that guidance by doing a fast and discovering their guardian spirit.

ABBI WANTS A VISION QUEST

One day after she had been there only two weeks, Abbi finally told Mrs. Loggerman: "I need to have a fast."

"You have said it several times now. Well explain to me some more about it."

She tried to recall everything she had learned.

"According to Mr. Schoolcraft when Indian youths get to an age when they need to find out who they are, and which way their lives should go, they go on a fast for up to a week, eating nothing, only drinking water, living by themselves and waiting for a dream or vision that reveals to them who they are and what their purpose is. I really need to discover my purpose in life, Mrs. Loggerman. Ever since I was told I was an Indian, or at least half-Indian, and my adoptive Papa vanished, and I was sent here, I have been very, very, very, confused. I don't know who I really am, what world I belong to – that of the Indian or that of the European colonists – and what lies in my future. I want to fast in order to have a vision, according to the tradition.¹⁷"

"What do you mean by a vision?"

"It would be like Scrooge had in Charles Dickens' story, where he discovers his proper path into the future – except that Scrooge did not seek his visions deliberately. The visions just appeared in spite of himself."

Abbi's adoptive Papa had read Charles Dickens's *The*

¹⁷ Today, this practice is commonly known as the "Vision Quest"

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Christmas Carol to his children the last winter.

“I see.”

Abbi was helping Mrs. Loggerman wash the dishes. Two of Mrs. Loggerman’s girls were sitting in their high chairs, while two were playing on the floor in the living room, and the remaining – the newborn and one year old – were fast asleep in cribs. It was a good time to talk. Mrs. Loggerman considered Abbi’s question for a moment as she put a dish into the cupboard. “Hmm. Well, what does having an Indian fast involve?”

“Well it seems that I must find a nice spot, an enchanting spot. It cannot be around here. I was thinking that spot on the ridge overlooking the canyon. And there build a small lodge, a small wigwam, and live in it all alone, eating nothing, and waiting for a vision. The idea is to discover your guardian spirit. That is why it is sometimes called the ‘guardian spirit quest’”

“Well, describe the procedure.”

“The young person has to first become very clean, such as through being in a sweat lodge. And I already happen to have a sweat lodge.”

“You certainly do. It works like a tiny little sauna. Did you know the Finnish name ‘sauna’ describes the activity and not the building, so in fact my father would have called your sweat lodge a little sauna. *Pikku sauna*, he would have called it.”

“I must remember that in case I run into any Finns in my life.”

Sylvia, came to see what was going on. She wanted to participate. “I want to dry dishes,” she said.

“No Sylvia,” said her mother. “You’ll only drop them and they’ll break. But you can dry the wooden bowls and spoons.” She gave Sylvia a towel and began giving her a few things to dry. “But continue, Abbi. What comes next after you have made yourself clean?”

“Well then the boy or girl lives alone in the small wigwam for several days up to a week without food. I would have to build the wigwam. Then he or she would have a vision, and a spirit would speak to him or her. The spirit, would give him or her a special power and song. The boy or girl will then know what their purpose will be – whether they will be a healer, or hunter, or wise man, or

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whatever. Hiawatha, when he was young, had a fast. There is an entire chapter of *Hiawatha's* fasting in *The Song of Hiawatha*. To make it authentic, in my view, I think I should be wearing a proper Indian garment. I learned that the Ojibwa now make dresses out of trade cloth in their traditional style, and most Indians now mostly wear regular clothing – I saw some men in railway construction wearing regular clothes: Papa said they were probably of the Maliseet people. But before even any trade cloth, they must have been made of deerskin, very soft pleasant deerskin, wouldn't it? I wanted to ask if there is some deerskin clothing around here. I understand that men hereabouts hunt deer, so I expect they make clothing out of deerskin."

"Wait, Abbi, before we discuss what you will wear, let's discuss how you will stay out in the wilderness all by yourself day and night. First of all, are you not afraid to be all by yourself at night?"

"A little; but I suspect after the first night, I will feel better. I will sleep on a mattress made of pine tree branches, and I hope there is a blanket of fur I could use, instead of a regular blanket. I want to make it as authentic as possible."

"What about us? We will be worried. What if you get yourself in trouble?"

"Well according to what I read, it is permissible if a girl goes on a fast, for the mother to come by and check once in a while. You can therefore be my mother and come by to check up on me. In one story in Schoolcraft's book, where there is a boy fasting, the father comes every morning to encourage his son. Or you could send Jeffrey or Mr. Loggerman to check on me. But according to the rules, you can't bring me food or anything, until I have my vision, or a week has gone by, or I want to stop, whichever comes sooner. If no vision comes, it is permissible to try again another time."

"Do you really think you need it now? You are still only nine."

"Yes, Mrs. Loggerman," replied Abbi. "So much has happened to me. I am quite confused. I need for the spirits to appear and make things more clear."

"Well, I suppose if you must. It is summer and it is

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warm. I can see no harm being outdoors in August. But that means I will not have your help attending to my chores.”

“I know Mrs. Loggerman, and I’m very sorry. But I really must do this, or else I will become progressively more and more confused. I can work doubly hard in the week before and the week after to make up.”

“Very well, I’ll talk to Mr. Loggerman, and see what he thinks of the idea. Do you know how to build a small wigwam?”

“Yes, I think I can build a small one, a one-person wigwam. It will have the same principle as my sweat lodge, except I’ll try to make it a little bigger, and cover it with birch bark if I can find enough.”

Mrs. Loggerman put dried dishes away onto the kitchen shelves.

“But I really would like to have a proper Indian dress,” added Abbi. “Otherwise it might not work, if it doesn’t feel authentic.”

“Well, what kind of clothing do you need? These days, Indians wear the same clothing as anyone else, as you said, except, perhaps in ceremonies.”

“I know that Indians like the cloth the Europeans have. I suppose it feels better against the skin than deer hide. But I think I would feel best if my dress were all deerskin like in old times. I have read that Ojibwa women’s clothing was in two pieces – the deerskin skirt on the bottom and sleeves on top. And then there are all kinds of designs and beads done on them to decorate it. I want to feel authentic.”

“Well, with all the hunting that is done in these parts in the fall, there is no scarcity of fur or deerskin. Perhaps Mr. Loggerman has a tanned deerskin. He has been asking me to make him a vest.”

“Oh, Mrs. Loggerman, you should have a sewing machine! My former Mama had a sewing machine. She made clothes for all the children, even this one I am wearing now. Do you have a sewing machine?”

“No I don’t. I only have the loom. I’m afraid I still sew the long way, by hand.”

“You should ask Mr. Loggerman to buy you a sewing machine the next time he goes to Fredericton. It will be

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very useful if you have six growing girls.”

“Well, never mind about the sewing machine for now. I don’t think the sewing machine will sew deerskin. I think you have to punch holes and use sinew thread or something like that. Alright, Abbi, I’ll see if there is any tanned deerskin around, and if you can learn how your dress is to be made, I’ll help you make it. I agree that it is wise to do it proper, in the proper Indian way, or else it may not work.”

“Oh thank you, Mrs. Loggerman!”

Abbi gave her a hug around the waist. (Abbi was still quite small at that time.)

Later before bed, Abbi read chapter V of *The Song of Hiawatha*, to review Hiawatha’s experience doing his fasting.

“ V *Hiawatha's Fasting*

*You shall hear how Hiawatha
Prayed and fasted in the forest,*

.....

*First he built a lodge for fasting,
Built a wigwam in the forest,
By the shining Big-Sea-Water,
In the blithe and pleasant Spring-time,
In the Moon of Leaves he built it,
And, with dreams and visions many,
Seven whole days and nights he fasted.*

*On the first day of his fasting
Through the leafy woods he wandered;
Saw the deer start from the thicket,
Saw the rabbit in his burrow,
Heard the pheasant, Bena, drumming,
Heard the squirrel, Adjidaumo,
Rattling in his hoard of acorns,
Saw the pigeon, the Omeme,
Building nests among the pinetrees,
And in flocks the wild-goose, Wawa,
Flying to the fen-lands northward,
Whirring, wailing far above him.
"Master of Life!" he cried, desponding,*

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"Must our lives depend on these things?"

Abbi stopped. "'Master of Life' would be the Great Spirit, *Gitche Manitou*," she said to herself. "I also have to pronounce the Indian words as if written in the English way, instead of what Papa said was the Latin way." She continued:

*"On the next day of his fasting
By the river's brink he wandered,
Through the Muskoday, the meadow,
Saw the wild rice, Mahnomonee,
Saw the blueberry, Meenahga,
And the strawberry, Odahmin,
And the gooseberry, Shahbomin,
And the grapevine, the Bemahgut,
Trailing o'er the alder-branches,
Filling all the air with fragrance!
"Master of Life!" he cried, desponding,
"Must our lives depend on these things?"*

*On the third day of his fasting
By the lake he sat and pondered,
By the still, transparent water;
Saw the sturgeon, Nahma, leaping,
Scattering drops like beads of wampum,
Saw the yellow perch, the Sahwa,
Like a sunbeam in the water,
Saw the pike, the Maskenozha,
And the herring, Okahahwis,
And the Shawgashee, the crawfish!
"Master of Life!" he cried, desponding,
"Must our lives depend on these things?"*

*On the fourth day of his fasting
In his lodge he lay exhausted;
From his couch of leaves and branches
Gazing with half-open eyelids,
Full of shadowy dreams and visions,
On the dizzy, swimming landscape,
On the gleaming of the water,
On the splendor of the sunset.*

*And he saw a youth approaching,
Dressed in garments green and yellow,
Coming through the purple twilight,
Through the splendor of the sunset;*

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*Plumes of green bent o'er his forehead,
And his hair was soft and golden..."*

Abbi paused to imagine what she had read. Bradden had read it to her and the other children when she was younger but it had not meant as much then as it did now. Before, she had not known what it meant that he was 'fasting'.

"This is where he begins to get his vision," she said to herself, remembering how it continued.

She began to now wonder what the person would begin to see. Would there be a ghost appearing? Ghosts are scary. She was beginning to have second thoughts. How could she handle it if she saw ghostly figures, and was all alone by herself?

THE LOGGERMANS AGREE

"Abbi wishes to have a fast?" asked Mr. Loggerman the next day when Mrs. Loggerman told him in the kitchen.

"It's an Indian custom for young people," said Mrs. Loggerman. "She has explained it to me in detail. It involves the young person spending several days, up to seven, by themselves in a small wigwam, until they have a meaningful dream or vision. It seems to be very important to her. It is apparently a very important practice in Indian culture."

Abbi was nearby in the living room sitting with all the girls, while looking in Schoolcraft's book for a story that was simple and could be enjoyable to read to the little girls. She overheard Mr. and Mrs. Loggerman talking about the fasting custom, and quickly turned to a page she had marked and spoke up:

"Mr. and Mrs. Loggerman, here is what Mr. Schoolcraft wrote about it. I will read the part about young people. *These fasts are anticipated by youth as one of the most important events of life. They are awaited with interest, prepared with solemnity, and endured with a self-devotion bordering on the heroic.*"

"I think I have heard of it," said Mr. Loggerman. "They are done by young women as well?"

"Yes, Mr. Loggerman. Mr. Schoolcraft mentions it next.

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It is at this period that young men and young women 'see visions and dream dreams' and fortune or misfortune is predicted from the guardian spirit chosen during this, to them, religious ordeal. . ."

"Ordeal?" wondered Mrs. Loggerman. "It sounds dangerous."

"How can it be, Mrs. Loggerman? All they want to do is to wait for a dream or vision to occur, and then interpret it. And seven days is the most. If I eat well before, then seven days is not so much to be without food, is it?"

"Hmm," mused Mr. Loggerman. "I suppose it would be fine. I can't see any harm in a healthy girl of nine being in the outdoors in summertime, for several days and nights."

"Yes, Mr. Loggerman," Abbi agreed. "Perhaps my dream will come right away, and then it could be over the second day."

"She wants a proper Indian dress for it," Mrs. Loggerman continued, to Mr. Loggerman; "one of deerskin, without any cloth. Do you have any tanned deerskins we can make into a dress, Percy?"

"I believe so. You have never had time to make anything for me from them. Very well, you can use the deerskins for a dress. We'll probably have two more deer this fall during hunting season and two more deerskins will come from that to replace them."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Loggerman," said Abbi. "I wouldn't mind trying to tan the skin myself in the Indian way, but I can't wait for the fall. I must have my fast now. I can work on preparations for it in place of my normal Indian studies. It touches on all aspects of Indian ways anyway - I can read legends involving fasting from the book, I can learn the customs involved with fasting. For Indian crafts I can learn how to make and decorate my Indian dress and also how to build my wigwam. The only thing missing is learning about language. Oh Mr. Loggerman, you must remember some more Maliseet words for me. I would hate to call things by Ojibwa words like Hiawatha did, if I am in Maliseet country."

"Well I will try to remember some, and tell you when supertime comes around," promised Mr. Loggerman. "But I can't say I know very much. The Indians who work for me speak English and only speak Maliseet among

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themselves. There has been little occasion where they had to translate from one to the other when speaking to me.”

“Oh how grand it would be if they came to work while I was still here. I could ask them myself when they have their break. In any event, Mrs. Loggerman, for the next couple of weeks I will replace my Indian studies with studies connected with having my fast, so it will not take up any more time. Then there will only be the few days it will take me to have my vision.”

And so, preparations began for Abbi to have her fast before the end of the summer.

She worked extra hard so that neither Mr. nor Mrs. Loggerman had any reason not to allow Abbi realize her wish. Every morning, after her quick visit to the beaver dam, she milked Annabelle, built the morning fire for tea and porridge, all before even Mr. Loggerman came down; then helped get the children up, helped them eat, and so on. She was extra helpful with chores. She helped Mrs. Loggerman in her cooking blackberry preserves, baking biscuit and bread, mending the children’s clothing, cleaning the floors, and so on. She didn’t want to give the Loggerman’s any reason not to let her have her fast, even though she had been here only a few weeks.

One afternoon some days later, with the children in cribs or playpens as was the routine, Mrs. Loggerman brought out the tanned deerskins – from the several Mr. Loggerman had on hand from deer hunting of past years – and spread them out over the kitchen table. Abbi was ready with her books at hand.

“I’m glad Mr. Loggerman already has some deer hides all done. Here is how deer hides were prepared by the Indians, Mrs. Loggerman,” said Abbi, referencing a book. “First the hair was removed by some tool, next the hide was tanned with an oily paste of brains and liver – yuch! – and then soaked it in water for some days. Then they stretched it out, wrung out the water, and let it dry. Then it was smoked to keep it soft. . . I’m glad the deer hide tanning is already done, Mrs. Loggerman. It seems like it would be considerably more difficult, if we were to begin with a dead deer.”

“Now how is a dress constructed in your mother’s

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tribe?”

“Well as far as I can understand, the general idea was to make a sleeveless dress, a jumper, by combining two deerskins, one front, one back. That will leave much left over. From that some separate sleeves are made that are worn over the arms and shoulders. And because I’m small there is certain to be much skin left over for moccasins and a bundle.”

Abbi had Schoolcraft’s book about legends open at page 46. She continued from the book:

“In this book here is how Schoolcraft described the dress: *The dress of the females in the Odjibwa nation, consists of sleeves, open on the inner side of the arm from the elbow up, and terminating in large square folds, falling from the shoulders, which are tied at the back of the neck with ribbon or binding. The sleeves are separately made, and not attached to the breast garment, which consists of square folds of cloth, ornamented and sustained by shoulder straps. . .Do you understand Mrs. Loggerman? He doesn’t say more about the rest of the dress. Perhaps I can find something more in the other book.*”



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“Well it sounds, from Mr. Schoolcraft’s description like the Ojibwa women recently incorporated cloth in their traditional dress. I imagine the traditional dress was originally entirely a very soft deerskin skirt reaching up to your armpits, and held by straps. Then the sleeves or armlets were added to the exposed shoulders and upper arms to cover them. It doesn’t matter if we are perfectly accurate or not, Abbi. I expect every woman added their own original ideas. We only need to use the general principle of the jumper plus the separate sleeves. . . Well stand here, and I will measure you. Fortunately I have made dresses before for myself and my children.”

Abbi stood still as Mrs. Loggerman took measurements with a tape measure she had.

“I wish there was someone I could send a letter to, to ask to help explain it better, Mrs. Loggerman,” said Abbi while Mrs. Loggerman measured her.

“When you have the dress done, you will want to decorate it. I know they might put beadwork on it. What did Indians use before the Europeans brought beads, I wonder.”

“Porcupine quills I think,” replied Abbi. “Porcupine quills are hollow, but also soft like the stems of feathers are. You can cut them up and get pieces you can use for beading or even to make a necklace. And because they have sharp points, you can push them through holes and weave them a little.”

“Porcupine quills?” replied Mrs. Loggerman. “Perhaps we can find some. Sometimes local people kill porcupines. They are edible you know.”

“I suppose they taste something like pork,” said Abbi, “and that is why settlers called them ‘porcupines’ – pork of the pines.”

“You can ask the workers if they know of any neighbours who have had dealings with porcupines, and then get the skin with all its quills from them.”

“It would honour the porcupine, if I could make something pretty from its quills,” said Abbi. “And I should have feathers too. I could use feathers from the chickens, and either cut them up or use them whole. But the Indians didn’t have chickens did they?”

“Well chickens are similar to wild birds like quail and

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grouse. It's not entirely a foreign creature."

"That makes me feel better, but I would prefer eagle feathers. But if I found an eagle feather I would not cut that up, but use it whole."

"Also," added Mrs. Loggerman, "You can use paint or dye to make some designs on the leather. There is no rule, I don't think, about how you decorate your dress or how you make your necklaces and bands and so on. The main idea is that it is pretty and lasts, and not too difficult to make."

Abbi was already running through her mind all the pretty things she had encountered so far that she could use to decorate her dress.

"But first," continued Mrs. Loggerman "let's make the dress." She spread the deerskin neatly over the tabletop, smoothing it out. "Let's see. If we cut the bottom part of the deerskin across here, it would come up to your chest, and then we can use the remainder of the deerskin to make the sleeves."

Mrs. Loggerman had already brought a pair of shears to the table and now took them into her hand. Noting the location to cut, she turned it to a suitable angle and cut it across.

"We'll have to refine the shape by trial and error, by putting it against your body and cutting where needed. Remove your outer clothing so we can measure better."

Abbi removed her smock and dress and stood in her drawers and undershirt. Mrs. Loggerman took new measurements.

And so, the dress was begun. To sew the pieces together, they used thin strips cut off sides of the deerskin hide that seemed relatively tough. These were pushed through holes punched into the leather of the dress. It was more like lacing than sewing. The result was a little coarser than if they had used thin sinew thread, but they had no sinew on hand.

Since there were chores to do every day, Abbi and Mrs. Loggerman could only spend an hour or so working on the dress. Besides the dress, there were other things to do too by way of preparation. Abbi still walked out to the ridge in the afternoons, since Mrs. Loggerman still wanted blackberries to make into preserves for the winter. During

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her trips for blackberry-picking, she went to the ridges to consider the best location for her fasting. When she knew she began planning her wigwam. The first thing to do would be to build a frame. She was happy she had already had some practice making the frame of her sweat lodge. It should be easier now doing it a second time. But this time she didn't need to make it airtight and thought she would cover it in the regular way with birch bark pieces.

For the frame she had to find and cut down some bendable saplings, plant the thick ends into her chosen ground in a circle, then bend the tops inward, then bind the top part to the top part of the one opposite, until there was a rough dome. Then additional branches were to be added crossways to stiffen the frame. Finally, sheets of birch bark were to be laid over the frame, made to overlap like shingles, and anchored in place. This time she would bind it all together with cedar root. She had no idea how to get cedar root, and dug with a small shovel around a cedar tree. She found thin roots that traveled long distances. When she grabbed it, she could pull up very long strands of it. They were very strong and pliable. She was pleased.

"Look, Mrs. Loggerman," she said when she brought some home. "It is cedar root strands. It is like thick string. I will collect lots and use it instead of twine."

"You're right," Mrs. Loggerman agreed, as she studied the long strand Abbi brought. "I hope it will work."

For birch bark, Abbi searched the woods for large birch trees where birch bark was naturally peeling loose. She pulled those pieces off. Because she only needed a one person wigwam, she didn't need very much.

In one of her excursions further away to find birch bark she encountered the bear. It was the first time. She stopped and began backing up. "Don't be afraid, bear," she said softly. "I am only looking for birch bark."

Since Abbi was holding a whole handful of birch bark, she must have looked like some strange creature, and the bear nervously retreated too. He wasn't an enormous bear. Abbi thought perhaps he was one or two years old, out on his own the first time – a young creature like herself. Or may it was a she. She couldn't tell.

She told Mrs. Loggerman later that she was happy to have seen the bear finally. She was less afraid of it now.

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She had chosen the site for her wigwam at the same sheltered spot on the hill overlooking the valley where she had sat to study, where there had been the echo, in a place a little down from the top of the ridge. Here there was a flat area with a wonderful view towards the east and over the river valley. The spot already had some saplings she could bend over to start the frame.

In the next weeks, both her dress and wigwam were gradually getting done and, from experimenting and reading what she could from the books, she was learning a great deal even without following any schedule of Indian studies.

When the jumper and top had been shaped and sewn/laced together, Abbi took the shears and cut fringes, like Indians did, around the bottom. Fringes also helped disguise the irregularity of the edges.

Finally when Abbi tried it on, she and Mrs. Loggerman agreed it fit well. Now it was time to decorate it. The sawmill workers, finding Abbi's enterprise entertaining, found her a porcupine skin, discarded after one of their wives had taken its meat for supper. Now she had plenty of porcupine quills to use – more than she needed. Unfortunately there wasn't any time to do intricate decorative work with them. She cut them into small pieces and used them in the manner of beads.

Any Indian costume, she thought, should have feathers, and so Abbi began looking for feathers too. But she did not want to kill any bird just for feathers. It was the Indian way that fur, feathers, and other uses for an animal, was secondary to killing them to eat; and the people around here did not hunt any birds, except perhaps grouse and ducks in the fall. Thus she looked for feathers naturally lost by birds. She looked and she looked, but it was hard to find wild bird feathers on the ground and she found none.

“Well chickens,” she said one day. “It looks like I'll have to use some of your feathers.”

She picked up short feathers, that lay around their nests. When she had enough, she attached them to her dress by short strings so that they hung loose.

Another idea she had was taking a very dry pine cone apart, and then putting a needle through the seeds. She

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had to drive a nail through first, and then put a string through.

“I can use these in a necklace,” she thought. “I could have a length of porcupine quill, then a pinecone seed, then another length of porcupine quill, then another pinecone seed, and so on. That would look pretty.”

That gave her the idea of including the beaver in her decorations, by using the chips produced by beaver’s gnawing of wood. It seemed important to include something connected to the beaver. She could paint them different colours. She added these to her necklace along with the porcupine quills.

She searched the premises for paint of some kind, and found red paint – just for small touches. Perhaps she could find natural colours too. “When I get blackberry stains on some white clothing, they are hard to remove. Maybe I can make paint or dye with blackberries,” she thought.

And so it went.

“My you look pretty,” said Mrs. Loggerman when Abbi showed her the dress after she had decorated it.

“Look, Mrs. Loggerman,” said Abbi, pointing to her feet. “I also made myself moccasins from the left over pieces.”

“How did you do that?”

“I just stepped on the left-over skin and cut it some distance out from my foot as I stood on it, and then pulled the outside parts over the top, and cut it with scissors till it all fit and then I tied the top in a bunch by punching holes and using thin strips of the leather to tie it all together.”

“My, you are inventive!”

“I don’t know if that is exactly how they did it, but I suspect everyone had their own variations there too.”

“Wonderful! Now you have everything you need.”

“I hope to find a feather to put in my hair too, Mrs. Loggerman – a real eagle feather. A chicken feather will just not do for that. But if I don’t find an eagle feather, I will not be upset. But I need one more thing, Mrs. Loggerman. I need a bundle. I could make it out of the left over piece of deerskin.”

“What is a bundle?”

“Well it involves taking a piece of some animal skin, and putting important things in it, and then folding it over to

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create a bundle. You can put everything important in it. If I discover an interesting shell on the ground, or a colourful stone, I could put it in. Anything that is important to the person. Anything very personal, that gives you strength and power.”

“Well then it is easily achieved. Take the remaining deerskin piece and put what you like in it.”

“It’ll be difficult, Mrs. Loggerman, to keep it small. I have so much now. I have to think of what is most important to me other than the books which are too large for a bundle.”

Mrs. Loggerman stepped back and admired her little Indian. “In the last few weeks you have pursued this with every spare moment you have, Abbi. I am so happy for you. Once you have made your bundle, what is the procedure then?”

“I have already also completed my small wigwam at the place where the valley is, facing east over the valley. I worked at it the last week every day before picking blackberries, like you already know.”

“And then what comes next?”

“According to what I read, when the child is ready for his or her fast, the parent blackens the palms of their hands with charcoal and then rubs the child’s cheeks, leaving them black without any decorative design. I suppose that is to let the spirits know that the child is seeking a vision rather than simply camping out. Water is permitted, so I think I should make a birch bark vessel by which to fetch water to drink. It is important to replenish fluids on such hot days. But I can’t eat anything. Fasting is about not eating anything.”

“But Abbi, I will be so concerned, especially when night falls.”

“But as my temporary mother you should keep an eye on me to ensure it is going well. It is permitted. A mother or father is permitted to visit the child daily to ask how it’s going. But they can’t stay for long as that would break the child’s concentration.”

“I see,” replied Mrs. Loggerman. “When all the babies are put to bed, I can take a lantern and come out to check on you then. It would help me sleep better knowing all is going well.”

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Abbi was getting more and more excited with every passing day. It wouldn't be long now that she would have the fast that would teach her direction in life.

THE DAY OF FASTING COMES

Since the weather seemed it would be nice for a while, they decided Abbi's fast would begin the next day, which happened to also be laundry day. A fire had to be built to heat up the laundry water beside the river. Hot stones could then be used for the sweat lodge where she was to clean and purify herself for the spirit world.

"The first thing I have to do is bathe in the sweat lodge and become very clean, even under the fingernails, Mrs. Loggerman. I would be too nervous to have any of the girls in the sweat lodge. I should be very solemn as well."

The next day, after the laundry was done, Abbi brought her Indian dress, and all the other things she would take, down to where she had her sweat lodge, and then she stirred the laundry tub fire to help heat up the stones for the sweat lodge.

At noontime Mr. Loggerman came to the house for lunch and to supervise the children while Mrs. Loggerman was away. Abbi's fasting would now begin!

Leaving the children with their papa, Mrs. Loggerman and Abbi returned to the sweat lodge. Abbi rolled hot rocks from the remains of the laundry fire into her sweat lodge. Then Abbi got out of her regular clothes and went inside. After ten minutes she went into the river and then emerged and joined the waiting Mrs. Loggerman.

"I feel very pure and clean, Mrs. Loggerman," said Abbi

"Alright, we're ready to begin. Well let's get you into your dress then."

Abbi suddenly realized something. "Wait, Mrs. Loggerman! I must have Indian underwear!"

Mrs. Loggerman rolled her eyes and asked: "And what is Indian underwear?"

"A loincloth of course. When I cut the leftover deerskin, from the two deerskins we used, for a piece for a bundle I still had a large piece left over. It was a long strip to serve for a loincloth. Anyway I forgot it in my room."

"What difference does it make what kind of underwear

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you have on, Abbi?”

“I won’t feel like a real Indian. It might not work if I’m not as authentic as possible. I’ll run inside and get it.”

Abbi, tore up the hill to the house and, as Mrs. Loggerman waited, ran upstairs, got rid of her white drawers, and put on her loincloth – a long piece of deerskin through her legs and held front and back by a strip of skin serving as a belt, and then she ran back down and out the door. Mr. Loggerman and the little girls saw her dash in and in a moment dash out, and wondered what was going on, but Abbi didn’t give them a moment to ask.

When she reached Mrs. Loggerman again she said: “Properly it should be the very softest of skin, maybe rabbit skin, for comfort, but the deerskin was all that we had available.”



“Alright then, stand there and I’ll help slip the jumper part on you.”

Mrs. Loggerman helped Abbi into the dress, and saw to it that it was straight. Abbi put on her self-made moccasins, two necklaces she had made, a band for her wrist and one for her head.

“I fear I have failed to find a feather for my headband, Mrs. Loggerman. I don’t want to put a chicken feather on my head. Even though they are good to eat, they do not fly. It is most appropriate for dreaming that I have the feather of an eagle, a bird that soars high, high in the

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clouds, and speaks to *Gitche Manito*.”

“Speaks to what?”

“*Gitche Manito*, the Great Spirit. He is analogous to ‘God’ and probably the same person viewed in another way.”

“Oh.”

Mrs. Loggerman helped Abbi straighten everything. Finally she was all dressed, and rather pretty.

“Now, you have to make my cheeks black, Mrs. Loggerman. That’s the custom.”

Mrs. Loggerman went to where the fire was made that they used for the laundry, and blackened her palms with soot from the outside of the metal tub. She came back and in a nearly ceremonious way rubbed Abbi’s cheeks so they had sooty dark circles. Both found this occasion very special, but especially Abbi. Her heart began to pound a little from the anticipation of what lay ahead.

“Let’s go, then, Abbi.”

They headed back up the slope to where the path began that went upriver and along the ridge. Mrs. Loggerman carried a fur blanket that had been used as a cover in their house, for Abbi to sleep on, or use as a blanket in case it was unusually cold. It was still August, and not likely to be cold, though. Abbi carried her bundle and a birch bark vessel she had made for water.

After 15 minutes of walking, they came to the place where Abbi had sat many times reading her books, looking over the canyon, and calling to the little girl *manito* in the cliffs who she imagined was an Indian girl who was picking blackberries, who she had decided to call *Saqteminimisis*. Down from there a short ways, Abbi’s wigwam was sitting ready for her, in a flat sheltered area.

“My you have built a pretty little wigwam, Abbi,” said Mrs. Loggerman, when she saw it for the first time.

The wigwam she had built was very small, only three or four feet tall. The large pieces of birch bark that covered it were held in place by various means, including branches with ends secured in parts of the frame, loose branches pressing on top, rocks on the bottom edge. For a doorway she had a large loose piece of birch bark which could be lifted up.

“Alright, Mrs. Loggerman. What I must do is simply to

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sit here in front of my wigwam, or lie inside, and look and listen until I hear a voice speaking to me or a spirit appears. I can also walk around during the day, just like Hiawatha did, and speak to the animals. At night I will go inside, and sleep and also hope to have a revelatory dream.”

“A revelatory dream?”

“I don’t know if the term ‘revelatory’ is proper English. I mean a dream that reveals to me my purpose in life, or my guardian spirit. I won’t eat anything, not even blackberries, but I will drink water. You must permit me, Mrs. Loggerman to go down to the water to fetch water.”

“Of course, but always be careful when you get close to the water. Thankfully the water is smooth in this part of the river. Let us see inside your wigwam.”

Mrs. Loggerman got on her knees as Abbi lifted open the door.

“I have already created a nice soft mattress of fir boughs, Mrs. Loggerman.”

“Well here is the fur blanket you will need, just in case it becomes cool at night. If not, add it to your fir bough mattress.”

She pulled the fur in through the door and spread it out over the fir boughs covering the ground. She crawled back out backwards.

“I will miss you,” she said to Abbi with a hug. “But I will come and check on you when I can. It is only a quarter hour to walk here and a quarter hour back, which is not too far. I will do it after supper when I can have Percy watch the children while he smokes his pipe and chats with Jeffrey as he often does in the evening. You are not afraid are you?”

“A little. After the first night it will be better.”

“I guess it is time for me to go, so you can start your fast. Do you have everything?”

“I think so. I have tried to think of everything.”

“Well, Abbi, good luck. I hope you get your vision quickly. We’ll be thinking of you.”

Abbi was not afraid when she watched Mrs. Loggerman go, because she was now used to being out here by herself. She was only concerned how she would feel when it became dark.

Abbi's Vision Quest

When Mrs. Loggerman was gone, Abbi sat down in front of her little wigwam to think of what she should do next. It was still early afternoon. Wearing her Indian dress she felt very much an Indian. It was probably not as good as a real Indian mother would make, but she was very proud of what she had accomplished with Mrs. Loggerman's help. She had also tied her hair in two parts, Indian fashion, and made a headband with designs on it. Unfortunately she had yet not managed to find an eagle feather to put in it.

She recalled from *The Song of Hiawatha* how Hiawatha walked around in the vicinity of the wigwam and studied the world around him.

"The first thing I have to do," she said to herself, "is to go down to the river and fill my birch bark container with water for drinking."

She took the birch bark container, and climbed down the slope to the bank of the river. There were pine, fir and birch trees lining the bank, but it was not dense. She had already determined an easy place to go to the water's edge to get water. As she bent over the water, she saw her reflection, and felt moved. She was a real Indian! Then she heard a cry of an eagle above, and looked up.

"Why there's an eagle's nest up there on the ledge of the cliff on the other side," she said to herself. "I wonder what the Indian word is for 'eagle'. It isn't even in Mr. Longfellow's list of words ... Maybe there is an eagle feather down below somewhere. But I'm on the wrong side of the river. Look, young eagles up there ..."

Suddenly a young adult eagle took flight from the nest about 100 feet up, and a feather came loose from the nest, and began to float in the breeze. It floated, and floated, and came down and down, crossed the river, and landed almost next to her. It was a sign!! Abbi thought. She took the

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eagle feather, and put it into her headband, and looked at herself in the water. It was clearly a sign!!

“Mr. Eagle,” she spoke, looking up. “Are you a spirit? Are you my guardian spirit?”

The eagles made no indications they even knew she was there. Perhaps it was nothing but coincidence. But at least she now had a lovely eagle feather.

Having filled the birch bark container with water, she climbed back up the slope, being careful not to spill the water. Finally when she was back, she again sat down cross-legged in front of her little wigwam, took a sip of water from the birch bark vessel and then put it to one side, next to the entrance. And now her fasting had begun.

All afternoon she sat and watched and listened to all the sights and sounds in the nature all around her. But it was not easy just sitting and not doing anything.

She was tempted to make a game of it, but kept forcing herself not to. She had to be solemn. She could have had some fun with the echo, for example. She could have designed a conversation with the spirit *Saqteminimusis* like she had perfected by now. She could have recited ‘*The Song of Hiawatha*’ and listened to the verse echo. But she held back, She knew she would not find what she wanted to know, unless she was solemn, and serious. That’s what she had learnt from Schoolcraft’s book. A fast was a very serious matter. She was not , like before, simply visiting this place. She had put on Indian costume, purified herself in a sweat lodge, and Mrs. Loggerman had blacked her cheeks. She had taken pains to do it correctly. This was no game! This was serious. She really wanted some guidance in her life. And something very *real* might happen! But what?

Abbi had been raised with her Papa’s scholarly open-mindedness about spirits and the supernatural in Indian beliefs. He had told her that besides viewing nature through personification of it in the form of *manito*’s, Indians truly believed in good and bad spirits, and in guardian spirits. But when she had learned of such ideas from her adoptive Papa, she had viewed it all in a detached way. But now that she had been told she was Indian, it was all a serious matter. What she was doing now was not simply playing at being an Indian, like her adoptive Papa

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himself had done when he was a boy – and like so many other boys in the Victorian Age did: this was *for real*. She was a real Indian girl seriously seeking guidance from the *real* spirit world! Would the *real* Indian spirit world respond? Would they accept her? Would a guardian spirit appear and show her the way?



She was almost scared about what would happen. According to the Indian view of it, real spirits could appear before her, and tell her things. Would it be like seeing a ghost? Ghosts are scary. She was having more second thoughts about it now. Maybe she should go home. She had to remind herself that in all the stories she had read about a youth having a fast, nothing terrible ever happened other than the youth having to go home on account there were no results.

“What is supposed to happen?” she asked herself. “Oh I wish I knew more about this custom than the description and the stories in Mr. Schoolcraft’s legends book. I wish there was a real Indian who could explain more about how it will happen. How will I know if there are spirits nearby? All I know is I must be respectful. I have made myself clean and pretty to honour them. But I wonder what will happen now?”

When she quietly talked to herself, there was no echoing in the valley. She had already in previous days informed the echo girl, *Saqteminimisis*, about her plans to fast, so she knew *Saqteminimisis* was in sympathy with

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what she was doing, and maybe she was around here somewhere too. What if a ghost girl appeared, and said she was *Saqteminimisis*?! At least she was used to imagining a girl Indian spirit from the many weeks she had conversed with her so far. She would not be so scary!

There was nothing but the sounds of nature all around her – the whisper of wind in the pine needles, the chirps of birds, the faint roar of the river in the distance. When was something going to happen? How would it happen?

Perhaps it was necessary to let the spirits know why she was there. She held her eyes closed and spoke softly.

“Spirits, please tell me about myself. I want to know about my mother. What was her Indian name? Give me a vision of her. Give me a vision of my father. What does the future hold for me? What is my purpose?”

She opened her eyes and listened to all the sounds around her, not knowing what to expect. Would a spirit talk to her? What was supposed to happen?

She thought of the lines about Hiawatha’s fast, Maybe nothing would happen until a few days. She suddenly remembered – she had made a comb out of a piece of hardwood from the sawmill, using a carpenter’s saw blade, and had included it in her bundle. Perhaps she could comb her hair a little. For a fast, one had to be not just very clean, but very well groomed. High respect had to be shown to the spirit world.

She had earlier placed the bundle inside the wigwam, so she went to fetch it and brought it back out. She undid the bundle. It contained all kinds of things she had collected – pretty stones, little crafted things she had made. She took the comb from it, and closed up the bundle again. She removed her headband and feather, and untied her hair and began to comb it. As crude as the comb was, it worked. Then she tied her hair again in two parts, and put her headband and eagle feather back on.

The afternoon wore on. The daytime drama in the wilderness all around her went on as usual. Birds flew, butterflies came flapping by, insects buzzed. To pass the time, she wandered around a little observing things, but not too far from her wigwam site.

“Oh I am hungry,” she said about suppertime. “But that’s to be expected. This is a fast.” She took a sip of

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water from her birch bark container, hoping that would help a little.

Meanwhile back at the house, Mr. Loggerman had finished work and the Loggerman family was having supper.

"Abbi has started her fast, then?" asked Mr. Loggerman as he buttered a piece of bread.

"Yes. I wonder if we ought to be worried or not," replied Mrs. Loggerman. "She *seems* to have the matter well in hand."

"Where's Abbi, Mama?" asked Sylvia.

"She's doing a fast, Cutsie, I mean Sylvia."

"What's that?"

"It's an Indian custom. Abbi is an Indian girl. Her mother was an Indian who came from a place called *Gitche Gumee*."

"She is a very determined sort of person," observed Mr. Loggerman, "once she puts her mind to something."

"I will go out there later with a lantern, after the girls are put to bed, to make sure she is fine. Apparently that is permitted by the custom. What a girl! I hope she discovers what she seeks. Could you pass me the butter, Percy? And girls, eat everything on your plates. If you don't eat you won't grow."

As it started to become dark, there were more mosquitoes than before. Fortunately in this location, on the breezy hill in late summer, mosquitoes were happily quite few in number. Had that not been the case, she would have had to have a small fire going all the time to create smoke to drive them away. Suddenly she wished she had a fire for some light.

"It's getting dark. I should have made a fire. I should have brought some matches," she said to herself. "But maybe that would not be proper – to have matches. Perhaps I can try tomorrow to make a fire by rubbing two sticks together." Unfortunately she had not practiced it, and didn't really know how it was done.

As it began getting dark, Abbi began to feel insecure, so she climbed inside her little wigwam and lay down on the fur and the bough mattress. She took off her headband and feather so as not to damage them. She enjoyed the smell of the fir boughs that formed her mattress. She gazed up

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at the ceiling of the wigwam. She could tell that it was getting dark because the light coming in through the doorway or cracks in the birch bark roof became dimmer and dimmer. Soon she was lying in pitch blackness. Now every sound became magnified. Every snap or crack outside nearly made her jump. What if some animal was lurking in the shadows outside? What if spirits would manifest at night and come to ask her what she was doing here? She focused on the sound of water in the distance, or the whistle of the breeze through pines. They were pleasant sounds.

“I’ll just try to sleep,” she said to herself. “I’ll sleep and then it will be morning.” She sat up and also removed her armlets, and necklaces. She’ll sleep in her dress, for now. She lay back down but found it hard to get to sleep. As she began drifting off, some unusual snap outside made her jump awake.

“What’s that sound!?” she whispered to herself. “Something is coming! Maybe it’s a spirit!”

She heard a sound again, and became completely still and quiet. She held her breath. Perhaps if whatever it was did not know she was there, it would go away. The sound came closer and closer. Moving lights came in through the cracks of the wigwam roof. A spirit was coming!!! A spirit was coming!! Abbi held her breath utterly frozen in fear, waiting for what would happen next.

“Abbi, are you alright?”

It was Mrs. Loggerman’s voice. The light was evidently a kerosene lantern she carried to find her way along the path. Abbi relaxed, and sighed a breath of relief. It wasn’t a spirit, but Mrs. Loggerman. But she was not going to let on to Mrs. Loggerman that she had been terrified, and had forgotten that Mrs. Loggerman had promised to come check up on her.

“Yes, Mrs. Loggerman,” replied Abbi through the wall of her wigwam. “I’m laying on my bough mattress and trying to sleep.”

“Alright,” said Mrs. Loggerman’s voice. “I’m happy it’s all going well. I just came to check. Well, I don’t want to interfere with your progress. Have a good night, then. I will return to the house. . . Goodnight, Abbi.” Her voice reverberated slightly in the valley, but there was no clear

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echo since she did not speak very loudly.

“Goodnight Mrs. Loggerman.”

The moving light that had shone in through the cracks of her birch bark roof began to recede and soon vanish, along with Mrs. Loggerman's footsteps. Abbi was now back in pitch darkness.

“I hope I can get my vision tonight, so I can go home tomorrow,” she said to herself. “I don't know if I like this very much. If I get to sleep, the night will go by fast. I'll close my eyes, and think pleasant thoughts. I'll think about being at home, with my Papa, I mean my adoptive Papa. Oh how I wish *he* had really been my natural Papa, like I originally always believed when I was little, rather than Irwin Pictford.”

For the next while, the night sounds were regular and unchanging. There were no more unusual sounds, and she could relax more. She focused again on the breeze in the pine needles nearby, and to the distant sound of water further down where there were the many falls she called *Minnehahaha*. There is nothing more pleasant than the white noise of water. It soon lulled her to sleep.

She dreamed of her former Papa, of Bradden Woodrow, who everybody thought had drowned – although that was not certain as his body had never been found. She dreamed that he appeared outside her wigwam and said “Be good, Abbi.” In the dream Abbi said exactly what she had wished earlier: “I wish you were my real father, Papa. I wish you were Irwin Pictford. Mama said that was the name of my real father.” In the dream he replied “But I *am* ‘Irwin Pictford’, Abbi.”

Abbi woke up because the dream was doing mischief – reflecting what she had just wished before falling asleep. She wondered how she could tell between a regular dream and a vision dream. Nonetheless she had a tear in her eye from seeing Bradden in the dream. She missed him. She truly *did* wish Irwin Pictford and him were identical. Why did it have to turn out otherwise! He and she had been very close. And why did he have to fall into the Saint John River and disappear!?

“Please, spirits,” said Abbi out loud. “Don't play games with me. Please show me my natural mother and father. Please show me Paula and Irwin Pictford. Please show me

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my natural mother and father in my dreams.”

She closed her eyes, concentrated again on the white noise of the rapids in the distance, and fell asleep again. She dreamt again. In this dream she was looking at the wonderful illustration she had seen when she was six years old – the one on the cover of *Canadian Illustrated News*, which showed a couple under what seemed like a shower of light, in the middle of a skating rink, with skaters in costume all around (See the illustration in Chapter 3.) She had always imagined being inside that scene – a real event, the magazine had said, at a rink in Montreal. The man and woman in the center had been actors portraying the marriage of Princess Louise and Marquis of Lorne. Papa had let her cut out that picture and put it on the wall in the children’s bedroom. Now she was dreaming of it, and that she was looking at it and admiring it like she had when she was little. Suddenly the illustration became the real thing – as if she was there. And then the man and the woman in the middle changed into two other people, the woman, originally dressed in a bridal gown, changed into an Indian woman wearing a deerskin dress like she was. But she herself was looking at the scene from a distance, so she could not see what they looked like in detail. The Indian woman was bathed with light. She wanted to go towards her, but she did not have skates on. “I need skates,” she was saying. “I want to get closer to her.” She was anxious that she could not get closer to see her. Then she woke up again.

She thought about what she had dreamt. “The bride in the middle became an Indian woman. Perhaps that was my mother.”

This dream had manifested something she had wanted ever since she first saw the illustration years ago – to be in the event depicted in the illustration. And since she had just before asked the spirits to show her a man and a woman that were her parents, and the woman turned into an Indian woman, this dream too seemed suspiciously like a regular dream in which subconscious wishes were fulfilled. She wanted a real vision, not a regular dream. How could she tell the difference?

She closed her eyes again, and fell asleep again. This time, she dreamt of nothing in particular. She dreamt of

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incidents while handling the babies. She dreamt of watching the beavers at the dam, and the beavers did not do anything differently. Now she fell ever more deeply asleep, and the night went by very quickly. Before she knew it, she woke up and the morning sun was breaking in through cracks in her wigwam.

"It's morning!" she realized, and sat up straight. She put her armlets back on, and her necklaces. She untied her hair and took the comb from her bundle and gave it some strokes, before tying it again and putting on her headband and eagle feather. It was important to be properly dressed and groomed before she emerged from the wigwam. Having a fast was a special occasion and ceremony, she reminded herself again. Being clean, groomed, and properly dressed was part of the process. Even though no other humans saw her, all the spirits in nature did. She must leave a good impression.

She then climbed out of the little wigwam. She was greeted by the most wondrous scene.

She was facing east and looking down over the valley. Mist rose from the river below, and the rays of the sun cut through the mist. It was breathtakingly beautiful.



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“Maybe that is *Gitche Manito*,” she whispered in awe as she emerged. “Maybe that is how *Gitche Manito* appears – along with the sun. In the Ojibwa language, the sun is called *Giizis*.”

She stood up and raised her arms to the morning sun.

“Welcome *Giizis*, the sun. I have never seen a scene so beautiful in my entire life. But I must be careful not to look into you. You are very bright.”

She had read of the Indian Sunrise Ceremony, but didn’t know what more one should say, and sat down on the ground again. All this was new to her. She would have to improvise what she would say each morning. Her stomach grumbled.

“I am quite hungry,” she observed. “It’s about breakfast time now. But being hungry is the whole idea. It’s supposed to make it easier to get a vision. I’ll have some water.”

She lifted her birch bark water container high, and then to her lips. She drank the remainder and then put it back down. She changed her position, and made herself comfortable. She watched the sun come up, being careful not to look directly into it, and improvised some more welcoming words – especially about how it brought warmth and life to the world. What should she do now?

“I know. I will go down to the river. My birch bark container needs filling; and I can put some water on my face. And on my arms which are a little dirty from the ground. Then I will come back.”

She picked up the empty birch bark container, and made her way down to the river again. Once there, she lingered beside the water, studying everything. She looking at herself in the reflection.

“Oh, my cheeks are black. They’re supposed to be black. I shouldn’t wash it off. Oh well, I can at least splash water on my feet and arms.”

She did so. She had her comb with her, so for a few minutes, while dangling her feet in the pool of water underneath the *Minnehahahaha*’s she combed her hair more thoroughly. Finally she put her comb away, tied her hair again, refilled her birch bark container, and made her way back up the slope. She must not get sidetracked from her purpose. There was a serious purpose to all this – to

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seek visions that would reveal truths that she could follow in life.

Arriving back in front of her little wigwam, she placed the container of water down beside the door again, and prepared to sit once again in front of the wigwam listening, watching and waiting. She assumed a cross-legged position, straightened her clothing and headband and hair and sat very still. She watched the wilderness around her come alive again as the sun climbed in the sky. She imagined the echoing girl spirit among the blackberry bushes on the opposite side of the valley had seen her and was quietly wishing her well – quietly since it was a solemn occasion and shouting across the valley would break the solemnity.

She closed her eyes to concentrate on all the sounds. In a while a chipmunk came hopping along, and stopped in front of her. She opened her eyes. The chipmunk looked at her out of curiosity. She had heard from the *Hiawatha* and other legend stories that spirits might appear as animals, so she asked it: “Are you a spirit, a ghost, visiting me, rather than a real animal?”

The chipmunk turned and went on with its business.
“I guess that was just an ordinary chipmunk.”

She closed her eyes again. She let the rays of the morning sun shine on her face. She tried to feel at one with the entire universe. But at the same time, sitting and doing nothing made her drowsy, and soon she was on her side in front of the wigwam, napping. When she awoke, it was midday. She got up, and walked around a little like *Hiawatha* did. She tried to remember some of the animal names from Longfellow's Ojibwa vocabulary. She had been so busy with preparations these last weeks she had barely had time to memorize the list of Ojibwa words. She remembered *Wawa* for ‘goose’. That was about the easiest word to remember. But she saw no geese today. That was one other thing she had forgotten to prepare – she had already forgotten to teach herself how to make a fire by rubbing wood, and now she had forgotten to learn applicable Indian words from Longfellow's vocabulary. But then, a lot of the words were of plants and animals she would not encounter here – fish, for example.

A red squirrel appeared in the pine tree, and chattered

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at her.

“Hello squirrel! Oh I remember. Longfellow wrote your name as *Adjidaumo*. But I wonder if the Maliseet Indians of New Brunswick have that word. Properly I should speak Maliseet to the spirits around here! Are you a spirit, Mr. Squirrel, or are you a solid, real, squirrel?”

The squirrel, seeing Abbi was not going to chase him, continued on his business through the trees.

“I wonder when I will see a ghost appear who will talk to me and say it is my guardian spirit?” She imagined it would be like the spirits in *The Christmas Carol*, except they could have animal form.

There was absolutely nothing to do. When would the vision come? she wondered. How would it come?

“I will try to sit very still, and get a vision!” she asserted to herself.

She sat and sat and sat. Then she heard a noise behind her, on a ridge above the wigwam. She turned and looked over the shoulder. Perhaps it was the young black bear with whom she had already made an acquaintance. It had been looking for blueberries and now stopped to study her with curiosity from atop the ridge. Surprisingly she was not scared. She had anticipated the possibility of the bear coming around, and already had a tree picked out which she could climb, whose branches were too thin for a bear and if the bear followed, would break. But she wasn't scared at this moment. She was at peace.

“Are you a spirit?” she asked it, in case it wasn't the bear who lived in the area but a vision. For a minute, she and the bear looked at each other. The bear was obviously very perplexed as to what he was looking at.

“Are you really a bear, or are you a spirit that looks like a bear? Are you come to tell me you are my guardian spirit?”

Abbi almost expected the bear to speak. But instead the bear felt uncomfortable and retreated and vanished again. Obviously that was the bear who frequented the blackberry patch, and nothing more. “I guess he or she was not a spirit. He or she was a real bear.”

There were also birds who landed on nearby branches. Flies and butterflies flew by. A dragonfly landed on her arm, and she studied it for a few moments until it flew off

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again. She even moved a rock and found a salamander underneath. When she looked up in the sky, she often saw an eagle soaring. Once in a while she would see it landing at the nest on the cliff on the other side of the valley.

A blue jay landed on a branch of a small tree in front of her.

"Are you my guardian spirit?" she asked.

It flew away.

"I guess not."

With nothing to do, all her senses were heightened. Perhaps that was what it was all about. By both being starved and doing nothing a person's senses were keener due to deprivation of normal listening and activity, and soon they would sense more than they would sense in the normal course of life. When the eagle made its cry, she began to imagine it was saying something. In fact if she wanted, she could hear words in any sound. Normal sounds began to sound like English words. If her language was something else, they would begin to sound like words in that language. Is that how the messages came?

And so the day went by, the sun describing a large arc overhead. By late afternoon she was quite weary of doing nothing. It was a torment for a normally active girl. When would something significant happen? Perhaps she was not doing it correctly?

The day had been a hot and humid one, and the sky had become progressively more and more hazy and cloudy. Billowing clouds had soon filled the sky. Evening came and the sun dropped behind the trees behind her. She retreated inside her wigwam and lay down. She looked up at the ceiling of her wigwam. She studied the way she had built the frame and applied the birch bark. It didn't look very neat, but it wasn't supposed to. She was proud of tying the frame together with cedar root. It seemed to hold fine.

"Where are you, vision?" she asked nobody in particular. "It is so difficult to do nothing all day, and be very hungry too. I almost can't wait for Mrs. Loggerman or anyone to come and ask me how I am, just for something to break the monotony."

There was some pitter patter of rain on her roof. "Oh-oh. I hope I made the roof well. I haven't checked it for rain."

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But the pitter patter soon stopped, and everything was quiet again. She turned on her side, and thought about nothing in particular. Then she heard footsteps approaching, and the moving light of a lantern. It was Mrs. Loggerman. What a welcome sound!

“Abbi?” said Mrs. Loggerman’s voice. “Are you still alright?”

“Yes, Mrs. Loggerman,” said Abbi through the walls of the wigwam. “I’m still alright. I’m very hungry but I’m supposed to be hungry. I haven’t had a vision yet. I hope and pray it will come soon. It is so tiring to do nothing.”

“Well hold in there. It will come. Maybe tonight. Sleep tight. Mr. Loggerman is looking after the children while I come out here to check on you. Well, if you’re fine, I shouldn’t disturb you any more or else I may jinx it all. Goodnight. I’m glad you’re doing fine.”

“Goodnight, Mrs. Loggerman. Thank you for coming all that way to check up on me.”

“A good brisk walk does nobody any harm. And I can get away from the house – even though it is dusk and hard to see...Well sleep tight. I’ll return now.”

Abbi almost wished Mrs. Loggerman would stay and they could have a long conversation, but she knew that would ruin the whole mood, and might prevent her from achieving her dream or vision.

She had taken off her headband, feather, necklaces, and armlets like yesterday, to make it more comfortable when lying on the branches mattress. She turned onto her back again. She concentrated again on the sound of the water in the distance. “Sleep, sleep, sleep. Dream, dream, dream,” she said to herself.

Finally she fell asleep.

She dreamt she woke up, and there beside her in the wigwam was Amik, her adoptive Papa’s stuffed beaver, the one he had gotten when he was a boy and that he always had on his desk in the study. Amik was actually now at Tall Pines, at Madam Woodrow’s mansion. Within her dream she sat up and said:

“Amik! How is it that you are here? The stuffed beaver that was always on Papa’s desk, is supposed to be at Madam Woodrow’s mansion right now. How can you suddenly be here beside me in my wigwam?”

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The stuffed beaver had been posed sitting up, with head slightly turned, and looking with an eye made of a bead. It remained as motionless as it had always been. As she used to do when he was in the study in Fredericton, she reached out to stroke its fur.

"I've missed you, Amik. I've missed Papa's stuffed beaver, the one he had on his desk and inspired him, that he got when he was a boy."

Suddenly it moved. It came to life and moved this way and that. Abbi drew her hand back in surprise. "You're alive!!"

It looked up at Abbi and said "Don't forget me." Then it slipped out of the door of the wigwam. Abbi leapt after. As she emerged from the wigwam into the darkness of the night, Amik continued to run away down the slope towards the river. Suddenly there was a great boom. Abbi woke up, saw she was still inside the wigwam, and realized she had been dreaming it all. But the boom was not in the dream. It was a real boom of thunder. Suddenly there was a flash of lightning breaking through the cracks in her wigwam roof; and in some seconds another boom of thunder.

"Oh, no," said Abbi. "A thunder storm! I hate thunder storms!" She drew the fur blanket over her and hoped it would pass quickly.

Another flash came through the cracks in the birch bark. Then more thunder. Then it began to rain, and then the wind came. The rain came pouring down, and the wind swirled all about, and lightning flashed some more. She drew herself into a ball and prayed that the thunderstorm would end and it would all be over. But she would not be so lucky.

A big burst of wind came along and blew off her entire roof, sending the whole wigwam flying away. Abbi screamed. She was fully exposed to the wind and the rain.

"No, no!" she cried. "My wigwam has blown to pieces! The rain is pouring down. I'm getting wet. I want to go home. . . I've got to go home. . ."

She got up and drew the fur blanket around her shoulders. Using the flashes of lightning to find her way, she ran along the path home as fast as she could go. As she ran, rain came pouring down and within minutes she was completely drenched from the rain and the fur blanket

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around her shoulders was soaked and heavy. But she stayed the course. With every flash of lightning she oriented herself to the path, and continued along. In only ten minutes she was back at the clearing and rushed into the house. Because the thunderstorm had awakened the children and some were crying, Mrs. Loggerman was already up and heard Abbi come in. In her nightgown, and carrying a baby in one arm and a candle in the other, Mrs. Loggerman descended the stairs to see a very wet and forlorn Abbi coming in the door.

“Abbi!! What happened?”

Abbi was in tears. “The thunder storm blew my wigwam to pieces! I ran home by the lightning flashes! It’s all over! My fast has ended!” she cried.

“Well let’s get you out of your wet deerskin, and into a nightgown. Go sit in the living room. Put the blanket from the sofa around you. I’ll run upstairs and fetch your nightgown.”

Before going upstairs, Mrs. Loggerman placed the baby on the couch, and used the flame from her candle to light the large oil lamp that illuminated the living room area, to give Abbi some light. She then rushed up the stairs to fetch her children, Meanwhile, Abbi dropped the wet fur blanket to the floor, and replaced it with the woolen blanket from the sofa. Her armlets, headband, bundle and other things had remained behind. She would have to fetch them tomorrow. She was shivering. Mrs. Loggerman returned down the stairs with a towel and her nightgown and helped Abbi get out of her deerskin dress, dry herself, and get into her nightgown. She put the blanket around her again, and told her to sit down. She put some kindling in the fireplace, and struck a match to start a fire. More children upstairs were crying from being frightened by the thunder, and she rushed back upstairs to bring them all down to the living room. “Just sit there, Abbi,” she said. “I’ll bring everyone down. Oh there hasn’t been such a thunderstorm here for a long time.”

Fortunately half the girls were walkers who could make their own way downstairs and Mrs. Loggerman only had to fetch the two remaining little ones. They were all frightened from the thunder, but when they all saw the nice fire in the fireplace and the light of the lamp, they

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stopped being afraid.

"Abbi what happened to you?" asked little Gladis.

"I got caught in the storm."

Mrs. Loggerman arranged all her babies on the chairs and sofa and, with her littlest baby in her arms, she sat herself on the sofa next to the shivering Abbi. Lightning and thunder continued to crash about outside. Those girls most afraid of the thunder crowded close to them and sat on the sofa too if there was room and felt safe. They all faced the fire that was beginning to crackle in the fireplace.

Somehow Mr. Loggerman upstairs slept through it all.

"It's all over," said Abbi when she had recovered a little. "Only on my second night. I failed, Mrs. Loggerman."

"Don't say that. Didn't you get any vision or dream?"

"Not what I expected. Nothing is clearer to me than it was before. I am as uncertain about everything as before. I'll have to try again, sometime, Mrs. Loggerman."

"Was there really nothing?"

"Before the thunder storm I dreamt of a stuffed beaver that my Papa had, that he always had on his desk. I dreamt he appeared in the wigwam, and came alive, and said 'Don't forget me.' and then he ran away. I was hoping I would dream some more and it would become clearer what that was about. But then the thunderstorm ended it all. It's all over!"

"Well maybe the idea is that you have to figure out what 'Don't forget, me' means. Perhaps that's part of the vision. Perhaps two nights is all you needed. Didn't you say that a vision quest did not have to go for a whole week?"

Abbi sighed. She was no longer Abbi the Indian Girl. She was back to being the regular Abbi come to assist Mrs. Loggerman manage her household.

"I left my armlets, headband, necklace, bundle, and other things behind. I'll have to go back to fetch them tomorrow, and survey the damage."

"The thunderstorm is already moving off," Mrs. Loggerman said to everyone. "Let's all have tea and something to eat, children, and then we'll all go back to sleep and sleep soundly like Papa."

All the girls were in agreement about the idea.

"Did you notice, Abbi?" Mrs. Loggerman continued, "Mr.

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Loggerman didn't even awaken? Perhaps he is so used to the sound of the river and the saw when he works, that he doesn't notice thunder."

"Or maybe he works so hard he is thoroughly tired!" added Abbi.

BACK TO NORMAL

The next morning, Mrs. Loggerman let Abbi sleep, and then made her a big breakfast. Abbi was quite hungry from not having eaten one and a half days. At midday when Mr. Loggerman came to have lunch and could watch the babies, Abbi and Mrs. Loggerman went out to the site of the fast to survey the damage. The wigwam was scattered everywhere, but Abbi found her armlets, headband, necklaces, bundle, and birch bark vessel.

"I will dry them and put them away with my dress, for when I have a fast again, Mrs. Loggerman," she said with a sigh.

Then there was nothing more to do than to try to put it from her mind, and resume her normal activities.

It took her a few days to get out of her disappointment that something she worked so hard for had been a failure. But soon she became her normal lively self again, and the next week went by in routine fashion.

As before, every morning, before the sun was even up, Abbi ran in her nightgown down to the beaver dam to say hello to the beavers, then splashed water on her face, then milked the cow, then fetched some eggs, then helped get the babies to the kitchen table and fed them. Then she helped Mrs. Loggerman with the household chores like laundry, cleaning, mending. Meanwhile the men came from the town in a wagon, and sounds of sawmilling started up again. At noon it paused as workmen gathered together around their own lunch area outside, and Mr. Loggerman walked to his house to have lunch with his family and Abbi. After lunch he returned to the sawmill, and the sawmill noise went on again. After lunch the babies were made to nap. Then Abbi was free for an hour or two to hike along the ridge and try to resume her Indian studies. But her heart was not as fully in it as before. She would have to get over the failure of her vision quest first.

By offering to pick blackberries, and come back with a

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basket brimming, making Mrs. Loggerman inspired to make even more preserves and desserts, she could extend her time lingering in the natural setting. She was no longer afraid of bears, now that she had encountered the one in the area twice now. Whether it was a male or female she did not know.

She did spy the local bear once again. He or she was in the distance, and looked at her, like it had done weeks before. Neither was quite as afraid of each other as before, having seen each other several times by now. However she would not like it to come any closer. She had already identified a tree on the edge of the blackberry patch she could run to and scramble up. Thus every time she saw evidence of the bear, she looked around to see where that tree was and how she would run there.

The bear inspired her to search through her books to find the Ojibwa word for 'bear'. Finally she discovered it was *Mokwa* or *Makwa*. She felt guilty for not knowing the local Maliseet word. She pleaded with Mr. Loggerman to remember what the Maliseet called a bear.

"Please, Mrs. Loggerman!" she pleaded. "Please remember what they called the 'bear'!"

He thought about it, and then remembered an incident in the logging camp in winter where they came across a cavern that had a hibernating bear in it. The men decided to let it sleep, "But," Mr. Loggerman finished, "I remember one of the Indians speaking to the bear and using the work *Muwin*."

Abbi was thrilled, and she thought *Muwin* was similar enough to *Makwa* that it was evidence that both languages had the same distant origin. They were related Algonquian languages. Her adoptive Papa had told her that nearly all the hunting people with canoes in the northeast quarter of North America were related – which meant they all grew out of the same earlier people. Not only would some of the Maliseet words be similar to Ojibwa, but the customs would be similar too – they would probably have the sweat lodge and fasting too!! She now longed to meet real Indians from around these parts!

Every time she reached the blackberry patch area, she now spoke out loud in case the bear was there and nearby. "Mr. *Muwin*," she would call. "Do not be afraid of me or be

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threatened by me. I am here only to pick blackberries. You should not mind, since you eat too much as it is. You are getting diarrhea from eating too much all too often. I am doing you a favour.”

If she saw no evidence of the bear, she proceeded to pick the blackberries. She could pick blueberries too, elsewhere on the ridge, but the blueberry season was over, and it took a longer time to fill up a basket with blueberries as they were small.

Although her speaking with the echo, who she envisioned as the spirit she had dubbed *Saqteminimisis*, had lost its novelty, she did not forget her. There was always something fascinating in a girl's voice coming back at her through the expanse of the valley through which the river flowed.

Generally speaking, Abbi's life continued as before; but she was still confused about her identity and her path in life. And would she ever have a chance to pursue a fast again?

REVELATION

Yes, Abbi was generally disappointed that her fast, her vision quest, had ended in disaster, and that nothing that she experienced in its short time had been the revelation she had sought. What did it mean when the stuffed beaver came alive and said 'Don't forget me.'?

She couldn't think of a solution so she tried to put it from her mind.

“Perhaps some day in the future you can try a fast again, and it will be more successful,” said Mrs. Loggerman when Abbi expressed her disappointment yet again.

Perhaps, she thought, she had tried her vision quest too soon. Perhaps she should learn more about Indian ways so that next time she would do it better.

One day, returning home in the afternoon with a basket brimming with blackberries she asked Mrs. Loggerman: “Did you ever give the echo a name when you were a girl? I have called it *Saqteminimisis* after Mr. Loggerman revealed it means 'little blackberry' which I thought was a perfect name for a daughter of *Gitche Manitou* who

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wanders the ridge opposite, gathering blackberries like me.”

“Well my father called it *kaja*, which he said means ‘echo’ in Finnish.”

“KA-YA? Really? It sounds like a woman’s name. It sounds like ‘Kay’. I have imagined the echo to be a girl spirit, although if a man talks to it, it sounds like a man. So it is possible it could actually be a mischievous imitator spirit, like a parrot. I heard parrots sit on the shoulders of pirates and imitate what they hear.”

“Well you can call it *kaja* too. Perhaps it remembers the name from long ago already. If you write it, use *J*. In Finnish *J* sounds like *Y*.”

“That is a good idea, Mrs. Loggerman. But I have already been calling the girl echo *Saqteminimisis*. I like it because it has many syllables and sounds very musical when it comes back. Kay or even *kaya* is far too short.”

“Well there is nothing wrong with *Saqteminimisis* if it sounds musical and if it makes you imagine a girl spirit opposite doing what you are doing – picking blackberries. Whatever works best for you is fine. There is really nothing out there but an echo – but I understand you Abbi. When I was a girl I too liked to imagine there was a girl on the cliff opposite, too distant to see, who was calling back. That is what is so charming about echoes – you can play with them.”

“I would love to learn some Maliseet. *Saqteminimisis* is in Maliseet, and so is *qapit* and *muwin* – the three words Mr. Loggerman has remembered from his Indian workers. I can’t wait till Mr. Loggerman hires additional workers who are Maliseet, so I can ask them what more things are called. Maliseet is distantly related to Ojibwa, and some words will be similar. Ojibwa and Maliseet languages were cousins, since the Ojibwa word for ‘bear’ is *makwa*, and because if you speak lazy, you drop the K, so *makwa* would first become *ma’wa*¹⁸, and that is almost like *muwin*. I can see why the word ‘Maliseet’ is Mikmaq for ‘lazy speakers’—I learned that somewhere. I don’t know if it was Mr. Loggerman or a book or Papa. Anyway to the Mikmaq ear, the Maliseet didn’t pronounce their sounds

¹⁸ The apostrophe represents a break, a slight pause, in a word

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very clearly.”

“You are becoming an expert in Indian languages already!”

The Loggerman girls were scattered about in cribs or playing with their toys in the living room. The novelty of seeing what Abbi and their mother were doing had worn off for them by now, and if they saw Abbi and their mother doing the ordinary things, they were not drawn to investigate, but remained with their preoccupations in the living room area.

It was nearly dinnertime and Mr. Loggerman arrived to see what was cooking.

“As you can see,” said Mrs. Loggerman to her husband, as she worked at the counter. “Abbi has brought another basket of blackberries. I suppose it is her small hands and nimble fingers that can pick them faster than any adult. I thought the season for them was over, but Abbi continues to manage to find enough to fill up the basket.”

“Good for you Abbi,” he said to Abbi.

“And her failure with the fast has not dampened her resolve to learn all about Indian language and culture,” added Mrs. Loggerman.

“Yes,” added Abbi. “That was why I brought three of my Papa’s books with me in the first place, Mr. Loggerman. I mean my adoptive Papa, who was an engineer and liked to study literature and about Indians. I’m not talking about my natural father who I was told was named Irwin Pictford. He died at sea, you know.”

“Is that so? Died at sea?”

“Yes, Mr. Loggerman. His ship was caught in a hurricane in the North Atlantic. The sailors had to struggle just to keep water out of the hold. He saved a man from being swept over by a wave, but alas, the storm kept up and eventually the wooden ship fell completely apart, and all that was left were boards floating all over the North Atlantic. Everyone drowned. They say that had it been an iron steamship it may have survived the beating, but iron steamships, if filled with water, drop to the bottom of the ocean like a lead brick.”

This story was far more embellished than what Jenine had told her. With each retelling, it was sure to become more and more elaborate until it was a whole novel.

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"Well that is too bad," said Mrs. Loggerman. "But at least you then got yourself another father who was a university graduate and taught you to read and write and much more besides, and you are only nine and a half."

"Yes, Mrs. Loggerman. In the evening he liked to read and write at his desk in his study. He always kept a stuffed beaver on his desk to one side. The same beaver as in the dream, who I called 'Amik'. He had got it as a boy and loved it so much. I think it was his inspiration for his studies and writings on Indian things."

"You mean," interjected Mrs. Loggerman. "the stuffed beaver you saw in your dream when you were fasting, before the thunderstorm blew your little wigwam away?"

"Yes Mrs. Loggerman. Ever since that day I have been wondering what the dream meant, when the stuffed beaver became alive and said 'Don't forget me.'"

Abbi was by now setting the table. Mr. Loggerman had gone to fetch his little girls and to drop them – gently of course – into their hand-hewn highchairs. At the end of her sentence Abbi paused and suddenly she understood.

"Mrs. Loggerman! I know what it meant! I know what it meant! I know why he said 'Don't forget me.' I'm supposed to continue my Papa's work! That's what it meant! That was the vision about my future! I have to go to university and study all about Indians and poetry and such, like him!"

"Well there you are. Your vision quest was successful after all; and in only two nights."

"It's all clear! That's the reason I brought his books, and why Mama gave me his folder of writings! I'm supposed to continue what he was doing in the study with Amik on his desk! And I cannot forget Amik because *he is the inspiration for it all in some way!* If I remember him, if I remember Amik, I will continue to be inspired, just like Papa was! That's the reason not to forget him! Amik is the inspiration!"

"Well then," said Mrs. Loggerman, "all the more reason to continue learning from your Papa's books."

"My destiny is to read all of my Papa's—the adoptive one, not Irwin—books, letters, and writings, and continue his pursuits. I will study hard in school, excel in all subjects, go to university, and become very smart. I don't think I have to become a railway builder, because when

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Papa worked at his study, he pursued all the other things that interested him, there, particularly Indian legends and poetry. It was his pastime, a hobby after work. But I think the vision means it is my destiny to make it my fulltime ambition. Perhaps I could become a professor like Mr. Longfellow once was, who my Papa had admired.”

“Well then we have to get you to school. You won’t get anywhere unless you continue in school, whether it teaches about Indians or not. You can’t get to university unless you get through regular school first! Which reminds me, it has become September, and I believe the school session in Pinewood has started. It is time to get you to school, like I promised your adoptive Mama. You have to put your Indian studies aside for a while and study geography, literature and all the regular subjects. I know I will not have you for chores for much of the day, but a promise is a promise. We got most of the big summer chores done anyway.”

Yes! School!

She was ecstatic! Not only had she discovered her path in life, but she would be returning to school! She had excelled in the school in Fredericton, and now she could continue. And when she returned to her adoptive family in the city, she would continue yet again in yet another school. And before long she would be in a university!!!

16

Beyond the Sawmill

FIRST VISIT TO PINWOOD IN A WHILE

“If I go to school, how will I get there?” Abbi asked after supper after getting all the little girls under control. She joined Mrs. Loggerman in the kitchen part.

“Well for the first day I think the parent or guardian has to enroll the child. I will have to go with you into Pinewood. I wonder how we can arrange to have the girls looked after. It is the girls that have prevented me from going into town more often. I haven’t gone ever since we returned from Saint John. It is old Jeffery who goes into town regularly with our wagon to fetch supplies and mail, and whatever else needs to be done. With all the children to look after, its not been practical for me to go.”

“Why not take them all with you, Mrs. Loggerman? Then you can show off your children, and especially the new one you got just two months ago.”

Mrs. Loggerman paused in her scrubbing of the potato pot...“Yes that is possible. I know how to drive the wagon just fine. And there is plenty of room for all the girls in back. We only have to make sure Jeffery or Mr. Loggerman don’t have a need for the wagon or horses.” She continued scrubbing and reflected on what she new about goings-on in Pinewood. “Jeffery says that there is much gossip going on about us, how I have a new baby and an Indian girl to help out. Everyone is very interested in you, Abbi. Everyone is saying we got ourselves a very intelligent Indian girl to help and they want to see what we got. I think perhaps we *should* go around to show them how intelligent, bright, and lively you are; and especially how good you are at speaking, reading, and writing. You could read, write, and speak circles around most of the women I know, and you are still only nine and a half years

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old. We can do it in conjunction with enrolling you at the school.”

“I would be honoured to meet those women,” replied Abbi. “I can’t understand why you haven’t tried to go away from here, more often, Mrs. Loggerman, even if you have to take all the girls along. Where I’ve lived before, ladies get together often for tea and gossip.”

“It’s much different out here, Abbi. With everyone so poor and busy, and the distances between everyone being so large, the community might gather for one purpose or another only a few times a year – someone may get married, someone die, and of course there are special days like Easter and Christmas. Years ago the community built a large log cabin with a cross on front in Pinewood to serve for religion. People living in or close to Pinewood go there regularly. In fact the local ladies may get together after and have tea-times like you said. The community has put its cemetery there too, and we might go to a wedding or a funeral there if we know the person. Otherwise, people a little too far away, like us, tend to ask God’s forgiveness on Sunday, and read a chapter or so from the Bible.”

“I’d prefer to go to the valley at the ridge, where I did my fast.” commented Abbi. “I think that place is every bit as nice as the nicest cathedral in the world, and you can almost see God there when the sun rises over the mist, except that Indians call God *Gitche Manitou* which means ‘Great Spirit’.”

“Yes, Abbi. I can see why the Indians never had a great need to build churches for their religion. They simply looked for natural cathedrals in the wilderness.”

“It’s too bad all the women of the area don’t see each other very often because of the distances and chores. Perhaps you have to make a *point* of going and visiting neighbours.”

“You’re right, Abbi. But our priority right now is to get you enrolled in school like I promised your Mama, your adoptive Mama, and Madam Audora Woodrow, who runs the company. I will ask Mr. Loggerman when he comes for lunch if the wagon is free for tomorrow or the day after next.”

“What do you need me to do now, Mrs. Loggerman? I

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have finished changing the diapers of the two littlest girls. Shall I put any of them asleep?"

"I almost forgot," said Mrs. Loggerman, taking a letter out of her apron pocket. "Here is something that might raise your spirits some more. I found among the letters Jeffrey brought from town for Mr. Loggerman's business, this letter for you, it appears, from your adoptive Mama. I'll let you be free to read it."

"Oh, they have been so far from my mind because of all the chores and my Indian pursuits. I am so glad she remembered!"

She opened the letter to read it at the dinner table.

When she was done, Mrs. Loggerman asked: "Was the letter good news?"

"Yes. The children, my adoptive brothers and sister, are adjusting to Audora's big mansion just fine, but Mama seems not to enjoy it very much. She was raised a country girl and doesn't feel like she fits in. She is trying to adjust however. She hopes I am fitting in here, and wants me to write back soon."

"Well write the letter and then you can post it when we go to Pinewood."

ENROLLING AT THE SCHOOL

When the day for traveling to Pinewood arrived – two days later – Abbi cleaned herself up, combed her hair, and put on her best dress, just like she had done in Fredericton before going to school.

Mrs. Loggerman had Jeffrey bring around the horses and wagon to the front of the house. A rug, blankets and pillows were placed in the back part of the wagon behind the front benches, and then Abbi climbed up there, and began receiving the little girls as Mrs. Loggerman lifted them up, one by one. She placed the little girls on the blankets and pillows and commanded them to sit and remain seated.

The newest baby, around two months old by now, was put inside a large basket. Mrs. Loggerman put it on the front seat where she'd be safe between her and Abbi.

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Soon they were under way. How exciting for Abbi! The first time she was traveling further away from the Loggerman's in two months!! It was the break she needed.

"First we'll visit the general store," said Mrs., Loggerman. "The post office wicket is there too, and I can introduce you to Mr. Wilson, who runs the general store and post office wicket. You can post your letter home there."

Before long they were there. Pinewood was not more than one wide dirt street with the railway station on one side, and assorted businesses on the other side – the blacksmith, a small hotel and tavern, the general store, small church, and so on. A large river, larger than the one that ran past the Loggerman's sawmill, which was more like a 'brook', ran past the town on the other side of the railway track. It wasn't the Saint John River, but one that flowed into the Saint John.

Mrs. Loggerman stopped the wagon in front of the general store. It had steps going up from the dirt street, to a walkway of boards, which was sheltered by an overhang, held up by posts.

Mrs. Loggerman tied the horses to one of those posts, and took the basket with the new baby from Abbi, and helped Abbi hop down.

"I want to come down too," cried Sylvia.

"Me too!" others chimed in.

"No not yet. I and Abbi will be only a minute. You'll get to come down soon enough. Sit still. Don't move, or else you may fall out of the wagon and get hurt. I'll be watching

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you from the window. Alright?”

“Yes, Mama,” replied the girls.

They entered and found themselves in a large room with shelves everywhere, brimming with a little of everything anyone could possibly want. But what people mostly purchased were food necessities from large barrels and bins—flour, beans, sugar, salt, and whatever else Mr. Wilson had available.

“Good morning, Mrs. Loggerman!” said Mr. Wilson, a lean, older man with a wide moustache. “I haven’t seen you for a long while, although I have heard all the news from men who work at the mill or Jeffrey who comes for provisions. I have heard you have a new baby girl, and acquired a girl to assist you, who is an Indian. This must be her.”

“Tell Mr. Wilson a little about yourself, Abbi,” said Mrs. Loggerman.



“I’m not full Indian,” began Abbi. “and I am an orphan. My natural parents died when I was a baby. My mother was an Indian of the tribe at Lake Superior, which they call *Gitche Gumee*. That means I’m Ojibwa, not Maliseet such as live in New Brunswick; and my father was a sailor of Pictish origins who died in a hurricane in the Atlantic. I never knew them because I was raised by Mr. and Mrs. Woodrow, who I considered my Mama and Papa since a young child is not able to understand the concept of being an adopted orphan. Papa worked in the railway that came

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up this way, but he also went to university and once had Henry Longfellow as a professor, and became interested in Indian things and writing verse as well. But then he fell in the ferocious Saint John after saving many men, but his body was never found so his fate remains uncertain. He may have climbed out of the river and is now in a hospital. That is my hope. I am expecting that he will return one day and there will be a long explanation. His mother took in the rest of the family, but considered it appropriate – seeing as Madam Woodrow owns half the sawmill – to send me here to help the Loggermans with their six small girls. That summarizes me, Mr. Wilson.”

“My, my, my, my,” said Mr. Wilson surprised by the flurry of information. “You are very articulate. Are you really only nine?”

“Nine and a half,” said Abbi smartly.

“Indeed,” affirmed Mrs. Loggerman. “She reads and writes better than most of us in these parts. She is amazing. She attributes it to her Papa studying at university and teaching her from an early age. Now here’s the new one. Here is my little baby. Mr. Loggerman was dismayed that it was a girl once again. Seems we are unable to produce any boys. He keeps saying ‘How am I going to run a sawmill without boys?’”

“Well, everyone already knows about that predicament,” said Mr. Wilson, revealing that it was already standard gossip that Mr. Loggerman wanted boys but all he got was girls.

Abbi in the meanwhile roamed her eyes around the store. She was tempted to explore, but refrained. She wanted to leave a good impression. Besides, going to the school was uppermost on the agenda.

“Well, as you can see through the window, Mr. Wilson. I have all my little girls out there on the wagon. I have come to enroll Abbi at the school, which I heard has started, and this is a social call. I’m not here to purchase, since Jeffrey has already made the purchases—although I would be happy to take any mail for us.”

“Certainly,” said Mr. Wilson, going to the back and checking the mail slots at the post office part of the store. “Ah yes, here are a few came in by last night’s train. For the sawmill.”

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“Thank you, Mr. Wilson,” said Mrs. Loggerman. “I have to go before the babies get into mischief by themselves. Abbi has a letter for her family in Saint John.”

Abbi took it out of the pocket of her apron, and handed it to Mr. Wilson.

“It needs postage,” said Abbi.

“Put it on our account,” said Mrs. Loggerman. “One other thing, Mr. Wilson. Abbi is keen to meet Indians from the area, especially a girl close to her age. What do you know about that.”

“Oh, I dunno,” he replied rubbing his chin. “We are rather far from the Indian community – it is downriver near the Saint John River. Indians might drop in here only in winter or spring on their way or returning from employment as loggers, and sometimes when they go hunting this way. But I will spread the gossip that Abbi wishes to meet an Indian girl.”

“Thank you, Mr. Wilson.”

“Well goodbye, Mrs. Loggerman. Goodbye, Abbi.”

“Goodbye, Mr. Wilson,” said Abbi. “It was a pleasure to meet you. You have nearly everything one could think of all at once in this small store.”

“It is many hours to reach a city like Fredericton, and I try to have a little of everything one can get in Fredericton here. I can even order in something large, should someone need it. Whatever they need, I can get, now that we have the new railway.”

“Yes I know, Mr. Wilson,” said Abbi. “The railway up this far is now done. They are still working on the rest of it that goes up to Edmunston. My adoptive Papa was a railway engineer on the construction.” Abbi was proud of him.

Outside, Abbi untied the horses and they climbed back onto the wagon. Mrs. Loggerman put the basket with the baby between herself and Abbi again. They were off.

“Where should we go next, Mrs. Loggerman?” wondered Abbi. “There doesn’t seem to be much more than the general store to visit.”

“We have to see if the school is started. We have to get you enrolled, as I promised. Then we’ll see what next to do.”

Within only a couple minutes more they were at the

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school. It was a plain log building, with plenty of windows to let in the light. It was situated on a grassy lot, and one could see patches of dirt where children's' play had worn grass away. For water, there was a well with a pump with large handle.

"The community got together years ago to build this school," said Mrs. Loggerman. "Someone donated the land, others donated lumber, and labour. People donate to the teacher his lodging, food, everything. It is very informal. Usually it is the people who have children in the school who donate a great deal. It encourages the teacher to give their children more attention."

"Will you have to donate something, if I am here?"

"Certainly, but that is no problem. Mr. Loggerman may give the school committee some lumber to build something needed, or for repairs, or wood for feeding a fire in the stove in winter."

"Well, I appreciate it, Mrs. Loggerman."

"It is our duty, Abbi, in exchange for your helping us, that we see to your education and care. That was the understanding. I believe the teacher's name is Mr. Turbot."

Mrs. Loggerman halted the wagon in front of the school.

School was indeed already in session. The teacher, a young, lean man, named Mr. Turbot, saw them through the windows of the classroom and came out to meet them.

Abbi and Mrs. Loggerman descended to meet Mr. Turbot.

"Can we come down yet, Mama?" chorused some of the girls.

"Not yet, girls. We'll only be here a moment too."

Mr. Turbot approached them. He was a young man, not too tall, with reddish hair, who looked a little older than he was, on account of his moustache and beard, both of which were neat and trim.

"Mr. Turbot," said Mrs. Loggerman, "I'm Mrs. Loggerman. My husband runs the Koski Logging and Sawmill Company three miles from here. This young lady is staying with us and helping us, and we wished to enroll her in the school, while she is with us for the next months. Her name is Abbi."

"Mrs. Loggerman," replied Mr. Turbot. "I believe I have heard of it in the gossip circles. Yes, I heard of this girl,

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who everyone says is an Indian girl.”

“Well, she has a colourful past. She will explain it to you in detail by and by. We have to enroll her in school. The current predicament is that we are so far away. Three miles is very far to travel to school regularly.”

“There are other students who, for one reason or another cannot come to school regularly. It is not unusual in a region such as this. A teacher serves as guidance and assistance. The student has to learn from their own will, whether he or she attends regularly or not. In her case I can allow flexibility in her attendance, as long as she works hard on her own.”

“Tell him your thinking on the matter, Abbi,” said Mrs. Loggerman to Abbi.

“Good morning, Mr. Turbot,” said Abbi politely. “I have heard a great deal about you and your good work in this community. My major duties at the Loggerman household are to assist Mrs. Loggerman get her little girls up in the morning and fed, and then later to get them to supper, and then to bed. Thus properly, I cannot come to school until after the babies are fed, and must leave so as to arrive home before their supper. Going by wagon will take only 15 minutes, but I’d be happy to walk here, if there is no wagon coming this way.”

“We can accommodate your arriving late, certainly. Better late than not at all, certainly,” replied Mr. Turbot.

“She’s now a very accomplished walker, Mr. Turbot,” said Mrs. Loggerman. “She has been hiking the ridges near our sawmill all summer – at least a mile or two every day going to and returning from a ridge where there is a beautiful echo. I’m certain she’ll try her best.”

“Teaching in such a frontier setting requires adaptation. We have one boy who sometimes comes on a horse, and he pastures the horse in our yard. Other children love it, and he shows them how to ride it. We must adapt to the needs of children here. Is Abbi to stay with the class now, Mrs. Loggerman?”

Abbi hoped she would say ‘yes’. She saw how children inside were all gathered at the windows peering out. She loved to make her acquaintance with them and wanted indeed to start right away.

“Well why not?” said Mrs. Loggerman. “We can always

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show you off to folks another time. You will walk home, then, Abbi? You can't get lost. You'll just walk the road. But mind you get out of the way, if workers from the sawmill meet you coming the other way with a load of lumber. I will now do as you suggested – visit some women I have not seen in a while and chat with them and show them my babies. I'm afraid they'll have to meet you another time. I have a handful of good friends in the area I haven't seen for a couple of months. I'll see you around half past four, Abbi. Be careful as always."

"Yes, Mrs. Loggerman. Say hello to the ladies you visit from me, even though I have never met them and that I look forward to meeting them another time."

Wonderful! It was all settled! She couldn't wait to go inside and meet all the children peering from the windows.

"Have a good first day at school, then, Abbi" said Mrs. Loggerman, getting back into the wagon.

As Mrs. Loggerman drove off with her wagon full of little girls, Mr. Turbot led Abbi into the log cabin school.



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ABBI BEGINGS SCHOOL

It was nothing like the wonderfully designed brick school with several classrooms she had gone to in Fredericton. It was a single room. Here there were large tables made of local boards, instead of proper student desks. Children sat on benches behind the tables facing the teacher. At least the teacher had a blackboard; and there were small slates for children to write on.

Unlike in the Fredericton school, there was a lack of books too. The fact was that besides a few older textbooks, which had to be shared among the students, there were only the books Mr. Turbot had brought when hired for the teaching position.

But that didn't matter. Learning did not require fancy surroundings or the latest books, Abbi decided.

"Children," said Mr. Turbot, "this is Abbi. What is your last name Abbi?"

"My parents who died when I was a baby were called Pictford, I was told; but I grew up with Mr. and Mrs. Woodrow. I'm uncertain what name to use when I'm on my own – Pictford or Woodrow – since I expect I will return to the Woodrow family after my assisting the Loggermans is over."

"Alright, Abbi Pictford *or* Woodrow. Is there something special you would like children to know about you?"

Abbi looked out over the children's attentive eyes. The children were of every size, age, and dress. All levels were obviously being taught together here. "Well," Abbi began. "There are two things I consider important. One is that my natural mother was an Indian, I was told, from Lake Superior. That is the large lake called *Gitche Gumee* in the Indian language there. It means 'large waters'.

A boy threw up his hand. "Can you call the Atlantic Ocean, *Gitche Gumee* too, since the ocean is also large water?"

"I suppose so," said Abbi. She had never thought of that before. She continued: "I was told my natural father, who I never met, drowned in a great storm on the Atlantic Ocean. But that is not my second important point I wanted to make. The second important thing about me is that my adoptive Papa, the one who raised me, Mr. Bradden

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Woodrow, railway engineer, studied in university, and knew Henry Wadsworth Longfellow who wrote *The Song of Hiawatha*, and I have already learned a great deal from him, including reading and writing, and I intend to continue in his footsteps, including going to university.”

“Well, then, Abbi,” said Mr. Turbot, “you will have no difficulty with reading and writing, I expect. Anything more?”

“He also taught me about Indian lore, and told me many Indian stories as described by the man called Henry Schoolcraft. They have become all the more important to me now that I have learned I am Indian. But I have since discovered that those stories are from the Lake Superior area, and that the Indians in *these* parts are a different tribe, the Maliseet, and don’t have exactly the same stories, or language, although related.”

“You seem to know a great deal on account of your father, your adoptive father. You are right, they call the Indians here ‘Maliseet’. And they have their own variations on stories and legends. Perhaps you will be interested in their legends, seeing as you are here and not in the west. Mr. Longfellow did not write a poem about these legends here, I’m afraid, even though I believe he grew up in Maine, which is the American state just south of New Brunswick. In Maine they have the Indians called Passemaquoddy, who are identical to the Maliseet, except residing on another river than Saint John, the Penobscot I believe, which arises from tributaries that come close to the Saint John, and then flows down to Bangor.”

“Really?” Here was something Abbi hadn’t known. “Then maybe Mr. Longfellow was ultimately inspired by the Indians here, when he wrote his poem about those at Lake Superior. Maybe he saw some when he was a youth.”

“I’m sure he became aware of them, and indeed he may have met Acadians fleeing south, and that may have planted the seeds for his first poem *Evangeline*.”

“Maybe he couldn’t find out enough legends and myths about the Indians in Maine or New Brunswick to write about them. But if there are legends from Indians around here, I would love to hear the stories here, and learn some of their words.”

Mr. Turbot addressed the children: “What Indian story

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did we look at yesterday in the official Royal reader, children? The central character was called... ”

“Glooscap!” chorused the children.

“Yes, the Indians in New Brunswick have very amusing stories about a character named Glooscap. But time is awasting. I can tell you more about it later, Abbi; but for now, join the class. You can sit over there beside Mildred. We have to do some arithmetic right now. Perhaps we can manage to advance you in arithmetic, today, Abbi?”

Abbi went and sat down, as instructed, on the bench beside Mildred, a quiet girl with wavy blonde hair. Abbi instantly knew they would become friends.

In the next hours Abbi was absolutely thrilled to be back in school. She came alive with questions and answers. She loved to show Mr. Turbot what she knew.

When lunchtime came, and there was an hour break, Abbi became better acquainted with some of the other students from a bit further away who didn't walk home for lunch, but especially Mildred with whom she had sat this morning.

Mildred explained her situation: “Although I don't live too far, my parents work at this time, and so they prefer I stay at the school for lunchtime.”

“We didn't anticipate I'd be staying here today after enrolling,” said Abbi, “so I didn't bring any lunch.”

“Here, I'll share mine with you.”

As they sat together on a large stump, Mildred told her everything there was to know about the school, the lessons they had already begun, and what to expect.

After school, they walked together through the town, until Mildred had to turn in another direction to return to her home. It would become a habit for them to walk together a ways after school.

The journey home was a challenge. It was like walking to the blackberry patches and back twice. But there was plenty going on in the forests beside the road to keep her interested. She could have taken her time, but she walked briskly, to see how quickly she could walk it. Mrs. Loggerman was surprised when she arrived back earlier than she had expected. Abbi immediately set to work helping Mrs. Loggerman, as it also offered her the opportunity to tell her about her day at school, and to grill

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her about her visits to the neighbours and their gossip.

The evening routines continued as usual, and when it was time for bed, Abbi hoped to sleep a deep sleep so she could wake up refreshed, and do everything she normally did like her quick visit to the beavers at the break of dawn, starting the fire, milking Annabelle, getting eggs and all the rest, before heading off to school again. She managed to do fine. As anticipated, she arrived an hour or so after the school day had begun. Mr. Turbot already understood and accepted that Abbi would be arriving later than the other children.

Thus Abbi began a new day of absorbing what the teacher was teaching. The fact that the school was in a log building and poor, did not matter to her.

And so it went in the following weeks. With pleasant weather, and the forests alive with wildlife, the walk both to school and back was pleasant. There was always something unexpected along the way – a darting fox, a scurrying squirrel, a hopping rabbit, and birds of every kind. She liked to speak to them as if they were people. She especially liked it when she encountered the same animal more than once, because then a relationship could develop. When there was nothing interesting to experience on the way, she could review a lesson in her head, conjugate verbs, recite multiplication tables, and so on, to the rhythm of her walking.

She might also meet wagons from the sawmill headed towards Pinewood. The sawmill workers got to know Abbi well. She would wave hello, and sometimes the driver would stop the horses and they would have some exchanges of conversation. The sawmill workers found Abbi to be an engaging, amusing, sort of girl.

With the regular school subjects, Abbi had now turned her attention away from her Indian studies a little. If her Vision Quest said her purpose in life would be to pursue what her adoptive Papa pursued, well then it was imperative to do well in school, or else how would she ever reach university?!

It was inevitable that Abbi would overdo it sometimes – try to do more than her body and mind could handle. The difficulty was not the walking to school but her staying up too late at night, studying something interesting by the

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light of the oil lamp, and not getting enough sleep as a result. When she overdid it, she'd find herself very tired at school. One day she actually fell asleep at her desk, and children laughed at her. Abbi felt embarrassed when she awoke, and when class was let out for lunch hour, Abbi said to Mildred: "How embarrassing, Mildred, to fall asleep again at my desk. It is my fault. Late at night I become so interested in reading or writing something, I stay up too long, and I don't get enough sleep. I must refrain from staying up too late."

It was midday and the sun was shining brightly in the sky. The deciduous trees – as much as there were of them among the conifers – would soon be displaying their autumn colours. There was a large maple on the school lot with a heavy branch extending sideways, from which hung from ropes, two swings. Children took turns swinging on it.

Once again Abbi and Mildred went to sit on their favourite large pine stump to eat, as was their usual habit at lunch.

"Couldn't you go home and make your own lunch, Mildred?" Abbi wondered.

"But I'd be alone if my parents aren't there," replied Mildred. "At least here I have children to talk to. What did you bring for lunch, Abbi?"

Abbi took out a jar of jam and a biscuit from the bag she used to carry books and things to and from school.

"I never have time to prepare proper sandwiches, Mildred. So I just grabbed some biscuits and a small jar of blackberry jam from the shelf. Want some? I picked the blackberries myself during the summer. I like to say a prayer of thanks to *Saqteminimisis* when I eat blackberry jam. She is the girl spirit who takes care of all the blackberries on the ridges. She replies when I call to her."

"What?"

"It is how I envision an echo in our valley upriver. I like to pretend it's a spirit of an Indian girl."

Mildred nodded but didn't entirely understand. She was getting used to Abbi's imagination. Abbi put some jam on one biscuit for her.

"O *Saqteminimisis*, spirit of the blackberries, I thank you for your wonderful taste and goodness," said Abbi to the jam she was spreading.

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“Would you like a half of my sandwich,” Mildred offered in exchange. “This is a properly made sandwich my mother made. It has ham – well actually salted and smoked porcupine, which is almost like ham which is smoked pork.” Abbi nodded and accepted it. She had never eaten salted and smoked porcupine before. She wondered to herself if by chance it had been the one whose quills she had used for making an Indian necklace in summer for her fasting. She didn’t think she should ask at this particular moment in time. It was rather good in any event.

“Thank you Porcupine, for your gift of meat for this sandwich,” said Abbi.

“What?”

“I was speaking to the meat.”

Mildred had brought smoked porcupine sandwiches several times by now, and children teased her about it, as it was unusual.

“The boys call me ‘Porky-pine’.” she claimed.

“I know, Mildred. It is inappropriate. You don’t resemble a porcupine in the least!”

Abbi took out a metal cup from her bag, hopped off the stump. Mildred did too and they went over to the well pump as they continued to talk. Abbi took the handle and began to pump it to get water to drink. Mildred held first Abbi’s cup and then her own under the spout as water gushed out.

With the pump gushing out water, Abbi then shouted to other students: “Come one, come all! Some fresh refreshing water!” For the benefit of some children from French homes she added: “De l'eau fraîche! Tout le monde venez ! De l'eau fraîche, ici!”

A couple of boys and a girl came and shoved cups under the spout after Mildred was done, while Abbi pumped the enormous handle. Then Abbi and Mildred returned to sit on the stump to continue eating and chatting.

“You speak French, Abbi?” said Mildred. “I only know a few words I’ve learned from some French children around these parts.”

“That’s on account my Mama, I mean my adoptive Mama, spoke both English and French when she raised me, on account her mother was French Acadian. Her father, however, was English Loyalist, which means she married a

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man from an English colonial background, so they spoke mostly English at home. Sometimes I'm not even aware I am switching from one to the other. I originally thought everyone could switch like that, until I learned they can't, and many don't even know any French."

The two girls sat together in the sunny but brisk autumn day, until Mr. Turbot summoned the children in for the afternoon session by ringing a bell.

OTHER FOOD FROM THE WILD

Abbi told Mr. and Mrs. Loggerman at supper about how Mildred had brought a sandwich with smoked porcupine meat.

"Mildred has been eating sandwiches at lunch with salted and smoked porcupine meat her father made. It tastes something like ham. Maybe that is why they call it porcupine – pork of the pine."

"Out of porcupine meat?" wondered Mr. Loggerman. "Normally people don't bother since the porcupine isn't very large – they normally make it into a stew. And beavers too, when they were more common."

"No! Not beaver stew! You must never make beaver stew, ever, Mrs. Loggerman! Beavers are my friend. I think they are my ancestral totem animal!"

"What do you mean, 'totem animal'?"

