





This tale is dedicated to my late brother Dean Brassington.  
For years he encouraged me to write a novel about Stoney Creek.  
I like to think he'd accept 'The '72 Series' as a downpayment  
towards that end.

# Prologue: Meeting

Spring 2012, Toronto

The yellow school bus pulls up to the Hockey Hall of Fame, stopping abruptly curbside. She's excited enough to want to barrel her way down the aisle and out into the crisp spring air, jumping up and down at having arrived at every hockey player's Mecca or Disney World. But she doesn't. Just as, when they were driving along Front Street, getting closer, ever closer, she didn't have her face plastered to the window like everyone else, craning her neck to see. You know; champing at the bit. Indeed, if you looked at her now, you might think that she was *blasé* about it all.

She's the last one off the bus. Head down, she steps onto the sidewalk. Taking a deep breath, she gazes up at the building and smiles. Having done her research, she knows it was designed by architects Darling & Curry in 1885, built in the extravagant Beaux Arts style; huge stone pillars, ostentatious carvings. No surprise; it used to be a Bank of Montreal. It could pass for an old church, really. Which makes sense, seeing as the Hall is a cathedral for the sport.

"Zoë!"

"Come on, girl! Save your gawking for inside!"

"What's wrong with you?" another classmate laughs.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Amidst others, adults and kids alike, the high school class waits for the guided exhibits tours. There are three groups. The first is boys who are entranced and hyper-energized. Another group -mostly girls- may as well all be wearing t-shirts emblazoned with 'Meh: informal exclamation 1. expressing a lack of interest or enthusiasm." *Meh. I don't care about any of this stuff.*" The third group is a small cadre of girls. Clearly players. Animated with chatter. At the periphery of this group, our girl. Zoë's a little shorter than some of her friends. Dark brown hair pulled back into a ponytail. Her eyes... They're penetrating eyes. All-seeing eyes. And she's vibrating at a frequency familiar to her: when she's in the crease. Watching *everything*.

Some time into the tour, at one of the displays, while the buzz around her continues, she's transfixed. And pensive. All the while, still shivering. Glancing over at one of the Hall's personnel, Zoë thinks some more, inhales until her already skipping-along heart threatens...then heads over to the counter.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The HOF staffer lumbers down a long corridor. The walls are full of framed photographs. Photos of players, coaches, managers, owners and League builders, stretching back almost a century. Almost without exception, autographed. He arrives at an office with the nameplate 'Adam Francis, General Manager', knocks on the door. "Hey, boss."

Behind the desk, an amiable man. Early 50s. Blonde hair longer than you might expect. A tight beard shot through with silver, a white-capped chin. "What's up, Sergio?"

"I know you're pretty busy this morning, but there's a student out here asking for you. She says you grew up with her father. Last name Carrivée?"

As the two men head through the building towards the public area, Adam's mind races. The weight of memories makes his heart ache as it too, races to beat the band.

Before Sergio has a chance to point her out, he sees her. Always having been prone to strong emotional reactions, Adam feels his heart now rise up and soar. "Hi," he finally says, gazing down on her.

She peers up at him, blinking hard. She realizes that she's feeling just how she feels when penalty shots are deciding the game. 'Focus!' she thinks. "Mr. Francis? I'm Zoë Carrivée. Luc-"

"Luc's daughter," he smiles. But he's distracted. Not so much as seeing her father in her features, but by something else there, something tip, tap, tapping at his brain.

In the cafeteria, they sit together, apart from everyone else. "You didn't have to buy everyone a snack!" Zoë laughs.

"I know," Adam says, slowed down by this riddle about her face. "But you're in Toronto and I'm just doing my part to help the city's reputation for friendliness."

"So it's not just me showing up?"

"You have your dad's smile." Again...*something*.

Zoë is charmed. Maybe for the first time in her life. "Really?!?"

"How is he? Your father?"

Having known she would have to answer this question, Zoë struggles with her composure. Distracted by her friends, who wave, by the time she's looking back at Adam, it's clear her answer is not going to a happy one.

Understanding the silence, Adam goes pale.

"When did you see him last?" Zoë asks.

Unable to not look at her, Adam shuffles through the stack of reminiscences. "Not since high school. I went away to university in Minnesota."

"You got a scholarship." She waits on his response. "My dad told me."

"He did?" The morning's surprises continue for Adam.

"He told me a *lot*. About your friendship." 'But not *everything*,' she thinks.

Adam considers this. "We lost touch. It happens," he adds sadly, as if needing to forgive himself.

"I remember being on the zamboni with him when I was *really* young," Zoë says. "He would tell me about you and him and The 1972 Canada-USSR Summit Series. It was my favourite way to fall asleep. He'd take me to work, and he'd tell me about everything that happened in August and September of 1972."

"And you'd fall asleep!" Adam laughs.

"Only when I was young!" she counters, enjoying being teased. "When I got older...when I started playing...I'd bug him to tell it to me again. And again." Zoë takes in Adam, lost in thought. "He said The Series was a turning point for him."

"I can top that," Adam says. "Meeting your father changed my life."

"Really?"

"You and me, we have something in common; neither of us would be sitting here, here in the Hall, were it not for him."

At the hint of Zoë's raised eyebrows, Adam explains.

"My parents were from Britain. They loved Canada, but I don't think my father had ever felt 'at home' here. And he'd certainly never adopted any of the sports. Especially hockey. We made very occasional Saturday evening visits to close family friends Arthur and Joanne Allen, also from across the pond. The seven, eight, nine year old me was left to watch 'Hockey Night in Canada' with Uncle Arthur and his son Ben,

as my father whiled away the time playing billiards by himself across the room. Much to Uncle Arthur's annoyance."

"My dad and I watched hockey together. Always."

"I bet. Keep that in mind. Now as for me, I craved being part of something. Anything, really. I just wanted to *belong*. Which I definitely did not. You'd think *I* was a foreigner, too."

"That's so *sad*."

"Hockey was still a way for me to try."

"So you played? Before you met my dad? He never told me *that* part of the story."

Adam shakes his head. "No. God, no." As Zoë frowns, Adam's inclination is to tell her how her father's frown was identical to hers. "Back in 1970, Esso brought out NHL Power Player stickers. A step up from run-of-the-mill cards, the kind that came with bubble-gum. When you purchased gas, you got stickers. There was also an album. To collect the stickers in, naturally."

It's all Zoë can do to *not* interrupt.

"Now, there was no way my father would have done what other fathers did. Make regular gas purchases for hockey stickers. Not in a million years."

"So how...?"

"I'd steal from a coin tray my dad kept on top of a chest of drawers in my parents' bedroom."

"So you *bought* them?" Zoë half-laughs.

"Yup. Every recess out on the playground, while the other guys were trading stickers, I'd *buy* mine. Doubles and triples, I'd trade. So it wasn't *entirely* a monetary thing going on."

"What did the other kids say?"

"They were *not* impressed. But they liked the money. There was a corner store next to the school, and they'd use it to buy french fries at lunch. I can *still* smell them."

"And your dad never found out?"

"Nope. At least I don't *think* he ever did!"

“But eventually you collected them all. That must have felt good.”

“No. It was an empty accomplishment. Hollow.” He pauses. “I remember completing it. I was in my bedroom one night. The sound of laughter and car doors slamming had me up and at my window; kids from across the street had arrived home from a hockey game, hauling all their equipment, still loud and raucous.”

Zoë is confused. “But you run the Hockey Hall of Fame! You got a university scholarship! I don’t understand!”

Once again, Zoe resembles her father, this time mired in *consternation*. Which only has Adam wanting to tell her everything. The entire tale. “You’ve heard the phrase ‘stranger than fiction?’ That’s where your dad –and your grandfather– come in.”

# Book One

## Chapter One: The Arrival of the Carrivées

September 1 1972, Stoney Creek, Ontario

Pristine-covered paperback novel in hand, twelve year old Adam Francis stood in the hallway leading to his home's front door. Ahead, the neighbourhood kids playing street hockey, the requisite cacophony of low barks and high squeals and the silence before the scored goal's celebrations filled the air. All around him, the quietude of the house, broken only by kitchen activity. Feeling his spirit suffocated, caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place, he sighed before carrying on outside to plunk himself down on the warm concrete of the front steps, slouching in the sunlight.

His mother followed him. "Maybe you could borrow a stick?" The lilting question, asked in her soft Welsh accent wasn't really a suggestion. It was more a 'You're not alone' message. She watched as her son hung his head. "Our new neighbours are due. Today."

Adam sat a little more upright. "How..." He turned to look up at her. "How do you know *that*?"

"Mum's know *everything*," she smiled. "Mostly." She pulled a Granny Smith out of her apron and shone the apple until it was a brilliant jade sphere. "For example...when you're hungry. Before even *you* know you are."

Spirit rising just a little, he took the Granny Smith and methodically began eating it, one tiny bite at a time. As he might were it corn-on-the-cob. Between watching the streetplay and reading his novel, Adam was lulled into a stupor.

Some time along, he was rattled awake by the sound of an engine bearing down, gears being shifted, men's voices. Yelling. Or singing. Both, maybe. He couldn't be sure.

A moving truck pulled into the driveway next door, an accompanying car out front. All this attracted the attention of the kids, but didn't get them so interested as to actually stop playing. Adam, however, was curious about the plates - Quebec, 'Je me souviens' - and the writing on the van: 'U-Haul - Nous allons toujours votre chemin!'

Inside the car, a boy Adam's age spied the streetplay with wide eyes.

Mrs. Francis spied all this through the screen door, and headed outside to get a better look.

As loud as patrons leaving a pub at closing hour, three men tumbled out of the truck, roughhousing all the way.

Climbing out of the car was a short, balding man, smile lighting up the overcast day. He spied Adam and waved. "*Bonjour mon ami! C'est une très belle journée, n'est-ce pas?* (Hello, my friend! It's an extremely beautiful day, isn't it?)" he called out. "*Tu vas bien?* (Are you well?)" he asked. And then, smacking his forehead with a vaudevillian flair, he repeated the question in English. "Are you well?"

Thinking hard, distracted by a boy his age also shooting out of the vehicle, and wanting to get it right, Adam swallowed hard, then responded in the man's native tongue. "Ca'va bien, Monsieur! Merci!"

Even as Mrs. Francis registered her surprise, it made way for her quiet pride.

The man stopped. As did the men at the truck. Only the boy remained in motion. "*Tu vois? Je t'ai dit que ce ne serait pas comme déménager dans un pays étranger!* (You see? I told you it wouldn't be like moving to a foreign country!)"

Meanwhile, the kids playing hockey slowly came to rest, intrigued.

"Are they French?" one asked.

"No, stupid. They're *Italian*," another joked. "Are you deaf?!?"

Laughing, another player chimed in. "Francis brown-noses in French class."

"Teacher's pet."

"Straight-As. Every test."

The first kid struggled with the information. "He speaks Italian *and* French?!?"

"My name is Antoine Carrivée," the man called over. "And this is Luc. My son," he added, as the boy arrived at his side. Without missing a beat, he handed the car keys to him.

Barely registering an acknowledgement to Adam, Luc scurried around to the back of the car and opened the trunk. Adam –and the kids– watched as he removed an assortment of items, then placed them on the grass to the right of the lawn. A collapsed hockey net. A stack of sticks. And then a full set of goalie pads, gloves...and a mask.

The kids huddled. Discussing in barely hushed tones. Finally, one stepped forward. "Hey! You wanna be our Cheevers?"

While all this was happening, what seemed to interest Mr. Carrivée the most was Adam's reaction. He squinted his understanding.

Everything had gone silent. Mr. Carrivée turned to find Luc peering over at him. Waiting. “*Continue! Joignez! Vos oncles et moi, nous pouvons nous en occuper.* (Go on! Join in! Your uncles and me, we can handle this.)”

Luc hesitated.

“*Vraiment! Aller! (Really! Go!)*” he laughed. But before his son had gotten much closer to his kit, Mr. Carrivée whispered “*Gentil et facile, Luc.* (Nice and easy, Luc.)”

Luc stepped forward to the pile.

“Luc,” he father said once again.

“*Gentil et facile, papa. Gentil et facile. Je promets.* (Nice and easy, Papa. Nice and easy. I promise.)” And with this, he began to suit up. “Not Cheevers!” Luc said to the boys...who were more than a little surprised by this new kid’s attitude.

“What about Plante?” one of them called out.

“Esposito?”

“Villemure?”

“Parent?”

“Ken Dryden,” Adam said, only loud enough for his mother to hear.

“I’ll be Dryden,” Luc called back, “and stop everything you’ve got!”

“Isn’t that who *you* said, Adam?” Mrs. Francis asked, just as quietly.

“Lucky guess,” Adam sighed as he continued watching this new kid about to be accepted way more than *he’d* ever been. “That’s all.”

Next door, Mr. Carrivée looked on, seeing *everything*.

And so, as strange a concept as it might have occurred to an onlooker, the first day of Adam’s friendship with the Carrivées began. With Adam looking on from his safe perch, Luc played hockey with the neighbourhood kids, instinctively using one of the universal languages (the others being music and art...and of course, Love) to ‘bond’. The move continued apace; at points it seemed like the four dashing Quebecois were about to break into song, their actions were so buffeted with *vigour*. In fact, they did. Several times. Rousing, barrel-rolling tunes, the lyrics of which well beyond Adam’s comprehension. And then...

...and then, not that far into the move, the Quebec quartet burst out of the house. Stopping at the pile of sticks on the lawn, they insinuated themselves into the game, even as Mr. Carrivée joined them. For the neighbourhood kids, wide-eyed and drop-jawed, this was as exciting a development as having professional players suddenly dropping from the sky onto Baseline Road would be. What they didn't know was that two of the men had played in the Quebec Junior A Hockey League, and the other almost made the NHL draft.

Though the kids probably would have been fine just looking on, these madcap Quebecers would have no part of it; in the winter they played shinny on a local lake, the rest of the year at the rink their brother had managed for years. So sharing the fun with these kids was the order of the day. They were gregarious forces of nature, ambassadors of high spirits and good cheer.

In the middle of all this, Mrs. Francis brought out a jug of lemonade to the Carrivée men and the hockey players.

If it had been the weekend, her husband would probably have been dozing on the couch, back turned to the world, his snoring the only proof that he hadn't expired. And if he'd awakened right about now from his self-induced coma, through his grogginess he'd have been bewildered at his wife's busyness.

Meanwhile, Mr. Carrivée continued *his* observance.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Alas, eventually, all good things must conclude. At mid-afternoon, Mr. Carrivée said his goodbyes to his brothers, wishing them a safe return voyage to 'la belle province'. Though Luc had remained faithful to his father's request and took it easy, the other kids ultimately met their tiredness head-on, succumbed, and trundled home, starved. (But not before cheering their new go-to goalie; usually the role was assigned according to a short-straw draw.)

Luc made a detour to his front door; he stood at the verge of the Francis lawn. "Vous ne- You don't play?" he asked Adam.

All Adam could offer up was a shrug.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Luc and his father stared at the two plates on the kitchen counter. Heaped and foiled. "*Qu'est-ce que c'est?* (What is this?)"

"*J'sais pas!* (I don't know!)" his father laughed.

*“Est-ce que ta tante Jeanne a fait ça pour nous? (Did Aunt Jeanne make this for us?)”*

Mr. Carrivée shook his head. Then he reached in and pulled back the foil on one plate.

Their eyes went wide...and both were salivating in seconds.

Luc bent closer, inhaling. *“Tante Jeanne ne ferait jamais cuire quelque chose comme ça! (Aunt Jeanne would never cook something such as this!)”* he laughed.

*“Mes frères, (My brothers,)”* Mr. Carrivée began to say. *“Vos oncles...(Your uncles...)”*

*“Et eux? (What of them?)”* Luc asked, peeling back the foil on the other plate.

*“Ils ont mentionné quelque chose à propos d'une surprise qui nous attendait, juste avant leur départ. (They did mention something about a surprise awaiting us, right before they left.)”*

*“Eh bien, c'était pas eux, (Well, it wasn't them,)”* Luc laughed. *“Autre que du café, ils sont tous les trois inutiles. (Past making coffee, they're all three useless.)”* At his father's raised eyebrows, he leapt to clarify. *“Je voulais juste dire de cuisiner. Ce sont des déménageurs merveilleux. (I meant cooking, only. They're wonderful movers.)”*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

*“They're from Quebec, obviously.”* Mrs. Francis had finally settled into her chair; her habit was to go back and forth to the kitchen until she was satisfied they had everything they needed. *“Last name Carrivée, first name Antoine. His wife died last year. A heart condition, he alluded to. So he's raising his son Luc himself.”*

Adam offered her his rapt attention. Her husband's reaction was closer to disinterest.

*“He's going to be the new rink manager,”* she added. *“He drives the machine... what they use to groom the ice... Oh, I forget what it's called...”*

*“A frog ice-rink manager!”* Mr. Francis's regional Geordie accent was as thick as it had been all throughout his life in Newcastle, UK. Mrs. Francis would often engage her husband in the most insignificant topics just to hear him talk, she so loved his voice, even after all these years. (Except when he felt the need to say things such as this.)

*“Zamboni, Mum. It's called a zamboni.”*

*“Thank you, dear,”* she said to Adam. *“Zamboni. I took them some dinner, but it might be nice to get them a housewarming gift.”*

"A gift? A *gift*?!?! Where were *our* gifts when we arrived back in '57? I don't recall anyone coming up to me with a *gift* when we landed here in the middle of bloody winter!"

"John, you know that's not true. We weren't here long before we met George and Joanne," she pointed out to him. "And there were the Newfields right next door to us. They were British. *They* were our friends for a while."