"I read in Schoolcraft's books that Indians belonged to a totem represented by an animal. It was something like a surname, and you couldn't marry a person of the same totem. And it was very important that you could not harm your totem animal. If your totem was the beaver, you could never kill it or eat it. Instead you looked to it for guidance. Even though nobody has ever told me what totem animal I belong to, I feel certain it is the beaver. That's why Amik appeared in my fasting dream. And I have been visiting the beavers in the pond for guidance."

"Oh dear," replied Mrs. Loggerman. "I had better not make beaver stew then!"

"Beavers are now rare," added Mr. Loggerman between mouthfuls, "and it is unlikely anyone will make stew from them around here. They were trapped for furs. And still are – there are no laws preventing it. Without protection,

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beavers are in danger wherever they are of being wiped out for their furs.”

Abbi was interrupted by the girl Mrs. Loggerman called “Poopsie” in the high chair beside her, who spilled meat off her plate. Abbi was reminded she still had to find names for the four remaining little girls like she had promised. So far she had only named Gladis and Sylvia. “Poopsie,” said Abbi. “Eat your moose meat. Moose meat is good for you. It will help build strong muscles like the moose has. Here, I’ll help you cut it into smaller pieces.”

When Abbi was done assisting Poopsie, she continued to Mrs. Loggerman. “I wouldn’t mind porcupine stew, or even rabbit stew, Mrs. Loggerman. I know, Mrs. Loggerman, that you have a gun and in the past used it to hunt rabbits. Jeffrey told me. You are quite a woods-woman, Mrs. Loggerman.”

“I haven’t been able to do it for years, what with all the babies to look after. Besides, with the moose and deer and other meat the men procure, there is no need to hunt rabbits. We haven’t had rabbit stew in a long time.”

“I don’t know if I could kill animals,” mused Abbi “But the books about Indians say that when you think in terms of spirits, not bodies, then it doesn’t matter so much. The spirit endures even if the body no longer works. Have you ever observed, Mrs. Loggerman, after shooting a rabbit, its spirit floating up out of its body? If you have, then you can thank the spirit of the rabbit for the food.”

“I don’t think I’ve seen a ghost of a rabbit floating out of it. I’ve never even thought about it.”

“Perhaps it has to be somewhat dark since ghosts are very pale. And you also have to be very attentive. Ghosts are also ephemeral.”

“Ephemeral?”

“It’s a word I recently learned. I try to use words I’ve learned, and I think this is an appropriate occasion.”

“I don’t know what it means.”

“It means ‘fleeting’, Mrs. Loggerman.”

“Could you pass me the potatoes, Abbi?” interjected Mr. Loggerman. He liked to eat quietly, and listen to the entertaining conversation between Abbi and his wife.

“I suppose,” continued Abbi after passing Mr. Loggerman the wooden bowl filled with potatoes, “in the

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regular world, where there is mainly the Great Spirit or God and we don't deal with the lesser spirits, we thank the rabbit spirit indirectly by thanking the Great Spirit, God, in the mealtime blessing."

"What do you mean, Abbi?" wondered Mrs. Loggerman.

"I mean, the Great Spirit is the chief of all the spirits in nature, and so when the rabbit dies, and his angel lifts up out of the body, then we can thank the boss angel, which is God, or Great Spirit, and God can then let the rabbit angel know that the Loggermans were very thankful for the food he provided."

"Hmm. I never thought of it that way. We normally don't think of angels let alone animal angels."

"I think there *have* to be animal angels or spirits, Mrs. Loggerman. Haven't you heard people say, after their wonderful pet has died, that they hope their pet went to pet heaven? I think heaven is just like the earth, except everything is in the form of angels or spirits. Angels and spirits are the same thing, in my view."

"Hmm," replied Mrs. Loggerman, pondering this great philosophical question.

It was Abbi's duty today to also assist the girl on her other side. She had dropped a potato onto the floor. Abbi picked it up, and cut off the part that had touched the floor and put it back on her plate.

"I think it even applies to berries, Mrs. Loggerman. I have been thanking *Saqteminimisis*, the blackberry girl echo spirit of the ridges, for her blackberries whenever I make a sandwich with your wonderful blackberry jam. I know that in the religion of the Europeans, people thank God, for food at the table, but I think if you thank the guardian spirit of the food, it is more direct, don't you think? God, or *Gitche Manitou* is too busy with big matters to be concerned about every little thing we eat. For example, I imagine the field where these potatoes came from had a potato girl spirit. Perhaps one could hear her in the wind blowing across the field. Not every place has an echo."

"Well your view on things sounds very interesting, but unfortunately Mr. Loggerman and I are quite stuck in the ideas with which we were brought up," said Mrs. Loggerman.

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SOME MORE MALISEET WORDS

Now and then, on their way home from school, Abbi and Mildred dropped by at Mr. Wilson's general store, and Abbi fetched the mail for the sawmill.

"I am also hoping for a letter from my family, my adopted family, at home," added Abbi when Mr. Wilson gave her the mail for the sawmill and the Loggermans. "It will come from Saint John. Could you keep watch for it?"

"I sure can," said Mr. Wilson.

"Another thing," added Abbi. "Since I mentioned I would like to meet a real Indian girl from these parts, have you had any success? I have also told Mildred about it. We would both love to meet an Indian girl."

Mr. Wilson shook his head. "I'm sorry, Abbi. I have told people about it in conversation, but no Indian has come through here. Perhaps later when there is hunting and logging....."

"Maybe I'll have to make a journey to them!" said Abbi, in frustration.

At home with the Loggermans Abbi could ask Mr. Loggerman about the Maliseet Indians. Mr. Loggerman always hired a few Maliseet men in winter at the logging camps and at the sawmill too sometimes when he had a need for extra labour. As a result, he had spoken to many Maliseet men over the years, and, for a non-Indian, knew more about the Maliseet, than most men around these parts.

"The Maliseet, are also known as *Wolastoqiyik*," said Mr. Loggerman one suppertime. "Actually *Wolastoqiyik* is the better name, since the word 'Maliseet' comes from Mikmaq (*Mi'kmaq*) and means 'lazy speakers'. And the Maliseet don't particularly like that."

Mrs. Loggerman listened, for a change. Normally she and Abbi did most of the talking at suppertime, and Mr. Loggerman was quiet. But Abbi's questions about the Maliseet got him to talking this time. The little girls around the supper table, were into their regular suppertime antics, which both Abbi and Mrs. Loggerman, being so used to it, handled almost automatically without thinking. "Sylvia," exclaimed Mrs. Loggerman. "Don't play with your food!"

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Mr. Loggerman asked Abbi to pass him the carrots. She did so, and continued the discussion about the Maliseet.

"I suppose I wouldn't like it if I was called a lazy speaker, Mr. Loggerman," said Abbi. "What does *Wolastoqiyik* mean?"

"It comes from their name for the Saint John River. Their whole life in olden times revolved around the Saint John. They traveled downstream in the spring, and spent the summer, many clans together, fishing while the women planted corn—meaning maize, and beans, squash, and such. In the autumn, after the harvest, they broke up again into clans, which are family groups, and traveled back upriver each to their own clan territories. There they spent the winter hunting game during the winter."

"I read that Ojibwa too gathered in large communities in summer at the lower parts of rivers, and then by fall the families went up the river to their own family hunting grounds for the winter. Why is that, Mr. Loggerman?"

"That's because if too many people were all hunting in one area in fall and winter, soon the moose in that area would all be killed for food and there would be none left. By spreading out, that ensured there were always some moose left over in every area to have new young and not vanish from the area"

"In the olden days they must have traveled all over, then."

"Yes, and there are related tribes in Maine. Originally there was no such thing as Canada and America and there was no border to cross. Over there they are called Passamaquoddy, but they are the same people, with the same language."

"Mr. Turbot our teacher knew about that. Continue about the meaning of *Wolastoqiyik*. Mr. Loggerman."

"Well because their life was spent traveling up and down the Saint John, it was a very special river. They called it the *Wolastoq*. *Wolastoq* simply means 'good river'. And so their name for themselves was *Wolastoqiyik* which means 'People of the Good River'"

"That sounds like a much better name than 'Maliseet'!" said Abbi. "And it shows they simply adored the river. I must now use that word – *Wolastoqiyik* – from now on, even if it is more complicated to pronounce!"

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At school, Abbi also asked the teacher, Mr. Turbot, everything he knew about the Maliseet Indians and their language. He at first could not tell her very much, other than about the Glooscap stories, some of which had become popular among settlers. But he assured her he would try to find her more information.

Thus one day, Mr. Turbot pulled Abbi aside, at the end of the day. “You were looking to learn some Maliseet words, Abbi?”

She nodded. “I’ve learned a few from Mr. Loggerman, but I’ve been hoping to meet a real Indian from around here. It is my greatest sorrow in the last while, that even though I’m an Indian, I’ve never met a real Indian – except for when I was born.”

“I have come across this book. It appears to have been written to help missionaries to speak a little Maliseet. It is brief and perhaps leaves a little to be desired, but it has some major Maliseet words.”

Mr. Turbot handed her the book. She opened it. The title page read: “*Primer of the Indian Language spoken by the Mee-lee-ceet Tribe of New Brunswick*”¹⁹ Abbi opened to some of the pages. She saw that there were selected words, arranged alphabetically, and then there were some pages with sentences, although further on the sentences were of a religious nature, talking about Jesus.

“Its purpose,” added Mr. Turbot, “was obviously to give missionaries or preachers some words and phrases they could employ when preaching to the Maliseet.”

Abbi sat down at a table to open the pages more easily. “Here is the word for ‘bear’. I already know that one from Mr. Loggerman telling me. There is a bear at a blackberry patch, but at first I knew only how to call it in Chippewa or Ojibwa – which is *Makwa*, or *Mokwa* or *Mukwa*. The Maliseet just lost the K it seems. Here it is written *Moo-een* which uses English pronunciation just like Mr. Longfellow does. Papa said that Roman Catholics use Latin. That means I expect a Roman Catholic missionary would write it M-U-W-I-N.”

¹⁹ Books about Indian languages from before Abbi’s time are rare, but there were a few, and this is one real book, written for use by missionaries preaching to Maliseet Indians. It can be found reproduced on the internet.

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“You already know about Latin pronunciation from your university educated Papa?”

“I know how the letters are pronounced, and when I go to university I have decided to learn Latin like he did. It is the language that was spoken by ancient people called Romans. My adoptive Papa said that writing Indian words for Latin pronunciation instead of spelling it by imitating their own language, is better. It does offer some Maliseet words.”

“Well in any event, you may borrow this book and study it if you wish.”

Abbi was happy to find anything there was that would help her learn more about the Indian language of these parts. In her Indian studies, which she still pursued from time to time when she didn't have regular school homework, the amount she could find in the Schoolcraft books regarding language was limited, and didn't deal with much more than the Ojibwa language.

“Thank you, Mr. Turbot. I very much appreciate it. There seems to be very little written at all about Indian languages.”

“And I'm afraid that will be the case with the Maliseet language too. It was always easier for the missionaries or government people to develop phrasebooks for commonly used words and phrases than to properly rationalize the grammatical rules, word stems, and so on, like we do in regards to English in our English class.”

Mildred was waiting for her outside the school, and they walked home together – as far as where Mildred took another road. Along the way they stopped for Abbi to check for mail for the Loggermans at the general store.

“Good afternoon Mr. Wilson. How are you today? I'm still expecting my Mama in Saint John replying to the letter I sent a while ago.”

“I'm very well, thank you. Let me check... Here is the mail for the Loggermans, but I'm afraid I haven't seen anything for you yet, from your family.”

“That's alright. I expect Mama may want to write an especially long one, and that takes time.”

Mildred and Abbi continued on down the road, the railway station and a lot with piles of lumber and logs ready to be lifted onto freight cars.

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Abbi studied the book as she walked. She didn't feel inspired by it at all. "I wish there was an Indian around here who could teach me words directly. It would be easier to learn words that way, and pronounce them correctly too, than from books."

"I once saw some grown-up Indians coming through here," said Mildred. "Their village is downriver a ways, I heard."

"Oh it would be a dream come true to meet a real Indian girl from around here!" sighed Abbi,

Perhaps she wouldn't meet *any* during her stay with the Loggmans, let alone one her age. But she was not one to give up hope, just as she hadn't given up hope that her vanished adoptive Papa hadn't drowned and would eventually return.

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NEVER MET A REAL INDIAN

One Saturday morning when there was no school, Abbi didn't come down as normal, and Mrs. Loggerman went to her room to see what was the matter.

"What's wrong, Abbi?" asked Mrs. Loggerman. "It seems to me you should be happy, seeing as you have determined your path in life from the Vision Quest fasting and now have been back at school for a month."

"But, Mrs. Loggerman, I'm still the same as before. I am still a girl raised in the European way, and I have still not met a single Indian. Never in my life have I met Indians. I have heard Papa recite *The Song of Hiawatha* and tell me all about Indians from his own interest in them. I even played an Indian girl in a performance. But I have never met a single Indian. I don't know even if I am doing anything right when I practice their ways, or make their crafts, or try to pronounce their words from books. All I have to go by is what Papa told me and what is in the books, and my imagination."

Abbi came close to tears as she spoke. The realization had struck her all of a sudden.

"Oh dear," said Mrs. Loggerman. "I'm sure you'll meet some Maliseet Indians before long."

"You should call them *Wolastoqiyik*. The word 'Maliseet' makes fun of their dialect..."

"Well *Wolastoqiyik*, then. As Percy said, there are men here in spring when logs come down the river and in fall and winter when there is logging to be done. And sometimes Percy even has a sawmill workers who are Indian also at other times when he needs extra help."

"Oh, Mrs. Loggerman, there is nothing I could wish more at this time than to meet a real Indian girl of my own

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age! That would make my life complete!”

“I will bring it up with Percy. Cheer up. Come down for breakfast.”

MIHKU-SIS

An then miracle of miracles – soon Mr. Loggerman had three additional sawmill workers working for him. They were hired to handle bringing the logs ponded in the water above the sawmill to the saw with winches because there were more logs than they thought that had to be sawn before winter arrived. Also, Mr. Loggerman wanted to get done early to provide a week or two for hunting and fishing. Everyone in the area liked to have meat to carry them through the winter. And in winter it wasn't even necessary to salt and smoke the meat as the cold would freeze it, and steaks could be cut off with a saw.

“You are in luck Abbi, ” said Mrs. Loggerman to Abbi, after she had learned of it. “Percy has hired some Indians to speed up the work before the snow comes, instead of hiring men from the Pinewood area. You will meet some Indians at last. Next Saturday, when you are not at school, you can go meet them when they are having lunch.”

This was exactly what Abbi was hoping for ever since she arrived! Well, it would be even better if she met an Indian girl. But, maybe one of them has a daughter her age!

Sawmill workers regularly took a lunch break in the middle of the day, and Abbi learned that the Maliseet men, when working at the sawmill, sat apart from the others outside the sawmill, smoking and talking among themselves in their own language.

The very next Saturday, when midday came, Mrs. Loggerman excused her from helping with the children, and encouraged her to go meet them.

Abbi made her way to the sawmill. She saw three of them sitting together on stacks of boards beside the river. Shyly she approached them. Except for their unique faces and speaking their Indian language, they looked like any of the other workers in their outward appearances. But she expected it ever since she had seen some men working on the railway and Bradden had explained things. Still, the

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books had given her the romantic image of Indians – as they were before contact happened – and she was still a little disappointed that Indians were not like they once were. Mr. Schoolcraft's books too tended to reflect how things were generations ago. His books were written in the early 1800's. It was now 1875. Nonetheless, the language they were speaking sounded romantic to her.

"Hello," said Abbi when one of them noticed her standing and looking at them. "My name is Abigail Woodrow. Woodrow's my adoptive name. I was an orphan and I am half Indian. My mother was Indian, but not from around here. Mr. Loggerman says that you are Indians of the *Wolastoqiyik* tribe."

The three men, who had been chatting among themselves and smoking pipes, studied this girl who had come to them and started talking to them. She amused them. In particular they were surprised she used *Wolastoqiyik* and pronounced it very well.

"I'm so happy you have come to work for a while at the sawmill," Abbi continued. "Mr. Loggerman said you are loggers and very skilled in handling the logs in the river, and you help manage the logs when they arrive here from upriver in spring, and later when needed, and that he now needs extra help before the hunting season and the snow."

The three laughed and said some things to one another in their own language about this girl. They did not know what to make of a small nine year old girl with such a bold and talkative manner, suddenly deciding to talk to them.

"I live here and help Mrs. Loggerman at the house," Abbi continued. She turned and indicated the house on the hill some distance away. "She has lots of little girls to look after. I help her with that. I also go to school in Pinewood. Where do you live?"

One of them indicated with his hand, down the river. But there was no indication whether it was only miles or tens of miles away. Another said something in Maliseet.

"What did he say?" Abbi wondered.

After a pause, the oldest of them finally replied. "He said a good name for you would be 'Squirrel Girl', or 'Little Squirrel' because you chatter like the squirrel in the pine tree does. You are small and very bold like the squirrel too."

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“Well my regular name is ‘Abbi’, in long form ‘Abigail’. I’m nine and a half years old. And tell your friend I’m honoured to be associated with the squirrel. I consider the squirrel to be a highly conversational animal, not afraid of talking with anyone who comes along; not like some animals who just stare with beady eyes and say nothing, or run away on the very slightest movement. I meet squirrels when I walk to and from school and one of them that I see often is my friend.”

“Well he heard you. I don’t have to explain. He knows a little English. Well, my name is Jack, and these are Fred and Tommy. We also have Indian names our mothers gave us. I speak English better than them. But they can understand quite well.”

“How do you know more English than they?”

“I learned. If you decide hard enough to do something, you will achieve it. What can we do for you then, Abbi? Mr. Loggerman already mentioned you. He said you are Indian and wish to learn about the Maliseet.”

Abbi looked around thoughtfully, with a finger on her chin, trying to think of where to start. Her mind had accumulated so many questions about Indians hereabouts. Finally she replied:

“Well, I would like to know more about the Maliseet or *Wolastoqiyik* language and stories, because I have mostly learned about the Indians at Lake Superior, where I was told my mother was from. I recently learned about Gloopscap at school.”

“Yes, *Koluscap*,” said Jack, saying it the Indian way.

“*Koluscap*,” repeated Abbi, imitating him. “I already know a few other words in your language. For example I know that the name for beaver is *qapit*.”

One of the men nodded. Jack said. “Our word for you, squirrel girl, is *mihku*. We will call you *Mihku*²⁰ or *Mihku-sis*, which means ‘little squirrel’.”

Abbi was thrilled. She had been given a Maliseet Indian name, and it sounded nice, even if it was only a nickname.

“To say ‘little one’ add *sis*. For example ‘little beaver’ is

²⁰ Spellings vary. Another written form is *miko*. The main idea is that the initial MI is strong. It refers to the very bold chattering red squirrel.

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qapit-e-sis. Or a moose calf would be *mus-sis*²¹. Therefore 'little squirrel' would be *mihku-sis*. The word for 'girl', is *pil-sqeh-sis*. And 'little girl squirrel' would be *mihku pil-sqeh-sis*"



Abbi was thrilled. She was being given a real lesson. "She repeated what Jack had said: "*mihku pil-sqeh-sis*. I look after Mrs. Loggerman's children every day. What is the word for 'child'? In Ojibwa it is *abbinochi*."

"*Wa-sis*. For 'little' child, say *pi-le wa-sis*. Add *pi-le* for 'infant', so a 'baby girl' is *pi-le pil-sqeh-sis*"

"Therefore," said Abbi, "a newborn beaver would be *pi-le qapit-e-sis*!"

"There you are. You are already speaking some Maliseet."

Abbi was thrilled!

"Is it true that the true Maliseet name for yourselves is *Wolastoqiyik*? Mr. Loggerman said that it comes from what you call the Saint John River, *Wolastoq*; and that it means 'Beautiful River'"

"That's correct," said Jack. "It comes from *woli* meaning 'good or beautiful', and from *astog* meaning 'river'"

²¹ The remainder words given here may be written in slightly different ways in various dictionaries.

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“If I wanted to add ‘beautiful’ to a word, then could I say for example *woli-qapit-sis* to mean ‘beautiful baby beaver’?”

That took them by surprise and they all laughed.

“Well to finish what you wanted to know,” continued Jack. “In order to say ‘people of the beautiful river’ you just add *-iyik* which means ‘people of’. You add *-iyik* to *Wolastoq* and you get ‘people of *Wolastoq*’ or ‘people of the lovely river’”

“That means I could call the people living in Pinewood, *Pinewoodiyik*.”

The men laughed again. Abbi was, as we all know by now, very good at imagining things. She assumed the men were approving of her abilities and not mocking her, and continued: “I already know some more *Wolastoqiyik* words from Mr. Loggerman and a book from Mr. Turbot my schoolteacher. I know that ‘bear’ is *muwin*. I am happy to learn that *-sis* means ‘little one’. I now know how to refer to their little ones. A bear cub would be *muwinsis*, right?”

The other men chuckled again. Jack was the elder, and more fatherly, and most happy to teach Abbi something. He appeared to have learned how languages have rules, and was teaching some rules he was aware of in his language.

“That’s right. Just add *-sis*.”

Abbi was thrilled to be learning some Maliseet words. “I originally thought Indian languages were more similar to each other, but I am finding that Indian languages have variations and dialects like any other, and different language families. I already noticed that the *Wolastoqiyik* word for ‘bear’ is similar to the Ojibwa word, if your dialect dropped the *K*. I am interested in these things. I plan to make it my purpose in life to study these things. I know a few Finnish words too from Mrs. Loggerman, whose father was Finnish. Her father’s name was Mr. Koski. That name means ‘falls’, so that means his name was ‘Mr. Falls’. I also learned that the Finns had the sweat lodge; and since Henry Wadsworth Longfellow felt inspired to write his *The Song of Hiawatha* in a fashion similar to the Finnish folk songs called the *Kalevala*, I wonder if there is a very distant connection.”

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“It is interesting that what you say, *koski*, means ‘falls’ in the language you mentioned. In my language, we say something ‘falls over the edge’ with *kaskiye*. It is similar. But the actual word for waterfall is *kapsq*”

“Really? I must tell Mrs. Loggerman when I get back to the house. How would I say ‘little waterfalls’? There is a place upriver where there are many little waterfalls. I have tentatively called them *Minnehahahaha*, but that is not a real word – I just added a few *haha*’s to Longfellow’s word.”

“Well to say there are many of something you add an ‘EK’ or ‘OK’ or ‘AK’ –the one that sounds best – to the end. One ‘girl’ is *pil-sqeh-sis* and ‘many girls’ is *pil-sqeh-si-sok*.”

“Therefore ‘little waterfalls’ would be *kapsqisisok*? Now I have two names other than *Minnehahahaha* – oops I think I added too many *ha*’s.”

The men laughed at this amusing girl. Indian girls usually were very quiet. But not Abbi.

“When I was having a fast, and the sun rose, I wanted to call it by a *Wolastoqiyik* word, but all I knew was the Lake Superior word for sun, *Giizis*. What is it in *Wolastoqiyik*?”

“Well that is one word that is similar. In my language it is *Kisushs*. In Mikmaq it is *Gizos*. It is just a different way of speaking the same language.”

Abbi was elated. “My Papa told me that Maliseet Miqmaq and Ojibwa are related – Algonquian languages. And that it means there was once a single original language a long time ago.”

“Yes, I know that there are languages similar to ours; but also languages that are very different.”

“Like the Iroquois languages of the farmer-peoples. They are completely different from the language of the Algonquin hunting peoples. My Papa explained it to me once. I am so happy to have learned the word for ‘sun’ is almost the same in all the Algonquian languages. Then I can call it *Giizis* and it will be much the same in *all of them!* It is practically a universal word. I was afraid of calling something by a completely different name from around here. I have called the beaver around here *qapit*, because the Lake Superior name is *amik*, which is very different. But the word for ‘bear’ is similar like I already

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observed. I would like to discover more words that are similar.”

Jack was sitting on a stack of lumber, and shifted over. He was uncomfortable that Abbi had been standing all this while. He patted the area next to him and said: “Sit down, *Mihku-sis*.”

Abbi sat down. She felt very much like an Indian now, sitting with these real Indians.

“Well, *Mihku-sis*,” said Jack as he puffed on his pipe. “Tell us more about yourself.”

“I’m half-Indian, and my mother came from *Gitche Gumee*, which is Lake Superior. But I only discovered it a few weeks before my adoptive family who raised me sent me here to work with Mrs. Loggerman. I have been reading books to learn everything I can about Indians, ever since I discovered I’m one. I had a programme of Indian studies I followed in the summer in the afternoon on the ridge while also picking blackberries for Mrs. Loggerman’s preserve-making. Now I mostly learn things at the school in Pinewood and have less time for it. I have over the years had many questions about Indians, and sadly I’m learning that modern Indians are not as romantic as they once were. They are becoming just like everybody else. I imagine it was much more inspiring when there were no European people here and there were Indian kings and queens and princes and princesses. I don’t know hardly anything about my mother, but sometimes I hope she was an Indian princess, the daughter of a king from Lake Superior. I know people nowadays call the leaders of the Indians ‘chiefs’, but I read that in earlier times the Europeans used the word ‘kings’. I imagine you could have been a king, Jack. You have such a noble face. And if you have a daughter she must be like a princess.”

The other two men laughed loudly at this. “King Jack,” said one teasingly.

“Do you have a daughter, Jack, sir?” Abbi asked. “Please tell me you do. And if she is also close to my age, it would be a dream come true to meet her. There is so much that I would like to show her around here.”

Jack drew on his pipe. He was about to answer when Mr. Loggerman rang the bell in the sawmill indicating to all the men that lunch break was over.

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Abbi heaved a sigh. "I know that means your lunch break is over. I also have to get back to work. Mrs. Loggerman always needs my help with her little girls."

She jumped off her perch beside Jack. But before going she said: "I do appreciate having been able to have this chat with you gentlemen. I have to go to school during the week, but please be here next Saturday. I want to learn more about the People of the Beautiful River, while I'm staying here with the Loggermans."

"We will probably be working here next Saturday. Good-bye *Mihku-sis. Knomiyul.*"

The three men chuckled and gathered together their pipes and cups and prepared to head back to their work, all the while chuckling about the chattering girl who had come to talk to them.

When Abbi entered the house to resume chores with Mrs. Loggerman, she proclaimed: "The *Wolastoqiyik* men working for Mr. Loggerman have given me a nickname."

"What?"

"They call me *Mihku-sis*. It means 'young squirrel'. That's because they say I chatter a lot."

"Well, Abbi, that is certainly true."

"And a *Wolastoqiyik* name for the many small waterfalls upriver is *kapsqisisuuk* – that is hard to say. It will be an alternative to the name I invented, *Minnehahaha*. I have to write it down. And Mr. Jack said their word for 'falls over the edge' is *kaskiye*, which is similar to your *koski* which means 'falls' in Finnish."

"Really?"

"Before I help you with putting the girls to napping, Mrs. Loggerman, can I run upstairs and write down everything I've just now learned, before I forget?"

"Very well, but make it quick."

Abbi ran upstairs and scribbled all she had learned down in pencil in her notebook, in the Indian languages section.

A GLOOSCAP STORY

Throughout the week of going to school in Pinewood Abbi looked forward to meeting the men again next Saturday. She didn't like the fact that she had to go to

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school during the week and that the school was so far away. If she lived as close to Pinewood as Mildred, she could come home to catch the Indian men at their lunch break every day. She thought of being sick so she could stay home to speak to the men, but didn't think she could pull a trick like that. Besides, she didn't want to irritate the Indian men with all her chatter *every* day.

Most of the students in school in Pinewood weren't all that interested in Indian language or culture, so Abbi only mentioned it to Mr. Turbot. She also discussed it in more detail with Mildred. She always wanted to share her adventures with Mildred. So far, she had told her about her fast, about the blackberries, about the bear, about her sweat lodge, and now about the Indian logging men. But Mildred had never experienced any of it herself. Abbi got an idea.

"Mildred. We must arrange for you to visit us next Saturday! Then you can meet them yourself. And then later we can try out my sweat lodge – the one I built in conjunction with having my fast. I have used it two more times, when Mrs. Loggerman wanted me to wash the babies. I took them in with me two at a time. They love it. It's like returning to the womb. Oh I wish you lived closer and you can see everything I have told you about. You ask your mother and I will ask Mrs. Loggerman."

"There are always chores to be done at my home. But I will ask her."

Meanwhile, after Abbi had informed Mr. Turbot of her talking to some Indian men at the sawmill, he tried to be helpful to Abbi some more, and found her a book with a Glooscap legend in it.

"Maybe if you are interested in Glooscap legends, you will be interested in this other book. There is an amusing story in it about '*How Rabbit got His Long Ears*.'²²"

"Oh thank you Mr. Turbot. I've become interested in Glooscap legends."

Abbi left the school flipping through the pages of the book. Mildred was waiting for her for their walk home. Abbi explained what Mr. Turbot had given her. "I'll read

²² A real story out there, although whether it was around in 1875 is unknown. Nonetheless we assume it was for this story

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this story about Glooscap out loud as we walk. It's not long."

As they walked towards town, Abbi began to read out loud.

"Long long ago, Rabbit had very short ears. One day he had nothing to do, and was bored. So he decided to play a trick on the other animals.

He told Beaver the sun was not going to rise again. Beaver told Squirrel and Squirrel told Chipmunk and Chipmunk told Skunk and so on.

The story got around the earth and all the animals were worried. 'If the sun is not going to shine anymore it will be dark and cold like winter,' they said. 'We have to start right away to gather food like we do when we prepare for winter.'

Animals like Bear, who prepared for winter by fattening up began to eat and eat. Squirrel began gathering all the nuts he could. Bear began to eat as many blueberries he could. Beaver began gathering branches to store under the water. All the animals prepared for when the sun did not shine again.

Rabbit thought this was funny, and, from behind some bushes he laughed and laughed as he watched the other animals scurrying around.

Then along came Glooscap, the Lord of the Indians. Normally the animals were glad to see him and rushed to gather around to talk to him, but they were all too busy preparing for the coming cold season without any sun. So Glooscap had to seek out the animals, in order to chat with them.

He sought out Bear, and asked him how he was doing. But Bear said he didn't have time to talk now. So Glooscap continued on and found that none of the animals had time to talk. So he went back to Bear for an explanation. 'What is going on? Why does nobody have time to talk to me?' he asked.

Bear replied: 'Don't you know? The sun is not going to shine any longer and we have to get ready for winter now. That is why everyone is busy.'

Glooscap told Bear, 'Who told you that story. It is not true.'

Bear said that he heard it from Raccoon.

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Glooscap went to Raccoon, and Raccoon said the Chipmunk told him.

Glooscap went to Chipmunk, and Chipmunk said that he heard it from Squirrel, and so on.

Eventually Glooscap came to Beaver, who said he had heard it from Rabbit. Glooscap asked: 'Well, where is Rabbit?'

Rabbit heard this, and stayed hidden in the bushes. Glooscap thought he saw something in the bushes, and went to the bushes, grabbed Rabbit by the ears and lifted him up. Rabbit's ears were stretched and that was how Rabbit got his long ears.

"That's the story, Mildred."

Mildred replied: "That's cute and amusing. Glooscap stories are entertaining stories more than educational"

"But it is educational – if you cause mischief, eventually you will be found out."

"It is too bad that the poet you always talk about, Mr. Longfellow, didn't use Glooscap legends."

"I think the popularity of Mr. Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha* has raised interest in Indian legends," Abbi observed. "I think that's why they put some Indian stories into readers this day in age as well as some sections from *The Song of Hiawatha*. They are good to read to children. When I was little, my Papa, my adoptive Papa, whose first name was Bradden, recited to us children from *The Song of Hiawatha* and also some legend stories from Mr. Schoolcraft's book. I have my Papa's copies of both. I brought them when I came. It reminds me that I could recite some to Mrs. Loggerman's children."

She knew from her own experience that it didn't matter whether the little girls understood or not. It was the dramatics in the reading that caught and held children's attention.

So the next time she was in charge of all Mrs. Loggerman's children, she brought down *The Song of Hiawatha* book, and read to them in the fashion Bradden had done. She began with the most famous chapter – the one most people consider the actual beginning as it depicts Hiawatha as a baby.

With all Mrs. Loggerman's little children spread around on the floor of the living room, she held the book and

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paced around and gestured like she remembered Bradden doing. She tried to fill every line with expression and drama.

*“By the shores of Gitche Gumee,
By the shining Big-Sea-Water,...”*

She had heard this chapter so often she knew most of it by heart. It gave her more opportunity to dramatize it. When she expressed the sounds of animals, the girls joined in.

*“... ‘Ewa-yea! my little owlet!
Who is this, that lights the wigwam?
With his great eyes lights the wigwam?
Ewa-yea! my little owlet!’ ...”*

Ewa-yea shouted some of the older girls. *Ewa-yea!* some others followed.

Abbi knew that engaging the girls with stories or performance, they became of a single mind, and were therefore not fighting among themselves. She also realized that reciting poetry was even better than telling stories, since younger children couldn't always follow a narrative, but could respond to intonation and rhythms in a voice. And she discovered that when it was time to get them napping, to lull them to sleep she only needed to find passages that were calm and peaceful. The sooner they could be lulled to sleep the sooner she could retire to her room and do her studies!!

GLOOSCAP IN VERSE

Abbi was also reminded of how Bradden had often composed his own Hiawatha-style verse based on Indian legends from Schoolcraft's book of legends. The one about the hopping man, *Aggodagauda*, had been developed from a legend about an Indian with only one leg, whose good leg performed the role of two. She recalled how the Woodrow family had performed it to the community around Littleton and then Moncton, and how she had played *Aggodagauda*'s daughter in it. She got an idea!

“I know!” she exclaimed, sitting up from her bed “I can try to do the same - to write a Glooscap legend into a poem form like my Papa did with the *Aggodagauda* legend!”

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Thus after her schoolwork was done in the late evenings, she spent some time writing verse at the small table in her room, by the light of the oil lamp. Mrs. Loggerman, having tucked every child into bed, came to Abbi's door, to remind Abbi not to stay up too late.

"Are you doing schoolwork, Abbi?"

"I've finished. I thought now I would see if I could turn an Indian story into Hiawatha verse like Mr. Longfellow did and like my Papa did too. I'm trying to do it with a Glooscap story."

"How is it going? Do you know how?"

"I think I know how. Remember I told you all I have to do is create lines that have eight beats. I have chosen a very short legend about how the rabbit got long ears. Can I read to you what I have so far?"

*"Once upon a time in memory,
When the Rabbit's ears were stubby
When his ears were not so dangling,
Rabbit found the days so boring,
Felt like he should do some mischief,
Play a prank, a joke to fool them,
Fool the creatures of the woodland,
He would tell them, this he'd tell them:
Tell them that the sun is fading,
It will set and there be staying,
Leave the land so dark and freezing,
Like a winter never ending.*

That's all I have so far, Mrs. Loggerman."

"I'm impressed," said Mrs. Loggerman. "When it has the beat, it seems more like a song."

"Well, I better stop and go to bed. Or else I'll be tired tomorrow."

"Well, blow out the oil lamp and goodnight."

"Goodnight, Mrs. Loggerman."

Mrs. Loggerman left. She got under the covers and leaned over to the side table with the lamp and blew out the flame.

Aside from sometimes feeling sleepy and napping at school from staying up just a little too late, everything went well both at school and at the Loggermans. Besides regular schoolwork, Abbi didn't forget about her goal to learn about Indians too before bed, since she was one.

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Thus when all her regular schoolwork was done, she made a point to continue her own Indian studies from the books of her Papa's that she had brought, and a few the teacher Mr. Turbot provided – as much as time permitted – and continued to neatly write down what she learned, as diligently as if it was another school subject. She wasn't as organized as she had been in the summer, though. Last summer she had organized what she would study according to the day of the week. Now she had to squeeze in her Indian studies wherever she had free time.

Mrs. Loggerman agreed that Mildred could come over on Saturday. Mildred's mother had already said 'yes' to Mildred. Mrs. Loggerman said it was fine, as there weren't any particularly important chores to do. Abbi had an idea: "Maybe Mildred's mother and you could meet for tea. That way she could bring Mildred and return with her at the end of the day."

"That is an idea. I haven't spoken to Mildred's mother a long time. We used to be good friends when we were little. Suggest it to Mildred at school."

It all came together. The week flew by quickly and when the next Saturday came around, Mildred's mother visited Mrs. Loggerman and Mildred joined Abbi. While Mrs. Loggerman and Mildred's mother fussed over the little girls, and gossiped about goings on throughout the region. Abbi ran off with Mildred.

After Abbi had familiarized Mildred with her room and the surroundings, it was lunchtime, and they went to meet the *Wolastoqiyik* Indian men.

Abbi and Mildred were actually waiting for the men at the piles of lumber where they sat when Mr. Loggerman rang the bell that released the men for their lunch break.

"*Qey! Mihku-sis. Tan kahk?* Hello! Little Squirrel. How are you? And who is your friend?" said Jack when he saw her and Mildred. The men sat down and opened sacks with food, and fetched water from the river to drink. Jack filled his pipe with tobacco.

"*Quey!*" said Abbi, realizing it meant 'hello!' "This is Mildred. She is visiting. How should I say 'Hello, men'"

"'Hello' is *qey*." said Jack once he had sat down. "'Men' is many of one 'man'. For many things add *-K*. I said earlier 'girl' is *pil-sqeh-sis* and 'many girls' is *pil-sqeh-*

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si-sok Well ‘man’ is *ski-tap* and ‘men’ is *ski-ta-pi-yik*”

“*Qey ski-ta-pi-yik*,” said Abbi

“*Qey, qey, Mihku-sis!*” said the other one.

Abbi felt she belonged. She was happy among these men. She then remembered she had put a piece of paper and a pencil in the pocket of her apron, and now took it out and began to write what she had just learned – how to say ‘hello men’.

Mildred was naturally quiet. She liked to watch and listen.

“I brought some paper and a pencil to take notes,” Abbi explained. Then she had an idea: “You call me *Mihku-sis*. Can you give Mildred a nickname too?”

“Well we don’t know her. What nickname do children call her at school?”

“They call her ‘Porcupine’ these days, on account of how a couple weeks ago she brought sandwiches with smoked salted porcupine between them. The name has stuck, even though Mildred hasn’t had a sandwich with porcupine meat recently since it got eaten up. She doesn’t seem the least like a porcupine. She has blonde hair and there is nothing prickly about her.”

“Well, in any case, the word for ‘porcupine’ is *matuwehs*”

“Then we can call her ‘Little Porcupine’ or *Matuwehsis!*” said Abbi.

Abbi turned to Mildred. “How do you like that, Mildred? I can call you *Matuwehsis* and you can call me *Mihkusis*. It can be like our secret names.”

The name sounded exotic but Mildred wasn’t sure if she liked to be called ‘little porcupine’. She had to think about that.

“Well, we can think of something else,” said Abbi, realizing it implied Mildred was like a porcupine while she wasn’t. “We can think about possibilities.”

“Have you determined more about your mother?” Jack asked Abbi. He seemed very fatherly.

“No, I only know what my adoptive Mama told me – that she came east on account of her husband, who was Pictish, wishing to live in Littleton, and that they came from *Gitche Gumee*, that’s Lake Superior, somewhere. He was lost at sea you know. There was a big hurricane. The

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waves were 50 feet high and the wind blew the sails to shreds, before all the nails in the boards of the ship popped out, and all the ship fell apart. But that's another story. About my natural mother, I feel she was Ojibwa because I almost feel I already *know* some of the Ojibwa words in the book, and understand the spirits in the wilderness. I would like one day to speak to real Ojibwa too. But they tend to live towards the west, more. Do any come this way, to visit?"

Jack shook his head as he drew on his pipe. The other two men were also drawing on pipes between eating something or drinking from their cup. They seemed content to just relax in the warm springtime air and sunshine. It seemed to Abbi that the others didn't speak English all that well, although they seemed to follow the conversation.

Abbi tried to remember all the animals that she'd like to know the names of in Maliseet.

"What's the *Wolastoqiyik* word for robin? I have seen a robin around here."

"The bird with the red belly is called *ankuwiposehehs*."

"Oh that is too long." But she wrote it down anyway. She said it out loud as she wrote. She added: "I have taken note of different ways of saying the K sound, and I'm trying to note the differences in some way. I imagine nobody but me will be able to read the way I write down what you tell me, Mr. Jack, when I try to describe how it is pronounced. All I want to do right now is to write it down in a way I can remember to pronounce it. Isn't there a shorter word? By the time I finish saying *ankuwiposehehs* he'll have flown away."

"It's long because it describes the robin. A good simple word for just 'bird' is *sips*"

"Therefore 'little bird' would be *sipsis*? I must write that down. Mildred, would you like to be called a robin or a bird? If you are a robin, then we would call you 'little robin' which would be *ankuwiposehehsis*. If you are just a bird, you would be *sipsis*."

"I don't know..." replied Mildred.

Abbi turned to Jack again: "What else? What is 'raccoon'?"

"*espons*"

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“A family of raccoons wanders along the river at night and catches frogs. A little raccoon would be *esponsis*.” Abbi was now adding *-sis* on every word!

Mildred was uncertain for every one. She couldn’t think as fast as Abbi,

And so it went, but the men chuckled how Abbi liked to add *-sis* to the end of everything. Finally Abbi changed the subject.

“My teacher Mr. Turbot gave me a book with a Glooscap tale about how rabbits got long ears. I intend to make it into a verse like my Papa did.”

And then a bell or a triangle rung by Mr. Loggerman inside the sawmill let the men who were outside, both the Maliseet and half dozen other men sitting elsewhere, know that work would be proceeding once again.

So the Maliseet men got up and joined the other men returning to the sawmill work. Abbi stuck her paper and pencil back in her apron pocket and lead Mildred back into the house and up the stairs.

“I have to enter what I have learned into my notebook I used for Indian studies – in the Indian languages section,” explained Abbi. “Let me show you.”

Abbi was as always diligently documenting what she learned. She had a pen and a bottle of ink, and as Mildred watched, she added the Maleseet or *Wolastoqiyik* words she had learned, in neat ink, to her vocabulary list. For example she could write the *Wolastoqiyik* word *mihku* beside the Ojibwa-Chippewa one *adjidau'mo*. She used the letter *W* to indicate *mihku* is *Wolastoqiyik*, and if she found a word in *Mikmaq*, she would indicate it by *M*. Thus for some things, her growing vocabulary would have Ojibwa, *Wolastiqiyik* and *Miqmaq* words side by side that she could compare. For example for ‘sun’ she had *giizis*, *kisushs*, and *gizos*.²³

“It seems,” Abbi explained to Mildred, “like many differences are only the accent, just like a word spoken by a person from England sounds different from the same word spoken by a Yankee. I suppose if I know Ojibwa very, very, well, then *Wolastoqiyik* or *Mikmaq* speech might

²³ Readers note that there are variations in spelling because different listeners had different ways of interpreting the spelling, and the Indian language itself had dialectic variation!

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sound to me like British speech does to a Yankee – the language seemingly distorted with addition of new unique words. It's only when I don't know any Algonquian Indian language that they all *seem* so different from one another. So if I learn *Wolastoqiyik*²⁴ from the men, that will help me learn my own language of Ojibwa, and even *Mikmaq* much more quickly I imagine. And the other way around."

Mildred always learned a great deal from Abbi. Abbi was so smart compared to other children of her age!!

Abbi was done entering the new words into her notebook in no time. When done she said: "Now we can try out my sweat lodge, Mildred. And if we have time, I can take you to the ridge and show you where my fasting wigwam was and its wreckage when it blew apart in the thunderstorm."

Abbi and Mildred ran out of the house again and down the slope to where the storage cabin was near the river, and the shapeless mound that served as Abbi's sweat lodge.

They had a joyful time trying out the sweat lodge. Not in a solemn fashion like before, but in a healthy fashion, as a *pikku sauna*. They then offered to give baths to the more dirty of the little girls. Mildred's mother and Mrs. Loggerman came down to see the activity, and helped wash the girls after Abbi or Mildred had got them all sweaty inside the tiny sweat lodge.

It was a most wonderful time for Abbi. She had Indian men to talk to, school to go to, and Mildred as a friend. She couldn't have asked for anything more – other than maybe to actually meet a real Indian girl her age. Mrs. Loggerman was also happy to become reacquainted with Dorothy, Mildred's mother.

But alas the day flew by and it was time to go. After supper, Mildred and her mother headed back home. They had come in a small single-horse wagon.

When the next week resumed, when her schoolwork was done, Abbi continued her work on the project she had started – making the Glooscap story Mr. Turbot gave her into verse, like her adoptive Papa had done with a legend

²⁴ Note: Abbi has decided she will use the word *Wolastoqiyik* so reader, bear in mind that when she says *Wolastoqiyik* she is referring to the Maliseet!

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from the Schoolcraft book - *Aggodagauda and His Daughter*.

The week flew by, and unfortunately by the next Saturday, the Indian men were not at the sawmill anymore.

"I'm sorry, Abbi," said Mr. Loggerman at suppertime. "The sawmill work is now done for the year and all the men had to go hunting, especially the Indians."

Mr. Loggerman said he was good friends with Jack and Jack told him that he would be happy to meet Abbi again sometime. Jack, Mr. Loggerman explained, spoke English well, and had learned to get along with all the non-Indian peoples throughout the area. "I often have contact with him."

"In that case, Mr. Loggerman, please tell him when you meet him that I would like to meet an Indian girl my own age. It would be a dream come true if I did.."

"Alright, Abbi. I'll bear it in mind when I run into him or someone from his family."

Abbi turned her efforts now to finishing her Glooscap poem whenever she had free time in the evening. She tested what she had out on Mr. and Mrs. Loggerman from time to time, and soon it was finished.

LETTER TO LONGFELLOW

Abbi liked studying literature at school. Becoming interested in literature had made her aware of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow as a literary giant of the day, and not just the author of the *Song of Hiawatha* she had learned so much about. She now knew that he had written many long poems and was a celebrity in both North America and Europe.

Thus, one cool Sunday when it was good to be indoors, when she looked finally into the folder of her adoptive Papa's writings that Jenine had given her, she was surprised. She ran downstairs to Mrs. Loggerman.

"I finally began looking through the letters and writings of my Papa, in the folder that Jenine gave me before I left her, and look what I discovered! Papa wrote a letter to the famous Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the man who wrote '*The Song of Hiawatha*', and some other poems—Mr. Longfellow also wrote '*Evangeline*' about Acadians, which

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I would like to read some day. May I read you his letter to him Mrs. Loggerman?"

Mrs. Loggerman was in the midst of working at her loom. With the children quiet, they both had time to pursue special interests at this time. "Indeed? Your Papa knew him?"

"Well he said Mr. Longfellow was his professor in his first year at the university just before Mr. Longfellow became a full time poet. I should call him Professor Longfellow – that is what my Papa called him. Here is what Papa wrote. This must be a draft letter as some is crossed out. I suspect Mr. Longfellow, I mean Professor Longfellow, has the final letter. My Papa wrote:

Dear Professor Longfellow,

You may recall me having once been your student during the last year you were a professor at Harvard and I was just beginning my studies, and perhaps also years later encountering me at a performance of The Song of Hiawatha by a touring theatrical company in Boston and meeting me a little later at your residence. I have always had an interest in your interpreting Indian legends in verse, as you did with 'The Song of Hiawatha', and have aspired to trying it myself, as there are plenty of Indian legends to be found. Not long ago, I took one of the stories in Schoolcraft's book, one entitled Aggodagauda and His Daughter, and told it in Hiawatha style verse. This Ojibwa story, if you are not familiar with it, features a hunter who, from some mishap, lost the use of one of his legs, so he hopped around, and from it developed one very powerful leg. I wrote the story out in verse, and had my family and in-laws present the verse in the same fashion as the performance of The Song of Hiawatha in Boston. I assumed the role of Aggodagauda, and my daughter Abbi was his daughter. She was only seven at the time. This story was so amusing to our audience of children that afterward every single child was inspired to hop around to see how well they could manage with only one leg. I believe that at one time such a man actually existed, as sometimes there are men who become incapacitated in one leg for some reason and compensate for it by developing their good leg. I thought I would send you a copy of the

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program I had printed, which includes the entire verse, for your entertainment if not comments. I find that many Indian stories are well suited for children and many convert very easily into presentations in verse form. Living in central New Brunswick now, I am made aware of the Maliseet Indians of the Saint John valley, who have their own unique legends. Your work mainly dealt with the Chippewa or Ojibwa tribes of Lake Superior, where most stories revolved around a mischievous character named Manobozho, or Nanoboza – I am aware that pronunciations vary. Here in New Brunswick the mischievous character is called Glooscap, and sometimes I am inspired to write one of the Glooscap stories into verse for the entertainment of children, but have yet not had the chance . . . ”

Abbi looked up, for a response.

“Well it seems to me, Abbi,” Mrs. Loggerman replied, “that you have already started it – I mean writing a verse from a Glooscap story. Is there a response from Mr. Longfellow to your adoptive Papa’s letter?”

“Yes, Mrs. Loggerman. His letter is not long, but he praises Papa’s effort, and agrees it could be entertaining to put Indian legends into verse, and wishes my Papa well in his efforts of this nature.”

“Well, you can carry on his efforts.”

“Yes, Mrs. Loggerman, but first I think I should write Professor Longfellow, inform him of the unfortunate accident with his former student, possibly drowning in the Saint John River, but nobody knows since nothing of him was found, and introduce myself as the girl who played *Aggodagauda*’s daughter. I doubt that he knows that Papa is now missing. I have Mr. Longfellow’s address right here. I’ll tell him also that I myself would like to do what he proposed.”

“Well it seems like a fine plan this chilly Sunday while the sawmill is quiet,” said Mrs. Loggerman.

“I will write it down here, so that I can watch the fire and the children when they arouse from their napping.”

Thus Abbi found paper – she had earlier persuaded Mrs. Loggerman to let her to buy some proper letter writing paper and envelopes from the general store – and began to write the letter.

After a while she put the letter aside, and decided to

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finish turning the Glooscap story about the rabbit into verse so she could include it in her letter.

By the following Sunday she had finished both her poem and letter.

Her final letter read:

“Dear Professor Longfellow,

I am sorry to inform you that Bradden Woodrow fell into the great Saint John River where the water is most ferocious last winter in an accident on a railway bridge. But he saved some men in the process; therefore it would be a noble death, if he did die, but I hope he didn't.. It is very sad, but nobody has ever found anything of him other than a coat, hat, boots and some other clothing; thus I still hold a small grain of hope a miracle happened, and somehow he lived – although it becomes more and more hopeless after so long. I thought I would let you know of the tragedy first off.

I discovered afterward that I was adopted and that my mother was an Indian from the Ojibwa nation at Gitche Gumee, so I have been reading Bradden's books including your poem about Hiawatha and Mr. Schoolcraft's legends book and a third book too.

I have read the draft of a letter Bradden sent to you, along with a copy of his version of the Indian tale Aggodagauda and His Daughter which he had put into verse form and we performed to an audience. I am his daughter, Abbi, and performed the role of the Daughter.

I am now living near a small town in New Brunswick called Pinewood, assisting Mrs. Loggerman, who has numerous little girls. I will soon be ten years old.

At the school here I have learnt about the Glooscap stories, and tried to write one of them out in verse like my adoptive father did with Aggodagauda and His Daughter. I would like you to read my verse version of the Maliseet story of Glooscap and how Rabbit got long ears. I have managed to achieve the rhythm by counting the beats on my figures – each line has to be constructed so there are exactly eight beats. But it is hard. I have had to reword the lines over and over until it fit the rhythm. I must have written ten sheets before the version I am including with this letter below. I hope you enjoy it, Professor

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Longfellow. Some day I would like to be a university student just like my adoptive Papa was. I had an Indian fast last summer. It lasted only two nights, but I discovered that this sort of thing is to be my purpose in life. Here is the result of my telling the story of Glooscap and How the Rabbit got long ears. I hope you enjoy it.

How Rabbit Got Long Ears
a Glooscap Legend
put into verse by Abbi Woodrow

*Once upon a time in memory,
When the Rabbit's ears were stubby,
When his ears were not so floppy,
Rabbit found the days so boring,
Felt like he should do some mischief,
Play a prank, a joke to fool them,
Fool the creatures of the woodland,
He would tell them, this he'd tell them:
Tell them that the sun is fading,
It will set and there be staying,
Leave the land so dark and freezing,
Like a winter never ending.*

*Rabbit told the Beaver firstly,
Told him this invented story.
Scared was Beaver, who then scurried
Off to inform all the others.*

*First the Beaver told the Chipmunk,
Then the Chipmunk told the Squirrel,
Then the Squirrel told the Raccoon,
And so on and on and then when
All the animals had heard this,
Heard the awful, dreadful, story,
They were all so very worried.*

*"That is awful, that is dreadful,"
Said the creatures of the forest.
"If the sun will stop its shining,
Earth will darken and be chilly.
We must work and strive to prepare,
As we do when winter's coming,
Even though we're still in summer."*

Squirrel began nuts to gather;

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*Beaver hastened collect branches;
Animals who slept in winter
Ate to fatten up their bodies,
Build up fat around their bellies.*

*'Long came Glooscap, Indian leader,
For to chat with nature's creatures;
But he found them all so busy,
Without time to stop for talking;
Without time around the fire,
Without time for sitting, chatting,
Without time for tea and biscuits.
Without time for singing, dancing,
Without time for teaching babies.*

*Glooscap wondered what was happening,
Why his visit was not welcomed,
Why none seemed to have a moment,
Why they all kept busy working,
Never for to stop for talking,
Sitting, chatting, telling stories!*

*So Glooscap he asked the creatures.
First asked Bear this very question:
"What's the cause of all this rushing?
All this work with no relaxing?"
Spoke the Bear and said he thusly,
In a low voice very gruffly:
"Soon the sun will set and stay there,
Earth will become cold like winter.
That is why we all are rushing
We're preparing for a winter
Storing food and fattening bodies
Have no time for conversation,
Have no time for sitting, chatting,
Have no time for tea and biscuits,
Have no time for singing, dancing,
Have no time for teaching babies,
Have no time to welcome Glooscap.*

*Glooscap said it was all error.
"Sun indeed will keep on rising,
Keep on rising and keep shining,
Keep on lighting, and too warming,
In the manner it has always.
Where'd you hear this kind of story?"*

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*Bear then said, said this to Glooscap:
"It's Raccoon who has this told me.
Was from him that this was told me.
That is from whom I have heard it,
From the mouth of woodland's masked-one."*

*"Hmm," said Glooscap, thinking, pondering.
"Then I must go find the masked-one,
Ask him where it is he heard it.
Thank you for the information."*

*Glooscap then went 'bout the forest,
Looked for Raccoon for to ask him,
Where it's from that he had heard it.
Raccoon paused from fishing, eating,
Took a moment answered Glooscap:*

*"T'was from Squirrel, Squirrel told me.
From his small lips it was chattered."
So Glooscap went find the Squirrel,
Asked the Squirrel where he'd heard it.*

*"T'was from Chipmunk that I heard it,
Chipmunk told me as he scurried
All about the forest carpet."*

*Thus Glooscap he kept inquiring,
Till at last he came to Beaver.
Beaver stopped his gathering branches,
Spoke thus to the noble Glooscap:*

*"T'was from Rabbit that I heard it,
Heard the sun will stop its shining,
Stop its path of rising, setting,
Leaving earth so dark and chilly,
Dim and freezing just like winter."*

*As he'd done with all the others,
Glooscap said there was no truth here.*

*"You should stop and act as normal,
Nothing strange is gonna happen
Go back to your sitting chatting,
Having tea around the campfire,
Dancing, singing, telling stories,
Teaching all your little babies,
Everything you did like normal".*

*Then Glooscap the Indian leader,
Went now on to find the Rabbit.
Rabbit was the final creature,*

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*There was no one else to ask it,
Must be he from where it started!
Rabbit was who Glooscap sought now,
Rabbit was the one to ask from,
Rabbit had to do explaining,
Why he started all this mischief.*

*But the Rabbit had been listening;
Knew Glooscap would come a-calling,
Asking him from whom he heard it,
After having asked all creatures,
Leaving none more in the forest,
None towards to point a finger.*

*Rabbit thus avoided Glooscap,
Looked for places good for hiding,
Hiding so as not be questioned,
Not be found that he's the prankster,
He's who started all this mischief.*

*So he crouched in hiding places,
In some burrows, under branches,
In the grasses, in the bushes.*

*Along came Glooscap walking briskly,
Walking looking for the Rabbit,
Looking this way, looking that way,
Searching for to ask the question.*

*Glooscap saw a bush start shaking,
Reached his hand right down inside it.
What was there that caused the shaking?
That was what Glooscap was wondering.*

*Felt some ears and then he grasped them,
Pulled to lift them but the Rabbit,
Held to branches and resisted,
Causing Glooscap pull much harder,
Causing ears to stretch and lengthen,
Till the Rabbit stopped resisting,
Up he came from bushes swinging,
By the ears Glooscap was grasping,
Looking red-faced, very foolish.*

*Glooscap now had found the prankster,
Found from whom the rumour started,
Found the liar who caused the mischief,
Found the source of all the trouble!*

That's the story, that's the legend,

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*Why the Rabbit's ears are lengthy;
Why the ears of creature hoppy,
Starting short, became so floppy.*

*I hope Professor Longfellow, that you like my verse.
Every time I read it I think of ways to rephrase things to
make it better; therefore it may finally end up a little
different from the above. Suggestions will be appreciated,
sir.*

*Yours, truly
Abigail (Abbi) Woodrow*

She folded up the letter and put it in an envelope. She wrote Professor Longfellow's address on it, which she found in her Papa's notes, and set it aside for mailing when next she went to school.



*Up he came from bushes swinging,
By the ears Glooscap was grasping,
Looking red-faced, very foolish.*

ABBI'S NAMES SOME MORE BABIES

Mr. Turbot was a bookish man. He said that in summers he worked at the booksellers in Fredericton. Every year he brought some interesting books to show the students. This time was no exception. He had brought a number of new books and introduced them to his students. He had students read from them, passing them around, and might loan them to students to read at home, if they were

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particularly interested in them. As a result, Abbi now became particularly interested in literature, and regretted she had not brought any other books with her than the three books regarding Indians. She told Mrs. Loggerman about it one Sunday afternoon they and the Loggerman girls were all together in the living room. It was a chilly and rainy late October day, and they had a fire going in the fireplace.

Everyone – Abbi, Mrs. Loggerman and the six girls – were gathered in the warmth of the living room.

“Sylvia!” shouted Mrs. Loggerman. “Get away from the fire. You’ll burn yourself.” Sylvia retreated from the fire. Mrs. Loggerman was so glad that she had a name for the girl. She told Abbi: “I am so relieved we managed to name the two oldest, Abbi. What would I do if I did not have a name when they get into mischief like that!”

“Don’t worry, Mrs. Loggerman,” said Abbi who was sitting on the sofa with two of the younger girls – the two and three year olds – and keeping them entertained. “I promised to have names for the others as I got to know their personalities and decide what name was most suitable.”

“Any more ideas so far?”

Abbi turned her attention to one of the unnamed toddlers on the sofa beside her. She was bubbly and her hair full of blonde curls, who Mrs. Loggerman often simply called ‘Precious’. “This girl, I believe will be lovely and beautiful. Men will swoon over her. She needs a romantic name, but a name that also reflects her humble origins in the woodlands of Canada. I was thinking ‘Evergreen’. I think ‘Evergreen’ is a beautiful word, ‘Every’ for short. It makes one think of the smell of spruce and pine.” Abbi next turned her attention to the other one, who Mrs. Loggerman often called ‘Poopsie’ and continued: “Now this other girl, who is next in age, and we always put together with Evergreen, I suggest be called ‘Conifer’. Its short form would be ‘Conny’. Both girls will be beautiful, and when they are grown up, men will *pine* over them, I’m certain.”

The other one was indeed pretty. She was a brunette like her mother.

Mrs. Loggerman paused in her darning of baby clothes

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at the kitchen table and pondered these two new names. "Hmm Evergreen Loggerman, and Conifer Loggerman, 'Every' and 'Conny'. They sound very different from 'Gladis' and 'Sylvia'. But maybe that is good. There is less confusing the names that way."

The two little girls sensed they were being talked about and stopped to listen.

"Very well!" declared Mrs. Loggerman. "We have two more names settled. Come over here Every and Conny."

Abbi lifted them off the sofa and motioned them towards their mother.

"Come to Mama, Every and Conny. Yes, you are now called Evergreen and you are now called Conifer, but I will mostly call you Every and Conny. I'm sure you two are tired of being called Precious and Poopsie, which are not real names at all."

A noise out on the verandah signaled the arrival of Jeffrey with an armful of firewood. "Jeffery!" exclaimed Every.

"Yes, Jeffery is bringing wood," said Mrs. Loggerman. She got up from the kitchen table to open the door for him.

"Bring it in, Jeffrey," said Mrs. Loggerman.

Jeffery was a silent type of man, in his 60's, a lifelong man in the timber industry, now retired but living with the Loggermans and providing assistance in running the place.

"One thing you have plenty of when you own a sawmill," said Mrs. Loggerman to Abbi, "is wood to burn. There are piles of refuse from the sawmill. One only has to cut the pieces to appropriate length for the fireplace."

Jeffrey set the wood down in a box designed for holding firewood.

"Stay awhile Jeffrey," said Mrs. Loggerman when Jeffery was free from the load and about to leave. "You need not stay alone all the time in your cabin by the stable."

"Well, ma'am," said Jeffrey. "I have the horses to attend to, and harnesses to mend, and keeping watch on the sawmill while it is quiet and all the men around here are hunting. There are thieves about that would not mind stealing some equipment."

"Very well, Jeffrey," said Mrs. Loggerman. "At least take a jar of my preserves." She fetched a jar from a shelf.

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“Thank you, ma’am,” said Jeffrey, taking the preserves. He then left.

When he had closed the door behind him, Mrs. Loggerman said to Abbi: “He never stays. He doesn’t care for babies, Abbi. That’s what it is. I suspect he’s terrified to death that one day I will have him do some baby chores like change diapers. Imagine an old logging man having to do that!! It would be utterly humiliating to him, never having married and had any babies. But my husband will help with the babies if needed, because the babies are his.”

Mrs. Loggerman returned to her work at the pine table. “Have you received a letter from your adoptive Mama yet?” she asked Abbi.

“No, Mrs. Loggerman,” said Abbi, “and I continue to be worried. I haven’t received a reply to the letter I sent in September, on the day I enrolled in school. Do you think a letter could still get lost in the mail?”

“It’s possible. Well, if there is nothing soon, perhaps we can try sending a telegraph all the way to Saint John, from the railway station to Madam Woodrow of the Woodrow Company. From time to time she sends telegrams, when the company needs something from Mr. Loggerman’s sawmill very quickly. Mr. Loggerman could ask when he has to communicate with her if your letter arrived and if Jenine replied.”

“I wish I had something entertaining to read. Mrs. Loggerman. I regret not having had enough space in my trunk to bring more books – books of a literary nature. My Papa had lots of literature books in his library. I know you and Mrs. Loggerman cannot read very well, and there aren’t any books around here other than the Bible and the *Kalevala* verse.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Loggerman, “maybe Jeffrey has some books. He is a good reader. He helps Percy with reading and writing business letters. He also buys the Fredericton newspaper and tells us what is going on in the world.”

“Yes I see it often in the outhouse.”

“Well it won’t hurt to ask him if he has any reading material. Go run after him and ask.”

Abbi hurried to grab her coat to catch up with Jeffrey who had just left a minute ago. He had not gone far.

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“Jeffrey, I am going out of my mind not being able to read when we are forced by chilly weather to be indoors. There are no books in the house, and Mrs. Loggeman suggested I ask you if you have any books. Do you?”

“Sure,” he said.

“You do? Marvelous! Can I see what you have?”

“Come with me.”

Abbi entered Jeffrey’s quarters for the first time. There was a stove in the center of his small cabin, radiating an abundance of heat, and a kettle on top. Affixed to the wall was a big shelf filled with books.

Abbi’s eyes were wide with wonder. “So this is what you do when you are alone!” exclaimed Abbi. “You are a reader!”



“Yep,” he said. “Learned to read when I was already forty, and haven’t stopped since. I buy a book whenever I see one for sale, and have the money. Reading’s like stepping into another world.”

“Exactly what I think!” exclaimed Abbi. “Oh please, Jeffrey, can I borrow some?”

“Sure,” said Jeffrey, “Help yerself. But mind you bring it back. I’m mighty proud of my collection.”

“Ooh, wonderful!” exclaimed Abbi. “You even have Charles Dickens. I’ve always wanted to read *Oliver Twist*, ever since I discovered I was myself an orphan. They say it is much too difficult for a nine-and-a-half-year-old to read, but I am told I am advanced for my age in reading and writing.”

Jeffrey looked mighty pleased to have his library

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acknowledged by someone who knew about books.

Abbi browsed through the titles and pulled out three books, not wishing to alarm Jeffrey by taking too many at one time. She could always come back for more.

And so Abbi could expand her reading, from the few scholarly books of Papa's to some major works of literature such as Jeffrey had accumulated over the past 20 years since he started reading.

Abbi returned to the house and began one of the books. This was perfect for when she was not so interested in studying or learning, but just wanted to escape into another world for a while. She was soon reading a chapter from one of Jeffrey's books every night before going to sleep.

Abbi by now knew that it was Jeffery who purchased newspapers that came to the general store from Fredericton. He did so whenever he went to fetch provisions for the house. She was familiar with them because he left old ones in the outhouse to use. Abbi liked to read a bit each time she went there. As a result she was able to keep up with what was going on in the larger world.

The next Saturday when Abbi and the little girls were again in the living room and Jeffrey brought in a handful of wood for the fireplace, Abbi managed to persuade him to linger while she was looking after the babies.

Jeffery reluctantly agreed, but it was only because he liked to talk to Abbi about his books.

"So Jeffrey," said Abbi after he had made himself comfortable near the fire. "I have just finished the book *'The End of the Boardwalk'*. I thought the plot a little slow at the start, but it became more interesting as it came towards the end. What do you think Jeffrey?"

Jeffrey turned about in his chair searching for words. "Well er, yes. . . I think. . . hmm. . . yes. . ."

"I knew you'd feel the same way. But I was not happy about how the heroine, Molly, was described. I think she should have been more of a plump happy type, don't you think?"

Jeffrey again shifted about in the chair searching for words. "Well. . . hmm. . . Molly. . . yes. . . er. . ."

The older girls were fighting over a book. "Evergreen!"

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Every! Stop that!” scolded Abbi. “Don’t hit your sister Conny. Come, give me that!” Abbi took the book. “If you rip a page, Jeffrey will be angry. It’s his book.”

Sylvia and Gladis, who walked very well now, wandered about all over the living room gravitating to whatever was going on at the moment. “I want you to read to us,” begged Sylvia, when she arrived where Abbi and the other girls were.

“Maybe later. Right now I wish to discuss literature with Jeffrey.”

The very youngest who Abbi had not named yet, were relatively quiet on the sofa beside Abbi. The baby born at the beginning of the summer was a half a year old. She and the next older one, who only had nicknames yet, were fidgeting now, and Abbi lifted them to the floor. The floor was of pine boards and worn smooth by lots of feet. It had rugs here and there that Mrs. Loggerman had made on her loom. The youngest, a crawler, loved to travel across the floor on all fours. The next one up was a toddler, and still in training for that special accomplishment associated with the human species— walking.

“I’ve never seen a boardwalk, Jeffrey,” continued Abbi to Jeffrey. “I’ve seen the shore of the Bay of Fundy once, but there was no boardwalk. Do you think that in the book the boardwalk was a metaphor for life, Jeffrey?”

Again Jeffrey shifted in his seat and again was slow in responding. He wasn’t uncomfortable about it, however. He was perfectly happy just to have Abbi’s attention, acknowledging the world of books that was near and dear to his heart too. “Well. . .metaphor. . .hmm. . .yes. . .it is. . .ye see. . .” he said.

“Look at the youngest babies,” said Abbi. “They are now crawling and toddling around. It is time they had names so I can call them. Those two don’t have names yet other than nicknames. We have been giving the girls good names, you see, Jeffrey – names suitable for when they grow up. The two oldest over there tugging at their mama’s dress now are Gladis and Sylvia, then there’s Evergreen and then Conifer over here – Every and Conny for short. Their names speak of their origins in the wilderness, and yet the short forms are quite regular names..... and then there are the remaining two babies. I

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have been constantly trying to imagine what we should call the remaining two. One of them – the one who is about a year and a half, is very quiet like you Jeffrey. I was thinking perhaps ‘Jeffrina’. And the other, the newest, I suggest ‘Percina’, after Mr. Loggerman’s name, because she seems more like Mr. Loggerman. She has his stout frame, blue eyes and sandy colored hair. What do you think, Jeffrey?”

Jeffrey’s eyes lit up at being honoured in this way, but then decided it was not proper. “No, no, Abbi! Not after me!!”

“Why not? Someone to carry on your name, since you never married nor had any children.”

Mrs. Loggerman was listening from the kitchen area. “Jeffrina and Percina Loggerman. . . Well they do honour the two most important men around here,” Mrs. Loggerman said. “And it is a different way of naming than Gladis, Sylvia, Evergreen and Conny. Variety is always good, I think. And none are plain ordinary names.”

“Yes, Mrs. Loggerman. It would be terrible if we named all six girls by plain names like Mary, Jane, Betty, Molly, and so on. How could you remember which was which? This way the names have ‘association’ and ‘symbolism’. I learned those terms in school in literature class, Jeffrey. For example to remember Evergreen’s name, every time I look at her, I picture a stately evergreen, with the bows being her gown.”

Jeffrina, the toddler, sensing they were talking about her, returned to Abbi. Abbi lifted her onto her lap.

Jeffery nodded. He understood ‘association’ and ‘symbolism’. It made sense that names should have some literary merit, and not be merely drawn from a hat of common plain ordinary names.

“Yer mighty smart fer an Indian girl, Abbi,” he said.

“Have you seen any other Indian girls around here, Jeffery? It would be a dream come true if I could meet an Indian girl my own age! I should have asked the Indian men if any of them had a daughter my age, when they worked here in October. But I was too interested in their language at that time.”

“I’m not exactly from right round here. The Indian families with women and children are down the river in the

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village. I've only seen the men at the logging camp or sawmill"

"Families used to come around here in the old days, Abbi," said Mrs. Loggerman from the kitchen area where she was working at making some loaves of bread. "I've seen women and children, but I've hardly seen any come this way in years. But then I've been tied down with all my babies, and haven't had much chance to get around."

As Abbi bounced Jeffrina on her knee, Jeffrey got up from the chair he had been occupying, took some wood out from the box of firewood and put it on the fire in the fireplace. He did not mind staying at the house awhile as long as Abbi was there assuming responsibilities for the babies, and sharing with him her enthusiasm about literature.

"Where do you get your books, Jeffery?" Abbi wondered. "You must go somewhere to purchase them."

"No. I just watch for any at the general store. The general store always has a few they get from Fredericton. Whenever I have money and have read all I got so far."

"Yes, Mr. Wilson prides himself in having a little of everything," Abbi acknowledged.

While Abbi was with the Loggermans, Jeffery had the occasion of buying one or two more. One day Jeffery returned from Pinewood with the household provisions, and had a package for Abbi.

"A gift, Abbi. Consider it a Christmas present in advance. I give it to you early so you can read it when the snow comes. I bought a copy last year and have read it, but I thought to buy a copy for you seeing as it was on the shelf in the store again."

"For me? Thank you Jeffery!" She opened the brown paper package and there was a book entitled *Stranger in a Winter Landscape*. Jeffery explained it was about a Louisiana girl traveling to Nova Scotia in search of Acadian roots.

"I thought it was appropriate since you mentioned your adoptive mother had some Acadian origins."

"Oh thank you, Jeffery. I will read it, and since you have already read this novel, we can discuss it!"

That was fine with him, even though he could not hold up his end of any discussion with the quick, spirited Abbi.

Abbi is an Activist!

BEAVERS IN DANGER

As fall progressed towards winter, Abbi continued to regularly visit the beaver dam to see how they were doing. She expected the beavers were preparing for the coming winter, storing branches under water at the doorway to their lodge. It would be food during the winter when up top was frozen and white.

“I hope you have stocked up enough food for the winter,” she called.

And then one day when she went there, she was shocked to find near the dam, what was obviously a beaver trap. Who set it? Had any of her friends, the beavers, been caught in one yet?

Right away Abbi set out to spring the trap with a stick and to remove it. She then looked around for others, but that was the only one. When she arrived back at the house she was upset and angry. She stormed inside, and found Mr. Loggerman there.

“What is that you have there, Abbi? It looks like a trap.”

Abbi showed it. “I found this trap at the beaver dam! Who would want to trap a beaver?! Don’t they know beavers are now very rare hereabouts? We have to leave them alone so that mothers have babies, and they come back.”

Beavers were very important to Abbi because she liked them ever since she got to know Amik, the stuffed one on her adoptive Papa’s desk, the same one that had given her a message in her fasting – and she truly believed the beaver was her native totem animal. Abbi could not have been angrier.

“Let me see,” said Mr. Loggerman. He took the trap and looked it over. “It could be one of many men around here, who trap animals from the fall through the winter – foxes,

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minks, rabbits and such. I sometimes trapped during the winter when I was a young man, before working at logging camps.”

“But how can we stop them? Can I put up a sign at the beaver dam that says ‘No trapping here?’”

“You could, but that may not be enough. You see, the area of the beaver dam is not part of our property. It belongs to nobody – its what’s called ‘public lands’ – and the government says what can and cannot be done on it, and the government allows trapping.”

“Couldn’t you buy it?”

“It would be a difficult process. And how would I use a beaver pond? A better idea would be to tell the government to protect the beavers everywhere they are rare. If men are trying to trap these ones, they will also be trying to trap those located elsewhere too.”

Abbi was angry. “Alright, Mr. Loggerman, I’m going to write to the Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada, Mr. John A. MacDonald, and ask him to put a stop to it.”

She stomped off and up the stairs to fetch paper for a letter.

Soon the letter was written. It read:

*Dear Right Honourable Mr. John A MacDonald,
Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada,*

My name is Abigail Woodrow, and I am nine years old. I live with people named Loggerman, near the town of Pinewood, New Brunswick. They live on property by Sawmill Brook, which is like a small river and it runs into the Loggers River, and there is a sawmill here. Further down from the sawmill, by a stream running into Sawmill Brook, a family of beavers have built a dam, and are living a happy life in the pond above it. But recently, I found a beaver trap at the dam, and removed it before any beaver, who is called castor in French and amik in the language of the Ojibwa Indians, could get caught. I understand that fur trapping is common in the wilderness; however in some parts the beavers are all gone as a result of being trapped till there are no more. Even here the beavers are rare, and if such trapping is permitted, soon there will be no more beavers here either. Could you please prevent beavers

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being trapped in public lands where they are rare such as in the beaver pond near here? Your prompt response would be greatly appreciated as every day that goes by, the beavers are in peril, as the land where the beavers are, is public land and private landowners have no power to do anything about what is not on their own land.

*Yours Sincerely,
Abigail (Abbi) Woodrow.*

She put it in an envelope and for address, simply wrote the Prime Minister's name, care of the Parliament Buildings in the capital. She put it aside for mailing the first chance she got.

Then she made a handmade sign from a length of sawmill board, borrowed a hammer and some nails, and nailed the sign to a tree near where she had found the trap. The sign declared. **'NO Beaver Trapping Allowed Here'**. She hoped that would be enough until she received a response to her letter.

After posting the letter, she made certain she visited the beaver dam every morning to make sure there were no additional traps.

"I have never seen you so angry, Abbi," said Mildred at school.

"I hope the Prime Minister sees my letter and does something about it!"

MR. TURBOT LEADS A DISCUSSION

One day, when his teaching was well in hand, and his students seemed all to be doing well, Mr. Turbot digressed from the curriculum set down by the government to talk about his own interests and discoveries while working in Fredericton during the last summer. He was a young man yet, and still seeking out his own career. No more seasoned person would come to such a desolate location to work for only expenses and free room and board from the Pinewood community 'school committee' members!

He tapped his ruler on his desk to get attention and then began: "Since you all have been doing well in classes, I thought we might depart from regular lessons to have a discussion. While you children have had a vacation this

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past summer and been helping your parents with all that has to be done, I went to Fredericton where my mother lives, and, there I was in temporary employ of a lending library. In summertime, the lending library is very active. And while being employed thus, I have taken note of what new is available by way of materials for educational purposes. As you have already seen, I came back with some exciting books which I have shown you by now. My thinking is that, just because you live so far from civilization is no reason that you should not benefit from the latest books and information available on the various subjects we look at, just like children in the cities.”

Abbi had already decided after only a few weeks from enrolling that here was a young teacher who has not stuck to old ideas. Furthermore, he had no inclinations to talk down to his students, and often spoke to his class of children as if they were his equals. What he said therefore often perplexed most of his students, but at the same time caused the more brilliant among them to try to rise to his level.

Abbi threw up her hand.

“Yes, Abbi.”

“When you were in Fredericton, what did you learn that is especially new and novel in our world?”

“Well, I heard of the promise of electricity. People are saying that electricity will have many more uses than sending messages along wires by telegraphy. There is talk that it may actually send the voice along wires. And as for other news, there continues to be great debate over Charles Darwin’s theory that humans originated from apelike creatures.”

A boy in the classroom spoke up: “My papa says that the Bible says that humans were created by God out of clay.”

“Well that is what the debate is about,” said Mr. Turbot. “It isn’t the first time science and the Church have been at odds. Remember we talked in science class last year that centuries ago, Galileo said that the planets rotated about the sun, while the Church said everything rotated about the earth. If the Church was wrong once, well it could be wrong again.”

Abbi put up her hand.

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“Yes Abbi.”

“My Papa already taught me about what Mr. Darwin said last year before he disappeared. I know a little about it and I agree that all living things form one large family. I would prefer to think of a squirrel for example as a distant relative rather than a stranger. But I think everyone knows that deep inside. The Indians always viewed all living things as being brothers and sisters. They already knew, deep inside, what Mr. Darwin discovered, or re-discovered.”

“And what is your view of the point of view of the Bible?”

“I think that the Bible is largely a book of legends and myths. I have been reading Indian legends since last summer, and they always make animals seem like humans and humans like animals, but I think it is both for fun and symbolism they make those twists. I think the Bible began with myths and legends too. The story of the Garden of Eden can be a myth, with the Garden of Eden being symbolic of the original Earth. A story can start from something real, and have a real message, but be made simple and entertaining when told.”

“That is a very interesting, and supportable hypothesis,” replied Mr. Turbot. “As you children know, if you explain something complicated to your little brother or sister, you have to simplify it and speak in everyday terms they can understand. Perhaps myths and legends do the same – find a way of explaining things that is easily understood even by non-experts. Those stories in the Bible are no exception. They were passed down in Asia Minor and Egypt in the fashion of legends and myths. Alright, here is a challenge. In your view, how might the story of the Garden of Eden be a myth that described the reality of evolution in a symbolic way? As you know it begins from the creation of Adam, while Mr. Darwin suggests we all began from the simplest life forms and evolved to higher and higher forms rather than being created all at once.”

Abbi rose to the challenge. She began: “Well God – which the Indians call the Great Spirit or Maker of Life – making Adam, doesn’t mean he made him instantly. He could have started out with chemicals, then given the

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chemicals Life, and made them reproduce like cells, and gradually turned chemicals – which the story symbolized with ‘clay’ since we learned that clay is made up of remains of small organisms – into humans along with all the other plants and animals living on the earth. God, you see is enormous. For him a zillion years would seem to him to be as long as a day to us. God’s day could be one rotation of the galaxy.”

“So how would you then interpret the creation of Eve from Adam’s rib as a symbol of the real events?”

“That’s easy, Mr. Turbot,” continued Abbi. “Anyone can see that men and women are almost the same. So God did not have to make Eve entirely from scratch. He didn’t have to go through it all again. He only had to take a piece of Adam and then create the same thing, only a little different. I think the rib is symbolic of God *not* needing to start from scratch but only to take the same thing and make another version slightly different.”

“Why did he make Adam first and then Eve? Why not make Eve and then make Adam?”

“Well, as everyone knows, if there is originally only an Adam, the original Adam must have been just cells, reproducing by simply splitting, like we learned in science recently with the example of the Amoeba. So to make a sexual creature, the Creator had to create two new creatures based on the same template, one male and one female. We start with Adam because it is easier to picture him, as being *asexual* like the Amoeba – is that the right word, Mr. Turbot?”

“Yes that is the right word – not divided into two genders, not sexual – as you children recall from when we talked about the amoeba just a couple weeks ago in science class. You all had a look through my own personal microscope I use to study microscopic things as you recall.”

“Yes, Mr. Turbot,” said the class. They all remembered that day when they lined up to look into the microscope in turn and see an oval squirming thing in a drop of water. He had explained that it reproduced by dividing, compared to the more complicated one where two different versions, one male and one female, combined to give birth to a new one, which could be either male or female.

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“Well continue, Abbi. Why did the myth choose Adam as the first.”

“I think Adam was seen as the first rather than Eve because it’s more difficult to see a woman symbolizing the asexual beginning because of her getting pregnant and all. So Adam was a symbol of the first creatures which I like to call the ‘*Adam-oeba*’, and God next split the *Adam-oeba* in a special way creating male and female forms that united, in order that reproduction can occur in a new way. I like the word *Adam-oeba*, as the very first life form, because if we break the word apart, into two new words, we have *Adam* and *Oeba*, and *Oeba* sounds like ‘Eve’.”

Mr. Turbot chuckled. “Yes by strange coincidence *oeba* sounds close to ‘Eve’....Very good theory, Abbi, and quite imaginative! As we recall, class, from when we briefly discussed it earlier, the theory of evolution suggests indeed that chemicals came to life, then became creatures that reproduced by splitting, and then they distorted into two components for sexual reproduction.”

“I don’t think Darwin discovered anything new, Mr. Turbot,” said Abbi. “The Indians know that all life are brothers and sisters to each other – or rather cousins. Darwin only found some good examples of it and pointed it out.”

“Indeed, it does not take a scientist to see that humans and chimpanzees, for example, are very similar – especially their hands and ears. So it is possible humans have always had the general idea that somehow we are all cousins to one another – some close cousins, some very distant. Indeed what Darwin described was in a general sense always a known wisdom in all humanity. Perhaps in living in cities and pursuing farming and industrialization civilization became disconnected from that wisdom and Charles Darwin, while a biologist, re-discovered it. He started out thinking to take an inventory of living things, and then realizing we are all related.””

“My papa said that the evolution story is wrong,” said a boy.

Mr. Turbot continued as if he was talking to a class of mature students not children. That was his nature. “But perhaps, children, what we have is simply two different ways of looking at the same thing. Science looks at things

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in terms of physics, modeling everything in terms of practical laws, while religion is a mythological way of looking at everything, complete with personifications, symbols, and metaphors – exactly as Abbi has proposed regarding the biblical Garden of Eden, and which she saw in Indian stories too. Whether we view the Creator as a personification, or as some infinitely complex scientific process, we are speaking of the same thing, in my opinion, and both views are valid for the purposes they each serve.”

Abbi threw up her hand: “In the Indian beliefs, God or the Creator is called *Gitche Manito*.”

“Indeed, Abbi. The same thing – God – can be described in different ways by different cultures as well....Well children in the last few minutes before we go home, let us speak about some other subjects you may have on your minds. Any more ideas, children?”

Abbi was again the first to respond. “What are spirits, Mr. Turbot. Another thing I have been thinking about is about the Church view of spirits, compared to the Indian view. I also wanted to understand how both relate to the scientific view of things. So I wonder what a spirit is?”

“A ghost,” shouted a boy at the back.

“If there is only one universe,” continued Abbi, “then they too must be different views of the same thing. There can’t be more than one universe, can there?”

“That is very true, Abbi,” replied Mr. Turbot. “It is stupid to imagine that each religion has a different universe and that science has its own too. It is plain that we all share ONE universe and therefore, logic dictates that we are merely interpreting the same thing in various other ways according to our needs as people and societies. Therefore you are right – the concept of spirit will have different manifestations in different cultures. In my own personal opinion, the spirit is that which vanishes when something becomes dead and still. Throughout human history, we humans have contemplated what that is Thank you Abbi for your insights. I didn’t intend to have this big philosophical discussion about life, nor religion, nor the theory of evolution at this moment in time; but since we have started, and we have two minutes left, who here believe the controversial notion that humans

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originally had an ape-stage, that we came from apelike creatures? You all remember the pictures of apes I showed you. Most of you know about apes, don't you? So what do you think? Is it possible that in the last stage of evolution humans were apelike?"

"I think so, Mr. Turbot," said Anne, a red-headed girl in the back row.

"Why?"

"Because I have seen men who look like apes, and I even saw a man that was so covered with hair he looked like he might have had a gorilla for a mother."

The children laughed.

"Good observation, Anne." replied Mr. Turbot. "humans can now and then present throw-back traits from hundreds of generations in the past."

Abbi threw up her hand too.

"Yes Abbi."

"I agree too, but we didn't necessarily look like chimps. We could have had a very pretty ancestor, and chimps went in a direction that made them look ugly, and humans went in a direction that made them look pretty."

"She has a good point," said Mr. Turbot. "Everyone assumes that Darwin is saying that humans came from creatures that look like chimps and changed to what we are today. We forget that the chimp's ancestors changed too. The common ancestor could have looked very different from both. Our common ancestor could have been smooth skinned for example. Fossils of apelike creatures of the past only show bones. We have no idea what they looked like on the surface. But Abbi, if you were a chimpanzee, you would consider yourself to be pretty and the human to be the ugly one. Beauty is relative."

"I suppose so," agreed Abbi. "I'm sure every creature thinks they are the prettiest and all others are strange and ugly. I can see how a mother chimp holding a human baby may think it is very ugly, from her point of view."

Mr. Turbot realized he had better stop. Otherwise the children would tell their parents of the discussion about Darwin's theory, and some would be angered and come knocking on his door to tell him to be quiet on that controversial subject. Besides, the clock on the wall showed it was the end of the school day. So he said: "Well

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the clock shows our school day is over. Have a good journey home, children, and do not forget to do your homework.”

CHECKING ON LETTERS

Abbi walked home with Mildred every school day, until Mildred had to turn onto another road at the end of Pinewood. The deciduous trees had by now lost practically all their leaves. Abbi was thankful that most trees around here were evergreens, and that the landscape would not become entirely barren when winter came.

“How long will you be with the Loggermans?” Mildred wondered.

“I don’t know Mildred. I don’t know my fate. I have been waiting for a letter from my Mama, my adoptive one who raised me, but no letter has come. Even if she didn’t receive my reply to her first letter in early September, surely she would have sent another one by now. When I left, it seemed I would not be here for too long. My purpose was to help the Loggermans with their little girls seeing as none of the nannies hired from Fredericton wanted to stay for long.”

“Aren’t there any women from around here that could have helped out?” Mildred wondered.

“Mrs. Loggerman said that friends and neighbours will help out – such as one of the wives of the sawmill workers coming to look after the babies for a day – but all the women also have their own lives, their own children and chores, and live far apart, and cannot be full-time help for someone else. It is full-time help that Mrs. Loggerman needed. I’m the only full-time help they were able to get, but now that I go to school every day, I’m not as helpful as if I was real full-time help – except last summer when I came and there was no school.”

Abbi and Mildred always dropped in at the general store on their way from school, to pick up mail and buy whatever was needed at their households. They climbed the steps and entered once again.

“I came in to check for mail again, Mr. Wilson. I’ll pick up the Loggerman’s mail; but please tell me if something has also arrived for me from my adoptive family in

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Richdale or Saint John. Tell me something has come! ”

Mr. Wilson checked and reported, “No, nothing. Just for Mr. Loggerman. Here’s Mr. Loggerman’s letters for today, if you’re taking them for him. And here is some for Mildred’s parents.”

“Nothing for me?” Abbi asked as she took them and gave some to Mildred. She always hoped that by some miracle Mr. Wilson would say ‘Here is one.’ and maybe there would finally be a letter from Jenine.

Abbi and Mildred began to leave the store.

“Wait, Miss Abbi,” said Mr. Wilson calling her back. “You *did* get a letter. It is from Cambridge near Boston. It is from a Mr. Longfellow. Here it is.”

Abbi was elated. She had forgotten she had written him a while ago. She returned to fetch it and opened it immediately to share it with Mildred.

“I wrote to Professor Longfellow, Mildred, because my adoptive Papa knew him, so I had to tell him of the tragedy that befell him, and I even sent him my verse about Glooscap and how the Rabbit got long ears, the one I showed you.”

“Well what does he say?”

Outside the store, they sat on the steps. Abbi opened the letter and read it out loud.

“Dear Abbi

I was sorry to hear of Bradden’s accident and disappearance. You must have been close to him, and I express my deepest condolences if he is indeed gone, but I agree it is always good to hold out hope until there is absolute proof.

Yes, he did express interest in putting other legends into verse form, along the lines of The Song of Hiawatha, and I did find his verse version of the story of Aggodagauda and His Daughter amusing. The production of it I can see would have been very entertaining. The beat of the verse and the act of hopping go together well. I also read your own verse of the Glooscap story, and I was surprised you are only nine years old. It was surprisingly good for a girl of your age. I enjoyed it very much.

But do not restrict yourself to one form of verse in your poetry explorations. Try other forms of verse too,

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whether rhyming or not. Choose the form of your poetry according to the subject. The form in my poem of Hiawatha is suitable because the beat is reminiscent of the beat of a drum. It is also suitable to an adventure, an epic, in which action is progressing constantly— where there is a journey.

Also look beyond the Ojibwa people, as you have done with your attention to Glooscap. Bear in mind, that there are many tribes, and every one has their own versions of supernatural heroes or mischief-makers. Besides the Manabozho, or Nanabozho, of the Ojibwa, and Glooscap of the Maliseet and Mikmaq, there is the Wisakedjak of the Cree, Napi of the Blackfeet, Coyote of the western plateau, Raven of the Pacific coast, and many more.

Bear in mind also that Indian languages are very different from English, and when you tell a story in English verse, its character will be very different from verse or song created in the Indian language. My 'The Song of Hiawatha' does not resemble actual Ojibwa song, nor should it try, because the character of English is so very different. The best we can do is to capture a feeling, using our own language, that seems to suit the subject and the aim of the poem.

Furthermore, do not consider any of the Indian stories to be cast in stone. Every new person who told a given story, could add or subtract or change any part of it. The same story could assume many versions. It could also be transferred from one hero to another. And at any time, a highly creative mind could invent a new story, inspired by some interesting thing they observed in the behaviour of an animal or person. You do not have to be an Indian to think up a story involving an animal. Our literature has such stories going back to ancient Greece in Aesop's fables

Keep up your studies on the subject, and your creative writing pursuits, and I am sure your adoptive father, wherever he is, will be very proud

*Yours very truly
Henry W. L."²⁵*

²⁵ Between 1821 and 1882, Longfellow received 20,000 letters - many of them from fans - and was said to have answered every one. (source Harvard University Gazette Feb 1,2007 - 'The Many Lives of

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Abbi was absolutely thrilled. Here was a real former professor, teaching her just as if she were a university student, instead of a nine-and-two-thirds year old girl going to a small log-cabin school with hardly any books.

Mildred snapped her fingers in front of Abbi's face to bring her back to the present.

"I've never had anyone teach me so much in a letter, Mildred! I will have to read it over and over to fully understand what he is saying. And look! He signed himself 'Henry'! That is very familiar! He and my Papa must have known each other quite well!"

Abbi and Mildred stood to go. They had not gone far, when Mr. Wilson came out the door and called Abbi back again.

"I found yet another letter, Abbi, at the bottom of the incoming mail bag. I missed it the first time. Come back."

Abbi and Mildred ran back.

"Who is this one from?"

"Well believe it or not, it appears to be from the Prime Minister of Canada."

"What!" exclaimed Mildred. "When did you write to the Prime Minister of Canada, Abbi?"

Abbi took it and opened it too. "Didn't I tell you? It was after I found the beaver trap at our dam." She read it out loud too:

"Dear Abigail,

I was very impressed by your letter, especially your ability to express yourself and your fine penmanship, considering you are only nine years old. I was also moved by your concern about the survival of our country's beaver population in some regions in the face of continued trapping of this animal, especially since it is Canada's animal symbol. While in some more remote parts of the Dominion of Canada, there are plenty, I have heard that in the east beavers are rare and in some places nonexistent as a result of being trapped to extinction. Thus I agree with you that the beaver should be protected in some parts. I will forward your letter to the Premier of New Brunswick and direct him to look at the matter there. In

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow') Thus this idea that he would have replied to Abbi, is a very sound one.

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the meantime, you have by my authority, the right to designate the beaver pond about which you are concerned, a protected area. Feel free to use this letter as your authority. I hope that the beaver family in your pond produces numerous babies, and they multiply. Please continue to be concerned about issues such as this. It is very good to see young people interested in the circumstances they will inherit in our great land.

*Sincerely,
John A. MacDonald
Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada."*

Abbi was elated! "It worked, Mildred! Now nobody can trap our beavers! I will show this letter all around! If any trapper sets a trap in our beaver pond, I will immediately procure a constable, because this letter is my authority!"

"See?" said Mildred. "Even though you did not get any letter from your family, you got letters from two very important men in the world today."

Abbi agreed. She was very happy. She couldn't wait to get home and show them to Mrs. Loggerman. Mrs. Loggerman was always very interested in these things she pursued. But first she had to go back into the general store and let Mr. Wilson see the letter from the Prime Minister. That way the gossip would go all around the area and all trappers would become informed and stay away from her beaver pond. And finally when she got home she had to add to her sign at the beaver pond "by authority of Prime Minister MacDonald of the Dominion of Canada"

MORE CORRESPONDENCE

In the course of her stay with the Loggermans, Abbi had not forgotten to send a letter to her best friend in Fredericton, Charlotte, and Charlotte sent a reply which Abbi received happily. But where was the letter from Mama? She most wanted to hear some news about Mama and the family now living in Tall Pines at Richdale.

She continued to check the mail like she did every day when returning from school, hoping there would be a letter from there, from anyone.

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Then one day, there was a letter. The address on the envelope was written in a child's manner. What was it? She opened it when she and Mildred got outside the general store.

"It's from Mark – my brother, the boy I grew up viewing as my oldest brother. He is two years younger than me, which means seven years old. He's the boy Grandmama Audora most desires to grow up to take over the Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company."

Abbi opened the letter quickly and read it. It was written in the manner of a seven year old just learning to write.

"He has many spelling errors and he has printed it all, Mildred; but he is only seven. I will read it out loud:

"Dear Abbi

I saw your letter to Mama. Mama saw it but was too tired to write. She is very tired. I see I will reply. I need to practice writing. I have been going to school at a private school 25 miles away. Mama is tired and likes to look out the window and sometimes read a book. She seems not interested in anything. Grandmama says it is because of the shock of Papa's drowning but you know what I think Abbi? I think it's because she can't do what she always did before. Mama wanted to make food for us, but she couldn't because grandmama said it was the job of the cook. Mama wanted to help the little children get dressed, but Grandmama said that was the job of the governess. Mama didn't have anything to do. Her mind is blank when we were in Fredrickton and she thinks Papa is away and you are with him. I hope she becomes better after a while like the doctor says. Excuse my poor writing. I am just learning to write. I am glad you like being with the Loggertmans. Everything is fine here – except for Mama not liking how Grandmama doesn't let her do what she really wants.

Love, Mark

P.S. Grandmama Audora doesn't know I wrote this to you. I posted it myself."

Abbi understood what he meant. Jenine was a country woman who didn't understand the life of wealthy people like Grandmama Audora – with finery and servants all

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around. Now that Bradden was gone – vanished but nobody knew what happened to him – Jenine had no one to act as a buffer between her and his overbearing mother. Because of it, she felt so out of place that she was daydreaming about how things used to be.

“Mama must somehow get out of Grandmama Audora’s clutches!” Abbi declared. “I must return and save her! It is like she said to me before I went, Mildred. Grandmama doesn’t like me because I was adopted, and doesn’t like her because she is a country girl her son married against her wishes, instead of a fancy woman from her wealthy Richdale society!”

“Maybe your Papa, your adopted Papa, will return and then everything will be fine again.”

“Yes, Mildred. That would solve everything. We can only hope and pray that it will happen!”

The Indian Princess

HER STAY COMING TO AN END?

One day in early December, Mr. Loggerman received important mail. It was from a large sawmill in Maine.

“What was that letter from the sawmill in Maine about, Percy?” Mrs. Loggerman wondered later at the dinner table during one lunch-hour. “Was it good news?”

“Remember last year I made some trips to Maine to investigate possibilities for working at larger sawmills closer to cities? Well this is from one of those I visited.”

“What does it say?” wondered Abbi as she tended to the older girls at the supper table.

“I have been finally offered a position managing a new sawmill in Maine. It is located beside a proper town, one that is more suitable for raising six girls, like we wanted.”

“That is wonderful isn’t it?” replied Mrs. Loggerman. “We finally will have our dream come true!”

“Please explain more, Mrs. Loggerman. I didn’t know Mr. Loggerman was looking for a position elsewhere.”

“Yes, Abbi.” replied Mrs. Loggerman. “He has been for quite a while. He was not expecting to find anything, but Jeffery helped him send letters to some large sawmills near larger towns here and there. And then he visited those that showed interest last spring just before the logs came down the river. Percy and I have thought for a long time that the best place to raise only girls, is near a nice size town, not the wilderness. Had they been boys it would have been different. What would girls do for work in the woods? And so Mr. Loggerman sent letters around to large sawmills in case they could hire him as a supervisor – like he already does here – so we could live near a nice town.

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And we never thought there would be a reply after he visited them, but it seems the one in Maine is interested. Isn't that wonderful? Gladis, Sylvia, Evergreen, Conny, Jeffrina, and Percina, will have a chance to grow up into fine ladies in a proper town, instead of being backwoods wilderness women like me. We didn't expect there would be any response, and that is why we didn't tell anyone we were investigating it. But now that a sawmill has accepted him, it is fine to tell everyone."

"What will happen to this sawmill and logging camp?"

"We expect that the Woodrow company, that owns half already, will take it over completely."