Mr. Francis thought on this. "The Newfields went back home," he replied in a grumpy, petulant tone.

"The Newfields?" Adam asked.

"They were from Brighton," his mother explained. "On the south coast of England. They were our neighbours for a few years. Before you were born. They decided they didn't want to put down roots in Canada after all. Mrs. Newfield felt she wanted to have children who were British-born," she added, watching her husband's face as she filled Adam in. She'd heard the disappointment in her husband's voice; the couples had been close, and he'd taken it especially hard when they left. They had been a tangible connection to England, one that Mr. Francis had found sustenance in. "Adam," Mrs. Francis eventually said, "maybe you and I could go to the store tomorrow and see if there's something appropriate for two men trying to make a new home for themselves in a strange place."

"Bloody lumberjacks!" his father insisted. "Probably can't even speak the Queen's English properly! Don't forget, they had to have martial law in Quebec only two years ago! Our trade commissioner was *kidnapped* by them!"

"Our'?" Mrs. Francis asked. "Them'?"

"Do you know what the French always called the English? 'Perfidious Albion'," Adam's father spat. "I bet that hasn't changed."

"They're from Quebec. Not France," Adam pointed out.

"Same bloody difference."

Adam thought on this. "Does that make me the same as you? Canadian, the same as English?"

Barely holding back a giggle as she got up to retrieve something she'd forgotten, his mother called out from the kitchen. "Don't paint *me* with that brush! I'm *Welsh*!"

## Chapter Two: The Gift

Adam sat on the bed, pad of paper and pen in his hand. Beside him, his transistor radio was playing the CKOC Top 40, counting down the hits. He liked to track the songs, noting their weekly positions, making bets with himself as to what he thought would happen. Mid-tune, after he'd made a mark on the paper, an errant thought barged its way through his handiwork, causing him to pause. 'A gift', his mother had suggested. "A gift for hockey fans," he said out loud. After weighing the notion with a jiggling motion of his head back and forth, he slid off his bed, got down on his knees, and reached under it. He pulled a box out first; a puzzle. Then a pile of comics his nana had sent him from England a couple of years ago, before she passed. Adam paused as he felt the thin paper between his fingers, flicking his way through an edition of 'Beano'.

Finally, he found what he'd been looking for. Bringing it to his face and blowing the dust off it, Adam grinned. Which surprised him; the item had surely *never* represented smiling, to him. Or anything close to happiness. But he felt none of the usual memories attached to it. The sadness. The loneliness. The *apartness*.

"A gift."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The front door was open, but Adam knocked anyway, because there was music playing. And someone singing along. He knocked again. This time, Mr. Carrivée arrived, smile as big as all outdoors. "Allo! You know, hard as I tried, I could not think of who you remind me of! And now I know: Peter Mahovolich! You are the... The 'splitting' image of him!"

As Adam dealt with his embarrassment at the compliment...he knew who Mahovolich was; he was tall, blonde and had a nice smile...Luc arrived. Adam held out his Esso NHL Power Players stamp album. "Welcome to the neighbourhood." He paused. "Bienvenue au voisinage!"

As much as his father was touched by the linguistic gesture -Adam had carefully consulted his English-to-French dictionary before he'd come over- Luc was wide-eyed. "Are you sure?" he asked.

Adam nodded. "Really. Take it." He paused. "I've got two," he lied. "I can spare this one. I want you to have it. It's a *gift*."

"Come on inside!" Mr. Carrivée said. "Remain a while!"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Though the living room was partially furnished...a sofa, a side chair, a television...a table-hockey game took centre-stage. Adam stood at one end, making tentative, then wild motions with the players. It was clear that he'd never played. And so when Mr. Carrivée walked past Luc, he squeezed his son's shoulder. Luc got the message and backed off on his expertise. "The stamp album..." Luc began to say. "If you don't *play* hockey, then you must watch games, then?"

Though he had no skill to draw from, Adam actually took to the game rather quickly. Here he was, in a new neighbour's home. Being welcomed. *Making friends.* "Sometimes. Not at home, though." He continued his efforts; a bright-eyed smile warmed his face. "Only when we visit friends. On the Mountain."

"The *mountain.*" Luc and his father looked to each other.

Adam was slow to stop playing; he was lost in having *fun*. Finally, he looked up to find them waiting for an explanation. "Oh. Sorry. Yeah; 'the Mountain'. Hamilton has an upper and a lower city," he says, using his hands, pointing. "Above and below the Niagara Escarpment. We call the top part of the Escarpment 'the Mountain'." And then he went back to the game.

"Adam, would you like something to drink?" Mr. Carrivée gestured to Luc to follow.

"Yes, please."

In the kitchen, Mr. Carrivée poured out some soft drinks as Luc thumbed his way through the album. "*T'as un de ces.* (You have one of those.)" Mr. Carrivée offered softly.

"*Oui. Mais pas en anglais.* (Yes. But not in English.)", Luc replied, distracted, touching the faces of the Canadiens reverently, mouthing the name of each Hab. He closed the album as seriously as he might a Bible.

Mr. Carrivée finished the pouring, then, as Luc leaned in to take two glasses, he stopped him. "*Ca c'était généreux à faire.* (That was a generous thing to do.)"

"*Ouais. Mais il a dit qu'il en avait deux.* (Yeah. But he *did* say he had two.)"

"*Non, je voulais dire ce que t'as fait. Ne lui dis pas que tu en avais déjà un. Je suis fier. Ta mère serait très fière de toi.* (No. I meant what *you* did. Not telling him you already had one. I'm proud- Your mother would be *very* proud of you.)"

Nodding, Luc grabbed the pop and started to leave. "*Il ne regarde pas le hockey chez lui!* (He doesn't watch hockey at home!)" he whispered.

As Luc handed Adam his drink, Mr. Carrivée made a point of going to the boy. "I am *very* sorry for your misfortune."

At Adam's blank stare, Luc said "Not watching hockey."

"Indeed," Mr. Carrivée continued. "To have struggled so long against such...such *adversaire*. You must *definitely* come over to watch games with us. Often."

"*Et on a pas besoin d'attendre que la saison commence, non plus!* (And we won't have to wait for the season to begin, either!)" Luc cried out, then let loose with a howl of happiness.

"*Mais bien sûr!* (But of course!)" his father laughed, smacking his forehead. "*Avec la série de défis qui approche, l'équipe de l'Armée rouge de l'Union des républiques socialistes soviétiques contre nos garçons de la LNH, on n'aura pas besoin d'attendre que la neige vole! Nous serons-* (With the challenge series almost here, the Red Army team of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics versus our boys from the NHL, we won't have to wait for the snow to fly! We'll be able-") Seeing Adam's blank stare at his rapid-fire comments, Mr. Carrivée stopped. "I thought you could speak French!"

Adam held up his thumb and forefinger. "A little. From classes in school. For two years. But I want to learn. More."

If Luc and his father hadn't felt the warmth of the welcome before, they certainly did now.

"Very well," Mr. Carrivée said. "From this point on, Luc and I will try- We will *assist* you with your French, with the *goal* of being able to converse in *la belle langue*."

"And you could help us with our English?" Luc suggested. "School for me might-"

"Speak for yourself!" Mr. Carrivée declared, arms across his chest à la Louis Cyr, the legendary strongman from Quebec. "*My English is impeccable! I've been contacted by Hockey Night in Canada!*"

Rolling his eyes, Luc ignored his father. "So what *do* you think about the upcoming series? Do you think they are as good as some say?"

"The series? 'They'?"

Luc and his father exchanged matching expressions of incredulity.

"But where have you been?" Mr. Carrivée asked. "*Avais-tu lu les journaux? Écouter la radio? Regarder la télévision? Ce seront quelques-uns des plus grands jeux jamais*

*joués!* (Haven't you been reading the newspapers? Listening to the radio? Watching the television? These will be some of the greatest games ever played!)”

“Papa!” Luc laughed. “English!”

Mr. Carrivée looked to Adam. Contrite. Then winked. “My apologies! Of *course* we cannot do it without the ‘other’ players!” He threw his hands up in the air. “*Mais c'est destin! C'est la manière que le destin l'a prévue pour être!*” He gave Adam's head a good-natured rub. “That is to say, it's *destiny*. It's the way Fate intended it to be!”

As Adam mouthed what Mr. Carrivée had said, Luc went back to his end of the table and began to play. “I think we need to *educate* him.”

Mr. Carrivée frowned, then looked to Adam to check the boy's comprehension; Adam's expression wasn't that of confidence. After gesturing for Adam to take a seat, Mr. Carrivée went to the table and he and his son began their first ‘seminar’ together. “Agreed. A little education is called for. Some guidance. So that when the tale begins, you understand *completely* why we will be behaving as we will.” His hand-play was proficient; for he and Luc, this was their ongoing game of chess. “We shall be your guides. Let us first begin with the two worlds which are about to collide.”

And so Adam's universe was expanded yet again, as he was told of the back-story to the 1972 Canada-USSR Summit Series.

Canada's long tradition of winning at Olympics, the formation of Hockey Canada in 1969, the 1970 World Championships being taken away from Canada, Canada's pulling-out from international competition, withdrawal from the 1972 Olympics.

The mystique of the Soviet Union Red Army hockey prowess, its success in international competition.

And finally, the endless political machinations behind the scenes required to make the '72 series a reality. The public's reactions to these. And the context of it being ‘Us vs Them’, a battle of ideologies in a Cold War world. (As opposed to the simmering ‘Us vs Them’ situation between English and French Canada.)

“Wow,” Adam offered, a good twenty minutes later. Dazed...but also excited.

Mr. Carrivée winked at Luc. “*Wow.*”

“That's a good place to start,” Luc laughed.

“And probably as good a place to stop, too. Your parents must be wondering where you are.” Just then, a thought occurred to him. He made the universal hand signal for ‘Hang on a second!’, and left for the kitchen.

"Tomorrow we'll play some hockey?" Luc asked.

Adam winced, but this was deflected as Mr. Carrivée handed him a ragged cardboard box. "For your mother," he explained, guiding him to the front door. "Please relay our gratitude." He went close to him, as if sharing a secret. "Does everything your mother cooks taste so wonderful?"

True to his innocent nature, Adam nodded immediately, without a pause for reflection.

"You are truly blessed, our new friend Adam Francis," Mr. Carrivée smiled. And then he turned serious. "In Montreal, the Soviets have landed. Preparing. Saturday night you'll be here? To begin your adventure?"

"We might be out visiting. I think this week we go--"

Mr. Carrivée once more went into 'confidential' mode. "Would you *like* to be here? Watching it with Luc and me?"

"Yes, but--"

"Good. I will talk to your parents. We will make it official."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

With a bounce in his step and a smile to light up the night, Adam presented the box to his mother. "The Carrivées extend their gratitude!" he announced. And then, as a tribute to Luc's father, Adam went in close to her. "Mr. Carrivé says I'm blessed to have you as my mother."

Mrs. Francis opened the box; inside were the two dinner plates, cleaned to a sparkle, buffed to a sheen. "You must have had a lot to talk about."

"Hockey!" Adam replied, looking as happy as happy can possibly look.

"Hockey?!?" Adam's father spat, entering the kitchen to empty his filled ashtray. "Brilliant. My son's bound to become a bloody goon, now. What a *destiny*."

## Chapter Three: Work

Dayne Steel was a small company. It didn't actually 'make' steel, but rather processed it, flat-rolled it, cut it up into sections by enormous shears, and packaged on broad wooden pallets. Skids, they were called. It was a closely-knit, family operation; there were only thirty-five non-unionized employees, and it had a low-key, almost egalitarian feel to it. For the most part.

John Francis was the facility manager. He worked in one of two tiny offices high above the shop floor. He loved his job; he was the latest Francis to work in the industry, now going back four generations. Mr. Francis had been born in Newcastle, England, but he'd moved to Sheffield for just the right job, leaving him in a pretty dire situation for an English football fan: having to root for the home-town club's rival.

Sheffield was known as 'Steel City'. Towards the conclusion of the 1950s, he and his wife Evelyn emigrated to Canada. To Hamilton, Ontario. Also nicknamed 'Steel City'. On this particular morning, high above the office floor in a small office, Mr. Francis sat at his desk, going over some paperwork. At the sound of a door-knock, he looked up to find two employees with a piece of cardboard attached to some short sections of two-by-two. The brown surface was divided into squares with scores on them. Some were over-written with a name.

"Mr. F, care to join the pool for Game One tomorrow night?"

"Still some good choices available."

"A buck a go. Easy money for a potential nice pot at the end of the day."

Mr. Francis narrowed his eyes. "Speaking of easy money... Are you two on a break?" He looked to the clock on the wall. "Because I can imagine a lot of things, but I can't imagine you taking wagers from punters on company time."

"Yes sir, a break," the other worker replied. "Just about to head back down to the shop floor."

Mr. Francis returned to what he was doing.

The two employees retreated, sour-faced as they descended the metal stairs. "I guess we can take that as a 'No'," one quietly griped. "I told you it was a bad idea."

"Punter...?"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Post-dinner, Adam's parents stood at the sink finishing off the dishes. It was something they always did together. And there was an intimacy to their choreography; movements to avoid contact, movements to promote it.

The phone rang; Mrs. Francis wiped her hands on her apron to answer it, but before she could reach for it, Mr. Francis snagged a kiss from her. Blushing, she picked up the handset to the wall-mounted, rotary phone. "Hello?" she said, offering up her best coquettish eye-blink for her husband.

"Evie?" the voice replied. "It's Joanne."

"Hello, Jo! Alright?"

"Well... Yes and no."

"What's wrong?" Mrs. Francis asked, playfulness gone. "Is everything OK?"

"Evie, it's about Saturday night."

"Saturday night. Right. Are we still on?"

And now it was Mr. Francis's mood that changed; he turned away, still wiping dishes, but now with his head down.

Joanne Allen was a tiny woman. Curly hair. Big, round eyes. And a voice just as plainly Welsh as Adam's mother's. Leaning against her kitchen wall, she twirled the cord nervously. Absent-mindedly; she was wrapping it around her open palm. "Evie, I know you don't follow hockey...I'm not such a fan myself...but tomorrow night...George is *so* excited about this game, about the entire series..." When she heard no response from her friend, she continued her explanation. "What they're calling 'The Summit Series'. Between Canada and the USSR."

"Yes, of course!" Mrs. Francis said, having been informed of it earlier in the day, courtesy of Mr. Carrivée.

Clearly, this was the part of the conversation that made Mrs. Allen feel a painful awkwardness; she lowered her voice, despite her being alone in the house. "Evie... This is difficult, I don't want to fib to you, we've been friends too long. But John's never disguised his disinterest for the sport. He gets bored, he wants to be doing something, he gets up, he plays billiards..." She inhaled a big breath. "George just doesn't want to have to--"

"Joanne, you don't have to explain."

"It's the only game in this silly affair to be played on a Saturday night. We can make it up to you the following week! Come up for dinner. A late-summer barbecue."

"Joanne, I understand completely. If you're ill..." She watched as her husband brought both palms together in prayer head tilted up, making as if to thank God.

"Ill? But I never-" And then the penny dropped. "Oh! Is John there? Oh, Evie, I'm so sorry for putting you in the middle of all this!"

And then Mr. Francis took his leave, rubbing his hands together with glee. Mrs. Francis waited until he had left the room. "Jo, I have to go. I'll speak with you next week? Talk to you then. Bye..."

"Everything all right on the Mountain?" Mr. Francis called out from the living room.

Mrs. Francis followed in the heels of her husband. "Joanne isn't feeling well."

Knowing it was pointless to hide his true feelings from his wife, Mr. Francis instead went the 'piss-take' route. "I am very, very sorry to hear of this. I hope you sent our best wishes for a quick recovery."

Mrs. Francis rolled her eyes...and saw her opening. "How about us going to a movie on Saturday night?"

"Is there something the three of us could enjoy?"

She sat down next to him on the chesterfield, twisting her response as much as he had, acting prim and proper. "Just the *two* of us. Adam's going to be next door, watching the game with Luc and his father."

"I am?" Adam was suitably surprised.

"So this will be a *date*," she explained to her husband, remaining in character.

"A date?!?" Mr Francis mused. "Hmm... Sounds a little racy. I could go for a little slap-and-tickle in a cinema balcony..." he added, just before going in for a nuzzle.

## Chapter Four: Game One: Heartache All 'round

September 2, Game One, Montreal. USSR 7 - Canada 3

Adam heard none of what Luc and his father were quite animatedly going back and forth about. Actually, he *could* hear it, but none of it registered. He felt the air sucked from his lungs, his heart pierced through with a barbed spike, and his head was both pounding and ringing in equal measures. His only cogent thoughts were 'This is what it feels like to die', stuck in an endless loop.

He'd just sat through just over two hours' worth of- Well, something he could never have imagined. The massive ups-and-downs. The rollercoaster ride of excitement, of dismay, this elation, that disappointment, all around him a cacophony of cheering and the full-bodied sounds of the Carrivées' reactions *en francais* to yet another emotional gut-punch, the pleading of false hopes and the silence that shock bestows. Though he may not have contributed much to the noisy spectating that bloomed all around him, he experienced it all just the same.

In the middle of their boisterous discussions, Adam simply got up from his chair, walked to the front door, turning to them only as he exited. "Good night."

As chance would have it, his parents arrived home just as he was crossing the sward of grass separating the modest properties. "How was the game, Adam?" his mother called out, light-of-mood. "I brought you back some popcorn, Luv."

"I'm going to bed," he replied over his shoulder.

Now there were *four* bewildered people.