Meanwhile, Mr. Loggerman returned to the sawmill, as lunchtime was over. The sawmill's work for the season was over, but there was still work to do before the snow came.

Abbi and Mrs. Loggerman continued chatting.

"What will happen to me?" Abbi wondered.

"I expect you will return to your family. It was the understanding that you would stay with us only as long as we needed your help."

"When?"

"We'll see what Madam Woodrow says. She can hire someone else to run the operation here very quickly, and then it won't be long before we move and you return to your family – your adoptive family. Doesn't it make you happy to return to your family?"

Abbi had mixed feelings. She was challenged to return to wrestle with the dragon that Grandmama Audora represented, but at the same time, it seemed her stay in the wilderness would not be complete until she met an Indian girl her own age.

"I want to return, but I had hoped from the start that before I left I would meet an Indian girl my own age to be friends with. But I've only met Maliseet men."

"Oh dear," replied Mrs. Loggerman. "I told it to Percy, and I expect he would have mentioned it to the Indian men before their working at the sawmill ended. Don't you fear. It is still November. We won't be moving until the spring, and perhaps you will be returning to your family earlier, in time for Christmas. But still, it's only November. There is still a month yet – or more if you stay longer. We'll see

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what we can do about your meeting an Indian girl your age.”

“I wish I knew what was going on in Saint John or Richdale. I only received the one letter from my brother Mark. Nothing from Jenine, my adoptive mother.”

“Well Madam Woodrow will write you now that she has to decide what is to become of you. With Percy having a good position and our living near a proper town, I will have no trouble finding live-in household assistance who is not frightened by bears or driven to madness by mosquitoes. Madam Woodrow has no choice but to take you back and let you live with the family that raised you. The first thing, she and Mr. Loggerman must make arrangements for the transfer of ownership of my half to her, and she will certainly write you a letter too.”

Mrs. Loggerman was right. Among the next letters from the Woodrow Timber Manufacturing and Millwork Company there was one addressed to Abbi.

Abbi opened it on the pine dining room table and read it out loud so that Mrs. Loggerman could hear.

“Dear Abbi

I am sorry for not writing to keep you updated on Jenine and the others, but I believe Jenine sent you a letter earlier and you replied to it.

For me, business matters are always pressing, particularly now with Mr. Loggerman soon moving to a new position at a sawmill in Maine, and our intent to purchase Mrs. Loggerman’s portion of the company and continue its operation. Yes as I have informed the Loggermans, the Woodrow company will be buying out the Loggerman share of the sawmill and logging operation. I will be sending a man, Mr. Morton, up there to determine the value of everything, so that I know how much half of it will cost, so as to pay them a proper price. I understand they will use the money to buy a house in Maine in the town where they are going.. I have known of their desires in this regard for some time, and was ready.

As I said at the start, your stay with the Loggermans would be only as long as they had urgent need for help. Now with their moving to Maine, and no longer living in the wilderness, they will have no difficulty finding hired

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help for the little girls. Indeed, with Mr. Loggerman's good salary managing a large sawmill, they will not be lacking in money to pay for whatever they require.

Being as I am assuming responsible for you as well as all the children, I will bring you back, but since the journey from there down to Saint John is a very long one lasting all day, with some transfers, we cannot have you traveling by yourself. I propose you come back with the man I will send to the sawmill to take inventory, Mr. Morton. He will go there to establish the value of the sawmill and logging operation so that we will know more precisely how much I will pay the Loggermans to buy out their half. Unfortunately he will not be able to go there until after Christmas. Therefore I'm afraid you'll have to spend Christmas there with the Loggermans. Then Mr. Morton will accompany you back to Saint John in early January when he is done.

The two oldest boys are still in private school, coming home for every second weekend, and the two youngest under the care of the nursery-governess, are growing day by day. Jenine, being a country woman from birth, has had difficulty fitting in at the mansion, but you needn't concern yourself about that. Leaving her life in Fredericton, coupled with the loss of her husband, has affected her. She has become withdrawn and spends much time reading and gazing out a window. But I have provided her with all the professional help she requires to get her through these trying times. Enjoy the Christmas there, and we will review your situation, decide what will be the best next step for you, when Mr. Morton returns with you in January.

*Best wishes from us all,
Audora Woodrow"*

"She has written about the same thing to Mr. Loggerman," said Mrs. Loggerman. "Don't worry about not being able to go home until after Christmas. You will have a wonderful country Christmas with us. I will have my sisters return from the many places they have ended up. We all wish to reminisce about this place where we grew up, before we leave it for good."

Abbi was most concerned about Jenine. "Madam Audora says she is giving Mama peace and quiet. But she needs

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the opposite, like Mark said in his letter! She needs something to *do*! Grandmama Audora and the doctor have it backwards!" She was somewhat angry about that. She would have to do something to make them realize it!

She calmed down by next day. As she walked to school, she tried to project herself into the future.

So her stay with the Loggerman would be coming to close by the end of the year. On the one hand she was happy if she could see her Woodrow family again, but on the other hand she was sad to leave everything that had become familiar to her around here. Abbi saw the red squirrel she frequently saw at a pine tree along the way, and that it was collecting pine cones for winter. Winter was coming. The leaves were gone, and skies were grey. Sometimes there was a dusting of snow on the ground, much like powdered sugar on a cake. The sawmill was quiet, but she knew that behind the scenes, Mr. Loggerman was preparing for the logging work in the forests upstream. He was probably hiring workers for the logging camp. The Loggermans would stay until the end of the logging in early spring. Whoever Grandmama Audora would send to take over, would then take over Mr. Loggerman's role from then on.

"I wish with all my might," said Abbi to herself, "that before I leave here, I will have met a real Indian girl my own age. If I manage that, then I will be happy to endure whatever Grandmama Audora designs to do with me next, when I return!!"

A SPIRIT COMES TO LIFE?

On the next Saturday when there was no school, Abbi thought she would visit all her summertime haunts. She visited the beaver dam to make sure her sign was still there and that there were no new traps - there weren't. She checked her sweat lodge to make sure some animal had not decided to make it home. Perhaps she would use it again one more time before saying goodbye to it..

Then she walked the ridge being careful not to slip, and visited the blackberry patches. They were all now without any leaves. They would not come back to life until spring. She then went to the echo ridge, hoping the echo still

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worked when it was cold and there were no leaves on trees. It did. In fact without leaves on trees the echo was better than ever! She didn't have to raise her voice very much to hear an echo above the distant noise of the river, and the whistle of the wind in the pine branches.

"*Saqteminimisis!*" she called.

"SAQTEMINIMUSIS" came the reply.

"How are you?"

"HOW ARE YOU?"

"I am fine."

"I AM FINE TOO!" No. The echo didn't add a "TOO". Abbi only imagined she did.

"I wish I could meet you for real."

"I WISH I COULD MEET YOU FOR REAL."

"I wish, *Saqteminimisis*, you were real and not a spirit."

"....NOT A SPIRIT!"

She continued this way for a while, trying to imagine how the echo would look if she were a real girl, and not 'ephemeral' like spirits and ghosts tend to be. And when she imagined it, she felt sad never to have met a real Indian girl while here, besides the spirit. What chance was there that she would meet a real Indian girl in the month remaining before she had to go back to Grandmama Audora's decision-making?

"I will leave here and my greatest hope – of meeting a real Indian girl my own age – will never be realized!! I will only have you, *Saqteminimisis*, an ephemeral entity from another reality!!" Abbi became tearful. "*Saqteminimisis!*" she exclaimed at the top of her voice. "Why can't you be real!? *Saqteminimuuuuisis!* I wish you were real!"

A REAL PERSON

Suddenly she saw coming along the ridge, a figure. It was a figure of a girl – an Indian girl!!!! She was dressed regular, in a woolen dress and a coat, but her face and long black hair were that of an Indian girl!! Was it a ghost? Was it *Saqteminimisis*, the spirit of the ridges who wandered the cliff opposite carrying a wicker berry basket made in Indian fashion, come to life to meet her in person?

The figure came closer and closer and closer. She

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didn't know what to do. She was frozen to the spot. The girl looked real. There wasn't anything ghostly about her. Nothing about her was transparent.

Who was she? What was she?

She came closer and closer.

They came face to face.

"Who..o are you...?" began Abbi. "Are you *Saqteminimisis*?"

"Yes," the girl replied.

"Are you a ghost? Are you a spirit?"

"No," the girl replied, a little puzzled. "My family camp over there in the woods," she said sweeping her hand in the direction of the woodlands on the other side of the ridge.

"You speak English."

"My Papa teach me English. He is chief. My name is *Saqteminimisis*. I hear calling my name, calling my name – wonder where it come from. I come here to see. I see you. I cross river at walk-bridge. It is you! Why you calling my name?"

"I called the echo *Saqteminimisis*, when I came last summer, and it was one of the Indian words Mr. Loggerman – the owner of the sawmill – knew. I thought it was suitable to call the echo that, because I imagined she looked after all the blackberries on the ridges. Listen...." Abbi raised her voice and called "*Saqteminimisis*"

"SAQTEMINIMISIS" came the reply.

The girl laughed at it.

"My name is Abbi," Abbi continued. "Listen..." Abbi called "Abbi!"

"ABBI" came the reply.

Abbi continued, "The Indian men who worked at the sawmill call me *Mihkussis*."

"*Mihkussis*? You are *Mihkussis*? My Papa tell me about *Mihkussis*!" replied the Indian girl.

The echo repeated the word MIHKUSIS.

"What is your papa's name?"

"He is called Jack. That's his English name. I don't have an English name yet."

"Oh! I know Jack! And I know a perfectly good English name for you – Minnie."

"Minnie is an English name?"

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“Yes and a very common one.”

She laughed. “Then my English name will be Minnie! Abbi give me English name like my Papa gave you *Mihkuisis*.”

“But *Mihkuisis* is not a proper Indian name such as words meaning ‘misty-sunrise’ or ‘he-who-runs-like-the-wind’ or ‘sunset-in-the-morning’ and such. *Mihkuisis* is like a nickname, because I chatter a lot like the squirrel. I still don’t know my proper Indian name, or if my mother gave me one yet. Even Abbi is a nickname, if it is a short form for *abbinochi*, which in Ojibwa means ‘baby’. Is your papa a chief? I never asked Jack if he was, but I told him he looked like one. Oh tell me Jack is a chief! That would be like a king. Then if you are his daughter then you are an Indian princess!!”

“Yes, Papa is chief. He is Chief Jack. That why he learn English well. He speak for all our people when speaking to the English people. He also speaks some French.”

“Then you *are* an Indian princess!” exclaimed Abbi. “You are Princess Minnie!!!”

The echo repeated the words “PRINCESS MINNIE!”.

Abbi could not believe it! Her dream had come true. She now wanted to tell Minnie everything there was possible to tell starting with the echo, and *Minnehahahaha*, and having had a fast with her wigwam blowing away, and seeing the bear while picking blackberries, and about the sawmill and Mrs. Loggerman, and the children, and about the sweat lodge she made, not to mention the mats she made, and about school, and about Mildred, andBut she only managed to tell her a very little bit. Telling the real life *Saqteminimisis* her whole life story in a matter of minutes was impossible especially since her newfound friend’s English was not good enough to always follow her fast chatter.

Nonetheless, soon the whole valley resounded with echoes of two girls talking and laughing.

There was too much to show and tell Minnie, so Abbi decided they should first go back to the house to tell Mrs. Loggerman the good news – she had finally met a real Indian girl her own age!! “Come Princess Minnie. It’s only a fifteen minute walk. Come see our house – the Loggerman’s house.”

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They ran and were there in ten minutes.

"Mrs. Loggerman," Abbi exclaimed as they entered. "I found an Indian princess my own age. This is Minnie. She is Chief Jack's daughter. She says the family has a camp not very far from here. Why didn't Mr. Loggerman tell me about her? And why didn't he tell me Jack was the chief of his people?"

"I expect he didn't know about Minnie. We knew Chief Jack has several children, but time flies, and we haven't met his new children. And I thought he told you Jack was a chief. That is why he speaks English well and makes a point to relating well to the settlers hereabouts. He visits them all from time to time to keep up good relations."

"Tell me more about Jack and his people, Mrs. Loggerman."

"Well, I knew about the camp. Jack's extended family or clan has for generations had a temporary campsite about a mile or two away from here where men sometimes visit for a few weeks in fall when hunting. I think men who work here at the sawmill live there too. I think originally it was more for berry picking and salmon fishing. Sometimes in the past they had a weir across the river. Settlers too have made weirs to catch salmon on the bigger river that goes past Pinewood."

"Salmon fishing!" exclaimed Abbi. "I have seen men salmon fishing on the river that goes past Pinewood on my way home from school. And I saw salmon jumping the falls where the sawmill is."

"Anyway," continued Mrs. Loggerman, "I remember when I was young, Jack's family and friends came more often, everyone together, even in summer. The women cleaned the fish and put them in the sun to dry, and also did berry-picking. But things are not how they once were. I haven't noticed any Indians passing through for years. Aside from seeing Jack and some other men working at the sawmill, I have not seen any women or children for a long time. Isn't that right, Minnie? Nobody has been coming other than men to hunt or work at the sawmill?"

Minnie nodded.

"And what about now? Is your family there now, Minnie? Even your mother Anna?"

She nodded.

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“The same camp with the old log cabin that anyone from your family who visits can use?” wondered Mrs. Loggerman.

Minnie nodded.

“How long has your family come to visit, Minnie?”

“We come yesterday,” replied Minnie. “But my Papa and uncles were there earlier when working for the sawmill. It too far to come every day to sawmill from our village. They stayed there and walked to the sawmill to work and caught fish when free. Everybody else back at home.”

“At the Indian village downriver? How is life down there?”

Minnie nodded. She added: “My Papa and Mama and some uncles and aunts and some children sometimes like to come up the river to here, to catch salmon, and hunt and live in the Indian way. Papa says he misses the Indian way when down at the village where the missionaries and government come and wish to make us like them. That’s what my Papa said. At village we have nice house. You have nice house, Mrs. Loggerman. It bigger than our house in village. I like the big fireplace! Oh I want to sit in front of big fire!”

“So who has come to the campsite this time? How is it that you and your mother have come?”

“My aunt and uncle too. It is because Papa said he want me to meet *Mihkuisis*, or Abbi, because *Mihkuisis* want to meet me. We arrive yesterday, my Papa, my Mama, my aunt and uncle. Others not want to come. Papa said he would bring me here to meet *Mihkuisis*, but I have already met *Mihkuisis* by myself! Even before Papa introduce us! I heard voice calling *Saqtiminimusis* when I was collecting wood for fire, and had to go towards the voice, because that is my name – *Saqtiminimusis*. I cross river where there is a bridge for walking across.”

Mrs. Loggerman laughed. “Your name is the name Abbi gave to the echo? What a coincidence!”

“That is her real Indian name,” said Abbi. “How did your mother choose that name, Minnie? Indian mothers choose an Indian name that is meaningful.”

“Once when the family came and the women picked blackberries, Mama was pregnant, and the baby – me – decided to come right in the middle of blackberry picking

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and she gave me birth in the middle of blackberry patch.”

“Didn’t the thorns on the blackberry bushes hurt her?” Abbi wondered.

“She said it was good. It distract her from the other pain.”

Abbi turned to Mrs. Loggerman. “I suggested that her English name be ‘Minnie’, just like ‘Jack’ is Chief Jack’s English name... What is Chief Jack’s Indian name, Minnie?”

“I heard it said once, but I don’t remember. It was long one, about the wind and thunder and birds in sky. Indian name is sacred, and not used every day. I like that you give me name ‘Minnie’. Then I don’t have to tell everybody *Saqtiminimisis*. Then my Indian name is more special. Use it for special occasions.”

“Well then,” concluded Mrs. Loggerman, “Then we will use *Saqtiminimisis* sparingly and call you ‘Minnie’ in regular use. Would you girls like some tea? It will allow you to warm up a little before you go out again.”

“Yes, please, Mrs. Loggerman,” said Minnie politely, showing Chief Jack had taught her manners too. One day she might become a Chieftess and had to have good manners!!

Mrs. Loggerman went to fetch tea for the girls from the kettle atop the stove. “Imagine!” she said as she went. “Abbi giving the echo the name *Saqtiminimisis* and it turns out there is a real girl with that name!”

“When she came,” added Abbi, “I first thought she was the spirit of the blackberry patches come to life, Mrs. Loggerman, and I was a little scared.. Oh! Can I show Princess Minnie my room while you are making tea?”

“Go ahead then. I will set out the tea in the meantime. Don’t be long.”

Abbi lead Minnie upstairs to her room. She had by now made her room very pretty – there was a nice little desk in front of a small window that was at the end wall of the house, and it looked northeast. It had pretty curtains. There was a bed on one side and a dresser on the other side.

She showed Minnie her books on Indians, and her writing on the Indian language.

“I have been learning some Maliseet – I mean ... *Wolastoqiyik*” said Abbi. “I don’t want to only learn one

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Indian language.”

“Papa said *Mihkuisis* was an Indian girl,” Minnie recalled, “and was asking about our words. Papa told me much about you, Abbi, when he returned to village from working at sawmill. Only he and my uncles come here when they work for sawmill. He said to me when they returned to village: ‘One day, Minnie, when we next go to our camp, you can come along and I will introduce you to *Mihkuisis*. She talks a lot like a squirrel’, he said. ‘She is not as quiet as ordinary Indian children.’ When we here, I ask Papa ‘When I can meet *Mihkuisis*?’ and Papa said ‘*Mihkuisis* is at the school in Pinewood during week. On Saturday there is no school. Tomorrow is Saturday. We will go tomorrow.’ Today is tomorrow, but before he could, I was getting firewood on path near river, and heard voice calling my name, and had to see. I walk five minutes and see a girl on hill opposite, and crossed the bridge made of logs to your side.”

“I was longing to meet an Indian girl my own age. I suppose Mr. Loggerman mentioned it to Chief Jack, before he returned to your village. I am so happy he asked you to come along..... but now look at some of the things I made. I had a fast...”

“Fast?”

“A Fast,” Abbi explained, “is what the Ojibwa children did when they came to a point in their youth when they needed to discover their direction in life. You sit by yourself in a small wigwam without eating and wait for a vision...I showed you my broken wigwam on the ridge...I suppose I was talking too fast.”

“Too fast?”

Abbi laughed. “‘Fast’ can mean two things – ‘quick’, or ‘not to eat’. Anyway, Mrs. Loggerman helped me make a dress from deerskin. It is hanging in the closet. Let me show you.”

She brought it out.

“It’s nice. Just like Mama has in a trunk.”

“I know Indians don’t wear much deerskin clothes anymore but use trade cloth or buy ready-made clothes, but I thought it would be wise to be authentic. Anyway, my vision came and it told me that my purpose in life is to become educated and do those things my adoptive Papa

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did in his study all the time after he came home from working in railway engineering. And now I have learned I will be going home to the city in January, and I don't think I will ever use this dress again. If I ever need an Indian dress again, I'm certain to be too big very soon. Have you ever had a fast?"

Minnie shook her head. But she thought she understood what Abbi meant. She had an older brother that had gone away into the woods by himself a while... That must be what Abbi was talking about.

"Well then you can have this one to wear for when you have your fast. You are the right size. You can add your own decorations to it."

"For me?"

"Yes. Try it on, Minnie!"

By now, in the warm house, the girls had removed their coats, and now Minnie replaced her woolen skirt with the deerskin one of Abbi's.

"Look in the mirror....Let's go show Mrs. Loggerman."

They now hurried downstairs.

In the meantime, while Mrs. Loggerman was making her tea, all her little girls around her playing or sleeping, there had been a knock on the door. Very rarely did anyone visit, so a knock on the door was unusual. Mrs. Loggerman opened it. It was Chief Jack.

"Chief Jack! Come on in. I expect you are looking for your daughter. Yes, she is here. She found Abbi on the ridge, and they came here. They are upstairs now."

"I'm glad. I thought she got lost while gathering firewood - but there is a little snow on the ground and it was easy to follow her tracks. I knew she had met Abbi. I saw Abbi's tracks too and knew what had happened. I was going to bring my daughter here anyway later today to meet Abbi, but she seems to have found Abbi by herself."

"I've been making tea for them. Come sit down. They will be down in a moment. I will make more tea. The sawmill has now shut down for the winter, and Mr. Loggerman and Jeffrey have gone to Pinewood at the moment to hire men for the logging camp."

"I have men who can work at the camp."

"Yes, any men who have worked for him at the logging camp are welcome to return, he always says. But this will

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be the last time he will run it. Did you hear, he got a job as a supervisor at a large sawmill in Maine? This sawmill and the logging camp will be run by someone else by spring. But I am sure they will continue to hire the same men as before.”

“You leaving!?! You’ve been here a long time, ever since your father alive. I remember him from when I was small.”

“In spring. And Abbi will return to her family who are near Saint John. Sit down, sit down.”

Chief Jack removed his hat and sat down at the table as Mrs. Loggerman brought two additional cups, one for Chief Jack and one for herself. Then all eyes turned to the stairs as Minnie came down wearing the deerskin dress, Abbi following close behind.

Everyone was speechless for a moment. Then Chief Jack and Minnie exchanged words in their own language. Minnie was excited about meeting Abbi and she explained the dress, but Chief Jack also appeared to admonish her for going off by herself without telling everyone.

“I said to her,” explained Chief Jack, “not to run off without telling anyone. She said how Abbi called the echo in the valley *Saqteminimosis*, and how Abbi recommended her English name can be ‘Minnie’.”

“That is the dress I helped Abbi make last summer,” said Mrs. Loggerman, admiring it again. “She wanted so much to have the fast by which young Indian people she said learn about their path in life. I used some tanned deerskins Percy had available. It appears to fit Minnie perfectly too. She is your size, Abbi. I know nothing about the fasting custom. Is it also among your people, Chief Jack?”

“Yes, but maybe away from the village. The missionary doesn’t like when we follow our own beliefs, instead of following religion in the way he wants. Young people are rebellious, and when they learn of it, they may go off and do it, still.”

Abbi of course had no idea how difficult it was these days, with missionaries and government agents observing them, for Indians to be like they once were. But neither Abbi nor Minnie were aware of the obstacles to expressing their culture at this moment, and Abbi explained what she had in mind:

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“Mrs. Loggerman, I thought I would give Minnie the dress I used for my fast, so Minnie could use it for *her* fast. She said she hasn’t had one yet. We are about the same size. I have done my fast, and it was a success. I will be returning to the city soon. Before I ever have a need to do another fast, if ever, I will have grown out of it. I’m close to ten years old, and growing fast.”

“Are you sure, Abbi? You did so much work on it.”

“Yes, Mrs. Loggerman. I’m sure. I expect by next year I could be four inches taller, and then it definitely wouldn’t fit me at all anymore. But of course, Minnie should use it soon before she grows out of it. And then when she’s done with it, she can give it to another girl of this size in her band. There will always be an Indian girl of that size.”

“You are very generous, Abbi,” said Chief Jack.

“I told her that she can add all her own designs and decorations to the dress, to suit herself, to make it her own. I expect, Chief Jack, that the *Wolastoqiyik* have the fasting too for young people, since you are of the Algonquian culture like my people, the Ojibwa. I don’t know if I did it right, even using the Ojibwa style. I only had books to go by.”

“You did fine, Abbi. If you achieved what you sought, you did fine, no matter how you went about it.”

“I even made my own sweat lodge. Mrs. Loggerman said it was a small sauna from the point of view of the Finns.”

“Yes, Chief Jack,” explained Mrs. Loggerman. “In the old days, our family used the cabin now used for smoking and storage near the water, for our sauna – a family sweat lodge – every Sunday. Oh it makes me want to empty the cabin and make it a sauna again. But perhaps alas it never will, since we will be moving.”

“You can do it one last time,” said Abbi enthusiastically, “if your sisters will be coming for Christmas!”

“It sounds like a lot of work, but if we all pitch in – temporarily removing everything in storage, and scrubbing all the benches clean....”

Nobody had to ask Minnie what she thought about having her own fast and wearing this dress, because her face was beaming.

“We thought to show it to you on her,” continued Abbi.

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“And since you came, Chief Jack, you can see it on her too.”

“Well come on down and have some tea,” said Mrs. Loggerman. “Chief Jack followed your footsteps here. He was going to bring Minnie to see you anyway later today. It must be Providence that designed it that you two should meet of your own accord. Come then. The tea is ready.”

They all sat around the table. Mrs. Loggerman brought some biscuits as well. Minnie, in the deerskin dress looked to Abbi positively like the Indian Princess she had always envisioned in her mind’s eye. Chief Jack, while maintaining a stoic look, was quite pleased, as well as amused. He considered Abbi, *Mihkuisis*, to be a remarkable, and generous, girl.

After having some tea, Minnie appeared to plead with her father in their language. Finally he nodded and appeared to say something in the affirmative.

“Minnie,” he explained to the others, “would like to stay a while before returning to our camp. I said ‘yes’ because that is why, after all, we brought her to our hunting camp when we decided to come – to visit Abbi. But only if it is fine with you, Martha.”

“Certainly. She is welcome to stay and get to know Abbi.”

“Your husband told me a month ago about how Abbi wished to meet an Indian girl of her own age. That is why I asked my daughter to come along – so she can meet Abbi. Yes she can stay then; but I must return to the camp. We have planned that we will first catch salmon from the river at a place upriver, and look for evidence of moose or deer near the water so we have tracks to follow, and then hunt later in the week.”

“Who else has come?” Mrs. Loggerman wondered.

“My brother Tommy, his wife Betty, and my wife Anna. Our other children have remained at the village downriver with their grandparents. We won’t stay long this time because it is getting cold. But the cabin has a stove and it will be fine. We will stay until next Saturday, I think.”

“It reminds me of the olden days,” Mrs. Loggerman reminisced, “when your whole family came to pick berries and catch salmon.”

Abbi and Minnie were getting tired of sitting around

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having tea. "Mrs. Loggerman," said Abbi, "can I and Minnie be excused. I have only begun to show her everything. How long can she stay Chief Jack? Since her reason for coming with you was to meet me, can she stay with us the entire time until you go back to your village? All week?"

"Even when you go to school?"

"She can come with me to school. I'm sure Mr. Turbot, the teacher, won't mind. And the children would love to meet a real Indian princess! I can loan her some school clothes. We are the same size. Please?"

"Is it fine with you, Martha?" Jack wondered. "It will be good for Minnie to see settler children and improve her English. At camp she will help Anna and Betty, and learn nothing new."

"Yes, of course!" replied Mrs. Loggerman. "Mr. Loggerman - Percy - can fashion an additional bed in Abbi's room when he gets back. But in return, Chief Jack, please send your womenfolk over here for tea when they have some free time from their work. I am tied down here with my children during the day when Abbi is at school and Mr. Loggerman is working; and I would like to meet Anna, your wife, again. I remember the olden days when your clan came around here to visit, and there were many women come to pick blackberries and blueberries from the ridges."

"Then it is settled," said Chief Jack. "I will return and tell the women. They will let Minnie be here, and come and visit you Mrs. Loggerman - a few times during the next week, I expect. It is only a half hour walk."

Abbi was elated! "And when Minnie returns next Saturday, can I come with Minnie and visit your camp?"

"Of course. And I hope that one day you can visit the Indian village and the proper house we have there."

"Sadly, I'm going back to Saint John, when the Loggermans move, Chief Jack; but I will one day visit. Minnie and I in the meantime can exchange letters when Minnie has mastered writing."

With that Jack left, and Abbi and Minnie became busy again with activities.

"First," said Abbi. "We must get you out of the Indian dress and put it away safely so you can take it when you return to the camp. It is best not to soil it or get it wet. I

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had a hard time getting it nice again after it got soaked by the thunderstorm.”

ABBI AND MINNIE BECOME FAST FRIENDS

It is not difficult to imagine how they passed the day. Of prime importance was to show Minnie the beaver pond, the place where she had broken the dam, the place she had found a trap, and the sign she had erected. She showed her the sweat lodge she had built and they crowded inside. They planned that they would try it out tomorrow, on Sunday.

Soon it was suppertime and Minnie was a guest at the supper table, and would be for the next week. It happened that they had fresh salmon for supper. The men had been fishing for salmon too in the past few days.

“Is this one of the salmon Jeffery caught?” asked Abbi at the dinner table during supper.

“Yes, Abbi. He was very lucky this year. We got a good many. I have already cleaned and salted some and we will have some to eat fresh for right now.”

“I always want to thank the spirit of the animal for the meat, Mrs. Loggerman,” said Abbi, “and feel that it did not mind giving itself up to us. This is so delicious.”

“Yes, Mrs. Loggerman,” echoed Minnie. “This salmon very good.”

Mr. Loggerman asked Minnie about goings on at the Indian village. He knew many of the men there and asked specifically by name how they were and what they were doing. Minnie obliged.

“When it is time for Minnie to go back to the camp,” Mr. Loggerman said, “I can accompany Minnie and Abbi there, and return with Abbi. I would like to see what success they had with their hunting or fishing, and shoot the breeze with Jack and Tommy. Did you know, Abbi, that I and Jeffery got a moose and a deer too, the other day.”

“Where is it?”

“It’s hanging in the sawmill. Jeffery will prepare it, and then we’ll salt some of it, and the rest will be kept in the cool night air to eat in the winter months.”

“Yes, what will we do for meat around here if we could not hunt?” said Mrs. Loggerman. “We’d have to ship meat

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here by rail from beef farms far away!”

“Explain to me, Mr. Loggerman, what you know about how Indians use the campsites,” said Abbi. “Mrs. Loggerman said earlier that Chief Jack’s family has been coming there for as long as she can remember, but every year less and less.”

“As Minnie will tell you, it is a traditional place the family would go. They may have other campsites too. Originally there was no Indian village. A clan would live at one campsite and hunt and fish, and then go to another, in annual rounds. But after some months of it, every clan wanted to meet up with other clans, and that is why every year the seasonally nomadic hunting Indians would all meet in a common place, mostly in summer when life was easy. The Maliseet...”

“*Wolastoqiyik...*” Abbi corrected.

“...*Wolastoqiyik*, history says, met at the bottom of the Saint John River, and they grew some crops like squash there. When growing season was over, the clans then all went back up the river each clan to their own areas, to fish for salmon, and live through the winter, hunting moose and deer. When summer came the cycle began all over. Is that how you understand it, Minnie?”

“Yes, my grandpapa explained it like that once. But when French and English came, they couldn’t do it anymore. They wanted Indians to settle down and not move. They helped start Indian villages. Missionaries make churches, and then make schools, teach farming.”

“Yes,” continued Mr. Loggerman, “the government didn’t really like the clans traveling so freely in the land, because by now the government had arbitrarily given large pieces of land to settlers, and these settlers, seeing Indians coming through, began to see them as trespassers when in reality the Indian never thought of the wilderness being owned by anyone other than the Creator. The clans, however did have a sense of hunting territory and were very possessive of the moose, deer and salmon in their clan territories.”

“Yes, Mr. Loggerman,” added Abbi. “My Woodrow Papa, Bradden, explained it to me a while ago. When European and North American people came in contact, the side with more people tended to determine the way things went. As

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long as Indians were more than Europeans, the Europeans were very respectful and thankful, very thanksgiving. But then when Europeans were everywhere, they didn't care what the Indians thought anymore."

"But let us not talk about sad things," said Mrs. Loggerman, breaking in. "Let us have some blackberries for desert. We can put cream from our cow on them."

The next day, Anna and Betty arrived around noon. The women fussed over all the little Loggerman girls. They found blonde, blue-eyed, babies very cute. Meanwhile Abbi and Minnie ran off, Abbi continuing to show Minnie everything she had failed to show the previous day. Abbi wanted to show Minnie the many waterfalls.

"When I first came, I called them *Minnehahaha*, after a woman's name meaning 'laughing waters' in *The Song of Hiawatha*. But I added some *haha*'s because there were many falls. But Chief Jack told me I could call them *kapsqisisuuk* "

"Yes - 'many little waterfalls'."

"But there is a third way, as Mrs. Loggerman explained, as her father called them *pikkut koskit* I now have three ways, the first way being a little silly."

And so it went all morning. By the afternoon, the girls were heating up rocks in the laundry tub fireplace, and preparing to take them into Abbi's little sweat lodge. By then Anna and Betty had returned to the hunting and fishing camp. Abbi offered to include all the little Loggerman girls in the sweat lodge - but only one at a time, since Abbi's crude sweat lodge was very small.

"With Minnie helping, we can have all six very clean in no time, Mrs. Loggerman. I will make them all sweaty inside and hand them out to Minnie who will give me another one, and soap up the last."

By the time supper was over and evening fell, both Abbi and Minnie were very very tired and fell asleep immediately.

In the morning, Abbi involved Minnie in all the morning routines and chores. Then when the Loggerman children were fed, Abbi and Minnie headed off to school. Abbi pointed out squirrels and birds they saw.

"*Sipsis*," said Minnie when they saw a small chickadee.

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It was late fall now, and many other kinds of birds had flown south.

“Yes ‘little bird’,” replied Abbi.

Minnie told Abbi the Indian name for every animal they saw, and Abbi was determined to remember every one without writing it down.

When they reached Pinewood, Abbi pointed out the train station, and general store; but they didn't have time to linger. They headed to the school. Since Abbi always arrived late, the school was in session. When Abbi entered with Minnie, Mr. Turbot was a little surprised.

“What have we here?”

“Mr. Turbot. This is Minnie. She is the daughter of the hereditary chief at the Indian village downriver. That means she is a princess because a hereditary chief is like a king – kings and queens are hereditary too, like for example Queen Victoria. She is visiting her family's camp not far from the Loggermans and I invited her to come with me to the school today. They have to go back in about a week however. If it is alright, may I bring her every day this week?”

“Well you are welcome to join us. Minnie, to see what we are learning here.”

“She knows English and can teach the children a few Indian words,” suggested Abbi.

“Good idea. Let us study some English, and then Minnie can give us equivalents in the Maliseet language. We will try to write them on the blackboard to see how they look written. Can Minnie write?”

Minnie shook her head.

“Well, you can learn to write a few words, then.”

“Oh it would be grand if she learned to write, Mr. Turbot,” said Abbi. “Then when I return to Saint John we can correspond by letter!”

Children have no prejudice, and were very interested in Minnie. Her presence also provided a change from boring routine.

At lunch, Abbi introduced Minnie to Mildred, and they all sat together on their favourite big tree stump. Abbi had prepared lunch for Minnie as well as herself. She liked the bread Mrs. Loggerman made.

“It's very soft,” she said.

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“Put some blackberry jam on it. Mrs. Loggerman is also expert at making jam,” said Abbi. Then to Mildred: “Minnie’s real name is *Saqteminimosis*, which means ‘little blackberry’. She got the name because – she explained to me last night – her mother Anna, gave her birth in the middle of blackberry picking.”

After school, Abbi, Minnie, and Mildred went home together, stopping in at the general store.

“This is Minnie, Mr. Wilson,” said Abbi. “She is a real Indian princess. She is the daughter of the hereditary chief named Jack. She speaks English – her father has taught her.”

“I am so happy for you, Abbi,” said Mr. Wilson. “You have discovered an Indian girl your age – and just in time, since I hear you will leave soon.”

“Yes, Mr. Wilson. I will go in January once Madam Audora sends a man to take inventory. He is to escort me back. Madam Audora thinks it is too far for me to travel alone. That means at least I will be here for Christmas and see how Christmas is celebrated around here.”

“Well it is much like everywhere else – people fill our small church, and then visit each other and eat specially prepared food. Can I give you Mr. Loggerman’s mail?”

“Yes, Mr. Wilson. I expect there will be plenty of communication between Madam Audora’s company and Mr. Loggerman regarding her company buying out the sawmill and logging operation.”

As Abbi was talking, Mildred was showing Minnie around the store. Abbi saw them looking at candy sticks. “Mr. Wilson, do you think we could buy some candy? I don’t have money, but I will explain it to Mrs. Loggerman if you can add it to the Loggerman account.”

“Don’t fret about it. Take one each, my treat!”

“Oh thank you, Mr. Wilson.”

They then left, each one with a stick of colorful candy sticking out of their mouths.

They continued until Mildred had to turn onto another road to her home.

When Abbi and Minnie arrived home, they found Anna and Betty had come again that afternoon, and were enjoying helping out Mrs. Loggerman. Minnie was excited to tell her mother and aunt in her own language about

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everything she experienced. She said the teacher was fine with her coming with Abbi every day until she had to go home.

Anna wanted to make sure it was fine with Mrs. Loggerman.

"I'm happy to have Minnie as a guest," Mrs. Loggerman told Anna. "Rest assured I will give her chores to do along with Abbi. I won't let either girl be idle."

"That good idea, Martha....., Well, now I and Betty have to return. Men may have got a big moose by now. We have work to do – cut up, remove hide, scrape, stretch.... We come again in a few days to visit?"

"Certainly! Come in the afternoon, then you can talk to Abbi and Minnie when they return from school. Now that the sawmill is quiet and the men are all hunting and Percy and Jeffrey are preparing the logging camp, it is very lonely around here."

The week went by all too fast. Anna and Betty visited Mrs. Loggerman again in the afternoon a couple days later, and stayed long enough to see Abbi and Minnie return from school, ask them about their day. Then they had to hurry back to their husbands at the campsite.

"Minnie and I have become fast friends," said Abbi to Mrs. Loggerman, one suppertime. She then turned to Minnie. "That is a third way of using the word 'fast'. This version means 'be tight' and it also occurs in the word 'fasten'."

"Oh Abbi, you know English so well! You are teaching something new about English every day!! 'Fast' can mean 'quick' or 'eat nothing' or 'be tight'!"

MINNIE HAS TO RETURN

And then Saturday came. It was time for Minnie to return to her family. Abbi was sad about that, but at the same time, since she would now go with Minnie to see a real Indian campsite, her spirits were still soaring.

Abbi folded up the Indian dress she was giving to Minnie, and added the moccasins and other accessories she had made. She tied it all up with some string and put it in the bag with the shoulder strap so it could be easily carried. They put other things in the bag that Minnie

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should have. Abbi had more than fit in the bag, so she had to decide what was most important.

Percy Loggerman decided to walk with the girls, as he wished to speak with the men and gossip about what was going on in their world, and about who was doing what in the world of logging and sawmilling. With the sawmill quiet, and logging operations not yet started, he had no pressing obligations this Saturday.

It was a sunny morning. The weather had been warm in recent days and melted the early December dusting of snow. They still had to wear coats, but it was pleasant to be outdoors, especially in the sun.

They left early and walked the ridge for 15 minutes, Then they continued further to where the path went down to the water and there were several felled trees forming a bridge. Wear on it suggested it was several years old by now. They crossed it carefully as there were rapids going on below. Abbi saw a couple of salmon making their way up the rapids.

“This is where Papa and my uncle catch salmon,” said Minnie. “They use spears these days. But they are not here now because they are in the forest hunting I think – or are helping Mama and Aunt Betty to finish up, to make it ready to travel.”

“How will you go home, Minnie?” Abbi wondered.

“We travel a mile to the same river that goes past Pinewood. It is big and has less rapids. We have canoes to take us down to our village downriver. It is about ten miles Papa said.”

Soon they arrived at a clearing. It had an old log cabin in the center, and various structures all around, some improvised with poles and tarpaulins, others more permanent, such as a campfire site.

Abbi saw a structure made of poles above a very smoky campfire. When she got close, she realized that the structure had rows of filets of salmon on them. They were being dried by smoke from the fire. It was a weak heat so the salmon tended to dry instead of cook. Cooking occurs when the temperature of the water in the fish flesh goes above boiling. They wanted to preserve the fish and dry it, not fry it. Minnie’s uncle Tommy kept the smoky fire going. It had a tea kettle on it too, for when anyone wished

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to have some tea.

Mr. Loggerman waved and said hello, and before long, the three men – Jack, Tommy and Mr. Loggerman – were sitting on stumps and rocks, smoking pipes, holding mugs of tea, and chatting away – or as Mr. Loggerman put it ‘shooting the breeze’.

Minnie lead Abbi to where the women were.

Anna had a moose hide spread over a large outdoor wooden table useable for all purposes, and she and Betty were bent over it, scraping the inside of the skin.

“They only want to clean it enough so they can roll it up to carry back to the village today. Back at the village Grandmama will help too. She knows how it is done. Come. Abbi, let us help clean the inside of the moose hide.”

Abbi looked to her right and saw a moose carcass hanging there. “Uck!” said Abbi.

“Don’t worry about the moose,” said Minnie. “Uncle Tommy asked it, before he shot his gun if the moose was fine with giving up himself for us. Moose are used to sometimes becoming food, and often to wolves. And then after he was dead, Papa said a prayer thanking the moose, making sure he was fine with it.”

“Did they see the moose spirit rising out of it like a ghost?” inquired Abbi. “I always imagine that if the light is dim, then you might see the spirit of the animal float up out of it. The spirit then hovers and will then decide whether his hunters were worthy, or not. Then if not, he would remain and haunt the hunters until they had accidents and never have luck in hunting and fishing again. That is how I envision it all. If he was happy he would bless his hunters and continue to heaven, up to a parallel world like this one, except all ephemeral.”

“Ephemeral? That’s another word I don’t know. I am hearing so many new words from you Abbi.”

“It means faint and fleeting like mist – And I am learning so many Indian words from you, Minnie.”

“Let’s help Mama and Aunt Betty. You can take a break, Mama.”

“Thank you, girls. But we will not go anywhere. We will stay here and listen to you speak of your week staying with Abbi and Martha and her children, and going to the school.”

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Anna gave Abbi her scraping tool, and Betty gave Minnie hers. Anna showed Abbi how it was done. Then as the girls worked, the women began inquiring from them about their week, sometimes in Indian, sometimes in English. Minnie now knew how to speak English even better than her mother, having had much practice all week.

Anna took a break in a while, to get some tea from the men, and fetched metal cups from inside the cabin. They had tea as they worked.

“When will you be leaving, Anna?” asked Abbi.

“We think first thing tomorrow morning. We will pack everything up for carrying tonight, and leave as soon as it is light. We will be home by the end of the day tomorrow.”

When they decided the moose hide was clean enough to roll up, they turned their attention to the carcass. It had to be cut up for carrying.

Anna checked the smoking salmon. They had been in the smoke for a while, both on the rack above the fire and at night inside. They did not want to leave them out at night, or else a bear would come and eat itself full. Yes, she declared, they now seemed hard and dry. Good enough to gather up to carry.

“I suppose during this past week you had plenty of salmon to eat all week,” said Abbi.

“For first two days. But then when we have moose, we eat parts of moose best to eat right away. We have big pot inside with stew in it. We heat it up on the stove inside for supper. You and Mr. Loggerman can have some for lunch today!”

“In that case, Anna, I prefer not to know what is in it,” said Abbi. “I will go by how it tastes.”

That was wise.

“We make stew of parts we can eat that we can’t carry. We don’t wish to waste anything. The moose spirit will then look at us favourably and we will have good luck hunting and fishing.”

Chief Jack, overhearing the conversation between Abbi and his wife, added. “The rule about hunting and fishing, Abbi, is that the nicer the hunter and fisherman is to the animal they catch, the more in future animals want to be caught by him. English has a word for it – ‘charisma’. When we have a moose, the more of it we can make into good

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food and useful things, the more all moose spirits will prefer to be caught by us than anyone else, including wolves, who will waste much."

"I understand, Chief Jack. If you must die, it is best to offer yourself to the best, most noble, most deserving adversary. That is what I thought when my Papa fell in the Saint John River. If he drowned, then it is better he drowned in its rushing gorge than in a puddle of water. But he has not been found and I think he is continuing to battle a noble adversary, and will return when his battle is over."

"What means 'adversary'," asked Minnie.

"That means 'opponent', someone you are fighting against, or competing with."

Soon it was evening, and Mr. Loggerman said it was time to go before it became dark.

Abbi said goodbye to everyone, and gave Minnie a hug. Both had tears in their eyes.

"I will not see you again for a long time, Minnie. Please learn to write, and then we can exchange letters. I will write to you care of the Indian village, and you will write to me wherever I am. Come January I won't be around here any longer but in Richdale, in the clutches of Grandmama Audora. She is my own adversary. She is the dragon I will have to wrestle with."

"What is dragon?"

"Dragon is like a big bear or something like that."

"Thank you for the dress you made, Abbi. The next time we come here, I will have my fast. Maybe I will even have it where you had it. And by then I will know how to write, and write to you and tell you all about it."

They parted and Abbi sadly returned home with Mr. Loggerman. She had many memories from the past week to keep her spirits high for another week or two until some snow began to fall and there was Christmas in the air.

CHRISTMAS AT THE LOGGERMANS

When Christmas came, Mrs. Loggerman made all kinds of special foods, and invited friends over. Abbi met many for the first time. They told her about all the gossip about how remarkable she was. The Loggermans in turn visited those friends too. Jeffery had replaced the wheels on their

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wagon with runners, turning it into a sleigh. This was the time of year when people made an effort to visit their friends and neighbours even if they were far away. For the Loggermans the visits became not just Christmas celebrations but also goodbyes since everyone now knew the Loggermans were moving to Maine.

Because they were selling their property, some of Mrs. Loggerman's sisters came, taking the train from distant places, leaving their children, if they had any, in the care of husbands. They were the Koski sisters come to say a goodbye to their childhood home.

They were inspired when Abbi told them about her making a sweat lodge. "That is a little sauna", they exclaimed. "The smokehouse cabin and storehouse used to be our father's smoke sauna! Oh how wonderful if we could make it a sauna one last time!"

Mrs. Loggerman had already thought of it since Abbi had suggested it. "Since we will be giving much of the meat and smoked things, to friends and neighbours," she said, "we will be emptying it anyway. We can scrub it clean with soap, and get the stove with the rocks, which we have been using for smoking, back to working as a smoke sauna. We can have a sauna a final time, a final farewell to the past."

"We must do it for New Years," said Margaret, the oldest of the three sisters.

Soon Abbi watched as the Koski women made the smokehouse cabin into a sauna again, beginning by scrubbing the interior clean. And when it was done, Abbi was able to experience with them a *large* sweat lodge for the first time. In this version the hot rocks were heated up inside, by a fire in a cavity underneath the rocks. The cabin interior was high, and smoke hung mid-height like a cloud and people were able to walk under the smoke when tending to the fire. When finally it was hot, and the fire was out, they opened the door and windows wide as Margaret threw water onto the rocks causing lots of steam that drove out the smoke. Then they closed the door and window and waited for the hot rocks to heat the space up again. It was then a smoke free hot place for an hour and more.

Abbi was amused to be among the lively women and six

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little girls as they swatted themselves with *vihtas* and ran out red and steaming through the snow to jump into the river.

Before they were done, Abbi, using a wooden bucket, carried some hot rocks from the big sauna, into her little sweat lodge, to use it a final time.

“Goodbye, little sweat lodge,” she said as she sat in the darkness, the sounds of the others outside jumping into the icy river in the background. “When I’ve gone back to Saint John,” she thought, “perhaps a groundhog would move in and make it its home.” She couldn’t imagine the future residents of the property even understanding what it was.

Christmas and then New Years had come and gone all too fast. Now she had to await the end of her stay here.

Mr. Morton arrived in January and Mr. Loggerman and Jeffery showed him around to take the inventory of everything connected with the sawmill or logging. The objective was to determine how much Audora’s company owed to buy out the Loggerman’s share. Two of the visiting three Koski sisters had to set off to return home by train. Margaret, who was still single, would remain to assist Mrs. Loggerman until they were ready to move to Maine come spring.

With Margaret there to help with chores and babies, Abbi had more free time to visit her favourite haunts once again. She said goodbye to everything. Snow now covered everything, as if a blanket covering a sleeping land. Soon Mr. Morton was done and it was time for her to accompany him back to Saint John, to face her nemesis, Madam Audora Woodrow,

GOODBYES

Abbi had left such a strong impression on everyone, that when it was time for her to leave with Mr. Morton, everyone was there to see her off – Mrs. Loggerman, and her sister, and all the little girls to whom Abbi had given creative names – Sylvia, Gladis, Conifer, Evergreen, Percina and Jeffrina. There was Jeffery who had enjoyed having Abbi reinforce his love of books. She had read the book he gave her, *Stranger in a Winter Landscape*, twice and they had discussed it. There was Mr. Loggerman who had found her dinner conversations with his wife always

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entertaining. And last but not least there was Mildred accompanied by her mother, with whom she had become fast friends. Mildred and Abbi promised to correspond by letter. The only person not there to see her off was of course Minnie. But they had already said their goodbyes several weeks ago.

The train had arrived. It was a slow freight train with only one passenger car. It would take several minutes to connect the freight cars loaded with lumber and logs ready to go, and there was plenty of time for goodbyes.



“Goodbye, Abbi,” said Mrs. Loggerman. “We have enjoyed your company and conversation. And thank you for giving names to all my girls. I am certain to have given them plain ordinary names like Mary, Jane, Betsy, and so on. We will soon be moving to a nice town in Maine. I have given you the address. Write whenever you feel like it and I will write back.”

Each one had something to say to Abbi – other than Mr. Morton, who stood in the background impatient to go and wondering why it was taking so long for the railroad men to connect up the freight cars.

Finally when the freight cars were connected, the conductor blew his whistle for the benefit of passengers, indicating the train was ready to go.

Then it was time to board. Abbi followed Mr. Morton in

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and went quickly to a window, and waved.

“Goodbye, everyone. Goodbye wilderness,” said Abbi as the train began lurching forward this winter morning in January.

CONCLUSIONS

Although she would be leaving here, and that was sad, Abbi felt very satisfied with her visit to the wilderness. She now understood much better who she was, and her path in life. Most of all she had achieved what she had dreamed of ever since she was told she was an Indian orphan, and would go with Mrs. Loggerman – to meet an Indian girl, her own age. In fact she had done even better – she met the daughter of the hereditary chief, who she regarded as a king, and whose daughter was therefore a real Indian princess; and became fast friends with her.

She now also knew the reality of being an Indian in the world of the time. She did not find among Minnie’s clan, any Hiawatha or any of the Indians in the legends. They were people struggling along in life, like everyone else, adapting to their current circumstances now with settlers all around them. She was glad her visit with Minnie taught her about that. Perhaps being an Indian is like fishing, she thought. If you fish for recreation, it is romantic. But if you fish in order to eat, it is not romantic at all, but sometimes it is work. Abbi had learnt a very important lesson in life. Something can seem romantic when you are not in it but on the outside. When you are in the middle of it, it is regular life which can be enjoyable sometimes and not so enjoyable at other times. The Europeans who loved the poem *The Song of Hiawatha*, didn’t have to live the life of the Indian, and it was therefore romantic.

Because she had been raised in the European way by her adoptive Woodrow family, Abbi had become very European in nature. As much as she tried to be Indian, she realized she could not easily live in Minnie’s world. And now, having discovered she had an Indian side, she could not fit very well into the world in which she grew up either.

She realized that perhaps she could never become fully Indian. She lived in two worlds, and would have to grow

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up in both.

But overall, her experience living here at the Loggermans had been a good one. She was now ready to face Grandmama Audora and whatever lay before her in the next stage of her life..

PART

3

The Winter Carnival

Abbi's return to Saint John would begin a new chapter in her life. While she has discovered her identity and met real Indians and made friends with a real Indian princess of her own age, the fate of Bradden Woodrow who fell from the bridge into the Saint John River remains unknown. So too Abbi's true origins. The journey continues, this time leading her to an Orphan Home and involvement in a Winter Carnival



*This costume is certain
to be a winner at the
Winter Carnival!!*

Abbi's Return to Saint John

JANUARY, 1876

Abbi was now to be returned to her adoptive family. Soon she would be facing Audora Woodrow again, her adoptive father's mother, who was the president of a large company in Saint John called 'Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company'. The company was buying out the Loggerman's sawmill and they had sent Mr. Morton, an accountant, to take an inventory and determine a fair value. His work was now done, and Abbi was to return to Saint John by train in his charge. The Loggermans and everyone else who had seen her off at the Pinewood train station were now out of sight. All she could see now out of the passenger car window were snow-laden pines and long blue shadows as the early morning sun began to rise. The journey would last all day.

The single passenger car of this freight train had a stove in the center. Abbi took off her hat, and loosened her dark hair. There weren't many passengers yet, but Abbi expected more would board as they got closer to Fredericton.

How would she pass her time? She was a talkative nine - almost ten - year old girl, and needed to talk to people. When she had come, she had spent most of her time chatting with Mrs. Loggerman; but Mr. Morton was very different. He was a slim, spectacled and studious man who appeared to be only interested in doing calculations in his notebook. He was not accustomed to escorting children from the interior of New Brunswick all the way to Saint John, and would have been happier if this girl across from him wasn't there. But the duty had fallen to him to bring

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the girl back to Audora Woodrow, his boss, on his return to Saint John. He had nothing against Abbi personally – it didn't matter that Abbi had an Indian appearance – black hair, brown eyes, cheekbones a little more prominent than the run-of-the-mill child. He would have felt the same if a blonde blue eyed girl had been thrust into his charge.

Mr. Morton turned back to his notebook. He had calculations to do in regards to the inventory-taking he had done at the Loggerman sawmill this past week, and that is how he intended to spent his time during the long journey from the wilderness of New Brunswick to Saint John.

Abbi looked around the single passenger car of this train. Other passengers sat quietly, reading books or newspapers, doing knitting, or catching some more sleep since they had had to get up before 7 am to catch the train. The conductor now and then added firewood to the stove in the middle.

There was plenty of time to review her experiences of the last seven months. Although Audora may have wanted, in sending her to the wilderness, to get rid of her, in her mind, the adventure living with the Loggermans had turned out well. She had been beside the wilderness, and it made it easier to learn about Indians now that she had been told she was one herself, and then she was thrilled to finally meet and make friends with a Maliseet Indian girl, Minnie, with whom she would in future try to correspond by letter. Alas, currently Minnie could not write and she would have to wait until Minnie mastered her writing skills. She had also made friends too during her several months at the Pinewood school, especially a girl named Mildred.

Yes, Abbi actually regretted her seven months with the Loggermans was over, as her future was now unknown once again. She was to be returned to Saint John by Mr. Morton and be subjected once again to Audora's decision-making.

She cringed at what might be in store for her next.

“What she has in store for me now I do not know,” she said under her breath and sighed. She hoped upon hope she would be allowed to rejoin her adoptive family and not be sent by the powerful, controlling, Audora Woodrow, her former “Grandmama” to yet another place deemed suitable

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for an Indian orphan. Would she even be allowed to see her former Mama and the children? Or would Audora send her right away somewhere else?

She looked for something else to do besides staring out the window at the snowy winter scenery going past.

She had in her bag the book *A Stranger in a Winter Landscape* that she had received from Jeffrey, the Loggermans' handyman, and although she had already read it, she thought to read it some more to pass the time.

She read a little until the track turned to the one that went alongside the Saint John River. She now decided to catch glimpses of the river. She sometimes saw parts where the current had kept the ice from forming. It reminded her of the reason her family had to be taken into the care of Audora Woodrow, and then why she had been sent to the Loggermans. A year ago her adoptive Papa, Bradden Woodrow, while doing a survey in his capacity as a railway engineer, had fallen from a trestle bridge that spanned the Saint John, into swirling rapids, and nothing of him had ever been found of him, in spite of massive searches – except his boots and coat. There was too the button Jenine told her about, that a hunter had found away from the river, and brought it to the railway people. But was it really his? Was it really from his shirt? In any case, with him gone, his family had had no alternative but to go into the care of his mother Audora. But Grandmama Audora had always had a great prejudice towards her, according to Jenine, because she was adopted and not true kin to her, and so Grandmama Audora had found it useful to send her to the wilderness to assist the Loggermans who supplied her company with rough hardwood lumber for architectural products. Her adoptive Mama, Jenine, had explained everything to her before she had left for the Loggermans last year.

“Mark my words, with Papa gone,” Jenine had said, “she will discriminate against both of us. You are an Indian orphan we adopted, and I am a country girl that her son married against her will, instead of some rich socialite from her world of wealth in Richdale.”

“Papa would not have allowed his mother to have sent me away from Mama and the other children,” Abbi said under her breath as she gazed at the frozen Saint John

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River that held the secret of what happened to Bradden Woodrow. "But where was he? They have not found the slightest trace of him. Did he pull himself out of the water? Did he get to a fire fast enough and dry himself out?" As long as he had not been found, she held a glimmer of hope that by some miracle he was still alive somewhere and would miraculously reappear one day.

But it wasn't good to dwell on the unknown, so she turned back to her book.

Hours and hours went by as the train stopped everywhere, adding and subtracting freight cars loaded with logs or lumber. The train ride was like a snail's progress. They had departed at 7 in the morning, and it was now approaching noon.

Abbi decided to try once again to strike up a conversation with Mr. Morton. She hoped he was getting weary of doing his calculations. He had forever so far been looking down into his notebooks, with not even any glance at the scenery outside the train window.

"Pardon me, Mr. Morton, but you have been doing calculations in your notebook for hours. I don't mean to interrupt, but I was wondering what the calculations are for. I suppose it has something to do with the inventory you took of everything at the Loggermans' sawmill..."

In his reply he didn't even look up at her. "That is correct. I am calculating the value of it all, adding up numbers so as to establish how much would be a fair amount for Madam Woodrow to pay the Loggermans for buying them out."

"I'm glad it will be a fair amount. Then they will be able to get a nice house in the new place in Maine where they are going."

He put down his notebook for the first time. Perhaps he was becoming a little weary after all?

"Of course it must be fair! Percy Loggerman knows the value of everything too, and he too will see a copy of my calculations, and have to agree to the amount arrived at."

"I'm sorry for interrupting then. You must know arithmetic well. Arithmetic has been my worst subject at school. Will you be calculating all day? Don't you ever take a break?"

"It is my work and work needs to get done. I am not

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doing it for pleasure. When we arrive at Fredericton there will be an opportunity to take a break there as we wait to transfer to the express train to Saint John.”

“I understand. It is wise to get work done when traveling. When I walked home from school when I was living with the Loggermans, I tried to read my assignments so I didn't have to do them at home...But look: other people in this coach car are eating sandwiches. It is lunchtime. Mrs. Loggerman packed for us some lunch. At least you might take a sandwich to eat while you calculate. Let me see what she packed....”

Abbi removed the cover from the container Mrs. Loggerman had given her. She took an inventory of what was inside.

“There is a loaf of bread, sliced, a butter knife, some butter, and a nice piece of corned moose meat already sliced. Oh good, the butter was frozen when we began and it is still cold. I think she intended us to combine them and make our own sandwiches. I will make you one and one for myself. ”

On this train seats faced each other on each side of a window, with a narrow table between them. Abbi set to work on it to butter bread slices and then add a slice of meat. As she worked she took the liberty of talking some more, hoping Mr. Morton would become more sociable. It hadn't worked earlier, but maybe this time Mr. Morton was willing to take a break for lunch. Abbi became her normal talkative self:

“I'm so happy for the Loggermans and their children finally being able to move away from the wilderness. On the other hand I myself am a little sad to leave the Loggermans. I felt very much at home there, seeing as it turns out I am Native Indian, as you probably realized when you saw me, as they say I very much look like an Indian girl. I only learned I was adopted by the Woodrows last year before Grandmama Audora, I mean Madam Audora, decided to send me to stay with the Loggermans and help them with their children. That's when Mama, I mean Jenine Woodrow, explained everything – that they adopted me. I am really Ojibwa, she said, born from an Indian woman named Paula Pictford, who sadly, died. Although New Brunswick is the land of the Mikmaq and

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Maliseet Indians, Mama said Paula came here from the east, from *Gitche Gumee*, which is Lake Superior, like the Indians in *The Song of Hiawatha* the long poem by Mr. Longfellow about which you are no doubt familiar. But on the other hand, I don't regret leaving the wilderness if I can reunite again with my Woodrow family. But alas, Papa, that is Bradden Woodrow, Jenine's husband, who disappeared when on a trip to inspect a railway bridge – he was a railway construction engineer – is still disappeared, and the rest of the family is living with Madam Audora, in her mansion at Richdale, outside of Saint John, which is called Tall Pines. But I hear Mama, I mean Jenine, is not well, according to Mark's letter. Oh I long to see them again. There is Mark the oldest boy, then there is Jimmy, and then there is Jack, which in French is Jacques, but it sounds the same, and finally there is little Mary, who is more than two years old by now. And now that the Loggermans are moving and their sawmill will now belong entirely to Madam Audora, I am being returned into the hands of Madam Audora's decision-making. I prefer to rejoin the family at Tall Pines, but I don't know what Grandmama – I mean Madam Audora – has in store for me. She has never taken much of a liking to me, probably because I am adopted and not really kin to her.....”

Mr. Morton gave her a stern look over top of his notebook, informing her she was talking too much. She stopped. She couldn't help it – it just bursts forth after getting pent up inside. Then she put a second slice of bread on top of what she had just made and handed it to him. “Here's your sandwich, Mr. Morton.”

Finally Mr. Morton showed some responsiveness. He took the sandwich. “Hmm. Thank you..... But I would appreciate it if you didn't chatter on and on. It distracts me from my calculations.”

“I understand, Mr. Morton. I am told I have a tendency to chatter on and on. It is why the Indians at the sawmill called me *Mihkuisis*, which means ‘little squirrel’ since squirrels chatter a lot. I must learn to think things out and say only what is important at that moment and not talk about everything that comes through my mind.”

Abbi pressed her lips together to force them not to talk, as she worked on a sandwich for herself.

20. *Abbi's Return to Saint John*

“Oh,” she said after a minute when she inspected the contents of the lunch container further. “Mrs. Loggerman also put some apples in here. You can munch on an apple too when you’re through with the sandwich. I’ll put it on the tabletop between us. There is also a glass bottle of juice, although the railway has a very large kettle on the stove in the center from which the passengers can take water for tea. Just let me know what you would like, Mr. Morton. There are still many hours left to go. I remember when I came, the journey took all day, from early morning to late evening. It is a lo-o-o-ng way between the backwoods of New Brunswick and Saint John, even by railway.”

Happily for Mr. Morton, when Abbi began eating, she stopped talking.

Abbi took the liberty of looking around the car again to see what other passengers were doing. There was a restlessness among all the passengers now. They had been seated a long time. There weren’t many passengers, thought, in winter. And this was the only passenger car. All the other cars were freight. Perhaps when she was done eating she could get up and see if there were other people with whom she could strike up a conversation, seeing as Mr. Morton could not be drawn away from his calculating – his ‘work’.

And that was just what she did when she was done eating her sandwich. She walked up the aisle and said hello to everyone, and judging from the responses, determined who was keen to talk. When she found someone, a middle aged woman traveling by herself to visit relatives in Fredericton, she told her all about how she was an Indian girl and an orphan, and everything else that came to her head.

“My Papa, who I discovered was my adoptive Papa, was an engineer in the construction of this very train track we are on,” she said proudly. “But he had an accident and vanished into the majestic Saint John River. People think he drowned, but they have not found anything other than his coat and boots and a button, so I have always kept up hope that he is still alive.”

“Good for you, dear,” said the woman. “Never give up hope until you know for sure.”

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“Right now, Mr. Morton, who is an accountant or something for the Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company of Saint John, is supervising me on my return to Saint John. Madam Audora Woodrow who is president of the company, is my adoptive Papa’s mother, and has assumed responsibility for me. I wonder what she has in store for me next. I hope I will be allowed to rejoin my adoptive family at her mansion; but I fear she will only treat me like an orphan like she has always done, rather than kin. That is the sad part about being an orphan – you can never be completely part of any family.”

“Well I hope everything turns out for the best. As for me I am visiting my relatives in Fredericton.”

“I used to live in Fredericton with my adoptive family. I can tell you precisely where we lived...”

Abbi was now so happy to have found at least one other passenger to converse with in her normal chatty manner. It enabled time to fly by quickly. And before she knew it, they were arriving in Fredericton.

“Already?” she said, when the conductor called it.

Before leaving she said goodbye to everyone she had befriended on the train by then.

Mr. Morton marshaled her along to the waiting area for the express train between Fredericton and Saint John.

Happily Mr. Morton seemed to have finished his calculations and did not have to work on the express train. Once they were under way, noticing him not calculating, but looking out the window like everyone else, Abbi said, “I suppose you have by now figured out how much Madam Audora will have to pay the Loggermans for their share of the sawmill.”

“Yes, I have completed the task,” he replied. But his tone suggested to her “Do not start chattering at me again.” He was now interested in, it seemed, resting a little before arrival. He closed his eyes – another signal to Abbi not to bother him.

Abbi thought she ought to nap a little too. She had had enough chatting with fellow passengers on the last train. She wasn’t ready to begin again on this train. It would not be long now before they arrived in Saint John.

The journey had begun at 7am, and by the time they arrived at Saint John Station, it was almost evening.

Abbi's Fate is Decided

BACK IN SAINT JOHN

Desmond, arriving with Audora's carriage, met them at the station platform. He was to take Abbi to his employer, to Madam Audora Woodrow. Mr. Morton, at the same time, was met by his own carriage driver, and Abbi parted company from Mr. Morton.

"Thank you, Mr. Morton, for your help in bringing me back to Saint John. It took all day, but finally the journey is over. Have a good journey to your home. Say hello for me to your darling wife. I suspect you are as weary of the trip as I am."

"Hmm," said Mr. Morton and proceeded to his carriage. Abbi felt a little sorry for him. Here was a man completely worn down by numbers.

Abbi turned to Desmond. "I can't wait to see Mark, again."

Desmond was by now putting Abbi's luggage into the carriage. "He's at school, Miss Abbi. Both he and Jimmy go to a boarding school 25 miles away. They only come home on every second weekend."

"Well how is Mama . . . I mean Mrs. Woodrow, . . . I mean Jenine? I heard she isn't fitting in very well at the mansion."

"Audora Woodrow has a nurse attend to her needs. She believes it is the consequence of her losing her husband and all the subsequent changes in her life, and that time will heal all."

"And how is Grandmam...Madam Audora?" Abbi wondered.

"She is well. She is at her office at this moment, still working. She always works late now that there is gas

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lighting. She is waiting for you. She has instructed me to take you there first of all. You'll go home to Tall Pines with her when she's done. She wishes to talk to you at her offices first of all."

In wintertime it gets dark early, and it was getting dark even though it was only about a half past five; but the carriage had lanterns.

Abbi remembered the office. It was the one where it was decided last year that she ought to go to help Mrs. Loggerman at the sawmill that the company half owned, and where suddenly Mrs. Loggerman's baby arrived. "She is still working when it is dark?"

"Her office has the latest in gas lighting. She prefers to get things done before she goes home. Sometimes she works after everyone else is gone."

"She must be very dedicated to her work," remarked Abbi. "But I'm so very weary from being on the train from morning to night. I hope she will be done by now so we can go back to Tall Pines right away."

Desmond helped Abbi into the carriage, which had its hood up to provide shelter from the winter weather. He then climbed up to the driver's seat in front. They drove off from the Saint John Station, and made their way through the downtown streets to the offices of the Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company not far away.

It was dark outside the window of the carriage, and all Abbi could see were the lights of lanterns on carriages and lamps inside buildings. There were also some sprinkles of snow in the air.

AUDORA'S OFFICE ONCE AGAIN

Leaving Abbi's luggage in the carriage, Desmond showed Abbi up to Madam Woodrow's office. They didn't see any other employee than a man near the entrance watching things. It was after normal working hours and everyone else had gone home.

"Here is Abbi, Madam Woodrow," he announced when they arrived at the third floor office. "The train arrived on time. Mr. Morton has continued to his home, as it is late, and he said he will confer with you tomorrow."

21. *Abbi's Fate is Decided*

Audora Woodrow looked exactly the same to Abbi as the last time she saw her – stern, authoritative, but with a handsomeness in her features that had been inherited by her son, Bradden, the man who was missing. She wore her dark hair stylishly done up at back, and her dress was black and businesslike. In her studying her, Abbi always sought out the interesting accessories she wore – jewelry, broaches, elegant handkerchiefs, pocket watch, etc – elegant touches that revealed how fashion-conscious she was, in spite of her dominant basic businesslike black.

But Abbi didn't study Audora for more than a moment. She immediately noticed how bright it was in the office. Frosted glass globes on the walls between the windows emanated a light that was brighter than she normally saw when oil, kerosene or candle lighting was used.

“Oh, Grandma—I mean Madam Woodrow—how bright it is in here with the gas lights. It is almost like daytime!!”²⁶

Audora ignored Abbi and spoke to Desmond first. “That will be fine, Desmond. I will probably be done in about 15 minutes. Please hold the carriage to take us home as soon as we're done.”

“Yes, Ma'am,” said Desmond, and withdrew. He would spend the next fifteen minutes downstairs chatting with the attendant at the entrance, and checking now and then on the horses outside.

And now to Abbi: “You've seen gas lighting before, Abbi. I have it at my mansion. You may have seen gas lighting often without realizing it. City buildings may have it, if they are within reach of underground pipes from a gasworks company. Take off your coat and have a seat Abbi, while I finish up a few business matters here ...”

Audora turned her attention back to what she was working at on her desk. Abbi took off her coat, scarf and hat, put them on the sofa there, and sat down in a chair.

²⁶ Lighting from coal gas emerged in the mid 1800's; but only in urban areas. Companies, called 'gas works' sprung up to make and distribute the gas. By the mid 1800's there were a thousand gas works in Britain and North America was not far behind. If you lived in a city, you were likely to be able to obtain gas for lighting, cooking, and even heating. In rural areas you would likely still be using kerosene, oil or candles. One of the impacts of gas lighting was it allowed factories to operate even after dark. In this instance Audora is working after dark.

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Besides being bright, the office was also warm. This building had central heating. Heat poured from numerous radiators under the windows. After sitting on the wooden seats of the train, Abbi was pleased the chair was cushioned. She yawned. She felt weary.

“How tedious it is to be on trains all day,” she said. “I’m pleased it is over and I can experience a change of scenery. I can’t wait for us to get home, Grandm...I mean, Madam Woodrow.”

Audora did not say anything, but continued what she was doing at the desk. It must be very important, Abbi thought. She was reading something, and making notes. Abbi wondered what important business work she was doing, but did not dare to ask. She noted that there had been no big “welcome” from Audora, nor any desire to hug her, even though they had not seen each other in seven months. It seemed ominous. But it also seemed normal, since throughout the years she had never treated her with any warmth like her adoptive Papa and Mama had. It now seemed she only saw her as a responsibility and not much more.

“I can’t believe how light it is in here,” Abbi repeated. “Perhaps it’s because you have more lights going on in here than I have seen elsewhere.”

Audora spoke, without looking up from what she was doing. “Did you have a good trip? You didn’t get into any difficulty? As I said, you’ll have to be patient Abbi, while I finish up with a few things. . . I trust Mrs. Loggerman and her sisters are all fine too? All is proceeding nicely up there with their arranging to move?”

“Yes, Mr. and Mrs. Loggerman are so happy to be moving out of the wilderness. The wilderness is not the place to raise six girls, Mrs. Loggerman always said. Had they been all boys, it would have been a different story. I was unhappy Mr. Morton couldn’t come to do the inventory until after Christmas, so I couldn’t be here for Christmas; but Christmas turned out to be happy with the Loggermans, on account of Mrs. Loggerman’s sisters getting together there. I listened to them talk about old times when they were little and all lived in that area. They also talked about how you lived near there for two years with your husband, and how my Papa—I mean Bradden—

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was a little boy. I can imagine it would be romantic to live there when you've just married and have just one baby."

Without looking up, Audora continued: "Yes, Stanley's father started out procuring lumber to send to England, and then masts and wood for shipbuilding in Saint John, and his son—that is Stanley, my late husband—thought of starting something on his own. A sawmill was a good idea since his father's company was a ready-made customer. We partnered with a logging man, Harry Koski, Mrs. Loggerman's father, because he was a seasoned veteran logger and sawmill worker. Stanley had business skills, the money to finance the operation, and his father as a prime customer. It was a good partnership. But then after two years, Stanley's father died and we had to go back to Saint John to take over the main business, this one I now head, over from his father, and we settled in at Tall Pines ... Yes I was up there for two years with Stanley. You don't think I would send you somewhere that I did not once find an adventure myself, do you?"

"I suppose you know me better than I thought. Being with the Loggermans was an adventure, when I think back on it, in spite of the chores, Grandma—I mean Madam Audora."

"Believe me, children will envy you when you tell of your adventures in the wilderness."

Audora shuffled papers on her desk, took out a large book and a quill. She dipped the quill into an inkwell and wrote some numbers in the book.

"I expect there has been no new news about Papa," said Abbi, "—I mean my adoptive Papa, I mean Bradden. They have still not found anything more? It's close to a year since he fell into the river."

"No they haven't, I'm afraid."

"Well I will hold a glimmer of hope he is alive until it is known for sure," Abbi replied. "I find the term 'glimmer of hope' very inspiring. It's like keeping a little candle going."

Abbi sat, stretched her legs, looked around the office. She yawned once again. "I napped a little on the train, but I'm so sleepy from not having had much to do. I can't wait to do something." She noticed there was a clock on a shelf that went 'tick, tick, tick, tick'. On the wall above the clock was a framed picture. It looked like a picture of Queen

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Victoria²⁷.

“Is that a photograph of Queen Victoria? I think I’ve seen it before when I was here before I went with Mrs. Loggerman, but did not have a chance to study it.”



‘Queen Victoria’, *Canadian Illustrated News*, April 8, 1871, - vol III, no.14, p.209 (NLC-3865)

“It is a copy of the photograph that appeared on the cover of *Canadian Illustrated News* some years ago. I contacted the publication to find the photographic origins of it and had a large photograph made had it framed and put it up on the wall.”

“I know *Canadian Illustrated News*. Papa brought it home often. But she looks severe.”

Without looking up Audora replied: “She has to look severe to command respect. When men come in here, I like to remind them that a woman rules the British Empire. It makes it easier for them to accept a woman as a president of a company.”

“That’s a good idea,” she agreed. She surveyed the office some more. “Your office looks almost like a woman’s parlour.”

²⁷ Queen Victoria became Queen of England at age 18 in 1837 and died in 1901. The period has become known as the “Victorian Age”.

21. *Abbi's Fate is Decided*

"Ever since my husband Stanley died and I took it over running the company by myself, I've been trying to make it more feminine, more comfortable for a woman to be and work."

"I think that's a good idea, too," agreed Abbi.

Abbi sat silently and continued to survey the office. Last time she had been here, she hadn't had time to look around. She saw that Audora had some magazines on a table and immediately asked: "Oh, you have magazines! Grandmama Audora, may I look at the magazines while I wait?"

"You may have a look, but don't call me Grandmama now that you know you are adopted. I'm not really your grandmother, just as Jenine is not really your mother. The best way to call me is probably what everyone else calls me, Madam Audora Woodrow."

"I know, Gran-er Madam Woodrow. I was told that my real mother was an Indian from *Gitche Gume*."

"From where?"

"That's the Indian word for Lake Superior."

"Your mother is from Lake Superior? Where did you hear that?"

"Mama—I mean Jenine—told me when she explained I was adopted. She said my Indian mother and her husband lived in the same town, in Littleton, as they; but they died and she and Bradden raised me from three or four months. I spent a lot of time while I was with the Loggers learning all about the Ojibwa language and ways from Papa's—I mean Bradden's—books, because that would be the same language as my mother's."

Audora Woodrow knew that Abbi had in reality been left anonymously at the Littleton church door and as far as she knew Abbi's mother was unknown.

"Well Abbi," said Audora, looking up, "I can't see how Jenine would know. It seems to me that there is a far better chance that your mother was Mikmaq, since Littleton is closest to the Mikmaq communities."

"Mama, I mean Jenine, would not lie ... " Abbi was alarmed.

"Well perhaps she guessed, or thought to say Lake Superior because she thought it would please you. Bradden was so involved with Longfellow's work *The Song*

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of *Hiawatha*, about Lake Superior Indians.”

“But I have learned nothing about the Mikmaq!” exclaimed Abbi. “I know a little about the *Wolastoqiyik* Indians, because they were up there. . .”

“The what Indians?”

“The Maliseet. Their true name is *Wolastoqiyik*. It means ‘People of the Beautiful River’, meaning the Saint John River. Anyway there were three men who worked at the sawmill just some months ago from whom I learned a great deal, and later from Minnie, but nothing about the Mikmaq other than that the word ‘Maliseet’ comes from their word for ‘lazy speakers’ because they didn’t pronounce words as clearly as the Mikmaq did.”

“Abbi, you should not dwell on your Indian origins. In this world, regardless of whether you have Indian origins or not, the way to get ahead in life is to learn the ways of civilization.”

“I know. I have to make my natural father proud too. Jenine told me my father was Pictish, from somewhere around Scotland.”

Audora looked up and almost laughed. “She did, did she? And Pictish?” Audora smiled as Picts were a historical people and there were no such people as Picts this day in age. “Well I suppose it is good to be half Indian rather than full Indian. That helps you learn about the non-Indian ways, the civilized ways, as well. Perhaps Jenine was wise to tell you that.” She returned to her writing.

Audora, of course, knew that Abbi was a foundling, and her parents were actually unknown. Everyone had always assumed from Abbi’s appearance that she had at least one Indian parent, so Audora understood what her daughter-in-law had done – make up some parents and background to give Abbi something that would be more inspiring than being told her parents were unknown. Now Audora thought she would not undermine what Jenine had done, other than to discourage any obsession with the Indian side which she did not see having any practical value in this society.

“His name was Irwin Pictford,” continued Abbi, “and my mother’s name was Paula Pictford. I’m certain that Mama, I mean Jenine, knew that Paula Pictford was Ojibwa. She seemed to be sure. And she would have learned it from Papa, I mean Bradden, who knew a great deal about

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Indians from what he learned at Harvard before he studied to become an engineer. I would like to ask Jenine to remember more.”

“She is currently not all that well,” replied Audora, continuing to write. “It may be best to leave the matter for a later time when she is better.”

Abbi already knew it from a letter from Mark, but said nothing. She didn't want to imagine that Jenine might not be the same person she was when she last saw her.

“Oh, you have some magazines on the small table over there, Gra-Madam Audora! May I look at some?”

“Certainly, but put them back in an orderly fashion when you are done.”

Abbi ran over to grab some magazines and then back to the chair. She began to turn the pages on the top one.

“You have some American magazines. I've never seen these before. This magazine, called *Atlantic Monthly* has no pictures, but I'm sure the literature in it is fine. Here is a poem entitled *The Beautiful Woman's Wish*.²⁸ Although I'm far from beautiful I'm curious what a beautiful woman would wish for. It is written by Charlotte F. Bates. I've never heard of her, although I think Charlotte is a very pretty name. ‘*Thou strokest back my heavy hair . . . With smothered praises in thy touch, . . . Thy long, proud look doth call me fair. . . Before thy lips have vowed me such. . . And when between each long caress. . . Thou gazest at me held apart, . . . And with impulsive tenderness. . . Refoldest closer to thy heart, . . . Over love's deep, within eyes. . .*’”

Audora interrupted. “You're far too young to read such material. You're only nine. Read something else!”

“You're right, Madam Audora. Some of the lines are a little difficult. I'd have to read this poem over and over many times before I properly understand it.” Abbi put aside *Atlantic Monthly*, and looked at another magazine. “Oh, I like this one. *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. It has more pictures. I like it when there are pictures to look at to supplement the text. I learned the word ‘supplement’ just recently. It means ‘to add to.’”

Abbi proceeded to browse through *Harper's Monthly*.

“There are many pictures in here,” she said. “But these

²⁸ We used an actual poem in the stated magazine.

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pictures look pen-drawn. They are not as good as pictures in *Canadian Illustrated News* that look more like photographs.”

“That’s because *Canadian Illustrated News* was the first magazine in the world to print photographs in a new way invented by their engraver, William Leggo, known as photo-engraving by a chemical process from photographs. In simple language, it shows greys as smooth areas, not as hatchings of black.”



“I have always adored *Canadian Illustrated News*, Madam Audora, ever since I was little. My Papa, I mean Bradden, brought home *Canadian Illustrated News* regularly. I liked the pictures immensely. I couldn’t wait for Papa to bring a copy home when we lived in Littleton. But alas, I haven’t seen any issues of *Canadian Illustrated News* ever since I went with Mrs. Loggerman. You see, the Loggermans didn’t read. Only their handyman Jeffrey did; but he mostly read books. He also got the Fredericton newspaper whenever he could, and I often read it in the outhouse. Do you have copies of *Canadian Illustrated News*?”

“The back issues of *Canadian Illustrated News* are in that glass cabinet. But they are in order. Whatever you take, I will have you return them in their proper order.”

“I only want to see recent issues, to see what has been happening in the world recently. I’ll keep them in order.”

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She went to the cabinet and took out a number of copies. Then she sat down and with the pile in her lap, began to browse them. The first issue she looked at happened to be completely fresh – the January 23 issue of 1875. “Fancy costumes for children!” exclaimed Abbi. “Here is a picture which shows children in fancy costumes of different sorts. I wonder what they are dressed up as, and what they’re dressed for. It must be for some affair in Montreal. Children don’t go to fancy balls, hereabouts, do they?”



FANCY COSTUMES FOR CHILDREN.

'Fancy Costumes for Children', *Canadian Illustrated News*, Jan 23, 1875
vol.XI, no. 4, 53 (NLC-1746)

“Carnivals”, said Audora, without stopping what she was doing. “People dress in costumes for winter carnivals, and there are often children there.”

“I once saw a cover showing a winter carnival and in the middle there were, Papa said, two actors celebrating the marriage of Princess Louise and a man named John Campbell, who is formally called Marquis of Lorne. I begged Papa to let me have the picture, and he put it in a frame for my wall. The text said it was held at a big rink in Montreal. They have winter carnivals there all the time.”

“There has been one in Saint John, and our community

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at Richdale came together a few years ago and started an annual carnival too at our Richdale Exhibition Hall which in winter is a rink.”

“Yes I know that Richdale²⁹ has all the wealthy people, and they make sure their community has everything new and important like their own theatre. I have learned that working people live inside cities because they have no carriages, but wealthy people like you live away from the city in nicer, more spacious, places, since they have carriages to take them everywhere. I think it would take more than an hour to walk from Richdale to Saint John, instead of only 15 minutes by carriage.”

“Yes that is one of the privileges of being wealthy. And you are right. We are able to create our own cultural institutions on our main street. We have both an Exhibition Hall that becomes a rink in winter, and our own theatre called Richdale Royal Theatre, that we’re proud of. That’s what you can do when you are rich, Abbi. We have a Richdale Winter Carnival that we started just a couple winters ago. It was inspired by one held in Saint John. In fact there was coverage of the second Saint John Winter Carnival in *Canadian Illustrated News* a couple years ago. I remember because I happened to attend. We are right now within Saint John, and the company has many customers here. When we go home to Tall Pines, we leave Saint John and in about 15 minutes, as you just mentioned, we enter Richdale.”

“Did you really attend one reported in the magazine, Audora? I must find that issue!”

Abbi went to the glass case with the magazines and looked for the issue with the Saint John carnival picture in it. “Here is March 15, 1873. I’ll see if it’s in this one.”

Abbi sat down again, and flipped through the magazine. “This must be it. There is an illustration. The caption reads ‘*St. John, N. B. - The Fancy Dress Entertainment at the Skating Rink on the 19th Ult. - from a sketch by E.J.B.*’”

She studied the illustration, and continued: “Everyone skating is in costume. There seems to be spectators looking on and chatting at the side. There is a very tall

²⁹ As noted earlier, ‘Richdale’ is fictional and invented for this story.

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fellow in a white sheet. Nobody can be so tall. Someone either is carrying something on his shoulders with a false face, or is skating on stilts. I wonder what it represents ... Some of these costumes are hard to make out. I see someone dressed as a devil, and this one is probably Robin Hood, and here is a jockey, and an Indian. I wonder if there are children at this event. There are a few short people in the picture.”



ST. JOHN, N.B.—THE FANCY DRESS ENTERTAINMENT AT THE SKATING RINK ON THE 19TH ULT.—FROM A SKETCH BY E. J. R.

“The Fancy Dress Entertainment at the Skating Rink on the 19th Ult [St. John, N.B.], Canadian Illustrated News, March 15, 1873; vol. VII, no. 11, 164 (NLC-3146)

Abbi looked up with a thought: “Wouldn’t it be marvelous if you were in the picture, Audora? What was your costume, Audora?”

Audora glanced at it as Abbi held it open. “No, I didn’t wear a costume or skates. I was among the spectators at the sides. In many such affairs the idea for me is to make an appearance as President of the Woodrow Timber Company, to socialize with presidents of other companies, not to enjoy myself or make a spectacle of myself. Although . . . when my husband was alive, we two made quite a skating couple at every skating event, and then it was enjoyable. We even won a couple of competitions.”

“You did, Grandmama, I mean Madam Audora? I can

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imagine it to be the most romantic of experiences – to skate hand in hand with your beloved!”

Audora replied wryly: “I was once not quite the business ogre that I am today. And I still put on skates and costume for the annual Richdale carnival I just spoke about. I can’t let the other women of the Richdale Women’s Charitable Society to which I belong and who sponsor the event get the better of me. You see, Abbi, although I operate in a man’s business world, I like to remind women I have not ceased to be a woman, but rather that *they* are lacking in not living up to their full potential.”

“I must find where in this magazine it describes the picture,” Abbi continued. “Here it is on the previous page 163. I’ll read it to you Madam Audora. Perhaps it will bring back memories for you. I will not read everything, just the important moments: *The second fancy dress entertainment at St. John took place on the 19th at the Rink . . . Let’s see . . . Music was furnished by the 62nd band by getting up sets of quadrilles. . . . The beautiful figures and mazes of the dance are so beautiful at any time as when well performed by good skaters to the music of a good band – Oh Audora, I can just imagine how wonderful it is to be performing a dance on skates instead of on ordinary feet! Now it tells something about the costumes: *Many of the costumes were striking on account of their oddity, others were conspicuous through their extreme gracefulness. Prominent among the gentlemen was the ‘Clown’, whose skating and acting were alike inimitable making him the observed of all observers, at least as far as the members of the male persuasion were concerned. ‘Ivanhoe’ was there, but the coat of mail enclosed a different form, or else he who wore it on the former occasion had somewhat improved the character of his skating in the interval. Conspicuous for height, if not for duplicity, was the wearer of the ‘Pepper’s ghost’ costume— That must be the tall costume in the picture, Audora—The acting of ‘Mother Goose’s son Jack’ accorded well with the assumed character. ‘Beautiful Snow’ was extensively patronized by ‘Jack Frost’, ‘Snow King’, ‘Alaska’ and others. There were two ‘Perfect Cures’ on the ice, but neither of them seemed ever to be at hand when one would naturally**

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suppose they were most needed by the unfortunates who lost their equilibrium and furnished food for merriment to the spectators by coming down on the ice. Do you remember that, Madam Audora? Skaters falling down on the ice?"

"Well, not everyone with skates were expert skaters. I dare say it would be better not to put on skates if you don't know how to skate, rather than falling and being laughed at, especially if you are an important person who requires preservation of his or her dignity."

"The article continues to name some of the women's costumes. Let me see. There was 'Maud Miller', 'Little Red Riding Hood', 'Tambourine Girl', and it continues: *The impersonation of 'New Brunswick' would have been interesting from patriotic considerations even if her neatness and grace had not rendered her attractive on her own account. 'Beautiful Snow' had its feminine as well as masculine patrons, the most notable being 'Winter' and 'Snow Queen'*—'Snow Queen'! I can just imagine how that costume might have looked – perhaps with lots of lace resembling snowflakes. 'Night' was there as before, though perhaps a little less conspicuous. 'Liberty' draped with stars and stripes, was a beautiful figure; and even more so was the childish 'Bride', clad in a costume white as the driven snow. At eleven o'clock the band commenced to play 'God Save the Queen' which was the signal for departure, and in a few minutes the ice was cleared Oh, Madam Audora, I would love to just once attend such a carnival!"

Audora had returned to her writing and didn't respond. Abbi became even more engrossed in browsing the magazines. She was happy that the gas lighting was so nice and bright to make reading easy.

Soon, because Abbi now seemed to be too quiet, too absorbed in the magazines, Audora felt it was time to gather some information about Abbi and her view of things. "You're not unhappy to have been with Mrs. Loggerman?" she asked as she put the large book she had been writing in aside and took out something else.

"No," said Abbi, continuing to flip through the magazine, "It was wonderful when I was free from the chores. I walked along the ridge, I picked berries. I had a sweat

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lodge . . .”

“A what?”

“That’s an Indian custom. It’s where you sit in a hot place, and sweat, and then run out and jump in the water.”

“You had many good experiences?”

“I did a fast, and Mrs. Loggerman helped me make an Indian dress, and I waited for a vision, but on the second night there was a thunder storm and the wigwam blew away. But I had results, and now I know my purpose in life – I’m supposed to follow in my Papa’s, I mean Bradden’s, footsteps – not his railway work but what he did at home in his study like literature. I also studied about Indians from two of his books which I took to the Loggermans’ with me. I learned some Ojibwa words – ‘Ojibwa’ is the correct word rather than ‘Chippewa’ that some say – and then met some *Wolastoqiyik* – that’s the better name for the Maliseet, like I said earlier – men who called me *Mihkusis* which means ‘Little Squirrel’ because I chatter a lot; and I learned some *Wolastoqiyik* words, and in the summer I actually met a *Wolastoqiyik* Indian Princess whose name is *Saqteminimisis* which means ‘Little Blackberry’ and her English name is ‘Minnie’. She is Chief Jack’s daughter. She visited while Jack’s clan were at their hunting camp, and we looked at things, such as the sign I made at the beaver dam. The Prime Minister of Canada gave me authority to designate the beaver pond as a protected area. I also tried to write a poem from a Glooscap story, in the same way that Papa—I mean Bradden—wrote some poetry in the Hiawatha meter. I found a copy of a letter Bradden wrote to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and I thought to write to him to inform him that Bradden had fallen into the Mighty Saint John River and has not been found. He wrote back and expressed his sympathy towards Bradden’s accident and gave me good advice about writing poetry, since I sent him my poem about Glooscap. . . .”

Madam Audora showed surprise. “You exchanged letters with Henry Wadsworth Longfellow?”

“Yes, Madam Audora.”

Abbi just happened to be flipping through *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, and almost leapt when she saw: “Look Gran—Madam Audora! Here is a picture of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in *Harpers New Monthly Magazine!*

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He is rather old these days. The picture shows his hair is all white.”

Audora looked, then turned back to her work. “He’d be 69 I estimate,” she said, reflectively.

Abbi continued: “The article is not about him but generally about a place called ‘Cambridge on the Charles’ That must be the Cambridge near Boston where Professor Longfellow lives. And look at the bottom is a picture of his residence. Papa once told me he was once there and chatted with him before he came home from university.”

Then Abbi looked at the picture on the next page: “Oh here on the next page is a picture of Longfellow in his study!”



'Longfellow's Study' Harper's New Monthly Magazine - pg 205 - 1875

She studied the picture very carefully trying to draw every bit of information out of it she could. “It looks like a

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very creative study just like Papa's, I mean my adoptive Papa's, except Papa's was not as large. His desk or table is all covered with books and things. Papa's had Amik – his stuffed beaver to inspire him when he worked.”

She recalled all those times when she was growing up in Littleton when she visited Bradden in his study. The stuffed beaver was always on his desk watching everything like a sentry. He had had it since a boy, and was so familiar with it he even talked to it when he needed to think out loud.

“I wonder,” she continued, “if Mr. Longfellow has something to inspire him on his desk. It is hard to make out what is there. He has a nice fireplace, so he can feel nice and warm while working. In this picture he looks deep in thought. Do you think Madam Audora that maybe he is thinking about the letter I sent him? Maybe my letter is somewhere on the table. Although the picture is etched by artists for the magazine, I expect it is done from a photograph, isn't it? Therefore maybe it really was on that desk somewhere when the original photograph was taken.”

Audora looked up and was reflective. “I was a fan of Mr. Longfellow once. He wrote the poem *Evangeline*, about the hardships of Acadians . . . You see my grandmother was of Acadian origins.”

“Are you partly French, Madam Audora?”

“Everyone whose ancestors settled here in the Americas, is partly a lot of things – partly French, partly Scottish, partly Irish, partly English, and many other things. After the immigrants came here, they all married one another.”

“Jenine's mother was Acadian too. That's how I and the children know a little Acadian.”

“I knew a little Acadian,” replied Audora, “but after marrying Stanley there was no further use for it in my life. New Brunswick is today governed by the English language. We now reside in the Dominion of Canada which is in the British Commonwealth. Here we are also closely associated with the New England states in culture and business. All business here is conducted in English. We are not in France. What use is there for French here? – other than to show off yourself as an educated person – if you studied proper Parisian French in a university like

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Bradden did. There is no status or practical value in speaking Acadian in my world.”

“Mama, I mean Jenine, told me that Acadians came first and married Indians and perhaps many Acadians are part Indian. Acadian women must have found Indian men very handsome. Perhaps you are partly Indian too, Madam Audora?”

“If so it is a very small fraction, going back along one of the branches. And by the same token, Indians living near settlers, are getting European ancestors. One day there will be no pureblooded Indians left, and no settlers who do not have Indian blood—other than newer immigrants.”

“I found Indian customs useful, Madam Audora. I had a fast, like I said. All I had to guide me was what I read in Papa’s legend book by Mr. Henry Schoolcraft which I took with me. It is a custom where a young person stays by themselves in an enchanted place, without eating, in order to receive a vision or dream that reveals what their purpose is in life. I learned that my purpose in life is to continue what Papa, I mean Bradden, was doing. I want to go to university like him, and learn all about literature, writing poetry, and about Indian legends and ways. Perhaps I will be a professor.”

Madam Audora shook her head. “Don’t get your hopes up, Abbi. You will find it very difficult to be both an Indian and a woman in this world. If you set your sights too high, you will be very disappointed.”

“My vision said that I should not forget the stuffed beaver. Do you still have it?”

“Yes. In fact it is over there in that glass cupboard. I don’t know what else to do with it, besides put it with all the other things from Bradden’s youth. I brought it here because I thought to donate it to a museum or school so students can see what a beaver looks like; but it’s getting old and worn with time. Bradden had it since childhood.”

Abbi hadn’t noticed it earlier, as it was in another cabinet with glass doors. It almost filled the entire space like a museum exhibit behind glass. She leapt from the chair and ran to it, and studied it through the glass. “Can I have it, Madam Audora? It would mean so much to me to have it.”

“We have other things to deal with first, before we

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discuss such things. I trust you did not spend all your time doing a fast, or whatever else you contrived to do when by yourself. Did you go to school? Yes, I believe you did, as I recall from correspondence.”

Abbi returned to the chair.

“Yes, Madam Audora. But the school was just a log cabin. And there were only wooden benches, and slates, and the books were only those the teacher had. His name was Mr. Turbot. He was very nice, and helpful. The school was three miles away and I had to miss an hour every morning since it took an hour to reach it, and I couldn’t leave until Mrs. Loggerman’s little girls were fed.”

“Well it is good to hear you continued with school just fine.”

“I must continue with school now, Madam Audora. It’s winter. There is school going on right now. I want to continue in school.”

“Well, Abbi, let me finish what I am doing, and we’ll discuss it afterward in just a few moments.” She turned back to writing in the large book.

“Alright,” said Abbi, “I will continue looking at your magazines.”

She selected yet another magazine from the small pile she had fetched. “Oh, Madam Audora, you also have ‘*Scientific American*’. I’m glad it has pictures too.”

She turned the pages of *Scientific American*. “I like science. . Here in the July 3, 1869 edition is an article about an improvement to a horse’s bridle. . . It begins ‘*Anything that renders the horse more docile, or what is still more important, tends to instruct the public in common sense and humane treatment of that noble animal, is worthy the consideration of all intelligent men. . .*’ . . I think that is right, Madam Audora. I think the horse is a very noble animal. I like to talk to them and stroke them whenever I can, to thank them for taking me from one place to another.”

“Indeed,” replied Audora as she worked, “What would humanity do without the horse today.”

BROOKWELL OVERDRAW AND COMPRESSER SET.

Anything that tends to render the horse more docile, or what is still more important, tends to instruct the public in common sense and humane treatment of that noble animal is worthy the consideration of all intelligent men. The inventor

Fig. A



of the improvement we are about to describe, A. H. Brookwell, Harpersville, Oneida Co., N. Y., is well known to the public through his work on horse training and personal skill in instructing the horse. The improvement is designed to take



Fig. B

the place of the Yankee bridle with its double strap bit, patented by the same inventor December 1, 1867, and the double ring bit he patented December 12, 1867, and the further improvements described in this sketch are now pending. It was considered by the inventor to be a greater advance on the Yankee bridle than was ever the ordinary bridle in breaking and instructing the horse.

Fig. D



The principle of this improvement will be understood by reference to Fig. A. The mode of applying the bridle and bit to the training of horses will be understood by referring to the other engravings and their explanations. Fig. A represents a shackle bridle, with a retracting and compressing device. The chief advantage which this bridle has over other bridle horses is owing to the remarkable results which follow the application of the overdraw and compressor bit in their various uses. The overdraw is formed of two round straps, with a buckle and roller as represented by a at the left of the figure, extending in the two loops at the other ends, a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, z.

of the figure. Each of the straps, when buckled, is to be fastened to a light sliding loop, c, one above the other. This loop should be attached between the two straps so as to work steadily. A sliding bush is provided by situated in each strap, above the loop. The compressor is a joint bit of the usual form, except that the sliding loop, with the two sliding bars, a and d. The figure represents two modes of attaching these sliding bars, which are hereafter explained.

The bridle is formed of a crown piece and throat latch composed of leather, lined over the head with patent leather. Two loops are placed on top of the crown piece, three inches apart, at the fore part to be of the usual length; corners may be added to suit heavy throat latch and small length. The technique of the overdraw and the buckle are put through the loops on the crown piece, from front to back, the rest of the overdraw coming down over the face and being attached to the neck strap. It is attached in various ways, according to the use desired to be attained; but for the ordinary purposes of a riding or driving bridle, it is buckled to the ring of the bit. The remainder of the bridle consists of an ordinary driving line buckled to the ring of the bit, and an ordinary check rein, buckled to the ring of the bit, and the sliding bar, passing through the loop of the bit, and secured at a through a split ring, on the driving line.