Adam's journey was simple and short: With heavy footfalls, he climbed the stairs, entered his room, left the light off, and lay down on his bed. Remaining in his street clothes was his quiet protest.

"What was *that* all about?" his father asked as they entered the house.

"I'll go see."

After rapping lightly on Adam's door, his mother entered the room. As she did, he turned away from her. "Adam? Are you all right?" When he didn't respond, she walked to his bed and turned on the small bedside light. "Adam? What's wrong, Luv? Did you have an argument with Luc? Is that was this is all about?"

After a pause, Adam shook his head. And then, after a longer one, he spun to her, wrapped his arms around her, and began to sob. "We lost!"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"*Mais tu penses pas que c'était un peu...eh bien, grossier?* (But don't you think that was a bit...well, rude?)" Luc asked. He was walking up the stairs ahead of his father. "*Une minute il est là, le prochain il part sans rien dire!* (One minute he's there, the next he's leaving without saying hardly anything!)"

As he passed a window, Mr. Carrivée stopped. From his point-of-view, he could see Mrs. Francis holding Adam. If he could hear this moment as well as he could see it, he would hear Adam cry "They lost They lost!"

"*Papa! Temps de broser!* (Papa! Time to brush!)" Luc called out from the bathroom. "*Tu sais que je ne peux pas le faire moi-même!* (You know I can't do it by myself!)" he laughed.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"Adam, I don't understand," his mother said. "All teams lose. No matter how good they are. Your father's team, Newcastle United, they don't always win. You know how grumpy-"

Adam pulled away from her. Distraught, he yelled. "They were supposed to *win!* C'est destin!" At her silence, he continued, fighting for each word. "C'est la manière que...que le destin l'a prévue pour être!" He paused. "It was supposed to be a walkover!"

Mrs. Francis couldn't hold back *all* of her bemusement. "A 'walkover'?"

"You're right, you *don't* understand," he muttered, falling back to the mattress and turning away from her once more.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

As Luc brushed his teeth, his father sat on the closed toilet. Thinking. Luc glanced down at him, and stopped his brushing. Mr. Carrivée looked up; he gestured his question.

"Maman habituellement s'assied comme ça et me parle. Quand quelque chose n'allait pas. ("Maman used to sit like that and talk to me. When something was wrong.)"

"*Quand est-ce que quelque chose n'allait pas?* (When was anything wrong?)"

"*Que veux-tu me dire? (What do you want to tell me?)*" Luc countered.

"*Adam n'est pas comme nous, Luc. (Adam is not like us, Luc.)*"

"*Je connais! Je connais! (I know! I know!)*" he laughed, mouth frothing toothpaste. "*Il parle dans cette langue étrange! (He talks in that strange language!)*" He held up his toothbrush as if it were a microphone, and did his best radio D.J. "*And the hits just keep on coming!*"

"*Toi et moi... (You and me...)*" his father began, "*... nous sommes les vrais croyants! Nous sommes les grands protecteurs du sport! Ceux dont le cœur ne manque jamais! Nous avons l'habitude de faire face à la déception occasionnelle. (...we're the true believers! We're the great protectors of the sport! The ones whose hearts never fail! We're used to dealing with the occasional disappointment.*"

"*Pas avec les Canadiens! (Not with the Canadiens!)*" Luc insisted, making a mess of the mirror, spittle and foam flying.

"*Luc, Adam à prévu que nous gagnons. (Luc, Adam expected us to win.)*"

"*Nous aussi! (So did we!)*"

Mr. Carrivée thought for a second. "*Ceci est différent. (This is different.)*"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

When Mrs. Francis arrived in the kitchen, Mr. Francis gestured to the teapot on the table. "I've made us a cuppa."

She said nothing in response.

"What was all *that* about? With Adam? I hope he had a good reason-"

"He's crying, John."

"Crying? About what?"

"They lost. They were *beaten*."

None of this registers with him. "*Who* lost? *Who* was beaten?"

"Canada," she explained. "Team Canada. Against the Soviets."

Her husband still couldn't connect the dots...and then he did. "He's *crying*?!? Over an *ice hockey match*?" he added, incredulous. "Now *that's* barmy!"

'I'll keep that in mind,' she thought as he headed to the living room, 'next time England doesn't advance in the World Cup.'

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

*"On a fait monter ses espoirs, Luc. On lui a promis qu'ils gagneraient. (We got his hopes up, Luc. We promised him they would win.)"*

*"Mais papa! Cela fait partie du hockey! Croire! Vous avez toujours dit ça! (But Papa! That's part of hockey! Believing! You've always said that!)"*

*"Fils, quand on a choisi de présenter Adam au hockey, de partager avec lui toutes les choses que nous aimons, nous avons accepté la responsabilité d'être ses guides. Nous sommes tout aussi choqués par ce qui s'est passé ce soir, que par ce qu'ont été tous témoins du Forum. Mais je pense que pour Adam, c'est différent. Il n'était pas préparé pour ce que cela a produit. Je ne pense pas qu'il ait jamais mis son cœur, son âme à soutenir une équipe. Dans n'importe quel sport. Il s'est aventuré avec nous sans rien retenir. D'une certaine manière, la perte pour lui a peut-être été une blessure d'autant plus grande. Il a dirigé avec un cœur ouvert et non protégé. Un cœur pur. Et je pense que nous devons l'aider avec sa déception. C'est ce que nous devons faire. (Son, when we chose to introduce Adam to hockey, to share with him all the things we love about it, we accepted the responsibility of being his guides. We're all shocked by what happened tonight, by what we all witnessed from The Forum. But I think for Adam, it's not the same. He expected- He wasn't prepared for this to happen. I don't think that he's ever put his heart, his soul into supporting a team. In any sport. He ventured with us with nothing held back. In a way, the loss for him may have been all the greater a wound. He led with an open an unprotected heart. A pure heart. And I think we'll have to help him with his disappointment. That's what we need to do.)"*

In no-seconds-flat, Luc's eyes were welling-up. Within the space of several heartbeats, they were overflowing pools.

*"Qu'est ce que c'est, Luc? (What is it, Luc?) his father asked, alarmed and now standing. "Pourquoi es-tu soudainement si triste? Il ira bien! Croyez-moi! Toi et moi, On va aider Adam- (Why are you suddenly so sad? He'll be fine! Trust me! You and me, we'll help Adam-)"*

*"Tu parles comme Maman. (You sound just like Maman.)"*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"My heart was broken," Adam explains to Zoë, slouching back in his chair, staring at his coffee, wooden stir-stick moving in consistent circles, on auto-pilot. "That's the only way I can describe it. Worse than losing your first crush. At least what losing *my* first crush felt like." He considers this some more. A crush, a friendship...

“No. It was the same kind of heartbreak you feel when you lose someone- When someone passes. The first death in my family, my Nana Francis, my dad’s mother, *that* was what it was like.” He looks at Zoé plainly. “Now *that’s* hyperbole. Do you know that that word means? Hyperbole?” At her head-shake, he continues. “Something that’s an exaggeration. Something ‘over-the-top’.”

“It hurt,” Zoë offers. “Big-time.”

“I was *crushed*. I don’t remember anything else about that evening. I slept through the night. When I woke up, I still had my street-clothes on. Beyond the surprise, I was OK for a minute, but then the reality set in about the night before. If my mom hadn’t called me downstairs for breakfast, I probably would have just pulled the sheets over my head and stayed there all day.”

## Chapter Five: The Morning After The Night Before

Dealing with their ‘hangovers’ with their version of ‘a little hair of the dog’, the neighbourhood kids played hockey in the street. Stick blades scraping across asphalt. Stick heels rapidly *thwacking*, signalling ‘Over here, over here! Pass the ball!’. And then there was the re-enactment of goals scored in the previous evening’s debacle. At least the Canadian ones. Patriotism made replaying the other team’s goals (SEVEN!) a betrayal. A sacrilege.

Meanwhile, at the Francis dining room table, a silent Adam and his sighing mum were forced to listen to Mr. Francis’s mini-rant.

“Bloody Hell! It’s hardly even a sport! And not even a respectable one, at that!” he grumbled. ““There was a fight tonight, and an ice hockey match broke out! Jesus, Mary, Joseph and all the lambs in the manger! It’s enough that I have to put up with a plant full of workers yammering on about the damned match the night before! Now the same in my own home?!?”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

With Luc strapping on his pads, Mr. Carrivée stood against the kitchen wall, gesticulating madly on the phone. “*C'est ce qu'ils ont écrit?!? Ces batards! Je sais je sais; c'était un résultat horrible! Mais ce n'est qu'un seul jeu! Il y en a sept autres, peu importe! Peut-être convient-il que le premier sang ait coulé dans la Belle Province! Après tout, notre sang contient l'essence du hockey, non?* (That’s what they wrote?!? Those turncoat bastards! I know, I know; it was a horrible result! But it’s only one game! There are seven more- It

doesn't matter! Maybe it's fitting that the first blood spilled was in La Belle Province! After all, our blood contains the essence of hockey, no?)"

Luc took it all in as if none of it mattered, not even when his father gestured at him with his 'blood' comment. He wanted nothing to do with talk; he wanted to just get out there. But as he marched for the front door, his father extricated himself from his phone call.

*"Luc! Attendez! (Luc! Wait!)"*

*"Quoi, papa?!? J'ai besoin d'aller! (What, Papa?!? I need to go!)"*

Mr. Carrivée raised one brow. And waited.

*"Je suis désolé (I'm sorry,)"* Luc said, contrite.

*"Luc, mon fils; te souviens-tu de ce dont nous avons parlé hier soir? À propos d'Adam? (Luc, my son; do you remember what we spoke about last night? About Adam?"*

*"Papa, j'ai besoin de jouer! Cela ne peut-il pas- (Papa, I need to play! Can't this-)"*

*"Luc, je sais que t'as besoin. Mais rapelles-toi, nous sommes à Adam... Ses protecteurs. Ses guides. (Luc, I know you do. But remember, we're Adam's... His guardians. His guides.)"*

Luc pressed his hands and face against the window. *"Il n'est même pas là! Il ne joue pas! (He's not even out there! He doesn't play!)"*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Once more, Adam stood at the front door, gazing out at the kids. His mom approached from the living room. "Aren't you going to watch? You usually sit and watch."

*"I sit and read."*

They looked on as Luc came outside and onto the sidewalk. As he did, the kids swarmed him, their energy palpable. Without another word, Adam turned away to head to his bedroom. So what he didn't see was the exchange between Luc and the kids, then their disappointment as Luc walked towards the Francis home.

"Adam...?" Mrs. Francis called out. "Luc's here," she added, opening the front door. "Good morning, Luc."

"Bonjour, Mme- Good morning, Mrs. Francis," Luc said, watching Adam appear beside her. "Come out and play," he said to him.

"You know I don't play," he said softly with a nod to the kids.

"Come and play with *me* for a while. In our driveway."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

And so while still wearing his goalie pads, Luc tried to show Adam something about shooting, using a regular stick. Resulting in some truly comical moments. Eventually, Mr. Carrivée came out to watch, with coffee and cigarettes, as Mrs. Francis surreptitiously took it all in from their steps.

Truth was that Adam didn't seem to be very coordinated. This caused Luc endless frustration, and at one point he kicked the ball back at Adam...who managed a 'stick- save' with the shaft of the regular hockey stick. To the surprise of both.

"Good morning Adam," Mr. Carrivée said as he walked to Luc, ending facing away from Adam. He said something to his son, who reacted stiffly. After a thoughtful pause, Mr. Carrivée shrugged, and began to walk away.

And Mrs. Francis migrated a little bit closer, sitting sat down to afford the moment she suspected its due importance.

"*Pouquoi?* (Why?)" Luc asked, just the *hint* of petulance in his voice.

Mr. Carrivée stopped and turned. "*Je ne crois pas avoir besoin d'expliquer. Mais quand même: je veux que tu penses à ta mère. Qu'est-ce qu'elle t'encouragerait à faire?* (I don't believe that I need to explain. But still: I want you to think of your mother. What would *she* encourage you to do?)"

Adam caught maybe a half-dozen of these words, leaving him barely ahead of his own mother in understanding Mr. Carrivée.

A swell of heartfelt emotions negated the slight anger Luc felt. And so he removed his pads. And began to dress Adam in his equipment.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Zoë's mouth is wide open in disbelief. "My dad did that? He actually did that?"

"Does that seem out of character?" Adam asks.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The play in the street stopped, the kids now staring at them from the middle of the road.

"Ils ont été faits-" Luc paused. "They were made for me. By my maman. My mother."

"She *made* these?!?"

The wonder in Adam's voice soothed away any resentment Luc might have been feeling. "By hand. She worked as a...a..." Luc looked to his father, but he couldn't help with the word.

"The person who sews things. Not a...a tailor, but..."

"A *seamstress*."

Mr. Carrivée clapped his hands at Mrs. Francis's called out contribution to the conversation. "Exactement! Exactly! A 'seamstress'! Thank you, Mrs. Francis!"

"She copied the pads worn by Dryden," Luc continued to explain.

"Stitch-for-stitch," Mr. Carrivée beamed.

Adam watched closely as Luc suited him up, his new friend's kind demeanour settling in. "She worked hard on them. Like she was preparing a gift for a prince. I begged her to finish them."

Mr. Carrivée went closer to them. "He was *furious* when he realized they were *not* going to be...*regulation*."

Adam didn't understand the implication.

"If she'd made them 'in scale', they would have been too big for street hockey," Mr. Carrivée explained. "So she made them smaller. Just right."

"So... So you can't use them on the ice?"

Luc didn't respond.

"Sometimes," Mr. Carrivée began, "things are not as they seem, Adam. My wife, Luc's maman, she was a woman for whom the term 'glowing' was invented. 'L'image même de la santé.' Robust. Full of vigour. She had a big heart, but one not destined to last." He said nothing else, confident that Adam could connect the dots. Already he knew his son's new friend this well.

Sure enough, Adam had his 'light bulb' moment: he placed his hand on his chest. "Your mom...her heart..." He looked to Mr. Carrivée. "Is that how- Did she...?"

"She was too young to die. But it was a... *Une condition congénitale*. (A congenital condition.) *Héréditaire* (Hereditary.)"

And then Adam looked to Luc. "So you... *You* can't play. Because *your* heart..."

Mr. Carrivée knelt down, placing a hand on his shoulder. "He can play *here*. He can't play-"

As his father racked his brain for the right expression, fumbling, Luc completed his thoughts. "I can't play organized hockey. It's too stressful. Too dangerous."

"But *maybe*," Mr. Carrivée began, face bright. "The doctors here might have better news than in Quebec. At your McMaster, we hope."

Mrs. Francis was moved by the hope in Mr. Carrivée's voice.

"But you love the game so much!" said Adam. "Isn't that- Isn't that *hard*...?"

As Luc shrugged, Mr. Carrivée struggled to push through the difficult moment. "It is not as hard as missing his *maman*. But at least she is with him, every time he's out here playing."

Luc's hand went to his shirt, to his chest, to what hung from his neck there. His secret. His talisman.

Adam stared down at the pads. Frowning. "But I shouldn't be wearing them. I don't- They're too valuable!"

Mr. Carrivée blinked his acknowledgement to Mrs. Francis. "Consider it a little visit with her. I know she would have liked you."

It's unlikely that Mrs. Francis could have felt any more pride.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"I still have those pads." Even though she's teary-eyed at Adam's retelling, Zoë smiles her grandfather's smile. "I learned a lot in those pads. In the driveway. My dad may never have played organized hockey, but he was a great coach."

"I know. He *taught* me."

“Yes!” Zoë cheers. “You’d think it had been *him* in net when Saltfleet won the provincial high school championship, and not you. He was *so* proud of all of the ribbons and trophies.”

After digesting all this, Adam asked the question he’d been dreading. “How-How did he die?”

“The same way as my grandmother. But more on *his* terms.”

“Behind the bench?”

“In the crease.”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Luc got Adam all set with the pads properly cinched tight, the mask positioned just right, the gloves just so; it reminded Mrs. Francis of an attendant squire methodically and meticulously dressing a knight with all the requisite *accoutrements*. He positioned him in net...and then began taking shots.

Throughout all of this, the neighbourhood kids had been watching, fascinated; Adam Francis, the last person they could have imagined ‘between the pipes’. The fact that he was sporting bespoke pads pushed things well beyond their imaginations.

Adam had reasonably good reactions...but apparently little else. Luc tried to instruct as he shot, which didn’t seem to be a particularly good system to his father. “Why don’t you let *me* take the shots, and *you* teach him...?”

It’s clear as Mr. Carrivée took over that he wasn’t merely a hockey fan; he had some real ‘on-ice’ skills. To begin, he did some nifty juggling of the ball, bouncing it off just about every portion of the stick.

Mrs. Francis laughed, charmed.

“Showoff!”

Ignoring his son’s comment from the cheap seats, Mr. Carrivée began letting Adam know where his shot was going. Then Luc advised as to how to respond to the expected shot. And Adam tried to follow suit. And still the kids watched.

Momentum built. Mr. Carrivée was *very* good at providing opportunities for success. Regular cheers began to rise.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Laying on the couch, Mr. Francis could hear the noise. His curiosity piqued, he got up, looked around at the empty room, and then, peering through the side window, got a glimpse of the goings-on next door. "Adam...?" he said, quietly, mesmerized in his doziness. "I used to be a goalkeeper." After a few moments, he shook some grumpy sense into himself. "A *real* one." Still, he remained there. Watching. Spectating.