Two inches further back than the length of the check reins, there is instead a strap about four inches in length, which doubled (f) arranged in the center as the first part of a check rein, opposite of the bit, which strap is connected with a ring on the end of the check rein.

This is put on as just described, with the addition of a martingale, when the horse carries his head too high and his nose too high. This illustration, figure B, exhibits a horse bridle ready for mounting, and figure C shows the horse mounted and lines drawn up. These two illustrations have the overdraw buckled to the sliding bar, as shown by the letter d, Fig. A. This is proper when the horse pulls too hard or refuses to ride; but ordinarily it should be attached as shown by Figs. D and E.

There is no change from the bridle as applied to a saddle horse (when an open field is desired), except the mode of attaching the check reins to the driving line, as the adjustable buckle on the check reins will let the mouth and avoid the necessity for a check piece.

The driving line being usually rounded, a strap is made to lay around—draw as lightly that it cannot slip—the place where the check rein is attached to the main driving line, as hereafter described. The overdraw may be at-

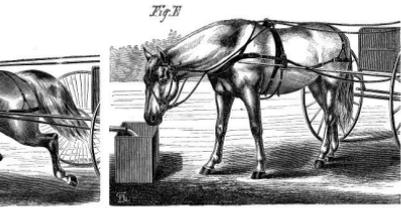
tempted to be used, if desired, by fastening the lines to the bridle, as the bridle is shown in the accompanying drawing with the overdraw and bit will travel more easily to the left and longer than by the use of any other contrivance known. If the horse is a head puller, the overdraw is attached to the sliding bar independent of the bit straps, as in Figs. B and C. This contrivance opens the check which soon opens the line to be more pliable. If the bridle is attached to the end of the overdraw on the side toward which the horse is to be led in the intended driving line, leaving the other attached to the crown piece, the overdraw, up or down, the effectiveness of these appliances, is increased or lessened when opening upon the sliding bar instead from the check rein and the ring of the bit. These corners let lead lower than the main, and it is desired to raise him to raise it, the overdraw is applied to the common bridle, in line of the usual gear runner. If a cutting horse shows his head down while spurring, use the overdraw and check high. If the driver wishes to force without a check-rein, and waste the advantage of the compressor bit, he makes what is called a half-overdraw, by fastening a short overdraw to the lead piece, instead of passing it through the loops, then, by sliding the front loop up or down, he can regulate its firmness, covering the mouth in the main overdraw, as through a split ring, on the driving line. This arrangement will do by the use of a reasonable

Fig. C



degree of judgment. We have seen to explain here only one point of the benefits to be derived from the use of these improvements. A careful study of their application will, by a fair exercise of judgment and common sense, prove invaluable to those interested in the improvement and in the education of the horse. Patents for additional improvements are now pending

Fig. B



through the other. The check rein is worn on a belt or in a pocket in the New England States, but orders addressed to him, at Harpersville, N. Y., as above, will receive attention. We have that a considerable quantity of the same had been made, and has been done since this year in the collection of the sugar beet, and that a company is in process of formation to engage in the manufacture of beet sugar in that town.

An enterprising Chinese firm has established a publishing house and type foundry at Shanghai.

Scientific American, page 4, July 1869

“What exciting things are happening in this world today, Madam Audora! Photographs are an amazing development. I really like photographs like the one on your wall showing Queen Victoria. Photographs look very realistic, except they are all in blacks and greys. . . With photographs you can now make pictures as real as life without any artist needing to paint them. . . But they’re not in colour. You still need an artist for color pictures—except that I once saw a hand-coloured photograph. It looked so real.” She paused as she turned more pages, and then continued: “And telegraphy is a wonderful thing these days too.

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Wherever there are railway tracks there are telegraph lines, and everyone can send telegraphs wherever there is a railway station, and, in the cities, many other places.”

“Indeed, newspapers and police these days use telegraphy regularly,” said Audora not looking up. “They can learn about things instantaneously whereas a letter may take some days.”

“Train stations need telegraphy to regulate the timing of trains. That’s what Papa explained once. The messages go through the wires that run along the train tracks. I predict that someday there will be wires to every house, and we will be able to telegraph each other whenever we want, without any need for letters. When that happens I wouldn’t mind where I lived, because then I could telegraph my friends whenever I wanted. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if every house could have a telegraph machine³⁰?”

“Well, if you invent such a household convenience,” remarked Audora wryly, as she shuffled papers, “let me know. I might buy it from you.”

“No. I’m not an inventor. I just like to imagine things. That’s easy. Making them come true is not easy at all. In fact it is very difficult. You can imagine things till you are blue in the face and they won’t come about for real. So I accept what Fate decrees. ‘What Fate decrees’ – isn’t that an interesting phrase?”

“Well, Abbi, we are not all such victims of fate. Some humans have more power ‘decreeing’ our fates than you think. It all depends on how much power you have.”

“I guess you’re right. You read in books about emperors ‘decreeing’ that this or that shall be done throughout the land. You never read about a poor farmer’ decreeing’ anything, except maybe ‘decreeing’ that his children must eat their vegetables at supper.”

Abbi stretched her face when she pronounced the word “decreeing”. It was not an easy word to say with a normal face because of the long EE sound.

Abbi continued to turn magazine pages. Audora Woodrow continued to write things into her large book.

³⁰ Neither Aurora nor Abbi would have known about the telephone, because Alexander Graham Bell did not demonstrate it till later in 1876; so she thought in terms of telegraphy

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The clock went "tick-tock". Abbi was getting a little tired of browsing the magazines. Her boots were pinching her so she undid the laces, stretched out her legs and let them drop off. Once off, she pulled off her socks too, and dropped them to on the floor. She had worn long warm woolen socks reaching to her knee instead of stockings. They were easy to pull off. She had hardly ever worn stockings when she had been at the Loggermans, as stockings were too fancy and got holes easily. when the weather was cold, she preferred long bloomers reaching down almost to her knees and long socks reaching up to her knees.

With boots and socks on the floor, she put the magazine onto the chair and walked around on the Persian rug on the floor rubbing her toes in it indulgently. How good it felt!

"Oh what a beautiful Persian rug, Madam Audora! I can just imagine all the work that went into making it. I can imagine the Persian women, seated in front of a loom, making it. Your office is so cosmopolitan, Madam Woodrow, for having things from foreign countries in it. I heard the word 'cosmopolitan' means something that belongs to the whole 'cosmos' "

Audora finally looked up to see what Abbi was doing. "What are you doing with your boots and socks off!"

"They have been on my feet ever since I left Pinewood. I have not had a chance to take them off. Also I wanted to feel the carpet between my toes."

"Put your boots and socks back on! This office is not the wilderness where you can take your boots off and walk around like the wild animals! You'll be free of them in but a half hour when we arrive at my home."

"But haven't you ever walked barefoot on your carpets? It is one of the greatest sensations a human can experience, next to walking barefoot in grass."

Audora Woodrow looked back down and continued her work. She repeated: "This floor is not a lawn. Put your boots and socks back on!"

Abbi sat back in the chair and put her boots and socks back on.

"Madam Audora, when will I be able to see my former brothers, sister, and my former Mama? Will I see them

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when we go home? I have been dying to see them again.”

“The priority at the moment is what we shall do with you next. You have to realize that, on account of Bradden’s disappearance, the family situation you knew in Fredericton or Littleton is no more. I suppose you will be able to see the littlest two as we figure out what is next for you. I have a nurse-governess looking after them. However, Mark and Jimmy are at school 25 miles away during the week in a private school. They are there right now and not at home. Jenine, although better, may not take seeing you very well. The doctor says it is because of her husband’s falling from the bridge into the Saint John and not being found. It is the lack of closure and the stress of keeping up hope. In her mind you are with Bradden on one of your ‘adventures’. If she sees you she will wonder where Bradden is, and ask you many questions, and then being reminded of the truth. She has to get a little better.”

“Mark said that it is because she wasn’t able to do what she did before.”

“He did, did he? When did you communicate with Mark?”

“He wrote me a letter.”

“Well I am more likely to believe what the doctor thinks rather than a 7 year old boy. The doctor says that she is in denial about the accident and that it is a manner of coping. Perhaps she would have done better returning to be with her sister, but her sister is gone out west somewhere with her family, Lord knows where. The new railways are taking many people like them west to seek opportunities there.”

“I think they’re in Windsor.”

Finally, Audora Woodrow put her quill down and seemed to be done. She tidied her desktop, clasped her hands and looked up at Abbi. Nine-year-old Abbi, almost 10, was now steeling herself for the worst. Was she now to go to another woman with lots of household chores? She knew that Audora viewed her in another way than her son’s and Jenine’s children because she was an Indian orphan. To Abbi it seemed she really didn’t want her with the others. What was next for her?

“Well I have finished the work I was doing. And now we turn our attention to your predicament. Here is my

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problem, Abbi: Even though you are an orphan and not kin, you have been raised by my son, Bradden, to become so much like him, who after a full year we can no longer act as if he is returning. He must have had a great influence over you. You can defy me, and go your own way, in spite of my wishes, as he could. And I know it will just become worse and worse as you grow up if you and I are together too much. And both you and I will become unhappy. You will like to fly away into nature, and take your shoes off, and whirl around in your adventures. And now that you know you are Indian, I can't even imagine what you will do in that regard – have your fasts and seek visions and whatnot in our back yard? You will not feel at home in my world of orderliness, decorum, discipline, and businesslike manner, just as my son didn't. I will not make the same mistake with my grandsons Mark and Jimmy as I did with Bradden— to send them far away where I can't keep an eye on them. At least here at the local private school I can keep an eye on them. They come home every second weekend.”

She was still bitter about how her son had disappointed her by not taking over the company like his father had taken over his fathers', but pursuing a career in railways instead.

She continued: “And I suppose Jenine too, a country woman, was out of place when she moved into my world. Mark may be right in what he wrote to you. She may need to be in the country. As for you, I think, as I said, Abbi, you have so much independence of thought that you are un moldable. You will be what you will be, no matter what anyone tries with you.”

Abbi did not know whether that was a compliment or criticism.

Audora continued: “Returning to the circumstances relating to Jenine: as I have explained, your former adoptive mother doesn't do much anything. She just lies about or sits and looks into space. I pay for a nurse to attend to her and a doctor who comes every week to help her cope. The doctor says she will probably come out of it in time. In any event, as I said, there is no point in you seeing her because your presence may stir memories that will be upsetting. How can one predict what will happen? It

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is very delicate. I'd want to consult with the doctor on such matters. Therefore, circumstances being as they are, the duty of dealing with you now falls entirely on my shoulders, as the only adult who has some sort of continued responsibility for you, the Indian orphan my son and Jenine adopted years ago in Littleton. As I was saying, I fear that if you were to stay with me, without being able to walk barefoot in the grass, and everything else, you may go mad like Jenine. Not that Jenine is really mad—it is better regarded as illness. Or else I will go mad. And you. You don't want to go mad, do you?"

"No ..." replied Abbi, "although I can imagine myself going mad in a romantic-tragic way like Ophelia in Shakespeare's play 'Hamlet'."

"You're confusing me, Abbi," said Audora with a tone of exasperation. "with your unexpected references. You are making it difficult for me to concentrate."

"I'm sorry Madam Audora."

"Well, I remain of the opinion that you need another path. You're not suited to live in my world. It is impossible for me to picture you in a fashionable gown, behaving according to the fineness and decorum of high society. What shall I do with a wild child like you? It is clear that what you need is to continue in school and get your basic education for living in this world. Happily through Bradden's attention and teaching you, you have mastered reading and writing and more, at a level beyond your age."

"I have been told that I can read and write as well as a girl of about 13."

"So we have to get you back into school as quickly as possible. The path is clear. First we temporarily get you back into schooling, and then we can consider what the next step should be for you. Perhaps we can find your kin. Perhaps there are Native Indians who would like to adopt you, and then you can continue to learn about being Indian as well. But the question is what is the best for you right at this instant."

"I'd like to get back to school."

"The only problem is that schools for the wealthy around here are all very proper, sophisticated, refined – quite contrary to your nature. So what are we to do?"

"I don't know."

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“Well here is an idea, which will immediately place you back into schooling in the short run, and in the long run assist us to find your best situation. I got the idea this morning, when I received a report about the Richdale Women’s Charitable Society Orphan Home³¹. It is a project of the Richdale Women’s Charitable Society. That is one of the organizations that I am involved in as a member of Richdale society. I believe I mentioned it earlier. I donate lumber and other things to the school programmes. I am sent their annual reports.”

“You want to put me in an orphanage?” asked Abbi in bewilderment.

“As far as orphanages are concerned, this Orphan Home is not like the others. It tries to be a real home for all children living in it, and also be an educational facility, a school. It is situated in an old mansion that one of our business leaders donated, when he purchased new property elsewhere. If you went there, you could continue with school immediately, and be in a homelike environment while we seek the situation most suitable for you. In your case, since you are connected to me from having been my son’s adopted daughter, I will actually pay the Orphan Home for your being there. Thus you will cost them nothing. Anyone in my situation will see it as the perfect solution—for my acting as your sponsor covering your costs, as a combination of charity and responsibility.”

“How long will I have to be there?”

“Until we find that situation that will suit you the best, one like the Loggermans’ but better, with school nearby and if possible some connection with Indian culture.”

“How long will it be before that happens?”

Audora opened up the Orphan Home report again for a

31 Originally homeless children were thrown together in asylums together with babies, mothers, and the aged, purely to give them food and shelter, and menial work. By the mid 1800’s it was recognized that children should be separated from the rest, and provided with a proper homelike environment accompanied by proper education to develop them into decent members of society. The word ‘Orphan Home’ evolved, and these were often built into large regular houses. There was one in Saint John, and one in Halifax in Abbi’s time. Usually they were sponsored by churches. This fictional “Richdale” Orphan Home presented here is portrayed as being sponsored by wealthy matrons of an upper class community.

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look. “Not long. The time children spend there before being adopted is typically less than a year. Perhaps the solution will be found before the end of the school session. I will give them instructions as to what kind of situation and adoptive parents they should find for you.”

“But couldn’t I live with my former family and go to school here?”

“There aren’t any regular schools in Richdale since wealthy people put their children into private schools. But don’t fret. It won’t be very different from a boarding school. Mark and Jimmy are at one right now as I said 25 miles from Tall Pines. They live there; so it will be similar for you.”

So that was her fate—to be sent to an orphanage? But the way Audora put it, it did not seem bad. Something run by wealthy women of Richdale could not be bad. It was something like a boarding school ...? “If everything you say is true, and there is school there ...”

“Well, then it’s settled!”

“When can I see my former family, at least my former little brother and sister?”

“We’ll now return to my mansion with Desmond, who is waiting for us with the carriage downstairs. It is late now, and the two littlest will be in bed. Mark and Jimmy are away in boarding school, as I said, and Jenine will have retired to bed too. So for tonight we want to hasten you to bed to rest up for tomorrow. You will perhaps be able to catch the two littlest in the morning and look in on Jenine without disturbing her. Tomorrow we will put you into school at the Orphan Home. There is a complex admission process, but I am a member of the Richdale Women’s Charitable Society, so I have some power to influence their decision-making. I will send you there tomorrow with a letter from me. A letter is far better than my talking to them personally, because a letter is something they can show to their superiors, a hard document, while direct conversation is just talk-talk-talk. That is why in business we put everything in writing. Just be patient for a few months, Abbi. It will all work out very well. You’ll see.”

“Can I take Amik?”

“What?”

“The stuffed beaver in the glass case. Amik is the

21. *Abbi's Fate is Decided*

Ojibwa word for 'beaver'."

"Oh yes, that. What use would you have for it?"

Abbi was reluctant to reveal how important it was to her now, it having inspired her adoptive Papa in his study, and having appeared in her dream recently while she had her Indian fast or 'vision quest' where a young Indian is alone and fasts so as to obtain a dream or vision showing them their path in life. But Abbi knew Audora would not understand her true relationship to Amik, so she said: "I can use it to teach the class about my experience with beavers. They are endangered because of trapping. There was a beaver pond at the Loggermans. I wrote a letter to Prime Minister MacDonald and he said I could protect the pond from trappers."

Madam Audora almost laughed. "You have been corresponding with the Prime Minister too?"

"Yes, someone wanted to trap the beavers in the nearby marsh, so I wrote to the Prime Minister that beavers should be protected. He wrote back that children like me are right to be concerned about the country they will inherit and that he would talk to the Premier of New Brunswick, and that in the meantime with his letter I could proclaim our beaver pond a sanctuary. I made a sign at the pond forbidding trapping there. I have so much to teach other children, and city children have never seen one, except in pictures. I can show Amik when I tell of my experiences with the real beavers."

"Very well, take it. I expect your story will be well received by children and teach them much about the beaver – which is Canada's national animal symbol. But it will be up to you to take care of it."

"Yes, Madam Audora. Bradden may return soon and want it on his desk again." Abbi smiled as she went to the glass cupboard, opened it, and took out Amik. Being filled with straw shaped by twine, he was light, in spite of being nearly half as tall as she was.

"Now put the magazines away, and put on your coat again while I turn off the gas lighting in here and fetch my coat. Desmond is waiting with the carriage downstairs. We've already probably been more than the 15 minutes I estimate. I trust your baggage is still in the carriage?"

"Yes, Madam Audora."

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Abbi put Amik on the chair, and hastened to put the magazines back. There was nothing more Abbi could add to the situation. Madam Audora was certainly a sharp businesswoman: she knew exactly what she wanted, and how she was going to achieve it. It was hopeless to argue or debate anything with Audora when she had made up her mind what she would do with you. It seemed she had already decided at the beginning, and all the talk was purely to win her over to her way of thinking.

But, with Amik under her arm, Abbi was happy, and she didn't worry herself much about what the future would hold. After all, her vision at her vision quest had revealed that as long as she did not forget Amik, her future was set.



An Unpleasant Start

CHECKING IN

Next day, on this mid-January morning in Richdale, the Woodrow carriage, with hood up to keep out the weather, made its way along the streets, slushy with snow. As it went, Abbi watched the comings and goings on the streets from the carriage window. It amazed Abbi to think that just a day ago she was in the backwoods of New Brunswick, saying her final goodbyes to Mrs. Loggerman, Mr. Loggerman, Mrs. Loggerman's sisters, handyman Jeffrey, her school friend, Mildred, and the Loggerman babies – Sylvia, Gladis, Evergreen, Conifer, Jeffrina and Percina. How rapidly her life could change!



Soon the carriage pulled up in front of the ironwork gate of a large lot containing a large brick building. That's all Abbi could see from the carriage window so far.

"Here you are, Abbi," said Desmond, Madam Woodrow's coachman. He descended to open the door of the carriage for Abbi. Abbi climbed out, her travel bag of belongings in

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one hand, and Amik, the stuffed beaver, under her other arm. Although Amik was still small as far as beaver size was concerned, Amik was large compared to Abbi. Fortunately, because he was only straw and twine inside, he was quite light to carry.

It was a typical early January day – cold, somewhat grey. Steam rose from the bodies of the two horses after the drive from the mansion through the streets of Richdale. Audora had insisted she did not come with her, and had given Abbi an envelope with a letter. Abbi was dressed for winter in her coat, hat, scarf, and mittens. Desmond lifted her additional small trunk off the carriage and put it on the ground. He then said: “I’ve been instructed just to drop you off. You are to simply go up the walk and enter. I’m not to have any discussion with the people. Everything they need to know will be explained to them in the letter in the envelope that Madam Woodrow gave you. Madam Woodrow said that this approach, instead of the normal one –as there is normally a long admission process – would hasten the process of getting you in there. Do you have the envelope?”

Abbi took the letter out of her coat pocket and held it up in her mittened hand, while trying not to drop Amik under her other arm. “Yes, sir, I have it. But I still don’t understand why Madam Audora would not bring me herself.”

“I do not have the answer to such a question, Miss Abbi. Perhaps it is because she is a very busy businesswoman, and has appointments to attend to. I only do as instructed. I will carry your trunk to the front steps, and then you will be on your own. Give them the letter. I have been told to watch you until you enter, and then I will go. There is nothing I can tell them. I don’t even know what is in that letter. Alright, Miss Abbi?”

“Yes, sir.”

Desmond opened the ironwork gate a little and Abbi stepped through. Abbi lingered a moment to take her bearings. A walkway, recently cleared of snow, led to the front door of the building. Desmond went ahead of her with her trunk, and left it on the steps. After he had done so, he came back, encouraged her to proceed, and returned to the carriage, to wait for Abbi to enter the building.

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Abbi cautiously studied the surroundings. The Orphan Home was located in an old larger house, perhaps once a home of a wealthy person, altered for its new purpose as a home for orphans. Abbi could see that there was some yard space around the house and some buildings at back. Judging from the laneway on one side, there was probably a carriage house of some kind back there, perhaps housing a wagon and maybe also a small stable with a couple horses for use by the orphanage; and various sheds, workshops and such. But at that moment Abbi saw little of what was around the back. She only saw a large brick building with a basement and two stories above it. The basement level was indicated by small windows at ground level, and the first story which began after climbing some stone steps, had many large windows. The second story was underneath the slope of the roof. A row of windows protruding from the roof, adorned with curtains, suggested the second story was in regular use – probably the dormitory area, Abbi imagined, which later proved to be correct.

With gesture, Desmond encouraged Abbi to proceed.



As Abbi went up the walkway, she saw further that there were some shrubs round about, but it was now winter, and there were no leaves, and if there was grass, and gardens, they were covered with January snow. A brick wall surrounded the property, and snow sat like cotton on its top. Lots of tracks in the snow indicated that

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lots of children had recently played there in the yard.

Abbi came to the steps. She glanced back towards the carriage. Desmond waved her on. She was now on her own. She went up the stone steps and found herself in front of a large door. A sign on the door said “Please Enter”, so she didn’t knock, but, putting her travel bag down for a moment, opened the door, picked up the bag again, and entered, all the while with Amik under her other arm. Seeing Abbi enter, Desmond turned the horses around and drove away.

Abbi found herself in an entry hall. Looking this way and that, she proceeded slowly, wondering when someone would appear and notice her. She heard some sounds of children somewhere echoing through the building. She looked to put her bag or Amik down for a moment to close the door; but suddenly a woman appeared from some offices to her right. She was rather young, maybe in her early 20’s, with dark hair tightly pulled over her head and affixed at the back in a bun. She burst out into the hall in a businesslike manner as if off to attend to something urgent; but was halted in her tracks upon seeing the girl, heavily dressed for winter, carrying a travel bag, holding a stuffed beaver under her other arm, and looking as if seeking to check into a hotel.



“Little girl!” said the Orphan Home woman, “What are you doing here? Can I help you? Are you lost?”

“I have been sent here to check into this Orphan

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Home,” said Abbi.

“But you can’t enter an Orphan Home just by walking in. There is a procedure to be followed. We are not a hotel. And we are so filled up here, that there are already many who we unfortunately have had to refuse. Who sent you?”

Abbi was filled with horror: “Y-you don’t want me either?” she said with a quiver in her voice.

“Who sent you here? How did you get here? Is someone outside?” asked the woman almost angrily. She instantly went to the door and looked about outside. She saw nobody. There was just the trunk on the steps.

“I was dropped off in a carriage,” Abbi explained, “and I was to simply enter, and give whoever was in charge here this envelope. It contains a letter I believe.” She gave the woman the envelope.

The somewhat pretty Orphan Home lady must be a worker here, Abbi thought, because her dress and apron seemed to be something of a uniform.

The young Orphan Home lady took the envelope and studied the writing on the face of the envelope. With her free hand she began to direct Abbi into the office from which she had just rushed out. “What is your name?” she asked as they went.

“Abbi,” Abbi replied. “Abigail Pictford. I used to be Abbi Woodrow, until I was told I was adopted.”

“Well my name is Priscilla. I am one of the matrons that look after the children here. Children call me Matron Priscilla.”

Entering the office area, Matron Priscilla signaled the attention of the superintendent, or manager, of the Orphan Home, who was further through another door; and she continued to usher Abbi forward. Superintendent Wellington, as he was called, stood up from a desk and met the two with a questioning look. Matron Priscilla said: “This little girl has just appeared at the door, saying that she was simply dropped off and told to enter and present this letter. It is addressed to you, Superintendent Wellington.”

Superintendent Wellington was middle aged, wore a neat vest and suit, and had an air of authority. He wore a large moustache which compensated for thin hair on top. Abbi saw a watch chain like she had seen among railway

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men, hanging from his vest, which would be attached to a pocket watch. She supposed the superintendent of an Orphan Home needed a watch to ensure that everything here marched according to schedule.

“Is this someone trying to force another child on us?” exclaimed Superintendent Wellington loudly while pulling on the end of his moustache. “Everyone should know that we are full up, and we can’t accept children at a faster rate than they leave. It is only January now, and adoptions are slow. They won’t pick up until the public experiences the promise of spring. We can return the child to wherever she was previously located, until our situation improves. But let’s have a look at what the letter says. . .”

The Superintendent opened the letter and read it out loud so that Matron Priscilla could hear.

“Dear Superintendent Wellington of the Richdale Women’s Charitable Society Orphan Home :

I am Audora Woodrow, President of the Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company and a member of the board of directors of the Richdale Women’s Charitable Society who sponsors the Orphan Home. As you know in the past my company has provided lumber and tools for your boys’ educational programmes.”

“Yes, I know the woman well,” said Superintendent Wellington, pausing. He continued reading:

“Please excuse me for not following due process, as it would take too much time, and rob a child of her education. The child who bears this letter is Abigail, an orphan originally adopted out of charity by my son many years ago, but his family has been compromised by his disappearance, possible drowning this past year, as you may well know. It has been a matter of concern all around Richdale. I have taken in my son’s wife and four natural children, and have assumed responsibility for assisting the orphan as well, to seeing her towards a destination best suited for a person of her circumstances and nature. All things considered it appears this particular girl is most in need of a country home with kind parents and not the kind of life I lead. She has already spent a good part of a year in the house of a Mr. and Mrs.

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Loggerman in a wilderness and it suited her well. That situation has ended on account of the Loggermans moving to Maine. It is clear that she wishes and is most suited for a similar country situation, except for three improvements – few children to look after, a good school within easy walking distance, and some connection among her new guardians to Indians. As one can see from her face, Abigail is certainly Indian to some considerable degree, and has become interested in that side of her, when she was recently made aware of it.

“So as not to disrupt her education and development, I implore the Orphan Home to take her in immediately for the schooling carried on there daily. Your further assistance in finding the kind of situation I describe above for her, through those who contact you, is also welcomed

“As it would be too inconvenient for her to walk to and from my home, which is some distance from the Orphan Home, I am happy to support her boarding. I have taken the initiative of including with this letter a bank cheque for a donation in the amount of \$500 to offset the costs of her boarding and education, and securing your ongoing assistance finding her the perfect place, which, as I said, ideally would include an Indian individual she can relate to. I will continue as always to donate in my normal fashion to the Orphan Home and other charitable projects of the Richdale Women’s Charitable Society.

“The girl is very talkative and will tell you everything more you need to know, about herself, her former life, and much more besides, that may not be of any consequence.

*Respectfully Yours,
Madam Audora Woodrow,
President, Woodrow Timber
Millwork & Manufacturing Company”*

The Superintendent gave Priscilla a look, and then reached into the envelope again to pull out a bank cheque for \$500 made out to the “Richdale Women’s Charitable Society Orphan Home”. Such payment for boarding children from outside was not entirely unheard of for private orphanages with educational programs in those days in North America, but this was the first time it had

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arisen in this particular orphanage. The amount of \$500 was considerable. (That value of it was similar to \$5,000 a century later!) Thus we should not be surprised that Superintendent Wellington and Matron Priscilla were a little stunned by the amount. No further exchange of words was necessary. The plain fact was that Madam Woodrow was a member of the board of the Richdale Women's Charitable Society and had just contributed a large sum of money. There would be no need to follow due process in this case. They would certainly have to admit Abbi.

"Well Abigail Woodrow ..." began the Superintendent.

"I was told my real last name is Pictford," Abbi corrected.

"Well, Abigail Pictford, it looks like Madam Audora Woodrow has great powers of persuasion with her dollars. I think we can squeeze you. The fact of the matter is that a bed became free in the girls' dormitory early this morning because a couple of adoptive parents removed their chosen girl a week earlier than we expected, and we hadn't yet chosen the next occupant from among the parentless children at the large asylum in the city. You can have her bed. Here you will find yourself among other children in a home-like environment looked after by several woman we call 'Matrons', like Matron Priscilla here. We're not church-run here so we don't have 'Sisters', that is, nuns, like at church-sponsored institutions. We have 'Matrons'. We do still have religion however on Sunday mornings, with a Sunday School led by a woman who volunteers here. I myself manage the Orphan Home in general, and live in a flat at the back with my wife Helen who is also a Matron here. In addition, I teach the school sessions and direct the boys in their practical education. You may call me 'Superintendent Wellington.'"

He extended his hand to Abbi and Abbi politely shook it and said, "Thank you for accepting me, Superintendent Wellington. For a moment I was expecting to be rejected and once again have to return to Madam Woodrow's decision-making."

"Not you Abigail. It so happens that your sponsor, Madam Woodrow, is a member of the board of directors of this Orphan Home. That means she is an important person,

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and her wishes are to be respected. So, welcome Abigail, then. Matron Priscilla will show you where to put your outer clothing, and take you to the girls' dormitory and show you where you will sleep."

"Come with me Abbi," said Matron Priscilla. "First let's put your outdoor clothes in the cloakroom in the hallway, and then go upstairs and I will show you your bed in the girls' dormitory. Dormitories are large rooms full of beds, the girls in one dormitory and the boys in the other."

They left the office area and returned to the hallway. Priscilla now took special note of the stuffed beaver under Abbi's arm.

"And what is this?" she wondered.

"That's Amik," said Abbi.

"Oh, like a teddy bear ..."

"No!" exclaimed Abbi. "I'm too old for a teddy bear! Amik is a stuffed real beaver that my Papa had—my adoptive Papa not my real one. I need it for ... for ... scientific purposes. I'm interested in nature. I'd like to teach other students about the beaver."

She could not reveal that perhaps Amik was indeed a little like a teddy bear – a source of security.

"Oh," said Priscilla. "Well fine then. But would you not want to leave it down here. I can put it in main hall where we have our classes."

"I would prefer not, Matron Priscilla. It belongs to my Papa, I mean Madam Woodrow's son, and it is not certain he drowned, as he has not been found. I would hate for it to be damaged by children when he returns."

"Very well, bring it with you. You can keep it in your trunk—I presume that's your trunk on the steps—after most of its current contents are taken out. It should just fit in the trunk when empty."

Abbi put down Amik temporarily on the bench along the hallway, and also her bag, as Matron Priscilla took Abbi's coat and put it in the adjoining cloakroom with the other children's outerwear. Matron Priscilla then stepped outside to fetch Abbi's trunk. It wasn't too large nor too heavy for her, but would have been for Abbi. Abbi was still small. At 9, almost 10, she had not yet experienced a spurt in growth, as she liked to say to explain her small stature.

With Matron Priscilla carrying the trunk, they

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proceeded together down the hallway. Abbi carried her bag and Amik.

Matron Priscilla oriented Abbi to the Orphan Home as they walked: “It is the noon hour right now. Children are taking a break from the morning school session. When we have been to the dormitory, and shown you where you will sleep, you’ll come back down to our main hall. By then the children will be having their mid-day meal there. I can introduce you to everyone all at once when you come down. Boys and girls are together for meals, and for the morning schooling session. This afternoon, after the meal we have our practical sessions, and you’ll join the girls. Girls and boys study different things—girls sewing for example, and boys do woodworking and such. That’s how we are a little different from a regular school. We feel it is important to teach orphan children practical skills as well as the 3 R’s.”

“Are there many orphans here?” Abbi wondered as she followed Matron Priscilla down the hallway.

“There are in this Orphan Home currently 32 boys and girls, 16 of each. Well, it became 15 girls this morning, but you will bring it back up to 16. Most of them are around your age. We don’t have very young children here. We are more like a school here, not a nursery. Children here are between 7 and 12, sometimes a little younger and sometimes a little older. And the older children help the younger, just like in a real family of children. It is like a very, very, large family with lots of children and with adults to keep order. It’s also like a school, where children of many ages and levels of accomplishment study together. There are a few older children, who we help to find work in the community while they are living and being schooled here. There are 32 children, as I said. We wouldn’t be able to accommodate any more than about 32 children. That’s too much as it is for this building. I expect you have gone to school a little?”

“Yes, and I so much want to continue school,” said Abbi. “It’s the reason Madam Woodrow decided to get me in here immediately. I liked going to school in Pinewood and then earlier in Fredericton. My life seems to be one of contrasts. The one in Fredericton was very modern, but the one at Pinewood was in a log cabin and it was so far

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away I always missed an hour or so in the morning just getting there. Here I will not miss anything, I like to look at the bright side of things.”

“That’s a good attitude, Abbi,” Matron Priscilla replied as they reached the stairs and began up them to the second floor. “When you are at *our* school, you will find yourself in the same place that you just finished breakfast. There is no walking to school at all here! It would be nice if we were larger and we had a dining room separate from a classroom, but that is impossible at this time. The main hall I just told you about has to serve many functions³². There are so many children needing help, that we have to make the most of every ounce of space to accommodate as many as possible. At the start of the day there is breakfast there, then after a short rest period when you can get ready for school, the same tables you had breakfast on become tables for your school lessons. Superintendent Wellington teaches school, and I assist him. Then after the morning lessons, the main hall becomes a dining room again, like it is becoming right now. All the children are in the main hall right now getting ready for the midday meal. You probably heard their chatter coming from there. We’ll have to hurry you up so you can join us ...”

“I think it’s a good idea that an orphanage is like a home,” said Abbi, as they struggled up the stairs, Matron Priscilla with the trunk and Abbi with Amik and her large carry-bag.

“Yes, Abbi. It’s not like the asylum or workhouse orphanages. They can do little more than to feed and shelter the children waiting for adoption. This orphanage is built inside a very large old house, so it feels very much like a very large family filled to the brim with children. The Richdale Women’s Charity Society is very proud of it and likes to call it an ‘Orphan Home’. It’s not a real home by any means, but it is certainly much better than things were in the olden days.”

“I have read ‘*Oliver Twist*’,” said Abbi, recalling the

³² There were no norms or standards for institutions back then – every charitable institution created their own situation according to their own needs and constraints. This fictional one is made up for this story.

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book as one of those that she had found among the books of the Loggermans' handyman, Jeffrey, which he had loaned her to read. "Oliver started out living in a place like you described – the kind that's in an asylum or workhouse."

"You have read *Oliver Twist*? Good for you!"

"Jeffrey at the Loggermans where I was last had a copy. I am told I read books far beyond the level of others my age, and a 9 year old girl shouldn't have read '*Oliver Twist*',³³ but I have. When I was coming into the building just now I was a little apprehensive, picturing the workhouse orphanage of that book. But at the same time, I began imagining myself being like Oliver, carried by Fate this way and that but ending up at a wonderful conclusion. It would be so romantic to discover in the end that you are actually the child of a noble family. Do you live in this house too? Or do you live elsewhere, Matron Priscilla? I can imagine you away from here, with your hair let down, looking so very beautiful."

"Well, thank you, Abbi," replied Matron Priscilla. "As a matter of fact I'm one of the employees who *do* come and go from here. I have a small flat which I share with my aging mother. But Helen, the Superintendent's wife, and our cook, Matron Gorda, live on the premises. And then there are many women who are pure volunteers, women of the Richdale Women's Charitable Society, particularly older ones whose own children have grown up, who come and go according to their own schedules. They sit and supervise the children when they are playing outdoors or indoors, so as to give the Matrons who are actually employed here, the freedom to see to running things. You will get to know some of them, such as Mrs. Cumberland."

"Matron Priscilla, you must be very experienced with explaining this Orphan Home to new children, because you have told me almost everything I'd every want to know, all in the space of a couple minutes."

"Well, I feel the more a new child knows, the less apprehensive they will be and the more quickly they will fit in; so I try to give them as much information as I can the moment they arrive."

³³ Charles Dickens died in 1870, and his books were well-known

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Matron Priscilla reached a large door to the left and opened it. “Here we are, Abbi,” she said. “Here is the girl’s dormitory.” It was currently empty on account all the children being in the main hall. “There are two rows of beds,” Matron Priscilla continued. “along one wall and the other, eight beds in each row, meaning 16 girls in all.”



Abbi found it to be neat and elegant, and not as plain as she had at first envisioned.

“Now on the other end of this floor, if we turn right at the top of the stairs, is the boy’s dormitory. Their dormitory is similar to that of the girls. Superintendent Wellington keeps the boys in line. And between the two dormitories in the middle are the washrooms.”

“It looks nicer than what I imagined an orphanage dormitory would look like,” said Abbi.

“That’s because the women of Richdale are proud of this Orphan Home and see to it that it is nice and has modern things. But it is a little crowded, as I said. 14 boys and 14 girls would be adequate. We have 16 of each right now. There is barely enough space between each bed to climb in. We are in dire need of expansion. So many little children are left out, or have to endure greater hardship at the old-fashioned orphan asylums. But we survive purely from the charity of wealthy Richdale citizens and their businesses here and in Saint John. In order to be able to do any expansion, we envision we would require about \$1500

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beyond our normal funding. Your sponsor, Madam Audora Woodrow, has just now contributed \$500. And that is very welcome. But where can we get another *extra* \$1000, beyond our regular fund-raising? It is always very difficult if you depend on charity for the required money.”

(\$1500 in the late 1800's was equivalent to something like \$15,000 a century later. It was a great deal of money!) But Abbi knew little about money and how much things cost, and changed the subject. “I like that this room is furnished with a light colour wallpaper,” she said. “It makes it seem very spacious even if it isn't.”

Matron Priscilla led Abbi down the aisle between all the beds. “As Superintendent Wellington said downstairs,” continued Matron Priscilla, “one girl has found a home and already left a week ahead of time, early this morning before you came. So by stroke of luck there is a bed ready for you. It has even been made up by Matron Helen, all ready for a new orphan. Here it is.”

“Oh, I hope I'm not taking up the space of another orphan!” worried Abbi.

“No, as it was, we hadn't yet decided who to admit to this spot. Perhaps it is Fate who has decided it should be you. That's how you should look at it.”

“I'm glad,” said Abbi, “because I don't consider myself that much of an orphan. I'm sure that if Madam Audora Woodrow had not succeeded in placing me here, she would have thought of something else. She seems very good at thinking up solutions to problems.”

Matron Priscilla put the trunk down on the floor and pushed it under the bed from the front. Beds, made of ironwork, were quite high off the floor in those days and the over two-and-a-half feet height was plenty of space to put any size trunk, almost. She continued: “You keep your assorted belongings, like your travel bag and trunk, and your Amik fellow, under the bed. You should always hang up all your clothes with hangers on the hooks on the wall behind the bed so they don't get wrinkled, or folded on the shelf above the hooks. The children wear clothes we make from donations of fabrics from businesses. That is why it may seem like there is a uniform here when you see the same fabric and clothes patterns over and over. We'll give you a dress and apron to wear. Often the

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clothes children come in get worn out quickly or they grow out of them. It is best to keep the clothes you came in, if they are fine, for special occasions so as not to wear them out in everyday use.”

Abbi noted that there was less than about two feet separation between each bed. It was crowded here, indeed. She wondered how she would cope with so many girls all together. She supposed it would not be as bad as sleeping with many babies in the next room like at the Loggerman’s.

“Well, I’ll leave you now,” said Matron Priscilla “You can rest a moment and get used to the bed, hang up any clothes you need to hang up, and wash up in the washrooms located in the centre of this floor, close to the stairs, over through those doors; and then come downstairs. Just follow the noisy talk of children. We are all right now finishing our midday break after morning school studies, and getting ready for the midday meal in the main hall. When you are ready, come down and join us for the lunch. I’ll be waiting for you there, and introduce you the moment you enter the room, to the rest of the children. And then you can tell everyone a little about yourself.”

“Very well, Matron Priscilla—is that the way one should always call you?”

“That’s the best way. Use the word ‘matron’ for the women staff. However many volunteer women like to be called by their normal names, like Mrs. So-and-so. The word ‘matron’ means ‘mother’. It is because we are mother-substitutes. Luckily for the girls, there’s no shortage of adult women to talk to—the three regular matrons and any volunteer women who might come in. It’s not the same for the boys. Currently there is only one man involved here full time – Superintendent Wellington. But there are a few older boys who have not found homes and who help the Superintendent with the boys’ tasks. Generally men are not too interested in children, and they don’t stay here long if hired. That makes Superintendent Wellington a little special. He enjoys it. Besides managing the Orphan Home operation from his office, Superintendent Wellington is also the person who teaches school for all the children in the mornings, and practical skills to the

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boys in the afternoon, as he already told you. I assist him in the morning, and teach practical skills to the girls in the afternoon.”

“You have been very thorough, Matron Priscilla, in describing the Orphan Home. There is much to absorb in all you have said. It is such a major change in my life. It will take me a while to become adjusted to it,” said Abbi.

“Well, you’ll learn everything about this Orphan Home as you go. I’ll expect you downstairs, shortly. Don’t take too long.”

“Yes Matron Priscilla.”

After Matron Priscilla had left, Abbi thought to herself that she liked the young brunette-haired matron and wanted to know her better. She did as Matron Priscilla had said—hung any clothes from her travel bag and trunk onto hangers and the hangers onto the hooks on the wall at the head of the bed. With her trunk emptied of clothes she put Amik in there for safekeeping. The trunk was just large enough for him and then some smaller things like books could be returned around him *after* he was in there. Next Abbi generally became familiar with the surroundings, opening doors, poking her nose into the boy’s side of the floor, investigating the washrooms, etc. But she hurried through it all, because she knew Matron Priscilla was waiting for her.

The washrooms had the new kind of new water closet type toilets like she knew from Fredericton. No more outhouse like she experienced in the wilderness! She also found porcelain basins for washing; and there were large mirrors. She had never before seen such large mirrors in a washroom. This was the first time she had seen such a complete reflection of herself. She studied her face. “Hello Abbi. I can now see my Indian features, now that I have seen Chief Jack and the other two *Wolastoqiyik* men, and Princess Minnie, when I was at the Loggermans’.” She tried to fix her hair a little.

After making some faces in the mirror, she realized she had better make her way downstairs, as instructed, to the main hall where the children would be eating. There, Matron Priscilla had said, she would be introduced to all the rest.

Abbi ventured down the stairs and to the hallway,

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observing all that she could. She already knew about Superintendent Wellington's office near the entrance. From what she had seen so far or would eventually find out, the Orphan Home building had three levels like she had initially guessed. First there was the basement level which was partly above ground so that it would have light coming in from windows at ground level. If there was central heating here, there would be a furnace with a pile of coal. There would also be storage for things used in running the Orphan House. Next, the first floor was reached by climbing some stone stairs at the front door as she had done when she arrived. This floor would have all the day-to-day facilities and activities—the office of the superintendent, kitchen, but most importantly, the common area called “main hall” that Matron Priscilla was talking about, that was used alternatively for mealtime, schooling, and free time activities. Next up the stairs from where she had just come was the floor that was under the steep slope of the roof. The stairs came up to this third floor in the center part, and turning left was the girls' dormitory and turning right was the boys' dormitory. The washrooms were in the center between the two dormitories, one for boys and one for girls, as we already saw.

When she reached the bottom of the stairs, she heard the noise of children and went towards the noise. As she went, she wondered to where the other halls and doors led. Where did the live-in staff sleep? What were the other staff and matrons like? Which way led to a kitchen, with its adjoining pantry or storeroom for food? Was there a room with a library? She hoped indeed that there was a library, with shelves lined with plenty of books she could read.

No sooner had she posed the questions she found herself at the open door from where the noise of children had come. She entered and stood for a moment just inside until Matron Priscilla noticed her there.

It was as Matron Priscilla had said: the main hall was a large room. It seemed like it was nearly half of the first floor, and spanning from one row of windows to the other. Wealthy people probably lived here at one time, and this must have been a big hall for dances and dinners. This wealthy person must have become more wealthy and donated this house for the Orphan Home. It still had fancy

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fixtures and décor left over from the old home; so it had a proper homelike feeling. It had a fireplace along one wall because in the olden days buildings were only heated with fireplaces; but now there were radiators under the windows, which indicated central heating. That meant there would be a furnace and a boiler in the basement that heated water that was piped around to radiators.

Although it was an old house, it appeared to have been kept it up to date with developments, making renovations and changes as necessary. Just like in Madam Audora's mansion, old oil-lamp or candle fixtures, were converted to gas, if gas service was available in the area as was the case here.

Thinking of what Matron Priscilla had said – that this large room was also used as a classroom – Abbi saw immediately evidence of that. There was a blackboard at the far end. It was not attached to the wall but probably it had wheels and was movable. Other things associated with a schoolroom at the far end, included a national flag, a map of the world, a picture of Queen Victoria, shelves with books, and other paraphernalia of a classroom. Elsewhere around the room, mostly on this side, there were cabinets, trunks, closets, and so on, suggesting further uses for this room. Abbi even saw some sewing machines, waiting for use presumably in girls' sewing classes.

But whatever else the room could become, at that moment, the hall was being used for the midday meal. It was lunchtime. Everyone had plates of food in front of them and were busy eating and chatting. She should not have explored so much upstairs. She was a little late.

The children were seated at two long tables oriented lengthwise to the room, one filled with boys and the other with girls. The long tables were actually two rectangular oaken tables each placed end-to-end. They were properly set with table cloths and china. The proper setting of tables for meals was probably part of the girls education. There were 16 boys busy eating and chatting at one of the long tables, and 16 girls at the other – or rather 15 as there was now a vacant chair since one of the orphans had left for her new home.

There was a third rectangular table here, a single, not double, this one running crossways to the room, and

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perpendicular to the two long children's tables. Abbi saw Superintendent Wellington, Matron Priscilla, and two other matrons seated at this table. One must be the Superintendent's wife, Helen. The other one was a big woman. She learned later that she was Matron Gorda, the woman who looked after everything connected with food. The staff were in this way included at mealtime, facing the children, keeping things orderly.

Abbi imagined now how this dining situation would become a learning situation. In a school session, instead of meals in front of them, the children would have books and slates. Instead of the staff sitting having a meal at the front table, there would be a teacher – Superintendent Wellington – sitting behind that table using the table as a desk. Then later, by moving tables around, this room could also serve for practical education lessons, like sewing lessons. And at yet other times it could be a common room, a living room, a recreational area, or whatever else was needed. Abbi had plenty of imagination for picturing it all.

Seeing Abbi at the doorway looking around at everything, Matron Priscilla stood up, and said: "Attention boys and girls!" The children hushed to see what was going on. Matron Priscilla continued: "As you all know, Elizabeth was fortunate enough to leave with new parents this morning. And here is a new girl to take her place. Her name is Abigail Woodrow, or rather, Abigail Pictford, as Pictford was the name of her natural parents. Come in Abbi. Sit in the middle there with the girls in that vacant place. Nancy would you get plates and utensils for Abbi?"

Abbi went to the vacant place at the table, while the girl named Nancy left to get tableware for Abbi. Nancy went through a door to an adjoining room, which Abbi would later learn was the kitchen.

Abbi was now facing towards the other table, so that she had an opportunity to study the array of boys there. She saw that they were all dressed more or less the same. It was as Matron Priscilla had said: the children were dressed in the same way on account of their making clothing from the same donated materials and the same patterns. Thus nearly all the boys wore identical trousers and vests of some brown material. Meanwhile most girls

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wore dresses of unappealing donated fabric—fabric that failed to sell obviously—covered with a large white apron, with frilly edges. Abbi thought the aprons were more attractive than the dresses underneath. She would probably get something similar to wear in her size by tomorrow.

“Now, Abbi,” continued the young Matron Priscilla, “before you sit down, tell us something about yourself.”

“Yes, ma’am,” replied Abbi.



She took a moment to think of what she'd like to say.

“I'd like everyone to know that my name is Abbi,” she began, “which is short for Abigail. About my life experiences, it's best to be brief as I have a tendency to go on for hours. I understand that I became an orphan when I was just a baby, only four months old. My first eight years of life were good ones. I lived in a family named Woodrow. I didn't even know I was an orphan until Mr. Woodrow had an accident—it was in all the newspapers: he fell in the Saint John River and has not been found—and I was finally told my real origins. Because he disappeared we could not remain in Fredericton so we went to live with my adoptive grandmother, Audora Woodrow. My adoptive grandmother then placed me with Mrs. Loggerman in the wilderness, whose husband ran a company that was also half-owned by Madam Woodrow's company. She sent me because Mrs. Loggerman needed

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household help. She had six children all ranging from a new baby up to five. I had lots of chores on my hands looking after them with Mrs. Loggerman. I went to school in the village of Pinewood. But then Mr. Loggerman got a new position in a sawmill in Maine and they had to move; so I was sent back to my adoptive grandmother here in Richdale just a couple days ago. And that's why I'm now here. She felt it was the best place for me, to immediately continue school. I have always felt I was more of a country person than a city person, and I do not mind too much *not* living with my adoptive grandmother. My Papa who fell in the Saint John River over a year ago was Bradden Woodrow. I don't mean my real father. When it was all explained to me, I learned my natural parents were named Pictford. I was told my father was a Pictish man and my mother was an Indian woman of the Ojibwa nation. She died of smallpox maybe three months after having me, and he died later at sea. When I was growing up people were always commenting on my looking Indian. I have high cheekbones, tan skin, and straight black hair. But I never suspected I was one until I heard people whispering 'adopted' now and then and I began to wonder what it meant. Then it was all explained to me by Jenine – my adoptive Mama. My name 'Abbi' is how my mother called me when I was only a few months old. It is a short form for the Indian word *abbinochi* which means 'child' or 'baby' – in the Ojibwa language. So the short form of my name should be written with an 'I' on the end, not a 'Y'. Nobody knows what my proper name was – my Woodrow parents never learned – so they called me 'Abigail', as that is a common name and can be 'Abbi' in short form."

"Hear that, children?" said Matron Priscilla. "When writing Abbi's name write it with an 'I' not a 'Y'"

"Whoop! Whoop!" said a boy reacting to Abbi's mention she was Indian.

"Baby Indian! Baby Abbi!" shouted another boy followed by snickering.

Abbi hadn't experienced such a reaction before at Pinewood. Perhaps urban boys were more ignorant and childish. She tried to ignore it and continued: "When I was at the Loggermans, there was wilderness all around and I learned all about Indian ways from my Papa's—I mean my

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adoptive Papa's—books and from observing nature itself. I also met Maliseet Indian men at the sawmill, but they should be called *Wolastoqiyik* which means 'People of the Lovely River' and ... ”

“Whoop! Whoop!” a boy shouted.

“Abbi, where's your feathers?” asked another boy.

“And your bow and arrow?” asked yet another boy.

“I happen to be very proud of my Indian origins!” declared Abbi. This reaction from the boys took her by surprise. She hadn't previously experienced such ignorance and stereotyping regarding Indians. Meanwhile Nancy came back and put a dish, cup and utensils down in front of Abbi.

“Stop it children,” broke in Matron Priscilla, standing. “Enough teasing! You must behave! Do you imagine any family would accept any of you if they had witnessed your behaviour right now? Now Abbi, help yourself to the food laid out on the table. Here we try to act like one large family, and everyone behaves as they would in a normal dinner situation. You will be pleased to know, Abbi, that the girls always have a hand in the preparation of the food, setting the table and so on, under the guidance of Matron Gorda, just like in a normal home. The boys are responsible later for cleaning up and rearranging the room for the morning's school sessions, and the afternoon's practical lessons.”

An older girl next to Abbi added, “Boys like the afternoon practical lessons better than the school sessions, Abbi. They have woodwork, leatherwork, and tend to our horses and wagons out back – that sort of thing.”

“Work that doesn't require any brains,” said another girl loudly, sticking out her tongue at the boys.

Abbi assumed all was fine now and helped herself to bread and jam on the table, and poured some milk from a pitcher. She was quite hungry. But she had to eat fast, since the other children were by now half-done.

But the boys' rowdiness had been stimulated. One vegetable available in winter was the carrot. Thus one of the food items set out on the table were carrots, scraped and cut end to end into thin sticks, and intended to be eaten by hand. Although most nutritious in this form, they

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weren't particularly popular, and the Orphan Home scheme was that what was not eaten at lunch went into the soup at suppertime. In any event, one of the boys took one of the carrot sticks from a bowl filled with them, and treated it like an arrow or spear and shot it across the room at Abbi. It landed on the table in front of her. When Abbi noticed it, the boy said: "That's an arrow, Abbi."

The boys laughed.

Abbi was by now very annoyed. There was nothing she could think of for responding verbally, so she grabbed the carrot stick that had been fired at her, and threw it back to the boys' table. All the boys then started firing carrot sticks from the bowls of carrot sticks on the table, across to the girls table until there were no more. They let out war whoops. Those aiming at Abbi yelled "Baby Indian! Whoop! Baby Abbi! Baby Abbi! Whoop!"

The girls responded by throwing everything back and then their own carrot sticks. Boys responded by throwing other food missiles from their table, food that they didn't like but which adults said was good for them. Food fight! Food fight! Abbi was too upset to participate. She had been the main target of the teasing and abuse. She could only stand and clench her fists. Not being able to stand it any more, she got up from the table and ran out.

Whack! Superintendent Wellington at the front table stood and hit a yardstick on the table extra hard, and the food fight ended.

Matron Priscilla stood too and shouted: "Food is the source of life! We don't obtain food for this Orphan Home very easily! Much of it is donated to us! Everything you have thrown has to be picked up, washed, and eaten! We'll put it all into this evening's soup, then it will be germ-free."

Matron Gorda, without stopping her eating said between chews: "Girls pick up the food, wash them off in the kitchen. Boys get buckets and wash the floors. Needs washing anyway." She didn't even have to talk loudly. Her distinctive voice was easily heard. The punishment clearly stated, she continued eating. She was a large woman, built like a barrel, who loved to eat. No wonder she was in charge of the kitchen.

Superintendent Wellington added: "Our afternoon

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practical lessons will be delayed until the cleanup is done. Furthermore, for supper this evening, boys and girls will *not* sit at separate tables. It will be boy-girl-boy-girl. You can all sit, eat quietly and reflect on what you have done.”

That was the most dreaded punishment of all – for boys to have to sit next to girls and girls next to boys! Yes, nothing was worse punishment for boys or girls of the ages 7-12! It was so dreadful to them that handing it out for only one mealtime was enough!

Matron Priscilla broke away from the table and went after the fleeing Abbi. “I’d better see to Abbi. What a way to begin a stay here, to be teased so brutally right at the moment of arrival.”

She found Abbi upstairs in the dormitory lying face down on the bed that had been assigned to her. “I don’t like it here,” wept Abbi when Matron Priscilla arrived.

“It won’t happen again,” said Matron Priscilla. “I will declare a horrible punishment for any boy who teases you about your being Indian or your name. You have to learn not to be so sensitive, Abbi. It will happen again I’m sure, if not here then elsewhere.”

Abbi turned towards Matron Priscilla. “It is hard not to be sensitive, when you’re an Indian. When I was in the Woodrow family, everyone would take notice of me and I never knew why, until I was told the story. I never even saw a single Indian person in all of Fredericton. Maybe some came, but I never saw them. Audora, I mean Madam Woodrow, is right. Being an Indian will be a curse, and being a girl Indian even worse. I will never get anyplace in life. I have never in my life heard of an Indian professor, or Indian businessman, or anyone Indian who is famous. What hope is there for me?”

Matron Priscilla sat down on the adjacent bed and comforted her. “Don’t say that. There are plenty of famous Indians. There is for example a gentleman named George Copway. He was a friend of Mr. Longfellow, and gave many lectures and wrote books.”

“But are there any Indian *women*? There are only a *few* famous Indians and no famous Indian *women* at all! There aren’t even many famous women of *any* kind!—other than Queen Victoria. Madam Woodrow is the only woman who runs a company I have ever heard of. Madam Woodrow is

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right. Being both an Indian *and* a woman will be the worst way to be of all! What's the use of trying!"

She plopped back face down on her bed.

"Well, we'll just have to find some examples of famous Indian women in our world," replied Matron Priscilla emphatically.

Abbi turned to her. "Oh, Matron Priscilla, I would be ever so thrilled to learn of examples of famous women who are Indian, to give me hope.... But I fear you won't find a single one!"

"I promise I'll investigate. I have a secret interest in famous people, famous women. I'm particularly interested in famous women of the theatre. I'll have a look in the information I have collected about them, to see if any are Indian."

"Oh it would be glorious if there really were an actress of the stage who was famous in spite of being Indian," said Abbi, wiping away her tears, "but it seems impossible that there will be."

"Well, then," said Matron Priscilla, "I will make it my mission for the next few days when I go home. I intend to find an actress who has Indian origins to prove you wrong."

Just then the girl who had been sitting beside Abbi downstairs, came up. She was a sandy-haired girl with curly locks and blue eyes, like Mildred, her schoolmate when she was with the Loggermans, but somewhat taller and more expressive.

"I was excused from the food cleanup to come up here to say we girls are so sorry for reacting to the boys, instead of ignoring them like girls are supposed to do. What a way to start a stay here, Abbi!"

"I will leave you two to talk," said Matron Priscilla. "Both of you remember in about an hour the afternoon practical lessons begin. Don't get so caught up with getting acquainted so as to be late."

Matron Priscilla left and the sandy-haired girl asked: "When I came in, I heard her talk about finding a famous actress?"

"Matron Priscilla says that she will try to find an example for me of a famous woman with Indian origins so that I can see that being an Indian girl still has promise.

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She will investigate when she goes home. She told me that she lives in a flat with her aging mother, and goes home every evening.”

The girl sat on the next bed, where Matron Priscilla had just sat. “Yes she comes and goes. That’s lucky for her. Who’d want to live here 24 hours a day if they could help it! God designed women to handle at most maybe 6 children. But there are many more children here than even in a normal schoolroom of children. Anyway, my name is Peggy, Abbi. And guess what? It just happens that I have the next bed! What fortune! We can get to know each other.” She indicated the bed next to Abbi’s on which she had just sat.

“Tell me more about this place, as much as you can!” Abbi insisted.

“Well the main thing is that we not only learn in a school session, but we also do chores just like in a regular home. It’s like being at home, where sometimes the children use the dining room table for doing schoolwork on. Except this home is filled with 32 children, whereas the normal home has about 6 children. You can imagine how much organizing is needed for 32 children. There are only three matrons working here permanently. They assign everyone chores every week on a blackboard. We children have to run everything ourselves, but they manage all of us like sergeants. But some volunteer women come now and then to help. I imagine us to be like a little children’s army, marching to the commands of our matrons and superintendent. Soon everyone prays for a home where there are only a *few* children, only a *few* brothers and sisters! The superintendent and matrons blame it all on overcrowding. They wish this house were bigger.”

“Is there time to get away from chores and schooling?” wondered Abbi. “Everywhere else I have been I have been able to wander away at times and do interesting things. I fear that here I will not have any freedom” Abbi was thinking of how at the Loggermans she had been able to walk along the ridge upriver from the sawmill and be alone there to study books or explore.

“Well we can play out in the snow,” Peggy replied. “And the boys cleared an iced-over pond in the back where we

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can skate. And sometimes there are group excursions. The Orphan Home has two wagons in the carriage house in back, and four horses, and a small stable for them. They can carry many children on an outing, or carry lumber or provisions that the Orphan Home requires. The boys look after them. It is good training for the boys to look after those. There are fundraising activities too. The boys who have been here for some time say there are some annual fundraising events we are part of, like picnics. In winter there is an annual event called the Richdale Skating Carnival. It is sponsored by the Richdale Women's Charitable Society just like the school. That's what an older boy said. Superintendent Wellington will talk about it soon, he said. Superintendent Wellington always opens the day here. Every morning after breakfast he says the Lord's Prayer and talks about major events concerning the Orphan Home to start the day. He always tells us we must always look like proper ladies and gentlemen if we want decent families to adopt us. Then we have a short break, then we sing 'God Save the Queen' to Queen Victoria's picture, and then school begins."

Just then a few other girls barged into the dormitory from the stairs, to make their acquaintance with the new resident.

"Did you pick up and wash all the vegetables?" asked Peggy of them.

"Yes," one said giggling. "And now the boys are scrubbing the floor. What a food fight you started Abbi! We haven't had such fun at boring mealtime for I don't know how long!"

When they asked her to tell them more about her adventures at the Loggermans in the wilderness, she took out Amik from the trunk under her bed, and told the girls all about it, and her adventures at the beaver pond near the Loggermans' clearing. Soon it was time for the afternoon practical educational session, and the girls had to go back downstairs. Abbi no longer felt upset.

THE AFTERNOON

Back downstairs for the practical class, Abbi and the girls kept talking. Abbi had no lack of topics to cover.

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“Girls,” said Matron Priscilla to the chattering group of girls, “you can talk about Amik and Abbi’s experiences with beavers later. We now have our practical lessons.”

All the girls were assembled back in the same room where earlier they had had lunch. The tablecloths were gone and four long bare oaken tables were awaiting the afternoon’s activities. The boys were elsewhere, probably in the buildings out back with Superintendent Wellington, possibly learning how to put a harness on a horse or something like that.

“Abbi,” Matron Priscilla continued, “you may find these afternoons interesting. You won’t find it in a regular school. What you learn here will add to your skills and character, and make you all the more attractive to prospective adoptive parents. Here we learn such things as how to cook, how to set a table, how to make and present tea, proper etiquette, sewing, and much more. Today we will practice some sewing. Abbi, in your case, your project would be to adjust one of our dresses and aprons to fit you better, for you to use while you are here. Peggy can help you.”

Abbi was very pleasantly surprised that there were such practical lessons here in the afternoons, where all the girls could be together and practice girl things.

Matron Priscilla continued: “And, Abbi, in case you are wondering what happened to the boys, well they are with Superintendent Wellington, where they are learning boy things to prepare them too for the future. Therefore most of the time we girls have this room with all the large tables all to ourselves. We have several sewing machines to use, and of course we have the kitchen and pantry to use, which adjoins this room. In its original use, this big hall was a large dining room. That’s why the kitchen is handy from here. All clear, Abbi?”

“Yes, Matron Priscilla,” replied Abbi.

“Alright then, girls. Let’s get out the sewing we were all working on. Tomorrow we will look at table manners for formal occasions, but today we will finish up with our sewing work.”

Amik and Renewed Hope

AMIK IS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Abbi's first day at the Orphan Home ended without further incident – except at suppertime, sitting boy-girl-boy-girl was uncomfortable for all the children. They were all happy afterward that Superintendent Wellington was lenient in administering this sort of dreaded punishment, and that it was only for one mealtime!

In the evening after dinner, Abbi chattered to exhaustion to all the children about her experiences during the last year in the New Brunswick wilderness while living with the Loggermans and helping them with their many little girls, including how she was called *Mihkuisis* meaning 'little squirrel' by the Indian men because she chattered so much. The girls in her dormitory were particularly intrigued by the fact that she had a stuffed beaver in her trunk. Abbi found herself talking a great deal to many of them about the beaver lodge in the pond near the Loggermans where she was last. She spoke to exhaustion, and then slept well. She awoke to the rays of the morning sun shining in through the east-facing windows of the girls' dormitory.

One of the matrons at the Orphan Home was Matron Helen Wellington, Superintendent Wellington's wife, a pleasant, brunette, energetic, middle-age woman. She was in charge after hours when the regular daytime staff had their time off. She looked after everything concerning the dormitories, grooming, and health. She made sure the children got to bed and woke up according to the routine. Every morning she woke up the girls with some clapping

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of her hands. "Get up girls. Wash up and go down to breakfast." She did the same in the boys dormitory on the other side of the central washrooms. In the boys' dormitory the boys could be a little rowdy, but she could, nonetheless, handle the boys by threatening to report them to the male authority, Superintendent Wellington, who was by then in his office downstairs preparing today's schedule, but who she could fetch instantly to apply unpleasant punishment if needed.

Because Abbi was following the routines here for the first time she was straggling behind everyone else and was pretty well the last one to be ready to go downstairs. She had now acquired the common Orphan Home clothing which included the rather plain dress with big white apron. As Matron Priscilla had said, many dresses worn by the girls looked the same because the same material and patterns were used over and over. Still, some girls wore something a little different made from some other material or something of their own; but all the girls had the same very practical white apron over top, with its handy pockets that any housekeeper of the day needed.

"Oh I'm so slow. All this is new," said Abbi to Peggy. "I don't know if I like wearing these clothes. I am so used to my own."

"Hurry up, Abbi," said Peggy, ready to go downstairs.

"Don't wait for me, Peggy. Save the chair next to you. I'll come in a moment."

"Alright, Abbi," Peggy replied, and followed the other girls downstairs.

Matron Priscilla came up to see how Abbi was doing.

"I'm a little slow, Matron Priscilla," said Abbi. "I'm just getting accustomed to the routine."

"Abbi, you didn't have much of a chance to talk about yourself to the class, yesterday. Would you like to present yourself in a more thorough fashion this morning? I mean, everyone seems to be very interested in your stuffed beaver, Amik, and your stories about your experiences with beavers in the last place you were. I thought, as I overheard you talking to the girls, that you may wish to bring Amik down, and tell all about it to the whole class, all at once. Or else you will still be telling the children one by one for months."

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Abbi considered it and agreed. “You’re right Matron Priscilla. I must have already told some stories four times to different groups of girls and boys. I am sure to be exhausted before long in talking about the beavers I met at the Loggermans.”

“Fine, I’ll tell Superintendent Wellington before he starts classes. He does science class this morning, and a talk about the beaver will fit in very well. I’ll be sure to tell him that Amik belongs to your Papa, and you would prefer to keep it safe for the time being, and not leave it downstairs. I’ll see you in a few minutes then.”

Matron Priscilla left, and Abbi hurried to finish getting ready. She once again took Amik out from her trunk under her bed where he had been lying sideways to fit, and went with it downstairs.

Downstairs, the girls whose duty it was to put down the table cloth and set the tables, were busy at work. They brought from the adjoining kitchen the food that was to be on the table for children to help themselves – pitchers of milk, bread, butter, jam, etc. Porridge would later be fetched by the individual children from the kitchen after the Superintendent’s morning message was over.

Abbi was by now familiar with the dining room routine from yesterday’s suppertime. In a rotating fashion a few girls or boys were assigned to assist Matron Gorda make the food, serve the food, and help in the dishwashing. There were other housekeeping duties too, of course, besides the dining room and kitchen duties, for which responsibilities were assigned in a rotating fashion. A large blackboard was used to organize all the assignments.

Before she sat down, Abbi glanced at this blackboard on the side wall near the door. It listed all the names of the children down the left side, with the days of the week across the top, and the chore they were responsible for where the name and the day intersected. She wondered if her name was there yet. It wasn’t. She supposed they were giving her a few days to familiarize herself with the surroundings and routines before assigning her to things besides the personal responsibilities like making your own bed. The idea was that the children would be engaged in activities similar to what they would have in a regular household. The Orphan Home was to be as if a giant-size

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home, not an institution. The wealthy ladies of the Richdale Women's Charitable Society who sponsored the Orphan Home, were adamant about that.

Matron Priscilla saw Abbi enter the main hall carrying Amik, and signaled Abbi to put Amik at the front on a sill, while they were having breakfast.

After putting Amik on the window sill, Abbi sat down at the place Peggy had saved for her.

Peggy repeated to Abbi about how the morning generally goes: "He always says the Lord's Prayer every morning," she said. "Then he gives us some news about what has happened or will happen. Then we have breakfast. Then we clean up and have a break to get ready for classes. Then before we begin classes we sing 'God Save the Queen' for Queen Victoria whose picture is on the wall."

"Yes I've seen that picture at the front of my other schools, and in railway stations," said Abbi. "My grandm...or Madam Woodrow, has a real photograph of her she got from a magazine publisher."

Then, at the front, where the staff sat, Superintendent Wellington stood to start the day.

"Our Father, who art in Heaven," he began. "Please whisper it to yourselves children." There was no desire to have the children say it out loud, because a group of 32 would create nothing more than an incoherent noise. He proceeded through the Lord's Prayer in a monotonous way, monotonous and uninspiring obviously from having said it every day for years and years. Then when done, he added a blessing for the morning meal. After the "Amen", the children relaxed to await his morning speech.

"Welcome children to a new day. You all realize that you are here courtesy of the charity of Richdale Women's Charitable Society, who convey to you, as always, good luck towards getting into a nice adoptive home, and best wishes for your education and future success. I know you are all pleased that you are not required to sit boy-girl-boy-girl any longer, but be warned that if you misbehave like you did yesterday when Abigail arrived, that punishment can be instantly reinstated. Abigail is now part of your family, and I would like to see you all - particularly the boys - welcome her warmly. So, we welcome again

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Abigail Pictford to our Orphan Home, who gave us a brief introduction about herself yesterday, and who has much to tell about her experiences at her last location. What else is there to talk about? There isn't much more for today. Tomorrow, I will have a special announcement about something we have planned for you children, and a couple ladies from the Richdale Women's Charitable Society will drop by for a visit, to elaborate on it. Since we will spend considerable time talking about it tomorrow, I will leave my morning talk short this morning, to compensate for tomorrow. Matron Priscilla has informed me that Abbi has brought with her a stuffed beaver that belonged to her adoptive father, and that many of you are very interested in it, as well as in her experiences with beavers in a pond near where she lived last, and that it would be a good idea for science class this morning to have Abbi show and tell to everyone at once her knowledge and experience regarding the beaver. So we can look forward to that this morning."

Everyone looked Abbi's way, and many were uplifted by the prospect of an interesting science class, and not the regular dull one. Many had also heard of Abbi's stories so far, and wanted to know more.

The Superintendent continued: "Let us have our breakfast now, then, and after breakfast, at 9 AM sharp, we'll begin our morning classes. So that's what is on the agenda for today. Now file in to the kitchen and get your porridge, children, and begin."

The children got up and carried their bowls to the adjoining kitchen. This was Abbi's first breakfast here, so she followed what Peggy did. It was probably similar to yesterday's supper. They lined up then too, to collect their potatoes and meat from the kitchen. This morning it involved fetching porridge.

In the kitchen, as the children came one by one, two of the older girls whose duty it was to do this chore today, dumped a ladle full of oatmeal porridge from a giant pot into each bowl. When Abbi's turn came and the girl, whose name was Cher, seeing how small Abbi was, gave her only a small portion.

Abbi looked at the small amount of porridge. Because at the Loggerman's she had become used to a large bowl of

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porridge in the morning, Abbi said: "Please Cher, I want some more." And Cher, chagrined, gave her another big ladleful, filling the bowl right up heaping full.



Abbi said to Peggy who had been ahead of her in the line. "Now I have too much! I hope I can eat all this porridge! It's my lot in life that I get too little or too much! I wish one day I will get something 'just right'. Before I came here, for example, I rarely saw people because I was in the wilderness, and now I am in the middle of 32 children day and night! That is *one* for-example. I can think of *other* for-examples!"

They went back to the table, where everything else – bread, jam, jugs of milk, fruit in bowls – were already at hand and children helped themselves. Abbi took a large pitcher that had milk in it and poured glassfuls for herself, Peggy, and another girl to her other side. Abbi saw some jam and wondered what it was. It was apple sauce jam. She spooned some onto her oatmeal porridge.

"I suppose apple sauce jam is the most economical," said Abbi to Peggy. "If I were back at the Loggermans, we'd have wild blackberry jam to add to the porridge. I suppose in the city blackberry jam would be expensive, as it would have to be brought in from the wilderness."

Most of the children finished breakfast by 8 AM, and

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after taking their used bowls, cutlery, cups and glasses to the kitchen, they left for an hour's break – except those children who had the chores related to breakfast cleanup or setting up for the morning classes.

“What do we do now?” Abbi asked Peggy, after they were finished breakfast.

“School always begins at 9AM. It's only 8:15. We have some free time to collect our school supplies and do some studying, or to chat – except for those children who have breakfast chores or setting up things for the school.”

Matron Priscilla found what was needed for Abbi by way of school equipment and supplied it to her. Of the staff, only Superintendent Wellington and Matron Priscilla remained for the morning school session. Matron Gorda began planning lunch, while Matron Helen tidied up in the dormitories and organized chores for laundry and cleaning. Generally in this Orphan Home, the children did most everything, and the Matrons and the Superintendent primarily assigned the tasks, supervised, directed, and kept it orderly. Volunteer women belonging to Richdale Women's Charitable Society might visit in the evening when supervision for children playing or studying in the hall or outside was needed and the regular matrons needed a rest.

When at 9 AM Superintendent Wellington rolled forward a large blackboard on wheels to the front of the room, the children knew that school was starting. The table that the staff used for their breakfast, with tablecloth removed, now became the teacher's desk. As for the children's tables, the girls had removed the tablecloths and boys had turned them all to face the front.

Superintendent Wellington took his educational books and materials from an adjacent cabinet and put them on the table. He began: “First we will sing ‘God Save the Queen’ as we look at the picture of our Queen Victoria. Stand up class.” He struck a tuning fork for the starting note, and then led the class in the singing. Singing ‘God Save the Queen’ and the Lord's Prayer was normal in all the schools Abbi had been in, so she did not find this in any way unusual. He then motioned them to sit down, and the class was now begun.

“Today, as you know, we tackle science. And Matron

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Priscilla has suggested we discuss the beaver, so we can have Abigail speak of her experiences. The beaver is not just an industrious and intelligent animal, but Canada's emblem animal. Unfortunately the beaver was heavily trapped here in the past centuries and its pelts sold in great quantities in Europe, resulting in the animal's extinction in many places. Our new resident, Abigail, comes with a stuffed beaver specimen that belonged to her adoptive father. I am reminded that her adoptive father was a railway design engineer, and the son of Madam Woodrow of Richdale, who belongs to Richdale Women's Charitable Society, and who is well known in social circles in Richdale. A year ago we learned from our newspapers about the man's tumbling into the Saint John River from a railway bridge under construction high up the river, and not having ever been found despite much searching. He is presumed drowned, but it is most correct not to assume it with finality until such a fate is ascertained for certain. And until it is, we assume he still owns this furry creature on the sill. Well we will make this creature part of our morning science project, and Abigail has agreed this morning to talk about him, and her own experiences with live beavers which she has already shared with some of you. Abigail, would you like to come up front and talk about the beaver and your experiences?"

Abbi was not shy. She had already many times in her several years of schooling, spoken in front of a class. She went to the front, took Amik off the sill, and placed him on the table that was now serving as the teacher's desk. Superintendent Wellington stepped to one side to listen along with the children.

She surveyed all the little eyes looking at her and began: "This is Amik. He is a real beaver, except stuffed, like people do now and then, to capture how it looked when it lived. This one is not as large as beavers can be, thankfully. Otherwise it would be too large for me to carry! I called him Amik, as that is the Ojibwa Indian name for the beaver, as used by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in his long poem *'The Song of Hiawatha'*. In French the beaver is called *castor*. Papa, my adoptive one, Bradden Woodrow, got it when he was a boy, so it must be very old by now. He always had it on his desk in his study. He liked

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it very much. It was his inspiration. When he disappeared in the Mighty Saint John River, we had to move away from Fredericton down here to live with his mother, and Amik was brought along too. Amik has been here in Richdale much of this last year, so I haven't seen him in a while. But while I was with the Loggermans far in the interior of New Brunswick, I experienced real live beavers. Mrs. Loggerman's husband operated the Koski Logging and Sawmill Company. It was beside a small river, called Sawmill Brook. And a stream running into Sawmill Brook – which I named *Qapit* Creek after the local Indian word for 'beaver' – had been dammed by a beaver family, creating a pond down from the house and sawmill, and I went there to observe the beavers whenever I could. Eventually they were not very afraid of me, and I watched them a great deal. I had already learned from my adoptive Papa that beavers were rare in the east, because of all the trapping of them, and therefore I considered it special that they were there."

"Explain why there was so much trapping of beaver," said Superintendent Wellington, seeking to guide Abbi's presentation a little.

"It was because it was all the fashion in Britain and Europe – the fur was made into hats mostly."

"Continue on," said Superintendent Wellington.

"Well everyone knows that in some places beavers are all gone, and in some places rare, but nobody does much about it. So when one day I found a trap set for my beavers, I took the trap away, and I put up a sign saying 'Beaver trapping not allowed here'. But Mr. Loggerman said that may not be enough, since most trappers would know that nobody owned that part. Mr. Loggerman said: 'You see, the area of the beaver dam is not part of our property. It is public land, and the government allows trapping.' I asked him 'Couldn't you buy it?', and he said 'It would be a difficult process. And how would I use a beaver pond? A better idea would be to tell the government to protect the beavers everywhere they are rare. If men are trying to trap these ones, they will also be trying to trap any located elsewhere.' So that is what I did. I decided to write to the Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada, Mr. John A. MacDonald. Well after some weeks a letter came

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back from the Prime Minister, and I brought the letter here in my apron pocket.” She took it out. “Here is what the Prime Minister wrote:

‘Dear Abigail,

I was very impressed by your letter, especially your ability to express yourself and your fine penmanship, considering you are only nine years old. I was also moved by your concern about the survival of our country’s beaver population in some regions in the face of continued trapping of this animal, especially since it is Canada’s animal symbol. While in some more remote parts of the Dominion of Canada, there are plenty, I have heard that in the east beavers are rare and in some places nonexistent as a result of being trapped to extinction. Thus I agree with you that the beaver should be protected in some parts. I will forward your letter to the Premier of New Brunswick and direct him to look at the matter there. In the meantime, you have by my authority, the right to designate the beaver pond about which you are concerned, a protected area. Feel free to use this letter as your authority. I hope that the beaver family in your pond produces numerous babies, and they multiply. Please continue to be concerned about issues such as this. It is very good to see young people interested in the circumstances they will inherit in our great land.

Sincerely, John A. MacDonald, Prime Minister of Canada”

Abbi continued: “I informed Mr. Wilson at the Pinewood General Store, and soon the news about my receiving the letter spread far and wide and trappers did not dare to trap at our beaver pond again. I added to my sign the words ‘by authority of Prime Minister MacDonald of the Dominion of Canada”

“Very good, Abigail,” said Superintendent Wellington. “You can see children that even a girl can influence the government. Don’t be afraid to speak up if you see something not right. Now let’s look at the beaver more closely. After all, we have a stuffed beaver to look at, which represents its external appearance. Being stuffed he

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would be straw and twine inside. This is far better than a picture in a book. So may I suggest Abigail explains the details of Amik, and then you can all come up and look more closely.”

“Well, the most important thing about the beaver,” continued Abbi, “is that it has sharp teeth that can even cut down trees. Even big trees. See these sharp teeth? He gnaws off piece after piece going round and round the trunk till the tree topples over.”

“Explain why it gnaws down big trees, Abigail,” said Superintendent Wellington.

“Well for two reasons. First of all, it likes to eat the bark of the branches up high, so by cutting the tree down, it can get at the branches. The second reason is that when the big trees have fallen, the sun can reach the ground and very soon a whole crop of saplings sprouts, and beavers like that too. They are like farmers in that respect. And like farmers too, they collect branches and store them under the water in front of their lodges to eat through the winter.”

“Do they eat the branches?” a boy asked.

“Not all of it. They like the inner bark of certain trees like poplar. Then they use it as construction material.”

“What does it taste like?” a girl asked.

“I tried it. It tastes very bitter and feels like eating sawdust. So I suppose it gets getting used to eating bark. And humans can’t digest it like beavers can.”

“Explain why the beavers make dams, Abigail,” said Superintendent Wellington, guiding her again.

“The beavers make dams because usually the water where a creek runs is shallow. By damming the creek valley, they can create a pond deep enough so they can build lodges and to swim about under the ice during the winter. The trees die where the water rises, and soon fall over, leaving a large pond. If the beavers leave the area and the dam breaks, the result is a pretty meadow called a ‘beaver meadow’ Animals that like grasses and meadow plants benefit from it.”

“Now continue pointing out some of its features, Abigail.”

“Well you can see from this stuffed beaver, since it is posed sitting up and holding a small twig, that its hands are

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suitied for picking up a branch to chew on. And here we see his back feet are webbed so he can propel himself through the water. His tail helps him to swim and steer. Also, when a beaver is swimming and senses danger, it will dive so that it slaps his tail on the water to warn other beavers.”

“Alright, children,” said Superintendent Wellington. “Come up to look more closely at the beaver, and ask Abbi any further questions.”

And so it went. Abbi was suddenly a celebrity, quite the opposite of yesterday when she was teased for being an Indian. Abbi thought it would be fine to be a teacher, even a professor at a university, one day. She had enjoyed teaching the children about Amik and wouldn’t mind being a professor. But, considering again what Audora Woodrow had told her, would the world have such a place for her given she was a girl and an Indian?

Abbi and Amik were a hit. The boys who had teased her were actually *impressed* with her now. She had done things that many a boy can only *dream* of doing! They even nearly forgot she was a girl. The children studied Amik and beavers generally throughout the morning. After Abbi had finished, Superintendent Wellington lead a discussion about how the beaver dam was constructed, then the nature of a beaver lodge, showing on the blackboard how their entrance came into it from under the water. He even taught from a book about when the beavers had their babies and how many, something Abbi did not yet know, herself.

Soon it was lunchtime, where they all made sandwiches from five loaves of bread Matron Gorda had baked that morning. Then came the afternoon practical sessions. The boys went out back to learn how to repair wagons, and the girls remained in the main hall, and learned table manners for formal occasions and practiced them. And then there was some free time, then supper, then doing some school assignments. Abbi learned the routine very fast! She assumed some chores and joined in with the other girls right away. That was her nature: new experiences were thrilling and she wasn’t shy one bit from getting involved right away!

Feeling very close to Amik, she was careful not to

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forget about him and leave him somewhere. After all in her dream when she had fasted on the ridge near the Loggermans, Amik had said to her 'Don't forget me'. She had interpreted that dream as indicating he was important to her as he had been to her adoptive Papa. It probably meant she should become a scholar like her adoptive Papa had been after work in his study. Thus, it was very important she keep him with her. When, that evening, she was certain all the children had had enough chance to look at him while he sat on the window sill, she took him back upstairs and put him again in the trunk under her bed. Before going to sleep, and after wishing a 'Goodnight' to Peggy in the next bed over, she peeked under the bed, and said in an inaudible whisper 'Goodnight Amik'. Although she would have denied it vehemently if someone had suggested it, Amik truly was becoming a little bit of a teddy bear for her – something that gave her comfort and security. It was moreover a connection to her adoptive Papa, who she hoped was still alive somehow in spite of tumbling into the roaring gorge of the upper Saint John River.

Matron Helen turned down the gas lights – only a small one remained if a girl needed to go to the washrooms. As Abbi lay in her bed awaiting restful sleep, she took the opportunity of reviewing this day in her mind.

All in all, the second day had gone very well. And her teaching the class about the beaver had revived her aspirations about being a professor. But was it even possible? Was she deceiving herself? What if what Audora had told her about being both a woman and an Indian in these times being the worst possible way to be, was true? When she thought of it in the darkness of the dorm, she noted again that she had never heard of any famous women Indians. Perhaps she will have to forget about her aspirations of being a professor and face a dimmer reality. It seemed Madam Woodrow was right about not elevating her expectations too high. She sighed and turned over on her side. Was there any hope for an Indian girl being like her former Papa as her dream during her vision quest suggested? Of studying in university? Of doing great research into Indian ways? Of writing scholarly papers? Or of being a famous author for that matter? Or an actress

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like she had been when playing *Aggodagauda's* daughter in the poem-play several years ago? Or of becoming a famous poet writing Glooscap legends into verse like she had done while at the Loggertmans? Of being well known, like perhaps Mr. Longfellow? Was there any hope at all!!!!??? ... And yet her Indian fast, or Vision Quest, where an Indian youth receives guidance, which involved the dream in which Amik says 'Don't forget me', had suggested this was still the direction she should go – that her path lay in doing scholarly work like her adoptive Papa had done in his study with Amik on his desk.

Next day dawned bright and early and the morning routine of getting up, dressing, and washing was repeated. Abbi was impressed by the fancy washroom facilities with all the mirrors and porcelain. She however missed running down to the river as the sun came up, and visiting the beavers.

Matron Priscilla came up just as Abbi and Peggy were ready to go downstairs. "Wait a moment Abbi," she said. "I did as I promised you a couple days ago ... Peggy, continue downstairs. Abbi will join you in a minute."

Peggy continued downstairs as Matron Priscilla sat down on Peggy's bed to talk to Abbi.

"What is it Matron Priscilla?"

"I promised I'd try to find an example of a famous person who appears to have Indian origins. I succeeded."

"You did, Matron Priscilla?" replied Abbi, her eyes widening.

"It was an interesting evening pursuit after I had put my aged mother to bed."

"What did you find?"

"Fact is, there have for some time been shows and entertainments featuring Indian women, many acted by women who weren't even Indian. I suspected that a real Indian woman wishing to be a genuine professional actress would probably want to avoid being stereotyped—that means to avoid only playing an Indian woman. So I also read texts written about regular actresses whose facial features in their photographs seemed they could be Indian. I found an article about the famous actress of the stage who is called 'Ophelia Summer'. That's obviously a stage name, among other stage names she has used. Her original

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name is unknown. The old article said that she began when she was very young, playing Indian women's parts in entertainments which involved Indians. But, because – I think – she became fed up with the stereotype Indian woman roles, she decided to hide the fact she was Indian and looked for parts with women of dark skin and black hair – Mediterranean women, Egyptian, Persian, Chinese.... She has even played dark haired French and English women successfully.”

“Tell me more” said Abbi. She had sat on her own bed facing Matron Priscilla, and was full of anticipation.

Matron Priscilla continued: “With only small changes like curling her hair, nobody would know she was an Indian, and today she is famous. Now few people know she is actually Indian, nor really care if they know. And with wigs, she can even have another colour hair.”

“I would be thrilled to see what she looks like, Matron Priscilla”

“I then remembered I had a photo post-card of this actress. I picked it up myself years ago when she performed in a touring play that was at the Royal Richdale Theatre near here for a week. She doesn't look at all Indian in the photo, I think because she made her hair very curly for the photograph.”

Matron Priscilla took out the postcard from a pocket in her uniform. It was one of those late 19th century photo-postcards to promote people and places, famous performers and tourist destinations. Photography was a wonderful new development at that time; but methods for printing photographs on printing presses had not yet matured; so instead, studio laboratories, operating almost like small factories, produced large quantities of copies of photos by regular photographic development means. And it was these photographically developed copies that were sold as cards—to promote all sorts of things which benefited from photographic realism—from tourist scenes to famous people, including celebrities of the stage.

Abbi took it from Priscilla and looked at it with wide eyes. “Yes, Matron Priscilla,” she said. “I can easily imagine her to have an Indian heritage. Oh she is beautiful. You've given me hope.”

The photo-card showed the actress Ophelia Summer

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glamorously dressed and lighted. It was quite a close view of her so that one could definitely see her face. And at the bottom of the photograph was written “Ophelia Summer”. And then elsewhere was written the name and address of the photography studio that had created it.³⁴



“Can I keep it? Can I please keep it? At least for a little while?” Abbi pleaded. “Even if she curls her straight raven black hair, it is still special to know she is actually Indian, and that she has managed to become famous in spite of it.”

“Yes you can keep it for a while. But I am a fan of hers too, so don’t lose it.”

These were the days before movies, when theatre was a major popular entertainment, and the famous actors and actresses came from the world of theatre. Their fame developed from attention and reviews in newspapers and magazines throughout the land, helped along by their own agents creating additional advertising and promotion that was multiplied thousands of times on printing presses.

³⁴ The artistically developed appearance of the card illustrated here is inspired from real cards of this kind made in New York in the late Victorian era.

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“Do you think she might be playing near here such as in Saint John soon? Do you think I might actually be able to see her some day?”

“It’s very possible, Abbi. Theatre is very popular here in Richdale, and also in Saint John. Richdale is a district of wealthy people. They follow the latest in theatre and other arts and entertainments, rivaling anything appearing in Saint John, the *properly* big city 15 minutes from here by carriage. Because of the wealth and culture here, even though Richdale is small, famous plays that normally might only appear in the largest cities, often come here to the Royal Richdale Theatre because theatre here has a healthy following. Besides, it is not too far from Saint John and plays that come here count on attracting audiences from Saint John too.”

“Oh, it would be my utterly highest dream, just to meet an actress, let alone one who has endured the same experiences as me on account of being Indian,” said Abbi.

“Now put all those thoughts from your mind about being limited in life because you are an Indian and a girl. Here is proof that everything is possible if you put your mind to it!”

“Yes, Matron Priscilla.”

“Come let us go for breakfast.”

They made their way down the stairs, Abbi clutching the precious card. Abbi said as they went, “Thank you, Matron Priscilla for discovering this actress and letting me have this photograph-card for a while. I will look at it whenever I become depressed about my lot in life, to lift my spirits. I intend one day to be a successful scholar and teacher in spite of being a woman and Indian. She gives me inspiration.” She put the card in the breast pocket of her apron.

Abbi joined Peggy at the vacant chair Peggy had saved for her as Superintendent Wellington was about to start the Lord’s Prayer. When done he now addressed the children: “Welcome children to a new day. You all realize that you are here courtesy of the charity of Richdale Women’s Charitable Society, who convey to you, as always, good luck towards getting into a nice adoptive home, and best wishes for your education and future success. I told you yesterday that this morning we would

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have a very special announcement, plus two guests. This special announcement concerns something inspiring to look forward to, as a break to the dull monotony of day-to-day chores and schooling, not to mention the monotony of winter itself as there are two months of it more to come. I'm talking about the Richdale Winter Skating Carnival. The Richdale Women's Charitable Society has always involved the Orphan Home in their annual Richdale Winter Skating Carnival. It has become a fundraiser for the Orphan Home in much the same way as the Annual Picnic has, that we hold in the summer. A few of you who unfortunately are still with us from last year, will know what I am talking about. Midwinter skating carnivals are popular these days in many cities. Thousands of people attend them dressed up in sometimes bizarre costumes evoking characters from news and literature. Even though Richdale is a smaller place, the society of wealthy families here has endeavoured to have their own midwinter carnival, at their own Richdale Exhibition Hall and Rink for two years, now drawing many attendees from Saint John as well. Who here – who wasn't here last year – has heard about winter skating carnivals?" A couple of children raised their hands. Superintendent Wellington saw Abbi raise her hand. "Abbi? Tell us what you know."

Abbi stood up: "I've seen illustrations in '*Canadian Illustrated News*'. There was a picture one time on the cover of one in Montreal which celebrated the marriage of Princess Louise and Marquis something-or-other. I also recently saw an illustration that showed one in Saint John a couple of winters ago. Madam Woodrow said she was there. I've always wanted to attend one." Abbi then sat down.

"Yes the Saint John carnival is what inspired our Richdale event. 'We have to have one too', said the board of directors of the Richdale Women's Charitable Society. 'It would be a fine use of our modest sized Exhibition Hall in winter,' they said. And so it was started, and now it draws attendees from beyond Richdale, indeed from Saint John itself, as I said. Ours is more intimate than the other skating carnivals because it is smaller, and that makes it all the better. From the admission charge, it raises much-needed funds for running this Orphan Home. What will

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interest you, is that you, the Orphan Home children, will all attend too. Some of you may never experience something like this again as it is a city affair. It is attended, as I said, by practically everyone in Richdale and more from Saint John and wherever else people have the ability to come from in the surrounding areas during winter. You will be there because we must show you off and draw attention to the Orphan Home that this event is supporting. Many adoptions and further private donations arise from our showing you off to the attendees. And we have in the past two years encouraged children here to fashion costumes for themselves and join the skating instead of being purely spectators. This year will be no different. We *want* the children to be in costumes like most everyone else. Unfortunately without devoting special attention to costume-making, the improvised costumes of the children have been somewhat disappointing so far. We'd like to draw attention to you more. This year, to encourage even finer costumes, we plan to make costume-making part of the girls' practical lessons in the next couple of weeks leading up to the carnival. We should, this year, arrive at superb costumes that will draw the attention of all attendees and possibly even result in some adoptions, since dressmaking ability is highly valued these days, given that much attention is given to fashion, especially among the wealthy women of the area."

An excited buzz went through the table of girls. Superintendent Wellington continued: "As for the boys, clothes-making is *not* something for which the boys are trained here, nor do many find any interest in it; so it's not practical to create a costume competition for them. Still, boys are encouraged to improvise costumes for themselves too like last year, and participate in the general competitions for boys costumes, if they choose. Fortunately most male costumes are more easily improvised and do not demand as much design and sewing. But you boys will have a separate creative challenge too. In the afternoons while the girls are busy making their costumes, I will lead you boys in the designing and erecting of all that is required at the Rink in a practical sense, for the event - making benches, setting up the stage, adding decorations, and so on. We will look for

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ideas that will give the event an exciting and festive air that is fresh and different, compared to previous years. We want the attendees to experience something new every year.”

Animated chatter now went through the tables of children, as they absorbed and reacted to what Superintendent Wellington was saying.

He continued: “While I have been talking we have just now been joined by two ladies from the Richdale Women’s Charitable Society.” The children turned to notice two women who had entered and had been standing near the entrance for a minute. “They are here to explain further what’s in store. I’ll let the chairwoman of the Richdale Skating Carnival committee, Mrs. Cumberland, explain to you further.”

Mrs. Cumberland made her way to the front of the children.

Abbi saw a cheery, bubbly mid-age woman. She had light curly short brown hair and bright-coloured clothing. She paused to survey the children and to build a sense of anticipation in her audience.

“Good morning, children,” she said as cheerily as the morning sun that came in from the east-facing windows of this hall. “How are we all today?”

“Fine, Mrs. Cumberland,” the children replied more or less in unison. They knew her already from her dropping by often as a volunteer.

“I don’t want to keep you children from your breakfast so I’ll be as brief as possible. Superintendent Wellington has just revealed to you who were not here a year ago, which is over half of you, all about this wonderful annual event that we have here in Richdale in midwinter, which results in much support from the business community of Richdale for the charitable activities of the Richdale Women’s Charitable Society, and in particular this Orphan Home.” She looked at Superintendent Wellington, and clasping her hands, expressed glee at new developments entertained for this year’s festival, already touched upon by Superintendent Wellington. She continued: “Well, in our never-ending quest to make our winter carnival ever better, this year we are adding to the fare of attendees skating about and showing off their costumes, a

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competition just for you children—well, at least the girls. The costumes you will make and show off at the event, will be judged and a winner selected during the carnival. Doesn't that sound exciting children?"

A contest! Mrs. Cumberland's gleeful energy was infectious. She continued. "How did we come upon this idea? One of the objectives here at the Orphan Home is to teach the girls as much as we can in the art of sewing, whether for mending or making clothing. Thus, we thought, why not make the costume-making a more serious matter, make it part of the girls' educational program here? First you will determine which girls are the most skilled at skating to wear the costume created, and then form teams with them to design and create the costume. What better advertising for your abilities than that? Let's draw attention to you. I dare say some of the audience might snatch up an orphan or two right then and there upon seeing the demonstrated skills!"

She chuckled merrily.

She continued: "Therefore, I have asked Matron Priscilla, for all the days up until the event, to devote the girls' afternoon practical lessons to making costumes and preparing the performance that will show it off. And needless to say I expect to see some lovely examples of costumes. Oh, I shouldn't talk any more, as you are all hungry for breakfast. I and Mrs. Darville – who volunteers here from time to time and you know already – just thought we would drop in here at the Orphan Home personally to give you, especially the girls, this good news. I hope it will bring some fresh excitement to your lessons, at least for a couple of weeks."

Superintendent initiated clapping from the students, and then said: "Thank you Mrs. Cumberland and Mrs. Darville for coming by. You are sure to see some absolutely splendid costumes at the Skating Carnival! Should we inform the children of an additional treat at this year's carnival?"

"Of course, of course. Thank you for reminding me, Superintendent Wellington. This year, children, we are fortunate to have obtained a special guest of honour to open our carnival, a genuine celebrity to generally brighten up the event, but also draw in the crowds and

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raise much money. This year we will have as our feature guest the world-famous actress Ophelia Summer. This is possible only because by remarkable coincidence a touring theatrical production in which she is the lead actor will be playing at the Royal Richdale Theatre at the same time as our Skating Carnival. This play is called '*Stranger in a Winter Landscape*' derived from the famous book. The play has been traveling from city to city throughout Canada and the United States for the past year. I'm sure that any children among you who have an interest in plays will be thrilled about that!"

Abbi's heart nearly leaped into her throat. This was the actress whose photo she had in her pocket that Matron Priscilla had given her! And wasn't that the name of the play the same as the book Jeffery, the Loggerman's handyman had given her as a gift? She had read it so many times! What an extraordinary coincidence! She sneaked the photo-card out of her pocket to look at it. Yes it was the same name, "Ophelia Summer". She put the photo back into her pocket. She thought it wise to keep this fact secret, especially the fact that Ophelia Summer might be Indian. She did not want to be teased again.

"Well, goodbye, children," said Mrs. Cumberland. "Now eat your breakfast; and we'll see you in your lovely costumes and skates in a few weeks. I will be looking forward to it, and so will all of us at the Richdale Women's Charitable Society."

The two women left, and the buzz of excitement rose again up and down the tables of children. Superintendent Wellington tapped his yardstick on the table for the children's attention.

"Well, then," he said, "although the boys are somewhat excluded from the formal costume competition, unless someone has an interest in the art of the tailor, there is plenty for the boys to do, as I already stated earlier. Everyone, both boys and girls, of course may skate at the Carnival if they wish, whether costumed or not, whether entering a competition or not, as the wearing of costumes at such events is generally voluntary—costumes ranging from mere improvised ones to well tailored ones. For those of you who were not here last year, I should point out that we have a good supply of skating blades that can

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be affixed to your boots with leather straps, and you can practice your skating on the pond at the back of the property that the boys prepare and maintain. Now, I think our porridge has been cooling quite enough, and it is time to begin our breakfast. Everyone, line up to take your bowls into the kitchen to fetch your porridge.”

Superintendent Wellington sat down. Matron Priscilla stood up and added the following comment. “Girls, we will get organized for costume making this afternoon.”