Something tickled Mrs. Francis, and she felt the sudden need to turn around to the house. But as mom's *always* have a sixth-sense going on, she brushed aside this urge. 'Sometimes it's better to just leave things alone,' she thought with a smile.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Adam kept up with the duo's instructions, and as he did, as his confidence built, he got a little cocky. After all, even if the occasional Saturday Hockey Night in Canada at the Allens' hadn't left any sort of impression, given the previous evening, he'd seen goalies in action now, so was mimicking certain moves.

"OK," Mr. Carrivée said with a poker-face. "This time...left corner...*bottom*." Firing a picture-perfect wrist-shot...he scored easily in the upper-right corner. The kids groaned.

"*Méchant!* (Meanie!)" Luc laughed.

## Chapter Six: The Assignment

"Adam," before you go have your lunch, I have something for you." Mr. Carrivée held an envelope in his hand. "An assignment."

Luc was helping Adam remove the pads, undoing the straps, lifting apart the snaps. "It will be one of two things," he whispered to Adam. "It's either a contract to play...or an essay: 'Why I Want to Be a Goalie'."

"*Non, je sais tout.* (No, smarty pants.) "*Et la tâche est pour vous deux.* (And the assignment is actually for *both* of you.)" He gave Adam time to translate the short sentence. "I have something for you to translate. Then, Luc will translate it back to French." He watched the dumbfounded expression the boys shared. "It is a contest of sorts. We will make you both properly bilingual in no time."

"What about *you*?" Luc laughed.

"I am the judge," Mr. Carrivée deflected. "And all decisions are final."

Adam thought hard on this. "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose."

The Carrivées were *very* impressed.

"Bonus point!" Mr. Carrivée cheered.

"Papa!" his son grumbled.

"What's the prize?" Adam asked. "For winning the contest."

"*Pour toi, mon amitié d'éternité.* (For you, my forever friendship.) *Pour mon fils, être éternellement un bon père.* (For my son, eternally being a good father.)"

Luc sighed. "So *no* prize, then."

"Oh, and Adam," Mr. Carrivée said, "Veuillez utiliser un crayon. (Use a pencil, please.)"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"Here you go, Adam," his mother said, holding a dinner tray. On it, a plate with a pile of fresh Italian bread slices, slathered in butter, with chunks of cheese, a few pickles, and a glass of milk. "Must be something important," she added, gesturing with a nod of her head to what Adam was intently reading.

"It's an assignment," he replied.

"But school doesn't start for another two days."

"It's- I want to be able to speak French. *Really* speak it."

"This is because of our new neighbours. The Carrivées."

Adam nodded.

She could see him considering something, so she waited, holding the tray close.

"Mom, you're Welsh."

"I am!" she laughed.

"Do you still speak- *Can* you still speak Welsh?"

Mrs. Francis's heart was warmed. "*Ond wrth gwrs, fy machgen melys, melys. Mae ble rydyn ni'n dod, yn bwysig. Bydd ein mamiaith yn parhau i fod yn famiaith i ni am ein holl ddyddiau.* (But of course, my sweet, sweet boy. Where we come from, matters. Our mother tongue will remain our mother tongue for all our days.)"

Adam was unusually enraptured with his mother's response. "What did you say?"

"That me speaking Welsh will remain as constant as your appetite," she replied, finally handing him his lunch. "Bon appétit."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

It really wasn't an 'assignment' to Adam. Well, it was, but one he didn't see as a chore such as mowing the lawn or taking out the garbage or 'hoovering' the carpets. As he flicked through his large English & French dictionary, his eyes were sharp and his spirit high. It wouldn't be overstating it to say that there was also a tad bit of delirium at play. Just a little. But enough that while his efforts bore fruit, as the half-page began to be filled with fresh words...some of them erased, then erased once more...his lunch sat untouched. 'I should do this more often,' he thought. His head rose in happy response to this subconscious musing.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Mr. Carrivée stood before the two boys sitting in expectancy on the front steps. Grinning as he read Adam's work. "This is good! Most wonderful good! Your work is... méticuleuse. Meticulous," he confirmed, continuing his assessment. Finally, he folded the page in two and handed it to Luc with only the English showing. "Your turn."

When all was said and done, Luc's translation wasn't half-bad. Maybe not as good as Adam's, but then *he'd* used a dictionary. What was most interesting was how much Adam learned from Luc's mistakes, his dancing eyebrows.

No matter; this was Mr. Carrivée's message to Adam. (Which Luc was equally struck by.)

"Adam, it takes courage to go into battle. To muster the courage to wage war. The courage to do so knowing that things might not work out. That even when your team plays very good, great even, victory is never guaranteed. Sometimes this makes a loss all the more painful. The loss in Montreal shocked all true-hearted believers. A full-body pain. Luc felt it, I felt it, and I believe you felt it, too. Maybe even more deeply than us, because you weren't prepared for such an outcome. Just remember that we'll be marching into the next battle in this glorious campaign together, you, Luc and me. Because we too, are a team- And we will win, lose or draw *together.*"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"He's back to school the next day," Mr. Francis declared. "It's too late for him to be up watching the telly."

"It's the first day of school after summer hols," Mrs. Francis countered, "they don't get anything done. Besides; *everyone* will be watching the game, so *everyone* is liable to be a little tired. Including the teachers."

"Seven million people watched the game in Montreal," Adam added to the discussion. "A record!"

Mr. Francis looked to the ceiling. "For an ice hockey match!"

"I seem to remember someone glued to the radio back in '66..."

"That was different!" Mr. Francis complained to his wife. "That was the World Cup Final! 'The Beautiful Game'!"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

#### **September 4, Game Two, Toronto. Canada 4 - USSR 1**

As the announcer on the television signed off, Mr. Carrivée, Luc and Adam were all suitably beatific. Adam stood, almost hugging himself. "Good night and sweet dreams!" he cheered, and then paused. "En français?"

"Bonne nuit et fait de beaux rêves!" Mr. Carrivée replied.

"Bonne nuit et fait de beaux rêves!" Adam continued, marching to the front door. "Bonne nuit et fait de beaux rêves!"

"But we don't have any need to dream!" Luc insisted. "The Red Tide has been turned back!"

"Just remember," his father said, "there are six more games! And the tide can again turn, *and* be treacherous. *Again*. Remember: this is *war*."

No matter Mr. Carrivée's sobering comment, Adam skipped home merrily. When he came in through the kitchen door, his mom greeted him expectantly. (And crossed fingers behind her back.) "Bonne nuit et fait de beaux rêves!"

## Chapter Seven: First Day of School

The first day of the school year, and the neighbourhood kids migrated en masse. No matter how much he was buoyed by the group's enthusiasm about the win the night before, Luc appeared despondent. Adam noticed this. As Luc lagged, Adam leaned in. "School's not so tough."

"New school," came Luc's weary correction.

Adam considered this. "A new school's not as tough as *not* playing in net. On the ice."

Luc smiled. "Exactement."

"Especially when you have someone on your *team*."

Luc thought on this. "Team Canada! Yes."

"Mais non!" Adam said, then went a little closer to him. "Team Carrivée-Francis."

And with this, all of Luc's apprehension and angst disappeared.

"Your father is stopping by the school to enrol you?" Adam asked.

"He's already there. Before he goes to work."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Just as he'd stood apart with Luc in the playground, not even chumming it up with the neighbourhood kids, Adam wanted to stay with him in class.

He usually sat in one of the front-row seats. (This made sense, because he *was* in fact a 'brown-noser'. He preferred the term 'teacher's pet', but we don't get to choose how other people see us and the labels they apply.) But there wasn't a free seat to be found other than the one that Adam might have chosen. And so Adam went to the teacher. "Mrs. Carroll, Luc Carrivée just moved here. He's my neighbour. I promised his father that I would help him settle in. I'd like to sit near him."

"You like sitting up front," she smiled, eyeing the chairs being filled. "I at least know *that* about you. Have you asked anyone to move? It *is* the first day of school. Nothing's written in stone."

Adam gave this some thought as he looked to the seats. "I know what it's like to want the front row. I don't want to ask anyone- Would it be OK if we sat at the back?"

"It would," she replied. "On one condition."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"How many of you have had to start at a new school?"

Mrs. Carroll's question received only one hand in the air beyond Luc's.

"My father was in the military," Mrs. Carroll explained, "so I went to different schools. Seven of them from elementary through secondary. New teacher, new faces, feeling very much a stranger each and every time. It can be quite nerve-wracking. Class, we have a new student with us. And to introduce him, his neighbour Adam Francis," she concluded, indicating for Adam and Luc to stand. Students turned in their seats to watch.

"Luc Carrivée and his father moved to Stoney Creek on the weekend. They're from Quebec, so Luc is bilingual. Way more--"

"Frog!" someone coughed.

Eyes shifted to the cougher; they all knew who'd said the word.

"Mr. Parsons, congratulations; you just set a record for the fastest detention in a new school year. Adam, please continue."

Adam cleared his throat. "He's way more bilingual than me, that's for sure. He's a big hockey fan. In fact, his father is the new arena manager. Oh, and he's an incredible goalie...with hand-made pads, replicas of those used by Ken Dryden."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Its horn parping out a few bars of a classic rock song...always different, a prize being awarded the first person to yell out the title...the food-truck arrived at the Dayne Steel roll-up loading bay door and settled into a diagonal. You might say that its position could be seen as a 'come hither' stance, but no teasing was necessary for the three-a-day visits; they were much-needed breakups of a shift. To a casual observer, the general congeniality and good cheer was reminiscent of tossing popcorn to pigeons. Queueing up for their coffee, soft drinks, sandwiches and snacks, one topic of conversation prevailed, snippets of which could be overheard by anyone listening...except Mr. Francis, who, to be clear, stood alone near the end of the lineup.

Not far from him, three workers chatted animatedly. Including Bob Michie, a stocky man roughly Mr. Francis' age.

"I bet he's the only one in this entire place who wouldn't have seen the game last night," one employee offered.

"And won't be watching tomorrow night's!"

"You don't know that," Bob said. Being from Cornwall in Britain -his family worked the legendary tin mines going back generations- his 'pirate' accent was thick, deep and *very* friendly. "He *loves* sport."

"He loves *his* sports. *His* 'football'. *His* cricket. *His* rugby. Big difference."

"Don't get him talking about *any* of it," the second worker whispered. "He's a memory-machine! But nothing about *here*, or *now*...it's all about 'over 'ome'. Sorry, Bob. I know he's a pal of yours."

Sad and sighing, Bob nodded. He strolled over to Mr. Francis. "Alright, John?"

"Hello, Bob. Yes, thanks. You?"

"Well enough. Tough loss on the weekend."

Mr. Francis was suddenly animated. "I was listening to it. Horrible, horrible effort."

Though the actual game had not been identified, Bob knew that while he was referring to the 'Saturday Night Massacre' in Montreal, his friend was referencing a football match from 'over 'ome'.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Ah, a fight. The School Bully versus The New Kid. Though Brent 'The Red-haired Demon' Parsons was notably larger than his opponent, Luc had the advantage of what you might refer to as 'wiliness'. A crafty attitude that played well against Parsons' heavy-footed oafishness. In fact, Luc had been known as a scrapper back in Quebec. Not that this bully would have been put off knowing this.

All that mattered though, was the helpless feeling that Adam was overcome by, seemingly unable to do anything. Given what he now knew, it was his concern for Luc's health that spurred him into action. As Luc was knocked down, Adam leapt into the fray, and was immediately in the thick of it. This caught everyone entirely off-guard, from the cheering onlookers to Luc and especially Parsons.

So it was no surprise that twenty minutes later the trio could be found sitting outside the principal's office with an assortment of proofs of the altercation: Luc with his bludgeoned lip, Parsons with a bloody nose –each nostril sporting sopping-up wicks of toilet paper– and Adam a black eye.

Principal Manzuk exited his office and stood there imperiously with a belt in his hands. With subdued drama, he put it into his back pocket. Then he crossed his arms, and just as dramatically, regarded the boys. “*Mes bon amis*. (My good fellows.)” he said, winking at Luc. “Everything's not *quite* going very well, no?” Finally, he silently ushered them into his office.

## Chapter Eight: Munich and More

That evening, Luc and his father carried their Swanson tv dinners into the living room during a commercial break, setting them on dishtowels covering their thighs for the heat. “*Maman n'aurait jamais nous permis de manger devant la télévision*, (Maman never would have allowed us to eat in front of the television,)” Luc suggested.

“*Votre mère se serait évanouie à l'idée d'avoir ceux-ci, point. Peu importe; Ceci est différent*, ( Your mother would have fainted at the idea of having *these*, period. No matter; this is different,) his father suggested. “*Tu comprends ce qui se passe en Allemagne? Aux Jeux Olympiques? Affreux. Juste affreuse. Le pire*. (You do understand what's happening in Germany? At the Olympics? Awful. Just awful. The worst.)”

The commercials over, the news returned, a live feed from Munich. In it, they heard that eleven Israeli athletes and one West German police officer had been killed by the Palestinian terrorist group Black September.

Noting that Luc had stopped eating, and was staring wide-eyed and drop-jawed at the screen, Mr. Carrivée got up and turned off the television. “*Le monde peut être un endroit horrible* (The world can be a horrible place),” he sighed. “*Non; le monde a parfois des gens horribles qui font des choses horribles*. (No; the world sometimes has horrible people doing horrible things in it.)” He nodded to himself, acknowledging his much deeper thoughts, how his late wife, born on a kibbutz in what was now the State of Israel, would have viewed the situation. “*Nous en discuterons à un moment plus approprié, Toi et moi*. (We will discuss this at a more appropriate time, you and I.)” He looked to his son, who took the reassurances as enough of a distraction to return to his meal, a better look at Luc's lip. “‘Frog’? *C'est ce que cet enfant t'a appelé?* (That's what that kid called you?)”

Luc nodded.

"Ribbid! Ribbid!"

Luc rolled his eyes, then laughed. *This* made him grab his mouth. "Ow!"

"*Je suppose que c'est bien qu'il ne sache pas que tu es juif* (I suppose it's good that he doesn't don't know you're Jewish.)"

"*Mi-juif*. (Half-Jewish.)"

"*La meilleure moitié*. (The better half.)"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

As they ate, Mr. Francis was clearly not happy with Adam's shiner. "Fighting is bad enough. But I hate that this was over *ice hockey*! No son of mine is going to be a goon!"

"It wasn't about hockey," Adam tried to explain. "it was about Luc being French! I mean, from Quebec. Brent Parsons bullied him into the fight!"

"But you just *had* to get involved!"

"Luc's his friend, John!" Mrs. Francis insisted. "What would you expect him to do?"

"I *knew* this would happen. Bloody Frenchies!"

"I think that with everything else going on right now in the world," Mrs. Francis calmly offered, "boys fighting on the playground really *isn't* that important. Black eye, or no."

"The third game is tomorrow night." This was less a declaration as it was an entreaty from Adam.

"Not for *you* it isn't," his father grouched, his melodic accent only barely softening his tone. "You're grounded."

"I can't even go next door to Luc's?"

"You'd better reconsider this newfound love of ice hockey."

"John, that's not--"

"Be told!" he barked, regretting having uttered the words even as he spoke them. The use of these two words was usually a *very* bad calculation where his wife was

concerned. "It's a school night," he said in a softer, more neutral tone. I don't think we need to discuss this any further."

As Adam looked to his mom, there was a knock at the back door.

"You're excused, Adam," she said, if only to 'discuss' her husband's outburst. "Go on."

"Hold up!" Mr. Francis barked. "What did I just say?"

"I thought that was about *tomorrow* night," Adam replied softly.

"Adam, do you have any homework?" Mrs. Francis asked. At her son's head-shake, she continued. "Then I don't think we need to discuss this any further." But before Adam had hardly risen from his seat, his mother reached for her apron pocket. "Oh; I have something for you. A present from your *father* and I. Consider it a tea-gift." As she retrieved the item, she looked to her husband and his confusion. She placed a small rectangle wrapped in simple brown paper on the table. "I'm sorry I wasn't able to find a ribbon or a bow."

Adam sat back down and opened the package. His delight erased the discomfort of the previous minutes as he held up a pocket-sized English-French dictionary.

"You have the one we bought you when you started French lessons in school, but we thought you could use one to carry around to help you with your new friendships."

"Thank you, Mom. Dad," Adam said, looking quite 'chuffed' as the Brits would say.

"I made a special dessert for your father," she continued, making a show batting her eyelashes at her husband. "Trifle. Come back in a little bit, and I'll give you some to share with the Carrivées."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Mr. Carrivée fired a succession of soft shots at Luc. While the boy had on none of his equipment, he still made correct guesses at his father's selections, playfully batting them back.

Adam came into view. Looking down at his new possession, he read something, then looked up once more. Taking a few steps forward, he interrupted his progress by consulting the dictionary, flipping through the pages, searching for something in particular. When he found it, he grinned, and continued his migration. This was repeated a couple more times, greatly piquing the Carrivées' curiosity. Finally, he arrived at the junction of the two properties and cleared his throat.

"*Mon père ne veut...*" Biting his lip, Adam flipped the dictionary pages. "...*ne veut pas que je vienne voir...*" More flipping...and then he tore through the last portion of his announcement. "...*le match demain soir.*" His head nodded as he confirmed the words. "*Mon père ne me laisse pas venir regarder le match demain soir.* (My dad won't let me come over to watch the game tomorrow night.)"

"*Bravo, mon ami anglo réfléchi!* (Well done, my thoughtful Anglo friend!) Mr. Carrivée cheered. "Not about your news, of course. *That* is the worst news." He looked to Luc. "Well, not the 'worst'."

"You'll have to tell me about the day after," Adam sighed, slipping the dictionary in his back pocket. "If you describe it well enough, it'll be almost as good as watching it."

A smile exploded on Mr. Carrivée's face. He let loose a scorching slapshot, finding a huge hole, lighting Luc up for a goal, the metal garage door amplifying the noise. "A marvellous idea!" He smiled at Adam. "Thank you for stepping into the fray for Luc today. That was a brave thing to do. You are a true friend." He paused. "And your prize is magnificent!" He enthused, pointing to Adam's eye.

Adam was consulting his dictionary in a flash. "Un œil au beurre noir?"

"Oui. Ou l'œil poché...ou un *coquart*."

Adam grinned. "Mon *coquart*! C'est magnifique!"

"*Votre coquart est un trophée magnifique.* (Your shiner is a magnificent trophy!)"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"You are?!?" Adam asked Luc as he walked to school the next day. "Seriously? You don't look-"

"What, I don't look Jewish?" Luc took a moment to consider his own question.

"I don't know. Do I look-" Now it was Adam doing the thinking. "I've only been to church...a couple of times...a long time ago..."

"Well, you look English."

"Only half English," Adam said. "So is your father Jewish, too?"

"No. But he says *that* part of Maman lives on in me."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The school was silent. Each classroom, each hallway, everywhere. Well, less so in kindergarten, where the teacher was mostly just trying to quell the little ones' chatter.

"Thank you for this minute's silence in acknowledgement of the tragedy in Munich." Only the teachers listening especially well would have noticed the slight quaver in principal's voice over the public announcement system.

"We're gonna need *another* minute tomorrow," Brent Parson joked, "after the Soviets kill them tonight!"

"Mr. Parsons," Mrs. Carroll barked.

*This* sounded serious. Everyone's interest levels rose immediately.

"I have a special project for you Mr. Parsons," Mrs. Carroll said. "Seeing as you have such lack of appreciation for gravity of the occasion. I'd like for you to organize a class presentation on what's happened in Munich. One thousand words...with newspaper clippings. Start with today's editions...and use the next few days' editions as your reference. I'll be expecting you to do the presentation next Friday, the fifteenth. A week and a half should be plenty of time for you to work your magic."

The tiny machines in Parson's blunt-thinking head worked at maximum capacity. "You expect *me* to pay for those papers?"

The class turned their attention to the teacher. While Adam looked to Luc.

"See me at the end of the day for some money for the copies you'll have to purchase."

Adam stood up, reached into a pocket, then walked to Brent to place a quarter on his desk. Brent stared at it a second, then dismissed it with a backhand, sending it careening against a wall.

"That's enough!" Mrs. Carroll shouted. "Can't you understand what's happened? People have *died*."

Luc put up his hand.

"It's far more important than some hockey series," the teacher continued. "Regardless of which side you're rooting for."

Luc began to wave his hand. Then he stood.

"Yes, Luc?"

"I would like to volunteer to help with this project. About Munich."

Mrs. Carroll, Brent, the rest of the class instantly had one thing in common: they were dumbstruck. Save for Adam, who got up.

"Yes, Adam, you may join the effort." Pausing, she smiled. "With one amendment to the assignment."

## Chapter Nine: Subterfuge

### September 6, Game Three, Winnipeg: Canada 4 - USSR 4

"Luc is coming over in a bit" Mrs. Francis said. "He and Adam--"

"That ice hockey match is *not* being watched on our telly. It was hockey that got *my son* that ruffian's badge, and--"

"It's schoolwork," Adam lied. As soon as the words had left his mouth, Adam realized that he didn't feel bad one bit about the subterfuge. In fact, he felt a small amount of excitement. He also realized how common a feeling this had become since the Carrivées had arrived. "Luc is going to need extra help. Because of his English."

"John, *our son* has a good head on his shoulders. *And* a good heart in his chest."

Suffice it to say that this comment brought Adam up short.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"Good evening, Mr. Francis," Luc said, an old-fashioned satchel stuffed with textbooks. "Thank you for letting Adam help me with my schoolwork."

Sitting in the living room reading, Mr. Francis had little reaction; as usual, he was in his own world.

The boys disappeared to Adam's room, where Luc unloaded his satchel. Books were haphazardly piled up on the bed. Most of which Adam was unfamiliar with. Certainly not from school. And atop them, a transistor radio.

"At least we can listen to the game," Adam sighed quietly. "But are you sure you don't want to be at home, *watching* it on tv?"

Luc got up, carefully closed the door, then arranged the books closer to the window. "My father...his nickname is 'Le Renard'."

Adam thought hard to translate.

"It means-"

Adam held up a finger as he reached into pocket for his dictionary. He quickly flipped through it. All through this, Luc was a little wide-eyed at the gesture. "A-ha!" his host said. "Le Renard... The *Fox*."

"Exactement," Luc grinned, motioning for Adam to sit. Adam didn't understand. Pulling back the drapes with the flourish of a magician, Luc gestured with a sweep of his arm, also in the tradition of performance stagecraft.

Adam gazed out the window to see a television in the stairwell window at Luc's. Luc turned on the radio, waving with it at his father.

Standing beside the television, Mr. Carrivée waved back.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Some time on, carrying a snack on a plate, Mrs. Francis headed upstairs. "Why is his door closed?" Mr. Francis called out.

"He's almost a teenager, John. Don't you remember wanting priv-"

"They should be doing their schoolwork," he replied gruffly.

Mrs. Francis paused. "Have you *entirely* forgotten what it's like to be that age?" she asked, to silence. "Who are you, and what have you done with my husband the charming rogue?" she complained to herself *sotto voce*.

Approaching Adam's bedroom, she could hear irregular noise from within. She knocked on the door...and the noise died. After a pause, Adam answered, looking frustrated. Then relieved. As she entered, Adam tried to cut her off, but she deked him out, twirling around him as deftly as any of the Soviets might have, to arrive at the bed -and window- with her delivery. As Luc tried to close the drapes, she stopped him, bent in, peeked out at the television, and grinned. Oh, and for good measure, she waved to Mr. Carrivée. "Is there *anyone* better to keep a secret than your mum...?"

Smiling, she began to make her exit to the door. Opening it, she stopped. "Work hard, lads!" she called out. "Don't hold *anything* back." She poked her head around the door. "Except for the cheering," was her farewell whisper.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

While the rest of Game Three unfolded, Mr. and Mrs. Francis had been watching a movie on tv. Which involved a little snuggling.

Eventually Adam walked Luc downstairs, sadness abounding. As they arrived, Adam's parents were 'caught'; Mr. Francis was embarrassed by what had been unfolding on the couch. Mrs. Francis, far more cool about it, turned to the boys, her hand clasping her husband's. "Good session, then?"

Luc looked to Adam briefly. "Some things end up being much harder than you expect them to be."

"Which is why a friend in need is a friend indeed, yes?" she suggested. "Oh, and boys; I think I can help with your Munich project. Dr. Capel loves his various newspapers, so I'll ask him if he could put them aside over the next few days."

## Chapter Ten: Gone Dancing

Now their morning habit, Adam and Luc trudged along to school in lockstep. "My father says they should be thankful they got a tie," Luc said. "I think he was a little ashamed of this fact, too."

"Was he angry?"

"Not angry. Sad. I think he wants to be hopeful. But he's finding it hard. Will you be able to come over for tomorrow night's game?"

"I *want* to be hopeful..."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

At Dayne, Bob dropped off a report at Mr. Francis' desk. Adam's father stood at the broad window, looking down on the shop floor. "What are they all doing out there?"

"Huh? Oh. Letting off some steam about last night's game. And chuntering on about the next one."

"Hockey, bloody hockey!" Mr. Francis almost shouted. "Is that all anyone can talk about?"

"Keep your voice raised like that, and they'll have something else to keep talking about."

"They've more cheek than an elephant's rump! Standing around, chin-wagging over some bloody game!"

"You've never spent time on a Monday morning with your workmates, analyzing the weekend's fixtures?"

"That's different!"

With raised brows, Bob exited. "I'll have a word," he said over his shoulder.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

### **September 8, Game Four, Vancouver: USSR - 5 Canada 3**

Dinner done, with Adam's help, Mrs. Francis cleaned up. "I've pressed your favourite shirt, John. And your suit's been freshly dry-cleaned."

"What for?" he asked, surprised.

"Your father and I are going out tonight," she instead said to Adam.

"We are?!?"

Mrs. Francis took Adam's hands and began moving him around the kitchen. "We're going *dancing*."

Watching them, Mr. Francis got a tad *misty-eyed*. "We haven't been out dancing in..."

"Your father used to dance in competitions," Mrs. Francis told Adam. "Did you know that? Ballroom dancing. Back in his home town."

"Newcastle," Adam offered.

"That's right" she sighed, floating towards her husband. "I had to beg and *plead* my way onto his dance card..."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Mr. Carrivée was peppering Luc with shots while Adam collected balls. He placed a batch at Mr. Carrivée feet. "He gets a little- He needs to let go of some of his energy when he's too excited," he explained, looking to his son. "*Essaie au moins d'arrêter quelques uns, OK?* (At least *try* to stop some of these, OK?)"

"Then you at least *try* to score, OK?"

With shot after shot after shot, Mr. Carrivée gently wore Luc out, ever mindful of his son's exertion levels. Adam had a hard time watching and fetching. Finally, all three of them were soaked with sweat; Luc eventually held up a hand in surrender.

"Good timing," Mr. Carrivée said "The game's on in five minutes."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

With sad faces, Adam, Luc and his father looked on as Phil Esposito castigated the Vancouver crowd and the Canadian fans in general in defence of Team Canada's efforts. It was a stunning tirade, something that was instantly a piece of the country's mythos.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

They sat in silence in the dark on the front steps.

"One win," Luc said softly, ever so softly, as if to not give the truth any more heft. "Out of four games. Four games at home! They managed only one win! C'est incroyable!"

"What does it mean?" Adam asked.

Luc looked to his father.

"It means that things will never be the same. No matter how the remaining games go in Moscow, things will never be the same. And *that*, to this 'traditionaliste', scares me the most."

"Why?"

"Why? I have been giving this much thought. The last Game of the Stanley Cup Final series ended on May 11th. The playoffs ended on April 25th, the regular season at the beginning of that month. Some of the players that made it onto the Team Canada roster would have been on vacation five months before that first game against the Soviets for *five months*, a little less if we factor in the training camps and exhibition games. And what do NHL players do in the off-season, while they're on holiday?"

No responses. This was probably due to the dour tone of Mr. Carrivée's response.

"Fishing. Golfing. Taking it easy after a long season. Doing what they usually do. Getting soft. Getting fat. Getting lazy. Taking a very long nap. Which is understandable; hockey can be a brutal sport. It's a very physical game." He paused. "And their counterparts?"

Again with the silence, but this time with dreaded anticipation at where Mr. Carrivée was going; both were depressed already.

"What is the name of the Soviet team?"

"The Red Army," Adam offered quickly.

"Yes. And armies don't go soft. Or fat. Or lazy. They're constantly ready for battle."

Pure silence.

"Think about it. A soft army goes to war with one that is well-trained, disciplined and in fighting shape. If not for the substantial talents of the first army, the second might have utterly massacred them. It could have been 7-3, 6-0, 5-1 and 4-0. We could be heading to Moscow down four games to none, with the only possible outcome being an eventual tie."

"They could have lost *all eight*."

Mr. Carrivée said nothing. "So; things will never be the same. We have been chastised in a most embarrassing way."

"Had our ears clipped," Adam suggested.

"Cut?" Luc asked, not understanding.

"Smacked."

"Ouch," Luc said, feeling for an ear.

"I believe the game in the NHL will change. There has been too much displayed in how the Soviets play to *not* learn from it. I'd like to believe that we're not that stubborn. Not that proud."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"And did the game change?" Adam and Zoë stand at the HOF '1972 Summit Series' display.

"Most historians would say so," Adam replies. "That it revolutionized hockey, period. Starting with the conditioning; it used to be that players arrived in training camp to *get into shape*. Ever since, off-season conditioning became part of the yearly schedule. Everyone still fished, golfed, did all those things...but the usual habits that resulted in players being *soft* over those four or five months eventually became relics of the past.

And the style of play changed, too. After watching the Soviets in Montreal in Game One, I think everyone realized that the slicing and dicing that had been showcased was a harbinger of the future." He thought for a second. "I always think about the Habs teams of the mid- to late-70s. But obviously, Gretzky and the Oilers were the natural heirs. I sometimes wonder how they would have done against that Summit Series Soviet team."

"My dad told me that after the first game--"

"The shellacking in Montreal..."

"-that he couldn't imagine feeling more depressed."

"Until Team Canada losing in Winnipeg after the rebound in Toronto, then the disaster in Vancouver."

"He called *that* 'le grand barattage'."

"The Great Churning," Adam nods. "I remember that we couldn't decide if we were more angry than sad, more frustrated than disappointed..."

"He told me that the next two weeks...between Vancouver and the first game in Moscow...were the longest of his life." She looked up at Adam. "How did you and my dad handle it?"

"Well, first off, keep in mind that school had just begun. So *that* was a lifesaver in a way. A good distractor. Secondly, we prayed. Well... I *wished* more than I prayed."

"And thirdly? Is there a third--"

"We waited."

"Without the Internet! I would have gone crazy!"

"Your father and I- You know, those twenty-two days in September... Sure, there was The Series. But between Games 4 and 5, your father and I cemented our friendship."

"I don't understand. You took a *bullet* for him in that fight!" Zoë laughs. "Your shiner! You'd only known him for a few days at that point!"

"Well, about that fight: me jumping into the fray didn't end the fight. In fact, Parsons giving me that black eye didn't end things. When your dad saw me take the hit, it must have set something off in him; it would be years before I witnessed anything so furious up-close. Not until my rookie year in the NHL. All of a sudden, he was a blur of fists. Parsons didn't have a chance. Which I think really stunned him, because he'd always been the top bully at Collegiate. It was fortunate for him that a teacher was close by to break things up. I just stood there *gobsmacked*, as my parents would have said," Adam laughs.

"Wow."

"So; let me tell you about those two weeks."

# Book Two

## Chapter Eleven: The Arena

Mr. Francis leaned against the wall, clunky shortwave radio in hand, listening to a soccer broadcast from England. With an arm outstretched to the ceiling, he held up the unit *just so*; it was the only place in the house with good reception, and he was happy to look as if he were offering something to the gods. It was a true labour of love.

At one point, Mrs. Francis made her way by, smiled, but didn't say a thing, knowing to leave him alone. A lesser labour. (Including ignoring the darkening smudge on the wall, proof of his time spent there.)

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Adam, Luc and his father pored over newspapers. The Toronto Star. The Hamilton Spectator. The Globe and Mail. The Toronto Sun. The Montreal Gazette.

"Papa! So many papers!"

"I dipped into your college fund," he winked at Adam. "You must have priorities, remember?" When Luc's eyes went wide, he laughed as he reassured him. "Don't worry so much! They're not a fortune!"

"Not by themselves. But together...?"

"Maybe we shouldn't be reading these," Adam suggested.

"Ignoring the truth doesn't change it," Mr. Carrivée advised, and then tapped his temple. "And knowledge is power."

"Does it make it easier to deal with?" Adam asked. "I mean, *swimming* in it?" He gestured to the sizeable spread.

"We're *not* the team," Mr. Carrivée insisted. "How we feel about things cannot change the outcome."

"Then why cheer on your team?!?" Adam was confused.

"But the coaches... Sinden, Ferguson..." Luc began, glossing over Adam's question. Wouldn't they be telling the players now how *they* feel about things that can change the outcome?"

"Exactement! They can! And they *will* change the outcome!"

Not understanding at all, Adam and Luc stared at Mr. Carrivée. Waiting.

"So you *do* think they can win!" Luc finally insisted.

"I don't know what to think," his father replied. "But I do know that they haven't won much so far. *And* that it will come down to what the players believe."

"Well, Phil Esposito believes the fans have been worse than the team's performance," Adam said, holding up a Sports section. He tapped at a paragraph.

"I'm really disappointed with them," Luc read slowly, carefully. "I am completely disappointed. I cannot believe it," he says with a hang-" Luc looked at the word again. "Hangdog?" he asked Adam.

"It means dejected. I think."

"With a hangdog face. 'Some of our guys are really, really down in the dumps. We know, we're trying, I mean, hell, we're doing the best we can.'"

They had watched Esposito say these words the night before. Luc saying them seemed twice as hard to listen to.

"Can you imagine how it would feel if your supporters abandoned you?" Mr. Carrivée asked softly. Seriously. "How heartbreaking that would be?"

"We expected them to win," Adam sighed.

Smiling, Mr. Carrivée, ruffled Adam's hair. "Yes, *we* did."

"But now...four games in Moscow...' Luc did the calculation in his head. "Canada would have to win *three* of them! That's almost impossible."

"They said it was impossible to lose *any* of the first four on Canadian soil," Adam offered.

"This is true," Mr. Carrivée conceded.

"Wait!" Luc cried. "You said that how we feel about things will not change the outcome!"

"I did. Unless--"

"But you also said how heartbreaking it would be for the team if everyone abandoned them!"















"The juices. Um... The fat that drips from the meat."

"Ah. Les gouttes."

"Ou alors l'égouttage-" Luc proposed.

"Ou a graisse du rôti..." Mr. Carrivée continued. "There are several ways to say it. Now; the second item: I don't know what the English word is, but we refer to them as *fromage en grains*." Before he'd said the words, he'd shifted his attention to his son; once he'd said them, he gently urged a shocked Luc's open mouth shut by way of his chin. Luc's outsized reaction made him smile. "We will, in all likelihood have to improvise on this item. To make a *substitution*."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"Why are you so happy?" Adam asked as they made their way into 'downtown' Stoney Creek.