The children, like yesterday, took their bowls to the kitchen to have porridge ladled into them by girls whose responsibility it was today and then returned to the tables where everything else was in reach in pitchers or plates.

Matron Priscilla stopped Abbi for a moment. “How fortunate for you, Abbi,” she said. “I knew about the costume-making competition, but I didn’t know about Ophelia Summer attending. I haven’t seen any advertisements in the newspaper yet either about her coming with the play. It is still too early for advertisements. It is still some weeks off.”

“Please don’t mention it to anyone that you found she is probably Indian, Matron Priscilla,” said Abbi in a whisper. “I don’t want to be teased again.”

“My mouth is sealed.” Matron Priscilla promised.

As she ate, Abbi imagined being at the event and meeting Ophelia Summer. Her heart was going a mile a minute. She would be in the very same place as the very woman whose picture she had in her pocket at that very moment. She might even have a chance to get close to her and talk to her! Despite her excitement, she vowed to control herself, and not exclaim her thrill to everyone, for fear of jinxing it. She would keep it to herself as much as she could. Matron Priscilla had promised to keep quiet about it. She didn’t want to make a fool of herself before the event, be teased, and then be disappointed on top of everything if a meeting for some reason never came about. But she was bursting to tell someone, and Peggy beside her could be trusted.

“Peggy,” she said, pausing half-way through her porridge, and with a tone as if she was about to reveal a most important secret. “I haven’t had a chance to tell you, because you were already down here when Matron

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Priscilla came to me this morning. Look!" She took the photo out of her pocket. "Matron Priscilla just gave me this photo card this morning. It's the same woman that Mrs. Cumberland mentioned, the one that will be at the Carnival! Matron Priscilla said she discovered she is Indian in origins, even though she is like any other famous actress of the theatre playing every kind of role. Matron Priscilla thinks most people don't even know she has Indian origins."

Peggy studied the card. "That's the woman who will attend?"

"Yes, Peggy, it's the same woman Mrs. Cumberland just mentioned—Ophelia Summer! The name written on the card is exactly the same as Mrs. Cumberland mentioned! Imagine! She is an Indian just like me!"

"She's beautiful," said Peggy.

"But don't tell anybody, Peggy. Matron Priscilla promised not to tell. I don't want the children to tease me if I betray all my excitement about her. They'll start their war-whooping again."

"Well I can see how wonderful it might be for you if she is genuinely an Indian woman!" said Peggy supportively, as she gave it back. Abbi put it back in the breast pocket of her apron that was close to her heart.

As the children and staff carried on with their breakfast, discussion continued throughout the children's tables about the upcoming Richdale Skating Carnival. The children who had been at the Orphan Home since last year, and who had experienced the last Carnival, were queried intensely by all the newer residents. There was general agreement among them that it was a really enjoyable event, perfect for breaking the gloom of early February.

Abbi was now very happy, quite the opposite of how she felt when she had arrived and had been teased. With the costume-making and the prospect of actually seeing an actress who was also Indian, being at the Orphan Home was completely the opposite of the gloomy existence she had at first imagined she would face here! For *now* at least. She did not know how it would be later after the Carnival was over.

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SOME ENJOYABLE DAYS, ORPHAN HOME

When the afternoon came, after an hour of leisure following the morning classes and lunch, the boys were taken elsewhere by Superintendent Wellington while the girls stayed in the main hall again for their afternoon with Matron Priscilla.

“Well, as promised,” said Matron Priscilla to the girls, “we will now put all our other projects aside, and our practical lessons for the next while will be devoted to preparing for the costume and skating competition. The boys will be pursuing other aspects of the event with Superintendent Wellington, but here we girls will give attention to costumes. We shouldn’t all try to make a costume each, as that might be too daunting for some, and there isn’t enough time. We’ll form groups, as Mrs. Cumberland suggested, in which one of you will be the one to wear the costume and skate with it and show it off. First we have to determine who would like to be the costume presenters in the competition – you have to be a good skater and not mind attention upon you – and then next who will be part of her team, in making the costume and preparing the presentation. Therefore, who among you consider yourself good skaters and would like to present? Who have attempted to do figures on the ice – a figure eight, for example? That is what we are looking for. It will help you win if the presenter skates elegantly and does not stumble about. Raise your hands if you think you are bold enough and skilled enough to be the person who will present the costume at the Carnival.”

About six hands went up instantly and the rest looked awkward, willing to let the most enthusiastic ones assume the roles. Abbi was among the quickest to raise her hand.

“Abbi,” said Matron Priscilla, “you can skate?”

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“Yes, Matron Priscilla. When I was living with the Loggermans, last December the children at our school in Pinewood used a frozen pond for skating and we skated during the lunch hour. Mrs. Loggerman found skates she had used when younger, for me. I can do a perfect figure eight backwards. I can also spin.”

“Well, that will impress any judge. Your participation as a competitor would certainly be well received by them too. You girls should know that Abbi has a connection to an important benefactor to the school and member of the Richdale Women’s Charitable Society, businesswoman Madam Audora Woodrow of the Woodrow Timber Company, who has contributed lumber for our woodworking and also financially. It would therefore be a good thing that Abbi present a costume and performance on the ice. Don’t you think so?”

Other girls already knew about Abbi being there because of a wealthy businesswoman. One girl whispered to her neighbour: “Abbi doesn’t really have to be here! Her wealthy businesswoman sponsor put her here as if it was a boarding school, not an orphan home!”

“What did you say, Marcia?”

“Nothing Matron Priscilla. Abbi can be a competitor, but I hope she doesn’t win because of her wealthy businesswoman sponsor. That would be unfair.”

“Of course. But do not begrudge her participating or winning *if* she deserves it, because that would be wrong too. Anyway, it will be fair. From past experience, the judges will not make up their mind themselves, but respond to the clapping and approval voiced by all the public attending the Carnival, when each costume and skater is presented. The audience will decide.”

This was the first time Abbi realized she was seen by the other girls to have special status at the Orphan Home, and also that a portion of the girls didn’t like her for it. It seemed unfair for them to begrudge her, since in her view, the truth of it was that Madam Audora *really* wanted to get rid of her, in spite of appearances, because her son and Jenine had *adopted* her, and she wasn’t really kin like the other children in the Woodrow family, and maybe also because she was Indian. Grandmama Audora, now simply ‘Madam Audora’, since she learned she was adopted, had

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always been dismissive of her when growing up in Littleton, giving most of her attention to the other children, even after her son and his wife protested. Abbi was sure that she wouldn't have been sent to this Orphan Home if she had been actual kin. Audora would certainly have found a real boarding school for girls, at least, and figured out a way for her to remain with her family at Tall Pines. Yes, Abbi concluded in her mind, Madam Audora was doing just enough not to feel guilty. If Papa – her adoptive Papa, Bradden Woodrow – were still around, he would certainly not have allowed his mother to treat her like this. In spite of Madam Audora, Abbi decided in her mind to be determined to make the most of the situation, and costume-making and participating in a real winter skating carnival like she had heard about was just about the best thing that could happen to her right now, especially if she would meet a famous actress who was a celebrity in spite of being of Indian origins! She patted her pocket that contained the postcard picture of Ophelia Summer.

“Alright,” said Matron Priscilla, “Abbi will be *one* costume presenter and skater. Who will become part of Abbi's team for making her costume? We want to closely resemble real life in this project, where you will usually make clothes for people other than yourself.”

Peggy put up her hand, but nobody else.

“Nobody else wants to join Abbi's team?”

“She's not a real orphan,” one complained. “She has someone who can buy her anything. She shouldn't be here.”

Some other girls agreed.

This time Abbi protested. “But I *am* an orphan!” she exclaimed. “My parents died around when I was four months old, and I have now lived in three different places before now – Littleton until I was seven, Fredericton until I was nine, and finally with Mrs. Loggerman at Pinewood in the wilderness. I'm as much an orphan as any orphan! And Madam Audora put me here to get rid of me, I'm sure of it, even if she is paying for me and pretending it is something different than it is.”

“She may be right,” added Matron Priscilla to the other girls. “Abbi *is* an orphan in that her sponsor has directed us also to find her a new home in a rural area ideally with

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some connection to Indians. She clearly is not concerned with keeping Abbi with the Woodrow family in which she grew up, and is not putting Abbi here for just schooling. Madam Audora Woodrow's helping of her, *could* be interpreted as her desire to release herself from responsibility for Abbi now that her son had vanished and she is in charge of his wife and family at her mansion. There is nothing to indicate her support of Abbi will continue, if someone else takes her. But, girls, it is not for us to second-guess or judge the views and actions of our benefactors. The woman *does* occupy a prominent place in Richdale society and her business supports us; and her good will and financial support towards the Orphan Home is admired and respected. Now, who else will become part of Abbi's costume-making team? Nobody else? Nobody else? Three girls is best."

Nobody else responded.

Matron Priscilla continued: "Well I can't force anyone – it would not be enjoyable that way. Very well, Abbi and Peggy will be one team. You two will simply have to work harder. You can go to that table over there now and start thinking about what you would like to make by way of a costume. As for the skating part, we all know that the boys have created a small rink in the back, where the costume presenters can practice after lessons. Now, who is next? Let's form four more teams giving five in all so that each group can have one table each of our five tables. Marcia? You had your hand up a moment ago. You can skate?"

"Yes, Matron Priscilla. I think I can learn some nice figures."

And so Matron Priscilla continued to assemble teams, while Abbi and Peggy withdrew to consider what they would make by way of costume.

When they were away from the others Abbi asked Peggy: "You didn't put up your hand for being a costume-wearer. Don't you want to?"

"I can skate a little but I don't think I could feel comfortable with all that attention. I would dread winning and have a thousand people looking at me. But you seem to have no problem in being the focus of attention. You are a natural attention-getter."

"It has been my lot in life that people have always

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singled me out for attention. I'm used to it. It's because I looked so completely different from the family in which I lived. I don't mind attention if it's in a good way; but I don't like to be teased."

"Anyway," said Peggy, "do you have an idea for a costume? Maybe you could dress like an Indian if you are one."

Abbi sought to make good friends with Peggy, and she her, and they had already begun to take every opportunity to work or learn side by side. Normally it was not always possible since the matrons were often indiscriminate as to what child would work with what child in practical lessons or chores. For this project, Matron Priscilla allowed the girls to assume their own teams, instead of dictating who would work with whom. The girls were glad of that. Abbi could not imagine working on the costume with anyone else than Peggy at this juncture.

"When I was with Mrs. Loggerman," said Abbi, "she helped me make an Indian dress for my fast. I gave it to Minnie, a *Wolastoqiyik* Indian princess. But an Indian dress requires deerskin. There isn't any deerskin here."

"For your what? Gave it to who?"

"For my Indian fast. I'll explain it all later. But without feathers and skins, there is no point in considering dressing me like an Indian ... I know! I think that we should make a costume befitting of the winter theme, a costume of a 'Snow Princess'. Let's imagine a kingdom far in the north, with a castle made of ice, and in that castle is a king, with a daughter known far and wide as the 'Snow Princess'. Now all we have to imagine is how she would be dressed."

"She would probably be dressed in a gown white as snow," began Peggy.

"Yes," continued Abbi, "Her dress would be made of snow-white lacy fabric. And there would be snowflakes on her cuffs and her apron and she'd have to have a crown."

"Some kinds of lace look like frost crystals. We could make snowflakes from lace."

"I can imagine a giant snowflake collar!"

By now the other teams had been formed and all the girls were under way each at their own tables.

Matron Priscilla raised her voice to address all the girls:

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“Girls, girls. The material for our costume unfortunately has to come from the textiles and used clothes that we have available in our textile cupboards and trunks; thus you should all rummage through the boxes of materials and old clothes before you get carried away with your ideas. We can only use existing materials. It is best we take everything out of the boxes and get ideas of how to develop what you find into a costume. We want you to alter existing used clothes and only add new fabric if absolutely necessary. Let’s start by rummaging through what we have to work with.”

The girls rushed to the corner where textiles and trunks of old clothing were stored for the sewing classes, and started pulling them out, tossing them this way and that onto chairs, tables and floor. Peggy and Abbi joined the fray.

“Gosh,” said Peggy, “I hope we can at least find a white dress. If we’re to make a costume for the Snow Princess, we need to start with a white dress.”

“Maybe an old used bridal gown,” said Abbi, “discarded by the bride after the tragic failure of her marriage, to relieve her of memories of what could not be!”

“Oh, Abbi, you always put an imaginative story on everything!” exclaimed Peggy, by now familiar with Abbi’s imaginative nature.

“I suppose my imagination comes from my adoptive Papa who raised me. He had lots of imagination too – when he was in his study away from his work with the railway construction company.”

Within minutes, the girls had all sorts of used clothes extracted from the trunks and boxes in which they had been stored, and spread all over, on the tables, chairs, and even on the floor. Everyone looked for clothes that had some flair and exotic qualities. The drab and simple items were immediately tossed aside.

Matron Priscilla addressed all the girls again: “Don’t grab something without cause, girls. If you can’t explain to me why you have selected a particular item, it has to go back. I don’t want anyone grabbing items or fabric just because they look nice. They must have a purpose in your design *before* you take it. We don’t want you to deprive use of it by another team who really needs it. Finally,

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check with me before you cut something up. I want to make sure it is not an item that is better to be mended and remain what it is, than to be transformed or taken apart.”

“What fortune!” exclaimed Abbi, finding a white bridal dress. “A bridal dress! There was one here! Maybe we can use that. It’s snow white. Can we use this, Matron Priscilla? Our costume is for a Snow Princess.”

Matron Priscilla looked at the dress. “That’s a good idea. There are often Snow Queens or Princesses at such carnivals. It suits the occasion. Let’s see what you have pulled out of the box. It looks like an old bride’s dress. It’s in fairly good shape, and it isn’t practical to repair a bride’s dress. Brides tend to want a brand new dress – unless its passed down. They won’t buy a repaired old one. But it’s meant for an adult, so you’ll have to greatly reduce it to fit you, Abbi.”

“Alas,” said Abbi, “I have not yet experienced my spurt in growth. I am still almost the same size now as I was two years ago! The dress will have to be *greatly* reduced!”

“But then there will be so much white material, and we can make it all puffy and frilly and everything,” said Peggy. “We were thinking, Matron Priscilla, to add lace that is cut to look like snowflakes.”

Matron Priscilla replied: “Well, I think you’ll find lots of lace material that’s worn or torn in our supply. Lace is not repairable. But you can cut the good parts into the shape of snowflakes. That would be a very good way of using up old lace. Look through those boxes there. That’s where we throw old lace.”

Abbi and Peggy began to rummage for lace, and found plenty. Meanwhile Matron Priscilla went on to help some other girls.

“A snowflake has a six-pointed form.” said Abbi to Peggy. “What we need is lace that radiates in six directions. Then we can cut snowflakes out of it. But I doubt anyone makes hexagonal lace. We can only hope. If not, I suppose nobody will notice if we made snowflakes with eight points.”

“Let’s also give you a cape with a hood, and trim it with fur. Look over there – some old rabbit fur muffs that seem to be falling apart. We can cut that up for the fur trim.”

Matron Priscilla addressed all the girls again: “Also,

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girls, we have only three sewing machines. We'll have to arrange to take turns using the machines. But much can be sewn by hand too."

"I know how to operate a sewing machine," Abbi said to Peggy. "My former Mama showed me a few times when I was in Fredericton. She made all her children's clothes. Right now, she's at Audora's mansion called Tall Pines with nothing to do because Audora has hired help to do everything that she used to do. I wish she could return to the countryside where she grew up. She doesn't fit in – as well as not having gotten over her husband's disappearance. Audora said I couldn't talk to her as I would bring back memories that may upset her at this time. The doctor said she only needs some time and rest before she is able to cope better."

"I'm sorry about your adoptive Mama, Abbi. I expect if she was better and in charge she would insist you remain with her."

"She didn't want Audora to send me to the Loggermans last spring, but Madam Audora is very powerful. The only person more powerful than her is her son, Bradden, my adoptive Papa, the one who vanished. He always insisted she let him raise his family his way and for her not to interfere. He managed her fine. I suppose that the only other person stronger than Madam Audora would be Queen Victoria who rules the British Empire"

"Well if your adoptive Papa who fell into the river gorge has not been found, maybe he is still alive, and will come back."

"That's what I'm hoping, although it is difficult to imagine what could have happened for him to completely disappear like that."

"Maybe he is lost in the wilderness and is far from any telegraphy station or even post office."

Abbi too had thought of that and as long as there was no concrete evidence he drowned she was keeping a glimmer of hope alive. But for now, she had to make the best of things, and drive all negative thoughts from her mind. Right now the prospect of making costumes and attending a winter carnival was filling her with great enthusiasm and inspiration. It was easy to forget all her troubles now!

Abbi and Peggy set to work. Abbi removed her apron

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and put the adult bridal gown on over her dress and Peggy began pinning it up and marking it for how much had to be cut off from the bottom or hemmed, how much the waist had to be taken in, and so on. Matron Priscilla came around to give pointers to the different groups of girls.

“Oh I’ve never enjoyed myself so much in a long time, Peggy,” said Abbi as they worked, spreading their work over a whole table. Everyone could use the sill along the windows and *all* five tables in the hall while the boys were not there.

Abbi was anticipating the event already, picturing it in her mind: “I can’t wait for the Carnival, Peggy. I’ll even see the famous actress Ophelia Summer! Perhaps she will talk to me? I can ask her what Indian tribe she is from.”

Abbi stopped to make sure that the photo-card of Ophelia Summer was still in the pocket of her apron.

“What are you doing Abbi?”

“Just making sure my photo-card of Ophelia Summer is still there. I’d hate to have discovered it was not there, and that this is a dream.”

The costume-making for the Richdale Skating Carnival was fully under way. The enthusiasm for it among the girls was so great that some of them worked on their costumes in the evening in the main hall during evening free time! Matron Priscilla had to tell them the next morning not to work on their costumes at the expense of their regular schoolwork. “If you must work on your costumes in the evening free time, do so only when you have completed all your schoolwork assignments.”

ABBI’S TALENT IS RECOGNIZED

The schooling sessions were the standard ones, as set out by the government. Abbi was familiar with the readers they used, too. This morning class was literature and Superintendent Wellington had students read from the readers. When Abbi’s turn came to read from the book out loud, he was surprised how well Abbi read.

“You appear to be able to read far above what is expected for your age, Abbi,” he said.

“That’s because my adoptive Papa, the one who vanished and people think drowned, but I don’t, taught me

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from an early age. He always read and wrote things in his study after getting home from a long day working in railway designing. Whenever I interrupted him he loved to talk to me about things and teach me. He had shelves covering an entire wall filled with books because he went to Harvard University and earned two degrees, first in the arts which means literature, languages, and such, and then in practical science where he learned everything needed to do engineering designing.”

“Well, I can see his intelligence has rubbed off on you. We’ll have to have you read from the reader at a higher level with the older students. It is unusual for an Indian girl to acquire much education these days, and you were lucky to have had such an educated adoptive Papa.”

“Yes, Superintendent Wellington. He was also interested in Indians on account of his being inspired by Henry Longfellow who was his professor of language when he first went to university. Mr. Longfellow then retired to write his long poem about Indians, *The Song of Hiawatha*, and Papa became inspired by it to learn more about Indians and to read the same books that Mr. Longfellow did by a man named Henry Schoolcraft. But eventually Papa realized there was no living to be made as a poet unless you became very famous like Mr. Longfellow, and found another passion in being a railway engineer, and then spent several years learning all the science and mathematics to be that. But alas his railway engineering path has lead to his falling off the trestle bridge into the swirling waters of the mighty Saint John River a year ago.”

“Well he was correct that it is always wiser to pursue the finer arts in one’s spare time. As for his disappearance, you are right not to assume he perished just yet. And the poem you mention is very famous. Since you know a great deal about Indians, and *The Song of Hiawatha*, perhaps we ought to look at *The Song of Hiawatha* when we have our literature class and you can contribute what you know, Abigail. Perhaps that will also teach some of the boys to look at Indians more realistically and respectfully as well. Would you children like to spend one literature class looking at *The Song of Hiawatha* and learning about Indians?”

The children raised their voices approvingly; but then,

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they would have approved *anything* that took them away from the normal boring routine!

Abbi was thrilled! The whole class would be looking at *The Song of Hiawatha*, and they would be discussing it! She wondered what she might learn that she didn't already know. She couldn't wait for the next literature class to come! She hoped Superintendent Wellington would let her recite some passages. She had become very good at reciting from *The Song of Hiawatha*, having done so often to entertain the Loggeman children in past months.

And when English literature class came around again, Superintendent Wellington indeed did that – let Abbi recite from *The Song of Hiawatha*. While Superintendent had the Orphan Home copy of the book, Abbi had her own copy, or rather her adoptive Papa's copy, which she had brought in her trunk when she came. When Abbi took her position at the front of the class, he suggested to her the chapter on Hiawatha's childhood, the one that contained the famous line "By the shores of *Gitche Gumee*" *Gitche Gumee* referring to Lake Superior.

"That is one I almost know by heart," said Abbi. "It is about when Hiawatha was a child. It is a good one for children.

"I agree," replied Superintendent Wellington. "After you have read it, we'll discuss it, class."

She opened the book to Chapter 3 and began to read. After some beginning verses she came to the most popular lines....

*By the shores of Gitche Gumee,
By the shining Big-Sea-Water,
Stood the wigwam of Nokomis,
Daughter of the Moon, Nokomis.
Dark behind it rose the forest,
Rose the black and gloomy pine-trees,
Rose the firs with cones upon them;
Bright before it beat the water,
Beat the clear and sunny water,
Beat the shining Big-Sea-Water.*

*There the wrinkled old Nokomis
Nursed the little Hiawatha,
Rocked him in his linden cradle,
Bedded soft in moss and rushes,*

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*Safely bound with reindeer sinews;
Stilled his fretful wail by saying,
'Hush! the Naked Bear will hear thee!'
Lulled him into slumber, singing,
'Ewa-yea! my little owlet!
Who is this, that lights the wigwam?
With his great eyes lights the wigwam?
Ewa-yea! my little owlet!'*

Abbi continued reciting to the end of chapter 3. [To read the whole text, *The Song of Hiawatha* is readily available in libraries and on the internet.]

When she was done, Superintendent Wellington indicated Abbi to sit down.

“Very good, Abbi. Let us now discuss what Abbi has recited, class What is the first thing you notice about the poetry in *The Song of Hiawatha*, class?”

“It has a beat,” said Marcia.

“Yes. It has a beat that carries you forward. It is suitable for telling a continuing story. *The Song of Hiawatha* is quite long. It is called an epic poem. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow liked to write long storytelling verse, but only *The Song of Hiawatha* uses this meter. Abbi what is the story overall?”

Abbi knew, of course, being so familiar with it. “It is mostly about the life of a man named Hiawatha – his growing up, his adventures, his marriage, and how he became a leader of his people. But my Papa said the stories came from many different legends Mr. Longfellow found in the writings of a man named Mr. Schoolcraft.”

“Yes, the poem is fictional, although drawing from Mr. Schoolcraft’s writings about real legends and myths. Let us discuss the rhythm, the beat. Who can say something about it?”

Abbi put up her hand.

“Yes Abbi, again. You seem to have become an expert at this poem.”

“You have to make each line have eight beats. I tried it when I was at the Loggers. I was able to create my own verse like this.”

“Very good. Perhaps the best way to learn about this kind of verse, is to try it yourself. Shall we try a few lines ourselves – lines with eight beats like Abbi explained. Note

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that it is not necessary to rhyme this kind of verse.”

He went to the blackboard and picked up his chalk.

“I will begin,” he began. He wrote the following:

“*Let’s begin to write some poetry* Is that eight beats?
Let us read it and count the beats. *Let’s be-gin to write
some poet-ry* “

The children counted and agreed,

“Now someone suggest the next line. Abbi you start.”

“*Poet-ry fine and so me-lo-dious*”

“Very good, Abbi. I will write it and then let us read it and count.....”

When he had written it, he had the class repeat it and count.

“Yes it has the eight beats. Anyone else? Try to remain with our theme.”

Someone suggested: “*With a beat like from a drum*”

“Well let’s write it down and count....”

They did so and Abbi said “There are only seven beats.”

“Then how do we fix it Abbi?”

“It would work if we turned the word ‘drum’ into ‘drumming’ which adds a syllable.”

Superintendent Wellington added an -ing to ‘drum’.

“Now let’s test it: *With a beat like from a drum-ing*. That is how to do it. Any other suggestions, Abbi?”

“You can also change words or word order. There are many ways of expressing the same thought.”

“For example....”

“Hmmm,” Abbi thought. “*With a drum beat very moving*”

“Very good. So now that you children know how to do it, I want you children to write at least ten lines about any subject you want. I expect older students to do better than younger. We’ll start it now, and you can work more on it for you homework. Do it now, and let us see who creates the most interesting lines. We’ll take fifteen minutes.”

The children began to write with their chalks onto their slates. They were all counting beats on their fingers.

Abbi raised her hand.

“Yes Abbi?”

“When I was at the Loggermans, I wrote a whole long poem. My Papa once wrote an Ojibwa legend about a man with one leg into a poem, and I decided to write one too

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when I was with the Loggermans. I wrote it about a Glooscap legend from the Micmaq or Maliseet Indians about how the rabbit got its long ears. I found the address of Mr. Longfellow in my Papa's papers, and I sent it to him, along with telling him about how he fell off the bridge. And he wrote back and said it was very good."

"You did? Well good for you! You got comments from the bard himself. You must therefore already know how to do it."

"I have a copy of it in my trunk upstairs."

"Well then, we must hear it. Since you are already an expert, you may be excused to fetch the poem. Perhaps the children will be inspired by it, seeing as it was done by a young person like yourself."

Abbi was elated! Her literary accomplishments were recognized yet again! So far she had only shown it to Mr. Longfellow and a handful of people at Pinewood, such as the teacher there, her friend Mildred, and the Loggermans. She ran upstairs to fetch her poem.

First Superintendent Wellington heard some of the lines created by various students, and discussed them – how to make them better. Finally he said: "Very good class. Now you know how to write this kind of poetry. Abbi, it appears is an expert. She spent many weeks in the summer writing her own story in verse. Shall we have Abbi recite it? You can then see what you can achieve when you put your mind to it.

The class sounded agreement. Abbi stood at the front of the class again.

"It is about how rabbit, who originally had short ears, spread a rumour among the animals that the sun would stop shining and the earth would become cold. The very tall Indian named Glooscap came along and told the animals they were mistaken, and that they had been tricked. He then followed the trail of the rumour back until it was clear it was started by the rabbit. And then he found the rabbit in some bushes and pulled him up by the ears.

"My poem begins in this way:

How Rabbit Got Long Ears

a Glooscap Legend

put into verse by Abbi Woodrow

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Once upon a time in memory,
When the Rabbit's ears were stubby,
When his ears were not so floppy,
Rabbit found the days so boring,
Felt like he should do some mischief,
Play a prank, a joke to fool them,
Fool the creatures of the woodland,
He would tell them, this he'd tell them:
Tell them that the sun is fading,
It will set and there be staying,
Leave the land so dark and freezing,
Like a winter never ending.

Rabbit told the Beaver firstly,
Told him this invented story.
Scared was Beaver, who then scurried
Off to inform all the others.

First the Beaver told the Chipmunk,
Then the Chipmunk told the Squirrel,
Then the Squirrel told the Raccoon,
And so on and on and then when
All the animals had heard this,
Heard the awful, dreadful, story,
They were all so very worried.

"That is awful, that is dreadful,"
Said the creatures of the forest.
"If the sun will stop its shining,
Earth will darken and be chilly.
We must work and strive to prepare,
As we do when winter's coming,
Even though we're still in summer."

Abbi thus continued her recitation from the papers,
feeling very proud of her accomplishment.

[See Chapter 17 for the full poem]

Soon she came to the end which went this way:

"Along came Glooscap walking briskly,
Walking looking for the Rabbit,
Looking this way, looking that way,
Searching for to ask the question.

Glooscap saw a bush start shaking,
Reached his hand right down inside it.
What was there that caused the shaking?
That was what Glooscap was wondering.

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*Felt some ears and then he grasped them,
Pulled to lift them but the Rabbit,
Held to branches and resisted,
Causing Glooscap pull much harder,
Causing ears to stretch and lengthen,
Till the Rabbit stopped resisting,
Up he came from bushes swinging,
By the ears Glooscap was grasping,
Looking red-faced, very foolish.*

*Glooscap now had found the prankster,
Found from whom the rumour started,
Found the liar who caused the mischief,
Found the source of all the trouble!*

*That's the story, that's the legend,
Why the Rabbit's ears are lengthy;
Why the ears of creature hoppy,
Starting short, became so floppy."*

Superintendent Wellington initiated vigorous clapping.

"Very good, Abbi. You did a great deal of work," he said approvingly.

"I must have written it over about ten times," said Abbi. "I could probably write it over some more and make it even better."

"Very good. You show the children that perseverance will lead to results. Very good work. I think we can excuse you from the homework of writing ten lines of verse in this fashion, if you'll help other students with theirs. Children, if you have difficulties, you may consult Abbi. She appears to know how it is done."

Abbi was so happy, she could hardly bear it. Being at *this* Orphan Home was absolutely wonderful!!

RIVALRIES

The Richdale Winter Carnival was only a week away, and the girls worked diligently, sometimes in their enthusiasm carrying it on into the evening and, as we said, neglecting schoolwork assignments.

Rivalries were developing between the groups of girls. While Abbi and Peggy were developing a costume suited to an imagined princess living in an arctic castle of ice, other girls were making costumes based on characters in

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various children's books. They were: Little Red Riding Hood, Jack Frost, Old Mother Hubbard, and Little Miss Muffet.

"I'm sure to win," said Marcia, the leader of Abbi's major rival group. "My costume is much better sewn than yours. Look at all your poor workmanship! We have better sewing skills than you and Peggy."

"We'll see," Abbi replied. "Matron Priscilla said that the decision will be from the strength of applause from the spectators when we skate out and present ourselves. So it's not just a question of how well the costume is made, but the *overall effect* of each of our presentations."

"Ha, ha," laughed the rival girls. "We hope you fall flat on your face!"

"No I won't," said Abbi. "I can skate. Anyway, I have been practicing every day on the ice in the back pond with Peggy."

"Well, we'll see who is the better skater, Abbi. I skated all winter in the last home in which I lived. I'm sure the attendees will like my costume and figure skating better!"

Later, when Abbi was outside at the pond in the back with Peggy, she was having doubts about her ability to perform on skates strongly enough to leave an impression. Sitting on a bench, Abbi attached the skating blades to the bottom of her boots with the leather straps used for that purpose: "I wish we had proper skates, with blades properly attached to boots, Peggy. These strap-on blades do not always stay straight."

"We'll just have to make sure the blades are sharp and the straps are tight before you perform, Abbi," said Peggy. "You won't fall. You won't be leaping like some men and boys try to do."

There were a few other children skating around, not just some rival girls, but boys too. A boy skated past and did an impressive leap into the air and came down without falling. He then came over to Abbi and Peggy to tease them. "You're lucky, Abbi, that they don't have competition between boys and girls. Otherwise I'd win over you, handily, in skating. Did you see my jump?"

"Judges do not expect girls or ladies to jump. It isn't lady-like. Anyway, who would want to see a Snow Princess jump!" Abbi, having her skates on now, got up

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from the bench. "Watch me! I've mastered the twirl." She went out onto the ice. "Look. You start your spin with arms out, and then you pull your arms inward and it increases your spin."

Abbi did a demonstration, but, becoming dizzy she lost her balance and fell down. A group of the rival girls skated by and laughed at her.

"I just got dizzy!" Abbi retorted.

"Come, Abbi," said Peggy. "Ignore the teasing. You'll do fine." She helped Abbi to her feet.

"I became dizzy, Peggy," Abbi repeated.

"With practice, you won't get dizzy, Abbi," replied Peggy. "The judges will be impressed if you finished your presentation with a spin."

The boys and girls practiced their spins, jumps, and figures every evening, each attempting to outdo the other. Costumed or not, they could all show off their skating skills at the Carnival.

The normal routines of having dinner, taking a break in the evening, going to sleep, getting up, having breakfast, doing assigned chores, taking morning lessons, having a midday break, ... all continued in the normal fashion; but everything seemed to fly by for the girls in anticipation of the afternoon sessions of costume-making.

The boys similarly looked forward to the projects Superintendent Wellington led them in preparations at the rink. While the girls were bent over their costume-making, the boys went over to the Richdale Exhibition Hall that was a rink in winter, in the orphanage's wagons, to plan and design the décor. Since only six boys from last year were still at the Orphan Home, it was all very new for most of them and Superintendent Wellington allowed fresh ideas to emanate from them instead of having the boys repeat what they had done the previous year.

"The exhibition hall is so ordinary and drab," said a boy named Gary when the boys and Superintendent Wellington first gathered in the Richdale Exhibition Hall/Rink to plan what they were going to do. "All attendees can see are the flags and coats of arms along the balcony and the picture of Queen Victoria at the end."

"Well we cannot remove those. They come with the exhibition hall," said Superintendent Wellington. "But we

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can certainly temporarily add decorations to distract from the regular decor.”

“We could have lots of flags that look like icicles and have them hanging on ropes from above.” Another boy named William suggested.

Lots of ideas were thrown about, but they had to be practical and possible to achieve with their modest budget.

And so it went. The days flew by.

Abbi could not believe that being at the Orphan Home could be so enjoyable. It was wonderful here! It was as if everything she had ever wanted was coming true in spite of the fact that her adoptive grandmother had sent her here to get rid of her. It was ironic, she thought. Her adoptive grandmother’s actions had now twice resulted in benefiting her in a way she could not have expected – first by sending her to the Loggermans she was able to learn about Indians, and by sending her to this orphan home she was able to realize her dream of attending a real winter skating costume carnival like she had seen on the cover of the *Canadian Illustrated News*. She had seen that illustration of one in Montreal when she was six, and had asked the man she knew as Papa, if she could keep the illustration. He had cut it out and put it in a frame and on her wall for a while. This was a long time ago, when they were living in Littleton. One evening as the girls were preparing for bed, she realized she had the picture from the cover in her trunk with her belongings without its frame. It was now in a folder in the middle of other papers for protection. She wanted to look at it again to refresh her memory about what a Winter Carnival was like!

“What do you have there, Abbi?” asked Peggy from the next bed.

She showed it to Peggy. “It’s a clipping of a cover from *Canadian Illustrated News* some years ago that my Papa let me keep. It used to be in a frame. It is getting worn because I’ve kept it since I was six, Peggy.”

Peggy saw the image that showed a couple in the center of the rink.

“It depicts an actual event in Montreal,” explained Abbi, “at their Victoria Hall. The woman and man in the center, Papa said, are actors who are depicting the marriage of Princess Louise and Marquis of Lorne. Princess Louise is

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the second youngest daughter of Queen Victoria. I've always pretended I was there skating around. The rink here in Richdale is probably much smaller, but I'm fine with that."

"Yes, Abbi," said Peggy studying the illustration. "It looks like a very big rink. Richdale's rink is probably less than half the size."

After they had studied and commented on it enough, Abbi took it back and returned it to her folder of letters and writings she kept in her trunk along with Amik and the *Song of Hiawatha* and some other books belonging to her adoptive Papa that she had taken with her to the wilderness and still had with her.

The girls then got into bed and under the covers, anticipating Matron Helen soon arriving to put out the lights.

After a moment, Peggy remarked, "Your poem about how the rabbit got long ears, which you read when we had the literature class about *The Song of Hiawatha* was very good. You should become a poet like Mr. Longfellow. I can even imagine for the Carnival we could have made a rabbit costume and pantomimed the legend while I was reading your poem. We could start with short ears that, when pulled, become long."

"I don't know Peggy," said Abbi gazing from her bed at the ceiling. "I thought of it but I think the rabbit in the Indian legend I used is a boy rabbit, a mischievous boy. It doesn't behave much like a girl rabbit. Besides I think you are too small to play the part of Glooscap even for a moment. Glooscap was I think almost seven feet tall. If we were boys then I think a costume about Glooscap and the rabbit would have been perfect. I think we made the right decision in making our costume a Snow Princess. "

"Yes Abbi, the Glooscap story about a rabbit might be more suited for an Easter carnival, if there was one," concluded Peggy.

Matron Helen clapped her hands to signal all the girls in the dormitory stop their chatting and get into bed, and turned off the gas lights, leaving only a small one burning in order to get to the washrooms.

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RICHDALE SKATING CARNIVAL ARRIVES

Then finally the big day arrived. It was now the second Sunday of February. The Richdale Winter Skating Carnival unfolded on schedule, ready to receive all the Richdale socialites coming together under the roof of the Richdale Exhibition Hall, now transformed into the Rink. Many more were expected to come in their carriages from Saint John as well.

The day before the event, with weather well below freezing, water had been added to the ice surface to give it a fresh surface that was mirror smooth.

The Orphan Home children were shepherded to the rink in several groups by Superintendent Wellington and the matrons. Since they had a special role at the Skating Carnival, the children arrived early. Besides the Orphan Home children, others who arrived early included the members of the Richdale Regimental Band who would supply the music.

Upon arrival, the children were directed to a specified section to the side of the ice, and told to keep together in the same area. Raised benches had been constructed for them so they could see and be seen. The costume wearers among the children had put on their costumes at the Orphan Home, and come with their coats and hats on top, to be removed on arrival. Those wishing to skate were permitted to put on their skate blades and test the ice, while the final preparations of the skating carnival were being made.

Abbi hastened to strap the blades onto her boots. She

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kept her coat on top of her costume for now.

She stepped out onto the mirror-smooth, freshly made ice, with barely any streaks in it yet. She pushed off with her skates but stayed close to where all the other children were. As she practiced skating, she studied the setting in which the Richdale Skating Carnival was to be held. She saw they were inside a large building with a high ceiling. There was a narrow balcony going around, midway up, all around the sides. There weren't any spectator seats back then since such events were not spectator events. Attendees were participants. However at every such event there were always many anyway who hung around the sides to socialize and observe.

From the balcony railings, flags of every kind, but particularly the Union Jack, flag of Canada, and flag of New Brunswick, were draped over the side, so they were visible from below. At the end, on the balcony railing part, there was a picture of Queen Victoria—the same print, she thought, that she had seen in many other institutional walls. It must have been printed in the thousands, she thought. The Richdale Regimental Band was settled in with their instruments on the balcony above the Queen.

At the other end of the Rink, where the entrances were, there was a big clock. Windows on all the walls let in daylight. When it was dark outside, such rinks and halls employed gas lighting. But this particular event was on Sunday afternoon, so no gas lighting was required. There was certain to be a limelight spotlight here up on the balcony at the end, Abbi thought. She had never seen one before, but Papa had told her about that sort of thing being used in theatres to put a very strong light on the performer.

The Rink had ice now, but Abbi could imagine how it looked in the summer as a regular exhibition hall for summertime festive events such as exhibitions, sporting events, lectures, and more.

Abbi heard some practice sounds from The Richdale Regimental Band. They echoed in the still-empty rink. They would provide musical background for the entire affair, ranging from rousing march-like pieces to waltz music. Below the Band and below the Queen's picture affixed to the balcony, Abbi saw there was a raised

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platform set up on the ice. This was probably something the boys had constructed. It was festively decorated for the occasion. On top of this stage, there was a row of chairs and a podium. Important people such as organizers and judges would be seated here, Abbi imagined. And it would be from this platform, Abbi guessed, that the featured guest, actress Ophelia Summer, would speak and open the event.

On the side of the rink opposite to where the Orphan Home children were gathered Abbi saw some benches which could be used by attendees for putting on skates, or simply resting, or generally looking on. True spectators did not use the benches for watching, obviously, because when sitting one couldn't see anything. Spectators would need to either stand at the sides, or serious ones could go up to the narrow balcony area above to be able to look down over the railing.

"They should have raised benches, like the ones the boys build for us Orphan Homes, for spectators in general – so they can be above the events," Abbi thought.

The raised benches the boys had built for the Orphan Home children went up in staircase fashion, so that children could climb them and see above the skaters. Abbi was glad the orphans had a way to get above the heads of the crowd. Otherwise she would not be able to see anything going on at the platform. She would not be able to see Ophelia Summer.

"Keep together, here," Matron Priscilla repeated to the children for about the third time. "We want the public to see you. We do not want you to be running all over and into the balcony. If you leave this area it is only to skate."

The children who were not wearing costumes wore their Sunday best clothes – the clothes that they did not use every day – with added festive decorations like snowflakes made of paper, or some twigs of fir tree or a hat with cotton added on top to represent snow. Outside of the formal costume wearers of the competition, few children had anything that might be seen as a genuine costume. One boy however wore black clothes, carried a broom, covered his face in soot and presented himself as a chimney sweep, demonstrating that it was sometimes possible to achieve a good costume without much effort.

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Another boy had a straw hat heaped with cotton, plus a red woolly scarf. Boys were good at being inventive and economical, even if they could not sew a stitch! Abbi thought.

Exploring further as she tested her skating, Abbi noted that there would be hot drinks served too, such as hot cider or hot cocoa, since stands for serving them were being set up too at the sides – no doubt provided by the host, the Richdale Women’s Charitable Society, also to raise money.

Seeing Abbi looking around, but not looking up above her head, a couple of the boys came towards her, boasting of their involvement in setting things up, and directed her attention upward. “See up there, Abbi?”

Abbi looked up. What the boys had erected was completely original. They had devised an array of long thin white pointed flags of varying lengths made to resemble icicles, hanging down from an array of six ropes, coming together at the center.

“Oh that’s wonderful, Billy,” exclaimed Abbi. “It looks like we have icicles hanging overhead. How did you get it all up there?”

Billy was keen to boast of the clever design of it all. “First, we laid all the ropes and the slender icicle-flags out on the rink surface, and then with the six outside ends of the ropes fixed to balcony railings, we pulled it all up from the middle with a pulley. See, the middle rope is holding it up. To bring them all down we only need to untie the middle rope which is affixed over there at the side and lower it the same way we raised it. See, with six ropes not only is it icicles hanging down but it is also a giant snowflake because a snowflake has six points.”

“You boys certainly are ingenious,” said Abbi. “It is wonderful. I can now see that it is one giant snowflake too. I would have loved to be involved with making that, if we girls weren’t busy making our costumes. Whoever thought it up is very inventive!”

Billy and other boys who were with him basked in the praise. Normally most of the Orphan Home children were at the age where boys think girls are to be avoided as much as possible, and vice versa; hence the two groups tended to be quite separate from each other and very

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competitive. But the boys liked it when they were able to impress the girls, even if they didn't want any involvement with them.

Abbi saw that by now other children were practicing skating and some of the costume wearers were anxious to remove their outer wear from their costumes and put their costumes in order, and were beginning to do so. Abbi decided to do the same. She took off the coat she had on top of her costume. She gave it to Peggy. "Put it with the other coats, please Peggy."

She straightened her costume as Peggy put Abbi's coat with the others and joined Abbi on the ice.

"How do I look?" Abbi asked Peggy, hoping it was all straight and looking just as they had planned it.



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“Breathtaking!” exclaimed Peggy. “With all the extra fabric from the large bride’s dress and all that lace we used, you look positively puffy, puffy like fresh-fallen powder snow! You are a personification of puffy snow itself, Abbi!”

Abbi indeed was like everything Peggy said. The dress had been made very puffy with layers of fabric and lace made to resemble snowflakes. In addition she had a cape over her shoulders with a narrow trim of rabbit fur. To top it off they had made a crown from paper and wire, with the tip of it resembling a snowflake. They had even made paper snowflakes for earrings and a wand with a large snowflake on the end. For this special occasion Abbi also had her hair tied up.

“You look wonderful,” said Peggy again, feeling pride in helping make it. She helped Abbi adjust the cape and other elements of the costume so that everything was perfect. “And you look so sophisticated with your hair up. We’re sure to win!”

“I hope my skating will be as good.”

“Well it’s our overall presentation that counts, Abbi. Don’t try too hard. We’ll do our pantomime just like we practiced on the pond at the back of the Orphan Home. You’re going to look splendid. Our ‘Snow Princess’ costume at least fits in with wintertime. What has Little Red Riding Hood, or Little Miss Muffet, to do with winter? Look how out of place Marcia’s Little Miss Muffet looks wearing skates.”

“Well,” replied Abbi, “there’s Marg’s group with their costume of ‘Jack Frost’. She’s playing a man. She should have called herself ‘Jill Frost’. That would have worked better”

“Not everyone has your imagination, Abbi. *I* would never have thought of changing ‘Jack Frost’ to ‘Jill Frost’. Nonetheless, have you ever seen a more sinister icicled creature, with that long nose and icicle on its end? Why would people approve of anything that sinister-looking in a festive event?”

Each team obviously thought their costume was the best, and the rivalry was intense.

“You can’t possibly win the competition, Abbi,” said her biggest rival, Marcia, approaching her, dressed as Little

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Miss Muffet. “Your costume doesn’t mean anything. Who knows what a ‘Snow Princess’ really looks like? You made it up from your imagination. At least we had lots of pictures to go by since Little Miss Muffet has been in a nursery rhyme a long time and there are lots of pictures of her in books.”

“Ignore her, Abbi,” said Peggy.

The children now began to witness all the refined ladies and gentlemen of Richdale society coming in through the main entrance on the other side, chatting with one another, and each presenting their own particular air of wealth and importance.

These were late Victorian times when the model for such affairs was the traditional social gathering called a “ball”, with music and dancing of the waltz, often with people dressed up in costume if it was a costume ball. The Skating Carnival was such a gathering, except that the waltzing—for those who had mastered it—was done on skates.

Showing off costumes was a major feature of this particular event. Being admired for having the best costume, funniest costume, etc. was a large part of the programme. For most, therefore, a costume was imperative! It was not necessary, however, to be extravagant. Not too many skaters went so far as to create spectacular tailored outfits. Mostly ladies might create a thematic hat and attach thematic adornments to regular clothing. Thus, complete tailored costumes were not common; so when they appeared, they were quite special, and got much attention.

Abbi had learned that there would be general judging of costumes at this event as was the custom at other such events elsewhere. The carnival organizing committee of the Richdale Women’s Charitable Society had established the following judging categories for costumes – men’s, women’s, boys’, girls’ – with prizes for the best costume in each category. The judging of the Orphan Home girls costumes was a separate event planned for the end.

“Pretty soon, this place will be full of people on the other side, sitting on the benches and putting on their skates.” said Abbi to Peggy.

“I was told that talented skaters will be allowed to show

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off their skills,” said Peggy. “I heard that there will be one man who will skate and leap over a whole lot of barrels.”

After some practice skating, Abbi and Peggy returned to the Orphan Home benches to rest. Realizing that among the people entering, one of them would be the famed actress, Abbi said: “Let’s watch for the entry of actress Ophelia Summer, Peggy.” They climbed as high as they could to be able to watch the people entering. The entry to the rink was on the side to their right, below the clock, which was opposite to the side with the band, the Queen’s picture, and the platform.

Abbi had her photo-card of Ophelia Summer with her. She had made a pocket in her costume for it. Besides Matron Priscilla, who had given her the photograph, she had only confided her interest in Ophelia Summer to Peggy, who she felt she could trust with the secret and who would not tease her.

“Do you see her? Do you see Ophelia Summer, the famous actress?” asked Peggy seeing Abbi craning her neck towards the people entering.

“No, I don’t,” said Abbi. “I fear my neck will develop a cramp before she arrives.”

“She’ll probably be fashionably late,” mused Peggy. “She’s the main attraction of the event this year. I know that the orphans are supposed to be the centre of attention, but the people have all seen orphans before. They will probably get twice as many guests as normal just to see *her*, with guests even coming from Saint John. She is famous everywhere, they say—everywhere that people follow theatre. This place will be very crowded!”

“You’re right, Peggy,” said Abbi, turning her head back to rest her neck muscles. “All eyes will be on her. And she will probably not arrive until moments before the start has been scheduled. A famous person like her just has to make a big entrance when all the other people are already in.”

Suddenly, someone poked Abbi from the floor below. She turned. It was her former adoptive brother Mark, now eight years old, and dressed in finely tailored clothes, not a costume. “Mark!” said Abbi. “How is it you are here?”

“This is an important Richdale social event,” Mark said. “Grandmama Audora just *has* to be seen here. She’s part of the organizing committee, even though she doesn’t

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really like the organizing ladies very much. She dragged me here, since I'm eight and she said it would be good experience for me to start to meet the important people of Richdale. I think she expects one day I will take over the Company from her and wants to prepare me for Richdale society."

"I completely forgot about Audora," said Abbi, "and that she is actually part of the Richdale Women's Charitable Society, and would be here. But I'd rather not talk to her. I fear she will spoil my happiness, as she always does, with her decision-making." Realizing Mark did not know Peggy, Abbi added: "This is Peggy, Mark. She helped me make my costume. Peggy, this is Mark, the oldest of the Woodrow brothers with whom I grew up."

"Hi, Peggy," said Mark to Peggy. Then he added to Abbi: "Come away a moment Abbi. I have something I want to talk to you about - more private-like."

She climbed down from the bleachers and joined Mark at the floor level and stepped off to the side with him. Mark said: "You won't believe it! Grandmama can skate! She will actually put on skates here and will show off her skating skills! She said she was quite a skater in her youth and she always attended such skating events with her husband, when he was alive."

"Yes, she told me at her office when I came back that she sometimes puts on skates."

"Can you imagine her skating? This I have to see! She says the chairwoman and the others of the organizing women will also be skating. I suppose it is most important that the organizers of an affair they've organized for skating, be front and center with their own skates and costumes. And Grandmama probably wants to show that she is equal or better than those women in skating and costume. And she has the most expensive skates money can buy. They are black and polished and with the skate blades attached right to the boot. And she has a costume. She is dressed as the witch in the Hansel and Gretel fairy tale. She only had to use one of her normal dresses, and just had her dressmaker make her a tall pointed hat."

When growing up all the Woodrow children had been raised quite plainly, away from the world of wealth and finery that their grandmother valued. Thus they had

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viewed their grandmother as somewhat eccentric, and this kind of conversation between Mark and Abbi about the eccentric woman was not unusual.

“I can’t yet imagine Grandmama Audora skating,” replied Abbi. “But I *can* imagine her as a witch,” she added, rolling her eyes.

“And Grandmama wants to be seen to be a strong supporter of the Orphan Home too. She doesn’t want to be seen in a negative way. She is treating it like she put you in a boarding school, while helping out the Orphan Home at the same time. She tells everyone about giving the Orphan Home \$500 for them to educate you. But I think she wanted to get rid of you.”

“Mark, I oh so much wanted to see you, Mama, and everyone else, last Christmas, and then again when I came here, before I went to the Orphan Home; but Madam Audora only made excuses. ‘Not yet’, she said. ‘Not yet’. She said you and Jimmy were at boarding school, and she was afraid of what would happen if Mama recognized me on account of her being affected by Papa’s disappearance. She wanted to consult with the doctor about that, so I was only allowed to see her from a distance, and the two littlest, before her driver, Desmond, took me to the Orphan Home. How are things, generally, Mark? How is Mama? Is she better? Oh I wish I could see her up close! Even if she doesn’t recognize me like Madam Audora keeps saying. Just to see her!”

“Mama is still lost in another world – just stares out the window in her upstairs room in the big mansion, and takes forever to read a book. We can visit her but she doesn’t seem to respond much. The little children are taken care of, by their nursery-governess, and she is taking their attention off Mama. She tells the children that Mama is ill, very tired, needs rest, don’t bother her, and so on. So we all wait for her to get better. But it’s been a long time now that she’s been like that – almost since we came to live in Grandmama’s mansion and since you left Abbi. The doctor says she is getting better, but I can’t see much change. And Grandmama gives us anything we want. And you won’t believe it, Abbi! Grandmama is spoiling me like she is a madwoman! Look at this money!” He pulled a bill out of the pocket of his vest. “It’s a \$10 bank note. Have you ever

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seen so much money before?”

“You have money of your own?” Abbi replied. “Nobody’s ever given me money of my own.”

“She gives me a whole \$10 a month to do as I please, as long as I ‘invest it wisely’ she says. She wants to see what I do if she gives me money. I think it is a test. Later she asks me how I used it. But I never know what I’m supposed to do, what she expects me to do with it. Here Abbi. Take it. Keep it. You never know when you’ll need some money.”

“Gosh, Mark,” said Abbi. “\$10 is a lot of money!”

(Indeed in the late 19th century \$10 was worth the same as \$100 a century later.)³⁵

“Take it, Abbi. Grandmama will give me another \$10 bank note next month!”

Mark had acquired his sarcastic characterization of his grandmother from his father. Like all the other Woodrow children, he had accepted whatever the eccentric grandmother gave him or instructed him to do. It had always been easiest for the Woodrow children, just to go along with the eccentric woman, and not puzzle too much about her motives or reasoning.

“Alright,” said Abbi, putting the money in the large breast pocket that was part of her costume, the pocket she had created to hold the photograph postcard of the actress Ophelia Summer.

Mark then had a moment to look at Abbi’s costume. “What are you supposed to be?” he asked.

“A Snow Princess,” replied Abbi. “There’s going to be a competition among costumes from the Orphan Home made by the girls. The costume wearers will skate about and one of us will be judged the winner in the Orphan Home girls category.”

“I hope you win, Abbi.” Mark replied. “I have to get back to Grandmama. She instructed me not to talk to you. She says we live in two different worlds and it is better

³⁵ Originally British monetary units (pence, shillings, pounds) would have been used. But Canada was also under influence from the United States and its dollar and by the mid Victorian Age, money in New Brunswick was described in terms of dollars. In our story we assume that bank notes in dollars were in common use in 1876 in New Brunswick.

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not to. But I'll try to meet you whenever I can, anyway."

With that Mark went away and Abbi went back to Peggy. She didn't tell her at that point about the \$10 bill. Mark had more or less forced the money on her, and she didn't have time to give it any real thought. Topmost on her mind was the idea that Madam Audora was going to be among the skaters and had a witch costume. She shuddered at the prospect of meeting up with Witch Audora in the next while!

"What did he say?" Peggy asked when Abbi rejoined her on the raised benches.

"He said that Madam Audora Woodrow is here and is wearing a witch costume. I should have known she would be here, but I forgot. She has to show herself as a great benefactress of the Orphan Home and the Richdale Women's Charitable Society. Mark also told me about Mama and I feel sad . . ."

Seeing Abbi becoming melancholy, Peggy said: "Don't worry yourself about it, Abbi. Imagine she were here looking on and how pleased she would be that you are doing this."

Abbi brightened up: "At least I'm glad I finally saw Mark. I haven't seen him in almost a year!"

Meanwhile the rink had been filling up with costumed attendees many of them now already on the ice warming up their skating skills. It seemed their expectation of a large number of attendees, on account of Ophelia Summer's attendance, would prove to be correct.

"Look!" exclaimed Peggy pointing towards the entrance, "There she is, Abbi! There she is! I mean Miss Ophelia Summer! I can tell by all the fuss of the people around her!"

"Where?"

"There, just coming in. It must be her! Look at all the fuss that people are making around her. She is removing her wrap. And she has a costume underneath. Oh, Abbi, it's a beautiful white costume!"

With the arrival of the star guest, the programme would begin. Abbi could barely contain her excitement.

As Miss Ophelia Summer entered with her entourage of people—including the owner of the Richdale Royal Theatre and his wife, other actors in the current production,

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publicity people, etc.—the band started up with a march-like piece to signal the start of the Richdale Skating Carnival. Some notable people were assembling on the platform below the band, and the Ophelia Summer group was ushered towards it to be ready to respond to being called.

The beginning of the Carnival was signaled by the playing of ‘God Save the Queen’. When it was done, from among the people now on the stage, a man with a wide handlebar moustache stepped forward. He turned out to be the master-of-ceremonies. He looked like a man who was normally very formally dressed – perhaps he was normally an accountant – determined now to look festive. His neat suit and tall hat had accessories affixed to it to reflect the festive midwinter occasion: a colorful scarf thrown around his shoulders, paper snowflakes attached to his hat, etc. He had a strong booming voice that carried far – a necessity in the days before microphones – and appeared to easily achieve a rapport with the audience.

He called for attention from the crowd of attendees who until now had been haphazardly distributed about the ice, testing their skates. “Ladies and gentlemen! Ladies and gentlemen!” A spotlight situated on the balcony was trained on him. Before electricity, a bright spotlight was created by igniting oxygen and hydrogen squirted on a piece of limestone and focused with mirrors. It was called ‘limelight’. Everyone became quiet. He began:

“The organizing committee of Richdale’s annual Skating Carnival, welcomes you all, whether you are costumed skaters or spectators, whether you will present your skills upon the ice or watch from the sides.”

The Orphan Home children climbed on top of their benches to be better able to see the introductory events at the stage and not have their view blocked by adults. Abbi was already highest up. She was keen on being able to see Ophelia Summer. She now strained her neck to see better.

In response to the master-of-ceremonies some of the audience shouted out comments, some clapped. He continued: “As most of you are aware, the annual Richdale Skating Carnival is organized by the Richdale Women’s Charitable Society as a fundraiser for its many charitable activities, notable the Richdale Orphan Home. Mrs. Mary

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Cumberland, chairwoman of the Richdale Women's Charitable Society, has reminded us that unlike other orphan asylums, which are sponsored by the good work of the churches, this Orphan Home is a project of distinguished matrons of Richdale society who themselves contribute much of their own time and money. I will draw your attention to the five leading women of the Richdale Women's Charitable Society responsible for organizing this year's Carnival. They are seated behind me on the stage. First we have Mrs. Mary Cumberland, the chairwoman of the Society costumed to represent Little Bo-Peep. Stand up Mrs. Cumberland." She stood up and the audience clapped. "Next we have Mrs. Smith, who, with all the roses on her dress, represents a rose bush." More clapping. "Then Mrs. Thornapple I believe is dressed as Cinderella's fairy godmother." More clapping. "Then Mrs. Darville who is dressed as an Oriental woman." More clapping. "—all of them wives of prominent political and military gentlemen of this town. Last but not least is the distinguished Richdale resident and widely known businesswoman Audora Woodrow, wife of the late Stanley Woodrow of the Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company, with her tall black hat, dressed, I am informed, as the witch in Hansel and Gretel." She stood and there was more clapping.

Abbi strained to see the important women as they were introduced. These women were not in particularly tailored costumes. They were for the most part adapted from regular clothes. It was difficult to decide, without some explanation, who each was supposed to be. For example, except for her shepherd's crook and colourful bonnet, it was difficult to determine Mrs. Cumberland was supposed to be Little Bo-peep. But finally when Abbi saw Madam Audora Woodrow stand up, wearing a black dress, pointed hat, and holding a broomstick, she thought that nothing could be a better witch costume, even if it was devised from her regular clothes!!

The master-of-ceremonies continued: "I will now call on Mrs. Cumberland, chairwoman of the Richdale Women's Charitable Society to say a few introductory words."

Mrs. Cumberland, the merry woman who had talked to the children at the Orphan Home some weeks ago, came

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forward. She paused to survey the crowd, and beamed a cheery smile.

“Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, honoured guests, children of our Orphan Home,” she began. “I as the chairwoman of the Richdale Women’s Charitable Society welcome you to our third annual Richdale Winter Carnival at Richdale’s Exhibition Hall and Rink. Although our rink is not as large as the one in Saint John, it is nonetheless ours and we, the citizens of Richdale, can stage fine events here. I welcome you and hope you will have a good time. Since I do not have a very loud voice, I will now give the floor back to our Master-of-ceremonies, Jake Wesley, who will carry on with his wonderfully loud booming voice.”

Indeed Abbi barely heard her. The master-of-ceremonies took the stage again as Mrs. Cumberland, cheerily retreated to her chair, carrying her shepherd’s crook. The master-of-ceremonies led the crowd in clapping. “Applause to Mrs. Cumberland and all the women of the Richdale Women’s Charitable Society on the stage for their tireless efforts to make this a memorable annual event.”

He then continued with his booming voice: “Each year we endeavour to make the Carnival better than the last. We are pleased to inform you that this year’s Carnival has two special features. First of all, the Orphan Home children will offer us something new. Before I explain what it is, let me say that this event is intended to support the children of the Richdale Women’s Charitable Society Orphan Home and every year we make certain those children are in attendance and very involved. We are proud every year to give these unfortunate boys and girls an entertaining time during the middle of winter while they wait to be adopted by families far and wide. But they are here also to remind one and all to support our Orphan Home. I draw your attention to the Orphan Home children over there to my right, your left, on the west side of the ice, situated on the raised benches, currently straining to see the stage.”

The audience turned and there was clapping.

The master-of-ceremonies continued: “But this year is not like previous years for them and for us. This year we

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have done something special. As you will see, a number of girls are splendidly dressed in genuine costumes they have themselves designed and tailored, not something improvised like many of us usually do. This year the costumes have been made as part of the girls' practical training as a demonstration of their dressmaking skills in their sewing classes under the direction of Matron Priscilla. The costumes you will find among them are.." He referred to some notes.. "Little Red Riding Hood, Jack Frost, Old Mother Hubbard, Little Miss Muffet, and Snow Princess. They have made them also in the exciting spirit of competition, because we have included them in a special category – the Orphan Home girls' category – in our judging of best costumes. As in all the costume competitions categories, the winning costume will be decided by you all by your clapping and voiced approval. We judges merely judge which clapping was the loudest. That will come later in the programme. But let us not forget the Orphan Home boys. While the girls have been sewing, they have been designing and building the stages, benches, and décor in this rink, including the festive affair you see above your heads, namely the six ropes of icicle flags creating one giant snowflake. Isn't that amazing! This year's festivities will take place under a *giant snowflake!*"

The audience looked up and many gave a gasp when they became aware for the first time that it was in fact a giant snowflake. Everyone cheered and clapped in acknowledgement of the Orphan Home children's efforts.

The master-of-ceremonies continued: "The second special feature of this year's Carnival, is that we are this year graced by the presence of the world famous actress of the theatre stage, Miss Ophelia Summer, who by stroke of fate is in town playing the lead role in the play '*A Stranger in a Winter Landscape*' which arrived here a few days ago and will play for another week at the Richdale Royal Theatre. This actress and this play have already drawn strong praises along its tour of many major cities of the United States and Canada, and those who have seen it already here at our Royal Theatre have nothing but high praise as well. In addition to opening our Carnival in a few moments, she will be available to chat with guests. But please do not crowd her or monopolize her time. We would

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like her to enjoy the Carnival too!”

The crowd clapped loudly.

He continued: “As is always the case with this Skating Carnival, it is regularly attended by the most distinguished persons of our fair city, in the realm of the military, politics and business, and some from Saint John besides. Normally we might have to spend half our time acknowledging them all and having them speak; however, they all come in the carnival spirit and have all requested that we not pay any special attention to them, as they have enough attention given to them in formal political events, and do not want protocols to interfere with the progress of the festivities. They are here, like all of you, to enjoy themselves, as a break from the winter doldrums. You all know them well anyway by sight, many sitting over there—Hello Mayor.” A stout older man with a moustache and long sideburns waved his hand in greeting.

“And what enjoyment we will all have this Sunday afternoon! Most of you have come festively dressed even if not in full tailored costume. Determining what each other is supposed to be is part of the thrill of this carnival. There will be music of various kinds presented by the Richdale Regimental Band behind me up there on the balcony behind Queen Victoria’s image. Let’s hear a few bars from the band.” The band played a few bars and was then signaled to stop. “Enough!” They stopped. “And as always, we will also offer amazing presentations of skating, including the making of figures, amazing leaps, and dancing the waltz on skates. We are only now determining who is here to perform what, and in what order we shall present their performances. If you wish to be included, please see me immediately so I can include your name on the list and fit you in. But to start it all off, we have a most famous guest, as I said. We have with us this afternoon the world famous actress of the theatre stage, Miss Ophelia Summer, who is in town this week playing the lead role in the play ‘*A Stranger in a Winter Landscape*’ at the Richdale Royal Theatre. It is simply our good fortune that the appearance of this play in Richdale this time in February, coincides with the timing of our annual Skating Carnival, and that Miss Ophelia Summer has agreed to honour us with her presence, and to say a few

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words by way of opening this year's Carnival. Let us not delay it any longer. I therefore invite Ophelia Summer now to our small stage to say a few words and properly open the Carnival. Miss Ophelia Summer! Come to the stage!"

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OPHELIA SUMMER ENTHRALS

Abbi was straining her head to see. The actress had not been on the stage yet but had been standing with her entourage at the base of the stage; and now she came up onto the stage. And then Abbi could see her. She was far away from Abbi, though.

“Her hair is long and curled,” said Abbi to Peggy. “I suppose it is for her part in the play. Yes, I remember the heroine in the story is a dark haired Louisiana woman returning to Acadia in the winter to look for relatives. She is playing a Louisiana French woman. But I would like to know for sure that she is really Indian”

“If you are able to get close to her,” suggested Peggy, “You can ask her to confirm what Matron Priscilla said about her was true – that she is Indian.”

“If I can get close to her!” replied Abbi, imagining it nearly impossible considering how people had swarmed around her when she came in.

The band struck up a rousing number to punctuate her rising to the stage. There was enduring applause from the crowd.

Ophelia Summer had dressed in a costume herself and looked perfectly regal in it. It was a white formal gown with an abundance of white lace. In her hair there was a small crown or tiara. Around her neck there was a white necklace. As the rink air was not particularly warm, she had a white fur stole around her shoulders. Probably real arctic fox, not something made out of rabbit fur, thought Abbi.

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The actress paused some moments as she scanned the audience and waved her hand in greeting to the different parts of the rink that were raising cheers. And then she prepared to speak, and the band stopped. Being an actress of the stage, she knew how to project her voice well.

“Ladies and gentlemen, guests of this famous Richdale Winter Skating Carnival . . .” she began. She waited for the crowd noise to die down and continued: “Although Richdale is not a large city, I have heard that this festival rivals in quality at least if not size, anything put on in Saint John, Halifax, or even Montreal. I trust many of you who have made your way here from nearby Saint John will agree as well.”

The crowd cheered and she smiled. When the cheering had died down again, she continued: “I was splendidly pleased when I learned that the run of the touring play ‘*A Stranger in a Winter Landscape*’ at the Richdale Royal Theatre would coincide with the time of your festive midwinter carnival, uniquely presented here in the Richdale Exhibition Hall and Rink and inviting the donning of costumes and the bringing of skates. As you all can see by how I am dressed up, and that I too have taken the liberty of wearing a costume.”

She did a turn to show off her costume, and then continued: “In a short while I will put on my own skates and join the parade of costumes. This costume, entitled ‘Snow Queen’ has been contributed by the wardrobe staff of our stage production. It is especially created for tonight.”

“Her costume is a Snow Queen!” exclaimed Abbi to Peggy. Her heart skipped a beat. “It’s breathtaking!”

“But I must disqualify myself,” Ophelia continued, “from the costume competitions, so as not to compromise the efforts of other women and their splendid costumes. I am told that instead I will perform the official duty of presenting the prizes to the costumes judged the best in the various categories – men’s, women’s, boy’s and girl’s and last but not least the Orphan Home girls costume-making competition.”

She beamed a broad grin. She was a woman of about 30 who adored the attention, and who was experienced and mature in being famous and in handling her public. When

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cheers had died down, she continued: "Although I have never attended before, I am told splendid fun is had by all at this event. I too will endeavour to partake in the merriment. I will allow myself to be entertained by the skating, the costumes, and the music performed by the Richdale Regimental Band. But I especially look forward to the special attention being given to the costumes of the children of the Richdale Women's Charitable Society Orphan Home. Let us acknowledge them again."

A rousing cheer for the Orphan Home. Abbi imagined Ophelia Summer looked straight at her!

She continued: "Accompanying me here tonight are Mr. and Mrs. Archibald, owners of the Richdale Royal Theatre, as well as other members of the cast and crew of '*A Stranger in a Winter Landscape*'. We are pleased at the attendance and fine words for the play so far from both here and Saint John. We will all be accessible should any of you have questions, but if you do not have a chance to talk to one of us, we invite you to attend the performance at the Richdale Royal Theatre if you have not already done so, sometime during its run here until the end of the coming week."

Another flurry of clapping and cheering.

"I will therefore try not to interfere with the programme further, but withdraw from the stage again and take my place among the guest skaters, and enjoy myself, the same as you all."

More applause. More broad smiles from Miss Ophelia Summer.

"I therefore declare this Richdale Winter Skating Carnival of 1876 open, and hand you back to the master-of-ceremonies, who will guide you through the programme."

With that the band struck up again as Miss Ophelia Summer climbed down from the stage. The master-of-ceremonies came forward again and waited until the actress had returned to the ice level and rejoined her entourage. Then he signaled the band up on the balcony to stop, so he could speak again.

"To begin the activities," he began, "we commence with a musical programme of the band, to which all of you with skates can warm up your skating legs. Note that the

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skating will go clockwise, so one skater does not collide with another. Following that, we will have performances of skating skill and dexterity by Mr. Harvey, and other marvelous performances including skaters who will demonstrate skating the waltz on ice. That will be followed by a skate-about for the viewing of costumes. At that time, your applause when we introduce costume-wearers individually will signal your level of approval of the costumes, and which our judges, the distinguished ladies of the organizing committee on stage, will use as a guide to judge the best in each of the categories – boys, girls, men, and women. There is much to entertain and amuse. Our programme will end with a skate of the Orphan Home girls to show off their handiwork. We will at that time have you judge the best costume from among them. There is much to look forward to this afternoon. During the course of this affair you are invited to help yourselves to tea, hot apple cider, hot cocoa, and other hot beverages, none being alcoholic I'm afraid – we do not wish our skaters to become tipsy and fall on the ice! – provided at the stands set up in various parts of this exhibition hall, at a modest price. All funds will be applied to the charitable work of the Richdale Women's Charitable Society, in particular the Orphan Home. Strike up the band! Let us skate!"

With that the Carnival began. The Richdale Regimental Band commenced with rousing march music that promoted skating. The entire exhibition hall of people began to turn clockwise as they skated round and round. Those who did not come to skate, naturally were spectators, consuming beverages, socializing with friends and neighbours, and viewing the proceedings from the side.

Among the Orphan home children, the rivalry between the various groups of girls who had made competing costumes continued on the ice. Abbi was a favourite target for the others. "Look at Abbi," said Marcia. "She's positively wobbling when she skates. Her costume should have been that of a clown!"

"Don't listen to them, Abbi," said Peggy. "You're doing fine."

"It's the skates. If the straps get loose, the skates wobble. I'd like to skate closer to Miss Ophelia Summer, to get a better look at her. Where is she?"

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“It’s unlikely you’ll have the chance yet,” said Peggy. “She is surrounded by people seeking to talk to her. She is famous, after all.”

Abbi and Peggy fell into the stream of skaters circling the rink in step with the music. It was too fast for them; so they again moved out of the stream to the side, and suddenly they found themselves before Audora Woodrow and Mrs. Cumberland. They were both now on skates, paused in their skating and conversing with one another at the side. Abbi could now see Audora’s costume up close. All she really had beyond a black business dress was a tall witch hat on her head. The hat consisted of a brim and a cone sticking up about two feet. She also had rouge circles on her cheeks, darkened eyes and exaggerated eyebrows. She held a witch-broom made of branches in her hand. Abbi then noted Mrs. Cumberland’s costume. As Little Bo-Peep she had an enormous, colourful bonnet on her head, and a shepherd’s crook in her hand.

“Abbi,” said Audora, her exaggerated eyebrows rising a little in surprise, “how pleasant to see you!”

“Madam Audora!” Abbi exclaimed. “Ah. . .This is Peggy. You look very elegant upon skates, Madam Audora. And appropriately costumed. And you too. . . Mrs. . . .”

Audora continued: “I was pleased to hear you will be a competitor with the Orphan Home costume and skating competition. You see, my decisions are always the correct ones – aren’t they, Mrs. Cumberland? My spending \$500 to have the Orphan Home give you an education was clearly the best decision for the circumstances, as you can see.”

“Well you are a businesswoman,” said the always-cheery Mrs. Cumberland. “Decision-making is what you do, and no one quarrels with the fact that you are good at it.” She turned to Abbi. “My you have an attractive costume! We’ll see you present it later.” She turned again to Audora: “I dare say, Madam Woodrow, you have offered the Richdale Women’s Charitable Society many good business suggestions over the years, including assisting with the economics of staging this event. And I can see that your late son’s orphan, Abbi, is fitting in well and your sponsoring her is bearing fruit. We should encourage many wealthy people to entirely sponsor particular orphans as a

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fine additional alternative to housing orphans from general fundraising.”

It was interesting to Abbi how Audora Woodrow had turned her ploy to get rid of her into something else. She was there as if in a boarding school was she? All the woman was really doing was disposing of her! She had to get away from Hansel and Gretel’s witch as quickly as she could before she contrived some new unwelcome design for her life at this moment when she was quite happy. “I must not give her a chance to formulate some new idea in regards to me!” thought Abbi. She had to get away! “Pardon me, ladies,” she said, “but I have to continue practicing skating. . . Don’t we Peggy? . . .”

She hurried off into the skating crowd, as fast as her skates could take her, without making sure Peggy was behind her.



“Peggy,” she said when she felt far enough away from the witch, “that was close! I couldn’t get away from that woman fast enough!”

She looked around and there was no Peggy in sight. “Peggy! Where are you? I’m lost. How can I see where I

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am with all these grown-up skaters towering all around me?”

Abbi found herself separated from Peggy, and in the middle of the crowd of skaters. She moved off to the side again at another location to watch the skating crowd stream pass in order to find Peggy again.

Before she could spot Peggy, she discovered that where she was at the side, she was standing not far from Miss Ophelia Summer. She saw her from the back, still without skates on, engaged in joyful exchanges of conversation with guests who had sought her out.

On her problematic strap-on skates, but splendidly dressed as a Snow Princess, Abbi came up behind Ophelia Summer and simply stared up. Her heart was pounding hard. This was the actress, this elegant and sophisticated lady was *her*! Soon the guests facing in Abbi's direction noticed her standing and staring; and Miss Ophelia Summer noticing they were looking at something, turned her head and looked down. Ophelia Summer was tall and statuesque compared to the small Abbi, who had not experienced the surge in growth that she soon expected.

“And what have we here?” asked Miss Ophelia Summer.

“It's one of the Orphan Home girls in her costume.” said the VIP she had been talking to.

“My, what a pretty girl and a pretty costume!” said Miss Ophelia Summer. “What is your name? And what is the nature of your costume?”

“My name is Abigail Pictford,” replied Abbi very formally. “People call me the brief version ‘Abbi’ usually, but I think it is nice to use my full name, ‘Abigail’, on an important occasion such as this. Pictford is the last name of my natural parents who died. I think it is wise to use Pictford when I am not attached to any particular family.”

“Well then, Abigail Pictford, what is the nature of your costume?”

“My costume, made by myself and Peggy Brown, is called ‘Snow Princess’.”

“What an interesting coincidence. My costume is called ‘Snow Queen’.”

“I had no idea you would be ‘Snow Queen’, Ophelia Summer.”

“Nor did I know there would be a ‘Snow Princess’ here.

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My wardrobe staff just improvised this costume from something else just this morning. I didn't even know what my costume would be until I put it on this afternoon. Isn't that an interesting coincidence—a Snow Queen and Snow Princess! And I see you even have a wand with a snowflake on the end of it.”

“Yes, it's the way the Snow Princess makes it snow – she waves her wand and it snows. She keeps it in her belt when she's not using it.”

“How creative!”



Abbi had seen Ophelia Summer's costume from a distance when she made the speech, but now she saw it up close. Miss Ophelia Summer's costume involved a white gown with great amounts of lace looking like snow, a crown, ice-like earrings and necklace, and a long white stole thrown around her shoulders, made of white fur. She also had long white gloves that reached all the way up to her elbows.

“You look absolutely breathtaking in your costume, Miss Ophelia Summer. Your long curly black hair contrasts well with the white of your costume. In my case my hair is straight and only tied up. I would love one day to make it curly.”

“Well, you're very pretty anyway.”

“But I have something to ask you, Miss Ophelia Summer. I am such an admirer of yours. I have a photo card of you. It is here in my pocket.”

“Have you indeed a photo-card of me? Can I see?” She

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knelt down as Abbi took out the card from the pocket she had made for it. Ophelia looked at it. "Yes, I remember when the photographer took it; it was some years ago in New York. Where did you get it?"

"Matron Priscilla of the Orphan Home had it. She collects such things, and is a fan too; and she gave it to me one day after I was greatly distressed after boys at the Orphan Home teased me about being Indian – actually I'm half Indian. Matron Priscilla found an old article that said you were an Indian, and became famous and successful in spite of it, to make me feel better. Is that true? Are you really an Indian? If you are, then being an Indian girl will not be a curse in my life."

Ophelia Summer laughed and handed the photo back to Abbi. She stood back up. "Yes, it is true, Abigail, but people see me purely as an actress now, and the public doesn't care about my origins, and few even know."

"You give me hope, Miss Ophelia Summer, that I'm not doomed to a life of hardship and struggle forever, by being an Indian girl."

"Forget about what other people think, and do what you want."

"I have something else to tell you Miss Ophelia Summer. I have read the play in which you are acting. Last fall, Jeffrey, the handyman where I lived, at the Loggermans, gave me a copy of the book of *'Stranger in a Winter Landscape'* as an early Christmas present. I have read it several times, and can picture you perfectly in the title role."

"My! You are a reader too! You are a remarkable girl! The play is happily one that older children can understand and enjoy. Perhaps I can invite the children of the Orphan Home to a matinee—that's where we perform the play in the afternoon on Saturday—perhaps next Saturday before the play travels on to its next location."

"Could you do that, Miss Ophelia Summer? That would be absolutely wonderful!"

"I'll see what I can do. It would be good for children to be introduced to the world of the arts—especially unfortunate children who might otherwise never see a play in a real theatre."

Some of the entourage around Ophelia Summer were

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becoming a little impatient at the way this girl was monopolizing the time of the stage celebrity, and started to make subtle motions that Ophelia Summer should break away from talking to this girl; but Ophelia Summer reacted against their suggestions.

“No,” Ophelia Summer responded, “this girl interests me. I should join the skaters on the ice before the master-of-ceremonies moves the program to the next stage. It would be splendid for me to don skates and skate around with this girl. What could be more appropriate than if the ‘Snow Queen’ skates around with the ‘Snow Princess’?” She laughed a wonderfully joyful laugh at the idea.

Ophelia Summer’s entourage responded immediately by bringing her skates. To her entourage, now it *did* seem an interesting stunt, for the ‘Snow Queen’ to skate with the ‘Snow Princess.’

When Ophelia Summer had her skates in hand, she motioned Abbi over to a bench at the side of the ice. “Sit down on the bench while I put on these skates, and then we can skate a little together.” They sat down on a vacant bench and Ophelia Summer continued: “Here is a secret between you and me, now that we are away from the others: People *do* make a fuss over Indians, and often it is better they do not know you are one. I started out playing Indian women in entertainment shows with pretend Indians in them, but after that I hid the fact I was one and auditioned for roles with women who were Italian, French, Persian, Chinese, and so on—any role that needed a woman with long black hair and darker skin. If people make a fuss about Indians, Abigail, pretend you are just a girl with raven black hair. It is easy to be, for example, part French, and part Persian, and part Chinese—whatever mixture you imagine would work. It is when you say you are Indian, that they will all start calling you *Wenona*, picture you fresh from the wilderness, and let you play nothing other than a narrow stereotype.”

“Ever since I found out I was part Indian when I was nine,” replied Abbi, “I have always told everyone about it, because everyone likes the Indian, and Indian ways, and I originally thought it was wonderful to be one.”

“But people do not see the Indian in a realistic way. They never see the real Indian who is losing his land and

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way of life because of settlers and governments, even while the public celebrates their traditional ways, thanks to the poem ‘*The Song of Hiawatha*’. It is a paradox. Do you know what I mean?”

“Yes, we’ve used the word *paradox* in literature class in school. Two contradictory things exist at the same time.”

Abbi watched Ophelia Summer lace up her skates and marveled at the boots with skate blades actually attached. Abbi said: “It must be wonderful to be able to afford boots with skate blades actually attached, and the white color suits your costume. My own skates are just blades tied to my plain leather boots with leather straps. And they belong to the Orphan Home. And they wobble after a while when the straps stretch.”

“Don’t worry. You’ll do fine, Abigail. We are not performing great feats of jumping. Now tell me a little more about yourself.”

Abbi folded her hands, thought for a moment, and dutifully began to tell her life story as she had done many times before: “I have learned that I was orphaned when I was a baby. I didn’t know that I was adopted until I was almost nine years old after my adoptive father disappeared. My adoptive mother then revealed to me that my parents were Irwin and Paula Pictford, and Paula was Indian from Lake Superior, probably Ojibwa, since that is the tribe up there. Anyway, Irwin and Paula Pictford lived in the same town as my adoptive mother and father, and both died. First *she* died from smallpox, and then he later died when he was a sailor—there was a big storm in the Atlantic.”

Little did Abbi know that this history about Paula and Irwin Pictford was something her adoptive mother, Jenine, had made up for her, because she did not want to tell her the truth – that she had been left at the Littleton church door, and that her origins were actually unknown. But it was good she didn’t know the truth, otherwise she would have constantly wondered about her true origins.

Abbi continued about more recent times: “I grew up with my adoptive Mama and Papa not knowing I was adopted by them, until Papa had an accident. Papa’s mother, who was wealthy, took in everyone, but she thought I was old enough to help a woman in the

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wilderness she knew with six little children and sent me there. I lived with the Loggermans in the woods of New Brunswick for close to a year. There was a school in a log cabin at Pinewood, and there was so much to explore and discover in the nearby woods, and I had some of my Papa's books about Indians—my adoptive Papa's I mean – I keep forgetting to say 'adoptive' since I never said it before I was nine. And then Mr. Loggerman got a good position managing a large sawmill in Maine, and so I was finally sent back to my adoptive Papa's mother with Mr. Morton who she sent up there to take inventory. But she did not think I would fit in with her society, and put me into the Orphan Home here for schooling, and for them to find me another place like the Loggerman's except a little better. I said I would be thrilled if it were an Indian family and the school was much closer. Have I described enough?"

"That's enough," replied Miss Ophelia Summer, "I don't want to make you feel miserable here at this joyous carnival, by making you remember the bad parts of your past. Now it would only be fair that I'll tell you something about myself in exchange. There is nothing special about me as a person. All the glamour that fame brings is just an illusion. Many years ago I was just an ordinary girl too. I was however an Indian girl. My mother died just before I became a teenager, and I was then alone with my father. When the world became very interested in Indians, a producer of entertainments arranged for my father, who was a chief, to travel to the big cities – even across the ocean to London – to present himself in lectures. Since I was about 13, and not a child anymore, he took me along. The producer thought it a good idea – he was an Indian King and I was the Princess. We were dressed up in buckskin and put on show. But then, a while later, when our Europe tour was over and we were touring the United States, my father caught an illness and he died, and I was left with the entertainment producer and his wife as guardians. When Indians became even *more* popular on account of Longfellow's poem about Hiawatha, he kept me on in his shows about Indians, performing and acting. Then suddenly one day he died too – that was more than 10 years ago – and I was now old enough – about 18 – to look

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after myself. I settled on the stage name Ophelia Summer, and hid the fact that I was an Indian and looked for regular acting parts. As I already revealed to you, I played French women, Italian women, Chinese women, Persian women. Nobody knew I was actually an Indian. I put curls in my hair sometimes. Sometimes I wore wigs. It is easy to look ordinary by filling my hair with curls and wearing regular clothes. Your Matron, who discovered a text that said I was of Indian origins must have read a very old article, when some reporters knew where I had come from. Today, when I go out in public, people do not see an Indian woman. If they did, they would expect me to be dressed in deerskin and feathers, including here at this Carnival, instead of as a Snow Queen. Perhaps people will not care anymore, but I am always afraid that if I am open about being Indian, they will demand I play Indian woman roles again and nothing else.”

Ophelia Summer found it refreshing to talk to this girl, as she could be frank and not have to put up pretence.

“I will keep it secret, Miss Ophelia,” replied Abbi. “I have only told my best friend at the Orphan Home, Peggy, about what Matron Priscilla told me, about you having Indian origins. I was afraid to tell the others for being teased again. Where are you from? I learned there are many Indian nationalities. Have you gone back home?”

Ophelia laughed in reaction to Abbi’s earnestness. “I’m not sure, but I remember when we were on show at the start, that my father was introduced as a chief of the Chippewa. I can remember Chippewa words too if I try hard enough, but you know, a person forgets their language if they don’t use it, and I haven’t used it since my father died. When we were touring and the entertainment producer and his wife kept me on, and were my guardians, I was too young and involved with what I was doing to think about the place I and my father came from, and then when the producer’s wife died and he too died, I couldn’t find out exactly where I had come from. I had never thought of inquiring from him before he died. So with my father’s death and then my guardians’ death I was an orphan myself. All by myself. But by then I was 18 and making a living, so I could take care of myself without any guardian. I would still like to determine where I am from. I

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hear the Chippewa peoples are many, covering many of the Great Lakes, with many communities.”

“The proper word is Ojibwa,” said Abbi. “According to Henry Schoolcraft, the word ‘Chippewa’ is a corruption.”

“Well ‘Ojibwa’ then,” laughed Olivia, recognizing that this girl seemed to know more about Indians than she. “In any event to find out about my roots, it would take some months visiting and searching. They are in out-of-the-way places that don’t have postal service or telegraphy. I have not had a chance to do that, and time has flown by.”

“I hope you will one day discover where exactly you came from,” replied Abbi. “Maybe you have an aunt or an uncle wondering what happened to you. And in my case too, I don’t know where Paula Pictford came from. According to my adoptive Mama, after she died, and then, Irwin died, my adoptive parents hardly knew anything as they had not been told by them very much when they were alive. There may be relatives who still don’t know what happened to Paula Pictford, or me.”

“You and I therefore share uncertainties about our origins, Abigail, and have a challenge ahead of us to determine it.”

Abbi had been clutching the photo card in her hands all the while. “I’d better put the photo card back in my pocket before I lose it.” As she put it back in the pocket of her dress, she noticed the \$10 bill from Mark there, but didn’t think it relevant to talk about it or how she came by it, especially since Miss Ophelia Summer hadn’t noticed it anyway.

“There,” said Miss Ophelia Summer, tying the final knot in the laces and standing up on the skates. “Let us skate, Miss Abigail Pictford. Here take my hand, and we’ll try to move along with the circling skaters. If we move towards the centre, the movement is slower than on the outside.”

Public attention quickly fell upon the actress skating with the costumed girl from the Orphan Home. Skaters pulled back and made room for them so that soon they were by themselves near the centre and also the centre of attention. Abbi, concentrating so much on her skating with her problematic skates, was at first unaware of eyes upon them. Miss Ophelia Summer signaled that the skaters should continue to skate and not slow down or stop—that

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she simply wanted to be a regular skater among them. They complied but kept looking in their direction as they skated.

Soon Abbi's ankles were sore. "My ankles are hurting from trying to keep my skates straight," she said.

"Then let's sit down on the benches again," Ophelia said. "Perhaps we can both fetch a mug of warm cocoa. They provide cocoa and other warm drinks over there for the guests. Let us rest our ankles as we will need to use them again in a while."

They both went and fetched mugs of cocoa from the vendor at a table, and then sat down on a bench. Ophelia Summer's handlers quickly rushed forward to pay the vendor the two nickels it cost.

Abbi put the cocoa temporarily on the bench beside her, as she tightened the straps on her right skate.

"Well," said Miss Ophelia Summer, "let's watch the others skate past, shall we? Some are practicing. Look at that man over there at the side. He practiced a figure 8. That means he described the number 8 in the ice. He will perform some remarkable skating in a while I expect. I think they call it 'figure skating'. He creates figures on the ice."

Abbi took a sip of the cocoa. It was warm and delicious.



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Ophelia continued: “And look at that costumed couple over there. They are turning a waltz even as they move with the flow of skaters, and even if the music is quite fast. No doubt we will see some astonishing waltzing on skates a little later. And have you ever seen such a variety of costumes? Are you excited?”

“I’m excited beyond description,” said Abbi now that she had a moment to grasp how special the situation was. “But mostly from being able to meet you. Oh thank you so much, Miss Ophelia Summer, for giving me so much of your attention. I never thought I’d even get close to you, let alone talk and skate with you. I wish I could be adopted by someone like you. All the while that I grew up people commented on how I looked different from the rest of the family and that I was adopted, but I was too little to know what it all meant. It took me a while to learn that it is common that natural children resemble their parents, and if they don’t, people wonder what the explanation is. Except—my adoptive Papa had dark hair, in a British way, so it was less of a problem when I was out with him.”

“If I were not always traveling from city to city, with the theatre, I would love to adopt you, Abigail. With our appearance, we could indeed be considered to be mother and daughter in the eyes of everyone.”

“You would adopt me if you could?”

“I certainly would. I’ve often wanted to settle down and become a mother; but my profession has always stood in my way. And when you become a celebrity, when you become famous, the public wants you to continue being that way. They won’t let you stop. That is the tragedy of my life. Everyone has a tragedy of one sort or another. Don’t believe that anyone is perfectly happy. We all wish for that which we do not have, and cannot get. But let’s not talk about unhappy things. It would spoil this moment, to mix unpleasant things into it. I can tell from the way you talked about your original parents, that thoughts or imaginings about them, even though you didn’t yourself remember these people, are pleasant ones. It is good to have pleasant memories from the deepest roots of your life. It makes you grounded. A tree with deep roots can withstand much wind, while a tree with shallow roots, or no roots at all, is pushed over by the smallest breeze.”

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“I wish I had memories of my beginnings, but actually I can’t remember much of anything from before I was about three or four years old. I have to use my imagination for anything earlier.”

Ophelia Summer then changed the subject: “Look at the people. They are a little angry that I am spending this much time with you. Look how they seem to want me to return to paying attention to the adults, to be shaking their hands and receiving their praiseful comments about my acting, instead of spending my time with an orphan girl. And look over there. The Orphan Home matrons and children are watching us too, wondering why I am giving you this attention. I suppose when we have finished our cocoa, we should return to our normal duties, you and I, behave as they expect us to. A performer always has to put the audience first, to give them what they want, what they expect.”

They sat and sipped their cocoa a while more. Then Miss Ophelia Summer stood up. “So now, Abigail, let’s take our empty mugs back to the table and return to behaving like everyone expects us to.”

Abbi got up and they proceeded to take their mugs back. Once done, Ophelia Summer extended a hand to Abbi and said: “In spite of being in this crush of people, I hope we can talk again, Miss Abigail Pictford.”

“I so hope we can talk again, Miss Ophelia Summer. But if we aren’t able to, I will cherish the memory of this conversation. You give me hope that I can become what I want in spite of being a girl and an Indian.”

Miss Ophelia Summer knelt down and gave Abbi a quick hug. “Now rejoin the other children. There is no need to tell them everything we talked about. You can leave out things they wouldn’t understand, that were just between you and me.”

“Thank you Miss Ophelia Summer,” said Abbi. “If we don’t meet again, I will remember this day for the rest of my life, and follow your career in the newspapers.”

With that, Abbi hastened back to the children, while Miss Ophelia Summer pushed herself once again into the midst of the guests who aspired to exchange some words with the famous star of theatre.

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MUCH FUN IS HAD

Abbi returned to a flurry of questions from the children. Having kept the truth of her adoration of Ophelia Summer from all the children, except for Peggy, she gave a superficial explanation to the children in general of what had gone on between them. She said that Miss Ophelia Summer gave her attention only because of her costume.

"She liked my costume," said Abbi loudly, "because by coincidence I was a Snow Princess and her costume represented a Snow Queen, and thought it appropriate that we should skate together."

Then Abbi tried to get away from the other girls in order to talk more privately with Peggy.

Peggy said: "I wondered where you had disappeared to. One minute we were skating together and the next minute you were gone. And then when the skaters opened up a big space, there you were in the center skating with Miss Ophelia Summer. Anyway, how happy I am for you to actually meet her!"

"We had a wonderful conversation, Peggy. She even addressed me 'Miss Abigail Pictford' twice! Nobody has ever addressed me like that before. She is very sophisticated. I will tell you everything later!"

At this point the master-of-ceremonies signaled the band to stop, and all skating stopped. He called for attention and began again: "And now, ladies and gentlemen, let us move to the sides in order that Mr. Harvey can demonstrate some of his amazing skill on skates."

The crowd moved to the sides, and the stated Mr. Harvey came forward, dressed in a dashing costume,

The limelight was now turned his way. He performed some utterly amazing feats, including figures, leaps and spins. The band played nothing all the while, but supplied drum rolls ahead of some of his more amazing tricks. One could hear the audience gasp when he succeeded. When finished and a little out of breath, he took a bow and the audience clapped vigorously.

Next a man and a woman were introduced, and they performed the waltz all over the ice, to an appropriate waltz tune performed by the band, as easily as if they

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were on their regular feet. Abbi expressed her utter amazement to Peggy: "I wish I will be able to dance a waltz on the ice some day, Peggy! It looks so absolutely romantic!"

But that was not all. They were joined by a number of other costumed skater pairs who joined in the waltzing. These additional ones were, however, not as skilled; but the spectacle of several pairs of skillfully waltzing skaters in costume going around the ice was memorable!

"And now, ladies and gentlemen," announced the master-of-ceremonies when the performance was done "we put the spotlight on the costumes. If you have registered your names on this sheet I have in my hand, please come forward when I call your name. I will introduce you and your costume, upon which you may perform some skate or pantomime to highlight your costume."

The master-of-ceremonies thus began to call out names, and the nature of the costume. The person called, would then come forward into the space opened up in the center of the rink. Usually they might simply skate around to show off their costume, but some offered to perform elaborate pantomimes, reflecting the way they were dressed, to entertain the crowd – usually in a humorous vein. Men dressed and acting like women is always funny, Abbi noted. Men produce such inelegant women! But not everyone sought comedy, or even to put on any elaborate act at all. They were simply proud of their costumes and it was enough to be introduced and seen.

Thus for the next hour, the master-of-ceremonies introduced the costumes and their wearers, who then showed them off, whereupon the spectators clapped in appreciation after each one.

In the categories of women's costumes, girl's costumes (other than the Orphan Home girls), boy's costumes and men's costumes, the winning costumes were decided after each group, by the panel of judges—the ladies of the organizing committee on the chairs on the stage—gauging the crowd response to each presentation. When all the costumes had been presented, the names of the winners were called, and they came forward and received a prize: a specially made medal for the boys and men, and a silver

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brooch made in a snowflake shape for the girls and women. The organizers had Miss Ophelia Summer present the prizes to the winners each time. The whole competition and award-giving, took up the much of the afternoon, and Abbi, like everyone else in the rink enjoyed every minute of it!

Finally it was the Orphan Home girls turn.

The master-of-ceremonies spoke: “Ladies and gentlemen, the finale for the Skating Carnival is at hand. Our attention is now directed towards the Orphan Home children and their costumed skaters. Mrs. Cumberland will now come forward and speak some words.”

The Richdale Women’s Charitable Society Carnival Organizing Committee ladies who were responsible for this evening’s event, were again assembled on chairs on the stage. Mrs. Cumberland came forward.

“Unfortunately I lack Jake’s booming voice, so I will be brief and let Jake take over again,” she began. “Yes, now is the time to admire the costume work of the girls of the Orphan Home, and judge which is the best in overall appearance and presentation here tonight...”

As Mrs. Cumberland talked, Abbi and Peggy stepped out the side door, which was just behind the bleachers where the Orphan Home children were located. It was a snowy early February with plenty of snow. Very quickly they scooped fresh snow and put it in a wicker basket that they had obtained earlier and painted white. Then they went back inside where Abbi helped get Peggy into a white sheet coverall and a crown of paper snowflakes. It was for their presentation. They resumed listening to Mrs. Cumberland, who was just finishing.

“Thank you Mrs. Cumberland for the brief introduction to the highlight of the day,” said the master-of-ceremonies as Mrs. Cumberland returned to her chair on the platform. “Let us then proceed with our most special presentations – the Orphan Home girls costume creations. Let us begin by having all the Orphan Home costume makers come onto the ice and skate in a circle around the center of the rink for a first look at them. Those who were involved with making a costume, skate with the girl who was chosen to wear the costume, so that we can see *all* the girls who were responsible for the costume we are

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looking at. We ask the audience to pay attention, and form some initial ideas as to which ones you like best. In some minutes, the children will move to the side again and we will call each costume forward individually upon which time the costume-makers will skate and I understand each one has developed a pantomime. We will then ask for your applause. We will determine the winner from the loudness of your applause as we did with all the earlier competitions. Come now, Orphan Home children first the general skateabout – boys too – I see some boys have contrived some imaginative costumes for the general boys competition earlier.”

The music began and all the children skated a turn around the ice, to begin with. Abbi was accompanied only by Peggy because she was the only one who had helped her. Other girls formed larger groups around their costume and wearer. Then the music stopped and the children moved to the side. Next, the master-of-ceremonies, referring to a piece of paper for names, called each group forward according to costume name and the girls responsible. “Little Miss Muffet worn by Miss Marcia Little—please skate forward to the center of the rink. You may make a turn or figure or pantomime to show off your costume.”

Marcia’s group responded. Her team had devised a spider made of paper and wires, which hung by a thread from a stick affixed to her back and sticking up above her head. She did a pantomime reacting to the spider dangling in front of her face. And then she did some figures to complete the presentation. The master-of-ceremonies, referring to the sheet of paper again, continued: “The costume Marcia is wearing was made with the help of her teammates Miss Betty Bing and Miss Ella MacGraw. Please join Marcia now so we can see you, girls.” The two girls did so. “Some applause for these girls and their Little Miss Muffet costume!”

The crowd responded with applause.

The master-of-ceremonies continued: “Alright girls, move back to the side. Next on the list is Miss Lisa Cuthbridge wearing a costume representing Little Red Riding Hood. Please skate forward Lisa and perform a figure or pantomime highlighting your costume.”

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Lisa came forward carrying a picnic basket. One of the girls of her team had a wolf mask on, that they had made, and they performed a pantomime where Little Red Riding Hood saw the wolf and skated away, looking over her shoulder. The wolf chased her around in a wide circle. The crowd chuckled.