"En français, s'il vous plait," Luc laughed as he skipped.

"Pourquoi..." Adam quickly looked up words. "...es-tu si content?"

"It's POUTINE!!!" Luc cheered.

Adam tried to look up this word. Nothing.

"C'est quelque chose que ma maman faisait. C'est mon-"

"English, Luc. Please and thank you," Adam requested with faux-seriousness.

"It's a traditional dish in Quebec. My *mom*," he added, the word over-pronounced, "she would make it as a treat. Or when I was feeling down. Or sad. Or unhappy."

"Comfort food," Adam suggested. This he looked up. "Nourriture de confort."

"When I think of poutine, I think of her. Is there something *your* mother makes you that's 'comfort food'?"

Adam's response was instant. "PICS!!!" he sang, also skipping. They were maybe a little too old for skipping, but they really didn't care what anyone watching them thought.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Stoney Creek was a typical flourishing, self-contained small town; it had just about anything you could want for. A bank. A bakery. A hair salon and a barber shop. A sporting goods store, a hardware store, a candy shop-cum-5&dime, a jeweller, a post office, a flower shop, a cinema and a drive-in, a dairy, a bowling alley...and a grocery store.

Luc trailed Adam through the IGA to the back of the store, up a gradual slope, the linoleum cracked and faded, slowed by being distracted by the shelf after shelf, row after row of both unfamiliar and familiar products.

Adam arrived at the meat and cheese counter. "Hello, Mr. Crowder!" he called out to the burly man decked out in a traditional butcher's outfit including a shirt, hat and apron, all in matching white. Well, 'white' was a stretch, especially the apron, speckled as it was with blood and the such the oldest stains more dirt-coloured than red.

"Adam! Just the young man I wanted to see. We have an opening coming up. Delivery boy. Bike included."

"Really?"

"Brad is leaving," he explained, juggling two packages. "In fact, he's already worked his last shift. Let me know in the next few days, OK?" he added, exiting to the back room facilities.

Adam turned to Luc, considering the situation in silence.

A new man arrived on the scene. Where his co-worker was built like a retired football player, this man was your archetypal basketball center. "*Mon jeune ami! Comment vas-tu?* (My young friend! How are you?)"

"*Je vais bien, (I'm fine,)*" Adam replied, and immediately began lining up his next words. "*Monsieur Deschamps, voici mon nouvel ami Luc Carrivée. Son père et lui ont emménagé à côté. Ils viennent du Québec.* (Mr. Deschamps, this is my new friend Luc Carrivée. He and his father have moved in next-door. They're from Quebec.)"

What followed was an ever-accelerating exchange between the two authentic French-speakers, some of which Adam caught, the rest just shooting past him in a blur. In his silence, Adam took delight in seeing his friend especially happy. Again.

"Luc here tells me you're looking for cheese curds," Mr. Deschamps said.

"Oui."

“Well, we don’t sell them, but now I’m wondering if I should have my wife make up a batch regularly. Who knows? Maybe there’s enough customers in town to make it worthwhile. In the meantime, I can offer you a not-unreasonable substitution.”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

*“Papa! Il y a un francophone à l'IGA ! Il n'est pas du Québec, mais- (Papa! There is a French-speaker at the IGA! He’s not from Quebec, but-)”*

“In English, pleaseandthankyou,” Adam teased.

“He’s from Sudbury, so he sounds different from us, but still, it was nice to hear!”

“First your French teacher, now this Mr...”

“Mr. Deschamps.”

“Mr. Deschamps. This is good! This, I like. Now; how did you make out on your quest?”

“Here’s the Bisto, I told you about,” Adam replied, pulling the box out of the IGA bag. “And some beef bullion cubes. No drippings, but still...” He then raised two packages wrapped in orangey-brown waxed butcher’s paper. “You were right. They didn’t have the cheese curds. But M. Deschamps said that these would do for now. Some medium cheddar and some sharp Lancashire. My dad’s favourite cheese, by the way.”

“Excellent. Now; you two will go on a mission to Chippy’s later on?”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Adam presented the foiled-covered plate to his mother, placing it on the kitchen counter. “Voila!” he exclaimed with a flourish.

Mrs. Francis moved closer to the plate and inhaled deeply. “What is it?”

“Poutine!” Adam sang, removing the foil to reveal a large pile of Chippy’s best covered in deep brown gravy, topped with melted cheese.

“It smells incredible.”

“Try it!” He watched as she retrieved one of the stubby chips and took a bite.

“Oh...”

Adam grinned at her reaction. Then grinned some more when she grabbed another.

“What’s that smell?” his father called out. “Did someone order chips? We had fish-” He arrived in the kitchen before he was provided an answer. He stared at the poutine. “What on earth is *that?!?*” he asked, pulling a face.

“John, you *have* to try this!”

“That just- That doesn’t look right.” Before he could say another word, his wife had popped a fully loaded chip into his mouth, lighting up his face.

Adam’s thrill at the sight almost matched his father’s reaction. Which was doubled by the man grabbing another and as he swallowed, a light seemed to go off. “Where’s the HP Sauce?”

## Chapter Thirteen: The Job

Mr. Carrivée answered the door to find Adam standing there with a piece of paper and a clean plate in his hands. On the plate, a tiny container, partially full. “Luc! Adam is here! An empty plate is a good sign,” he laughed. “Your parents enjoyed the poutine?”

“They loved it!”

Mr. Carrivée accepted the plate and stared down at the plastic box. “Qu'est-ce que c'est?”

“It’s called ‘brown sauce’ in England,” Adam replied. “A favourite. My mom calls it the British version of ketchup. But it tastes different.”

“And you tried this on poutine?”

“Sacrilège!” Luc laughed.

“She thought you might want to try it.”

Adam now looked down at the paper. “*IGA est à la recherche d'un livreur. Pour livrer les courses à vélo. Ils fournissent un vélo approprié. Il a un panier sur le guidon et un signe à l'avant du panier.* (IGA is looking for a delivery boy. To deliver groceries by bike.

They provide an appropriate bike. It has a basket on the handlebars and an IGA sign at the front of the basket.)”

“Yes,” Luc said. “You were talking to that man when we were there. Are you going to take it?”

*“Aimerais-tu diviser le travail? Ce serait un excellent moyen pour toi d'étudier Stoney Creek. Je pourrais te faire visiter les environs pendant les deux premières semaines. Ensuite, nous pourrions nous relayer avec les postes. Moitié-moitié. (Would you like to split the job? It would be a great way for you to learn Stoney Creek. I could show you around for the first couple of weeks. Then we could take turns with the shifts. Fifty-fifty.)”* Adam looked up. “Did I get that right?” he asked Mr. Carrivée. “Some of it?”

Mr. Carrivée looked to Luc. “Oui!” his son said. “Yes!”

“Good,” Adam said with relief, checking the sheet once more. “Words, I’m not too bad at. Sort of. But putting them together in sentences properly is trickier.”

“Practice makes perfect. And speaking is much less difficult than writing and reading,” Mr. Carrivée said. “But you might want to ask your question again.”

“Oh. Would you like to split-“

“Yes! Yes, please! Papa!” He said to his father. “*Un travail! Un travail!* (A job! A job!)”

“In English,” Adam said. Solemnly. “Thankyouverymuch.”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Mr. Crowder considered Adam’s proposal. “Two for the price of one, huh?”

“For the first little while,” Adam explained, moving out of a customer’s way, allowing them to pass. “Two weeks’ worth of shifts. Then we’d rotate.”

“Delivery days are Wednesday and Friday from four to six, Saturdays and Sundays in the afternoons,” Mr. Crowder said. “As required. Sometimes that might mean a half-dozen deliveries between noon and closing.” He gave it all some more thought. “This might be a good thing,” he mused. “If one gets sick, the other can step in.”

The boys waited.

“There’s only one bike,” Mr. Crowder said.

Adam and Luc were a little crestfallen.

“But I have a spare in my garage at home,” Mr. Crowder remembered. “I can have Springy’s take a look at it,” the man said, referring to the sports and cycle store a few doors down.

“I can fix bikes!”

Adam turned to Luc with a ‘Will wonders never cease?’ look on his face. “You *can?*”

“My father taught me. He did bike repairs in the summer back in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu.”

“Clearly, all this was fated to be. Make note of the cost of the replacement parts, and I’ll reimburse you. Now; about the wage,” Mr. Crowder continued. “It’s a dollar-fifty per hour. Which is a little more than other places. Naturally, you’ll be splitting it at first, so seventy-five cents each. There’s also a store discount. Oh, and all tips are yours. But don’t ask for one, or look as if you’re expecting one. Customers like to believe that the idea of being generous is theirs. Which it is. Still...” he smiled.

Luc held out his hand. “Accord! Deal!”

“Deal!” Mr. Crowder laughed, before repeating the gesture with Adam. “Come by on Wednesday at four. There are always other things to do, so we’ll keep you busy, even if it’s not doing deliveries the entire time. You might have your first class in Shelf-stocking 101.”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Mr. Carrivée watched Luc and Adam walking Mr. Crowder’s clunker down the sidewalk, each holding a handlebar grip. As they made their way up the driveway, he stood, as if out of respect when someone important entered the room. “Ah, the official escorts for a clearly magnificent piece of engineering.”

It didn’t look like one. Not really. The paint was horribly chipped and cracked. Two flat tires. A rusty chain. At least two missing spokes. The bike looked as if it had been abandoned.

“*J’ai dit à M. Crowder, notre patron chez IGA, que nous pouvions le refaire comme neuf.* (I told Mr. Crowder, our boss at IGA that we could make it just like new again),” Luc said.

“In English, pleaseandthankyou,” Adam said. After Luc did as requested, Adam added “I thought *you* could fix bikes!”

"I will only supervise," Mr. Carrivée assured Adam. "His hands will work the magic. And *you* will assist. Luc, if you would retrieve the stand and the toolbox from the garage? Please and thank you," he teased.

"Do you think you can get it working again?" Adam asked, distracted by this father-son dance he was witnessing.

"Well, I do have a little experience in this area."

"Luc says you used to fix bikes back in Quebec."

"This is true," Mr. Carrivée said. "Basic maintenance on basic bikes."

"He was also a *réparateur de vélos* for a professional cycling team," Luc called out from the garage, right before he reappeared with a tall metal contraption.

"A mechanic," Mr. Carrivée explained. "It was going to be my career," he added, accepting the stand from his son. It was a simple –but ingenious– affair; two pieces of hollow tubing, shaped into teetering angles, with a third bar between them, this one with a notable dip in it. "Until I met my future wife, Luc's *maman*."

Luc opened the toolbox, removing the remnants of a thick towel, and placed it just so on the dip in the cross-piece.

"Adam, would you be so kind as to place the bike on the stand?" Mr. Carrivée asked. Adam clearly didn't think he could manage it. "*Essayez* (Give it a go)," he encouraged him.

Adam tried, but it was too heavy.

"*La force indomptable d'une équipe* (The indomitable strength of a team)," Mr. Carrivée winked at his son, making a show of flexing his arms.

Luc stepped up, and together he and Adam placed the bike on the stand, the towel making for a safe resting place for the bike's cross-bar.

"Bon," Mr. Carrivée said. "Excellent." He stood back, stroking his chin. "This is a Schwinn from the early '60s," he nodded. He considered it some more, making a tour of the bike. "Someone must have made a trip to the US; up here, it's mostly CCM. It's a fine model. Strong steel. Good welds. Built to last. Which it has," he added. "Let us provide it many more years of exemplary, loyal service."

"Do we have what you need, Papa?"

"Yes," his father replied, completing his assessment. He ruffled his son's hair. "I believe that *we* have what *we* need for this resurrection."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

It turned out to be more a reincarnation than a resurrection. So much so that Mr. Crowder didn't recognize it the next time he saw it when Adam and Luc showed up for their first shift. "It was too far gone, huh? You needed to buy a new-" And then the realization hit him. "What?!? It's a miracle! How...?"

"We sanded down the frame and spray-painted it, Luc and I," Adam explained.

"Once my papa took everything else apart. He re-packed the bearings in the axles and the crank and the handlebars. Oh, and he trued the wheels."

"Four spokes replaced!" Adam added.

"And he found a piece of leather to cover the seat with...because it was split and falling apart. Maman taught him how to use a needle well."

"Replaced the tires," Adam added, "and the tubes. He said it was fortunate that it didn't have handbrakes or shifters." Adam thought hard. 'Sometimes simple is best.'

Mr. Crowder was impressed with how the boys meshed so well. "And the chain-guard!"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"What colour was it?" Zoë asks.

"Black when Mr. Crowder gave it to us. We painted it red. But the chain-guard we made white. Which was a huge challenge. I think your grandfather was most proud of that part of the project."

"It's blue now."

"Really? Your dad kept it?"

"Before he cleaned it up for me, it was orange. He went through a long Tiger-Cats phase."

"So, blue for the Leafs?" Adam asks.

"And the Argos. I'm a fan of both."

"Ah, a glutton for punishment. My utmost sympathies."

Again, Zoë responded to the teasing with a blush. “My dad never told me *any* of that,” Zoë says. “About the IGA.”

“Your grandfather made a map for him to use. It covered ‘the golden square mile,’” Adam explained. “From Highway #8 to the Escarpment, from Highway #20 to Grey Road. And your dad was fast. Learned fast, cycled fast, delivered fast. Sometimes I struggled to keep up.”

“How long did you keep working at IGA?”

“Your dad for a few years, but a few months after we started there, I took a job bussing tables and washing dishes at The DeLuxe, a retro diner from the 50s that was actually the hub of the downtown.”

“What else?” Zoë asks. “What else do you remember about those two weeks?” She suddenly looks quite sad. “You’re the custodian of all these memories. You’re the *safe-keeper*.”

“Hmm...” Adam says, moved. “Well, I remember The Fox and The Skyway Drive-in.”

Blank stare.

“Back then, before it became The Canadian Legion, and after that, The Horn of Plenty, there was The Fox cinema. Nothing fancy, really. A plain, old box. It had a balcony, but your dad didn’t like heights, so we’d sit in the orchestra. The floor seats. Well, on that second weekend, we saw ‘My Side of the Mountain’ at The Fox right after deliveries on Friday night, and on the Saturday night, your grandfather took us to see ‘Ring of Bright Water’ and ‘Chariots of the Gods’ at the drive-in. Because they’d never been to one in Quebec, it was a real treat. Especially for your grandfather. He must have made four trips to the concessions building, and walked the entire perimeter of the property, he was so enchanted. He thought it was the best idea ever. Being able to eat a hot dog while standing in the fresh night air while this enormous screen lit up the night.”

“A drive-in. I’ve never been to one,” Zoë says. “I think I’ve only seen them in movies. Which is kinda weird, actually.”

“Here’s the best part: at the time, The Skyway was the only ‘urban’ drive-in, anywhere. It wasn’t out in the country. At the back property line was Collegiate Elementary.”

“Where you and Dad went to school.”

Adam nods. “Along one side, were houses. Along the other, Saltfleet High School. Sometimes, over the years, we’d sit at the back fence and watch movies. There

was a hidden speaker that was still connected to the Skyway's audio system, and we'd take it and run the wire to where we'd sit. It was a cheap night out." Adam thinks a little. "Ice cream."

"Ice cream? What about it?" Zoë asks.

"We'd walk to the Stoney Creek Dairy, about a half a mile away. It was like a restaurant, and a 'bar', too. You lined up to choose from an enormous menu, and you could watch as they prepared it right in front of you, like an 'open kitchen'. Only it wasn't one or two cooks, but a gang of teenagers working away like slaves. *Happy* slaves, of course. Then you either sat at picnic benches or in your car, or remained inside to sit at tables. Oh, and they had these huge aquariums stocked with exotic fish, and a waterfall with a pond. Anyway, we'd grab some ice creams...if memory serves, your grandfather had a fondness for peppermint-chocolate shakes...and head to the Skyway. Life in Stoney Creek was kind of idyllic back then."

## Chapter Fourteen: The Devil's Punchbowl

"Where are you taking me?" Luc asked as they made their way along the railway tracks, heading east from the Arena, where they'd stopped in to see his father. There were many preparations required before the rink would be ready for use. Issues with the concrete floor. Boards that needed some TLC. Goals that needed to be painted, nets that either needed to be repaired or replaced. And of course, the zamboni needed a complete check-up from top to bottom.

"Not much farther now," Adam assured him, deftly proceeding on his rail as confidently as a circus tightrope artist, surprising himself with each step forward while Luc walked the other. Was he getting better at balance and reactions? Perhaps not yet an 'athlete', but maybe slowly moving away from *not* being one? He hadn't slipped off the rail for about a minute now, and didn't want to jinx himself, so he put that out of his mind, slowing his pace to make the balancing task maybe a little easier. "Farther, not further," he said, to keep it out.

"What's that?" Luc asked. "Farther, not further?"

Concentrating hard, Adam pulled out his dictionary and came to a stop. "*Farther* is 'plus loin...while *further* is 'davantage'.

Ultimately, they came to a crossing. Adam stopped so quickly that Luc almost fell into him. He held fingers to his lips. "Écouter! (Listen!)"

"Never mind that," Luc offered. "That's the biggest cross I've ever seen!" Luc was staring up at the thirty-foot cross that sat at the edge of the Escarpment.

"Come on," Adam said, indicating for them to get off the tracks. He took a sharp left through some low growth, and pointed down. "*That...is* Stoney Creek. The creek the town is named after. It goes all the way to Lake Ontario."

"Have you ever, I don't know, walked it? To the lake?"

"No," Adam replied, wondering why he'd never considered the trek. And then the answer came to him: because he'd never had anyone to adventure with before. "But today we're going in the opposite direction," he added, returning to the junction. "Eyes down," Adam instructed Luc.

"En francais," Luc laughed. "*S'ilteplaitetmercibeaucoup.*"

They carried on down a path that wasn't entirely straight, with rolling drumlins here and there, and as they continued, the sound of cascading water got louder. Finally, they arrived at their true destination.

"Wow!"

Adam smiled at Luc's reaction. "And *this...this* is The Devil's Punchbowl."

"The town- Stoney Creek has its own *waterfall?!?*"

"It's small...but it's *ours.*"

"This is where the creek Stoney Creek begins?" Luc asked, craning his neck.

Adam thought on this. "I think it begins *here* as Stoney Creek, but it's something else up top."

"On top, as in the Mountain? On top, like that?"

"Yes...but I don't know how that works. It must feed together, across the farmland, go over the waterfall...and then carries on to the lake. You want to see the view from up there?"

"You can't climb up *that!*"

"We'd go up Old Mountain Road," he replied, pointing off to his right. "Over there."

"Je vais bien pour l'instant, merci. (I'm OK for now, thanks.)"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"You and your dad are close." They sat on a boulder, tossing stones into the crystal clear, shimmering pool. You couldn't hear the tiny *plunks* above the din of the falling water.

"What do you mean?" Luc asked.

"You do things together. You share things."

"Like meals? Hockey?" Luc paused. "Poutine? Fixing that bike? Things like *that*?"

"More than that." Adam pondered it all. "When you talk, he listens. And vice versa. You're not just saying things at each other."

"Vice versa?"

"It's Latin." Adam perked up. "I'm taking Latin next year. In high school," he smiled. "At Saltfleet."

"*Tu es un gars si étrange, mon ami anglo.*"

"In English, please and thank you very much."

"You are *such* a strange fellow, my Anglo friend," Luc sighed.

"Vice versa means 'and the reverse'. So, you live to play hockey, and vice versa, you play hockey to live."

"Ah."

"So; have you always been close? You and your father?"

"He's my *papa*," Luc shrugged, maybe still not quite understanding.

"Even before your mom-"

"Always," Luc replied. "Always the three of us." His voice trailed off.

Adam could sense that Luc was getting a little misty-eyed. "Sorry. I didn't mean to-"

Luc stopped him. There was a long interlude of silence before he spoke again. "Adam, I need to say something. In French. To my *maman*. Out loud. I- I talk to her all

the time. Mostly at night. When I'm in bed, falling asleep." He paused. "I could just think it, but-

"I can take a walk," Adam suggested. "Give you some privacy."

Luc stared at the water.

"I need to pee anyway. See you- *Call* me when you're done."

As Adam's footfalls faded, Luc cleared his throat. "Maman," Luc began, "Tu me manques tellement. Mon cœur - Parfois, j'ai l'impression qu'il est brisé. Au-delà du médical. Papa et moi essayons de vivre du mieux que nous pouvons sans toi, mais c'est difficile. D'une certaine manière, faire de nouvelles choses dans un nouvel endroit semble une... une trahison. Papa dit que c'est ridicule. Non seulement cela, mais ce serait une trahison de votre part de ne pas faire de nouvelles choses. Construisez une nouvelle vie. Il est de notre devoir de vous de prospérer. (I miss you so much. My heart-Sometimes it feels like it's broken. Beyond the medical. Papa and I are trying to live the best we can without you, but it's hard. Somehow, doing new thing in a new place seems a...a betrayal. Papa says this is silly. Not just that, but it would be a betrayal of you not to do new things. Build a new life. It is our duty to you to thrive.)" Luc wiped at a sliding year...and then beamed a fierce smile skyward.

*"Oh! Tu as toujours voulu que j'aie plus d'amis. Tu as dit que j'avais passé trop de temps avec toi et papa. Eh bien, je me suis fait un ami. Son nom est Adam. Notre amitié est due au hockey, mais pas de la manière que vous pourriez supposer. (Oh! You always wanted me to have more friends. You said I spent too much time with you and Papa. Well, I made a friend. His name is Adam. Our friendship is because of hockey, but not in the way you might assume.)"* Luc now gazed in the direction Adam had gone. *"C'est un ami merveilleux. Même s'il est étrange. (He is a wonderful friend. Even if he is a strange fellow.)"*

*"Donc, une nouvelle maison, un nouvel ami, et Papa, Adam et moi sommes unis en cette période particulière. Cette série entre le Canada et les Soviétiques. Je suis désolé que vous n'ayez pas pu tout voir. Si tu étais là... (So, a new home, a new friend, and Papa and Adam and I are united in this special time. This series between Canada and the Soviets. I'm sorry you didn't get to see it. If you were here...)"* Of course, Luc knew that if his mother hadn't died, he wouldn't be sitting there at the base of a waterfall with a new best friend nearby. As knowing this didn't make what he was feeling any less so, Luc simply hung his head and cried.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"I talk to my dad all the time," Zoë says. Once more misty-eyed. "Especially when I'm on the ice. It's not like a conversation," she sighs, but before she breathes in again, she's smiling. "But I can feel him when I'm playing. And I think he nudges me

into a different response to what's going on in front of me every once in a while, changing my reactions, my movements. It's not like I *hear* him, though. It's like... It's like I'm passing on advice from him to myself. You know, like an interpreter."

"What language?"

"En français, naturellement!" she laughs.

They both sit with their thoughts.

"Did you-" Zoë begins. "Did you *really* have to go to the bathroom? At the Devil's Punchbowl? To give him privacy?"

The question makes Adam laugh. "Well, I had a big decision to make when we started to head back home. Either stop in at IGA and use the staff facilities, or race home. Because I really, *really* had to pee."

# **Book Three**

## Chapter Fifteen: The Lunch Run

### September 22, Game Five, Moscow: USSR 5 - Canada 4

School had obviously carried on during The Series' intermission. And for the hockey fans, as much as the notion would have made their heads explode, it was their lifeline. During school hours. Well, during classes, anyway. Classwork numbed the impatience. Assignments took the edge off the anticipation. Homework? Well, maybe that was the exception; anything taken home had to compete with hockey in the street.

On this day, all that ended. Vacation had ended. Peacetime had ended, and they were back to the glorious war.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The playground was alive with the usual energies found before the school day actually begins. Tag. Foursquare. Catch. Marbles. But then the bell rang, and everyone lined up to enter the school.

Principal Manzuk stood with a teacher in the school office. They were discussing the issue of setting up televisions in some classrooms. "That may end up being the case," he conceded, "but for now, we'll just have to wait and see."

"Well, are they even considering it? There are three games next week. Maybe for the final one, at least? We're probably going to see kids stay home, 'sick'. If their fathers are hockey fans."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Distraction and anxiety peppered Adam's and Luc's classroom.

For some students, it was instantly a regular day. For others, ardent hockey fans to be precise, being in school had become the worst punishment possible. Gone was the power of distraction. In its place, the torment of everything not-Game 5.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

At the 10:30 recess, clusters of wildly energized boys formed on the macadam, urgency-bordering-on-desperation their fuel. Adam and Luc listened in as some argued.

“It starts at eleven!” one kid complained; the passion in his voice was equal to how it may have sounded had he been told Christmas had been delayed.

“If we run home as soon as the lunch bell rings, we won’t get there until almost ten after twelve!” another added even more earnestly.

“Half the game will be over!!” A third almost yelled, as if in pain. (Which he was.)

What resulted was one of those impetuous moments that all pre-teen boys have in their contracts, where common sense is shoved aside, relegated to a corner out of the way; the trio bolted from the huddle, leaving the playground, leaving school property, sprinting to Moscow.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

At the arena workshop, Mr. Carrivée listened to the game on the radio as he repaired a piece of equipment; his productivity was such that he may as well have been blindfolded. And daydreaming. Which, all things considered, actually *was* the case; he wasn’t watching the game, so he was, in essence, ‘blind’. The daydreaming followed on from this as he ‘dreamed’ of the play-by-play in his head.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Inside the school, all the boys, including Adam and Luc, watched the room’s clock, which, not being above the blackboard but at the rear of the classroom, they had to turn in their seats to check. A good soul, Mrs. Carroll had decided not to be too harsh on them. Finally, twelve o’clock arrived. She went so far as to call other students for answers to questions, leaving the boys alone; both groups got a little of what they craved.

As the lunch bell rang, Adam and Luc bolted for home. As simple a path, as straight a line as they could map. At one point, Adam grabbed Luc, slowing them to a brisk stroll. Luc didn’t understand. Adam gestured to his own heart. Rolling his eyes, Luc picked up the pace.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Mr. Francis walked about the shop floor. Almost everyone had some kind of radio on. Engaged. Distracted. He shook his head as he approached Bob Michie.

“Don’t you see?” Michie asked. “Ice hockey is their football!” As Mr. Francis didn’t seem to understand, he continued. “How we feel about- That’s what all of this is about for them. And you know, there are some similarities-”

“Don’t go comparing *my* football with that bloodsport!”

“Have you ever actually *watched* a game...?”

“I’ve *seen* my share. Watched? I’d prefer to nap.”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Hardly a word had been spoken by either Luc or Adam once the game had been turned on. Other than vocal outbursts by Luc that were far too fast to be discernible by Adam. With their eyes glued to the tv, Mr. Carrivée pulled up in front of the house. “It’s your father!” Adam said.

Luc stood, but was flustered; he couldn’t decide what was more important. Not true; in that moment, the game meant more to him than just about anything imaginable.

Mr. Carrivée entered, motioned for his son to sit. “I’ve been listening from the start!” He checked his watch. “I’ll drive you back to school. You *can’t* be late.” He looked to Luc. “*Je ne veux pas que tu reviennes en courant.* (I don’t want you *racing* back.)”

Their attention returned to the game, the trio were transfixed, breathing shallow.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

“Who’s your favourite footballer?” Mr. Michie asked.

“Bobby Carmichael Mitchell, of course!” Mr. Francis replied, suddenly alive. “The *original* ‘Bobby Dazzler’!”

“What did you like about him?”

Saying nothing, Mr. Francis said it all with his rolled-eyes expression.

“Well, everything you *might* tell me, *they* can see in hockey,” Mr. Michie continued. “In *this* very series! The Soviets? Incredible! Their speed, their playmaking... You should have seen their movements that first game in Montreal. It was like watching Pele and Brazil-”

“Now *you’re* barmy!”

“-except that it was *five* Peles! With a different batch of them every shift on the ice!” As Mr. Francis, was about to turn away, Mr. Michie reached out for his wrist. “Hear me out. It won’t take a minute. Three things.” As Mr. Francis sighed, Mr. Michie continued. “First, I’m not exaggerating how fast the Soviets are. They literally ran circles around us. It looked like everyone on Team Canada had spent the previous months slothing about the cottage, endless beers chugged, tired and out of shape-”

“Hold up! Are you telling me *you’re* a hockey fan?!?”

“Yes! Of course! I watch it with my sons.” The shock (and maybe betrayal?) in Mr. Francis’s eyes didn’t reduce Mr. Michie’s enthusiasm. Still, he allowed his friend the chance to let it settle in. “One is a Leafs fan, the other a die-hard Chicago supporter. When the teams play each other, the house tends to get a little- Well, ‘interesting’,” he laughed. “So you don’t want to hear about the Soviets’ skills, or the case I could make for hockey being football-on-ice, or football being hockey-on-a-pitch. Let me tell you about something that’s different. In England, it tends to be the norm for a fan who hates a player on a hated team to maintain those feelings when it’s World Cup time. I can think of at least three players who *you’d* boo if they make the ’74 squad.”

“So? Football is tribal. What’s wrong with that?”

“So, supporters of the national side here leave all that at the door. No matter if they play for an American NHL team, they cheer every player until they’re hoarse.”

“Ridiculous.”

“All I know is that I consider myself a very fortunate fellow I have *our* beautiful game...and theirs, too.”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

“Allez! Allez!” Mr. Carrivée called out from the front door while Adam and Luc stood rigid -and trembling- in front of the television. “The radio’s on in the car, you can listen on the way! Hurry, we have to go!”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Minutes later, Mr. Carrivée’s car pulled up to the school’s front entrance. Inside the car, they were all glued to the broadcast. Mr. Carrivée checked his watch, turned off the engine, hopped out.

“Papa!”

“Allez! Come! Now I have to explain to your...your...”

“Principal?”

Mr. Carrivée inclined his head in gratitude to Adam, then herded them inside the school.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

“Capel’s House of Optometry,” Mrs. Francis said, phone to her ear. “How can I help you? Yes, this is Mrs. Francis. Yes, Adam’s mother.” She couldn’t hide her bemusement at what one of the secretaries at Collegiate was telling her. “Oh. Yes. Well...that’s fine. Yes, I understand. The Carrivées are- They’re *close family friends*. Thank you for calling. Cheers.”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

A dejected Adam and Luc were admitted back into class. They wandered over to the collection of desks where a group project was being worked on.

“They lost,” Adam said aloud. “Again.”

Beyond their deep, crestfallen reactions after hoping against hope, the other boys were impressed that he knew this; perhaps he was making his way into ‘the club’. Slowly? One game at a time?

“Parsons,” one of the boys whispered to them.

Luc didn’t have a clue what the kid was referring to, though his hackles were instantly raised.

“What about him?” Adam asked.

“He’s taking bets,” another kid replied.

“On the rest of the games,” a third chimed in. “*On the Soviets*.”

They all looked over at Parsons, his face chock full of smugness.

“So not just a bully,” Luc declared with a sigh suggested, “but *un connard*, too.”

While the word hung in the silent air, Adam brought out his pocket dictionary quickly looked it up. Suddenly, the air had a barking laugh filling it. He immediately covered his mouth, and gestured an apology to Mrs. Carroll, meekly holding up the dictionary.

The boys were all stares.

"It rhymes with..." Adam began, "grass-stole."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"Speaking of *grass-stoles*," Zoë interrupts. "How did the Munich assignment turn out?"

"It was a success. Parsons didn't end up contributing much, but I don't think Mrs. Carroll expected him to. That was OK. Your dad and I did a pretty good job with it. It was hard, reading the newspapers, doing the research. All those deaths. But I think your grandmother being Jewish added some poignancy to the presentation."

"What was the amendment the teacher insisted on?"

"*Oh ça; J'ai dû faire une partie de la présentation en français.* (Oh, that; I had to do some of the presentation in French.)"

"*Et mon père a fait sa part en français aussi ?* (And my father did his part in French, too?)"

"Nah," Adam replies. "In English-"

"Thankyouverymuch."

## Chapter Sixteen: The Telegram Project

### I

While the neighbourhood kids played in the street, burning off their disappointment in whatever ways were possible, Adam and Luc sat on the steps, mired in dejection. Silent statues, mute and frozen. So neither saw Mrs. Francis arrive with a Tupperware container; she was practically in front of them before they noticed. With the panache of a movie star opening an envelope at the Oscars, she removed the lid to reveal Welsh cakes.

"Pics!" Adam yelled. "C'est ma poutine!" he said to Luc as he reached in to grab one of the cookie-sized items.

But his mother denied him, instead moving the container in front of Luc. She smiled as the boy retrieved one. "Thank you, Mrs. Francis."

Only then did she offer them to Adam. With a wink. She looked on the boys and smiled at their reactions; her son with his usual 'I could eat a dozen-dozen of them!' enthusiasm, Luc with wide-eyed anticipation, watching his friend close his eyes in bliss. "I received a phone call this afternoon," Mrs. Francis said casually. "From your school."

Moments later, Mr. Francis eased down the last section of the street and pulled into his driveway, watching his wife wave goodbye to Adam and Luc. (But not before giving the boys another pic each.) As he waited for her on the walkway, he noted that she was holding something behind her. "What was that all about?"

"Close your eyes," Mrs. Francis replied.

"What's in it for me?" he countered, smiling as he narrowed his gaze. No matter how much an exercise in drudgery Dayne could be, just the sight of his wife could raise his spirits.

"Close your eyes!" she laughed. Once he had, she brought the container around front, opened it, and held it to his nose.

"Picau ar y maen!"

Mrs. Francis proceeded to feed her husband. "Whenever you speak Welsh to me, I always get a little weak at the knees. But you know this."

"Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch." It was the name of the tiny Welsh village with the very long name. The longest in the world.

Mrs. Francis took care of some errant crumbs at the corner of his mouth as her husband continued with the task at hand. Amidst it all, he made a playful nip at her fingers. She watched as his attention shifted next door. "They're sad about today's game," she replied, kissing his cheek.

Mr. Francis wanted to appear angry...but he couldn't. "They've become mates. Adam and the boy."

"Luc," Mrs. Francis replied. "The boy's name is *Luc*. And yes, they have. Actually, they remind me of you and your brother Denis."

With an unfortunate inclination to being a little dense on some topics, her husband found this notion quite disarming. Denis was a year older than him and it was true; they'd been thick as thieves growing up, getting into good mischief during the Second World War. He missed him terribly. So the pic had raised his spirits while the mention of his brother made him a little heartsore.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Adam wore Luc's goalie pads and held the stick. Sitting on their landing, Mr. Carrivée had a smaller Tupperware container in one hand, a freshly lit cigarette in his mouth, and a steaming mug of coffee at his side. Lifting out a pic, he sniffed at it. Rubbing the burning cigarette tip on the cement to save it for later, and then putting it aside, he bit into the pic.

All the while, Luc stood just off the driveway between his father and Adam. Waiting. "*Papa! C'est important!* (Papa! This is important!)

Eyes closed and grinning, Mr. Carrivée slowed as he ate, though he was inclined to munch away. And took a sip of his coffee.

"PAPA!"