“This costume was made with the help of Miss Mary Hubbard, and Miss Sally Tubble. Please join Lisa so we can see you girls.” The girls did so. Mary, with the wolf mask, took it off. All the girls did a curtsy. Everyone applauded.

Each group of girls was introduced in this way. The named girl wearing the costume would come forward and then after a small performance be joined by those who helped make it. The process was repeated until four costumes had been identified and presented. Abbi and Peggy were the final presenters.

“And finally,” said Jake, the master-of-ceremonies, “last but not least, we have Miss Abigail Pictford, and Miss Peggy Brown. Abigail is wearing the costume entitled ‘Snow Princess’, representing the daughter of the King of Snow and Ice who lives in a castle of ice in the arctic. , I read on this page that the Snow Princess, uses her magic wand with the snowflake on the end to make it snow. Abigail and Peggy come forward and present your costume. I am told that the Snow Princess will make it snow with *real* snow!”

Abbi skated around, holding her snowflake wand which she waved in time with the music created by the band. Peggy, who was draped in the white sheet and carried the large white wicker basket, skated behind Abbi. Every time Abbi waved her snowflake wand, Peggy threw a handful of snow up above Abbi’s head as if the wand had made it snow. They had practiced the routine earlier on the pond behind the Orphan Home. To finish it all off Abbi did a figure 8 forward and backward and ended by doing a twirl. This time she did not get dizzy. Peggy threw the rest of the snow all around her.

“Thank you Abigail,” said the master-of-ceremonies. “The girl who helped her, who helped the Snow Princess make it snow, is Miss Peggy Brown. Come forward again, Peggy, and join Abigail. Now some applause for our ‘Snow

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Princess' presentation!"

For Abbi and Peggy, the applause was tremendous. It was probably less to do with the costume and skating than the fact that the audience had seen Abbi skate with Ophelia Summer. But who can quarrel with the audience? Abbi and Peggy were the obvious winners!

Mrs. Cumberland among the women of the organizing committee on the stage, who were also the judges, nodded towards the other women, who seem to agree from the rousing cheers that the 'Snow Princess' was the winner. The master of ceremonies went to Mrs. Cumberland for the verdict and then returned to the front of the stage.

"Abbi and Peggy's presentation was the last of the five Orphan Home girl presentations, and it seems that judging from your applause we have a clear winner: the last one – Snow Princess! Miss Abigail Pictford and Miss Peggy Brown with their 'Snow Princess' costume are therefore the winners of the Orphan Home costume competition. Most would agree that 'Snow Princess' reflects the wintry purpose of this carnival. And it has not escaped our attention the coincidence between the 'Snow Princess' costume and the 'Snow Queen' represented by Miss Ophelia Summer's costume, which I am told is a complete coincidence. Thus I declare the 'Snow Princess' costume and the team of Miss Abigail Pictford and Miss Peggy Brown the winner of our first Orphan Home costume competition. Come forward girls and receive your prize of the snowflake brooch we have had specially made as prizes for girls and women."

A roar of approval arose from the crowd, as Abbi and Peggy came forward again to receive their prize. Unlike the regular competition where only the costume wearer got one, in this case both Abbi and Peggy got one each. As with the other prize presentations, Ophelia Summer came forward to present the prize, to pin it on them. Abbi was absolutely thrilled to receive the prize from Ophelia Summer, even though it was actually provided by the organizing committee. "Well done, girls. Well done Abigail," said Ophelia as she pinned the brooch on Abbi's costume, and then on Peggy's white sheet, which she had kept on for the moment.

Ophelia Summer stepped back again and the master-of-

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ceremonies continued: “But let us also give a round of applause for all the other little Orphan Home girls, for the great effort they put into making costumes. You are all winners! Come forward everybody, skate around, show off your costumes in the open space in the center of the rink one more time. Even though you others did not win, you all deserve applause for your demonstrated skill in costume-making. Anyone seeking to adopt one of these girls, note that you will get a girl with useful dressmaking skills.”

The band played and the costumed girls and their teams skated some more. There was resounding applause. Then upon a signal from the master-of-ceremonies, the band stopped again.

He continued: “And before our finale, can we also bring forward our special guest this evening, Miss Ophelia Summer, for some final words.”

Ophelia Summer dutifully came forward and joined the master-of-ceremonies on the stage. As before she received a round of applause and had to wait for it to die down. Then she began:

“Congratulations to Miss Abigail Pictford and her teammate Miss Peggy Brown, for winning the costume competition among the Orphan Home children. I am partial to her costume myself as mine just happened to be similar. Congratulations to *all* the winners from earlier in the programme, in *all* the categories – men, women, boys and girls! Would they identify themselves for some more applause?” She initiated clapping as the various winners waved their hand or skated forward into the open space in the centre of the rink. Then she continued. “As the Carnival comes to a close I wish to thank the organizing ladies for including me in your Carnival. I had an enjoyable time. Congratulations on a very successful event! I shouldn’t talk too much more, but I should now withdraw, as it is most proper that the Carnival close on the women who organize this event. After all, the real celebrities are they, for their tireless efforts in assisting orphans in the area, and on the Orphan Home and the ultimate purpose of the event, to raise funds for the unfortunate orphans. The master-of-ceremonies will lead this Carnival to its close now.” She waved her hand in response to cheers and applause from the attendees. “I’ll see you all, hopefully, at

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the Royal Richdale Theatre sometime this week, if you have not already attended. See you all then?"

She smiled and waved again as she descended from the stage, was joined by her entourage and disappeared into the shadows. The master-of-ceremonies watched her go, and when the applause had died down he came forward again. "One more round of applause for our special guest at the Richdale Winter Carnival of 1876," he said. The crowd applauded yet again.

THE UNEXPECTED FINALE

When the applause had died down again, the master-of-ceremonies continued: "As Miss Ophelia said it is most appropriate to signal the closing of the Carnival of 1876 with thank you's to the organizing women and a focus on the Orphan Home. Therefore, before the band plays 'God Save the Queen' and we bring everything to its final conclusion, let us honour the women of the Richdale Women's Charitable Society Carnival Organizing Committee who are responsible for this Carnival, and the Orphan Home that the funds from this event will serve. Accordingly I invite the five principal women to the center of the ice, all of whom have also demonstrated their skills on skates, which they yet have on their feet, and let the limelight be shone on them. The fellow managing the limelight up there on the balcony is asked to shine the spotlight on them now." He lifted his hand to his forehead to look right into the light that was currently on him in order to catch sight of the limelight spotlight operator.

The five women, all with skates and costumes on, beaming with broad smiles, came forward to the center of the ice. The master-of-ceremonies introduced each of the women as they came into the centre "First forward is Mrs. Cumberland, chairwoman of the Richdale Women's Charitable Society Carnival Organizing Committee. Next we have members Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Thornapple, Mrs. Darville, all dressed in their festive costumes, and last but not least businesswoman Audora Woodrow of the Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company with offices in nearby Saint John, carrying on the company

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begun by the Woodrow family of Richdale.”

Each woman gave a wave of acknowledgment to the crowd when their name was spoken.

The master-of-ceremonies continued: “What shall we do for a fitting finale? Shall we have them skate around, audience?”

The crowd cheered in the affirmative.

“May I suggest, Mrs. Cumberland, that you all join hands and let our pretty Snow Princess, representing the Orphan Home, lead you in one turn around the ice? Come back on the ice, Abigail our Snow Princess, and join the women for a skateabout.”

Abbi came back to the center. Mrs. Cumberland extended her hand to Abbi, who took it, who in turn extended her other hand towards Mrs. Smith to take it; and then Mrs. Smith had the next woman take her other hand and so on until Audora Woodrow took the last position in the chain.

“Well, Mrs. Cumberland,” the master-of-ceremonies continued, “shall we then skate around with Abigail one final time? The Richdale Regimental Band back there, who we also thank for their wonderful music—give us some music, before we finish off with the playing of ‘God Save the Queen’ to close this year’s Carnival. Proceed, Abigail, our Snow Princess, and the women of Richdale Women’s Charitable Society Carnival Organizing Committee! Take a turn around the rink to receive our applause for another successful Carnival!”

Abbi had never been happier nor more inspired. Someone had to take the lead, since a line of people cannot skate in parallel, without prior practice, and Abigail had been charged with the responsibility of leading.

As the Band played dramatic music befitting of closing the event, the eager Abbi was inspired to skate quickly in time with the music, causing the women closest to her to skate quickly too; but as everyone knows, when something is swung in a circle the inner part may move slowly, while the outer part is forced to move fast. Abbi, being in the center of the turning line of women, needed only move slowly to cause Audora at the other end to skate fast to keep up, or break the chain.

Then, when making the turn, Abbi’s skating became

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wobbly because of her continually problematic skate straps, and she started to fall and flailed her arms to regain her balance. Her flailing was transferred to Mrs. Cumberland who wobbled from Abbi's wobbling, and flailed her arms too to keep balance, and her flailing of arms transferred to the next woman, and that to the next, and so on it went down the line. Within moments, they were all flailing their arms to keep balance, and the whole line of mid-aged women had to break their hold as they went flying onto their fannies. After letting go of Mrs. Cumberland, Abbi managed to recover her balance and stay on her feet, only to find that everyone else in the chain was lying scattered on the ice.

Uh-oh!

But that was not the end of what happened! Madam Audora Woodrow who, having been on the outside and having had to skate the fastest, having the greatest momentum, slid on her fanny towards the side, and spectators opened up a path for her slide to avoid colliding with her, so that she ended up at the side where the middle rope for the icicle-affair above everyone's head was affixed. Struggling to get up, Audora grabbed the rope, and that grabbing pulled loose the knot that secured it all, releasing the central rope. The whole affair above, the giant snowflake of icicle flags, came falling down, fluttering on top of the women who were scattered about the central area of the ice. The final result was an ice full of large women, their proud airs shattered, with small flags and banners scattered on top of them and the ice in the shape of a very large, now floppy, snowflake.

When the audience realized everything that had happened, they roared with laughter, including Miss Ophelia Summer who was a happy distance away now, at the side, preparing for her departure.

The proud women who had been thrown to the ice were hurt to have their dignity and pride suddenly taken away from them and being turned into clowns. In the subsequent minutes, as they got off the ice, they may have pretended to take it in stride with a sense of humour, but clearly most were extremely angry inside, particularly Madam Audora Woodrow.

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“Uh-oh,” said Abbi as she surveyed the final result.

The Band, the moment they were aware of what had happened, suspended their last piece of music and hastened to ‘God Save the Queen’ to quickly bring the Carnival to a close.

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TWO DAYS LATER

Abbi's hopeful beginnings at the Orphan Home came to an end when Superintendent Wellington called Abbi into his office two days after the Richdale Skating Carnival. He motioned her to sit in the chair facing him and his desk.

Superintendent Wellington was holding a newspaper. He lifted the newspaper, peered over the top of it at Abbi, looked back down and read, in a serious tone: *"This year once again marked the midwinter festivities of the Richdale Skating Carnival, held last Sunday afternoon at the Richdale Rink and Exhibition Hall. The event, which is organized annually by the Richdale Women's Charitable Society, was carried once again by a programme of music from marches to waltzes performed by the Richdale Regimental Band. The ice was in fine condition and more people skated than every before, everyone once again presenting costumes and displaying their talents in skating. In addition to the usual programme, this year featured the appearance of the distinguished actress of the theatre, Miss Ophelia Summer, who was coincidentally appearing in the play at the Richdale Royal Theatre, 'A Stranger in a Winter Landscape', and who, wearing a stunning white costume depicting a 'Snow Queen', opened the Carnival with a few warm words to the crowd in attendance. Also new this year was a costume competition for the girls of Richdale Women's Charitable Society Orphan Home, who presented costumes the girls made themselves in class. Among them the unanimous winner based on crowd response was a raven-headed girl by the name of Abigail*

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Pictford. She wore an outfit entitled 'Snow Princess' consisting of a white dress adorned with snowflake-like lace. However the event offered yet another spectacle when to close the Carnival, the winning girl was asked to lead a line of distinguished women of the Richdale Women's Charitable Society, organizers of the event, hands joined, around the ice on their skates, as a finale to the Carnival. These ladies included Mrs. Cumberland, Smith, Thornapple, Darville, and businesswoman Audora Woodrow. Due to a stumble by this small girl leading the skating line, who struggled to regain her balance, and perhaps also due to a turn that was a little too sharp, all the ladies were thrown in disarray all over the ice, particularly the woman at the end of the turning line, who was whipped along at a good clip, Madam Woodrow. She slid far to the side where some ropes were affixed to hold up an affair of flags resembling icicles. Pulling a rope to lift herself off the ice, she loosened the knot there that held the abovementioned affair of flags that hung above the event, and caused the rope to be released and bring the affair down upon the scattered ladies on the ice, creating a spectacle that was a source of great amusement to all who witnessed it, but certainly a source of embarrassment to the ladies. This finale for the Carnival of 1876 is one which no one in attendance is ever to forget."



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Superintendent Wellington peered again over the newspaper at Abbi: "Well," he asked, "What do you think of that? The incident is all here in black and white for all the world to see. Imagine the embarrassment you have caused for the very ladies who organized the event, arranged the costume competition, and who also run this Orphan Home."

Abbi had the greatest look of remorse on her face: "I didn't mean to cause all those ladies to spill all over the ice," she said in near tears. "The straps on my skates were forever slipping ... I almost fell myself."

"It may have done you well had you fallen too, then it would have seemed to be nobody's fault. But you were taking the lead and you didn't fall. The blame is seen to reside entirely in your direction." He put the newspaper down on his desk. "Whether you were at fault or whether it was the fault of all involved, or nobody's, it happened, and the damage has been caused, and someone to blame is being sought. The ladies thus injured, have contacted me and we have all discussed the matter at length. Some women are willing to accept that no single person was at fault, but Madam Audora Woodrow is inclined to direct all the blame on you. She is the angriest of them all. She fears her dignity in the eyes of her business clients is ruined forever. She was quick to bring forth an inventory of all your misdeeds from her contacts with you over the years when you lived with her son. She pictures you as being impulsive, vain, and wanting to make yourself the center of attention; seeing in your behaviour at the Carnival a flaunting of your costume and your seeking out Miss Ophelia Summer and to monopolize her time when numerous people were waiting to talk to her. And then when you led the ladies around on the ice after your costume was declared the winner, she attributes the spill to your impulsiveness and vanity, your getting carried away by the attention on you and your not considering the interests of the large ladies behind you when you skated too fast and made the turn too sharp."

Abbi started to weep under the barrage of accusations. "I didn't mean to ..."

"Those are the accusations—and mainly from Madam Audora Woodrow, Hansel and Gretel's' witch, who has

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influence over the others. Obviously it is all magnified in particular by her anger. Something that began as a mere stumble has become very large. Well be what it may, the fact is that the women were laughed at and greatly embarrassed in front of all the city's important people, and they feel that they will be mocked for the rest of their lives, always reminded of the day they were thrown about on their fannies in the winter of 1876. While some of the ladies are willing to forget it and try to laugh off the incident, Madam Woodrow is particularly adamant that you be punished in some way. Led by her, all agreed that it cannot simply be glossed over like it never happened. I am being asked to decide on some kind of punishment, even if in reality it is a token one for their benefit. To begin with they have asked the brooch you won be taken back."

Abbi could only weep. She took off the snowflake brooch she loved to wear and gave it to him.

The Superintendent continued: "I have no choice, Abigail. I at least need to *show* them I am doing something about this matter, particularly since the very woman who presents herself as your sponsor, Madam Audora Woodrow, is the strongest voice in the matter of disciplining you. She is a prominent member of the Richdale Women's Charitable Society and also an important woman in Richdale business and social circles. Of all the ladies humiliated, she appears to be most angry, as I said, and the most interested in seeing something done. It seems to have confirmed in her mind her wisdom in keeping you at a distance from her. In her mind you contain 'the Devil's seed', or perhaps she attributes it to being Indian—we can only imagine how she imagines your parents to have been and how you came to be. Like it or not, whether totally fair or not, I am commanded to determine some punishment that will satisfy those ladies, Abigail. They are my bosses. Through them I am paid a salary for my work here."

Abbi wiped a tear from her eye. "What punishment?"

He continued: "A good punishment for children in the Orphan Home has been to take away their free time and give them chores that are not particularly pleasant. For boys we usually have them shovel coal into the furnace downstairs. For girls tedious chores in the kitchen – like

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peeling potatoes, scrubbing the oven, and so on – will do. Thus I have decided that is what we have to do—take away your free time and put you to work assisting our cook Matron Gorda. No skating, no reading, no chatting with the other children, no outings. Only schoolwork. Whenever the children are free, you are to report to Matron Gorda.”

Abbi continued crying.

“Stop crying. If you’re afraid of Matron Gorda, rest assured that she is frightening only on her exterior.”

“I can’t help crying,” replied Abbi. “I have gone from the happiest day of my life meeting Miss Ophelia Summer to the most miserable.”

The Superintendent had put the newspaper aside by now, and sat with hands clasped. “Well, if it is of any consolation, Abigail, the spectacle of seven ample women being spilled all over the ice onto their large bottoms was rather comical wasn’t it? The entire audience thought so, judging from the laughter.”

Abbi smiled at Superintendent’s attempt to cheer her up. “Especially my former Grandmama, Audora,” she ventured, “who has been trying to get rid of me in one way or another since her son was lost and I became her responsibility. And simply because I’m an orphan and not her kin, and I’m Indian. I can picture her still ...” And then she caught herself so as not to be misunderstood. “But I was perfectly happy for even her to remain on her skates to the end!”

Superintendent Wellington smiled in a fatherly fashion: “Well, Abigail, perhaps *she* deserved what she got. I am myself not a fan of that woman, from my contacts with her. She may be good at making business decisions, but she is certainly not a warm person. But do you think the other ladies deserved it?”

“No ...” she said quietly.

“Well, let’s make a deal, Abigail. I will allow you the satisfaction of having thrown Madam Woodrow in her witch costume onto her bottom; therefore the punishment will be for embarrassing the other ladies who didn’t deserve it. Does that sound reasonable?”

“I guess so,” replied Abbi. “But for how long will I have to report to Matron Gorda in my free time?”

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“I suspect perhaps a week or so. I will gauge the embarrassed ladies on that score whenever I meet them, some of whom volunteer here from time to time, mainly to supervise children during free time. I’m sure as time passes they will all turn their anger to laughter. It will all be over before you know it. Just grit your teeth and accept it that it is something you and I must do to smooth things out, whether it is just or not. Before long everyone will have forgotten about it, and the ladies themselves will be able laugh about it. Alright?”

“Yes, Superintendent Wellington,” replied Abbi, realizing he really didn’t have much choice in the matter.

PUNISHMENT

While the other girls were gossiping and playing in the main hall, Abbi reported to Matron Gorda for chores. “Abigail Pictford reporting for chores, Matron Gorda,” said Abbi when she appeared in the kitchen after the afternoon practical classes.

“Go to the root cellar, and get forty potatoes and forty carrots, and peel them,” was Matron Gorda’s first instruction in her gruff accented voice.

Abbi sighed and went to the basement where the potatoes, carrots, turnips, radishes, onions and so forth were stored in a cool and dark room. Forty potatoes and carrots was a lot of potatoes and carrots. She filled a handled basket with as many as she could, and struggled upstairs with them. Reaching the kitchen, she emptied the basket and returned to the basement. Several trips were necessary because forty potatoes and carrots was quite a lot! In any event, soon she was peeling potatoes.

Peeling potato after potato became quite tedious very quickly. She yearned for some way to reduce the tedium. Perhaps she could strike up a conversation. Matron Gorda spoke very little: she was clearly not much of a conversationalist. But Abbi decided to be her talkative self and see how Matron Gorda would respond. She began: “I don’t really mind peeling potatoes and carrots, Matron Gorda. Peeling a few is very interesting. It is interesting to watch how the peel comes off. Sometimes I try to see how thin I can make the peel. If the peel is thick, good food is

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thrown away, isn't it; so it is beneficial if one peels the potato as thinly as possible. I hear that fresh potatoes do not need to be peeled, just washed. But of course in winter one cannot find fresh potatoes. As potatoes stay in storage they try to grow. They sprout buds; the skin starts to go green. I sympathize with the potato. Imagine sitting in the dark, as if buried in the soil and then wanting to find daylight. If they see any daylight at all, any evidence of light, the potato is inspired. It thinks that if it starts sending a bud in that direction it will emerge into the light. That is why root cellars have to be completely dark, so that the potatoes stay asleep. The word is 'dormant'. Do you ever think of interesting things like that when you are peeling vegetables, Matron Gorda?"

Matron Gorda said: "Peel potatoes!"

Abbi sighed as she picked up her twentieth potato. "I've now done my twentieth potato. My arithmetic tells me 20 more to go. 40 minus 20 equals 20. I suppose you do arithmetic like that. I guess a cook must. You have to measure things: a pound of this, an ounce of that, a tablespoon of this, a cup of that. I suppose if a person wants to be a cook, it is useful to be good at arithmetic. There. Now 19 to go."

Abbi sighed once again as she put the peeled one down in the large pot and took the next potato from the basket.

She continued: "I imagine that peeling vegetables would not be as tedious if you did not have to do so many one after the other. Is it possible, Matron Gorda, that I could do the potatoes and carrots at the same time? I do one potato and then a carrot and then a potato and so on. And if you also want turnips peeled or onions, well I could do potato, carrot, turnip, onion, potato, carrot, turnip, onion, and so on. It would be less tedious that way, don't you think? What are you doing over there Matron Gorda? I am fascinated by cooking. But not by cooking that has to follow a recipe book. My cooking would be done by 'feel', like the greatest chefs do it. The tastes of various ingredients would be artfully brought together, like images in poetry or notes in a piece of music. Have you ever cooked food in that way, Matron Gorda, by 'feel'? I suppose it takes a great deal of training and experience to create food in a purely artistic fashion. Are you artistic?"

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Nobody knows anything about your background, Matron Gorda. It could be that you were once a world famous chef, forced by unfortunate circumstances to abandon your post in the kitchens of a European countess. Perhaps you made a small mistake one day, and a guest became ill, and you were fired and banished from that European kingdom. I'm sorry to say that the name 'Gorda' isn't particularly appealing to me. I think the name 'Gerta' is a touch more elegant, don't you think? That's short for 'Gertrude'. Have you ever thought of having people call you 'Matron Gerta'? But maybe your name is not short for 'Gertrude'. Was your father named 'Gordon'? 'Gorda' could be a girl's version of the name 'Gordon'. Were you named after your father, or uncle, or grandfather or some other male relative? I don't mean to pry, but how people acquire names has recently become a fascination for me, especially when I discovered that Mrs. Loggeman, the last woman with whom I lived, hadn't even had the time to name all her little girls, and there were six of them, all less than five years. I eventually named them all for her, with very creative, yet not strange, names. I suppose that you really don't have to name a child until they need a name. And Indians wait patiently for the spirit world to suggest one. But I would think that a child should have a name by the time they start to talk. Or else they will start to believe that their name is 'Hey You' or 'My Dear' or something like that. Imagine growing up and having the first name 'Hey You'. But I suppose if you say it fast, and it sounds like 'Heiu', then that could be a usable name, couldn't it? Oh, this potato peeling is tiring. I've now done 25, 15 to go. . I'll grab another and peeling will start over again. I suppose once I've peeled hundreds, I shall be very fast, and it will be very automatic. When something is automatic, like walking, then it is easier to do. Imagine having to be aware of how to move your feet when you walk! But I suppose that is what a baby faces when they start walking. Put one foot there, and then balance and move the other foot in front of the other, and so on. I imagine when a baby first learns to walk it is as difficult as when a girl first learns to peel potatoes. Luckily I'm already experienced in helping in the kitchen, from my former homes. But certainly not experienced in peeling vegetables for 32 children and

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some matrons! I suppose you are already used to peeling hundreds of potatoes at a time, Matron Gorda. Do you ever read a book while preparing food? When you can do something automatically, it is good to read a book. When I was at Mrs. Loggeman's, by fall I could feed the babies, or rock them to sleep, and read old Jeffrey's books all at the same time"

Matron Gorda stood up, placed her hands on her enormous hips. Abbi stopped to see what she was doing.

"BE QUIET!" roared Matron Gorda.

Abbi was startled, and froze in her tracks. Then Matron Gorda's tense body relaxed again and she returned to what she was doing, Abbi sighed and said *quietly* to herself: "14 to go. 26 done."

AN INTOLERABLE SITUATION

The worst part of being punished was that one was separated from the others most of the time, and it was difficult to feel part of the Orphan Home family. The only consolation Abbi found was from the stuffed beaver under her bed. When there was nobody else to talk to, she could always talk to Amik under her breath. She imagined that somehow Amik would come to her rescue, save her from this situation.

In the evening, four days into the punishment, Peggy had an urgent reason to find Abbi. Abbi, tired and angry after hours of cleaning the kitchen's enormous oven, had gone to lie on her bed.

"Abbi, there you are, lying on your bed," said Peggy when she found her. "Shouldn't you be doing your schoolwork downstairs? Why are you up here on your bed? At least you are given this time to do schoolwork for tomorrow's lessons. We can at least talk a little at that time."

"I'm so exhausted from working for Matron Gorda so much and not having any time to rest or go outside like other children. It's nothing but work, work, work. It wouldn't be so bad if I could have pleasant conversations with her, like I always had with Mrs. Loggeman at my last place; but she is a woman of few words, and I have to control my own talkative nature when I'm around her. Now

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I do a lot of talking to myself under my breath, instead, to relieve the stress. This place has become like a prison of late. My excitement of the first few weeks since my arrival, is over.”

Peggy sat down on her own bed, beside Abbi’s: “I came to look for you, Abbi, because I have some news that is both good and bad.”

“What is it, Peggy?” Abbi reacted, getting up on one elbow.

“I have to say ‘Goodbye’, Abbi. Our relationship of only four weeks is cut short.”

Abbi rose to her elbow: “Oh no, Peggy! What has happened?”

“And now the good news, Abbi: I have been adopted! That is why I have to go!”

“Oh, I’m happy for you, Peggy!”

Peggy explained: “It seems that many guests to the Richdale Skating Carnival were moved to adopt some orphans, in particular those who stood out from the others with their making of the costumes—those that showed sewing talents. City women strongly value girls who can sew and mend clothes. Marcia and Mary, our worst rivals in the costume competition, are leaving too! And somebody must have liked me too because of the costume we made. But I can’t understand why nobody chose you, Abbi. I felt certain someone would adopt you, because we made the winning costume. So I thought why has nobody chosen you too, Abbi? You know what I think? I think that the Orphan Home would not offer you because you were under punishment. They must have given some excuse to anyone interested in you. The women who fell on their fannies need to get their revenge on you *first*. That’s the only explanation.”

“You’re right, Peggy,” said Abbi, sitting up from her bed. “If they let me get adopted, they would be denied the satisfaction of getting back at me. That is terrible, Peggy! To be denied even being presented to anyone for adoption. That is a punishment far worse than working like a slave for Matron Gorda!”

“Yes, Abbi, I think that they are overlooking you purposefully during this punishment time, not showing you to people, not putting you for consideration for adoption.

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I'm afraid you're stuck here until they decide that your punishment is over, that you have corrected the evil of your ways in the opinion of the upset ladies."

"Which is mainly the proud and arrogant Madam Woodrow," Abbi declared. She flopped back onto her bed and glared at the ceiling, with hurt in her expression. "It's not fair! I'm being doubly punished! As long as I'm under punishment, I also have no hope to be adopted! This is *really* like being in a prison!"

But that was not the end of the bad news! Peggy added: "And you know how Miss Ophelia Summer arranged for the children to attend a matinee of the play? Well it's tomorrow, Saturday, and the other girls are certain that you will be left behind, because it is an outing, and you're not allowed to go on outings. You won't be able to go with all of us to see the play at the Richdale Royal Theatre."

Abbi was now near tears. She turned on her side to brood. "I was the one who inspired Miss Ophelia Summer to arrange for the Orphan Home children to attend the final matinee performance on Saturday. And now I'm the one who can't see it! What's the use of my being here! Leave me alone now Peggy. I feel very unhappy." She turned herself face down on the bed.

But Peggy felt uncomfortable leaving Abbi, and stayed seated on her bed next to her. Abbi realized Peggy was not going away and raised herself up again and wiped away a tear. "I *do* feel very happy for you, however, Peggy. I'm sure you will have a very happy future. It's better you leave first than me. I'm by now used to tragedy in my life."

"I'll miss you, Abbi. And I won't be happy until you have found a new home too."

Peggy lay back on her own bed too, in the empty dormitory, and both now lay on their respective beds and stared up at the ceiling. It was still early evening and the rest of the girls and boys were doing homework or pursuing some recreation or other in the main hall, or outdoors. Peggy and Abbi were free to speak in the empty dormitory without needing to keep their voices down.

Abbi silently stared at the ceiling deep in thought. Peggy turned to study Abbi, wondering what she was thinking.

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Abbi finally said: “If they don’t want me, I might as well leave!”

“You can’t leave, Abbi. You need to eat and have shelter.”

“I could go to Littleton where I grew up and where Mama, my adoptive Mama, Jenine, said I was born and grew up. Jenine told me before I went to the Loggermans that I was born to an Indian woman there named Paula Pictford; but she died from smallpox shortly after I was born and Jenine adopted me. I didn’t even know I was adopted until a year ago. I think I told you about it Peggy.”

“Yes you told me earlier,” answered Peggy.

“Anyway,” continued Abbi, “I grew up from a baby in the Woodrow family and we lived there until Papa – *adoptive* Papa – was no longer needed for the Amherst-Moncton railway and had to work to design bridges for the railway going up the Saint John River – not in the river, but *beside* the river. That’s when we went to Fredericton. But then after a while he had the accident, falling in the river in the winter and was never found. I lived in Littleton until I was about eight. People there will know me, wouldn’t they? Surely they’ll remember Bradden and Jenine Woodrow and their children, and maybe there will be someone who knows me and will give me sympathy. Perhaps I can persuade someone there to adopt me.”

“But that seems silly – People won’t adopt you simply if you ask them. They’ll send you back.”

“I know Peggy. That is why I have an even greater purpose – to find someone there who remembers back eleven or twelve years to when Irwin and Paula Pictford, my natural parents, lived there. I’ll learn everything I can about them. If I am to now use the name Abigail Pictford, seeing as Madam Woodrow has completely rejected me, I should discover where I really came from. I can never use the name ‘Abbi Woodrow’ again.”

Abbi was completely unaware that her adoptive Mama had made up the story of having been born from ‘Paula and Irwin Pictford’ because she didn’t want to tell her she had simply been left by an unknown person behind the Littleton church door. Oh what a hopeless adventure Abbi was now planning!

“There *must* be older people there who remember Irwin

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and Paula Pictford,” Abbi continued as her plan took form in her mind. “I’m only nine years old, ten in a month. That’s not a long time when you’re grown up. People who were 20 when I was born, will now be 30. People who were 30 years old when I was born will now be 40. 40 year olds will be 50, 50 year olds 60, and so on. Ten years is a short time for older people. If I tell people I was the little baby of Irwin and Paula Pictford, and that Paula was Indian—Indians stand out—they will certainly remember them, wouldn’t they? Everyone would remember an Indian woman and that she died when I was only four months, and that I was then adopted by Jenine and Bradden Woodrow, and that I was their Indian girl around town. I’m sure there will be many people who remember me as the Indian girl at the Woodrows; but there must also be some older people who may actually remember back to before I was adopted, and tell me something more about Irwin and Paula Pictford. They wouldn’t need to be that old, Peggy. They only need to have lived in Littleton more than ten years. They should remember an Indian woman, who had a baby and then died, shouldn’t they? She would have stood out, wouldn’t she? And I could go to her gravestone and talk to her.”

“But it is pointless to even think of going. How would you make it to Littleton, anyway? Littleton is all the way beyond Moncton, like you told me earlier.”

Abbi lifted herself off the bed and reached under the bed, where her trunk and travel bag were stored, and reached inside her bag. She pulled out the \$10 that Mark had given her. She showed it to Peggy and said: “This! It will easily pay for the train fare and much more!”

Peggy sat up. “A \$10 banknote! Abbi, where did you get it!” She studied it more closely.

“Remember at the Carnival, when my former brother Mark pulled me aside? He gave me this. He said that his Grandmama Audora gives him a \$10 note every month. But we were not raised in a wealthy household, so he doesn’t know how to spend that much money. He just gave it to me, saying he’ll just get another one next month.”

“Well that would certainly pay the fare and more,” said Peggy, “but I don’t know Abbi. . . It’s far, and going alone? Even if you get away, you’ll be reported gone. They’ll find you and bring you back – I’m sure of it.”

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“I have to try. I’ve made up my mind! I’ve decided that if I can’t go to the play, I’ll go home to Littleton!!...”

“I don’t know, Abbi.....”

“Besides, I want to see again the town where I lived my first years, to see how it has changed; and meet people I might remember. I was just seven when we left. I will go to the cemetery there and find the gravestone of Irwin and Paula Pictford – or at least Paula Pictford who died there of smallpox, since my Mama told me Irwin died at sea and is probably at the bottom of the Atlantic. I will stand in front of the grave and speak to her, and tell her spirit I am her daughter. It will be profoundly spiritual and satisfying—better than seeing a play. I must do it. And, Peggy, if I *am* sent back here afterward, I’ll accept any punishment I am given. I’ll feel stronger. I’ll come back with memories and a feeling of rootedness. Miss Ophelia Summer said that when one knows about one’s past one feels more rooted—actually I think she said ‘grounded’ which means the same. No punishment later can be worse than what I am enduring now, Peggy. Being in an actual prison would be better than this, especially if tomorrow I will have to endure imagining all the other children seeing the performance while I am scrubbing the oven, like Cinderella, and I can’t see it, nor see Ophelia Summer again. It would be utterly *unbearable*, Peggy!”

Peggy saw how serious Abbi was. “I don’t know, Abbi.” Peggy repeated, a little fearful of Abbi’s determination. “I know I would be very scared to travel by myself.”

“Don’t worry Peggy,” Abbi assured her. “I’m used to traveling long distances by train. The last time was almost alone, since Mr. Morton ignored me as he calculated things in his notebooks. I must do it, Peggy. It would be easy. I could go early in the morning before the sun rises, make my way to the railway station – I only have to walk to the Richdale Station, not all the way to the Saint John Station – and before long, in about three or four hours if the train is express, I will be there in Littleton. I know where it is. It is beyond Moncton on the new line towards Amherst. I’ll only take my travel bag. Everything else I’ll leave. Amik is in my trunk. I will write a message on my trunk ‘*please forward to Mark Woodrow at Tall Pines*’ If I never come back, I know Mark will look after all my things until I come

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one day to pick them up.”

“I don’t know, Abbi. . .” said Peggy, apprehensively.

Abbi leaned towards Peggy and said with earnestness: “You must swear that if you see me gone, that you mustn’t tell anyone where I’ve gone. I *must* go if they won’t let me see the play!”

“The people who are adopting me are probably picking me up tomorrow, Abbi. I might not see the play either. But please don’t do anything drastic. I’d like to see you again sometime. Maybe when the punishment is over, things will be much better.”

“I have to do *something*, Peggy. I just have to do *something*. I can’t stay here while all the other children go to see Ophelia Summer.”

Abbi lay back on her bed again. One could see from her vacant gaze towards the ceiling that she was developing her plan in her mind. Peggy didn’t go and they were silent for a minute. Then Peggy remembered something.

“There is something else, Abbi.... I heard they took the snowflake brooch away that you won.”

Abbi nodded. “Superintendent Wellington had me relinquish it to him when he set out my punishment. It is completely unfair since winning the competition has nothing to do with the mishap of the ladies falling on their bums!”

Peggy continued: “I thought, before I went that I would give you mine. You after all did most of the work. Here, Abbi. . .” She took it off her dress and began to hand Abbi her silver snowflake brooch.

Abbi was touched and got up on an elbow again. She was a good friend. “No, Peggy, keep it. We can share just the one. We don’t need two.” Abbi pinned it back on Peggy’s dress. And then she hugged her. “If you find me gone before your new parents take you, Peggy, I promise I will find your address and write you a letter telling you what became of me.”

Peggy became tearful. They hugged each other as if they might never see each other again.

ABBI of the Wilderness

5 AM, LATE FEBRUARY, OFF TO LITTLETON

That night Abbi could not sleep a wink. Her mind was filled on the one hand with upset at the thought she would not go to see the matinee of *'Stranger in a Winter Landscape'*, at the Richdale Royal Theatre, and on the other hand with a fiery determination to go away from the Orphan Home and everything connected with Madam Audora Woodrow, forever.

About 5 am in the morning she lifted herself from bed onto an elbow and looked around. All the girls in the dormitory were sleeping soundly.

"What would be the point of my being here for even one more day," she said to herself one more time under her breath. "If I can't go to see the play, I might as well leave right away!"

She got out of bed, crawled underneath (beds in those days were quite high), and whispered to the trunk.

"I hope you don't find it too stuffy in there Amik. If I don't return, the Orphan Home will take you back to Tall Pines, where I can trust Mark to look after you. I have written a letter saying my belongings should go to Mark. I am going to the Richdale train station and the train will take me to Littleton."

She then took her travel bag, and climbed out from under the bed. She put the clothes with which she had come from the hangers above the bed into the travel bag. Quietly, in her nightgown, she carried the travel bag to the washroom. There in the washroom, where there was a small gas light burning for children who had to use the facilities during the night, she took out the clothing she had put in the travel bag, and dressed. She straightened her hair and then, carrying the bag, she crept down the stairs. She crept into the kitchen, where she took some rolls and a couple of apples, which she put inside her bag, being very quiet since she knew Matron Gorda's quarters were adjacent to the kitchen. Then she crept to the front hallway where she fetched her coat, boots, mittens, scarf, and warm hat, from the clothes closet. She sat on the bench there and put them on. She carefully opened the front door and left into the chilly snowy morning.

The Richdale railway station was not far away. She

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already knew where it was and how to get there from the Orphan Home. While the sun was peeping over the horizon, she scurried down the road towards the railway station.



As the sun rose, the city was awakening. People and carriages started to move about. Richdale was coming to life this snow laden February morning.

Abbi entered the railway station and went to the blackboard where a stationmaster was writing the anticipated arrival/departure times with chalk. She waited until he had left, so as not to draw his attention to herself. She looked down the column under the word “To:” to find “Littleton”, but didn’t see it. She went to the stationmaster’s ticket window.

“Pardon me, sir, but Littleton is not on the schedule board.”

“That’s because the displayed schedule shows only the train run to Moncton. Littleton is beyond, south from there in the direction of Amherst. You must transfer to another train at Moncton, the one that is headed towards Amherst, that turns at Painsec Junction.”

“What is the fastest way to get there, sir?”

“To begin with, take the express train to Moncton which will pass through here very soon from the Saint John station, and inquire at the Moncton station when you arrive there which train to take to get to Littleton.”

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“I would like a ticket to Littleton, then, please,” she asked politely.

“Are you traveling alone? It is not good for a girl so young to travel alone.”

“I’m going home,” she said in a businesslike fashion and her lowest tone of voice. “I am older than my small stature makes me appear, sir.”

The stationmaster eyed her suspiciously. Abbi tilted her head back and tried to look as mature as she could. She gave him the \$10 bill that Mark had given her. He gave her lots of change and the ticket.

Abbi was quite familiar with the routine of riding the train, having most recently experienced it in the journey from Pinewood back to Saint John. But she had never traveled fully alone like this. She decided to act mature beyond her years so as not to draw attention towards herself. She knew how to *speak* beyond her years, so she only needed to *look* more than her nearly ten years. She imagined she could be viewed as a teenager of small stature and was determined to give that impression.

The express train to Moncton pulled into the small but fancy Richdale station, having just come from the Saint John station, which was a major terminal. Abbi climbed aboard and sat on one of the wooden seats that were used in trains in those days. In her lap, she held her familiar canvas travel bag – the one with the two large wooden handles, that she first acquired at Tall Pines when she was first sent to the Loggermans.

Soon the locomotive was chugging, and the wheels were clicking and clacking and the scenery turned from buildings laden with snow, to rural landscapes of white blankets. Her heart was pounding because she had never done anything like this, all by herself, ever before. But she had to remain calm she told herself. She had to act maturely at all times because travelers hardly ever saw nearly ten year old girls traveling alone on trains.

Soon the conductor came around. “Tickets please,” he said. She gave him her ticket and he punched it. He said: “Your ticket indicates Littleton. Transfer at Moncton station.”

“How long will it take, sir?”

“Several hours by express to Moncton – it is hard to

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give a precise time owing to winter weather; and then perhaps half an hour to Littleton from there. The train going towards Littleton is scheduled to depart so as to receive passengers from this one."

"Thank you kind sir," she said, mustering a low tone to sound much older.

Since she got on the train at about 7 am, she could be there around noon. Four or five hours would be quite pleasant, she thought, considering the journey from Pinewood to Saint John took all day. If she arrived around noon, that left her the afternoon to do her investigation at Littleton. If the afternoon was not sufficient, she could take a small room in the hotel with some of the money left over from the ticket. But she hoped she would find old friends of the Woodrow family to take her in temporarily. Even if they didn't adopt her, old friends or neighbours of the family would certainly have her as a guest. She hoped they would sympathize and not send her back to Richdale right away. Perhaps they would even help her discover more about her origins. If she had to return to the Orphan Home, it would be tolerable if she had learned all about her original parents Paula and Irwin Pictford.

The snowy countryside flew past the window. The passengers sat on the benches with far-off looks in their eyes, thinking about where they had just been or where they were now going. Or maybe their minds were simply blank to pass the time; she did not know. Others read newspapers or books. There were men in suits, women traveling with men, and some women with a child or two. Where were they going? What were the situations in each of their lives that required them to travel? These questions were food for thought.

The express train stopped only at major towns, as we said, coasting through the smaller stations without stopping. But when it did stop, people went on and off, the conductor shouted 'All aboard!' and the train chugged forth again, after which the conductor walked through the cars again inspecting and punching tickets.

There was plenty of time for Abbi to think on the train, and her mind wandered to when less than a year ago she first learned about Paula and Irwin Pictford. She thought about that afternoon a couple months after Papa, her

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adoptive Papa, had not been found, that it had been decided they had to move out of their leased home in Fredericton and live in Grandmama – *adoptive* Grandmama – Audora’s mansion since there was no money coming in anymore. Nobody wanted to move from the wonderful life they had started in Fredericton. And she herself had started school too. It had been a sad time and her adoptive Mama – Jenine – had come to her bedroom upstairs to tell her the story of how she had been adopted to explain why Grandmama Audora was so discriminatory towards her.

“Look in the mirror, Abbi,” Jenine had said, turning her in the direction of the dressing mirror. “The fact of the matter is that you are indeed Indian, and we adopted you. You are a very beautiful Indian girl. See your tan skin, your straight black hair, your high cheekbones? That is why people think you look Indian when they see you. I’m sorry Abbi, we were going to tell you everything when you were ready, perhaps when you were 11 or 12, but I can see the time has now come even though you are only nine. The fact is that indeed Papa and I adopted you and raised you as our own, but Grandmama Audora always saw us raising an Indian orphan girl out of charity, and she never really saw as accepted you. Mark my words she will try to get rid of both me and you, Abbi, because we do not have her blood in our veins.”

Abbi then remembered asking Jenine the whole story of how they got her, and seeing how her kind motherly face with blue eyes had become buried in thought, as if struggling hard to decide how to explain it all to her. “Well, ... your name was Abbi with an ‘I,’” she had begun, “as it is still. We called you ‘Abigail’ for the long form.” She had then explained that she was from the same people as featured in *The Song of Hiawatha* and also in the book of myths written by Mr. Schoolcraft – namely, the Ojibwa. Jenine then told her a story about how she had had a mother named Paula, who married a Pictish man named Irwin Pictford originally a fur trader, and they came east where Irwin worked for the same railway project as Bradden and they lived in Littleton, and how she was born, but how Paula next became very ill and died, and how Irwin gave her over to Jenine and Bradden to look after, because he got a job shipping lumber to Britain, and how

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he then died at sea and she remained to be raised in the Woodrow family of Littleton.

These revelations from Jenine, had been absolutely amazing to Abbi. Suddenly there had been so much more to her identity. She still didn't at this very moment, know that Jenine had made it up in order to spare telling her that she had actually been left anonymously behind the Littleton church door, and that the truth was nobody really knew where she had come from. Only her Indian appearance suggested she was from a Native Indian mother. Jenine had made up the tale of Paula and Irwin Pictford to give Abbi something more substantial before she had to go away to the Loggerman's. Unfortunately Abbi did not know this. She fully believed in what Jenine had told her.

"Tickets! Tickets!" shouted the conductor as he came around again, in order to punch the tickets of people who had boarded at the last stop. That brought Abbi back to the present – the swaying train, the click-clack of the wheels on the joints between the rails, the frequent whistle of the locomotive as it approached railway crossings to warn wagons a train was coming. She showed the conductor that her ticket was already punched and he continued on.

She opened her travel bag for a snack. She had anticipated becoming hungry on the trip and took out one of the apples she had put in her bag from the kitchen, and began to eat it. As she munched on the apple and looked wistfully out the window she said quietly to herself: "I'm free. Free of Audora Woodrow. Free of the Orphan Home. I'm going home, home to Littleton, the home of my birth, to discover everything there is to know about Paula and Irwin Pictford!"

Poor Abbi! She would not find any trace of Paula or Irwin Pictford, since they were made up! As the train's wheels click-clacked along, Abbi's heart was full of hope. She had for the past year accepted what Jenine had told her as the absolute truth.

Finally they arrived in Moncton. Since she had no luggage other than her travel bag which she had carried on board, she didn't have to wait, but proceeded directly to the stationmaster to inquire which train to take for Littleton. Once again she pretended to be older than her

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small stature would suggest.

“Thank you kind sir,” she replied in her lowest tone of voice.

She did not have to wait long to board that train and be off again.

As she took her seat, she realized that in less than an hour, she would be there!!! Her heart was racing at the thought of returning to her roots!!!

Stranger in a Winter Landscape

A SNOWY ARRIVAL, LITTLETON, N.B.

This second train was not express, otherwise it would not have stopped at a small place like Littleton.

Abbi remembered when they lived in Littleton, Papa, her adoptive Papa, often went to Moncton. This was like returning to Littleton from Moncton.

The snowy scenery once again flew past the window.

The train turned at Painsec Junction. If you went straight, you'd end up at Shediac and the ferry dock for crossing to Prince Edward Island. She certainly wouldn't want to make that mistake!



Before long, the conductor on the train shouted "Littleton", and she gathered her things together. "Excuse me," she said as she squeezed past a stout lady that had come to sit beside her.

She descended from the train to a snowy platform. It

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had been cleared but new snow was falling and covering it again. It was about noon, but she couldn't tell for sure; and she headed into the small Littleton train station building. It was about three years now since the Woodrow family left Littleton. Abbi felt a warm feeling like she was coming home; but there was a knot in her stomach because she knew that there was no Woodrow family here anymore. The cottage they used to live in would contain some other people. And Aunt Gwendoline and her family, had left too, gone west. The last she had heard, a year ago, they were in Windsor. Nonetheless she was hoping to at least meet up with some friends of the family and they might help her discover information about her original parents, Paula and Irwin Pictford. But nobody knew she was coming. She now regretted not having planned it in advance instead of making the decision to come here only yesterday. Had she corresponded with someone from their past, they could have welcomed her and even helped her in her quest. Perhaps someone in the area could even decide to adopt her!! Abbi had high hopes anyway.

The late February weather was chilly, and snow was beginning to come down. She entered the railway station waiting room area, warmed by a stove in the center, and found it empty except for the stationmaster in a corner behind a counter. While some people had boarded the train when it stopped, she had been the only one to get off. Apparently nobody else had had any need to travel to Littleton from elsewhere today. The train had to stop anyway to load and unload mail and other shipments, even if there were few passengers getting on or off.

Since he was the only other person there, Abbi approached the stationmaster. "Pardon me, sir," she began. Noticing the stationmaster was writing as the telegraphy machine at the side was clacking away, she said: "I'm sorry, sir. Is that a telegraph machine? I appear to have disturbed you in taking down the telegraphy message coming in."

When the telegraph machine had stopped clicking, the stationmaster turned to Abbi. "What can I do for you, Miss?"

"I was wondering if you are born and raised around here. Have you known of an Irwin and Paula Pictford, who

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lived around Littleton years ago, more than ten years ago?”

“I’m sorry, Miss,” he replied. “I’m not born and raised here. I was posted here in this job only about three years ago shortly after the station was built. This railway is quite new.”

“Yes. My Papa, my adoptive Papa, helped put the Amherst-Moncton railway here. He worked for the railway construction company.”

Then he noticed she was a young girl alone. “What is a young girl like you traveling alone, and in weather like this?”

“I’m older than my small stature may make it seem,” she said in a mature voice. “I’m expecting someone to pick me up,” she lied, “but. . .” She noted through the window the snow was coming down now in small cotton balls, and getting heavier...“perhaps they have been delayed in coming by the snow. Perhaps I will walk.”

The inquiring tone in her voice prompted the stationmaster to respond: “The main street of Littleton, if that is what you seek, is but a short walk that way. But if someone is coming, you are advised to wait a while more, or else they will be looking for you.”

Her only intention of speaking to the stationmaster was to determine if he had lived here more than ten years ago. That accomplished, there was no reason to stay. But for appearances she should appear to wait a short time. Perhaps she could get more information from him. She decided to strike a conversation with him. “It may interest you to know that I’m aware that it is by means of telegraphy that the railway coordinates the movement of the trains, prevents them from running into one another. I noticed the telegraphy wires running all the way along the track as I looked out the window as I came. You see, I know quite a great deal about how railways operate on account of my adoptive Papa having been a railway man, as I mentioned. Perhaps you have heard of him, since you work for the railway: Bradden Woodrow. We lived here in Littleton until about three years ago.”

“I’m sorry I have not. As I said, I was posted here three years ago.”

Of course. Someone would have to have been here

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more than three years ago to even remember the Woodrows, and over ten years ago to remember the Pictfords!

She thought she was starting to be too talkative and annoying the man; so she left him alone. She was too impatient to stay at the railway station, even for appearances of waiting for someone, for she had been sitting on train seats for four or five hours. So she walked around looking at train schedules and advertisements posted on the walls, and then she left as if her transportation had arrived. The stationmaster, immersed in his work, did not pay any attention.

She walked, bag in hand, cotton ball snow falling on her hat and coat, in the direction of the town. Its major buildings were visible through the snowfall. Having lived here until she was almost eight, much seemed familiar, in spite of being blanketed with snow.

Abbi reflected on the past few years. It was hard to believe just how much had happened between when the family left and now. They had moved to Fredericton and started a new life there, but then after a year and a half Bradden Woodrow had the accident and disappeared, and then the family had to give up the Fredericton home and move to Richdale, near Saint John, into Grandmama Audora's mansion called Tall Pines. Then Audora sent her into the interior of New Brunswick to live with and help the Loggermans, and then she returned in January, only to be sent to the Orphan Home. Yes an awful lot had happened to her in the last 2 and a half years. It seemed much more than that!!

The snow and wind were picking up now and making it harder to see. Still, looking up the road to the right, in the distance she saw, even though blurred by the snowfall, the unmistakable silhouette of the Littleton church.

She was now on the main street. There was nobody about in this snowy weather. She yearned to find people she could speak to in order to find someone that she knew or knew her and her adoptive family from years past, and then find someone who had been here a very long time. She spied the Littleton Hotel along the main street, went towards it and climbed steps to go inside.

She carefully opened the door and walked in, but saw

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nobody, until she saw a counter and a man behind it. The man looked up, a little surprised. He was a little stout man, balding on top. He had a broad white moustache.

“What is a young girl like you doing in Littleton in weather like this?” asked the man, distracted from what he had been doing behind the reception counter.

Surely this must be a man of the area, thought Abbi. “I am seeking someone who has lived in this area ten or more years ago. I once lived here in this area. I was born here, I was told, to Irwin and Paula Pictford. Then I spent my first years in the Woodrow family. Kind sir, please tell me that you are a long-time resident of this area.”

“Sorry, young woman,” he said. “I and my wife purchased this little hotel only a year and a half ago. But the former owner, well, he was of this area, establishing this hotel many decades ago. Seems its value greatly increased when the railway came, and he decided to profit by selling it and retire. After the property became mine, he moved elsewhere.”

Abbi was disappointed by this second instance of a person who was new to the area and couldn't help her—who weren't even familiar with the Woodrow family.

The man continued by way of explanation: “The railway changes things plenty. Every place the railway reaches experiences a dramatic growth. Seems that many original residents and businesses are not comfortable with the change, or can't keep pace, and find it easier to retire and sell their property, especially considering its value has risen dramatically.”

“I left with the Woodrow family only three years ago. The railway was already here for a few years already. Have things changed so much in three years?”

“I don't know, Miss, how it was earlier; but I can tell you there are new businesses. The general store was sold and the new owner made it into a larger dry goods store. A new grocery store has been established recently. The livery and wagon repair shop has changed hands too.”

“Yes the livery was owned by my adoptive mother's brother-in-law, Wilbur Cartsmith. The family decided to take the new railways into the west. I think they're now in Windsor.”

Abbi was sorry to learn that the Littleton of her

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childhood was not here any longer. But, she told herself, she was not here for visiting Littleton. She was on a mission to learn about her natural parents. She resumed her purpose: "Although I'd like to meet people who knew my adoptive family, the Woodrows, who lived in the cottage just at the edge of town, I'd *really* like to find people who were here over ten years ago who may have known my original parents, the Pictfords, sir. You see they died when I was a baby and I was adopted by the Woodrows."

"I see. . . Well people in some of the farms around the area have probably been here a long time."

"Well, I will seek out some farmers, then," replied Abbi.

"You won't find farmers living in town, nor, by the looks of the storm, will any come visiting town to buy supplies today," replied the man, glancing through a window at the weather outside.

"Well, thank you very much, sir," said Abbi and headed outside again. The man in the wide moustache went to the window to watch her with some curiosity.

Abbi stood outside wondering what to do, and then she turned and went back inside. She found the man close inside the door. "Pardon me again sir," she said. "I would like to find someone who can take me to the nearest farm then. I have money to pay." She opened her hand to reveal more than \$5. After purchasing the train ticket, she had received plenty of change back from her \$10 bill.

"And what is a girl doing walking around by herself in a snowfall with such a large sum of money?" the hotel owner inquired. Then, figuring it was none of his business, he replied to her question: "I cannot be a help, Miss. Perhaps there is someone at the livery. Perhaps they have a sleigh and driver. But best you wait to see if the snowfall will lessen. You can sit in here if you like and wait for the snow and wind to calm down. How is it that a girl as young as you would come to Littleton all alone and not even have someone here to meet them? If you once lived here, then surely the way to go about it is to first make contact with old friends and neighbours of the area and pursue your quest through them."

Abbi knew he was absolutely right. It had not been a good idea to simply travel to Littleton on impulse out of

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anger at not being able to see Ophelia Summer in the matinee of *A Stranger in a Winter Landscape*. She should have planned it more.

“You’re right, sir. I ought to have tried to remember some friend or neighbour of the family first and write them and make an arrangement with them. But my decision to come here occurred very fast – just yesterday. There was no time to make arrangements. Alas, now that I’m here I have to try to achieve my objective in whatever way I can. As beautiful and warm as it is in here in your charming hotel as a blizzard goes on outside, I have a purpose in coming here and I’m determined to follow it. Besides, I have just been sitting on the train from Richdale and then from Moncton since 7 in the morning. I have had enough sitting.” Then Abbi had an idea. “I know! I’ll walk over to the church. That’s not far away! It is visible from here. There’s a cemetery there. I can talk to the reverend. I can see if I can find the gravestone of my parents. At least Paula Pictford ought to be there. Perhaps the old reverend is there, and he will know. If he is still here, then he has probably been here more than ten years and would know about the Pictfords! There isn’t a *new* reverend here is there? Tell me there *isn’t* a new reverend, sir.”

“No,” replied the moustached man, “the Reverend Jones is quite elderly, and I understand he has been here a long time. He would be of help I’m sure. Yes, I see that would be your solution in your quest to find someone who has resided in the area quite a long time. But won’t you wait for the snow to lessen? Even a quarter mile is a considerable distance in whirling snow and wind. It has become quite heavy since the last half hour, as you can see through the window.”

“But I must!” replied Abbi feeling frustrated that things were not going as she anticipated. “What if the snow does not let up? My time will all go to waste, and I may never get another chance. I must, I must! Don’t worry sir, I’m familiar with blizzards from when I lived in the interior of New Brunswick. If things do not go well, I may come back, sir, and rent a room here for the night, in your charming establishment.”

With that, Abbi left the hotel and headed through the blowing snow in the direction of the church. Meanwhile the

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moustached man started putting on his coat. A woman of about the same age as he, apparently his wife, appeared from the back and asked him “Where are you going?”

He replied: “Over to the town constable’s office. There is a girl walking around alone in the storm who has come without anyone to receive her, and has a considerable sum of money in her possession. Something is amiss, I’m certain, in regards to this mysterious small stranger wandering around in this winter landscape! My sense is that it is something the town police constable should look into. I also fear for her safety. The girl is now walking towards the church. It is hard to see where you are going with the snow blowing about. She could very easily get lost even in walking a quarter mile. I will alert the constable.”

Abbi trudged along the road, insofar as the road was revealed by the tracks of sleighs that had traveled there in hours past; tracks which however were now getting covered up by the new snow.

As she went, she thought that if she had had snowshoes, she would have resembled the dark-haired heroine in the story ‘*Stranger in a Winter Landscape*’ as she tramped about in the winter looking for her roots in Acadia. But it also reminded her that about now the children of the Orphan Home would be seeing the matinee of the play. It angered her. The thought of it made her even stronger in her purpose!



She pulled her woolen hat down well over her ears and wrapped her scarf over her mouth. Her mittens were adequate for keeping her fingers warm.

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Before long she came to the church and saw the small white house of the reverend beside it. She remembered the scene from her years here with the Woodrows from when they all went to church regularly. There was smoke coming from the chimney, which suggested the reverend was at home. She walked to the door and knocked. But there was no answer. Perhaps the wind was blowing and howling too loudly for the reverend to hear. Perhaps there was another door? Or maybe he was in the church? She walked around the house towards the church and spied the church cemetery behind. While the cemetery area was covered with a blanket of white, the gravestones protruded up through the snow; so she thought she would go and see if she could find the gravestone of Paula Pictford, at least.

“James Ryan ... Gerald Jones ... Frances Brown ...” She went from one gravestone to the other reading them all – she even found the one for Jenine’s mother Marie – but could not find what she was looking for. She said to herself: “Where could it be? Where could the gravestone of Paula Pictford be? Could it be under the snow? Could it have fallen over? I can’t understand it!”

It had now been almost a year since her adoptive Mama had told her the story of her mother having been an Ojibwa woman named Paula Pictford and her father a ‘Pictish’ man named Irwin Pictford; and since that time her belief in the story had never wavered. She was completely unaware as she trudged from gravestone to gravestone of the true story – that she had actually been left at this very church by an unknown person, and that her search for the gravestones of the Pictfords was doomed to fail since her adoptive Mama, Jenine, had made them up.

Finally after making countless tracks about the gravestones, she gave up. “I will ask the reverend. I will try again to find Reverend Jones. He will know where Paula Pictford’s gravestone is.” Before trying the house again she thought she would try the church. Perhaps he was in there preparing for an upcoming sermon. Tomorrow, after all, was Sunday. She tried the front doors of the church. They would not open. She pounded on them too, and was about to give up and walk away and try the house again, when one half of the double door opened. It

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was the reverend, the elderly reverend she last saw three years ago, who now looked even more elderly.

“My goodness!” Reverend Jones exclaimed when he saw her. “What are you doing out there in the middle of a snowstorm, child? Come in out of the snow! Come to my house, since the church is not heated at the moment, and get yourself warmed up! I only came in here to fetch my bible which I mislaid.”

Little did she know that these were the same doors behind which she had been left as a baby, and that this man had been the reverend at that time too. He took her through the empty church and via the back door into his house. Little did she know it was exactly the same route by which ten years ago she first arrived.

He led her into his warm house by the side door. He directed her into his parlour to warm up and suggested she remove her hat, scarf, and mittens.

“I don’t have time to stay,” she replied. “I am on a desperate search. I hope you don’t mind if I keep them on. I am searching for my roots.”

“You look familiar somehow. Are you from the area?”



Reverend Jones, who saw hundreds of people, sensed he knew Abbi, but could not place her. It had been three years. Abbi had grown, and a person changes a great deal in three years when it is between the ages of seven and ten.

“Yes, and I’ve come back for a visit. My mission is to

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learn about my natural parents, the Pictfords. I was just looking at the gravestones in the cemetery, Reverend Jones. I must have looked at every single one – I could tell by my own tracks that I looked at every one – and didn't find the gravestone of my mother Paula Pictford who died about ten years ago when I was a baby. I was told that Paula died here in Littleton and that my father, Irwin Pictford, died at sea a little after. Paula Pictford at least should have a gravestone here."

Reverend Jones furrowed his brow and thought. "There is no gravestone for anyone by that name," he said finally. "But she may have been buried elsewhere. I do not recall people named Irwin and Paula Pictford in this area, but then I am told that I am losing my memory as I become older. I am often reminded of things that I have forgotten."

Abbi was crestfallen. She had anticipated she would at least find Paula's gravestone and it would become the high point of her trip. "Ever since I was told I was adopted, I've wanted so much to learn more about my natural mother and father, the Pictfords, who my adoptive Mama said were here in Littleton. And now I am here and I still haven't found even where she was buried. Where could she be? Why would you not know about her? The man at the hotel said you have been here a very long time, probably much more than my age. You must have known my parents."

"Yes I have been here since the church was built twenty years ago."

"She was Indian," Abbi added, "and she died of smallpox."

"My, my," replied the reverend. "One *ought* remember an Indian woman, since there are none here normally. Indians live at the Indian village near the sea... But, young lady, may I ask why are you looking for your parents' gravestone at this time? Searching in a cemetery is not something one does when there is a snowstorm going on!"

"I've come all the way from Richdale, outside of Saint John, and this was the only time I could come. It may be my only chance. My future is dreadfully undecided at this time. I did not know there would be a snowstorm here when I came." Abbi was close to tears in frustration. This was not what she had imagined would happen. She had not

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learned anything *at all* so far!

“Well I will not let you go back into the snowstorm,” asserted the reverend. “Sit in here and I will make some tea so you can warm up. Meanwhile let me think about the name ‘Pictford’. Perhaps something will come to me. I will be back in a moment.”

Well, at least the reverend would try to remember something. Abbi thought she wouldn’t mind staying a while if the reverend could remember something. She sat down.

As the reverend began making his way to the kitchen, he saw through the window a sleigh coming up the road. As he pulled the curtain aside and peered out he said to himself: “I wonder who that is ... Why, it’s the town constable, the new fellow posted at Littleton recently! I wonder if it has some connection to this girl ... I’ll get the door.” In this instance, the door to be opened was the front one, since the constable was arriving in the normal fashion by the front entrance to the house, and not via the side door that was adjacent to the back of the church building. He opened the door before the young constable had a chance to knock, and motioned him inside. The constable removed his hat and brushed the snow off his coat. He asked the reverend: “Is there a girl here?”

“Yes there is. I found her wandering about in the snow. She is in the parlour. Come in. I was wondering who she was and why she is wandering around in the storm alone. So far she has revealed that she is looking for the grave of her parents, people named Irwin and Paula Pictford who she said died here 10 years ago. She also said she has come from Richdale, a place near Saint John. She has come a long way. Have you heard of any people named Pictford from over ten years ago?”

“As you know, Reverend, I assumed the duties of town police constable only a couple years ago when Constable McRoy retired; so I wouldn’t know personally about what was here ten years ago.”

“You haven’t heard that name from others, or from the records in your office?”

“Pictford? No the name does not ring any bells. But never mind that. We have a more serious problem – the girl herself is missing from where she resided and there is a search going on for her.”

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“This girl who is in my parlour?”

“Yes. I was informed of her presence here by the owner of the Littleton Hotel, who was a little concerned. He determined from his conversation with her that she had just arrived by train, and had come all the way from Richdale, as you just said. I went first to the railway station and the station master confirmed that she had come by the train that arrived at noon. I therefore asked him to immediately telegraph Richdale’s police department – who also subscribe to the telegraph system in their police work. I directed him to ask with his dot-dash skills if there was anything to be concerned about with respect to a girl originating there and connected to the name ‘Pictford’; and the message came back in a few minutes that there has been a search going on for a girl who was probably announcing her name as ‘Abigail Pictford’. After several minutes of telegraphy exchange with a constable there, I learned this girl was found missing already at eight this morning at the Richdale Orphan Home. The name Pictford, said the hotel keeper, matched the name she gave of her parents, and of course the same ones you just gave – Irwin and Paula Pictford. I therefore conclude that this is most certainly the girl they are searching for in Richdale. Where is she now?”

“She is, I believe, still sitting in the parlour.”

However Abbi had overheard the conversation between the men in the front hall, and fled out the other door.

“She’s gone!” exclaimed the reverend. “She must have overheard us and left by the back door. We cannot let her wander around in this storm. We must find her!”

The reverend put on his coat and joined the constable in walking around the church property shouting “Abigail Pictford, where are you? You can’t be out in this weather. Don’t be afraid. We’ll take care of you, and get you back home. Where are you?”

Abbi, hiding behind the trunk of a large tree, said firmly to herself, almost in tears: “I can’t go back now! They can’t take me back now! I won’t go back! Not until I’ve learned of my parents!”

The constable and the reverend continued to search, looking for the tell-tale footprints of a girl. Because of all the tracks Abbi had left as she explored the cemetery, it

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was hard to tell which ones to follow and they did not find her immediately. It was a quarter of an hour before the reverend and the constable found Abbi, hiding behind the tree, shivering in the blowing snow. They dragged her away into the warmth of the reverend's house.

Abbi protested continuously. "No I can't go back yet! I can't go yet! I have to find out about my parents Irwin and Paula Pictford! I have to find Paula's gravestone! I have to find someone who knew them!!"

"There is no indication they lived here," said the reverend. "You can investigate the matter another time, not during the winter during a blizzard. Right now there are many people concerned for you back in Richdale. You must return to Richdale on the first available train, going the other way, back to Moncton, and then back to Richdale from Moncton."

Abbi resisted as much as she could, but to no avail. The constable informed by telegraph to the police in Richdale that the missing girl had been found. She was placed that afternoon onto the return train first to Moncton, and another from Moncton on to Richdale. The constable accompanied her as far as Moncton, and then assigned to the conductor of the express train towards Saint John the duty to keep an eye on her to make sure she stayed on the train until delivered into the hands of authorities at the Richdale station. Abbi was tearful all the way back. Her trip had been an absolute failure, the complete opposite of what she had expected!

When she arrived back at Richdale by late evening time, a Richdale police officer and Matron Priscilla were at the train station to receive her. Matron Priscilla had been searching for her all morning, until she had received word from the police that she had been found and was being returned. Hearing that, she had been greatly relieved.

By the time the train reached Richdale, Abbi was completely demoralized from her failure to find what she wanted at Littleton, and from being returned to the Orphan Home. She was by now also physically and mentally exhausted, especially since she had barely slept the previous night. She began to feel ill, and upon reaching the Orphan Home she collapsed and was carried upstairs. The matrons summoned a doctor and put her to bed.

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DAYS LATER, ORPHAN HOME – A VISITOR

Abbi was in bed for many days, so exhausted and demoralized that she slept and slept. She'd wake up only to turn over and go to sleep again. Then one morning she seemed back to normal. When she opened her eyes she was surprised to find Amik, the stuffed beaver, beside her, in her bed.



The dormitory was empty, except that Matron Priscilla was there beside her bed and asking: “How are you this morning?”

“Where am I?” Abbi wondered. “Oh yes, I’m back in the Orphan Home.”

“How do you feel? We’ve been worried. You’ve been

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spending nearly all your time in bed for many days now,” said Matron Priscilla. “Far too long. It’s now Sunday again. Are you ready to return to normal life?”

“I didn’t realize a whole week has gone by already, Matron Priscilla. I preferred to sleep. But now I’ve had enough, I think.”

Abbi was out of her tired and demoralized state of the previous days and more her normal self again. She noticed the stuffed beaver beside her. “What is Amik doing here beside me?”

“You put him there. Seems he is your ‘teddy bear’ after all,” replied Matron Priscilla, smiling.

“But my Mama always said he was full of germs.”

“Yes, we thought so too; so Matron Gorda washed the fur gently like one washes fur, and then put Amik at low heat in the bread oven, which we think killed the germs without damaging it. You need not fear, Abbi. We think your ‘teddy bear’ beaver is very germ-free now.”

“But I told you, Amik is not my teddy bear!” protested Abbi. “I’m too old for a teddy bear!”

It was no use denying it. Everyone knew how attached she was to the stuffed beaver. The only problem with him instead of a regular stuffed toy, was that he was stiff and came with a wooden base, and sometimes the edge of the wooden base would jab into her side when she held him.

“Well never you mind, Abbi,” said Matron Priscilla. “I’m glad you are feeling better now. You remember – you collapsed when you arrived back, and we carried you to bed, and called a doctor. The doctor examined you and said that you weren’t ill from a disease, but completely and utterly exhausted. The punishment, chores, stresses, lack of sleep, and your journey by yourself to Littleton just completely and utterly wore you out. So the doctor ordered us to let you rest and sleep as much as you wanted. And that’s what you’ve been doing these last days. The girls even brought you your breakfast, lunch and dinner. But I was getting worried when it became a whole five days and then six. You have not been your usual lively self all this while. I wanted the old Abbi back who’s full of spirit. How do you feel this morning?”

“I feel much better” said Abbi and she added: “I don’t think I’ve ever felt so tired, so exhausted, in my life. Not

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even when I had to handle all of Mrs. Loggerman's little girls and walk three miles to and from school day after day in fall." She raised herself to her elbow, "I can't remember very much from the past days. I've mostly been sleeping and dreaming about my early life in Littleton – running in the meadow, Papa, Mama, my brothers. And it was so depressing to wake up every morning to see I was back at the Orphan Home, that I repeatedly turned over and went back to sleep to dream some more. I suppose I'm now ready to face the Orphan Home again, Matron Priscilla. Sleeping can become tiresome if you do it too much."

"Well I hope you're really back to your normal self and ready again to face the exciting world. Why did you run away Abbi? I've been wondering all week and you haven't answered. Do you want to talk about it yet? I didn't know you felt so unhappy about everything. Everyone has been concerned— even your sponsor, Madam Audora Woodrow."

Abbi realized she had never explained it to anyone yet. "Peggy told me she and some of the other girls who made nice costumes for the Carnival were adopted, but that she thought the ladies who fell on the ice weren't letting you offer me to anyone until my punishment was over. And then I couldn't bear the thought of having to stay here doing chores while the children went to see Ophelia Summer in the play at the Royal Richdale Theatre. I felt it so unjust. Accordingly – I have seen that word 'accordingly' used in this sort of way – I simply couldn't stay here any longer."

"Well Abbi, you were in error. I wouldn't have prevented you from seeing Ophelia Summer in the play. I knew how much Ophelia Summer meant to you, and I would have made an exception and brought you, even if it meant doing a great deal of explaining to someone later. I wouldn't have kept you away. You shouldn't have run away. The children went, but I missed the play because I was out searching for you."

That news upset Abbi. "I'm sorry you missed '*Stranger in a Winter Landscape*', because of me."

"Never mind me. Perhaps the play will come back to the area one day. Unfortunately the play run in Richdale has ended and is gone now to Boston. The matinee was

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the last performance here in Richdale.”

“I would not have run away had I realized you would not see it. I really didn’t mind that I did not see the play; but I *did* mind not seeing Miss Ophelia Summer one more time. I’ve read the book. In fact I have the book in my bag.” She reached under her bed and pulled out the bag, and removed the book. “See? Jeffery bought it for me when he learned I liked reading books like he did and that I had only brought three of my Papa’s Indian books with me. I have read it many times. And I have enough imagination to be able to picture Ophelia Summer in the title role. Since you missed the play, I will let you have it to read.”

She handed the book to Matron Priscilla.

“Well that sounds fine, then. Thank you, Abbi. I will borrow it from you, just as you borrowed my photo-card of Ophelia Summer.”

Having been mentioned, Abbi also took the photo-card out of the bag. “I have to give the picture back now, Matron Priscilla. I don’t need it any longer. My memory of meeting the real person is more vivid than the picture. The picture does not live up to the memory. Besides, the picture isn’t in colour. My memory is.”

“Very well, I understand,” said Matron Priscilla. “I will return it to my collection of photo cards, to keep my collection whole; and I will read the book. But now, I am puzzled by your saying also that you imagined we were preventing you from being adopted, to punish you. That’s not true either.”

“Several of the girls who made costumes were adopted, Matron Priscilla, even Peggy, but not me. And I was the winner too. Peggy thought the Orphan Home was deliberately preventing my being adopted because the ladies felt I should be adequately punished first.”

“But that is completely false, Abbi. Yes, we told folks you weren’t available for them, but not for that reason. Remember it was made quite clear from the beginning in Madam Audora’s letter that you were to go to a country home, and if possible to people who were Indian. All these girls were taken to city homes, by women who live right here in Richdale and attended the Carnival. Not many farmers or loggers or Indians attend the Carnival – none, in fact. It is too difficult to come in wintertime. We wouldn’t

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have prevented you being adopted; but these were *city* adoptions. You didn't want to be adopted by a city family, did you? And none of them had any Indian connection either. It seemed that was the reason Madam Woodrow wished to treat you differently from the other children of her son's family—to have us help her find the kind of situation that's ideal for you."

"It really doesn't matter so much anymore," said Abbi. "It was Madam Audora who came to that conclusion. I'm sure I would have adapted in a city home. I would have been able to live in Madam Audora's mansion too, if she had let me. But she didn't want me because I'm not her blood kin, and maybe also because I am Indian."

Matron Priscilla was moved to give Abbi a hug. To be denied continuing to live with the family in which she grew up! "Cheer up Abbi. You never know— there may be something wonderful waiting for you just around the corner."

"Must I go back to helping Matron Gorda in the kitchen?"

"No, everyone believes you have had enough punishment, even the Richdale women when they heard. They have even given back the snowflake brooch you won. I put it on your shelf above you. Nor will you be punished for running away. But there are still the regular chores and the normal daily routine. This is not a hotel. Everyone has to pull their weight."

This was good to hear, Abbi thought, but that still did not make being at the Orphan Home better than being completely free of it, like Peggy had now achieved. "I miss having Peggy to talk to. But I'm happy she was adopted."

"That's right. Peggy is in a new family who has adopted her. Don't worry, we've let her know you're back and you're fine. Another girl has taken her place in the bed beside you, as you've probably noticed by now. Perhaps you will get to know her like you did Peggy. Her name is Jane. Unfortunately she is 14, some years older than you, and I know that will make it difficult to be as friendly as you had been with Peggy who was your age. That's the trouble with being in this Orphan Home: girls can get adopted in quite a short span of time, sometimes too short to develop a deep friendship. Now are you ready to rejoin

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the world?"

"I suppose I am," said Abbi.

"Well, that's good. All the children are on our Sunday outing – and even Matron Gorda has gone to supervise since I had to stay behind; but I have some good news for you. Get dressed, you have a visitor downstairs that you will be happy to see again! When you're dressed, go down to our parlour, beside the office, where we receive visitors. She is waiting there."

Abbi sat up in her bed. "There is? Why didn't you tell me at the start?"

"I wanted to make sure you were up to it first; up to getting dressed and going downstairs. Otherwise I'd have brought her up here. I thought it'd be far better, if you were fine, that you get dressed and show her you are not ill. It's not good to have people worry unnecessarily."

"Who is it, Matron Priscilla?"

"I won't say," said Matron Priscilla. "I'll let that be your motive to hurry up. But I guarantee you'll be very, very, pleased to see her again."

Matron Priscilla then left. Abbi's mind raced as to who it could be. Mrs. Loggerman? Peggy? One of her friends from earlier like Charlotte? Mildred? Minnie? Who did she know who she would be pleased to see?

The mystery nagged her as she rushed to get dressed. When all dressed, she went to the washroom to make her hair reasonably orderly. Since she had her brooch back, she thought she'd pin it to her apron. As a snowflake it was appropriate for the season. She found it where Matron Priscilla said she had put it – on the shelf. She then straightened her bed a little. Seeing Amik there on the bed she wondered whether to put him back under the bed, or not. She decided that if it was a friend downstairs, they would like to see Amik.

"Oh Amik. You don't want to be forgotten? I'll take you with me. If I will be pleased to meet the person downstairs, then you will be pleased to meet them too."

She took Amik under her arm and ran downstairs to the room near the office, where visitors were seated when they visited the Orphan Home. In front of the large window there, seated in one of the comfortable upholstered chairs, next to a small tea table, and gazing out, was Miss Ophelia

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Summer. She was wearing a fashionable coat, unbuttoned as she sat in the warm room, and an elegant broad-brimmed hat, tilted just so. It was similar to the one in the photograph. She was every bit as elegant and refined as Abbi could ever imagine.

Ophelia Summer sensed Abbi entering and turned towards her.

“Miss Ophelia Summer,” exclaimed Abbi. “I didn’t expect it would be you! I am overwhelmed!”

She motioned Abbi to sit down in the other upholstered chair in front of her. They were both alone. “Sit down Abigail,” said Ophelia Summer. “What have you there? A stuffed beaver?”

“His name is Amik. Matron Priscilla says he is now very clean. Matron Gorda had him in the bread oven for a time. I believe it is called Pasteurization, after Mr. Pasteur who discovered germs.”³⁶

Ophelia Summer laughed. She had a joyous laugh. “Well then put him down on the tea table and let him join us.”

Abbi did.

“Is that the brooch you won at the Carnival? It’s pretty. It suits the wintertime.”

“Yes, Miss Ophelia. They deprived me of it for a while, but decided to give it back.”

“I heard of your ordeal,” Ophelia began. “I read details of it in the Richdale newspaper which the owner of the Richdale Royal Theatre mailed to me in Boston. The play has now moved to Boston, you know. Next will be New York. Mr. Archibald thought I would be interested to read about you since I had skated and talked with you at the Carnival, and was very worried about you when I learned you had run away. But happily I learned just before our company of actors headed for Boston that you were back. Matron Priscilla informed me. You were quite ill after being returned here. How are you now?”

“I’m fine now,” replied Abbi. “I am told it was mainly exhaustion, and they let me sleep as much as I wanted these past days. But I finally feel fine now. And Matron Priscilla said I am spared further punishment—they

³⁶ French scientist Louis Pasteur published his "germ theory" of disease some years earlier in 1865.

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punished me you know for causing all those women to fall on the ice. But now I won't even be punished for running away."

"Yes—those women falling all over the ice. It was quite amusing to the spectators, although I would expect not to the ladies. Well did you know that because of it, you are about as famous in Richdale now as I?"

"What do you mean?"

"It appears the entire region knows of you, and your ordeal, including your running away to Littleton. The newspaper has told your entire story."

"I have been sleeping upstairs most of the time. I don't know much of what's been happening away from here this past week."

Ophelia Summer unfolded the newspaper she had in her hand. "Here is the edition of the Richdale Gazette that Mr. Archibald of the Richdale Royal Theatre mailed to me. Listen to what has been reported about you. I will read it to you."

'Only a week after the eventful Winter Skating Carnival, highlighted by the attendance of the famous Miss Ophelia Summer, the Richdale Police reported that a little resident of the Richdale Women's Charitable Society Orphan Home, Abigail Pictford, the same nearly-10 year old girl who was the center of attention at the Richdale Winter Skating Carnival, went missing and was found later that same day far away in Littleton, a small town four or five hours from Richdale by rail.

She had made the trip there alone by train, seeking residents in that town of her childhood who may have known her natural parents who she told several people were Irwin and Paula Pictford, who she said died when she was a baby. The town constable, deducing that the mysterious little stranger had come from Richdale by train, telegraphed the Richdale police, and immediately determined that she was the girl reported missing from the Orphan Home in Richdale.

She was then found by the constable, and returned by train, under the watchful eye of the conductor, to the Orphan Home, where, suffering from complete exhaustion due to her ordeal, was put to bed, and was, by doctor's orders, unavailable for contacting by us.

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What we have pieced together is that during her few hours in Littleton, she searched for the grave of her original mother at the Littleton church cemetery. The minister of the church, Reverend Jones, an elderly man who has been with that church for decades, reported he could not identify the names Irwin and Paula Pictford, nor any grave for Paula, but added that his memory was failing.

Unknown to him he already knew this girl. The name Abigail Pictford had thrown him off, as she used to be known as Abbi Woodrow. She had been adopted in Littleton by Jenine and Bradden Woodrow, the same Bradden Woodrow, a bridge design engineer, that the newspapers reported over a year ago to have fallen into a gorge high up on the Saint John River never to have been seen again, and who was also the son of noted Richdale businesswoman Audora Woodrow ...”

Miss Ophelia Summer put the newspaper down and looked at Abbi: “There is more, but that is enough. My, what an uproar you caused! As for me, when I read the article, I was surprised to learn your adoptive parents were folks named Bradden and Jenine Woodrow. At the Carnival you only spoke of Irwin and Paula Pictford and your name was given as Abigail Pictford.”

“I’m sorry. There was no time to tell you everything at the Carnival. I decided I might as well use the name Pictford for good, since Audora Woodrow didn’t want me with my Woodrow family any longer.”

“And the article revealed that you are regularly called Abbi, with an ‘I’”

“Yes, my adoptive Mama said that was the only name I had when I was four months old. She said Paula gave me the name. My adoptive Mama, Jenine, said that Papa had said he thought it was short for *abbinochi*, which means ‘baby’. They didn’t know if I had any other name since my parents were by then dead. They gave me the name ‘Abigail’ as the name ‘Abbi’ could also be seen as a short form for ‘Abigail’ too.”

Abbi found Miss Ophelia Summer somewhat serious, compared to her bright mood at the Carnival. She wondered if she was disappointed in her.

“How did you come upon the names Irwin and Paula

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Pictford?” Ophelia continued.

“Mama, my adoptive Mama who raised me, Jenine Woodrow, told me the story when she had to explain I had been adopted, after Papa, that is Bradden Woodrow, had been lost in the Saint John River and after many months had still not been found, and we could not stay in our home in Fredericton any longer. She said Paula Pictford was an Indian woman from Lake Superior, and Irwin Pictford a Pictish man, but later Madam Audora said it was more likely I came from the Mikmaq because they are closer to Littleton. I was a little confused. It seems neither knew very much about my mother, but I’m inclined to believe Jenine more, because Bradden, who knew much about Indians from his reading, would have known more and told her.”

“I heard about Bradden Woodrow’s accident falling into the Saint John River in January of last year. I read of it in a newspaper somewhere. It is sad. I feel so sorry. Had it not happened, you would still be living happily in Fredericton. Did you discover *anything at all* from your visit to Littleton?”

“No. I was hoping to find someone who might have known me or my parents, but it was a blizzard and there weren’t many people to talk to. The few who I talked to were new to the area. I was able to look at the gravestones in the church cemetery but didn’t find anything for Irwin or Paula Pictford and the reverend said he had never heard of any Irwin and Paula Pictford or any gravestone with their name on it. I wanted to investigate more, but the constable put me on the afternoon train towards Moncton.”

“The reporter of the newspaper article did talk to the reverend,” said Ophelia Summer, “and mentioned the Woodrows to him and he did finally remember you, the adopted Indian baby they had and was seen all about town and at the church on Sundays. You didn’t mention the Woodrows to him and I suppose you had grown and changed since he saw you last and he couldn’t place you and of course, as a reverend, he sees hundreds of people regularly. But he *did* remember you once the Woodrow name was brought up by the reporter, and was told that you were the adopted Indian girl.”

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“He did remember? If I had stayed, and he had remembered me, perhaps I could have asked him about my early years. And maybe that would have helped him remember earlier too. I can’t remember much from before I was about 4 or 5, and we left when I became 7. Mama only told me she got me when I was four months from Paula Pictford, who died. Then Irwin left me with them while he went to sea, but he drowned in a storm in the Atlantic. That’s what Mama told me. I was most hoping to find someone who knew the Pictfords so I could know them better. But I didn’t have a chance to carry out any of my plans. The moment the constable came, I was unable to stay any longer. I was sent back to Richdale under the watchful eye of the train conductors, and then I was met at the station by a Richdale constable and Matron Priscilla. I fear that was the only chance I will ever have of going back to Littleton and learning of my origins.”

Ophelia Summer stopped her with a touch to her knee, “That’s enough. Let’s talk about something else.”

Abbi relaxed, and Ophelia Summer tried to relax as well. Then Ophelia Summer suggested: “Let’s put all that unpleasantness aside for a moment, and chat about nothing in particular, now. I wish this place could serve some tea; then we could chat over some tea. We have in this pleasant room a nice tea table.”

Abbi sat to attention and her eyes lit up. “I could go to the kitchen and make some tea, Miss Ophelia Summer. There’s probably a kettle of hot water on the stove. Matron Priscilla said everyone is on an outing, but didn’t say where. I am missing it; but I don’t care. I can make tea. I have done it hundreds of times.”

“Wonderful,” replied Ophelia Summer, “Let’s have some tea. That would be pleasant. I have some time before I have to return to Boston. I have come by ferry along the coast, and it will be returning in a couple hours.”

“You have come from Boston? By ferry? I have never ridden on a ferry! How is it?”

“It is not as cramped as a train,” she laughed. “And I can sleep on it. And it has a steam engine, so it isn’t dependent on wind. Now go make us some tea..”

Abbi rushed off to the kitchen. She could hardly believe that she would have the privilege of serving tea to the

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famous Ophelia Summer. Meanwhile, Ophelia Summer sat quietly, gazing out the window at the snowy front yard of the Orphan Home, deep in thought. Some flakes of snow were falling down outside this early March. Her eyes then settled on the stuffed beaver sitting on the table, looking at her. Moments later, Abbi returned with a tray containing a teapot, sugar, cream, spoons, two cups and saucers.

The proper way to serve tea was something the girls had been taught here, and Abbi appreciated such practical knowledge to add to what she already knew. She was now able to drink water from a birch-bark vessel one day and drink tea from formal china another. Both were interesting to her. She put the tray on the small table beside Amik and poured out the tea. When the tea was poured out, cream added, stirred, Abbi sat down again. They sipped tea.



“I’m thrilled to see you again, Miss Ophelia Summer,” said Abbi. “I never imagined I would see you again, let alone have you come to the Orphan Home especially to visit me. You have given me renewed hope for the future.”

“What do you see in your future?”

“I know what my future is, Miss Ophelia. I had a fast. I

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didn't have a chance to tell you at the Carnival."

"A fast?"

"It's what Indian youth do to get a dream or vision that reveals their destiny. I read about it in the book of legends by a man named Henry Schoolcraft."

"I'm afraid I don't know very much about Indian culture. I have been away from it since I was a teenager and my father died."

"After Mama told me I was adopted and my mother was an Indian woman from *Gitche Gumee*, which refers to Lake Superior, I tried to learn everything I could about being an Indian. I took some of the books my Papa had had in his study about Indians with me when I went to live in the wilderness with the Loggermans, and I learned from those books. I learned that when a boy or girl gets to an age when they need to figure things out, they go off and live by themselves to fast for about a week to receive a dream or vision from the spirits. It is also called a 'vision quest'. According to the book by Mr. Schoolcraft, it is the most important event in life for an Indian youth. Visions are I think something like a fortune-teller sees in a crystal ball, or at night it's like what Scrooge in Mr. Dickens's book experienced. The spirits then reveal who your guardian spirit is and what your path in life will be. Did you ever do that?"

"No. Tell me about your fast."

"Well first I thought I should have a proper Indian dress. Mr. Loggerman had some deerskins because they hunt deer thereabouts, and Mrs. Loggerman helped me make an Indian woman's dress. We figured it out from descriptions in the books. I added some ornaments. Then I learned how to make a small wigwam and set it up on a ridge that overlooked an enchanted canyon where the river ran below. It was scary the first night, but I was fine when daylight came. Mrs. Loggerman checked on me because it is permissible for guardians of children to check on them. But the second night, there was a thunder storm and it blew my wigwam apart and I had to run home."

Most people laughed when told about the wigwam blowing away, but Ophelia didn't.

"But you had a vision? Tell me about the dream that revealed your future."

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“First I had some dreams that seemed like ordinary dreams since they simply showed what I wanted to see. And then I had the one that revealed my destiny. It was very real—very real. I dreamt I woke up and Amik was there, the stuffed beaver here, who earlier was always on my adoptive Papa’s desk. Well in the dream it seemed to be beside me in the wigwam, and I wondered how it got there, because it was left back in Richdale at Tall Pines. I stroked it and it came alive and said ‘*Don’t forget me*’, and then rushed out the wigwam, and down towards the water. Then I woke up and realized it was a dream. I didn’t think it meant anything for a while, and then some days later I realized that because Amik was Papa’s and he always had it on his desk in the study to give him inspiration, that it meant I am to continue to do the same studying and writing as he did in the study. I think it means I should go to university and study and write, like he did. I don’t think it meant to do railway engineering because he never did that in his study – although he had some models of bridges there. Do you believe in spirits and visions, Miss Ophelia?”

“Well I guess so. As you said, people believe in the visions of fortune teller crystal balls; so why not?”

“Indians still believe in spirits, but Indians don’t like to talk about it openly because of the missionaries who regard it as superstition. When Princess Minnie, the daughter of Chief Jack stayed with me a week, I learned a great deal about how Indians view things today.”

“Chief Jack and Princess Minnie?”

“Chief Jack and his two brothers worked at the sawmill and got to know them on their lunch break on Saturdays. They are Maliseet – properly you have to say *Wolastoqiyik* – and since I asked Chief Jack I would love to meet a real Indian girl my own age, later in the fall when the men returned to their traditional camp not far from the Loggers, his daughter came along to meet me. When later before they left for home, I asked Chief Jack to please interpret my vision to make sure I interpreted correctly, and he puffed on his pipe and said I had interpreted it correctly. He also said that this is very personal, and that properly I should keep it private because it loses its ability to keep me strong, if I don’t; but I don’t mind telling you, Miss Summer.”

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Ophelia became very thoughtful. She was moved by how seriously Abbi had been trying to embrace Indian culture during the year after having told she was Indian. Finally she said, “I believe I have missed out on my culture, Abbi. My memories of it are not very strong. Perhaps you now know more about Indians than I do.”

“I don’t want to change what I already am from growing up with the Woodrows, Miss Ophelia. But I want to add to it what I learn about being Indian.”

Abbi’s studies and her experiences about Indian culture while at the Loggerman’s hadn’t made her different, but rather she had embraced a larger identity. In her mind, she was not only Bradden and Jenine Woodrow’s adopted daughter, but she was *also* Indian. And to prevent there being conflict between the two identities, she had so far taken pains to draw parallels between Indian and regular culture. That’s why she liked to compare seeing the future in a fast to what a fortune teller sees in a crystal ball, or to consider *Gitche Manito* to be the same thing as ‘God’ but viewed in a slightly different way or see a ‘spirit’ to be analogous to an ‘angel’.

“Do you remember anything about your culture from when you were a girl, Miss Ophelia?” Abbi wondered.

“Yes when I try,” Ophelia replied. “I can remember my childhood. I have to think very hard to remember even some words of my parents’ language. When you don’t use a language all the time, you forget. But I hear a person can relearn it faster if they once knew it. Sometimes I remember words my mother spoke to me when I was a child. I know the word *abbinochi* you mentioned. I’m sure, she spoke it to me, when I was her baby. That is special to me. I’m sure I have relatives now who are wondering what’s happened to me. I should have gone back by now, at least to visit. But I lost track of where they are after my father died. I was too young to realize I should find out for future reference. The two people who knew, my father and the producer of the entertainments we were part of, died before I thought to ask them. I have had some interesting dreams too. About wild animals, even about beavers ... Perhaps it is now time I found out where my family are, and returned at least for a visit – to make contact with my roots like you tried to do when you went to Littleton.”

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Ophelia seemed a little choked up as she thought back. She cleared her throat and tried to change the subject. She forced a smile as well. “You serve tea well. How nice we can sit and chat. Soon I have to take the steamer back to Boston from the Saint John harbour, as I said. Look out the window, Abbi, at how the snow is drifting down.”

“I like to observe such things too,” said Abbi her spirits brightening a little. “I either observe strongly, imagine endlessly, or talk without stopping. Those seem to be my three major features. But right now I’m happy to sit and do nothing. It isn’t often that this Orphan Home gives children a chance to sit and do nothing—except after bedtime. Usually it is always busy with chores and school. I suppose I’m allowed to do nothing right now only because the doctor said I must rest.”

“Another reason I came to see you, Abbi, is that I wanted to let you know that I understand how you must feel, being an orphan, having lost parents.”

“How, Miss Ophelia Summer?” wondered Abbi. “Is it because of your mother dying and then later your father when you were traveling around Europe with him in the shows, like you told me at the Carnival?”

“Well that too; but I was thinking more about something else. What I mean is that just as a child can be orphaned from losing contact with a parent, so too a parent, a mother, can feel orphaned from losing contact with her child. You see, I once had a child, which I gave up. You see in this society it is frowned on for a woman to have a child without being wed to the father of that child. I think you are old enough and wise enough Abbi to know how a baby comes into the world. A woman and a man can lay down together and a baby can result, even if the woman and man are not married.”

“Yes, Miss Ophelia Summer.” replied Abbi boldly. “I figured it all out in my recent years when I was with Mrs. Loggerman and her many babies. I’ve learned more about babies, how they come to be, to be born, than I cared to know so soon. I must be careful not to lay down with a boy, if I am to avoid having a baby myself.”

“Luckily it doesn’t happen until you are grown,” laughed Ophelia Summer, “so you need not worry about it yet. But it happened to me when I was 20. I have not told this to

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anyone but I feel you and I can share secrets. You will keep my secret won't you?"

"Of course, Miss Ophelia Summer," replied Abbi.

Ophelia Summer continued: "Here is my story. About a year before I decided to hide the fact that I was Indian in order to play many different parts and not just Indian woman parts, I was in a staged theatrical presentation of Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*, which played in Boston for some weeks in early 1864. Some men at the university near there wanted my help in how Indians should be dressed for their own satirical theatrical production – the university there, called 'Harvard' had annual student theatrical production called 'Hasty Pudding'."

"I know about that. My Papa, my adoptive Papa, went to the university called 'Harvard' and ended up getting two degrees. He told me when I was little about the 'Hasty Pudding' plays. He also told me about seeing *The Song of Hiawatha* performed on stage in Boston during his last year at university and how he and his friend Sandy used it as inspiration to write a funny theatrical about the popularity of Hiawatha, with everyone speaking in the same kind of meter. Where you in that play in Boston? Papa described how there were actors on stage accompanying the recital of the poem."

A small smile broke on Ophelia's face. "Then you understand what I am talking about. Yes, that was the play. And I was called Wenona Storm, not Ophelia Summer, back then."

"Continue, Miss Summer. What happened next?"

"Well, I fell in love with a handsome man among the men involved with the 'Hasty Pudding' group, and I saw him as long as I was in Boston playing Minnehaha and Wenona. Since Boston is large and Longfellow was very famous, the *Song of Hiawatha* play was there an especially long time – I think over a month. Our cast had one day free every week and I got into the habit of visiting the 'Hasty Pudding' group. I got to know this man I am talking about quite well. But then the show went to New York and we parted company, but when he was graduating from the university, some months later, I came back to visit him to congratulate him. We celebrated his graduating. But sadly I

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also came to tell him 'farewell' as our relationship seemed not to have any future –we lived in such different worlds – and I had commitments to the shows. 'It would never work out.' I said. But then one thing led to another as we celebrating his graduating –and as I say, I 'laid' with him. It was an accident of passion. Neither of us anticipated it. But in any event I had to take the train back right away to New York, as it was my only day off and I had to return to the show that was running there – I had most of the female parts, not just Minnehaha and Wenona. I was very important to the show. Besides all the advertisements highlighted me as a 'real' Indian – it was very rare for real Indians to play the Indian parts. That was before I hid it and became 'Ophelia Summer'. The truth is that nearly everyone in the cast was *not* Indian. Hiawatha was played by a man of Spanish heritage. Well, Abbi, I had said 'farewell' to this handsome Harvard, so I put him from my mind, and he must have put me from his mind as well. But because of the accident of passion, I discovered a month later I was pregnant. Because I was pregnant, soon it was hard for me to be on the stage, but fortunately the tour of the show had ended. New York had been the big finale – it was there a whole two months!³⁷ My guardian – the producer of entertainment – died too about that time. His wife had already died two years previously. Yes, Abbi, it was as if everything happened one thing after another! I was now completely on my own. So I decided the first thing I should do is to go to where the baby's father had gone, to inform him of the baby. But he had gone away from where his family lived, I was told, to take a vacation in the summer before joining a railway construction firm in Moncton in the fall. So during the summer nobody knew exactly where he was. All I could do was to wait as my baby grew inside me. I had plenty of money from my performances and because my former guardian, the producer of entertainments, who had died, had willed me his assets because he and his late wife had had no children of their own. It wasn't very much, after all his debts were paid, but enough to live on for some months. And then

³⁷ This touring staged recital of *The Song of Hiawatha* is made up for this tale – the author

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after my baby was born I remained where I was for a while to nurse the baby and wonder what my future was to be. Then when the snow had melted, I went to look for him – the father of the baby – again.”

“Did you find him?”

“When eventually I found where he was, in a small town an hour or so by stage coach from Moncton, he was already married to another woman, to my surprise since he didn’t seem like he would – being about 30, everyone at the university had thought he’d be a lifelong bachelor. I struggled as to what to do with the baby. I was a mother with a child out of wedlock, and the father of the child already married to another woman and not even knowing about the baby. I couldn’t blame anyone but myself as I had told him ‘farewell’ and we had parted company already around May the previous year. He seemed to have become a different person in the meanwhile, too – more responsible and not the carefree man he was at the university.”

“It sounds very much like a novel, Miss Summer. It’s exciting,” said Abbi. “I can almost picture my Papa, my adoptive Papa, in the title role because he also was a student at Harvard. But continue.”

“So one day I decided to give the baby, *his* baby, to him and his new wife, *anonymously* — without them knowing who left it. I therefore left the baby at a church door in the small town where they had settled and where I was sure his wife –who worked there on Mondays cleaning the church – would find my baby girl, who I so far only called *abbinochi* just like my mother called me, and adopt it. And they found it and raised the girl into a fine young lady.”

“The baby therefore never learned who her mother was!” concluded Abbi. “I’m glad I know who *my* mother was – Paula Pictford.”

Ophelia choked right up, as she knew Paula Pictford had never existed, that Jenine Woodrow had made her up because she wanted to give Abbi more than to be told her mother was unknown.

Because Abbi had so thoroughly embraced the idea she was from Paula and Irwin Pictford, the idea that Ophelia might be talking about her was the furthest from her mind in spite of the many coincidences. Jenine had told her

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nothing about being found behind a church door, but rather of simply been transferred to the care of Bradden and Jenine Woodrow after the death of 'Paula Pictford'.

Ophelia had halted her tale, finding difficulty speaking. She was right at the precipice of Abbi realizing, and wondered how to continue.

"Continue Miss Summer," said Abbi.

Ophelia regained her composure and continued: "But I have often felt I made a mistake. Perhaps I should not have given my baby to them *secretly*. It could still have been fine if he and his wife had known. But I was young, and I was determined to be a real actress instead of simply playing an Indian woman everywhere. It was so much simpler to give him the baby without him knowing. . . but I never considered how a baby grows up to be a lovely girl, who *I'd* like to know."

Miss Ophelia Summer was now gazing out the window as she talked, and tears had come to her eyes, which she dabbed with the end of a handkerchief.



Abbi saw this and exclaimed: "Oh Miss Ophelia Summer, I had no idea that your life was as tragic as mine!"

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Suddenly her own woes paled in comparison to hers.

"I called my baby 'Abbi'," she finished, "same as your name, because my mother had called me that. I even embroidered it on her shirt." She broke into sobs.

Abbi still had no basis for making a connection between Ophelia's child and herself. Indeed the coincidence in name meant nothing. It seemed natural for an Ojibwa Indian mother to call her baby 'Baby', which was all that the word 'Abbi' was. Ophelia kept crying. Abbi rose from her chair and put her arms around the tearful Miss Ophelia Summer to comfort her; but this made Miss Ophelia Summer even more tearful, and she lowered her head onto Abbi's shoulder and held her tightly.

After a few moments they separated and Abbi looked into a most anguished face. There was more here than she understood, but she had so thoroughly embraced the fiction of being the daughter of Paula and Irwin Pictford, that she failed to understand exactly what was happening. Ophelia Summer saw that Abbi was not realizing the truth, and she anguished how to tell her. She really wanted *not* to; but what choice did she have? She composed herself again and continued,

"Sit back in your chair, Abbi. Let me tell you more ... My baby went into a wonderful home, with a wonderful mother and father for many, many, years. At least she was with her real father, even though he didn't know it."

"He didn't know it? He raised the girl thinking she was adopted? Your story really sounds like a novel!"

"I have often over the past nine years thought about visiting the couple and telling the truth. But is it fair, for a mother who gave up her baby, to intrude after another woman has raised her as any mother would into a fine young girl? What right have I to enter that young person's life, I asked myself often, when I have done nothing but to give it birth? It only takes nine months to carry a child and give it birth. What is that compared to a mother raising a baby as if her own for years and years? That is how I always rationalized it. It is the reason I never contacted them to reveal the truth. But things change. Everything has changed. My meeting you and your recent experiences have made me think about my baby girl. I have looked into your recent experiences. I know about Bradden Woodrow

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falling into the Saint John River gorge near Grand Falls and not having been found, and about his family other than you living at the mansion of businesswoman Audora Woodrow...”

“She was appropriately Hansel and Gretel’s witch at the Winter Carnival”

“And I know about Jenine Woodrow, and her current state of mind, which I am told is considered to have arisen as a consequence of the tragedy relating to her husband.”

“I wish she was back to normal, like she was in Fredericton. I worry that she won’t get better even though Grand...Madam Audora says she only needs time to get over her husband’s disappearance. And she won’t even let me see her. Mark and Jimmy come home every two weeks from their boarding school, but I can’t even visit them at Tall Pines anytime. It is as if I have been banished by Madam Audora from the family who raised me, forever!”

Ophelia hugged Abbi again, and continued more softly: “Everything is now all different. I can no longer rationalize away *not* revealing the truth after so many years. I am prepared to take care of you.”

“You’ll adopt me?” Abbi exclaimed. “But you said at the Carnival that you couldn’t because of your obligations to the world of theatre.”

“But things have changed since I met you.”

“How?”

“Well, you know the story about Paula and Irwin Pictford that Jenine told you?”

“Yes?”

“She made it up.”

“Made it up? What do you mean? But. . .”

“Do you know why you did not find the names of Irwin and Paula Pictford among the gravestones?... Because there never were such people. Jenine must have made them up just after telling you about your being adopted because in truth she knew nothing about where you came from.”

Abbi was shocked. She had by now so thoroughly embraced the fiction as truth. “There never was a Irwin and Paula Pictford? But Mama, I mean Jenine, *wouldn’t* tell me a lie, would she?”

“Perhaps she would if she thought the truth would make

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you feel badly. If the truth was that nobody knew where you came from, would you want to be told that? Isn't it better she make up some people?"

"She made it all up?"

"Yes, Abbi. The truth is that she found you behind the church door, left by some unknown person."

"Just like you left your baby who was also named Abbi?"

"Yes."

Abbi's mind was swirling with confusion and she sat there thinking for a moment. Suddenly she exclaimed: "I'm the baby! *You're* my mother!"

"And Bradden Woodrow was not just your adoptive father. He was your *real* father. I was talking about him all this time. He was the handsome man I met in Boston when I was performing as Wenona in *The Song of Hiawatha*."

Abbi's mouth dropped wide open. "You have been describing Papa and me all along. Now I have to remember everything you said in another way. I didn't realize because I was so certain I was from Paula and Irwin Pictford. You were talking about how I was born all along! Papa is my father just like he said in the dream!"

"What dream?"

"During my fast, first I had a dream in which I saw him and I said, 'I wish you were my real father, Papa. I wish you were Irwin Pictford.' He replied 'But I *am* Irwin Pictford, Abbi.' I thought it was a plain dream showing me what I wanted, but maybe it was part of my vision quest and I didn't know it."

Ophelia laughed through her tears. "There you are. The spirit world knows all!" She didn't know what to think about that coincidence, but she wasn't going to undermine the thought that maybe there really were spirits guiding things. After all, in the regular world many people believe that there are angels who guide events.

"Let me remember what else there was in my dreams when I was doing my fast," continued Abbi. "After I awoke from Papa saying he was Irwin Pictford, I said '*Please, spirits. Please show me my natural mother and father. Please show me Paula and Irwin Pictford.*' And then I fell asleep again and had a new dream in which I was looking at a wonderful illustration I had seen when I was six years

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old on the cover of *Canadian Illustrated News*, which showed a skating rink, with skaters in costume all around, like the Richdale carnival except this one was the one in Montreal, where the couple in the middle were actors and they were celebrating the marriage of Princess Louise, Queen Victoria's daughter, and Marquis Something-or-other (I think it was 'Lorne'). The woman actor was in a bridal gown and the man had a kilt. In the dream I was looking at it and suddenly the illustration became the real thing and I was in it – as if I was there. When I first saw that picture years ago I wanted so much to be there and now I was in the dream. That's why I didn't think at the time it was part of any true vision."

"What happened next in the dream?"

"And then the man and the woman in the middle changed into two other people, the woman in the bridal gown became an Indian woman wearing a deerskin dress like I was. I wasn't paying attention to what the man became, but maybe it became Papa. Maybe it showed you, dressed as Wenona in the performance in Boston, when you met Papa, like you just described in your story. Until now I thought it was just a regular dream, because I had asked the spirits to show me my mother, and that the actress playing Princess Louise turned into an Indian woman because my mind wanted it. Do you think the man and woman in the dream who played the Princess and Marquis became you and Papa, with you wearing your Wenona costume from *The Song of Hiawatha*? The acted-out wedding became yours and Papa's! How can it be anything else?!"

Of course, the entire dream could be interpreted as a regular dream responding to subconscious wishes, and the connections as coincidence. Ophelia did not know how to interpret it herself. In any event, she saw that Abbi wanted to believe in it, and so she thought not to make a discussion of it. To Abbi it was further affirmation of the Indian custom.

Abbi concluded, excitedly: "My guardian spirit was telling me everything but I didn't figure it out! Papa really was Irwin Pictford, and you are Paula Pictford!"

Ophelia laughed. "Well, not Paula Pictford – that name is made up by Jenine. But then ... the name 'Ophelia

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Summer' is made up too!"

"Yes Matron Priscilla said that 'Ophelia Summer' was made up, was a stage name."

Ophelia laughed again. "I don't know what my real name is. The producer of entertainments who was my guardian after my father died, gave me dozens of Indian-sounding names for the shows. When he died and I was by myself and went my own way I decided to use the stage name 'Ophelia Summer'. It seemed a nice name for an actress. Yes, Abbi, Paula Pictford and Irwin Pictford never existed. But Ophelia Summer and Bradden Woodrow *did*. Except I was called 'Wenona Storm' back then when I met him."

"You will adopt me?" Abbi exclaimed, realizing the main implication of it all.

"It will be more like taking over from where Bradden and Jenine left off – unless by some miracle Bradden is still alive."

"As long as he has not been found, I've kept up hope, Miss Summer. I believe he will appear some day."

"That is a good idea, but in the meantime you will have me.... Oh I am so happy I have let out the truth and told you. When I read the newspaper article I was sent, I was shocked. I adored you at the Carnival but never realized I was talking to my daughter. At the carnival your name was 'Abigail Pictford'. I had no idea at the Carnival that I was talking to and skating with my real daughter. I had no idea. ... I had no idea ... How shocked I was when the newspaper article said you were the adopted daughter of Bradden Woodrow! Thinking about it, I could understand 'Abigail' might have come from 'Abbi' on the shirt, but why would you be called 'Pictford'? That I couldn't understand, until you just explained how Jenine told you, and I saw that Jenine *made it up*. Yes, I'm your natural mother. But I did *not* abandon you. I did *not* abandon you, Abbi. It was all part of a well-thought-out plan to give you to your father without him suspecting. I saw from a distance how much he loved Jenine. I thought if I revealed myself, if I revealed it, it would have complicated everything. maybe even undermined his marriage; so I didn't. I thought maybe I would reveal it later when his marriage was firm. But by then I was on the stage in London England for several years. Yes, Abbi, he never knew he had adopted his own

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daughter. He never even learned I had become pregnant by him.”

“He never knew? He never even suspected?”

“Maybe in a deep way people can sense it. I don’t know. I often thought of telling him and you. Maybe when you’re grown, I thought. But now he has been lost. Everything has changed. I delayed it too long.”

The idea that Bradden was not to be found to share this moment made Abbi tearful. “Ever since I was told my Papa was not my Papa, I didn’t want it to be true. I always wanted him to be my real father. I always wished Irwin Pictford didn’t exist. But now that it is true, and that Irwin Pictford is made up, Papa’s gone! He has not been found in more than a year! Everyone feels certain he drowned, that he is dead! I have always held a glimmer of hope, but as time goes on it is hard to keep the glimmer of hope alight!”

Ophelia had nothing to add. His disappearance was a sobering reality. The fact his body had never been found left it uncertain. There was no closure. There was no grave that could be visited.

Ophelia took Abbi again into her arms and they held each other for a minute or so. Then as she released her, Ophelia sought the distraction of something else.

“I cannot stay for long. I have a performance tomorrow in Boston and must catch the overnight ferry going back from Saint John to Boston very soon....”

She took a sip of tea. Her mouth was dry. She needed to explain more. It seemed important she reveal absolutely everything to Abbi now. Absolutely everything. Nothing could be kept a secret anymore.

“Would you like to know how I managed to leave you with Jenine without anyone discovering me?”

Abbi nodded. “Yes, tell me what really happened!”

“This is what happened. This was my entire plan, and the reason I was never discovered.— After I had decided to leave you with your father anonymously, I came with you in the regular stagecoach that went through Littleton before there was a train station. I had already been there earlier to know what to do. The stage coach stopped at the Littleton livery for a quarter hour at a specific time to change horses.

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“I knew from my earlier investigations that Jenine cleaned in the church at that time every week. I came wearing a blonde wig. The passengers spent that time in the hotel next door. I had you in my arms inside blankets. Five minutes before the stage coach was to leave, I got up from among my fellow travelers and pretended I was going to go somewhere private to change you, but I left the hotel and ran up the hill to the church. I left the basket with you in it at the front door, taking most of the blankets, and ran back to the stage coach just moments before it was to leave, carrying blankets in a way that made it look like you were still in them. To the others on the stagecoach, I had simply gone to change your diapers somewhere. And then for the remainder of the journey which ended in Moncton, I pretended there was a baby inside those blankets, a big baby of four months, sleeping soundly. It was quite some acting I did for the rest of the way to Moncton.”

“Didn’t anyone notice you didn’t have the basket?”

“No because I always had you in my arms, and the basket was on the floor, filled with baby things. Since people don’t pay attention to baggage on the floor, nobody noticed that the basket was missing.”

“That was a good idea.”

“I was an actress and the performance went well. Nobody had any reason to suspect anything. But that was not the end of it. I had to make sure my plan worked. A few weeks later I returned and engaged in conversation people at the hotel where stage coach passengers spent some time as the horses were freshened up. I wore a red wig this time. I led local people in the tavern towards talking about the orphan that had been found and what had

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become of it. They informed me that Jenine and Bradden Woodrow had adopted you. And then my spirit was settled and I became 'Ophelia Summer' and hid the fact that I was Indian. And then I went to London, England spending the remainder of my money inherited from my producer of entertainments. I became famous playing roles requiring merely dark-looking women, such as Mediterranean women, Oriental women, Spanish women, even French, as I already told you at the Carnival. It was easy to play those roles. I simply curled my hair or wore a wig. I was happy to get away from the silly things that were presented about the Indians in America. I was there in London for several years, and finally when I had become famous enough to afford the fare to cross the Atlantic, I came back and started a theatre company, using my already established fame to get it going. Whenever I was close to New Brunswick, I checked back when possible to see how Bradden's family was growing and how you were doing. I once even visited Fredericton and saw where you lived. But when the touring shows were far away, such as at Los Angeles, it was difficult. Sometimes a long time passed before I learned anything more about you and your family. That's the whole story, Abbi. Jenine found you at the church door where I deliberately left you for her to find. That is the true story. That is why you didn't find any evidence of any Paula Pictford at Littleton. What Jenine told you was something she made up because she didn't know where you came from, and needed to tell you *something*."

Ophelia was so relieved to get it all off her chest.

"She told me that Paula Pictford was an Ojibwa from *Gitche Gumee*," said Abbi, "I think probably because that is what the Indians in *The Song of Hiawatha* were. That is why I studied all about the Ojibwa as much as I could find in Mr. Schoolcraft's book. But if you're my mother, where am I *really* from?"

"Well I told you at the Carnival that in my early years my father and I were presented as a King and Princess of the Chippewa, which you said were Ojibwa, and I know I originated from beside a very large lake, where it was not possible to see the other side; so perhaps I am really from *Gitche Gumee*. But it could be any of the Great Lakes. I

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understand you can't see the other side of any of them. When I was little I never understood where I was in relation to a map. Finding where I came from would be a whole new challenge for the future. But yes, if Chippewa means 'Ojibwa', then yes, Abbi, I am from the same people as in *The Song of Hiawatha*. But the Ojibwa are found everywhere from Lake Superior to Lake Ontario, aren't they? I could have come from Lake Ontario or Lake Huron too. Perhaps the time has come for me to find my way home, find where home is. But where would I start?"

"Perhaps you can remember something that would narrow it down," suggested Abbi.

"This summer, yes, this summer ... When the current tour is over. We must both go and discover where we are from." Ophelia gazed out the window. The past, the future. It was time to return to the present. "You prepare tea very well. I can see they teach girls here how to do things properly. I never learned. Everything has been done for me by others. I don't think I even know how to boil water properly!"

"I can pour you some more. . ."

"Please do."

Abbi poured it like an expert. She poured herself some more too. Then they passed to each other some cream and sugar. She had included on the tray a few biscuits. She took one and so did Ophelia. This ritual helped them both relax.

With all the children at an outing, the Orphan Home was silent—aside from the steady ticking of a clock. Some light snow was falling outside the window.

"We have to now determine what to do next." said Ophelia after a minute or two.

"You said you have to go back to Boston and continue with the play," Abbi replied.

Ophelia sighed. Everything was so topsy turvy now. "I know. I still have obligations to the theatre. We cannot take any new initiative until the tour of *A Stranger in a Winter Landscape* has ended. You need a guardian since you have lost the ones you had. As for me, you have also reminded me of my roots, and how I need to go back to my origins, and visit my relatives. I must take a long break from my work, and find myself." She smiled and added:

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“You must teach me to do a fast, to do a vision quest, so I too can discover my direction, Abbi. Yes, it would be wonderful to go home now, if we can determine where home is, taking you with me, to introduce you to relatives as my daughter. But there are still difficulties. We must worry about Jenine. It would be best that she is well and knows everything finally. I do not want to take you away from her without her full approval.”

Ophelia played with her handkerchief. She glanced at the clock in the room. The ferry would be leaving in exactly one hour, and it would take some time to take the carriage to the Saint John harbour from here. “Yes...right now I have obligations to the play *Stranger in a Winter Landscape* in a few more locations. When it ends *then* I will have free time. So I now have to go back and continue with the play, but when this play ends its tour, I will *not* do another play for a while. I will leave the theatre for the summer months and come to get to know you, Abbi. Perhaps we can search for our relatives together. Your relatives will be the same as mine you know. You may have a cousin somewhere. I am wealthy enough to do that—for us to tour the land of the Ojibwa and search for our roots together. Can we do that? You can wait a little while can’t you, until I finish my touring play and am free?” She glanced again at a clock on the mantelpiece in the room. “I have to go now. I can see by the clock that my return ferry to Boston is leaving soon. I have to get back to Saint John harbour or else I will miss the ferry and there will be no performance tomorrow.”

Ophelia began to button up her coat and tuck in her scarf. She adjusted her hat, and collected her handbag.

“What about you, Abbi? Are you fine continuing here?”

“Yes, everyone had forgiven me for causing the ladies to fall on their fannies and for running away” said Abbi, “Superintendent Wellington is a good teacher, and I like the practical skills Matron Priscilla teaches. I will be fine,”

“I’m sorry I have to go,” Said Ophelia. “I would really have liked to stay with you a whole day, and to talk about all kinds of things. I only had today free; and the ferry schedule only allowed me a couple of hours. The same steam ferry collects fuel, shipments and passengers, and then goes back..”

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"I'm fine here. Should I call you 'Mother'?"

"Perhaps you should regard Jenine as your mother still. Perhaps you can call me by the Ojibwa Indian word for 'mother'"

"Do you remember what it was?"

"It was I think *inga*.³⁸"

"Good-bye *Inga*," said Abbi, "but what is your real name? I forgot to ask you. It can't be 'Ophelia Summer'. That's your theatre name. What did your father call you?"

"*Dauniss*, but that's just a word for 'daughter'. During the time I was under the charge of the producer of entertainments, I had many Indian-sounding names, as I said. So I don't know which of them all was my real name. I am so confused. You will have to straighten me out, Abbi."

"Perhaps your mother never gave you a formal name yet, before she died," said Abbi. "I learned from Chief Jack when I was with the Loggermans that an Indian mother does not have to choose a name unless she has a dream that tells her what it should be, or sometimes an important elder is asked to give a name in a ceremony. Until then, children were called by pet names or nicknames."

"Yes, Abbi. Perhaps I never got an Indian name. Maybe my mother died before the name came to her. Maybe I was still 'Abbi' like you. It seems *both* of us need good Indian names! We should both start watching our dreams for guidance. Since I am your mother, maybe I still have to name you. And perhaps you can help name *me*, if my mother died before she had given me my proper name."

"I know! - 'Woman-in-the-light' - from my dream I told you about, where the woman that turns into an Indian woman in the center of the rink was bathed in light. Although in the illustration it was a fountain of water lit up, I think there were limelight spotlights too. And limelight is used in the theatre and you are in the limelight."

Ophelia laughed happily. Abbi was so bright and imaginative. It was quite a good idea, regardless of whether the dream came from the spirit world or not.

³⁸ Alternative forms - *ninga*, *n'ga*. Today, owing to the word 'mama' being common in our world generally, an Ojibwa speaker might say *nimaamaa* for 'mother', where *ni-* implies 'my' as in 'my-mama'

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“Well you’ll have to study the Ojibwa language to determine how to say that in Ojibwa. Let’s talk more in letters. And then when the touring show is over we can talk, and talk, and talk, in person. But I must go now or I will miss my ferry that goes from Saint John.”

They went to the front door.

“Good-bye, Abbi.” Ophelia bent down to give Abbi a final big happy hug. “I promise with all my heart I will come back soon to fetch you as soon as I am free – it will be only a couple months more – and then we’ll plan things, and see how Jenine is doing, and talk to Madam Woodrow, and everything that is necessary, and then do wonderful things together in the summer. In the meantime, study well until the spring school session comes to an end, and I will send you letters whenever I can and tell you where you can send letters back to me. Alright?”

“Alright *Inga*.”

Abbi wondered for an instant if this was all a dream. Was she still dreaming in the bed? Would she wake up now and find herself in bed upstairs?

From the doorway Abbi watched her go . Ophelia turned several times as she made her way to the gate. It appeared that there was a hired carriage that had been waiting for her all this time. She was famous and wealthy and she could afford having a carriage wait for her a considerable time. She gave Abbi another positive and promising look as she turned half way up the path to wave once more.

Abbi returned to the small parlour where she had to collect the tea tray. But first she stood at the window and watched Ophelia go. Abbi waved from the window again. When the carriage had disappeared, she turned to take the tea tray back to the kitchen. Then she returned for Amik. She went to the window of the parlour again and looked out at where the carriage had been and where there was nothing now.

Had it all really happened or was it a dream? Had Ophelia Summer really visited her? Had she really revealed she was her mother?

Matron Priscilla entered. Abbi turned towards her.

“Has she gone?” Matron Priscilla asked.

“Yes,” said Abbi.

When Matron Priscilla came close, Abbi burst into tears.

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Matron Priscilla took her close.

“Why are you crying? This should be your happiest day. You have discovered your mother.”

“You knew?”

“She told me a little before I fetched you. She asked me not to reveal it to you when I went to fetch you because she wanted to tell you herself. So why are you crying? I would have thought you’d be extremely thrilled. She told me she intends to come for you when her play is over.”

“I’m afraid I will never see her again. I watched her go, and now I’m afraid I will never see her again. Something will happen to her. I know it. Just like when Papa went. Maybe her ferry will be in a storm and capsize just like with Irwin Pictford.”

“She told me there never was an Irwin Pictford. She asked me where you got the notion, and I said I don’t know.”

Abbi realized Irwin Pictford’s drowning in the North Atlantic wasn’t a good example as it turns out he never existed.

“I explained to her that Jenine told me the story about Paula and Irwin Pictford – but it turns out she told a fib to make me feel better. You’re right, Matron Priscilla. Irwin Pictford is made up. Therefore he never died at sea. He never even existed. Over the past year years I’ve made his tragic end so real – with lumber strewn over the entire North Atlantic – that it is hard getting used to the fact that he is all made up. But Papa’s falling in the Saint John River is not made up. That was the tragedy I meant to say.”

“Well don’t you worry. The ferry will get to Boston fine, and she’ll be back for you. As I said, I had a very nice conversation with her before you did. You’ll get a letter from her from Boston soon, just you wait. Stop crying.”

“I can’t help it. She said my Papa was my real father after all, just as I thought when growing up, and now he’s gone. I’m afraid I won’t ever see him again. Nothing has been seen or heard of him in more than a year by now. I’ve been keeping a glimmer of hope alive, but it is becoming so difficult to remain hopeful, Matron Priscilla.”

Matron Priscilla feared the worst about that. She didn’t want to give Abbi false hope. A whole year was a long time for someone to vanish into a river and not be heard of

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again. The only way Abbi's father could be found alive was if something really extraordinary had happened after he fell into the icy rushing water.

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JANE IN THE NEXT BED

No, Abbi could not really be happy since she had no closure about her Papa's disappearance. It only became worse now that she was told he was her *real* father and not just her adoptive father.

Later that afternoon when the children of the Orphan Home returned from their field trip, the news about Ophelia Summer being Abbi's mother spread, and the girls in particular crowded around Abbi.

"I had no idea Ophelia Summer was actually Indian," said one girl to Abbi.

Another girl replied: "Of course she is. Once one is told, one can see it in her face."

"I think you look like her, Abbi. I can see how you are certainly her daughter," said a third girl.

"You also like to have the spotlight on you, Abbi. Maybe you should become an actress too," said another.

Abbi could hardly get a word in edgewise. "No," she finally managed. "I want to be a scholar and study at university like my Papa."

"Yes, of course!" replied someone. "The man you thought was your adoptive father was actually also your real one. I think it sounds like it could be a very good story for a novel, Abbi."

"We're all happy for you, Abbi."

Abbi was not happy, though. First of all she had a deep fear that perhaps she may not see Ophelia Summer again, just as over a year before she bid her Papa goodbye when he left on the winter trip to inspect bridges and she never saw him again. Ever since that time she had kept up 'a glimmer of hope', as she would say, that since his body was never found, he was actually still alive. She often tried

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to imagine ways that he might have survived the river. It was however, very, very, very difficult to imagine realistic ways that it could be true. And then there was Jenine's illness. For everything to be perfect, her Papa would have to reappear and also Jenine become well and they would return to a house like they had in Fredericton, far away from the controlling Audora. But how could that possibly come about?! "I'm more likely to find a million dollars abandoned on a street!" she exclaimed to herself.

She would have to settle for the good fortune that she had just received, namely discovering her *Inga*. "Oh Lord, please don't take her away!" She repeated it another way – "O *Gitche Manito*, please protect my *Inga*! I cannot bear to lose her, now that I have just found her!" In her mind *Gitche Manito* was the same thing as God: the same thing – the Creator of everything – seen in another way.

In order to embrace both the Christian and Indian religion, she had had to find parallels between them; otherwise she would have had to abandon one for the other, and she didn't want to do that. Everything 'Indian' she was discovering in her pursuit of Indian culture in the past year, had to have a parallel in what she had learned being raised in the very Christian world of the European colonists. Her imagination mapped the one into the other; and so she saw a single reality viewed in two ways.

She spoke about this one night to Jane, the new older girl who replaced Peggy in the next bed. Jane was taller than Abbi and a little more mature. She had light brown hair which she liked to wear in a pony tail. Being four years older, she was likely to be more like a big sister to Abbi, compared to how Peggy had been. They talked to one another before Matron Helen turned out the gas lights.

"Yes, Jane, I'm an Indian, or at least half," said Abbi. "And I am certain that Christian thinking and Indian thinking are just two ways of looking at the same thing. There are ghosts, angels and spirits in both – although – I'm not sure what exactly the difference is between ghosts, angels and spirits in general. I think they are basically the same."

"Well," replied Jane, giving her view on it. "I think ghosts are sinister – lost spirits unable to find their way to heaven; angels are of course those who manage to find

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their way to heaven and are happy; and spirits are, I think, a general term for the livingness in living bodies.”

“That’s a wise way of looking at it,” replied Abbi. “When one is living, one has a spirit. When one dies, the body stops working and the spirit becomes separate from the body. Then that spirit can either become a ghost if it is lost, or continue on to heaven and be an angel – although sometimes a spirit will remain near relatives a while before departing. Ghosts are the ones that cause trouble, because they are trapped, and don’t know where to go. They therefore search for a body to invade – and that is where the idea of ‘being possessed’ comes from – it means a wandering spirit who has not figured out how to go to heaven invades an unsuspecting soul and overpowers that person’s real spirit. I read that in Indian culture a spirit without a body is like a shadow without something to cast it. I read that if you see a shadow without anything to cast it, that is equivalent to seeing a ghost.”

“I’d be scared if I saw a shadow moving along the ground and no body to cast it,” replied Jane. “That would be spooky. And I’d hate it to then possess me in order to acquire a body.”

Both girls had gotten under the covers and were only waiting for Matron Helen to clap her hands, tell the girls to get into bed, and turn the lights out. But right now all the girls in the dormitory were chatting similarly. It was quite noisy, but Abbi, like everyone else there, had learned to block out all the background noise when talking to her neighbours.

“Yes,” continued Abbi, in a professorial manner, “and then you have to fetch a shaman or a Catholic priest to say to the invading spirit ‘be gone!’ but often the spirit doesn’t want to go, and it is a difficult task. It must be so comfortable to be inside a body. The solution is to show the lost spirit the path to heaven.”

“What if God doesn’t want him in heaven?”

“Well I suppose then he has to take the path to hell. But I’m not sure about that, because I haven’t ever heard my people, the Indians, speaking about hell. Our idea of hell is for a spirit to be without a body and wander the earth eternally because it doesn’t know the way to heaven. In Indian culture heaven is situated in the west near the

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setting sun. Anyway, without a body you can't do anything; that's why wandering spirits are always looking for unsuspecting souls to invade – so they acquire the comfort of a body. You get rid of ghosts, like I said, by explaining to them the way to continue on.”

“Looking for unsuspecting souls? What's a soul, compared to a spirit, Abbi?”

“A soul is the container, I think. Entering a soul is another way of saying ‘entering a body’. Think of a body as a container. If you pour spirit into it, it comes alive. If you pour it out, it becomes dead. If there is already a spirit and a wandering spirit enters it, the stuff inside starts bubbling and boiling because you can't have two spirits in the same body acting together—so they are at war. That is why a possessed person is in such turmoil. It would be like having two personalities fighting each other. But I think that sometimes two spirits can by luck be compatible. That is when the person becomes amazingly strong and inspired. But they often seem like a different person, nonetheless, even when they are in this way favourably possessed – like they have two personalities. That's my view of it. I've thought about it all a great deal when I was living with the Loggertmans in the woods, Jane, ever since I read Ojibwa legends in the book by Henry Schoolcraft.”

“It all sounds interesting, Abbi.”

“No matter how I analyze it, Jane, I always come up with parallels between what I learned earlier about the Christian view of things, and what I have come to know more recently about the Indian view of things, and I'm very happy about that because that means I can keep following Christian and Native beliefs at the same time; and I've come to think that all real religions – I mean religions that have stood the test of time – are the same too. If one analyzes them one can discover the parallels. There is one universe and different cultures view it in different ways according to what is important to them.”

“That seems a wise way of looking at it.”

“It is the same as how different people view the same person. If I stand before a crowd of people, a person who is, say a dressmaker, will mostly see what I am wearing, a person who dresses hair, will mostly see my hair, a dentist will remark that I have good teeth. Nobody is exactly the

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same in the eyes of different people. It's the same with the universe. Different cultures see it in different ways according to their particular situations. I mean for example, if I were living in a civilization full of seafarers, I might see God as being something like Poseidon, the Greek god of the sea. If I were a farmer people, I might see a giant tiller and planter."

"Why then is there only one 'God' in Christianity and many nature spirits in Indian thinking?"

Abbi raised herself on an elbow and turned towards Jane. Jane was wrong on this score: "No, Jane. It is the same. 'God' is the ruler and has angels under him. In my culture, the Great Spirit, which is the Indian version of 'God', has good spirits all around." Abbi lay back again. "Well, actually, it is probably a hierarchy – you know just like our body is a hierarchy of cells and organs. I don't think it is possible to ever have a spirit that isn't also a community of lesser spirits acting as one – all the way down to the infinitely small. And that also means that the Great Spirit, or God, has to be the infinitely large one, not a lesser subdivision. The Great Spirit, or God, created the galaxy itself."

"If God were a giant being, then angels would be like his organs or cells?"

"Something like that – except it is all spirit. That's why they are all invisible – they don't always have a body. Anyway I think it's all in the terminology. Different religions—and science too—use different terminology for the same things."

It was time to change the subject. Abbi remembered just then that she was very interested in Jane's background. She raised herself back on an elbow and turned towards Jane. "We haven't had much chance to talk, Jane, since you replaced Peggy. Now that you know how I am an Indian, tell me about yourself. Nobody knows very much about you. Where have you come from?"

"My story is actually a simple one," said Jane. "I was for a while in the big asylum. It was a terrible place. It offers little more than a place to eat and sleep."

Abbi lay back on her bed.

"Yes, Jane. I was told before that there were worse places than here and I used to remind myself when I felt

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negative about this place that ‘things could be worse’ and then I tried to imagine how they could be worse, and then I was relieved I was here, and not there. Tell me about the big asylum.”

“The big asylum is a refuge and workhouse for everyone. They tried to keep orphan children separate from the babies, adults, and aged there; but you couldn’t help catch glimpses of the grief and misery of the homeless, destitute, crippled, and aged. But they *do* give work to the able-bodied. They put me to work mending discarded clothes. Anyway, I’m so happy to be here. The big asylum was awful by comparison. I’m an older girl. I’m 14. I think the Orphan Home will try to find me some work outside the Orphan Home, and then I will come back here after work to eat and sleep and to learn things.”

“Yes,” said Abbi. “I know that work has been found for some of the older children, and they eat and sleep here until they are ready to move out on their own. It is a good alternative to being adopted. I hear that people do not like to adopt older children very much; so it is good that they get work and then move out on their own when they can.”

“Yes, I feel very lucky to be here, Abbi.”

“I have never experienced the big asylum, Jane. The most I know about olden days orphan places is the workhouse portrayed in Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*,” said Abbi.

“Charles who, in what?”

“That’s an English writer. Surely you have heard of him. He wrote a novel about a boy in Britain who lived in a workhouse for orphans. They gave the boys so little food, that when *Oliver Twist* asked for more, he got a thrashing. I’m so glad we’re not in a place like that. But the story is interesting because it turned out *Oliver* was actually of noble origins. Anyway they discovered who he was from a locket that his mother had had. It’s a complicated story, with much in between, but that’s a brief summary. I think Dickens called him ‘*Twist*’ because the story takes many twists and turns as it goes ...”

“Well my story is certainly quite plain,” said Jane, “I was born in Saint John and ...”

Abbi rose onto her elbow again. “Don’t tell me, Jane. That way I can imagine something very interesting and

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romantic about you. I am good at imagining stories. When I was with the Loggermans I read Indian legends, and soon I was making them up on my own to tell to the children. Would you like me to create a story featuring you, Jane?"

"That would be amusing, Abbi; but don't spend any time on it."

"No it will come to me without my even trying. I'll make one up right now."

"You can do that? If you can do that, you're remarkable!"

"I will begin by imagining that you were born as the daughter of an English Lord and Lady. The Lord was a handsome gentleman very interested in science. He became good friends with the fellow called Charles Darwin, who thinks we have all come from the apes. During a conversation they have at the Scientific Club, they decide to do an experiment. They will travel to Africa to meet up with some wild apes, and introduce you to one of their babies. Your father, you see, proposed to Mr. Darwin that perhaps the babbling that babies do—and believe me I've heard plenty of it in my time—is a natural language, and that perhaps it is the same language as baby apes have. Thus they go there and put you together with an ape mother and baby and would you believe it, you and the baby ape start talking like brother and sister in your baby language. Your father and Mr. Darwin are looking on. Suddenly the mother ape becomes excited and grabs both her child and you, and runs off into the jungle. Imagine the horror of it all for the two men, when they see you being carried off."

"That's quite amusing," laughed Jane. "What happened to me next?"

"Well your father and Darwin finally have to give up searching for you on account of the rainy season."

"What's a 'rainy season'?"

"I'm not quite sure, but every tropical place has one. I suppose it's a time of year when it rains and rains and rains—that's how the jungles become so lush."

"Well, continue."

"So your father and Darwin are forced to return to England. But before they go, your father calls into the jungle to the mother ape. 'Please take care of my baby

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daughter. I will be back when the rainy season is over.’ So they went home and his wife, your mother, was extremely distraught. She herself went back to Africa and found the ape mother and communicated with her by sign language, and the mother ape told her she had taken you because she thought the two men were endangering your life, and she felt it her duty to take you away from them. ‘Yes,’ your mother said, ‘the men were treating her like an experiment.’ So the mother ape gave you back to your mother and she returned home with you, where she discovered that you knew some ape words. Then, owing to your months in the jungle you had developed a fondness for bananas, and your mother’s cook found she had to buy bananas frequently. There were bananas in every fruit bowl in the house and everyone was eating bananas. One day there was a banana peel on the front steps, and your father slipped on it, fell and hit his head, and died.”

“Serves him right for getting involved with that Darwin fellow!” said Jane laughing.

“Well your mother was distraught, and had to leave England to get away from the memories, and go to the American colonies. But during the crossing the ship hit an iceberg, and sunk. Luckily you were carried in a basket, and the basket floated. You floated over the Atlantic and you were found by some Greenland Eskimos out hunting whales in their skin boats. They took you out of the water and gave you some whale blubber to chew on while they took you back to their village. So then you were raised for a while by an Eskimo mother. But she figured there might be some mother out there who missed you, and when the next anthropologist came to visit the village—an anthropologist is a scientist who studies people—the mother said to the anthropologist ‘*My husband found this white baby floating in the sea. I think you should take her back to your people and see if you can find her mother.*’ Thus when the anthropologist had finished observing these Eskimos, he took you back with him. He was headed back to the Scientific Institute in New York, but foul weather struck and the ship crashed near the coast of Sable Island. You clung to a floating piece of wood and soon found yourself all alone on the beach. There you found nobody in

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sight except the wild horses. You befriended a group of horses and even learned to ride one. But soon the small community there who tend to the lighthouses saw this mysterious girl riding the wild horses and went out to see what this strange apparition might be. They brought you to their village and asked where you had come from. You explained what had happened. Then they reported that nobody but you survived the shipwreck, and that they would have to take you to the asylum in Saint John. *'Please let me stay here with my friends, the wild horses!'* you pleaded. But they said that was no life for a human girl, and you had to go to the asylum. Happily you did get into another family, but tragedy struck there too and you were sent back to the asylum. And then once again you left, but soon you came back *again*. Finally they brought you here and you said to yourself: *'I will learn many skills and take charge of my own life so I won't need to be adopted any longer.'* How's that story?"

"You're amusing, Abbi, I suspect if you started all over and told it to me again, it would be a completely different story. It won't be the same."

"Well that is why stories have to be written down. That is why legend stories come in so many versions. All the storytellers start out with a few interesting plots they have heard, but when they start telling it, they add and subtract things, and a whole new story results. It's only when it is written down that it doesn't change any longer."

Jane laughed and changed the subject. She turned to Abbi and spoke seriously. "I wanted to tell you how happy I am for you that Ophelia Summer turns out to be your natural mother, and that she will come, by and by, to fetch you. And she is a world famous actress too! Oh I am so happy for you!"

"Yes, Jane. And I have been writing letters like mad to everyone I have known to tell them the good news. But I am not as happy as people think I should be. Now that I know that Irwin Pictford is made up, like I told you earlier, and that my adoptive Papa, Bradden Woodrow, was really my natural father, I want more than ever before, to discover that he is still alive."

"But you said it has been almost 14 months ..."

"There has never been any proof that he died, because

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nobody ever found anything more than his coat, hat and boots, and mittens. They must have been torn off him by the violent currents of the rapids in the gorge. And yet I can't think of any ways – realistic ways – he could have survived and disappeared.”

“Surely with your imagination, you can think of something, Abbi.”

“I have been imagining hundreds of ways, but they are all so unbelievable. Would you like to hear one of my scenarios?”

“Alright Abbi,” laughed Jane. “Tell me.”

“The best one is that he was plucked from the water downstream by a couple of men on a raft, who, realizing who he was, thought to keep him and hold him for ransom to get money from his mother, Madam Audora – who, by the way, really turns out to be my grandmother.” Abbi grimaced at the thought that controlling woman was really related to her! “Anyway, if you don't know by now, Audora runs a big company and is very rich. She would be a good target for a kidnapping-and-ransom plot. The plan goes sour because the men have their own enemies – they double-crossed some other thugs, who come after them. So the thugs holding Papa, are unable to carry out their plan, and run for a vessel they have on the coast, to escape, taking Papa with them, to Jamaica.”

“Jamaica?”

“Yes, I envision their being rum runners, bringing rum up here to the Maritimes. They didn't plan the kidnapping and ransom in advance, since my Papa fell in the river by accident, but decided on the ransom plot when they learned who he was.”

“But what were they doing on the Saint John River?”

“They were selling rum, of course. They would have had a barge with kegs of rum, and stopped here and there along the Saint John – and then along comes my Papa shouting help. He tells them who he is, and they decide to hold him for ransom, and that is when their enemies come after them, and take Papa with them to Jamaica where he has been ever since, unable to make contact with the outside world.”

“It seems quite unbelievable.”

Abbi sighed. “I know. Every new story I come up with is

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less believable than the last. I can't think of one that is believable and could have happened. My stories sound like they are out of novels. And that is depressing. It is hard to keep up hope without having some reasonable story that doesn't require something unbelievable."

"Maybe they *did* hold him for ransom, Abbi, and they forbade your grandmother from revealing it to the police, and she has been keeping the secret all this time, while she accumulates the enormous amount of money they are asking for. Then your story doesn't have to have any second group of thugs chasing them to Jamaica. He would still be held nearby, and your grandmother struggling with her horrible secret as she works hard to raise the money."

"How much?"

"I imagine a million dollars."

"Yes, Jane, I think my Papa is worth a million dollars. And you're right Jane, that version is a little more credible, as it doesn't involve sailing to Jamaica. But alas it still sounds fantastic. But thank you Jane anyway, for offering me hope. I'm so glad that you have replaced Peggy, rather than someone else. You are four years older than me. You have four more years of life experience, and I feel like I have acquired an older sister. In my life I have always been the oldest. I've never had a sister older than me."

Jane turned over in her bed, from facing towards Abbi, to facing away. "Goodnight, Abbi," she laughed. "I will try to think of some more ideas about how your Papa might have escaped the river and vanished. And I will also imagine my early life and see if I can remember any of that ape language I'm supposed to have learned." She laughed.

"If I have time in the future, I'll write out the story of your life and give it to you. Then it won't change," replied Abbi.

Jane turned back towards Abbi. "I doubt you will find time, Abbi. You will be embarking on a new adventure with your mother and your mind will be utterly preoccupied with that and you will forget about me very quickly."

"I suppose that is my nature. You are quite observant about me, Jane. I have been told I turn my interest in new directions quite readily, wholeheartedly, and with determination. It is both a good point and a curse. I suppose I will become so absorbed in my new life, if it

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goes well, that I will indeed become oblivious to all else. If so, then the story I have told you will have to do.”

“Goodnight, Abbi.”

“Goodnight Jane.”

Matron Helen finally arrived. She now clapped her hands as she usually did to get attention “Alright girls, quiet now. Lights out. Time to go to sleep. Get under the covers.” With that she turned out the gas lights and the only light was the moonlight coming in from the window.

MIRACLES DO HAPPEN

Throughout the past year, Abbi had held out a ‘glimmer of hope’ that her Papa was still alive. The revelation that she had been adopted hadn’t changed that. She had never been able to relate to ‘Irwin Pictford’ very well anyway. She was happy he turned out to be made up. Now she could return her focus to Bradden Woodrow, who, it turns out, was her natural father after all, just as she had thought for the first eight years of her life. With all the recent events and discoveries, her glimmer of hope burned more brightly. She now really *needed* him to still be alive. She needed to be able to tell him all the news – especially that she was his birth daughter – especially since he hadn’t known it – and that Ophelia was her birth mother. But without any word about what happened to him, and her inability to come up with a believable story of how he could have survived, Abbi was not able to be fully happy. And to add to her concerns was the nagging fear that it might happen to Ophelia too – that she too would inexplicably disappear. What happened once, could happen again.

She would often get away from the children while they were playing, and go upstairs to the dormitory to lie on her bed and stare up at the ceiling. Matron Priscilla went to find her today, and found her there.

“Abbi, you’re still so melancholy. Why do you so often leave the others to lie on your bed all alone?”

“I’m not melancholy, I don’t think, Matron Priscilla. I think I’m philosophical. I think that’s the right word, isn’t it?”

“Yes, I think it means you are thinking about life.”

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“I’m not so concerned anymore that Ophelia Summer might not return. If her ferry had been caught in a storm, it would have appeared in the newspapers by now, wouldn’t it? But I’m more concerned that my Papa might never return, and that as time goes on, my glimmer of hope, will become sillier and sillier in everyone’s eyes.”

“Well keep it to yourself. Nobody needs to know that you keep a light on in your heart for him ... Well, the reason I came to look for you is that a letter from Ophelia Summer came for you.”

Abbi sat up. “It did! Oh I’m relieved! The ferry did not capsize!”

Abbi opened it and read it.

“Well what does it say – if you want to tell me?” asked Matron Priscilla. “Remember I am a fan of hers.”

“She says that she arrived back in Boston just fine, and on the journey she had lots of time to write a letter to Madam Audora to explain everything. She will have received it by now, Matron Priscilla, since she sent it the moment she arrived in Boston.”

“Well that is good. More people know.”

“She says she has been continuing with the play, and during the week she will look at the shops in Boston, and look for a birthday present for me, since my birthday is coming up. She says my real birthday is March 25th. March the 21st, the first day of spring is actually an approximation Jenine decided on. Oh my spirits have been lifted. I have something to look forward to. A birthday present from my *Inga*! I wonder what she will get me.”

“There you are. There is no need to worry any.”

“She says she will write more when she sends me my birthday present.”

“Does she say anything about a third letter – to the Orphan Home?”

“What do you mean?”

“When Ophelia Summer came to see you a week ago, before I fetched you from upstairs, we had a long conversation – the one in which she explained you were her daughter. She felt responsible for you now and wanted to contribute some money to the school, as she had plenty of money. I think she owns a share in the show and, if it does well, she does well. She said you would not be an

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orphan any longer and she should contribute to your care until she came to fetch you. I told her that Madam Audora had contributed \$500 and I said it will go far towards our plans to build an addition which will cost about \$1500. She then offered \$1000. But she insisted it be kept confidential. She doesn't like attention to it simply because she is a celebrity. Well the third letter besides this one to you and the one to Madam Audora Woodrow, is the one the Orphan Home received yesterday. We received a letter containing a bank cheque from her banker for \$1000 towards the addition fund. We now have \$1500 – beyond our normal funds – for the addition. So your being here hasn't deprived orphans of beds. It will *add* beds! Isn't that wonderful? But I trust you to keep it confidential. She doesn't want some reporter to begin to dig and the whole story of her leaving you at a church door and all the rest come out."

"I understand," replied Abbi. "It seems a reporter who digs will uncover practically a whole novel in my life story and hers!"

"Well there is now no reason to lie on your bed and be 'philosophical' when other children are doing interesting things. Come on downstairs."

The letter from Ophelia and the anticipation of a birthday present coming soon was just what she needed to lift her spirits—but not entirely: the matter of her Papa being missing was still unresolved.

Where was he? His body had never been found. There had never been a funeral. There had only been a running-out-of-money and the family having to give up their Fredericton home. There wasn't a grave she could visit to tell him all the news. There was no closure. She wished something would happen to remove the uncertainty one way or another,

What had happened to Bradden Woodrow? He had fallen into a gorge of the Saint John River last winter when conducting an inspection for the railway construction engineering firm for which he worked, and in spite of long searches he had not been found. There had been no sign of him living or dead. What had really happened to him?

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WHAT REALLY HAPPENED TO BRADDEN?

What really happened to Bradden Woodrow after he fell into the river? Was he still living, and if so, why had he not been heard from for the last year?

Abbi was with Jane the next Sunday afternoon, assisting with the chores of cleaning off the tables after the lunch period. They piled up the dishes and took them to the adjacent kitchen and put them in a tub of warm water. Two other girls did the washing and yet two others did the drying. That way it got done quickly.

Meanwhile the remainder of the children were free and playing outside in the back yard. The Orphan Home always encouraged children to go outside for fresh air while the dishes were being cleared away, and the room transformed into a place children could linger, chat, read or do schoolwork. Today being Sunday and without school, the main hall would be free for leisure use the entire afternoon. But right now the dishes and table cloths from the lunch period had to be cleared away and today that duty just happened to fall to Abbi and Jane.

They were almost done. To complete their task, Jane and Abbi only needed to fold up the tablecloths and put them away and adjust the furniture a little.

“You are still so melancholy, Abbi,” noted Jane. “You should be happy. You have found your natural mother and she will come for you soon! And your birthday is only days away.”

“Yes I’m expecting a gift from her in the mail. But like I said earlier, I can’t be fully happy unless somehow my Papa, the one who fell into the raging waters of the mighty

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and beautiful Saint John, was found by some miracle to be still alive.”

“I understand. But you said it is difficult to imagine any believable way that your Papa could have survived.”

“But I tell myself that miracles are possible. When there is a lottery, *someone* wins it. That’s what I like to tell myself. Unlikely and unbelievable things *do* happen to people.”

“Well, this main hall is ready to be taken over by the children again,” said Jane as she noticed they were done, “as soon as they get indoors from running about in the back yard. Do you wish to go out in the back yard for a breath of fresh air, Abbi, now that our duties in here are over? Or maybe, since I am 14, and know the neighbourhood, I can persuade the matrons to let us go for a walk into town to look in shop windows.”

“No, Jane. I think I’ll just sit here by the window and look out at the trees beginning to bud. I don’t wish to be too happy when Jenine is still ill and my father is still lost.”

“Alright, Abbi. But I don’t think it’s good to be that way. You should look at the bright side of everything. Well, anyway, I will join the other children and see what they are up to in back. I’ll leave you to your thoughts.”

Jane left, and Abbi pulled one of the chairs up near the window and gazed out, leaning her elbows on the sill. A bird came down and perched on the ledge outside for an instant. She responded to it: “Birds are returning from their winter vacation! Here bird! Here bird! In the Maliseet language, you would be called *sipsis*.” She tapped on the window and it flew away.

Abbi gazed vacantly out the window and recalled the wonderful times she had had with her Papa in her early years. It was ironic that for her first eight years she had thought, like the other children, that Bradden Woodrow was her father. But then she learned she was adopted and was forced to think he was not her real Papa. But now he really was again. But the sad part was that he never knew, according to Ophelia, that his adopted daughter was also his real one. Or did he somehow know in a spiritual way? The spirit world is very mysterious. Who knows what goes on there!

She remembered how her Papa loved to teach his

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children from his own interests and especially to recite from Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha* or from Schoolcraft's book of Indian legends and myths which was more authentic albeit less poetic. She recalled when she was growing up how he loved to express himself to her about all kinds of matters, even though she often barely understood anything in the beginning. And he must have been especially attentive to teaching her about Indians since she was one and he knew she would want to know when she was old enough to understand. She now remembered also how wonderful it was to play the part of an Indian girl in the play-poem he wrote about *Aggodagauda* from an Indian legend in Schoolcraft's book. She did not realize she had been an Indian back then, but now that she knew she was one, memories of playing an Indian girl was now more special than before. In fact everything that was connected to Indians in her early years was now more special now that she knew she actually was one. How wonderful that when she had been at the Loggertmans recently, she had met real *Wolastoqiyik* Indians, more commonly called *Maliseet* Indians, in Chief Jack and his daughter Minnie. Through them she also understood how modern Indians were, as they coped with the changing world around them.

Now as Abbi gazed from the window at a winter being melted by the warmth of the arriving spring, she wished more than ever that Papa was still alive. There was something immensely wrong for him to have vanished just when the truth was coming out. But where was he? Did he drown? Does he see all this happening from a vantage point in Heaven? Or did he escape the river and was still living? If so, where was he? What had happened? Abbi felt tears fall down her cheeks as she thought about how wrong it was for all the wonderful news about Ophelia Summer being her natural mother, and about his being her natural father, having been just discovered and her not being able to share it with him.

Abbi studied the front yard of the Orphan Home. She saw that the snow had melted in some places. The bushes and trees had green buds on them, preparing to burst into leaves. There was a stone wall surrounding the Orphan Home property, but she could still see the carriages

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moving past along the road on the other side of the wall. The wall had a large ironwork gate, and one could also see the street clearly through that. As she gazed she noticed a carriage stop in front of the gate, and a man get out. Carriages that only stopped to visit did not come inside the gate. Someone would have to open the gate fully for that. The man who got out, from this distance, looked somewhat familiar. It was almost spring now, but there was still a chill in the air, requiring a hat and a coat. His hat and coat were similar to what Bradden Woodrow, her lost Papa, had been in the habit of wearing. He came through the gate into the property and began to walk up the walkway cleared of snow towards the Orphan Home. She could not believe it. It really looked like Papa. Was it him? How was that possible?!

She left her chair and made her way to the front door, opened it and watched the man approach. Was it someone who looked similar to him? Was it an apparition? He saw her and halted a moment, and then continued, saying nothing until he was close.

AN UNBELIEVABLE STORY

“A-a-are you a ghost?” she asked.

“No, it is really me, Abbi.” And he grabbed her up and hugged her.

She had grown a little and was heavy now. “I have to put you down,” he said. “You’ve grown. You’re too heavy for me to lift like before.”

“But I haven’t grown much. My surge in growth has not happened yet. Perhaps it will happen when I’m eleven or twelve”

He put her down.

“Where have you been, Papa?” Abbi asked. “I never gave up hope.”

“It’s a long story, Abbi. And that is why I’m here. I came to tell the story, before we do anything else. Can we go inside?”

Then she remembered her own wonderful news. “A woman named Ophelia Summer came to visit me, Papa! She said she’s my natural mother, and you’re my natural father!”

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He had already heard.

“Yes, I have come from Tall Pines where I went first. What a surprise when I learned! Grandmama told me. Ophelia Summer had written my mother a long letter. I know about her coming here and talking to you. I know you have plenty to tell me about it, but let me tell you my story first. There is so much to tell about what happened to me and why I wasn’t able to return for the last year.”

“You weren’t kidnapped or anything like that were you?”

“Kidnapped?”

“By rum runners who wanted to hold you for ransom in order to get money from Grandmama Audora.”

“No,” he laughed, uncertain about what she was referring to, “but it sounds like a good plot for a novel. Can we go inside and sit down somewhere?”

At first Abbi thought it was a dream. But soon, in only minutes, Abbi and Bradden were interacting as always, like they had never parted company for very long. It was like he had just returned from a very long business trip – for example like he had returned from a trip to Europe or something like that. He had never been away this long before, but she imagined it would be similar.

As she led him inside, Abbi enlightened him a little about her situation. “Grandmama Audora put me in here, but it isn’t bad. She put me in here for the time being because of the schooling and paid them \$500 to make it seem like a boarding school rather than an orphan home. Ophelia Summer paid them twice as much – \$1000 – for me to continue until her play is over. Now the Orphan Home has \$1500 for a new addition. But Ophelia does not want anyone to know she donated \$1000, so you have to keep it a secret. I will continue here until Ophelia Summer finishes her play tour. She then wants to take me along as she tries to discover her roots. She hopes Mama will be fine with that, and now she must hope you are fine with that too.”

“Well you should get to know her if she is your mother. It sounds like a good plan. We will be quite alright with it.”

“She feels so very guilty about not letting you know I was your daughter, but she saw you were very happy with Mama and thought it would be the simplest course of

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action just to give me to you without you knowing .”

“I have read Ophelia’s letter to Mother. She seems indeed a little torn about whether she ought to have let the truth be known. But it doesn’t matter either way to me. I always treated you like our own. I think it caused some stress for Jenine, however – but in another way. She was always wondering where you came from. It would have been a relief to her to have known.”

“How is Jenine? Grandmama wouldn’t let me see her. She didn’t take your accident and disappearance very well.”

“I’ll explain everything in a moment. Can we find someplace to sit? I must tell you what happened to me first of all. Then I can tell you what has happened recently afterward. Isn’t that the wisest plan?”

”Yes, Papa.”

They were in the hallway inside the entrance now.

Abbi continued describing her situation: “Over to the right are the offices that Superintendent Wellington uses, and the visitor’s area where visitors can sit and chat. It is like a little parlour. It’s where I sat with Ophelia Summer and she told me everything. And over to the left, through that large door is the main hall, where everything happens – in the morning breakfast, then our school, then lunch, then afternoon practical classes, and then supper, and then in the evening a place to study or just talk—except that on Saturdays and Sundays there is no school, and other things like outings happen in the mornings and afternoons. We all have chores just like in a real home. Everyone’s chores are all listed on that large slate board near the door. I and Jane were assigned today to clean off the tables after lunch. This will be full of children doing things very soon. It’s empty now. Other than the girls who are in the kitchen finishing up the dishes, the children are in the back yard for fresh air, playing, since it is such a nice afternoon. They’re probably building snowmen because the snow in March is warm and sticky.”

“Well then, as there is nobody here, let’s sit down here at one of the tables.”

Bradden pulled out a chair, put his hat and gloves on the bare oaken table, removed his coat and put that on the table too. He sat down and indicated Abbi sit on a chair

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next to him facing him.

“I always kept a glimmer of hope,” said Abbi as she sat, “even when others were convinced you had drowned. All I know so far is that you saved some men from getting hit by a locomotive, but as a result you fell into the mighty torrents of the Saint John River. I thought of dozens of different ways by which you could have survived, but they were all so unbelievable. While I could imagine ways by which you were prevented from contacting us, I couldn’t think of any way you could have survived the icy water and the winter temperatures and simply disappeared. It was January. My plots all required someone to have plucked you from the river and taken you away to a warm place before the railway men searchers came along.”

“Well Abbi, it *will* sound unbelievable. The truth, as they say is often stranger than fiction. I was saved by a large beaver.”

What?! A large beaver?! She was all ears. She could never in a million years have imagined something like that. Her mind could not even begin to fathom how a man could be saved by a beaver!

“Yes, a beaver like my stuffed one,”

“Amik”

“Yes, but twice as big! A really large old male beaver!”

“Tell me, Papa! Tell me!”

“First I must give you the general picture. I have to tell you the reason you never heard from me – I hit my head on a rock, and lost my memories because of it. Look at that!” He pointed to a healed scar on his forehead. Abbi got up and looked more closely and studied it. Indeed there was a long healed scar there. Abbi sat back.

“Continue Papa. Tell me everything!”

“Basically the blow to my head caused me to lose my memory and I had no other way of identifying myself because the river had torn my coat off me, which contained papers that would have identified me. I had to live with a clan of Indians through the winter. All I had in my memories were sights and sounds and people without my knowing how I was connected to them. I searched for something solid I could relate to. I remembered our life in Fredericton, and Littleton, and Tall Pines in Saint John, but I didn’t know where these places were. It was like places

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in a novel. You have all the information but can't tie it to the real world. I said these city names to the Indians who saved me, and they meant nothing – I think they were Indians of Maine, who they call Passamaquoddy, and had had more contact with the American side of things than Canadian side.

“Passamaquoddy?”

“They are culturally and linguistically the same as the Maliseet of the Saint John. In Maine they have a different name. And they live on another river, not the Saint John River.”

“But if they were so close to the Saint John, they would have been intruding on Maliseet territories.”

“Well who knows why they were there. Things are these days not like they were before European colonists came.”

“By the way, Papa, I agree that the Maliseet are Algonquian peoples like the Ojibwa like you once said. I found many similarities in their words and culture with the Ojibwa – well as much as I was able to learn about both, The Maliseet call themselves *Wolastoqiyik* which means ‘people of the good river’. I think it is a beautiful name and they should change the name of the Saint John River back to *Wolastoq*. There's nothing poetic or romantic in the name ‘Saint John’ although I'm sure ‘Saint John’ was a fine saint.”

“Abbi, the others are coming soon. I went ahead so I could see you first and tell you my story. I have already told the others. If we get sidetracked with discussions about the Indian world, they will be here before I am able to finish my tale!”

Abbi forgot that they were not in his study like in the olden days. “The others are coming?!!”

“Yes, I came in the smaller household carriage. They are coming in Mother's company carriage – the one with the company name on the side. I said – ‘please give me a half hour to see Abbi and give her the news’.”

“I'm sorry, Papa. Hurry and tell the story then!”

“Well, as I said, nobody among the Indians who found me, whatever their name was, recognized the names ‘Fredericton’ or ‘Saint John’, because they came from the river in Maine; but when I remembered my university days

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and said 'Boston', the patriarch or chief of the clan recognized the word. 'Yes, yes' he nodded. He at least knew a few words like 'yes' and 'no'. He drew me a map on birch bark showing what trail to use to go towards Boston. Wonderful. At least I had made one connection with my memories! It was not wise to travel in winter, so I stayed with the clan – they were a traditional clan living in the old way in their hunting territories instead of on a reservation where the government wants them to be. Then in early spring, when the snow was partly melted and the ground frozen in the mornings, I said goodbye to my Indian hosts, and I set off to Boston. But it turned out the map he drew was not to scale and Boston was many hundreds of miles away. But I continued, making a lean-to shelter for the night, beside a fire I made in the primitive way..."

"How did you make fire? Did you rub sticks together?"

"No that is not the easy way. The easy way is to have a small box filled with white ash from the last fire. And then you put into the middle of it some red coals. The red coals stay alive a long time until you have to start the next fire."

"Continue Papa."

"I was met by endless forests. I had thought Boston was only a couple days away, but I hadn't even seen another soul yet after several days. I was in real wilderness! I became hungry but managed to catch some fish. And then finally after a week I came upon a farmhouse. By then I must have looked terrible – with a long beard grown through the winter, wearing half Indian clothes, quite grimy from my travels. There was a farmer preparing to seed his field, and he almost ran away. When I called in good English, he stopped and talked to me. I said to him, *'I'm trying to get to Boston,'* and the man laughed. *'Boston is 500 miles away!'* he said. *'It'll take ye months ta get there walking through the wilderness!'* That was when I realized the scale of the map, the Indian patriarch had drawn, was distorted – it wasn't to scale – and I had completely misunderstood the distances. But I hadn't arrived at any other course of action, so until I did, I knew I would have to keep making my way to Boston in one way or another. Well, I asked the man for information about roads, towns, and so on, so that I could hitch rides

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along roads. I didn't get far that way. I discovered people were wary about giving rides to strangers without any money, especially strangers who didn't know anything about themselves and looked as wild as I did. They did not trust me, even when I managed to borrow a razor and remove my beard; and I found it difficult going. And it was difficult to obtain food. I had no choice but to begin looking for employment. It being the start of summer, there was plenty of work to be had, either in the timber industry or farming, depending on where I was. I am tall and strong and there was no difficulty finding physical work. Thus I would live for some months in a location, acquiring money for food and shelter, and a little extra for continuing my journey, and then continue on. All the while I tried to remember everything I could about Boston and my university days, and I began remembering the performance of '*The Song of Hiawatha*', featuring 'Wenona Storm' in Boston many years ago."

"Wenona Storm?" said Abbi. "That is Ophelia Summer. She was here, like I said. She told me she had many Indian-sounding names and therefore has no idea what her real name is or even if her mother had managed to give her one before she died. She was here, Papa! We were in the front sitting room and I even served her tea! And she told me the whole story of how she thought you were the most handsome man in the world! I got another letter from her yesterday, Papa. She is sending a birthday present for me. Did you know my real birthday is March 25? That's only a few days off."

"It is? Well then we'll have to celebrate it when it arrives."

"But continue the story, Papa." Abbi was feeling guilty about halting the story.

"As I said I worked my way through the summer, in one place or another, trying to save up my money. After working in a farm field gathering crops in the fall, I had accumulated enough money to travel to Boston. Finally I reached Boston last December, and began to have flashes of realization. I figured if I experienced things I had experience before, I would revive the memories of them. I now knew where Fredericton and Saint John were on the map, but I was now in Boston and wanted to remember as

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much as I could while there. One day I walked along the street looking up the theatre that had *The Song of Hiawatha* performance I attended when I was in my last year at Harvard. Who would I meet but Mr. Longfellow. He walked towards me holding out his hand, saying *'Bradden Woodrow! You are not drowned! I received a charming letter from your adoptive daughter Abbi from a small town in New Brunswick where she was living with a family by the name of Loggerman, in which she informed me you had fallen from a bridge into the Saint John River and everyone was presuming you had drowned, but that she was not accepting it until there was proof. I told her that was wise, and here you are!'* I shook his hand, and informed him I had lost my memory and although I knew who he was – the famous bard – I did not know how I was connected to him or to all the other memories floating around in a disorganized fashion in my head, but that it was coming back now that I was here. I told him I had struck my head, and that it was news to me that I had fallen into the Saint John, as I had completely forgotten everything before being saved by the Indians, *'That is how I got struck on the head'*, I concluded. *'Perhaps on a rock when I fell in the Saint John.'* I said that for the past many months all I could think of was that I should make my way to Boston, and that my memory would become more clear when I did. I added that after having arrived here only recently, I was remembering things from my university days. Mr. Longfellow then confirmed that I had been a student over at the university for the longest time, and that if I wanted to recover my memory well I should visit the university as well. Besides, he said, the university would have records on me and I could learn more about myself. Then he asked me where I was staying. I said I only had a small hotel room, since I had only a little money that I managed to save from all the jobs I had taken over the summer and fall, and he said *'Come over to my house. You will be my guest, and I will help you recover your memory. I will also have my physician look at you to ensure you are indeed otherwise healthy.'* I thanked him and went with him, and the first thing he did was show me the letter you had sent him from the Loggermans', the one in which you told him I fell into the Saint John, and your story about the Glooscap

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legend about how the rabbit got long ears which you put into verse.”

“Oh yes!” said Abbi. “I used the address from your folder of writings, which Mama gave me when I was sent to the Loggermans. I thought I should inform him of your falling into the Saint John since you had corresponded with him, and I included my Glooscap verse. I did what you sometimes did, making a story into Hiawatha-meter verse. He thought my verse was very good.”

“Yes I read it and I thought it was well done too.”

“The trick is to count eight beats on your finger ...”

“Well, Abbi, I began to remember how I was connected to you. And then he showed me my own letter I sent him from Fredericton in which I had included a copy of the programme for the poem-play about *Aggodagauda and his Daughter* we had performed in Littleton in which you played the daughter. Well how could I forget that?! I laughed out loud and remembered all about our wonderful presentation. My understanding of my situation in Littleton and then later in Fredericton began flooding back. Well then right away Mr. Longfellow and I composed letters, one to your address in Pinewood with the Loggermans and the other to the Fredericton address where we used to live, where I thought perhaps Mama and the rest were still living. I posted those right away – it was mid December – even before I began to explore the university. After posting those letters, Longfellow’s physician looked at me and pronounced me fine otherwise. He explained that my experience falling into the river was so intensely traumatic that my mind was blocking out all memories of it and that had affected associated memories too. He said it is similar to when someone sprains an ankle, but won’t walk on that ankle even after it heals because he fears the pain. He said I had to force myself to remember. I told this to Mr. Longfellow and he replied ‘*You should revisit the site where you came ashore and lived with the Indians, and then work backwards.*’ But first I would wait for responses to the letters. Meanwhile, I visited the university every day and began to remember my years there and of course my parents back in Richdale. I was Mr. Longfellow’s guest through Christmas, and we discussed many things of mutual interest. Then in January both

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letters I sent came back unread. However the letter to the Loggerman address came back inside a larger envelope in which there was a letter from Mrs. Loggerman addressed to Mr. Longfellow informing him you had returned to Saint John and it gave the Woodrow company address that could be used. It was the same address I had already found in the university records about me that I had not yet used."

"I left Pinewood in early January, Papa," said Abbi. "The Loggermans were moving to Maine in a while, and I was brought back to Saint John by a fellow Grandmama Audora sent up to take inventory, whose name was Mr. Morton. The letter would have arrived probably just after I left there. A letter might take a week or two to arrive there in the wilderness in winter from so far away as Boston. Mrs. Loggerman would have received it since they had not yet moved. I can imagine Jeffrey fetching it from the general store post office and looking at it with a puzzled look. Both Jeffery and Mrs. Loggerman knew I had corresponded with Mr. Longfellow and must have thought he was sending me another letter. But Mrs. Loggerman can't read nor write very well, so I expect Jeffrey helped her write her note."

"Jeffery?"

"He was their hired help..... Continue, Papa!"

"Well as for the other letter to Fredericton, it came back with the information '*not at this address.*'"

"Yes, Papa, we moved out of our place there, after some months when nobody could find you, and Grandmama Audora took us in at Tall Pines, except me."

"As I have recently found out! Well had I been around, I would not have let my mother send you away. Our family should stay together."

"But if you had been around, Papa," said Abbi, "we wouldn't have had to move to Tall Pines."

"Yes, of course. But to continue the tale: by then it was late January and I could have send another letter, this one to my mother in Saint John; but Mr. Longfellow suggested that instead of my writing another letter, given exchanges of letters take so much time, I should right away return to New Brunswick in person. Letters as you just said, in winter can sometimes take two weeks one way and two weeks back. A month could go by. Besides, now that my

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identity was known, the bank I used while at the university had no problem loaning me money for travel: I was a known person to them even if my memory was still foggy. So I took Longfellow's advice and by the end of January set off by train back to New Brunswick. I could have sent a telegram to my mother in her office in Saint John, but I thought I would be wise to take the doctor's advice first – to return to the scene of the accident and conquer the fears from the trauma that was blocking my memory. It would only consume a couple more weeks."

"I was in the Orphan Home by then, Papa, and it didn't seem at all bad since we were making costumes for the Carnival – I'll explain it all later Papa. Continue."

"I took the railway to the upper Saint John River region, and found that indeed I was remembering a great deal about the railway construction work. I would look at a bridge or culvert and remember designing it or inspecting it. I was remembering so much that I lingered longer than I anticipated; but my objective was to go to where the accident happened, and maybe even find the Indians who helped me. When I came to the bridge spanning the gorge, I felt terror and knew that is where I had fallen. Thus in the next days I packed some supplies in a backpack, leapt off a train at the bridge where I fell into the gorge, and went by snowshoe downriver to try to remember what actually happened. It felt like I was going to visit the dentist. That was how I knew I was close to remembering everything."

"How could you leap off the train, Papa?"

"It's not uncommon, Abbi, for people to get off at in-between places that way. You have to ask the conductor to ask the locomotive engineer to slow the train down to a crawl at a particular location. So he slowed the train to a crawl on the south side of the bridge. I knew that I was lost on the south side because when I walked to Boston, I didn't cross any large river again."

"What happened then, Papa? You still have to tell me how you were saved by a very large beaver."

"I put on my snowshoes and headed downriver along the south side as I said, keeping my eye open for a calm bay with a beaver lodge. I knew that I had been saved by a couple Indians who took me out of a beaver lodge. They

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told me so with their gestures. They were all puzzled how I got inside a beaver lodge. I could only shake my head. I didn't remember until I revisited the place. So as I said I followed the river bank downstream. Everything seemed similar to how it had been last January, and I was remembering everything. And then I saw it: a beaver lodge out in a quiet bay of the river about 3 miles downriver. I walked out to it and began to remember. I knew that was where I had been. I then went back to shore, collected some dry wood, and I made a fire on the shore where I could look at the beaver lodge in the distance."

"Did you still have the box with the coals?"

"No. I had packed matches now, Abbi. Well I relaxed and had some tea – hot water with hemlock needles – I had gotten used to it in my winter with the Indian clan. I felt a sense of relief and happiness and my mind was now normal. The trauma was gone, my mind clear. I then tried to determine the route the Indians would have taken. The beavers had repaired the hole, obviously, and it was covered with snow too, but I remembered this had to be the one. I then remembered how I was trapped inside and clawing to get out. Could I now find where the two Indians camped?"

"Papa, papa. You are talking about clawing your way out of a beaver lodge, but you haven't told me yet about how you got in there!"

"Oh yes. I'm getting ahead of myself. I have to tell you how I was saved by a very large beaver.... This is a good time to tell it, since it was at this time, when sitting by the fire, I was remembering it. Here is what I remembered. I already told you that I hit my head on a rock when I was tossed all around by the currents. So let's continue from there in more detail. I think I have now remembered most of it. Fortunately I did not become unconscious—only dazed. I struggled and struggled with the currents. No matter what I did, the currents were stronger than me. My long winter coat was flailing about in the current and was torn off me. My boots came off next. My hat was long gone, as were my mittens, scarf and everything else loose."

"Yes, Papa. They found those things and it didn't look very promising."

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“Had I had a regular shirt instead of a tight woolen sweater, that would have come off too! After a minute I managed to surface and gasp for air, and then was under water again. It seemed like minutes went by in this manner, getting some gasps of air now and then, before I found myself in water that was still strong but smoother. The water was originally moving fast and carried me a long distance.”

“Continue, Papa. Get to the part where the beaver saved you.”

They had been in animated conversation for more than 15 minutes now. The girls doing dishes were long done and in the back yard with other children. But Matron Priscilla arrived. She at first did not know what to make of this scene of the man in animated conversation with Abbi at one of the tables. But seeing Abbi was thoroughly engaged in what he was saying, she began to understand what was going on. From Abbi's responses, this could be none other than her vanished father. She tried to move closer to them without interrupting. Bradden Woodrow, with theatrical background from his university days, and from years of experience telling stories to his children, was quite a performer when he talked. Matron Priscilla herself was drawn to listening and getting engaged with the story.

“Well I suppose ten minutes into my ordeal,” Bradden continued, “the river widened then and the current slowed down. I think it carried me towards the side. Where the current was strong there was no ice, but now I saw that there was ice above me and it would prevent me from getting air. What to do? Where would I get air? Suddenly I saw a very large beaver swim by me. I knew that the beaver needs air too and would have an air hole. Maybe I could follow it. But it was much faster than me and would get away and disappear very quickly. I grabbed at it, first getting hold of a hind leg. It twisted and turned and bit me on my forearm. That wasn't a good idea. With my other arm I grasped hold of its tail and digging my fingernails into it I clamped on like a vice. Then I let go of his foot and used the free arm to grab his tail on the other side. He shook his tail to get me off, but finally decided I was not going to let go, and decided instead to get away. He

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pumped his legs strongly. I was a weight on his tail, so I kicked my feet to help it along. All I wanted was for it to lead me to air. I didn't want to stop its progress. In this way he swam forward. When he tried to turn I helped him turn by kicking my feet."



"You didn't lose your grip?"

"My desperation probably gave me much more strength than normal and my strong fingers held on like a vice. See I have big strong hands from field work on the railway. In any event, when it stopped fighting me, and began to swim, it wasn't difficult since I kicked my feet to move myself forward and not be any great weight to pull."

"Go on, Papa. Go on." Abbi was on the edge of her seat. She had never heard of anything like this anywhere, ever! It was like an Indian legend, but one that really happened and wasn't imagined.

Matron Priscilla took the liberty of sitting near Abbi, and indicated to him he should not stop. Abbi noticed her arrival.

"This is my Papa, Matron Priscilla. He is alive! He is telling me what happened after he fell into the river. He had hit his head on a rock in the river and lost his memory. And he is just now explaining how a large beaver saved him."

"Go on. Don't let me interrupt. May I listen too?" said Matron Priscilla. Of course she could!

Bradden continued: "We were still under the ice. I hoped the beaver had been under the ice for several minutes already, and needed air as much as I did. He had

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to get to his air hole, wherever it was, so I made my mind to hold my breath as long as I could and let him lead me to air. Then I saw a dark shape ahead and realized he was *not* heading for an air hole in the ice, but into his lodge. I was afraid for a moment. What if the passage was too small for me? I'd be left outside, and the railway men would certainly have found me drowned near the lodge entrance. So I hoped this beaver was so large that the passage was large enough for me. I put my head down and stretched myself out, trying to make my shoulders as narrow as possible. I was suddenly in the passage and in the next instant my head broke the surface and I was in the darkness inside the lodge. I gasped and gasped for air. There was a musky beaver smell in there, but at least I was breathing air! I lifted myself out of the passage the rest of the way. I had made it inside!"

Abbi said: "*Thus into the clear, brown water
Silently sank Pau-Puk-Keewis:
Found the bottom covered over
With the trunks of trees and branches,
Hoards of food against the winter,
Piles and heaps against the famine;
Found the lodge with arching doorway,
Leading into spacious chambers.*

"—That's from *The Song of Hiawatha*, Papa. That's where *Pau-Puk-Keewis* meets the beavers and goes inside the lodge from underneath. I read from *The Song of Hiawatha* to the Loggerman children to put them to sleep. Until I found that Jeffrey read books, I read a great deal from it. Did you see heaps of branches for food? Was there an arching doorway? There was a beaver lodge at the Loggermans, in a nearby marsh, and I've always wondered if that is how beaver lodges are when viewed from under water."

"I can't remember. It happened so fast. One moment I was in the water and the next moment coming up through the hole."

"Go on, Papa."

"The first thing I noticed was that the air inside was a bit warmer than the water – perhaps from the body heat from the beavers. It was pitch black in the lodge; but I sensed there was another beaver in there too besides the

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one I had followed inside. Both seemed agitated. I felt a bite on my forearm, but the sweater protected me. I drew himself into a ball, as I felt the body of a large beaver slide past me. The entrance hole was now free and I heard one beaver, and then the other, slip down the hole to escape me.”

“You were now inside the beaver lodge, Papa, and you had to determine how to get out.”

“Yes. I thought of staying there, because the temperature in there was not too bad. It would be above freezing, whereas outside was below freezing. Should I wait there in the hope the railway men would arrive soon? But I was soaked and there was no guarantee they would come this way. How would they know to look inside a beaver lodge? Should I begin to shout? Would my sound go through the walls of the lodge and be stronger than the sound of the river? I had to think. I decided that it wouldn’t hurt for me to start to create a hole in the ceiling. If searchers came near I needed a way to signal them. The temperature would not drop in there until the hole to the outside was large. The activity of creating a hole in the ceiling would give me warmth too. But still, I was wet and shivering. But it was good I had on good thick woolen long john underwear beneath all the clothes that had not been ripped off by the currents, which are relatively warm even when wet. But my teeth were chattering nonetheless.”

“I learned that shivering is good – it is the body’s natural way of generating warmth, Papa.”

“I was now alone in the blackness. I could tell by stretching out my legs that it was about four or five feet in diameter at the floor. Stretching my arm upward I could feel the ceiling. I saw a faint light that signified the air hole for the lodge – by which the beavers get fresh air into the lodge. I reached up and began to pick at it with my fingers. I then broke away a stick I found lying around and began to use it as a tool. I would try to enlarge the hole, picking away with the stick.”

“What were the beavers doing now?”

“I don’t know. Maybe having a conference?” he joked. “Obviously the beavers had a major problem – some foreign creature was inside their lodge and taking up its space. What could they do? It seems, that this big old

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beaver was one who had lived longer than usual, and understood what I was. He saw I was the same kind of creature that sometimes came around to try to catch it with traps. Beavers can be smart, especially old ones—they have to be to escape their predators. Well this old beaver was smart. We all know dogs who have made smart decisions and done smart things, like fetch help. Well this large beaver did as a smart dog might do – he left to fetch humans. Perhaps he knew that if others of my kind knew I was in trouble, they would come and help me and remove me from the lodge. Maybe he had experienced wolves chasing a beaver in winter and trying to break open a lodge. Could he deliberately cause some humans to chase or follow him to the lodge and would they remove me? If I was not removed, they would have to improvise a new lodge very quickly in midwinter!!”

“Continue, Papa! Continue!”

“Well the railway men were obviously too far away. As it turned out, there were a couple of Indian hunters nearby, much closer than the railway men. These two men I learned later were hunting moose many miles from their clan campsite, and were now camped a short distance inland from the river, maybe ten minutes away by snowshoes. The big ol’ beaver probably knew they were there from the smell of their campfire.”

“The Maliseet, or *Wolastoqiyik*, and probably too the Passamaquoddy word for ‘beaver’ is *qapit*. I met some *Wolastoqiyik* men who worked at the Loggerman sawmill for a while. One man whose name was Jack, turned out to be a chief, which is like a king if it is hereditary, and later I discovered he had a daughter my age – Princess Minnie. But I will tell you about that later, Papa. Continue your story.”

Bradden continued: “As they recounted it later to me, these Indian men were sitting around a fire making tea to drink – pure boiled snow doesn’t taste too good so they always add something. Then an enormous beaver appeared and just looked at them. One of the men said in his language, ‘*Why is a large beaver, larger than I’ve ever seen before, walking inland from the river through the snow, appearing here?*’ The other asked the beaver: ‘*Qapit, why are you here?*’ So the beaver looked at them,

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and then turned and started going. Seeing that the men did not follow, the beaver stopped and waited—just like a dog that wants you to follow. A beaver would understand that showing himself might make another creature follow, because it understands it from how a wolf would behave. You show yourself and you get chased. So one man said *‘He wants us to follow him! How curious! Why would a beaver come to ask us to follow him!’*”

“Like the red squirrel,” interrupted Abbi. “When I was at the Loggermans, the red squirrels chattered annoyingly to get me to chase them. I was told they do that so they can lead the intruder away from the area. But in this case, the wise old beaver was trying to do the reverse – to lead people *towards* something. He must have been smart to figure out how to do something in reverse like that.”

“Well who knows? Only someone who knows beavers very well will understand how their mind works. When an animal acts in some more intelligent way, it is based on some more normal behaviour it already uses.”

“Go on, Papa! Go on!”

“Well the men strapped on their snowshoes and followed the beaver back to the river, but this time the beaver went on top of ice towards the lodge instead of underneath. The beaver lodge was in the middle of a quiet bay in the river covered with solid ice covered in snow. The ice was strong there because there was no current underneath in that location. While all this was going on, while the beaver had been fetching the men, I had been pulling apart twigs and mud from around the air hole at the top. It wasn’t easy. The debris was falling down on top of me and I had to keep brushing it off. There were many very long branches in there that would not budge. I could only pick away at the mud and smaller twigs. But I kept at it. I realized the physical activity would also warm me a little so I forced myself in spite of my exhaustion. From the time when I arrived inside the lodge and began to make a hole, and the time the men were arriving, perhaps 20 minutes had passed. I had created quite a hole by then.”

“Go on, Papa.”

“The beaver led the men towards the lodge, until the beaver could hear me tearing at the insides of the lodge, and the men could hear it too. The beaver veered off and

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headed for open water to get himself to safety. The men heard the commotion I was making and rushed the rest of the way to the lodge and arrived just in time to see my hand come up through an enlarged air hole. ‘*Qey!*’ said one of the men down the enlarged air hole.”

“That’s their word for ‘Hey! or Hello!’” said Abbi. “I learned some *Wolastoqiyik* language from the men at the sawmill and from Princess Minnie while I was with the Loggers.”



“I heard their voices and called back. ‘*Hello! Help!*’ Realizing there was a human down there the men began to take apart the beaver lodge from the top around the air hole, until the hole was about two feet across and they could grab my arms and pull me out. They could not figure out how it was I was in a beaver lodge, but they saw I was wet and injured and shivering. I had blood on my forehead where I struck my head on a rock. Imagine if you were them Abbi, finding a man inside a beaver lodge like that!! One of the men took off his large fur overcoat – he didn’t need it right then, because he was warm from the activity – and wrapped me in it. And then the two men took hold of the coat’s collar and between them dragged me through the snow like a toboggan. I had no snowshoes, or even boots, so it was the best way. I appreciated the warmth of the coat around me, but I was still shivering. The beavers, I

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expect set right to work when the coast was clear to repair the hole in their lodge. It wouldn't have been difficult because all the material had collapsed inward and they could get mud from the river bottom below at the mouth of the entry passage."

"Maybe the searchers never found evidence because you never climbed out of the water the normal way," offered Abbi. "What happened next, Papa!?! Go on!?!"

"Well I was shivering like mad now, but if we allow about 5 minutes for them to get me out, and another 10 taking me back to their campsite, that would total to 10 minutes in the water, and 35 minutes inside the lodge or wrapped in the coat. That is not bad. So they removed all my wet clothes and wrapped me in a bearskin they themselves used for sleeping in winter, sat me near the fire, and gave me tea that had been boiling over the campfire. In an hour my body was back to normal, but my head was still aching. There was a large bump on my head where I had hit the rock. Meanwhile they had hung up all my clothes on branches near the fire to dry. Soon they were dry and they helped me put the dry clothes back on, but I was dazed by my head wound. So the men decided to break camp and take me back to their clan village before dark. Since I had lost my coat and boots, I wore the fur blanket around my shoulders, and they made some boots for me by wrapping my feet in two animal skins and tying it up with some cord. They had a toboggan they had intended to use to carry a moose if they caught one, and put me in that. If searchers had somehow managed to find the campsite, they would only have found evidence of two pairs of Indian snowshoes arriving in the area and going away – no evidence of a third person added."

"You went to their village?"

"Well it was more like a winter camp. In the Indian traditional way of life – before there were permanent Indian villages – , they only lived in large villages in the summer when the many clans gathered together. The rest of the year, various clans or families lived in their own hunting territories up and down the Saint John. In this case, we could be talking about another tribe situated in Maine. I was not able to find them again, so they remain a mystery."

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“I know all about it, Papa. Chief Jack’s clan had a camp some miles from the sawmill, and I visited it. They had an old log cabin there that anyone could use when they came. But they didn’t live in the old way anymore. They tended to live in the permanent village ten miles down the river from Pinewood where they had proper houses, and only visited their old family camp to hunt, or in summer to fish and pick berries. Mrs. Loggerman said that earlier the clan would come more often.”

“Yes the old ways are dying out, but this particular clan who saved me was one that had chosen to continue their traditional ways and not be in an Indian village like the government wanted. It took an hour or two to get there, traveling away from the river. The two men were brothers. The families of the brothers lived together there. There weren’t many – only about a dozen people, and nobody spoke more than a few words of English. I was put down inside a wigwam with one family, to rest. My head ached all night – I didn’t sleep a wink – but was better in the morning. Then they asked me with their hand signals to tell them who I was. But I could not remember anything. I made gestures and pointed to my head, and they understood I had lost my memory. And since I had lost my coat which had papers in it that could identify me, I had no way of finding out who I was. Because they were a considerable distance from any European settler, or town, and the snow was deep and it was snowing again, they did not find it practical to take me many many miles to give me to others to deal with. They decided to let me stay until I got my memory back and left of my own accord. They gave me some extra clothing they had, to replace what I had lost, and winter moccasins. I made myself useful, collecting firewood and whatever they wanted. But I did not know the language, and it happened that nobody in this traditional family spoke English, so we communicated by gestures. I learned some of their language.”

“When I was with the Loggermans, Papa,” interrupted Abbi. “when three *Wolastoqiyik* brothers were working there, I spoke to them on two Saturdays when they had lunch. One of them, Chief Jack, spoke English well; and the other two understood and spoke a little. Continue, Papa!”

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“That means they had considerable involvement with settlers, government and missionaries. But this clan in which I found myself was very traditional and nobody understood any English – except perhaps single words like ‘yes’, ‘no’, ‘go’, ‘look’ and so on.So that is the whole story Abbi. I’ve already told you what happened next, when I started off towards Boston. All of what I have explained came back to me, when I visited the location. That was only a couple weeks ago. Yes, as I sat having my tea not far from the beaver lodge, I remembered everything, my mind cleared up, and now I was ready to go home. I was glad I had followed the doctor’s advice to visit the location of my accident first. It hastened my recovery.”

“What did you do then, Papa?”

“I was ready to return to my original life. I first went to Fredericton, discovered from our former neighbours, the Jacksons, that you had moved out of the house to live with Grandmama Audora at Tall Pines.”

“I have exchanged a few letters with Charlotte. We are still friends.”

“And then I sent a telegram finally to my mother in Saint John, informing her I was alive and in Fredericton and would arrive back home soon. Then still in Fredericton I visited with former colleagues from work a couple of days. They were very surprised, like I had come back from the dead. Another manager had been hired to take over from me, but I said I needed a rest now, and he could keep the job. Besides, the project is nearly over. If I continue in railway design, it could very well be a project in a completely different location. When I had visited everyone in Fredericton who were affected by my disappearance, I took the train home to Saint John, and then to Richdale and to Tall Pines. At Tall Pines, I learned everything that had happened with the family in the past year. That is the story. In a few minutes the rest of the family will arrive with Mother’s company carriage.”

“How is Mama? Is Jenine better? I have always wanted to see her, but Grandmama Audora has been determined to rid me from her world, even more so since I caused her to fall on her fanny at the Carnival. She was very angry about that.”

“Well I think she has been very changed from learning

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that you are her granddaughter after all and not just anyone we adopted. As for Mama ...”

Matron Priscilla interrupted. “If others of the family are arriving momentarily, I would be happy to prepare some tea for everyone. Who is coming?”

“Everybody,” replied Bradden. “Madam Audora, Jenine, Mary, Jack, Jimmy, Mark – the whole family. We don’t want to put the Orphan Home to any trouble or disrupt anything. Perhaps we should have sent word ahead of time, but we thought it being Sunday, it would be fine.”

“It is no problem. It being a nice day, everyone is outdoors or somewhere else. In fact I am now the only one supervising in here. I will go into the kitchen and make a large pot of tea and bring it in. You can all sit in here. We have a parlour for visitors, but it will be too small for eight people. Continue with your conversation.”

The whole story of Papa being saved by a big beaver and then by Indians whirled around in Abbi’s head. She could never in a million years have come up with a story that amazing!

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BRADDEN CONTINUES HIS TALE

Abbi still had more questions – she wanted to know how the family was.

“What happened when you returned? Please tell me how the family is. I have missed them so much – except I met Mark for a few minutes at the Carnival. Grandmama Audora has not wanted me to see them – as if I had a disease or something.”

“Well I have given Mother a piece of my mind about that. I’ll explain my return. Well as I said, from Fredericton I took the express to Saint John. But I didn’t want to see my mother at the company offices first. I had to see Jenine and the children. So I went directly to Richdale. I wanted to see if my family was alright after what they had been through. I wanted to see Jenine and the whole family first of all. Mother, Grandmama Audora, has always been hard to deal with.”

“How was Mama? Audora said she wasn’t doing well, and that your disappearing didn’t have a good effect on her. Mark thought it was because she had nothing to do in a mansion with servants always having looked after the children.”

“Yes, she is of country origins and in the country there are no servants – neighbours and family simply help each other. It would certainly have been a foreign environment for her. Well, when I arrived at Tall Pines, I learned from the staff that the two youngest were under the authority of a nursery-governess and the two oldest boys were at a boarding school 25 miles away, and Jenine was doing nothing other than sitting in the large parlour upstairs, with a book in her lap gazing out the window. The nurse-

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attendant looking to her needs said it was as if she was elsewhere, and that she might only read ten pages of the book in a day. So I rushed upstairs in alarm to where she was. Then something amazing happened, Abbi. When she saw me she at first stared blankly, and then her eyes lit up and she smiled. She asked where I had been and where was Abbi. She imagined I had gone somewhere far away on some journey and taken you along. She wondered why it had taken so long. She said, *'Now we can finally go home!'* as if they were only visiting Tall Pines like we did once. She couldn't accept actually living there permanently. That is how she coped – by imagining it was temporary until I returned. She said: *'Oh how long I have been waiting to get out of here! I simply don't belong. Your mother doesn't even let me look after the children. I can't make clothes for them even. I have my sewing machine but can't use it. I made things with it, but nothing I make is used. I've made dresses for Mary, but Audora prefers to purchase finely made ones from the shops. When can we go? But where is Abbi? Was she with you? Is she back too?'* “

“What happened then, Papa?”

“She said *'I wanted you to come save me from your mother like you always do when I find myself alone with your mother.'* Somehow my being around made things alright. I was always her protection against my mother and those surroundings. With me not there, she had no protection, no escape.”

“I know, Papa. In my experience, I have felt very helpless when Grandmama made decisions about me.”

“I told her a whole year had passed since I disappeared. She was surprised it was so long. To her it was only a couple months.”

“What happened next, Papa?”

“I was very angry about the whole situation I found at Tall Pines, and the first thing I did was I told the nurse-attendant for Jenine that she was fired, that I was taking charge of Jenine now, and that there really was nothing wrong with her! And then we went to find my two littlest children. I told the nursery-governess there that Jenine was resuming looking after her own children and that she was fired too. I then told Desmond, the carriage man, to go

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to the boarding school Mark and Jack were at, and bring them home on account of an 'urgent family matter'. And then I took the other carriage and went to the company offices, and appeared at my mother's office door very angry. I accused her of not respecting my wishes as she had promised over the years about the way I wished to raise my family. She apparently thought I was dead and that she could now do as she pleased. I gave her a piece of my mind. Well she did not know what to say to that, as she was clearly guilty on that score. She broke down, as she had already been feeling very guilty for days after receiving Ophelia Summer's letter. She then explained how she had received a letter from Ophelia Summer, telling her that she had visited you, Abbi, and revealed that she was your birth mother and I was your birth father. '*Abbi is real family after all*', she finished, '*and not a stranger you adopted*'. She was very upset about that since she realized she had discriminated against you for no other reason that you were not kin - and suddenly you are her granddaughter and not a mysterious Indian orphan! Well I was no longer angry. I was quite shocked myself about that news and our discussion immediately turned to Ophelia's letter telling how she had given you to Jenine and me so we did not know you were actually mine. She was very sorry when she explained she had put you here in the Orphan Home, and earlier sent you away into the wilderness to live with the Loggermans. '*Would you have done that if you had known she was your granddaughter?*' I asked. '*No,*' she replied, '*and that is why I feel so bad.*'

"It wasn't so bad, Papa. Grandmama's decisions let me learn about Indians when I was with the Loggermans, and recently realize my dream of being part of a Winter Carnival."

"She brought me up-to-date about everything. I told her I had fired two of the staff and commanded Desmond to fetch the two older boys and there should be a family reunion before anything else, and then we should all discuss what should happen next. Well everything has been worked out and the older boys are home for a few days, and now this morning, it being Sunday, it was time I came here to tell my story, and reunite you with our family. They will all come here any moment."

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A CASUAL REUNION

Matron Priscilla now returned, pushing a cart with a couple pots of tea, many cups and saucers and spoons, and a tray of biscuits.

Abbi went to the window to look out to see if the other carriage was arriving yet. "They should be here soon, if you said it would be a half an hour, Papa."

She returned to the table, and volunteered to help Matron Priscilla put everything onto the table.

"This is a wonderful place, Papa," Abbi said as she did so. "Matron Priscilla teaches us practical skills in the afternoons. I now know how to properly set a table. This room in which we are now serves all purposes – sometimes it is a classroom, then it is a dining hall, and then, like now it is a leisure room, like a huge parlour. But in the afternoon during the week girls might be learning to sew here. I and Peggy made a Snow Princess costume. And it turned out Ophelia Summer was a Snow Queen at the Carnival. May I pour you some tea, Papa? Your mouth must be dry from all the talking."

She poured him a cup of tea.

"Can I show my Papa around some more, Matron Priscilla? Everyone is outside so it won't cause any problems. It will also still be a few minutes before the rest of the family arrives."

"Very well. I'm sure your Papa is interested in where you have been living for the past couple months. I will let in the rest of your family when they arrive."

And so Abbi gave her Papa a tour. First they looked in on the kitchen. Then she took him up to the dormitories, and told him she was borrowing his stuffed beaver. "I was afraid Grandmama Audora might throw him out." They then came downstairs again, and looked at the front parlour room for receiving guests. "This is where Ophelia Summer sat, and I served her tea. This is where she explained everything – about how she was my mother and had left me for Jenine to find. She wanted you to raise me because she wasn't in a position to do it herself."

They looked at Mr. Wellington's office. "Superintendent Wellington runs the Orphan Home. He isn't here today. He and his wife sometimes take Sundays off to go visiting

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relatives and such. He is a nice man who likes teaching children.”

She even took him down into the basement and showed him where coal had to be shoveled into a large furnace. “The furnace heats water that then goes through pipes to radiators. Boys who are bad are assigned duties to shovel coal into the furnace. And here is the root cellar. I had to fetch carrots and potatoes from here when they wanted to punish me for causing the Richdale ladies to fall on their fannies at the Carnival.”

“Well that Carnival seems to have been quite a big event, and I think you will have plenty of tales to tell me, later, Abbi. But let us return to the main hall now, in case the others have arrived by now.”

In general Bradden saw that Abbi fit in very well here. All that she had lacked was contact with her family. His mother, Audora, had prevented that as a result of her prejudice. But no longer.

As they made their way back to the main hall, Abbi now turned her chatter towards the subject of Ophelia Summer.

“She wants to come for me when her plays are done for the year. She is currently in the play of ‘*A Stranger in a Winter Landscape*’. Then she wants to search for her own roots and take me along. She thinks she comes from *Gitche Gume*, which is Lake Superior, and wants to see if she can find relatives. Wouldn’t it be wonderful, Papa, if it turned out she has an aunt or uncle or cousin, and maybe someone my age even. Then I will have lots more relatives. Please let me go with her!”

“I think it will be fine. There’s plenty of time to work things out about that.”

They were back in the main hall before the rest had arrived. Matron Priscilla was waiting. Then Abbi heard the neigh of a horse and went to the window. “There is a carriage arriving next to the one you came in. That must be them ...”

Matron Priscilla went towards the door. “Stay here. I’ll show them in.”

Abbi leaned on the window sill and looked out at the many people coming out from the carriage and then up the walkway. Can it be true? The whole Woodrow family coming here to see her and take her home? Was it really

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happening?

It was true. The whole Woodrow family was coming for her.

Matron Priscilla met them and led them inside to where Abbi and Bradden were.

“Mama!” shouted Abbi, when Jenine entered. She ran to her and they hugged. “I have missed you! Are you well now?”

Jenine had been carrying little Mary, now 3, and put her down when Abbi approached her.

“How have you been Abbi? My, I have missed you! I was forever imagining you were somewhere far off with Papa – but everything was explained to me. I think I’m well now.”

“I know there is no Paula Pictford and no Irwin Pictford, Mama. My real birth parents are Ophelia Summer and Papa. It is alright you told me the fib, Mama. It turned out your guess was right. Ophelia Summer was Chippewa, which is the same as Ojibwa and she thinks she might *really* be from *Gitche Gume*, just like you said Paula Pictford was. But I’m happy you told me the fib about Paula Pictford, because if you hadn’t I wouldn’t have learned all about Indian ways while I was at the Loggers. It was all fine there, Mama. There was wilderness all around there, and Mrs. Loggerman was very nice. We talked a lot when we did chores and that made chores more pleasant. And then I met an Indian girl my own age like I wanted, and she turned out to be the daughter of a patriarch, a hereditary chief, which is like a king, and therefore she was a princess....”

Jenine bent down and hugged her again. “That’s wonderful, Abbi. I now remember how terrible I felt when I had to say goodbye to you, and how helpless I felt against Grandmama. But you won’t be able to tell me everything that happened to you in the last year all at once this minute. We can talk about it later.”

“Papa has just finished telling me about how he was saved by a large beaver. I learned from Ophelia Summer that my actual birthday is March 25th and Ophelia Summer is sending me a birthday present. I expect you know all about Ophelia Summer by now?”

“Oh, Abbi, I could never have imagined that your birth

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mother would arrive in your life, and that she would turn out to be a world-famous celebrity of the stage! I was prepared for a woman possibly appearing who might identify herself as your birth mother, so I have been prepared for it — but a world-famous celebrity?! I wouldn't ever have imagined that your mother would turn out to be a famous actress! I expected it might be a poor Indian woman in great hardship." She hugged Abbi again hard before letting her go.

"This is the main hall where most of the children spend lots of time. Mama, this is Matron Priscilla. She is one of the matrons here. There is so much I want to tell you about this Orphan Home. She has prepared tea, You should sit down. We should have some tea. There are biscuits too. Some girls made them this morning." Next Abbi noticed little Mary. "Mary! How you've grown! You look very much like one of the Loggerman children now."

Mark was close behind Jenine. When Abbi saw him, she turned to him excitedly and hugged him. "Mark. I'm glad you came too." Jimmy was next. "Jimmy! You're bigger than you were!" Then finally she saw Jack behind all the others. Audora who was last, had carried him and put him down. "And Jack! I'm glad you came too. My you've grown!"

"When Papa came home," said Mark, "he sent a carriage to get Jimmy and me from the boarding school ... Will we be going back Papa?"

"Well we can't take you out in the middle of the school year," replied Bradden. "I think you boys will continue there until the school year ends. Desmond can take you back in a few days after we have been together for a day or two and got caught up."

Mark continued to explain things to Abbi: "The little ones have been looked after by a nursery-governess, but Papa dismissed her when he came back, so that Mama can look after them again. Sorry about giving you the ten dollars, Abbi. If I hadn't you wouldn't have been able to run away to Littleton."

"No Mark. It was good. If you hadn't, I wouldn't have gone, and Ophelia Summer would never have learned from the newspaper that I was the girl she left for Mama and Papa to adopt, and I would still not know she is my *Inga*."

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“Your what?”

“That’s the Ojibwa word for ‘mother’ in her dialect. I will call her *Inga*, and call Mama, ‘Mama’, as always.”

Finally there was Audora Woodrow who had intentionally been holding back, staying behind everyone else. She had let the others go ahead of her, because she knew Abbi did not look upon her very kindly after all that had happened between them.

Unlike the others, when Abbi saw her, she was not keen to run up to her and hug her. Audora understood, but felt uncomfortable that this strained relationship should exist between them, given that Abbi was her natural granddaughter after all. But Abbi did not know how to talk to her. She had developed an image of her as a witch and ogre for too many weeks now, whose decisions regarding her had not been with the best intentions because she had seen her as an orphan and an Indian, and not really hers. But of course that was all changed with the news that Abbi really was her granddaughter after all, and furthermore her mother was a celebrity of the theatre world!!!

Audora realized she had to make the first move. “Is it possible for me to have some moments with you alone, Abbi?” Audora looked to the others for support and then added to Abbi: “I am sorry Abbi for the way I treated you. My attitude towards you has been inexcusable. I’d like to apologize.”

Abbi looked around at the others for guidance.

“Go ahead,” Bradden nodded to Abbi.

“Is there somewhere we could go?” Audora wondered.

Matron Priscilla led them to the visitors’ parlour where Abbi had talked with Ophelia. Besides the small table and chairs for tea, there was in that small parlour also a large fancy sofa on one side where they could sit. Matron Priscilla excused herself and left them alone.

“Come sit with me, Abbi,” began Audora. “This sofa will do fine.”

They sat.

“I want to apologize, Abbi,” began Audora, “A week ago, even before Bradden returned, I received a letter posted in Boston. It was from Ophelia Summer. She explained how she was your natural mother, and that Bradden was your father, and she left you with him and

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Jenine anonymously many years ago. She said she had just visited you here and revealed it to you. Her revelation shocked me because it meant that you are really my natural granddaughter. It seems I have been discriminating against you simply because of the belief you were not from my son. I was never conscious of being that way to you until I received the letter; and then it became amply obvious how poorly I have treated you. In reality, my blood runs in your veins, and perhaps something in your character is inherited from me.”

And then something amazing happened. Abbi saw tears come into Audora’s eyes, the eyes of the hard woman who never showed emotion.

She looked into Abbi’s face, and all she could say then was “You have Bradden’s eyes ...” and then she hugged her—for the very first time. “I am so sorry. I’m so ashamed of myself,” she murmured. “I must be the most discriminating person on this earth.”

Abbi was uncomfortable she was that way and was quick to reply: “No you aren’t, Grandmama Audora. I think the world of men has made you hard. You are the only woman in Richdale, maybe in all of New Brunswick, maybe all of Canada, who runs a big company.”

“Oh how different it now sounds, when you call me ‘Grandmama!’”

She sat back and took out a handkerchief to wipe her tears. It was a black silk handkerchief, as one would expect.

“I mustn’t lose control as I have more to say,” she said. “After I received that letter from Ophelia, I thought I had received the surprise of my life, and that nothing could be more surprising than that; but then some days later a messenger brought me a telegram originating from Fredericton. It said: *‘Mother, I’m alive. In Fredericton. Will be home in a couple days. Currently visiting colleagues. – Bradden’*. How terrible that telegrams have to be so short!”

“It’s because it takes so long for the telegraph operator to tap in every letter with Morse Code, Grandmama,” offered Abbi. “Each letter takes two or three dots or dashes.”

Audora continued: “Well Ophelia Summer’s letter had

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left me in shock to begin with, and you can imagine what the telegram saying my son was alive meant. I was in so much shock I was in a daze. I went home to Tall Pines, and did nothing for the first time in a decade. I sat in the garden. I took a walk. I read a magazine. I talked to my servants. I played with Mary and Jack, I even tried to engage Jenine in conversation. I had no idea I was too intense for her, as Bradden explained later. As I said, I did everything I had not done before. I visited the stable where the horses are and talked to Desmond and asked him about his wife and family. I did things I have not done in years. I was quite in a daze. And then the next day I informed my company staff I was ill—but I was not—and spent another day that way at Tall Pines around my mansion. When finally I went to my offices again, I began to reorganized my business, so others would do more of my work, so I would have several hours free every day to do nothing in particular. It was cruel of Bradden to send the telegram from Fredericton and not arrive for some days after.”

“Papa said he stayed a few days with his railway colleagues when he reached Fredericton to learn of what had gone on in the company when he was gone.”

“But no matter. It so happened that Bradden returned while I was back at my offices in Saint John. He first went directly to Tall Pines and met Jenine. Suddenly Jenine was well, I was told. Jenine said: ‘*Bradden, where have you been?*’ as if he has been on a work-related trip and taken you along, and she had been waiting for him to return to save her from me! Apparently I am too controlling.”

“Yes, Papa told me how Mama became well as if she was waiting for him.”

“Well Bradden pretty well took over! He fetched his sons from the boarding school, and dismissed the nursery-governess, and Jenine’s nurse-assistant. He then came to my office and voiced his disapproval with everything I had done – yes he quite took over, Abbi. I had no power for once. But by the end of the day, the oldest boys had been brought home from the boarding school, reunions made, explanations given, and everything sorted out. Then it was time to come to fetch you tomorrow, which is today.... That’s the story, Abbi. I beg for your forgiveness for how I

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treated you. I didn't realize how wrong I was in my attitude and behaviour towards you until I realized you are really my granddaughter. I didn't realize just how high a value I placed on kinship, how discriminating I was. But Bradden didn't care about your being adopted, and treated you like you were really his. He always loved you from the start as much as if he had been your birth father, which he now turns out to be after all. I hope you won't hate me for how I have been."

Abbi really didn't hate Grandmama Audora. She was, after all, the woman who always visited the family when she was little and for the longest time allowed her to call her 'Grandmama Audora' and be included with the other children. Furthermore, Audora had never been evil towards her, only neglectful, or overly controlling, which is not as bad as being *deliberately* nasty.

Audora continued: "And I believe I deserved the humiliation I received at the Carnival when we fell on our bottoms, and I have already forgotten about that. I am sorry I have tried to be so controlling, Abbi. Family relations should not be dealt with like business matters. And as for someone to inherit the company, well, there are three boys to choose from, and even you, if you are interested. The probability that one of you will rise to the challenge with a natural interest in the business of building products is high, and I will not fret about it any longer. My son can continue in his railway career and I will no longer try to force the company onto him."

Abbi began wondering when she would be done. The issue had now been dealt with it seemed, and she longed to run back to the others to talk about her wonderful adventures. Adults *do* tend to want to talk on and on ... !

"And as for you, Abbi, I can see nothing more suitable than that you go for a time with your natural mother, Ophelia Summer, if Jenine agrees too. Since she is Indian, she understands all the challenges that you will face as an Indian in this new world filled with Europeans and their imported cultures." Audora dabbed her tears some more. "Do you forgive me? Maybe not right away, but eventually I hope."

"Yes, Grandmama," Abbi nodded, having already forgiven her. Still, Abbi realized by now that Audora was

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so good with words, that only her actual actions counted. Seeing a tear come from her eyes spoke much more than a thousand words from her mouth. It was the way she was, that's all.

From Audora's perspective, she was looking at Abbi in a completely new way. Past observations about her now seemed to have been a positive thing, not negative. And she saw their conflicts as indications of Abbi being strong minded like herself. Indeed she was very much like her son. She was not entirely like Ophelia Summer. There was Bradden in her!

"Let's go back to the others now," finished Audora. "All I wanted was for you to know I will not be the same person I used to be anymore. I have learnt my lesson."

"Let's return to the others then," said Abbi, pulling her sleeve and seeking to hasten the process.

As they made their way back to the main hall, where the others were waiting, Abbi had a thought: "There is an older girl next to me in the dormitory, who is 14 and her name is Jane. The Orphan Home wants to find her employment to which she can go to occasionally so she can learn to become independent. She is very good with figures and her penmanship is superb. She can help you keep in order those books you are always writing into."

Audora laughed. "With your endorsement of her like that, I'm sure I can grant her an employment interview."

"Otherwise," added Abbi, "she could get stuck with something that does not advance her talents, like working as a housemaid or something like that."

"You're right, Abbi. We should advance the Women's Cause."

For a change, Audora was happy, Abbi noted. Perhaps that's how she was when she was young and beautiful, before the business world made her hard. But they were now back with the others.

TOWARDS THE FUTURE

When they were all together again in the main hall, Jenine took over as mother, and commanded her children to sit here or there and behave. She poured tea for them, adding plenty of milk to the tea for the younger children.

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They had obviously been talking. Matron Priscilla was absent to leave the family to themselves. Abbi was quite hungry by now and couldn't wait to have tea and some of the delicious biscuits. She poured Grandmama Audora some tea too.

Abbi turned to Jenine. "Mama, Ophelia said that when her role in *Stranger in a Winter Landscape* is over, she will quit for a while. She wants to take me and find her family somewhere at *Gitche Gume* or another of the Great Lakes where the Ojibwa live, and get to know me too."

"That's fine, Abbi," said Jenine. "She can have you now for a while. We have had you for most of your life. She wants to know you just as much as you want to know her. I have always expected that one day your natural mother might show up. I have adjusted to that possibility. You can now share us, Abbi."

"Will you go back to Fredericton, Papa, to work on the railways again?"

"I don't know, Abbi. There is a new man in my place and the railway up the Saint John valley is getting done. I now have enough experience that I can even work for another company in another place, perhaps the Intercolonial Railway were I worked for a time when we were in Littleton. Since the Fredericton home has been given up, we have the option of living somewhere completely different. I suppose I will resume work in railway development, and then consider perhaps teaching at a university as I get older. There is a great need now for experienced men to teach about railway building practical sciences. That is something I should look into."

"But we ran out of money, Papa," said Abbi.

"Perhaps this is one time that Grandmama Audora can support us a while until I determine our next step."

"What will happen right now?" Abbi wondered. "I am in the middle of classes here. Will I be leaving here?"

"You will now come home with us to Tall Pines," said Jenine.

"But what about school? I am in the middle of classes here. I have friends here."

Grandmama Audora responded to that: "Desmond will drop you off here every morning, at the same time as he takes me to my offices, and then pick you up every

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evening as he takes me home. We'll come and go together. Don't worry, Abbi, I will not work late. It will be well before suppertime. That way you can be with your family in the morning and evening and continue getting schooling in the Orphan Home, until Ophelia comes for you."

"We'll stay at Tall Pines," added Bradden, "until Miss Ophelia Summer has completed her play tour, and comes for you. Jenine still hasn't met her, and I haven't seen her in almost 11 years; so it will be quite an interesting meeting. I'm sure it will go well. And as for the near future, perhaps next weekend, we can all make a trip to Fredericton and meet with Charlotte's family, and other friends and neighbours. I expect that very soon newspapers who reported on my disappearance will now wish to write about my return. Very soon you'll read about my adventure everywhere."

Abbi had a thought. "In the future I could stay with you and Mama when Ophelia is in the theatre through the fall and winter, and then I could stay with Ophelia when she goes home to someplace for a vacation in summer – she wants to settle somewhere. That would be perfect!"

"There you go," broke in Grandmama Audora. "Abbi is a brilliant girl. Maybe she has inherited something from me. You will even be a good help for Miss Summer, organizing her life."

"And," added Abbi. "When I am old enough, and Papa is a professor at a university – *if* he decides to be a professor – he can help me get into university in spite of my being a girl and Indian."

"Well," said Grandmama Audora, "We have had our tea and must thank the Orphan Home for their hospitality. Why are we sitting and standing, and talking? Abbi go get your things! We are going home!"

"But Grandmama, I have to say goodbye to the children."

"No you don't. You'll be back for school first thing tomorrow morning, and every school day after that, until the school session ends for the summer. A matron here can tell the children this evening what has happened and why you are not sleeping in the dormitory any longer; and that you'll be back in the morning for school lessons."

Abbi took off running. On her way she nearly collided

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with Matron Priscilla returning from wherever she had gone while she and Audora were having their conversation. “Matron Priscilla. Everyone is alive! Everyone is well! And Madam Audora has stopped being an ogre!”

“I know,” said Matron Priscilla. “I witnessed it. Have you all finished your tea?”

“Yes, and we are now all going home, including me. I will now come here in the morning and leave at night, just like you do when you go home to your flat where you live with your mother. Now you have a free bed for another orphan.”

“Well then, switch into the clothes you came in and fetch everything that belongs to you. I’ll come in a moment to help you carry the trunk downstairs.”

Abbi could not go fast enough. She changed clothes, removed Amik from the trunk under the bed, and dumped everything from the shelf and clothes hangers into it, as well as the travel bag. There was no time for proper folding or anything. Meanwhile Matron Priscilla discussed the new arrangements with Jenine and Audora downstairs.

Matron Priscilla returned to help Abbi carry her trunk downstairs. Abbi followed with her crammed traveling bag with the wooden handles.

Finally they rejoined the others. Matron Priscilla handed the trunk to Bradden.

“I’ll see you bright and early tomorrow morning, Abbi,” said Matron Priscilla.

“You’ll tell the children what has happened, won’t you Matron Priscilla?” reminded Abbi. Then Abbi realized something was missing.

“Oh,” said Abbi. “Something is missing. I’ve forgotten something.”

She ran upstairs, found Amik perched on the small side table in the gap between each bed, waiting patiently to be fetched. She had forgotten she put him there when she made room in the trunk.

“I mustn’t forget you, Amik,” she said as she took him.

She ran back downstairs with the stuffed beaver under her arm and returned to the others. “Here’s the stuffed beaver you had on your desk all the time, Papa. I borrowed it for a while.”

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“You carry it Abbi. Can’t you see I’m carrying your trunk?” he replied with a smile.

Abbi was fine with that.

Abbi got on her hat and coat, and was ready to go. Matron Priscilla showed everyone out of the building. Spring was definitely in the air now. The snow was nearly melted. Buds were sprouting on the trees in front of the Orphan Home. Abbi could hear the shouting of children in the Orphan Home back yard. She would have wanted to run out back and tell everyone, but realized that it would take long time to explain everything. There would be plenty of time if she continued taking lessons here, to tell everyone her story.

“See you Monday, Abbi,” called Matron Priscilla again with a wave. “Don’t forget to prepare your schoolwork.”

Desmond and the company carriage were waiting. So was the household carriage Bradden had come in, driven by an apprentice coachman in the family’s employ named Chad.

“We now have two carriages here to use,” observed Abbi as they all came to the carriages standing just outside the gate. “Can I go with Papa in the one Papa came in?”

There were too many people to all be in one carriage and they had to split up anyway. It seemed suitable that Abbi ought to go with Bradden in the carriage he came in, the smaller one, because Abbi and her Papa had always been close and had some catching up to do, especially now that they both knew they were really father and daughter!

“Go ahead with Papa, Abbi,” said Jenine. “We are too many for one carriage, anyway, and I have my hands full with the children.”

“And I will help with the children,” said Grandmama Audora.

Abbi thus went in the smaller carriage with Bradden while the rest went in the larger carriage just as they had come.

The carriages set off for home. Soon the sound of horse hooves and clattering of wheels on the cobblestone roads. the carriages, swayed a little this way and that.

Abbi and Bradden were quiet now, a little exhausted by it all.

As the covered carriage with Abbi and Bradden

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clattered along the city streets, after some minutes, Abbi, leaning against her Papa's shoulder, and with Amik on the seat to her other side, looked up at him.

"Papa?"

"Yes Abbi?"

"I came up with a good Indian name for Ophelia Summer. You see she said she didn't have a real name. Everyone gave her dozens of names for her shows, and 'Ophelia Summer' is not real either. I suggested to her 'Woman-in-the-light'."

"It seems appropriate," nodded Bradden. "She is after all an actress and the limelight is being shone on her."

"When I told her, she replied that I now have to learn Ojibwa so I can determine how it is expressed in Ojibwa. She only remembers a little Ojibwa from when she was a girl."

"Well I guess then you'll have to learn Ojibwa. What better reason to learn Ojibwa than to be able to name your mother," he replied, with a twinkle in his eye.

They rode on. Bradden gazed out the window of the carriage. He was happy to finally have some relaxation. A year-long ordeal was finally over for him. The carriage gently swayed this way and that as the horse clip-clopped along. Needless to say Abbi too could not have been happier. In a little while she looked again up at her father.

"Papa?"

"Yes Abbi?"

"I'm amazed that your story about being saved by the large beaver is real and not made up. I imagined a story for Jane, the new girl in the bed next to me; but I couldn't possibly have ever imagined a story like yours."

"Well they *do* say *'truth is stranger than fiction.'*"

"Your story, with your grabbing the beaver's tail and being pulled into the lodge, also sounds very much like an Indian legend, like a Glooscap legend. May I write it out in verse form? Then children can enjoy it for years to come."

"Of course, if you want. I was half thinking about writing about it in verse myself, but I think maybe *you* should.

"Do you think I *can*?"

He looked down at her with an understanding smile. "Didn't Professor Longfellow say that he was impressed with your verse of the Glooscap legend about how the

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rabbit got long ears that you sent him?"

She smiled back. The carriage continued on its way back home. Everything was perfect now.



Epilogue:

A New Journey Begins

THE PACKAGE

Ophelia Summer didn't know yet that Abbi was now living with her family at Tall Pines and now only went to the Orphan Home during the day for schooling, so the large package from her intended for Abbi arrived at the Orphan Home.

Matron Priscilla received it from the postal delivery man. "What's this? A larger package for Abbi?"

Abbi had arrived at the Orphan Home in the morning and Superintendent Wellington was about to start the classes. Matron Priscilla sought out Abbi, who was getting to know the new orphan who was now sleeping in the bed she vacated. She took Abbi aside.

"A large package arrived here from Ophelia Summer, Abbi," said Matron Priscilla.

"It did!?! It must be my birthday present! Can I open it?"

"You have class now. It's quite large. Maybe it would be better to leave it until you go home this afternoon. Be patient. I will keep it safe for you in the cloak room. Also, some of the other girls who are not as fortunate as you will be unhappy to see you receiving wonderful things from Ophelia Summer."

"I understand," said Abbi. She did feel a little guilty in regards to her good fortune. Had Abbi not been such a friendly and sociable girl, some orphans there might feel envious that she was there for schooling, and not an orphan any longer.

She had to struggle to be patient. The morning of studies in history and arithmetic flew by, and at noon when she had finished eating with the others, she snuck to the cloakroom to study the package from the outside, trying to determine what it was from its size and shape and shaking. But she had to head back to attend the afternoon classes.

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The mystery of the package kept getting bigger and bigger, and she couldn't wait for Desmond's carriage, with Grandmama Audora inside, to come to pick her up and take her home, as was now the routine.

Finally around 4 pm, Grandmama Audora's carriage arrived at the front gate of the Orphan Home.

"What is this?" asked Grandmama Audora when Abbi climbed into the carriage with the package.

"I think it is my birthday present from Ophelia Summer. She said my birthday is March the 25th, which is tomorrow. I wonder what it is."

"Well wait until we get home. If you open it inside the carriage you'll only make a mess of paper in here."

And so the carriage made its way home to Tall Pines, turning in along the long driveway and stopping at the front door.

Abbi leapt from the carriage, package under her arm, and ran inside to find Jenine. Jenine was now allowed to make dinner for the children. The cook now only offered suggestions, acting more like a teacher than someone in control. Jenine appreciated learning more about cooking from him. At least she had something to do now!! Similarly she was allowed to clean and dress her two youngest now that the nursery-governess was gone.

Jenine was in the large mansion kitchen at this moment, with baby Mary sitting in a high chair nearby and little Jack (or Jacques) playing with a toy locomotive on the rug in the dining room adjacent to the kitchen. This was what Jenine was more used to. The older boys were now back finishing their school year at the boarding school. Braden was now away on a trip to speak to railway people in his seeking out new opportunities for work. Jenine told her he had gone to Ottawa.

"Mama! Mama!" exclaimed Abbi, running into the kitchen with the package. "Ophelia Summer has sent me a birthday present. It came to the Orphan Home because Ophelia has not yet learned I am now living at Tall Pines and coming and going for the school part of the Orphan Home. Come into the dining room, Mama, as I open it on the table. Grandmama Audora, come too!!"

Grandmama Audora joined them. "Careful not to scratch the dining room table," said Grandmama Audora, still a

little particular about children damaging things of value in her mansion.

“I will, Grandmama,” replied Abbi.

Abbi began to tear away the layers of brown paper. Finally she came to the contents. She lifted it up. It was a girls outfit of some kind. There was a letter too and she opened it to read it.

“Happy Birthday, Abbi

I have been anticipating our journey together in the coming summer to seek our Indian roots in the west among the Ojibwa, and thought that we both needed proper attire. In my time off from acting in ‘Stranger in a Winter Landscape’, I visited some stores in Boston, and discovered a very pretty outfit suited for women going on hikes or outdoor adventures. It consists of a very durable skirt made of quality linen and a rugged jacket with many pockets for putting things like a compass, and a wide brimmed hat to keep off the sun, which includes the option of adding mosquito netting to keep off mosquitoes. What I saw was a demonstration model, and I immediately ordered one custom-made for myself, and one for you, based on your size – allowing for you to grow a little. Now, I think we will be all set to conquer the Canadian wilderness!“

“I must try it on!” said Abbi, and ran off to put it on. Abbi changed and came back, feeling very proud. She did a turn to show it off – skirt, jacket, and broad-brimmed hat.

“It is the most wonderful outfit I have ever seen!” she exclaimed. “Look at all the pockets. There are pockets everywhere, even in the skirt! And look at how rugged it is. It cannot possibly tear even if hooked onto a branch.”

Jenine came to have a closer look at it. She had become an accomplished dressmaker herself from her years of making her children’s clothes with the sewing machine Bradden had given her for her birthday a couple years ago. She studied the stitching along the edges of the jacket. She was impressed by the quality of the material and the workmanship.

“The stitching is made with very strong thread,” she said. “Yes Abbi, whoever made this did a very good job. It is very rugged.”

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Abbi studied it to see everything that came with it. she located all the pockets and found one pocket with mosquito netting that affixed to the brim of the hat and that would hang down over the face. She attached it.

“We could even go into the worst mosquito-infested marsh, Mama! Look.” She remembered those times at the Loggermans when mosquitoes were quite intolerable.

Abbi looked for a mirror to study her outfit further. The full length mirror in the entry hall was perfect. She stood in front of it and admired herself. She imagined how Ophelia would look in an identical one, and how they would look together hiking along trails in central Ontario this coming summer.

There couldn't possibly have been a better birthday present! She couldn't wait for summer and going west with Ophelia Summer to search for their Indian roots.

*Some
Historical
Background
Information
for
Abbi of the
Wilderness*

The following is a documentation of information gathered by the author while researching the background. It isn't necessary to read it to appreciate the story, but it provides interest and insight

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About 'The Song of Hiawatha'

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's famous 1855 epic poem about the Indians of Lake Superior, *The Song of Hiawatha*, is a central feature of *Abbi of the Wilderness*, because in 1864-1876 this would have been where Abbi's sense of her Indian identity would have been found.

Generally *The Song of Hiawatha* has major historic significance too. We owe to it our wilderness tourism industry and our national, provincial and state parks, and of course the survival of Native Indian traditions in spite of Church and government agendas to get rid of them.

This very popular poem stirred the European colonial society, and made people want to be like the Indian. That promoted the development of sport camping, canoeing, and fishing which in turn promoted wilderness parks and wilderness tourism in North America. At the same time, anyone with 'Indian' blood could find an identity that was recognized by the world at large. The growing tourism industry found profit in an exploitation of the 'Indian' according to the romantic images developed by Longfellow. The 'Indian' now was valued as guides for sportsmen, and 'Indian crafts'. The design of the birch bark canoe was reproduced as well.

Today, *The Song of Hiawatha* is not so popular, because it lacks depth and modern relevance. Still *The Song of Hiawatha* is quite an amazing work which clearly Longfellow pursued with passion – it was his first major enterprise after retiring from being a professor of languages at Harvard University, and one can imagine that maybe his retirement was inspired by his having a great vision of such an enterprising work after reading Schoolcraft's books.

So it is valid to celebrate Longfellow's effort, even if it is no longer relevant. The work is an enormous one, rivaling the actual folk poetry epic it aspired to imitate – the Finnish *Kalevala*.

It consists of 22 chapters of similar nature entitled – *Introduction, 1-Peace Pipe 2-The Four Winds, 3-Hiawatha's Childhood, 4-Hiawatha and Mudjekeewis, 5-Hiawatha's Fasting, 6-Hiawatha's Friends, 7-Hiawatha's Sailing, 8-Hiawatha's Fishing, 9-Hiawatha and the Pearl-Feather, 10-Hiawatha's Wooing, 11-Hiawatha's Wedding-Feast, 12-The Son of the Evening Star, 13-Blessing the Cornfields, 14-Picture-Writing, 15-Hiawatha's Lamentation, 16-Pau-Puk-Keewis, 17-The Hunting of Pau-Puk-Keewis, 18-The Death of Kwasind, 19-The Ghosts, 20-The Famine, 21-The White Man's Foot, 22-Hiawatha's Departure.*

While our *Abbi of the Wilderness* tale has included some excerpts from it, the reader is invited to read the whole thing and then read modern works for more depth and realism. The Victorian era was in general an era of great romanticisation of history and in that respect *The Song of Hiawatha* falls into the same class of literature as contemporary celebration of Vikings, King Arthur and the Round Table, Shakespeare, Ancient Romans, Classical Greece, etc.

The Song of Hiawatha is in the public domain and you can easily find it by Googling 'The Song of Hiawatha' to download the full text to read. See later in this Background Information, for more about *The Song of Hiawatha*, Longfellow, Schoolcraft, etc.

The Age of Timber, Shipbuilding and Railways

In our desire to fit Abbi's story into a real historical context, we had to consider what kinds of industries were going on at the time.

In New Brunswick the two major industries were the timber industry and shipbuilding. By the mid 1800's wooden sailing ships were being replaced by steamships, and shipbuilding went into a slump. But there was no danger to the timber industry. Timber was needed everywhere, and for some time timber was still shipped overseas where forests were scarce – other than in Scandinavia. Our story includes a short discussion between Audora Woodrow and her son about the situation. The company she and her husband ran before he died, and which she now ran – Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company – always lies in the background of all events of the story as does Audora who is running it; thus it is valuable to learn more about the context in which that company would have existed, even if there aren't many direct references to its operations in the story.

Timber & Shipbuilding Industry in New Brunswick in the 1800's

Towards the mid 1800's, New Brunswick was a major exporter of timber to Europe, and hundreds of ships were being built along the New Brunswick coast to carry New Brunswick timber overseas.

Originally Britain obtained its wood from the Baltic. But in 1806 during the Napoleonic Wars, Bonaparte applied a lengthy blockade that cut off Britain from its traditional wood supply. Britain therefore turned to the American colonies, particularly New Brunswick, as a source of wood. The British government also imposed protective tariffs to encourage a steady flow of timber. That launched the North American forest industry.

New Brunswick was ready. Its river system gave access to the interior pine, spruce and hemlock; and soon sawmills turned out square-cut timber for domestic and overseas destinations. In the middle of the 1800's, forest products amounted to over 80% of the province's exports with Britain absorbing much of it.

Shipbuilding developed as well, partly from the need for ships to carry all that wood across. From around the 1870's railways gave further access to timber and the new steam engines added steam power to sawmills. Rails and steam engines meant that timber no longer required rivers and waterpower. The timber industry faltered as the century ended, but that is beyond the time-frame of *Abbi of the Wilderness*.

In our story, we envision Mr. Bradden Woodrow's grandfather having begun his company fetching timber in the New Brunswick wilderness for masts (when there were virgin forests with pine trees 200 ft tall!), then his son became involved in the shipbuilding boom of about the 1850's. But shipbuilding declined, so the company resumed exporting timber and branched into processing timber into finished lumber, architectural wood, etc. The fictional

company under his widow, Audora, we named Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company. (Such plainly descriptive names were common in those days – I made it intentionally elaborate for the humour of it.)

Before looking at the timber industry of New Brunswick, it is worth saying something about the shipbuilding era and how it came about. By the time of the story, that era had passed and it does not figure into our story, but it is interesting nonetheless.

Shipbuilding.

Originally New Brunswick had a poor reputation for shipbuilding. Britain did not see its ships as being very well made. Typically, in New Brunswick in the early 1800's, to construct a vessel, all parties who supplied materials – sail-maker, ship-chandler, block-maker and often even the laborers – took shares in the vessel, which was intended to be sold once finished, and then all parties would recoup their investment along with a profit. The idea was to make money for all partners from the sale of the finished ship. To make a profit, it was necessary to expedite the building and selling of the vessel and as a result often the quality suffered. As a result, in the early 1800's, New Brunswick-made ships were the object of much prejudice in Britain.

Nonetheless New Brunswick produced a number of reputable shipwrights in families such as Olive, Troop, and Wright. William and Richard Wright in 1854 built the *White Star*, which acquired the distinction of being “one of the finest and fastest ships built in British North America.” The *Marco Polo* was built by yet another reputable shipbuilding family, that of James Smith. In 1836 he was admitted freeman of Saint John, and built his first vessel, a little barque called *Ocean Queen*. Other ships followed, leading up to the *Marco Polo* in 1850. The *Marco Polo* was just another ship built for the timber trade. Captained to England by Captain William Thomas, when she put into dock in Liverpool, she was singled out by the owner of the Black Ball shipping line, who bought her for a run to Australia. The *Marco Polo* was refitted to carry passengers; and it set sail captained by James Nicol Forbes. Forbes promised to take the *Marco Polo* to Australia and back in six months. He in fact achieved a record round-trip, arriving back in Liverpool five months and 21 days after leaving. The *Marco Polo* was proclaimed “the fastest ship in the world.”

The reputation as “the fastest ship in the world” resulted in world wide attention towards the *Marco Polo*, and by association, to the New Brunswick shipbuilding industry. Orders for ships poured into shipyards along the New Brunswick coasts not just into Saint John, but also Miramichi, Richibucto, Cocagne, Sackville, St. Stephen and St. Martins. In terms of quantity, some 40 ships might be launched in a year during the 1850's. From then until the early 1870's Saint John became the fourth in the British Empire for the number of ships based there.

But the age of wooden sailing ships was dying. They were being replaced by steel ships powered by steam. By the middle of the next decade no more wooden ships were being launched and the era of wooden shipbuilding in New Brunswick was over.

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Timber.

With the decline of shipbuilding, a company like the one belonging to our fictional Woodrows, had to resume its focus on timber products, both rough wood to ship across the ocean and finished wood for the local markets. Being located at Saint John, and not next to the forests, it was useful for our fictional company to deal with finished wood ready for the local building construction. Thus we envisioned Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company receiving rough boards and, with steam powered milling shops, producing finished boards and moldings for the building industry in the growing urban areas.

The logging of forests, sending them to sawmills, and making lumber, was something that did not change greatly with history. Trees were cut in winter, and the logs skidded to water with horses. In spring, the logs were floated to rivers and down them with the spring floods. The logs were captured by sawmills downstream. For cutting the timber, men were hired and taken to the logging sites, and maintained in logging camps through the winter. The same men might be sawmill workers in summer.

Sawmills were originally located on nicely flowing rivers and water driven. With the arrival of steam power, sawmills no longer had to rely on river power, and therefore did not need to be beside rivers, but usually were if they received their logs by water. In our story we assume the fictional sawmill of Koski Logging and Sawmill Company is water-driven, having originated at an earlier time.

The sawmills then cut the logs into rough lumber, stacked and seasoned them, and shipped them to market. In early times the construction industry might receive such rough lumber, and carpenters using their own equipment, cut and lathed the wood to whatever was required. With the development of steam power came factories and mass production. That meant “millwork” could now be produced by steam powered machines in large quantities. We picture our fictional Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company as a company on the forefront of mass production of “millwork”. Rough boards were run through the company’s machinery into various sizes and shapes as required by architects and builders. We do not know if there really was such attention to factory-manufactured “millwork” at this time, but we make it so in our story, as the story’s Audora Woodrow, being a woman, likes the idea of designing profiles of architectural moldings.

In the interior, in the forests where the logging and sawmilling was taking place, the timber industry was dominated by men known as ‘timber barons’. The one who dominated New Brunswick at the time was the famous New Brunswick industrialist Alexander Gibson. After developing the mill on the Nashwaak River, some 5 miles from Fredericton, Gibson built 14 logging camps up the Nashwaak River, to serve as source of logs for his sawmill. As the sawmill grew, it had to expand, and to accommodate its workers, Gibson built houses for his workers.

We mention Gibson here, because although we do not mention him in our story, he would have been a powerful player that Madam Aurora Woodrow would have had to deal with – perhaps needing to purchase raw lumber from him from time to time. Small logging and

sawmill operators had difficulty *not* getting swept up into Gibson's operation; hence we have our Woodrow Timber Milling and Manufacturing Company maintaining connections with smaller independent logging and sawmill operators so as not to be dependent on the large scale operators like Gibson.

Note – Gibson had a wife named Mary, and renamed the site of his sawmill from Nashwaak Mills to Marysville. He later started a cotton textile mill for his wife to run – hiring plenty of women for its assembly-line operation. Although it happened about a decade later than the time-frame of our story, it does demonstrate that a woman running a large company (like our fictional Audora Woodrow) was in the realms of possibility.

Success in one industry promoted success in another. The timber industry promoted railway development, and the abovementioned timber baron Gibson knew this. He took a prominent role in railway development in New Brunswick.

Since our story's Bradden Woodrow was obsessed in pursuing a career in building railways, and since the railway is strongly featured in *Abbi of the Wilderness* in general (including lots of railway travel), it is worthwhile looking at railway building in greater detail. It was in this time period quite intense. One could even call it feverish!

1850–1876 “Railway Fever”

Our story takes place right in the middle of a great amount of railway building in North America. We chose the time period 1864–76 partly for that reason. Bradden Woodrow, who becomes Abbi's adoptive father, gets caught up in the 'Railway Fever'. We see him in the first chapter as a student subsidized by his wealthy family, able to go to Harvard, who first took a general arts degree, and then got inspired towards railway building and took a second degree in practical sciences needed for railway construction engineering. He chose railway construction engineering as his career, and thus our story is meshed with the railway fever of the day.

Here is a brief history: The phenomenon of railways was not born in North America, but Europe. Early railways in North America were a mix of practices and technology from Britain mixed with those of local origins. Initially railway development was spurred by private enterprise. It was pursued, as any business venture, with a view to producing a return on the investment and additionally a profit. But soon governments saw how important railways were to the economy and began to support and even promote their development. After railways intended for industrial and commercial purposes had come into being, they also served as convenient transportation for people, replacing the awkward stage coach. From that emerged a tourism industry. Telegraphy and postal service was stimulated too by it. The impact was broad.

In Canada, by the time of Confederation in 1867, the importance of railways was clearly understood politically. It was by now a technology proven in Britain and the U.S. in a role to serve and stimulate communication, transportation, industry and commerce. Railways carried resources out of the wilderness at low prices, increased both the speed and regularity of mail service, and stimulated passenger travel. Governments saw all this and

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supported railway development generously.

Thousands of km of railway line were built in British North America in 1850-1876. The Grand Trunk Railway and the Great Western Railway established major railway systems that linked communities in Canada to each other and to the United States. By 1859 the Grand Trunk Railway was over 1,528 km in length, running from Sarnia, Ontario, to Rivière-du-Loup, Quebec, and from Montreal to Portland, Maine. It was the longest railway system in the world. Many smaller railways, often with grandiose names like New Brunswick's "European & North American Railway", joined into these larger systems. The railway became a symbol of progress. The physical uniting of the colonies by rail also became an important component of Canadian Confederation. The British North America Act of 1867 contained a specific reference to the new central government's responsibility to physically connect Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, and Ontario with a single railway system. The resulting Intercolonial Railway system, achieved the stated objective in the ten years that followed.

Meanwhile private interests continued to pursue the creation of railways to access timber resources, often with governments as partners and providers of subsidies. For example New Brunswick railway development in that decade and later, primarily intended for its benefits to the timber industry, was assisted by the Lobster Act, which provided a \$10,000 subsidy for every mile of railroad track laid. Gibson, mentioned earlier, who headed the New Brunswick Railway, took full advantage of this money!

Gibson first entered the railway business as a partner in the Fredericton Railway Company, which connected Saint John and Fredericton in the mid 1860's. While the Saint John to Fredericton line was being built, a link was being built from Moncton to Amherst, and our fictional Bradden Woodrow works on this while living in our fictional 'Littleton'.

Back at Fredericton, Gibson's company - New Brunswick Railway - in the early 1870's, continued the railway development into New Brunswick's interior, first with rails from Fredericton to Woodstock and then from Woodstock to Edmundston. It is this line that our fictional Bradden Woodrow works on next, when his family lives in Fredericton.

Further railway development in New Brunswick, such as up the Nashwaak to Miramichi and finally connecting with the railways in Quebec, came a little later beyond the time-frame of our story.

Our fictional family starts out living in a small fictional town on the Moncton-Amherst line we call 'Littleton'. When the Moncton-Amherst line is done, Bradden and family have a legitimate reason for moving to Fredericton—He will now work on the New Brunswick Railway line between Woodstock and Edmundston. There were two bridges crossing the Saint John round about Grand Falls from which he could fall, for his accident.

In our story we assume the construction engineers have an office for the first job in Moncton, and then in Fredericton. Such smaller details may not be entirely true with respect to the real construction engineers of these projects, but our story, like fiction in general, deals with what was *possible* rather than what really happened - at least in terms of smaller details. Our story creates fictional people, places, and companies that *resemble*, but are not

identical to, historical realities.

Our story does not deal very much about the nature of railway building in those days, since the story is about Abbi's growing up, and the railway building is peripheral to the story – ie in the background. Nonetheless it is interesting to know how railways were built back then.

In those days most of the work had to be done by hand. Surveyors and designers would have planned out the route of the railway, and engineers developed and oversaw the designs of culverts and bridges; but most of the actual construction work was done by temporarily hired gangs of workers. Work was very labour-intensive. Unskilled labourers, who swung the pick-axes, were often hired at some distant location, drawn often from pools of immigrants who hungered for any kind of work, sometimes from as far away as New York. They were brought in, and housed in tent camps near the construction sites, and didn't return home until the end of summer.

A railway construction company would probably have their own small steam locomotive to be used for construction – to move men and materials to and from site. It was possible to lay down temporary tracks (without a proper foundation) for the construction vehicles, to access locations not yet reached by finished track. If there was no construction locomotive, wagons designed for running on rails, could be pulled by horses. There would have been plenty of horses at an early construction site. Horses would have been used for every purpose from pulling stumps, to hauling dirt, to bringing in railway ties and rails.

Our fictional Bradden Woodrow is pictured as starting out as junior construction engineer, perhaps starting with inspecting construction to make sure it was done according to plan. Later in Fredericton he has a higher position, heading a team of construction engineers. Our story assumed he supervised a roomful of designers bent over drawings, in an office in Fredericton. The actual complexities of the process, where people are stationed, what their roles are and so on, are not relevant to our story since our story is about Abbi. *Abbi of the Wilderness* is told from a girl's, Abbi's, perspective – what she is aware of and her experiences. All that she becomes aware of is that her 'Papa' supervises men in an office and then sometimes goes to construction sites to inspect the work.

The Real world Railway Construction Engineer

In real history, the civil engineering of both the Moncton-Amherst and New Brunswick Railway were supervised by a real individual named Henry George Clopper Ketchum. In our fictional world, Bradden Woodrow's superior, Henry Dalton, in a very general way resonates with him. My discovery of this real person, who in fact hailed from Fredericton was a surprising coincidence, so I looked up a biography. The biography gives us a glimpse of how the life of a man interested in railway construction engineering went. It helps us understand the world to which Bradden Woodrow belonged after he chose to pursue this line of work.

In 1862 the real person Ketchum was awarded the first diploma in civil engineering from the University of New Brunswick and while a student was employed by the European and North American

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Railway during the summers from 1856 to 1860, first as telegrapher, then as a surveyor and later, under chief engineer Alexander Luders Light, as assistant construction engineer. From 1860-65 he worked for a railway contractor on a project in Brazil and then returned to New Brunswick and became the resident engineer for Colonial Contracting Company, being charged with building the Eastern Extension of the European and North American Railway from Moncton to Amherst.

When the company went bankrupt, construction was taken over by Clark, Punchard and Company, and Ketchum was hired as sub-contractor, a position which he held until 1868. Then in 1869 he was named chief engineer of construction of the New Brunswick Railway from Fredericton to Edmundston. Later, Ketchum was also named engineer of a section of the Quebec and New Brunswick Railway, but this is beyond the time frame of Abbi's story.

In Abbi's story we avoid mentioning Ketchum, just as we do not mention Gibson, the timber baron who headed the New Brunswick Railway, since we are producing fiction, and taking liberties with details. Where was Ketchum's office based, for example? How was the work subdivided? Could it have been in or near Fredericton? Ketchum was born in Fredericton, therefore it stands to reason he would have wanted to be based there so he could go home after work. Logic suggests there had to be field offices too. But our story is not about the world our fictional Bradden works in, but about a girl named Abbi, and her predicaments, so we do not need to put the background details of Bradden Woodrow's employment circumstances under the microscope.

Fredericton in Our Story

Fredericton figures into our story only generally as background, as does Saint John. We do not make reference to anything specific in Fredericton, other than we acknowledge its famous Christ Church Cathedral, which the Woodrow family are depicted attending. The Cathedral cornerstone was laid in 1845 and any Protestant would have gone there in Abbi's time. Today it is considered one of the finest examples of decorated Gothic architecture in North America and was declared a National Historic Site in 1983. It would be impossible for our story to ignore.

In our story, the Woodrow family lives in a newly built detached house, can walk to downtown Fredericton. Archival photos show that there were shops with picture windows with catchy signage promoting purchases of sewing machines, pianos, and organs. It must have been a wonderful place to go shopping.

Fredericton, although much smaller than Saint John, was made New Brunswick's capital. It therefore had the distinction and allure of a capital. Urban ills were rare compared to Saint John. Indeed, the nearby booming timber industry had no lack of work for the able-bodied, and so the problems of unemployment and poverty were probably small in Fredericton compared to Saint John.

Era of Theatre, Books, & Magazines

It is commonly assumed that our modern mass media culture is a relatively recent development, perhaps starting with radio; but all the evidence shows that it began in the middle Victorian Age with the print media. The only difference between then and now is that back then it operated very slowly, whereas today it is nearly instantaneous. But the result – a mass media culture – was similar.

A New World of Magazines and a Print Mass Media.

Many major magazines still alive today began back in the mid 1800's, and our story actually makes reference to real issues, and their content. Our including actual texts and pictures from magazines from that time adds realism to Abbi's story and they give the reader a flavour of things at this period in time.

Magazines and newspapers represented the early mass media and were followed much like people today follow radio and television (and now internet). Books were published for popular consumption, and their authors became celebrities much like today CD's and DVD's are published and the singers and actors featuring them become celebrities. Other entertainment of the Victorian Age includes the theatre. Going to the theatre was comparable to going to a movie theatre today. One often saw in live action what one had read in books and it is still the same today, as many blockbuster movies are adapted from bestselling books—How little things have changed!

With newspapers and magazines came the beginning of advertising and mass marketing. Newspapers came to be filled with advertisements, with 'fancy' type and sometimes with images, selling the same kinds of consumer products as we find advertised today. It created mass markets, which promoted mass production.

Newspapers helped create celebrities. Newspaper reports or discussions about famous personalities in the world of science, politics, royalty, theatre, books, etc. were multiplied tens of thousands of times in newspapers and magazines, and that created a wide media consciousness about these personalities of the day. Although one newspaper might cater only to a few thousand, all newspapers (and magazines) became part of the same world of information gathering, taking cues from each other, and writing about the same things. Information about a newsworthy person or event would be multiplied through hundreds of newspapers.

The mention of these famous people in newspapers or magazines generated an interest in what these people looked like. That promoted illustrations. Photography existed but the means to reproduce photographs in printing was undeveloped. Photographs had to be converted by engravers onto printing plates, and when printed, tended to look like pen-and-ink drawings, thus losing the realism of the photograph. Publications – specialized books for example – not needing to be generated quickly in the thousands like newspapers did, could be more experimental – venturing into printing a page more than once to put colour on top of colour. Book

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publishing could also investigate lithography, or other printing innovations. Booksellers often had some very interesting and colourful books on their shelves. But mass printing of pictures was still via the etching on the plate— except for *Canadian Illustrated News*, which we discuss a little later.

If the numbers of images needed was not large, photographs could be mass-produced by photo laboratories to be used for promotional purposes, which we also discuss later.

Telegraphy and the Media.

Telegraphy was needed to manage the train traffic, and the railroad rights-of-way were ideal for telegraph lines, both from the point of view of installation and maintenance. Thus telegraph business for the public generally was likely to be found in the same places the railroads served. Since in small towns there was not enough telegraph business to support an office for telegraph alone, often the railway station also served as the public telegraph office. Even the smallest town could access telegraphy as long as it had a railway station!

From what I understand about telegraphy, there had to be people receiving and relaying messages – it was obviously not automated. If police subscribed to telegraphy, for example, they might have their own man at the location of the main line, and when important messages came in, relay it to the police department via their own local line – or send a courier – so there was no delay.

Mass media found telegraphy stimulating. Although it could not transmit much information at a time, it could at least transmit headlines over long distances instantly. Underwater cables eventually linked North America and Europe via the North Atlantic. International correspondents might send brief headline messages by telegraphy and then put lengthy written reports on the next ship crossing the Atlantic.

Postal System

Originally letters were sent by folding the letter and sealing it with wax. Sending a letter was originally something like couriers today. In the mid-1800's the envelope came into use. Then the railways made it easy to send mail anywhere the railways went. This promoted the development of a postal service system, in which mail destined to different areas was transferred to the appropriate trains. In a world with only telegraphy – by which only a sentence or two could be sent at great cost – the postal system became very important to both the general public and businesses. Wherever the railways went, there was both postal service and telegraphy. The impact of having a rail line reach your location was enormous.

Gas Lighting

Gas lighting had a strong impact on the world from about the 1850's. Where it was available it was much cheaper than kerosene (coal oil) or oil lighting and gave a brighter light. Because the coal gas had to be produced in gas works, and distributed with pipes under the streets, it was only economical in urban areas. Rural

areas still used kerosene, oil, or candle lighting. After the electric light was invented, gas lighting remained a strong competitor; but the piping of gas underground and in thin tubes in buildings, was more cumbersome than sending electricity through wires; and eventually electricity replaced all the gas lighting systems. But the conversion to electricity did not begin until the 1880's, beyond the time-frame of *Abbi of the Wilderness*. Thus, other than the electricity needed for telegraphy, our story does not have any electricity. We *do* mention gas, thought.

Celebrities of Victorian Era

Today we assume that celebrities came into our culture only since the arrival of movies, but that is not true. Celebrities were already generated by the printed mass media of the 1800's. Reporters sought out gossip and news, and when their writing was printed, what they wrote and any accompanying illustrations were multiplied thousands of times, seen by thousands of people at a time, thereby generating popular culture and celebrities.

The larger the periodical, the larger its quantity and distribution, the more it produced a far reaching popular culture related to the facet of art and entertainment its editorial content covered. Similarly, commercially purchased advertisements placed in publications promoted an interest in particular products over a vast market. Those products could be entertainments and in that case advertisements too helped turn the feature performers or authors into celebrities.

Thus even before movies and actor celebrities like Sir Laurence Olivier, Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, etc, etc. there were celebrities of theatre, dance, song, etc. already in the 1800's. The most popular ones in the States were those who were featured in popular traveling shows, like Buffalo Bill, Annie Oakley, etc. Echoes of their past fame are still heard today. Popular authors who went on lecture tours too became celebrities. There were American celebrities like Mark Twain. As mentioned earlier, some believe Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was the first *international* American celebrity. His celebrity was generated by the publication of his poetry, discussion in the print media all over the world, and his subsequent touring and lecturing.

The personalities in more classical forms of art would have been less widely known, but still have been celebrities within their sphere. A theatrical star for example could tour around the country in a theatrical group, advertisements proclaim their talents, and then newspapers comment on their performance. As a result, the public would develop an awareness of a particular theatrical personality in all the cities where he or she appeared and was promoted and discussed. The only difference between then and now is that back then, with only print media, it operated much slower. Today with radio and television, it is instantaneous. In our story we present 'Ophelia Summer' as a celebrity in the world of theatre. Her celebrity, like that of others of the day, was based on touring and coverage in newspapers. The more places that a play, lecture, or other form of performance was taken, the more widely the show and its feature performer became known.

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Photographically made cards for promotion

By the time of our story, photography had been around a while. Photography began with the “Daguerreotype” created by Louis Daguerre, in 1839. By the time of our story, the photograph was well established—although, the relative quantities of old photos in archives suggest it really came into its own after about 1880. At the time of our story, press-printing was not yet able to reproduce photographs, other than etchers transforming a photographic image by hand into an etched plate, that reproduced the image in a fashion that resembled an ink drawing. For example the image of Longfellow in his study given in our story probably originated as a photo. Etching artists simply copied the photo trying to match it as best they could.



When it was desirable to preserve the realism of the photograph, photographic studios made large quantities of photo prints. These would be used in a promotional fashion, such as postcards promoting tourism – such as to Niagara Falls. They were precious because they were actual photographs and had all the fine graduations in tone. There was no colour photography yet; however sometimes photographs were hand-coloured. Hand colouring however did not permit mass-production of the color versions.

Some photographic studios became like factories, as they turned out such photo cards in quantity. In addition to their use as tourism promotion they could also be used to promote celebrities. Some New York studios produced large quantities of publicity photo cards for various celebrities. An imagined version of such a photographic card is the one in our story that Matron Priscilla gave to Abbi showing ‘Ophelia Summer’ (see the adjacent image). While early publicity cards tended to show more of the whole person, later ones showed close-ups. Such cards typically gave the name of the photography studio and address at the bottom, plus the name of the personality shown under the photo. Large numbers of them were made in New York in the 1880’s and copies survive today in archival collections. In our story, we assume that “Ophelia Summer” had some made in 1874 or so.

The World Famous Publication “*Canadian Illustrated News*”

During the time of our story, there was a boom in the creation of periodicals. There were plenty of magazines, including the beginnings of major American publications that endure yet today (such as *Scientific American*). However at that time most illustrations in these magazines were black and white etchings. Images made by photography or art, were copied into etchings on metal printing plates by etching artists and included with type on printing presses. The resulting pictures in the magazines resembled ink drawings with plenty of hatching. There was one exception –

Canadian Illustrated News. It printed pictures with proper smooth halftones. Sometimes photographs were reproduced, but most often it used works by its own artists. Its illustrations are valuable today because they appeared at a time when photographs were still uncommon—we do not find a great number of photos from before about the 1880's. Moreover illustrations made by its artists portray the times sometimes in ways not possible even in photography. The artist adds information and clarity that the photograph may lack since photography is slaved to what actually appears before the camera. It cannot add information, cannot simplify, cannot interpret.

In this story about Abbi, we indulge in illustrations taken from **Canadian Illustrated News**, which are in the public domain. Acknowledgement is given to the National Library of Canada (NLC) that maintains copies of the publication in its archives. The **Canadian Illustrated News** illustrations reflect the time of our story, and we offer them here to help the reader picture aspects of the life in those times. The Canadian institution of the winter skating carnival, for example, covered often in this magazine, was something we don't generally hear about today.

Featured in our story is the pretty illustration on the cover of the April 1 1871 issue, reproduced in Part One . Abbi sees it when her Papa brings the magazine home, and she is enthralled by the picture. This cover is an inspiration for later Abbi being in a skating carnival like the one depicted. More detail about such mid-winter skating carnivals in Canada is given later in these background notes.

Theatrical Productions in the Victorian Era

The custom of going to theatres and being entertained by people on a stage, performing in one form or other, is very old, and so the institution of actors and plays is pretty much a given. What was new was mass promotion. The mass media culture allowed producers to advertise plays in newspapers, and later see write-ups by reporters about them. Advertisers could exaggerate the importance of a particular star of their production and foster public adulation of him or her, as it helped bring in the audiences. If a play was taken from town to town it left its imprint everywhere, and in the long run it developed – to one degree or another – widely recognized celebrities. In our story we present actress 'Ophelia Summer' as a celebrity of the theatre.

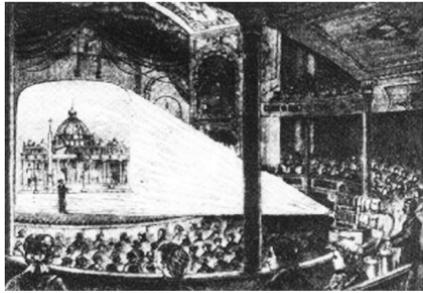
Chapter 1 begins with a theatrical production of Longfellow's play **The Song of Hiawatha**. We know that theatrical performances of his famous verse, even a musical, appeared decades later in history, but here we assume that some producer made a theatrical production of a straight recital in the mid 1860's, and used a 'magic lantern' to produce background images. The magic lantern is something I found personally very interesting, as I had never heard of it before, in spite of it having had a long history and once having been very common and being the precursor to the slide projector.

The magic lantern was invented already in the 1650s, as soon as the magic of the glass lens was known, and became a showman's instrument. Basically images painted on glass were projected onto a wall or canvas with the aid of a lens and a source of light – even a candle. By the end of the 19th century they were in homes, churches, lodges, schools, halls and theatres, and a regular part of

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public entertainment. They were found in all sizes and shapes, from toy lanterns for children, to huge brass-and-mahogany, double-lens machines lit with the intensely bright light of “limelight” for large theatres and halls.

“Limelight” was achieved when oxygen and hydrogen were squirted on a piece of limestone which turned incandescent once the gases were lit. It produced a light as powerful as that in a modern movie projector. The lantern lit with such a bright light projected hand-colored slides on a full-sized screen. The slides used were changed every 30 seconds or so and often illustrated stories or songs. Sometimes a live showman provided a soundtrack, and it was real theater for the audience in attendance.



The illustration above from a contemporary publication depicts the most developed form the magic lantern reached, using a double-lens lantern lit with limelight and projecting photographs.

After photography existed, slides no longer needed to be created by hand on glass. Photographic pictures could be taken from nature and made into slides – transparent photographs on glass. With limelight, and the new projectors, the images could be thrown onto a large canvas of about 600 square feet (say 20 feet by 30 feet!) Travelogues of exotic places around the world were very popular.

Thus it is certainly feasible that in about 1864, some innovative production company could have employed a magic lantern in a theatrical recital of *The Song of Hiawatha*, illuminated at least by a strong gas light if not limelight. It would have been utterly amazing for people of the day. But whether anyone did anything like this or not, I don't know. Historical fiction is about what *could* have happened, not what really did.

Harvard University and Hasty Pudding Theatricals

Our story needs Bradden Woodrow to have a great interest in the arts, even as he pursues the hard sciences with the goal of working in railway construction.

Although having switched his education to a second degree in practical science, we have him maintaining his interest in the arts through an extracurricular activity writing theatricals. I did not originally intend any reference to the Harvard *Hasty Pudding* theatricals when I first began. I only wanted some connection to Longfellow, but was led to it when researching Longfellow—who was a professor at Harvard. The purpose of having our character Bradden Woodrow be involved with writing for the *Hasty Pudding* theatricals, is to give him a light theatrical background as a precedent for his later staging *Aggodagauda and his Daughter* and later acting in an amateur production of *Hamlet*. But there is an even more important reason too, as you will know if you have finished reading *Abbi of the Wilderness*.

The *Hasty Pudding* Club began as a small secret society of students in 1795, where members agreed to take turns to supply a

pot of hasty pudding (a kind of pudding made with cornmeal) for the meetings. In its early years it specialized in staging mock trials on issues, but in 1844 when senior Lemuel Hayward learned that he would be hosting the club's next meeting of the club, instead of a mock trial, he transformed his room into a primitive theater and staged a production of a popular farce. This was the first of the shows the *Hasty Pudding Club* has been famous for ever since. Over the years they became more elaborate and students enlisted graduates and Boston theater professionals to help them create costumes and design sets. The first productions used existing scripts, but by the 1860s, the shows were all written by Harvard students.

In Chapter 1 of our story, Bradden and another student are attending a (fictional) stage production of *The Song of Hiawatha* in early 1864. They had been assigned to write a farce or parody related to the popularity of *The Song of Hiawatha*. One of the purposes of this scene is to stage an encounter with Longfellow, who has decided to attend the visiting production of his poem, at least out of curiosity.

To complete the history of the *Hasty Pudding* Theatricals, beyond the time-frame of our story – their reputation grew, the university approved of them, they got their own barn-like building, and 1882 saw the first musical, a spoof of Virgil's *Aeneid*, which went on tour. Flushed with profits, they acquired their own theater and have kept at it ever since. See the Harvard website for more information.

Theatres in Saint John Area

In our story we propose that there is a Royal Richdale Theatre in Richdale, where Richdale is a fictional wealthy suburb of Saint John. What does history tell us about theatres in Saint John? Apparently there was a boom in theatre in 1856. The Star Company set up theatre in the Saint John Hotel, then there was the Saint John Dramatic Lyceum on King Street. Then there was the very popular Royal Provincial Theatre that opened on Prince William Street on May 11, 1856.

Abbi's encounter with our fictional Royal Richdale Theatre is dated 1876, when the theatre tradition in the Saint John area was two decades old. A fictional Royal Richdale Theatre would have been quite realistic, drawing audiences also from Saint John. Furthermore, our fictional 'Ophelia Summer' could easily have been in the area earlier even more than once, and from that risen to celebrity status in the area.

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Orphan Homes in the Mid1800's

Since Abbi experienced a fictional orphan home in our fictional area of Richdale, near Saint John, we needed, for our story, to research the nature of an orphan home of that time.

Originally orphanages were divisions of poorhouses, or workhouses, designed to provide food and shelter for the unfortunate; but they required those housed there, the inmates, do some kind of prescribed work to earn their basic keep. (Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* depicted such a place). However by the mid 1800's it was recognized that children should be separated from the adult aged, crippled, etc and provided with a proper homelike environment accompanied by proper education.

The original providers of refuge and assistance for the unfortunate were the churches—primarily the Catholic Church. However, in the 1800's Protestant churches became involved as well. There were 'Protestant Orphan Homes' in larger cities like Saint John and Halifax .



The Children's Home [Hamilton]

Canadian Illustrated News, Jan 23, 1875, vol.XI, no.4, 60 (NLC - 1751)

The wealthy families of cities, who in English Canada were most often of Protestant persuasion, became involved with such idealistic orphan homes, with prominent individuals of the community often being on the boards of directors . Such Protestant homes depended on the charity of the region's businesses and wealthy, as well as income from special fund-raising events like picnics, organized by the home. The orphan home in our story, is pictured as such. It

depended on the charity of the 'Richdale' region's businesses and wealthy. The orphan home could be pictured as a 'Protestant' orphan home, but I remove all religion from it by assuming it is created as a charity by wealthy women of Richdale, who had formed a 'Richdale Women's' Charitable Society'. Orphan homes created by charity by the wealthy, as opposed to being initiated by a church denomination, were not unknown elsewhere, like New York.

Archives provide illustrations of some of the orphan homes of the day. There was a Protestant Orphan Home in Halifax with about 40 residents, built into a donated old house. There was also one near Saint John; but that one, judging from a photo, seems to have been large and more institutional. Too big to be a model for the one in our story.

The illustration opposite depicts a 'Children's Home' in Hamilton, Ontario, as presented in *Canadian Illustrated News* in January 1875, which coincides with the date of this story. It is a good example of the ideal kind of orphanage — a homelike environment and all the facilities, including horse, wagon, etc at back.

From the illustration, it looks like a rather pleasant place. We therefore took liberties in making the orphan home to which Abbi went, something like this, but small like the Halifax one.

Orphan homes in those days could be established in any donated large house and managed in many different ways, as there was no formula to follow at that time. Such a home would have the support of the area's community and its businesses and be properly organized with a board of directors, proper accounting, and annual reports.

Obviously the ultimate model for such 'orphan homes' was the normal home, except with a great number more children. Thus there are many ways of imagining the appearance of an orphan home, both inside and out, and the manner it operated. The way the fictional Richdale Orphan Home is described in our story is purely imagined using common sense about the challenges presented in operating one and the nature of its sponsors and circumstances.

Another important consideration about orphan homes is that since they aspired to educate the orphans, they had educational programs. In some instances here and there in North America, if they were good programs, they attracted regular day students from the surrounding community whose parents provided tuition.

As already mentioned, orphan homes had to do everything they could to raise money. Fundraising events were common. There was no set formula. Each orphan home did what they could in their own fashion.

Canadian Midwinter Skating Carnivals

Our fictional Richdale is seen as a special community of wealthy with rich tastes and a great desire to do good things and show charity. Every city had such wealthy districts, and perhaps Saint John did too. (Toronto had/has 'Rosedale') However our novel's Richdale is completely fictional and any resemblance to any real district near Saint John is pure coincidence.

Our story sought a nice self-contained place, 15 minutes by carriage outside of Saint John. The name 'Richdale' is quite generic.

Among the wealthy in such a community, what better way to demonstrate their charity and be involved with a good cause, than run their own orphanage, and to hold special charity events to help support it!

It so happens that our fictional Richdale had assumed the practice of putting on a midwinter skating carnival as their major charity event in support of their Orphan Home.

The custom in the late 1800's in Canada, of having midwinter skating carnivals is quite unique. The *Canadian Illustrated News*, published in Montreal, naturally focused attention on events at the Victoria skating rink there. Illustrations of skating carnivals at the Victoria Skating Rink appeared in issues for Feb 8, 1873; Feb 3, 1877; March 1, 1879. But, the issue for March 15, 1873 showed an illustration for a skating event at Saint John, New Brunswick, thus making our idea of such an event at fictional Richdale outside of Saint John a realistic one. We reproduce the illustration of the Saint John event in chapter 22, as Abbi browses some copies of *Canadian Illustrated News*.

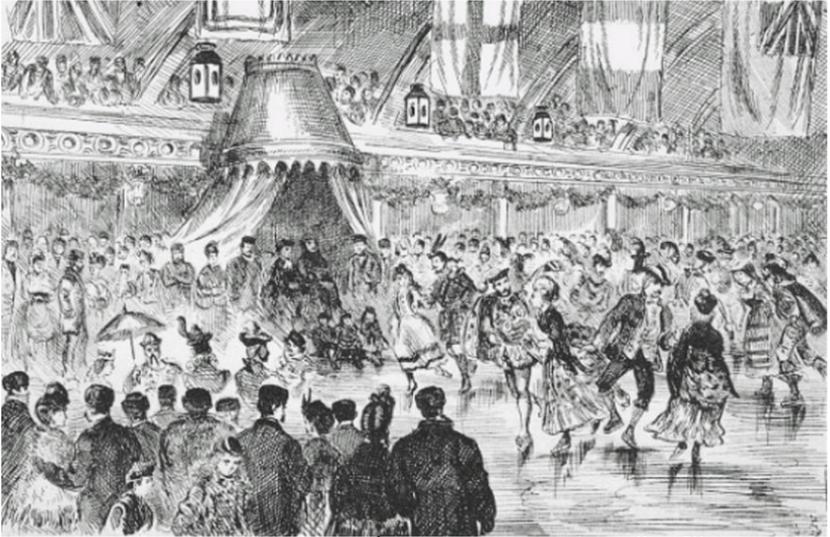
But, as we said, most of the illustrations in that magazine were of events at the Victoria Rink in Montreal. I add another illustration (next page), to the ones in the chapters, as it is quite illuminating as to the nature of such an event.

Here is some text from the magazine describing the event in the picture: *On Tuesday week a large crowd assembled at the Victoria Skating Rink, in this city, to witness the tournament for the prizes presented. The programme contained a variety of figures, many of them exceedingly complicated, which were executed with much grace by the competitors. Of these there were four sets, viz:- ladies, little girls, boys, and gentlemen The ladies prize was a beautiful locket set with turquoises and diamonds, which was won on a tie by two of the fair competitors. In awarding the prize, His Excellency announced his intention of duplicating it, so that each lady would have one. The girls' prize was a pendant with a centre of turquoises, presented by Lady Dufferin. The boy's prize, also given by her ladyship, was a gold medal; but as this was not ready, Lord Dufferin presented the successful candidate with a fine-gold breast-pin as an earnest of the recompense.*

The text relating to the illustration explained the presence of the Governor General and the Countess of Dufferin, and their handing out the prizes. It shows that it was realistic to have a special guest

Midwinter Skating Carnivals

at such an affair and it was the inspiration for having a celebrity guest – ‘Ophelia Summer’ – at the fictional Richdale Winter Carnival.



Skating Carnival, Montreal's Victoria Rink, Canadian Illustrated News, Feb 8, 1873; Vol. VII, no. 96, 92; artist E Jump (NLC -3108).

The unique thing about such “skating carnivals” – which were like traditional costume balls, but carried out on ice – is that in those days before refrigeration they could only be held in cold countries like Canada where ice would form naturally in an unheated facility. In its time it was as Canadian as hockey is today. Such skating carnivals can also be seen as precedents to modern figure skating performance displays, which still involve skaters being dressed in costumes.

The event experienced by Abbi was not as large or extravagant as the one described above. The Victoria Rink in Montreal was especially large. We imagine the fictional Richdale affair to have been a smaller one, in a rink of half the size.

Some more text that reveals the character of such skating events comes from the Feb 3, 1877 edition of *Canadian Illustrated News* talking about the event at the same Victoria Rink at that time.

We present our readers, on another page, with a sketch of the first Fancy Dress Entertainment of the season, which took place at the Victoria Rink, of this city, in the course of last week. The picture will prove a pleasant reminder to those who were present, either as participants in the festival, or as simple spectators, while to outsiders it will afford some idea of the beauty and magnificence of this species of amusement. Indeed, it may be said that these recreations on the ice are singular of their kind, being almost unknown except in Canada and Russia. Nowhere else does the climate, with all its peculiar accessories, adapt itself to such a form of agreeable and healthful recreation.

If, however, we call attention to the subject to-day, it is not so much to describe its attractions, as to throw out some hints whereby these attractions may be greatly enhanced. We did

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something of the kind a couple of years ago and we had had no reason to change our mind since.

In the first place, we think that steps should be taken to relieve the partial monotony of the scene. However brilliant the costumes and skillful the skating, it is nearly always the same round and round which fatigues the eyes and enfeebles the aesthetic feeling. Nothing is easier than to introduce variety into the performances, and variety is the chief ingredient of artistic enjoyment. A programme might be drawn up somewhat in this wise. First—A grand turn out of all the masqueraders pell-mell, to give a general view of all the costumes. This might last twenty minutes or half an hour. Secondly—A walk round in couples or threes so as to give an opportunity to inspect the costumes minutely. For this purpose every spectator should be furnished with a printed programme indicating the costumes, with or without the names of the wearers. Third—A straight race or game of some sort, first for gentlemen, next for ladies. Fourthly—A grand promenade of combined costumes; for instance, King with Queen, Night with Morning, Winter with Summer, Faust with Marguerite, the Corsair with Medora, Punch with Judy, and so on. This would be drawing harmony out of confusion and presenting a most agreeable spectacle. Fifthly—A grand waltz or quadrille than which nothing is more beautiful on the ice. Sixthly—A general pantomime, all the maskers acting their parts with their legitimate partners. We merely indicate the programme, Other and better elements might be introduced by the Directors.

A word about the costumes. The inexorable rule is that they must be in keeping. If historical, they must be true to history; if ideal, they must be poetic; if simply fantastic, they must be cleverly pointed. A programme of these should be drawn up by the Committee. The choice should not be left to individual tastes. Otherwise, there will be a mixture, as is always the case, with too much of one thing, and not enough of the other. Another remark is that the costumes should not be too common and cheap. Spangles of paper, pasteboard adornments, calicoes and flimsy muslins should be the exception not the rule. In Europe, such deception would not be tolerated. A distinction should also be made between a Fancy Dress Entertainment and a Masquerade. A mingling of the two, as is done with us, is against all traditions. One or the other. Never both together. A Fancy Dress Entertainment is more stately, more aristocratic and very beautiful. A Masquerade is jollier, more democratic, and very pretty. One Carnival of each might be given in the same winter, but the exclusion of masks and (?) of the former should be rigorous.

Finally, the comfort of the spectators should be attended to. Some mode of seating them ought to be provided. Walking around the narrow passage from eight to eleven o'clock, is no way of enjoying the festival. The men have a hard time of it; the women are squeezed out of breath and almost out of their dresses. The Directors and the Committee of the Victoria Rink have always displayed much zeal and taste in the management of the ice entertainments, and to them we confidently commend the preceding suggestions as, in our judgment, the best way of increasing their access and general enjoyment.

The Song of Hiawatha in the Context of the 'Indian' in the Mid 1800's

Abbi's tales are situated around the period 1864-1878, on the eastern seaboard in New Brunswick and partly towards the south in Maine and Massachusetts, revolves a great deal around the famous Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, his poem, *The Song of Hiawatha*, the public attention towards it, and the romanticization of the traditional Indian that the poem fostered.

The beginning novel *Abbi of the Wilderness* devotes much attention to Longfellow and his epic poem, Still, Abbi is an Indian girl and she faces attitudes in the regular colonial society about Indians.

Generally speaking in North America, colonial interest in the 'Indian' was generally growing in the early 1800's owing to media attention to conflicts between Indians and settlers in the "wild west", which gave rise to cowboy-and-Indian entertainments like the Wild West Shows which included 'real Indians' in stereotypical costumes performing stereotypical feats like throwing tomahawks. But there was also a more scholarly (i.e. anthropological) interest: notably Henry Schoolcraft. He wrote about 'Indians' from his experiences in the interior around Lake Superior and Lake Michigan. His writings about these experience culminated in the *Algic Researches* (2 vols., 1839)

The growing serious interest in the 'Indian' even inspired educated 'Indians' to come forward to talk about the culture. One of these was George Copway (1818-1869) from Rice Lake who even proposed the notion of an Indian run European-style nation in the interior. His books and lectures were popular for being from a 'genuine Indian'.

Longfellow's poem, *The Song of Hiawatha*, appearing in 1855, was a response to a growing public interest in the North American aboriginal. It took the subject to the general public like never before. After the *The Song of Hiawatha* shot to the stratosphere in popularity, Henry Schoolcraft published *The Myth of Hiawatha and other Oral Legends, etc* the following year (1856), that brought together into a single volume the legends he had presented earlier in his out-of-print *Algic Researches*, and that Longfellow had used as the main source for the stories in his epic poem. In the Introduction Schoolcraft spoke about how before *The Song of Hiawatha* he had had difficulty getting publishers anywhere in the world interested in publishing a book about 'Indian' lore, and that he was indebted for Longfellow's popular treatment turning things around. In his introduction he wrote the following:

...when in 1839, the author (Schoolcraft himself) submitted a veritable collection of legends and myths from the Indian wigwams, which reflected the Indian life as it is, it was difficult, if not impossible, to incite interest in the theme, in the trade. He went to England and the continent, in the hopes of better success. But,

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although philanthropists and men of letters and science appreciated the subject, as historical elements in the history of the human mind, the booksellers of London, Paris, Leipsic, and Frankfort-on-the-Main, to whose notice the subject was brought, exhibited very nearly the same nonchalant tone; and had it not been for the attractive poetic form in which one of our most popular and successful bards (Longfellow) has clothed some of these wild myths, the period of their reproduction is likely to have been still further postponed. (p xxi)

This is a strong testimonial to the impact of *The Song of Hiawatha* on the world public in painting a positive image of the North American 'Indian' that was somewhat more realistic than previous stereotypes. It brought attention and validity to their culture that helped preserve it against the colonial pressures to assimilate it.

Since Abbi drew a great deal of information and identity from *The Song of Hiawatha* and its source legends from Henry Schoolcraft, and there are references to them in *Abbi at the Winter Carnival*, let us review what the colonial society knew and thought of Indians around this time.

Sources for *The Song of Hiawatha*

Today, *The Song of Hiawatha* is a little peculiar. While it somewhat represents Ojibwa culture in that Longfellow used actual Ojibwa stories and cultural practices such as described by Schoolcraft, its final form is a product for English-speaking culture. So it is caught between two cultural worlds, belonging neither in one nor the other. But looking at it in a positive way, it also means Ojibwa culture CAN take ownership of the genuine Ojibwa myths and practices incorporated into the poem, (although they exist in purer form in Schoolcraft's works – thanks to Schoolcraft's wife Jane, who was Ojibwa on her mother's side.) At the same time, the English-speaking world can take ownership of the poem itself, insofar as it was created for English literary culture.

Longfellow acknowledged using Schoolcraft as his source for the myths and legends. His borrowing can easily be seen if one reads Schoolcraft's *The Myth of Hiawatha and other Oral Legends, mythological and allegoric, of the North American Indians*, (Henry R. Schoolcraft, LL.D. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co.; London, Trübner & Co. 1856) One can find many of its episodes represented in *The Song of Hiawatha*. Longfellow, it is clear, took those stories and situated his Hiawatha and other characters in them, adapting the stories to suit. But then one also discovers that the original Schoolcraft stories make no mention of a 'Hiawatha.' Where the Ojibwa legends have a recurring character, it is *Manabozho* (or *Nanabozho*), who is not particularly a heroic man, or sometimes not even a man. He is a mischief-maker often presented in rabbit form like the modern cartoon character Bugs Bunny. And even then, Schoolcraft presents very little about *Manabozho* in his compilations of myths and legends. Most are stories quite separate from one another, with a wide variety of non-recurring characters. The original stories are quite independent of one another, and only share the same world of nature and spirits.

Where, then, did the name 'Hiawatha' come from? Historic

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writings – which Longfellow must have read – suggest that there was a real person by the 'Hiawatha' name who was responsible for bringing together the Iroquois nations who had been in traditional conflict with one another, to unite and stand up against the European colonists. It is possible Longfellow was not aware that the difference between Ojibwa and Iroquois culture was enormous – the Ojibwa were from a hunting–fishing nomadic way of life, and the Iroquois were farmers who lived in permanent settlements. Their languages too were from vastly different language families.

Thus, Longfellow, taking legends from the Ojibwa, who did not have any 'Hiawatha' or even any heroic historic recurring character in their stories, produced an invention in 'Hiawatha', that did not fit reality, even though it produced a romantic heroic figure that appealed to the English–speaking public. For that reason the Ojibwa, or Natives in general, have never identified with 'Hiawatha' or quite trusted the poem. It seems to me that if Longfellow had not used the word 'Hiawatha' but had used 'Manabozho' (alt. 'Nanabozho'), things would be quite different. Native people would have accepted the stories in the poem, and identified with the narrative if not the poetic form. But Longfellow needed a quasi–historic real man, not a mythological mischief–maker, and so found him in Iroquoian history.

Besides drawing from Schoolcraft's documentation of real Ojibwa stories, and historical reference to a historic 'Hiawatha' among the Iroquoian peoples, Longfellow was no doubt influenced by the accounts given by a real Ojibwa named George Copway (1818–1869), who lectured a great deal and moved in circles which included Longfellow. While Longfellow got stories from Schoolcraft, and a historic figure from Iroquois history, he no doubt got the spirituality for his poem from his contact with Copway.

For some readers who do not already know a little about how the Indian saw Nature being filled with spirits, we have to fill you in a little. In general the Indian perception of Nature is a natural one. The view of a living environment, all animated with spirits, is one found in all aboriginal peoples living in Nature. It is civilization, in separating from Nature, that has lost this sense of the environment being a community of livingness to which we belong. Today we view the environment mechanistically, as mechanical 'systems' like the 'ecosystem', and not as communities of livingness.

From an 'Indian' point of view, Nature was filled with spirits, or *manito's*. While Schoolcraft described it in his accounts of the Ojibwa/Chippewa myths, Schoolcraft, we note, was writing as an observer. He himself never belonged to the culture that saw the environment in this way. His view of it would have been somewhat scholarly and detached. However, George Copway, had been raised in a traditional way and could speak about it from personal experience. The following text excerpts from Chapter 1 of *The Life, History, and Travels of Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh [George Copway], a Young Indian Chief of the Ojibwe Nation*, London, 1847. Note how much the tone is mirrored in many passages in *The Song of Hiawatha*.

You will see that I served the . . . gods of my. . . father, I was out early and late in quest of the favors of the Mon-e-dooos (spirits.) who, it was said, were numerous—who filled the air! At early dawn I watched the rising of the palace of the Great Spirit – the sun – who, it was said, made the world!

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Early as I can recollect, I was taught that it was the gift of the many spirits to be a good hunter and warrior; and much of my time I devoted in search of their favors. On the mountain top, or along the valley, or the water brook, I searched for some kind intimation from the spirits who made their residence in the noise of the waterfalls.

I dreaded to hear the voice of the angry spirit in the gathering clouds. I looked with anxiety to catch a glimpse of the wings of the Great Spirit, who shrouded himself in rolling white and dark clouds—who, with his wings, fanned the earth, and laid low the tall pines and hemlock to his course – who rode in whirlwinds and tornadoes, and plucked the trees from their woven roots – who chased other gods from his course – who drove the Bad Spirit from the surface of the earth, down to the dark caverns of the deep. Yet he was a kind spirit. My father taught me to call that spirit Ke-sha-mon-e-doo – Benevolent spirit – [note: Ke-sha-mon-e-doo sounds like it is the same as Gitche Manito, which means ‘Great Spirit’. Is it possible with Christian sensitivity, he or his editors sought to avoid referring to ‘Great Spirit’?] or his ancestors taught him no other name to give to that spirit who made the earth, with all its variety and smiling beauty. His benevolence I saw in the running of the streams, for the animals to quench their thirst and the fishes to live; the fruit of the earth teemed wherever I looked. Every thing I saw smilingly said Ke-sha-mon-e-doo nin-ge-oo-she-ig – the Benevolent [i.e. ‘Great’ ?] spirit made me.

In 1847 it was not good to go all out in celebrating the Ojibwa spirituality. To the European there could be no competitor to the Christian God. The next paragraph after the one quoted, demonstrates how Copway was compelled to negate his warm celebration of his original culture, and proclaim he had now chosen Christianity. Perhaps it was edited to be this way, on instructions from publisher, or editor, or missionary. *Where is he? My father pointed to the sun. What is his will concerning me, and the rest of the Indian race? This was a question that I found no one could answer, until a beam from heaven shone on my pathway, which was very dark, when first I saw that there was a true heaven – not in the far-setting sun, where the Indian anticipated a rest, a home for his spirit – but in the bosom of the Highest.*

He added such comments frequently in his book, and that undermined the appeal of his descriptions of the Ojibwa spirituality and made him seem a bit schizophrenic or in inner conflict.

Today we would not see much difference between the sun and the ‘beam from heaven’, or between a destiny in the bosom of the sun, and the ‘bosom of the Highest’. Enduring religions and spirituality in humanity are not so far apart in terms of basic concepts. In our story Abbi expresses this point of view.

The next challenge Longfellow faced in constructing *The Song of Hiawatha* was what poetic form he should use? He found the solution in the Finnish folk poetry epic *Kalevala*, which is about three heroes and their exploits. It is easy to see how suitable borrowing from the *Kalevala* would have seemed to Longfellow. The Finnish landscape is similar to that of the Ojibwa around Lake Superior. Finland even has red ochre rock paintings on cliff walls, like those found on cliff walls around Lake Superior. Records show that Longfellow investigated Finnish culture, and probably was quite fascinated by the similarities – which includes the Finnic sauna,

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which in its ancient form parallels the Ojibwa sweat lodge.

But most significant was Longfellow's borrowing of the poetic meter of the *Kalevala*, as much as it could be mimicked with English. Longfellow was reluctant to speak about the *Kalevala* influences. It wasn't much of an issue. Few English-speaking people knew much of anything about the Finns in those days, so it was only an issue for scholars.

The Historic Significance of *The Song of Hiawatha*

In spite of today's uncertainty about how to regard it, *The Song of Hiawatha* needs recognition for what it did by way of drawing attention to the 'Indian' and his culture. As Schoolcraft wrote in his book, had Longfellow not written *The Song of Hiawatha*, his own accounts of the real stories would not have been given any attention – or published – at all. Longfellow started a process that led to a great deal of interest in the North American Native cultures, both in scholarly circles and the ordinary public. To scholars 'Indian' artifacts were no longer curiosities, but articles for study, and the North American 'Indian' languages were a subject for linguistics. Meanwhile the public put on Ojibwa deerskin moccasins, played with his bows and arrows, and recreated his peaceful paddling through the landscape in the canoe. Camping, recreational fishing, gliding along in a canoe, and the national parks systems have all arise from the romance surrounding the Indian. Today even Europe has wilderness parks for nature preservation which accommodate campers wishing to pursue wilderness activities. It all came from North America, promoted to the public originally by *The Song of Hiawatha*!! We can't ignore Longfellow's poem despite its shortcomings!!

The public does not know that '*Hiawatha*' is an Iroquois word, or that his name should have been *Manabozho*, or that the form of the verse borrows strongly from the Finnish folk epic. For many generations, children around campfires, chanted the poetry as if Ojibwa people really chanted song in this manner. Still, this distortion of reality, like all the rest (the teepees, headdresses, totem poles, and all the other clichés) was not damaging and at least preserved an 'Indian' identity during a time when governments and missionaries would have preferred the 'Indian' quickly assimilate into the colonial civilization.

Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (1793–1864)



He was a geographer, geologist and ethnographer known for his early studies of 'Indian' cultures, notably that of the Ojibwa/Chippewa in the northern Great Lakes.

After several geological expeditions as a young man, and resulting published accounts of them, he served as geologist for the government-sponsored Lewis Cass expedition, to explore the wilderness region of Lake Superior and lands west to the Mississippi. He published an account of this

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expedition. He was later in another government exploratory expedition as well.

His ethnological research into the Native peoples began in his middle years when he was appointed an Indian agent at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. There he wed Jane Johnston, daughter of an Irish fur trader and a local Ojibwa woman, and learned the Ojibwa language from her. She was no doubt his steady consultant with respect to the Ojibwa myths, spirituality and customs – something which makes his work – on the Ojibwa at least – quite genuine and reliable. Later the Indian agent headquarters was moved to Fort Mackinac. He participated in more expeditions and wrote more publications on the expeditions.

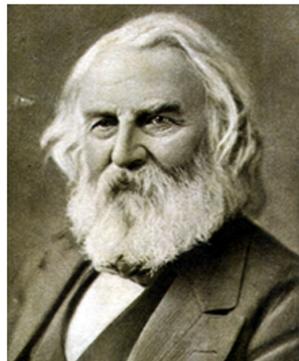
It was after that, during the period when he was engaged as Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the American ‘Northern Department’, that he began a series of Native American studies later published as the *Algic Researches* (2 vols., 1839) which were the source of information used by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow for the stories used in his *The Song of Hiawatha*.

In later years, after losing his position as Indian agent, he procured a government subsidy to develop a comprehensive reference work on American Indian tribes. He engaged Seth Eastman as illustrator. It was a massive work published from 1851 to 1857.

In our story, Abbi could certainly potentially reference any of the many writings by Henry Schoolcraft (since Schoolcraft is deceased before the time frame of our story begins). We have to leave Abbi’s access to Schoolcraft manageable, as she is only 10 (although reading ‘well ahead of her age’). His book of Hiawatha legends *The Myth of Hiawatha and other Oral Legends*, of 1856, was written for a popular audience (the same audience who became engaged with *The Song of Hiawatha*), is a good one for her, and that is the one from which *Aggodagauda and his Daughter* comes and other information – the fasting custom, for example.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (February 27, 1807 – March 24, 1882) was born and raised in the area of Portland, Maine. He attended university at an early age at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. Maine is the state just south of New Brunswick where most of Abbi’s story unfolds; thus, although Longfellow depicted the Ojibwa of Lake Superior in his *The Song of Hiawatha*, his own experience would have been with the *Maliseet* or as they were called in Maine, the *Passamaquoddy*. They were both Algonquian peoples, and so would have had similar language and culture.



After college Longfellow spent the next three years in Europe, preparing himself for a professorship of modern languages at Bowdoin, where he taught from 1829 to 1835. After some further time traveling in Europe, Longfellow became professor of modern

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languages at Harvard from 1836 to 1854, and pursued poetry on the side. After achieving success with his long narrative poem *Evangeline* (1847) he retired in 1854 from his professorship to devote his time to poetry. He wrote, *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855), *The Courtship of Miles Standish* (1858), and *Tales of a Wayside Inn* (1863), which included *Paul Revere's Ride*, and other projects.

His unorthodox meters, while giving unique effect to his poems, were sometimes parodied, especially that of *The Song of Hiawatha* whose meter was inspired by the meter of the Finnish folk poetry epic *Kalevala*. But the general, public loved his works, and he was a celebrity in his day, and some say he was America's first international celebrity.

In our story, chapter 1 presents a couple of university students watching a theatrical production of *The Song of Hiawatha* for ideas to create/write a parody in Hiawatha meter for a student satirical theatrical production in the *Hasty Pudding* Theatrical traditions established by then at Harvard University. We do not mention the *Hasty Pudding* theatricals explicitly in our story, since this is fiction, and the events really did not occur.

The Song of Hiawatha is important in our story and so is Longfellow. Since he seems to have been a very affable and approachable man who knew countless people, and whose home in Cambridge, outside of Boston, was constantly receiving visitors, we expect his spirit would be tickled to be involved in our story.

Our story has Abbi, in Part Two, sending a letter to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. She gets a reply from him. Can this really have happened? Is Abbi receiving a letter from Longfellow realistic? In the period between 1821 and 1882, Longfellow received 20,000 letters – many of them from fans – and was said to have answered every one. (source Harvard University Gazette Feb 1, 2007 – *The Many Lives of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*) Thus this idea that he would have replied to Abbi, is a very sound one.

Longfellow, was probably aware of the Passamaquoddy/Maliseet Indians, and could conceivably have been interested in the Passamaquoddy and Maliseet legends of Glooscap, even though his *The Song of Hiawatha* was based on the Indians of Lake Superior. It is reasonable to believe that he would have been genuinely interested in Abbi's versification of a Glooscap legend, as his (fictional) reply to Abbi indicates.

The Paradox in Treatment of the 'Indian'

Even as the Indian's traditional culture was being celebrated in the media and public opinion, governments and missionaries were at work stamping out the very culture that the public celebrated. These 'children of Nature', were seen by officialdom as a dying people—remnants of a primitive humanity—and were to be taken – to speak metaphorically – away from their Mother Nature and turned into orphans under the foster parent the Male God of European Civilization.

George Copway, mentioned above as having a probable strong influence on *The Song of Hiawatha's* spiritual side, was certainly someone who experienced it – finding himself having to walk a tightrope between the public interest in his traditional spirituality, and the well entrenched Christian beliefs of the day.

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Copway was born in 1818 in the Rice Lake area of Ontario, to Ojibwa parents – his people would have been the Mississaugas of Rice Lake. His parents converted to Christianity in 1830 and under the kindly patronage that came from it, he was educated, did missionary work, lectured and wrote books. He eventually moved in circles that included famous writers like Irwin, Cooper and Longfellow – as already mentioned. So great was the European interest in the ‘Indian’ by the mid 1800’s, that when Copway published the autobiographical work (quoted earlier) in 1847, it was a best-seller, and reprinted many times.

It must have been a surprise to him to soon discover that while the missionaries had condemned ‘Indian’ness, the general public increasingly sought him out to speak and write about that same ‘Indian’ness that he was supposed to leave behind. That of course, in my opinion, brought him into inner conflict, and when speaking fondly of his ‘Indian’ heritage to the interested public, he had to keep reiterating that Christianity reigned supreme to avoid the ‘eternal damnation’ that missionaries had warned him of. That lessened the effect of his presentations to the ‘white’ public. With this sort of an internal struggle and inability to belong properly to either of the two worlds, his later life tended towards tragic, leading to an early death in 1869 at 51.

But Copway’s experience describes a general situation in which both the old and new ways were validated by the European in their midst, and yet the old and new ways were not compatible with one another – one had to choose the one or the other, or end up in a very compromised or conflicted state.

The truth is that the mid 1800’s was a turning point for the Indian. Treaties were being drawn up, ‘Indians’ were being forced onto reserves, given plows to plow the land, and inspired to become ‘civilized’. The celebration of his traditional life by the general public didn’t matter – except it did *later* for tourists who wanted to see the Indian do traditional things and not be at work plowing a field. Leading the change were the Christian churches. Governments tended to simply go along with and support church initiatives. Underlying all the actions of the zealous missionary was an arrogance that held Christianity was the only true religion, an arrogance that was extended to all non-Christian religions in those times. The Indian religious worldview had no chance. But, then, when you think about it, it would not have had a chance against any other organized religion intruding on them. For example if it had been Judaism that pursued a missionary role, Indians would have been made Jewish. If it had been Buddhism, Indians would have been made Buddhist. And so on. A natural unorganized spirituality has no chance against ANY organized religion. There are many examples in northeastern Asia, to where Christianity hadn’t come, of aboriginal people subscribing today to Buddhism, having fallen under the influence of that religion. Religion is so all-encompassing that the very idea that there can even be another religion than your own is a concept hard to accept. Tolerance of other religions diminishes the more religious you are. It is why most wars today are rooted in religion. The irony is that while the churches lament at a decline in religiousness in the public, it is just this decline in religiousness that has increased acceptance of other religions and reduced conflict in humanity. Wherever religion is not extreme nor zealous, there is

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peace and tranquility, not war and conflict. (as John Lennon pointed out in his famous pop song.) Without extremism, it is easier to see the common threads between the different religions.

Some Notes on the Maliseet or Passamaquoddy

While *The Song of Hiawatha*, and Schoolcraft's book, focused on the Ojibwa, Abbi's experiences took place in the interior of New Brunswick and therefore Abbi's story gives attention to the Native peoples there – the Maliseet/Passamaquoddy.

In North America of the 1800's, every area had its Native peoples, called 'Indians'. New Brunswick and Maine were no exception. There were the *Mikmaqs* closer to the coast and northeast into Nova Scotia, but the major tribe of New Brunswick and northern Maine were the *Maliseet/Passamaquoddy*. Like that of the Mikmaq, the Maliseet language was part of the Algonquian languages, same as many languages towards the west including the Ojibwa (or 'Chippewa') languages of Lake Superior that were the focus of attention by Schoolcraft and Longfellow.

The traditional culture of both the Maliseet and Passamaquoddy followed the pattern of canoe-traveling Algonquian hunting-fishing peoples. They gathered in summer at the mouth of the river, fished, and planted some crops. Then come fall, they broke up into extended families each going to traditional hunting territories to spend the winter and hunt moose and other game. Fishing was a major activity throughout the year, and the salmon in the Saint John River and tributaries, which they liked to catch by torchlight at night, was important.

The colonial governments persuaded them during 1800's to settle on reserves and pursue ways of life like the colonists pursued. Today there aren't very many speakers of Maliseet or Passamaquoddy—less than 1000 of each perhaps; but today some younger people have begun studying and retaining their language, and numbers of speakers has stabilized. According to internet information in 2007, an active program of scholarship on the Maliseet-Passamaquoddy language takes place at the *Mi'kmaq - Maliseet Institute* at the University of New Brunswick, in collaboration with the native speakers.

Our story presents some Maliseet-Passamaquoddy words, We use the spellings given today at the University of New Brunswick. Anyone interested in the Maliseet-Passamaquoddy words and sentences is directed to the wonderful internet resource at

www.lib.unb.ca/Maliseet/dictionary/index.php

In our story, Abbi encounters Maliseet men working seasonally at the sawmill. What were the realworld circumstances of Maliseet peoples at this time? While Abbi's experiences are situated in 1874, we can get a sense of how the Maliseet Indians were doing from a report by Moses Henry Pearly done for the New Brunswick government 33 years earlier. He investigated villages near Fredericton, at Meducic Point, and Tobique along the Saint John. After that he investigated the Micmac(Mikmaq) too. In his summary (excerpted from full text that has been reproduced on website www.upperstjohn.com) he reported that *The total number of Milicete Indians now (12th August 1841) in this Province is four hundred and forty two, and in conclusion, I have to submit a few*

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remarks on the Settlements recently visited.

The Indians at the Village near Fredericton have of late years become rather industrious; the women work early and late at the manufacture of baskets, while the men provide the materials, and also till the soil with their own hands. They do not follow the chase (hunting) as ardently, or for so great a part of the season, as they used to do, and they lead much more settled lives than formerly. . . .

As mentioned above, the government saw traditional roaming, hunting, and fishing among the 'Indians' as undesirable, and sought to influencing their settling down in stable farming life. In this case those closest to Fredericton were most settled. Omitting Pearly's comments and recommendations, we continue on to the description of the next place he visited on the Saint John: *Of the small Settlement at the Meductic, I regret that I have to state, that (with one or two exceptions) the men are drunkards, and the women debauched, while the children are naked and starving.* In my view this group represents a transitional stage – people between the two worlds and confused.

The third location further up the river near where the Tobique River flows into the Saint John, he found Indians still quite rooted in traditional ways – some still very nomadic, others settled, but all still placing great importance on their tradition of salmon fishing (by torch at night) and hunting ('the chase') Pearly wrote: *The Indians at Tobique, subsist in a great measure by the chase, by occasional employment in lumbering, and in piloting rafts down the Tobique and the Saint John. They seem by no means inclined to continue labour, or the cultivation of the soil—yet, from the advantages of their situation, and the value of the Salmon Fishery, they have rather comfortable dwellings, and appear in easy circumstances as compared with others of the Tribe.*

Thus the three places Pearly visited seem to be representative of three stages of transition: new ways, compromised, old ways.

It's clear that the Indians with whom Abbi interacts, would have come from the Tobique peoples. Pearly does in fact state 'occasional employment in lumbering'. As for the Indians, Bradden deals with after his accident, we can presume they were a still nomadic band on the other side of the Saint John, perhaps within Maine (where they are called Passamaquoddy)

Pearly's full report further provides some interesting insights into the Tobique band – that the chiefs recognized the value of reading and writing and sought to have a school to learn it, that the church was achieving its objectives as they also sought to have a chapel, that cash was more valued than barter (a reason for some Indians getting work in lumbering), and that the salmon fishery – nighttime fishing using torches – was central to their culture, even though they were capable of cultivating crops.

Pearly's recommendations reflected the desire of the government to assimilate them into the colonial civilization. The Maliseet had no problem with the notion of making themselves stronger by such things as reading and writing, but would have preferred to achieve it on their own terms, rather than being subjected to paternalism from government and church as the price to be paid. This point of view, today resurfacing as 'self-government' has been unwavering in Native peoples in general! The colonial governments have resisted the notion of self-government

Context of the 'Indian' in the Mid 1800's

for nearly two centuries now. Governments see only two paths – spend billions of dollars keeping Natives in effect recipients of welfare, or have them vanish by assimilation. There has never been any desire to see them adapt while still retaining their identity.

By 1874, with the influence of the government and missionaries, perhaps little of the original spirituality and custom was remembered or followed, and so Abbi, idealistically reconstructing the Ojibwa traditional ways from Schoolcraft and Longfellow, must have seemed a peculiar girl indeed to the Maliseet men who worked at the sawmill! But who knows? A component of the people could have kept on with their traditional ways in private, hiding it from the missionaries and other 'whites', as was the case elsewhere.