*"Désolé! Mais il n'est même pas nécessaire de repenser très loin. Il y a deux saisons seulement.* (Sorry! But it's not even *necessary* to think back very far. Two seasons ago, only.)

As he watched Luc and his father talk, Adam effected Ken Dryden's legendary standing pose in the crease, arms resting atop his vertically-held stick, idly looking on. Was he listening? Thinking? Both?

*"Mais nous avons gagné la Coupe cette saison-là !* (But we won the Cup that season!)"

*"C'est vrai, oui. Mais nous avons terminé la saison à la troisième place de notre conférence, quatrième au classement général. Il nous a fallu sept matchs pour battre Boston, six matchs pour battre l'expansion North Stars et sept autres pour remporter le championnat contre Chicago. Peu importe à quel point vous êtes bon, parfois les choses ne sont pas faciles.* (This is true, Yes. But we ended the season in third place in our conference, *fourth* overall. It took us *seven* games to beat Boston, six games to beat the expansion North Stars, and another seven to capture the championship against Chicago. No matter how good you are, sometimes things do not come easy.)"

While Luc dealt with his anguish, rattling off a guttural stream of complaints and grievances, Adam remained in quiet, focused thought. A pondering statue.

Finally, Mr. Carrivée noted Adam's pose. "*Il fait des imitations, maintenant! Pas Mahovlich, mais Dryden!* (He does impersonations, now! Not Mahovlich, but Dryden!)"

In his funk from not hearing what he wanted to from his father, Luc ignored him momentarily. Then he turned to Adam and was caught between laughing...and wanting to know what had his friend in a trance.

Eventually, the quiet brought Adam out of it, smiling. "Sometimes, things do *not* come easy. And being so far away from home, Team Canada needs to know that we're all behind them. We can't be there...but we can still show them we're cheering by sending a telegram! It can't cost *that* much money! We could get everyone to chip in! Tomorrow is Saturday! We could send it before going to IGA for work!"

Mr. Carrivée thought on this, then stood and went inside the house.

"Was that a 'Yes!'" Adam asked.

And then Luc shot up, following his father.

Bewildered, Adam remained standing. And listened to an assortment of sounds from within. Some yelling. Some whooping. Some rapid-fire exchanges that seemed to take on a life of their own. Which did absolutely nothing to decrease his bewilderment.

Suddenly, Luc burst out onto the landing. In his hand, the cardboard innards of a paper towel roll. He held it up to his mouth. "Attention! Attention! All fans of hockey!" He paused. "All true supporters of Team Canada! Attention!"

Adam's eyes went wide at his friend's actions. All the moreso when Luc handed him the 'mic'. "Your turn."

Adam accepted it without hesitation. "Attention all neighbourhood hockey fans! Come join the effort to support Team Canada! Come help support our- Our *Moscow telegram* project!"

Not a further word was necessary; in no time flat, six, then eight, then eleven kids were outside, racing fast towards the pair.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Mr. Carrivée gesticulated wildly on the phone. "*Oui oui! Ce beau garçon Anglo d'à côté! Adam! C'était son idée! Oui! Nous allons envoyer un télégramme à Moscou.* (Yes, yes! That nice Anglo boy from next door! Adam! It was his idea! Yes! We're going to send a telegram to Moscow.)" As his brother began to respond to him, Mr. Carrivée stopped; he was having *his* lightbulb moment. "Non!" he interjected, "*Attendez! Nous n'allons pas en envoyer qu'un seul! Nous allons en envoyer autant que nous pouvons nous permettre! Oui! Tu devrais faire pareil! Naturellement!* (Wait! We're not just going to send just one! We're going to send as many as we can afford! Yes! You should do the same! Naturally!)"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

It was a combination charity drive/fund-raiser/pep-rally/Judy Garland, Mickey Rooney' Let's put on a show! in movies from the 50s'/celebration. And the

neighbourhood kids didn't require much convincing. They paired off and began canvassing the neighbourhood, then venturing farther afield, asking for nickels, dimes, quarters, *anything* for the effort. They received blank stares from only three houses in a total of fifty-seven... and those were the people who never gave out candy on Hallowe'en.

Ninety minutes later, a sizeable bucket of money was dumped on the Carrivée's front landing. Assorted change, to be sure, but also some one and two dollar bills...even some fivers. Some kind, generous person had even contributed a tenner.

"That's a whole pile of moolah!" one of the kids sang.

"Is it *that* expensive to send a telegram?" another asked.

"No," Adam replied. "Not just *a* telegram. *Telegrams*, plural. *Many* of them."

"Yes," Mr. Carrivée smiled. "*La force réside dans les nombres.* (There is strength in numbers.)"

While Adam was cheered by this, he was all the more so by how the local kids seemed to be regarding him differently in the middle of this campaign.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

At the dinner table, Adam held up a sheaf of papers. "So we collected the money and composed the telegrams and before our IGA shift, Mr. Carrivée drove Luc and I to the place at the railway station downtown where you send them from, and we gave the person at the counter behind the glass the messages..." He stalled in his explanation, blinking his own incredulity. Finally, he snapped himself out of it. "And they took the money and sent the telegrams and gave us copies, and we're going to tape them to the Carrivée garage door for everyone to see."

Adam's parents watched him return to eating his dinner -after catching his breath, of course- then their gazes met, both of them bursting with pride. (It should be noted that Adam's news set off internal sparks for his father...a variation of the same tune that Mr. Carrivée had been singing to his brothers in Montreal.)

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

### **September 24, Game Six, Moscow: Canada 3 USSR 2**

In the Francis living room, Adam's father was reading yet another novel. Staggered tumult from the neighbourhood rose and fell all around him. He was equal parts miffed, fascinated and bemused.

Sitting up, he listened. Standing, he cocked his head, listening harder. Finally, he padded to the television, and turned it on. Flipping the channel, and found the game. Ever The Unbeliever, he remained there, bent, with his hand on the ON-OFF button, desperate to not be caught doing what he was doing.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Francis was en route down the stairs with a basket of laundry. But she could hear...she could hear the *faint* strains of the tv, broadcasting the game. She thought on this, and was touched. Finally, she made a noise, giving her husband fair warning.

Hearing his wife approaching, Mr. Francis turned off the television, and rushed to sit, his secret safe.

Arriving at the living room entrance, Mrs. Francis was stopped by synchronous cheers that felt as if they were coming from everywhere.

As Mr. Francis didn't want to acknowledge his kinship with this blatant -and eerily familiar- fandom, he grumbled, stirring in place before going back to his book. "Bloody goons," he said unconvincingly.

Knowing full well what was going on, Mrs. Francis gave him the eye. "Cuppa...?" she finally asked, floating away. "I picked up some vanilla slices from VandenBerg's."

"Brilliant, Luv!" he called out, brightening, slipping into glee at the mention of his favourite treat from the local bakery.

Mrs. Francis covered her mouth, barely stifling her laugh. "She shoots, she scores!" she whispered from the kitchen.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

A win. A slim one, but a win regardless. Exuberant street hockey was being played in the road, everyone still riding high on Team Canada's victory. Mr. Francis came out onto the steps, looked to Adam. "Son!"

Standing behind him, Mrs. Francis felt a little concerned. She watched as her husband took a five dollar bill out of his pocket.

"Would you run to the store, Adam?" his father called out. "I need some Benson & Hedges."

"I thought you wanted to go for a walk?" Mrs. Francis said to her husband, hand then at his waist, playfully pressing her knee into the back of his. "I still need to get-"

Mr. Francis considered the street game. "Why don't you pick up a dozen ices while you're at it?"

"Popsicles?" Adam replied, eyes wide.

"Your friends look like they could use them."

Mrs. Francis applied her chin to his shoulder, grinning...and in love.

Adam too, was grinning as he headed for the sidewalk.

"Don't forget one for your old mum!"

Adam nodded, then paused in front of the Carrivées', where Luc's father sat contentedly. "Vous avez...vous avez be-be..besoin de...dequelquechosedumagasin, M. Carrivée (You need anything from the store, Mr. Carrivée?)"

Luc's father threw up his hands, happy. "*Que pourrais-je désirer de plus lors d'une journée comme celle-ci?!?* (What more could I desire on a day such as this?!?)" he called out. When it appeared that Adam couldn't translate the joyous response in his head, Mr. Carrivée shook his head, laughing.

## Chapter Seventeen: The Dinner

Mr. Francis listened to the lunchroom chatter at Dayne; nothing else was being discussed other than Game Six the previous day. Except that unlike previously, *now* he was fascinated.

Bob Michie approached. "Tough loss on Saturday!"

"Loss?" Mr. Francis replied. "It was a corker!"

"The Magpies!" Mr. Michie added. He received hardly a reaction. "Newcastle! Three-nil to Sunderland!"

"Oh. Right."

Bob was perplexed...especially at his friend's blushing.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

### September 26, Game Seven, Moscow: Canada 4 USSR 3

At recess, the playground had the same general congregations of anxious hockey fans amidst the general population. But it was slightly different from two days previous; the principal had warned students that anyone going home to watch the game and was late coming back would be subject to detention. All the more so for those who didn't bother to return, period.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Mr. Francis walked the shop floor with a clipboard, checking in with people, gauging production progress with them, confirming delivery dates. Almost everyone had transistor radios nearby. He was concerned about this, because so many seemed distracted. As he spoke with someone who'd come to him to sign a form, there was a cry, a slam of equipment, and a flurry of activity.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Adam, Luc and his father watched the game, even as Mr. Carrivée checked with his watch every minute or so. "OK! We leave at 12:50!"

"12:55, Papa!"

"12:50!" His father countered, gesticulating wildly at the television. "Régardez! Régardez! You can listen in the car, en route."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

As they arrived at the school, the game still played on the radio. Mr. Carrivée waited. "Go! You *cannot* be late again!"

Adam began tugging Luc out of the car...but Luc didn't want to shut the door. Adam closed it. Luc then leaned through window. Mr. Carrivée slowly pulled away, Adam holding Luc. They dashed for entrance doors just as the bell rang, a caboose to the migration train into the school.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Inside, none of the boys who were fans were able to concentrate: general anxiety reigned. Not knowing the result felt like torture. They squirmed in their seats, unable to calm down.

In the office, the game played on a radio, loud enough for the principal to hear, but not so loud as to annoy the secretaries. Not *too* much, anyway.

Eyes closed, Luc, prayed, clutching what was beneath his shirt, bunching the cotton at his chest.

As the final seconds of the game wound down, the principal turned off the radio, marched into the office, and flipped on the P.A. "Your attention, please..."

Luc was still lost in prayer, Adam beside him, hating the anticipation, the dread...and yet loving it at the same time.

"Final score...4-3..."

All breaths were bated.

"...Canada-"

The classroom...and others, heard in the background...went nuts.

"-evening up the series at three wins, three losses each, and a tie."

Brent Parsons was stone-faced.

Turning off the P.A., the principal looked to one of the secretaries. "Could you please see if you can get the Board Superintendent Huyck on the phone...? I know that he's a big hockey fan. Maybe *he* should make the decision..."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Mr. Francis arrived home. Engine off, he remained in his car, looking to the Carrivé's driveway. He couldn't help but smile at the fact that once more, Adam was in the full goaltender gear, playing with Luc in the Carrivé driveway...and appeared to be improving.

Mrs. Francis came out onto the landing. She handed her husband a mug as he mounted the steps. "We're eating a bit late tonight."

Mr. Francis sipped. All seemed good in the world.

"I'm whipping up a special treat for tea," she continued.

"Oh?"

"Roast of beef."

Her husband was surprised.

"And company. Special guests."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Two families. Mr. Francis looked a little ill at ease, Mr. Carrivée a little playful, Luc a little wide-eyed at Mrs. Francis' movements; remembrance of his mother in his expression. Adam and Mrs. Francis were the only ones in a 'normal' state.

"-roast potatoes, corn, carrots, Brussels sprouts, mushy peas...and that...*that* is Yorkshire Pudding."

Luc pulled his attention away from Adam's mom. "It's a *pudding*? For dinner?"

Mrs. Francis smiled at Luc's wonder. "You have it with gravy." She leaned close. "But sometimes I have leftovers for dessert. With *jam*."

"It smells wonderful, Mrs. Francis." Luc's father looked as excited as his son.

"Where *we* come from," Mr. Francis explained, "it's a staple. Part of what we refer to as a 'Sunday roast'. A special weekly dinner. A British tradition."

"Tell them about the contests, dad!"

"Contests?" Mr. Carrivée asked.

"Well... OK. Sunday roasts at a pub. Which is *not* like a bar, don't let anyone tell you that... Roast beef. Yorkshire pudding. The contest would be whoever could eat the most Yorkshire pudd got as much roast beef as he could manage."

"An eating contest!" Luc cried, almost clapping his hands.

"What's in it, Mrs. Francis? The Yorkshire pudding. If I'm not being rude."

"Milk...eggs...flour..."

Mr. Carrivée thought on this. "Ah... So the 'winner' fills up with bread. No offense intended, Mrs. Francis."

"And having stuffed himself," Mr. Francis added, "can't manage much of the -far more expensive- roast beef."

Mr. Carrivée laughed, and then said something in French

"To the...the victor...the...the spoils..." Adam began, pulling out his dictionary.

"I suppose that's *one* way of looking-"

“...but he’s too...too full to enjoy them,” Adam added, completing the translation.

Mr. Carrivée winked at his son, who, although he managed a brief smile, was a little lost in the occasion: a family dinner.

“You are turning into a very, very good translator, Adam,” Mr. Carrivée said to him. “Well done!”

Mrs. Francis, basking in this comment, finally sat. “Eat up! Don’t let it get cold!”

And so everyone dug in. Luc especially enjoyed what he was eating from the first forkful.

“You are a football fan, Mr. Francis?” Luc’s father asked.

“North American grid-iron football? No, I can’t say as-”

“*English* football. Soccer. ‘The Beautiful Game’.”

Adam wondered where this was going...while his mom smiled.

“Of course! Of course I am! Have you ever seen it played? I mean, on a proper pitch, by *real* players? English football: now *that’s* a sport.”

“No, I’m sorry,” Mr. Carrivée said, genuine emotion in his voice. “I’ve never had the pleasure of seeing an English football league match.”

“Shame. Nothing quite like it.”

“I *have* seen international play.”

Mr. Francis waves him off with his knife. “Some minor tie between Canada and America? Hardly the same thing. You-”

“I saw a World Cup Final.”

“You did? Which one? You must have done some travelling in your time. Chile? Mexico?”

“Two championships ago. In 1966.”

“In England?” Mr. Francis asked, stunned. “How? That hardly seems likely-”

Now Adam’s mother winced at where the conversation might be going. “Would anyone like any-”

"I was fortunate," Mr. Carrivée began. "I was visiting my grandfather. In France. Someone owed him a favour. Someone who knew someone who knew someone else..."

Adam stared at his gobsmacked father; he may never, *ever* have seen him this way.

"You... You were there," Mr. Francis managed to say. "At Wembley. You saw the match. England's win. Geoff Hurst's treble!"

"I did. I was there. I saw it all."

Mr. Francis dropped his utensils to his plate; the jangled sound was like a peal of a bell. "What- What was it like?"

"I've never seen anything- It was... I can't really describe it properly...and surely not in English."

"Your English is *fine*, Mr. Carrivée," Adam's mother said. "Better than some Canadians I've met! English Canadians, I mean."

"Merci beaucoup. Adam has been a wonderful influence."

"I only got to listen to it on the radio," Mr. Francis said. "The Final," he added, in awe.

"Your heart is owned by football."

Mr. Francis nodded. "I miss it. I miss it a lot."

"It is not easy," Mr. Carrivée said, eyes passing from Adam...through remaining there just a bit...to Mr. Francis. "Missing parts of your life that you once loved. And still do."

Luc was touched by his father's words, while Adam felt the same at his father's facial expression.

"So," Mr. Francis says, "what was..."

In the silence, Mr. Carrivée showed his true strengths as a storyteller: timing, building the suspense...and then finally, grinning. "Incroyable. *Incredible*. I've seen my share of sporting events, jeux fabuleux de finale de la Coupe de Stanley..." He waited for Adam to translate.

"Um... Stanley Cup Final games...*fabulous* ones..."

Mr. Carrivée smiled. "...but *never* have I experienced what it was like to be in that crowd on that day, during that match. Full stadium, almost all them cheering on England." He noted the glee (and bewilderment) on his host's face. And now it was *his* time at the mic. "And here comes Hurst. Some people are on the pitch, they think it's over!"

You see, the score of the Final between England and Germany was even at 2-2 at the end of regulation time. Eleven minutes into 'overtime', Geoff Hurst scored his second goal of the match. (Which was a contentious one; many felt that the ball, having ricocheted off the crossbar hadn't actually crossed the goal-line.) But he made it a 'treble' by scoring again several minutes later; though he'd just been trying to clear the ball to waste time, he scored even as spectators began streaming onto the field.

Mr. Francis took the cue, and joined in the last portion of BBC commentator Kenneth Wolstenholme's famous declaration. "It is *now!* It's *four!*"

"We too, have some traditions where Luc and I come from," Mr. Carrivée said, after allowing the moment to breathe. "I'm not sure if you have the same ones. One of my favourites is for someone new to a neighbourhood to gift those who have been generous in their welcoming. Sometimes, a fête, a party. Sometimes, food."

"Poutine!" Adam happily joked.

Winking the boy's way, Mr. Carrivée began pulling something out of his shirt pocket. "Sometimes, something personal, something only one person could appreciate." He passed the item to Mr. Francis, whose eyes went wide when he saw what it was.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"A little of everything," Mrs. Francis said, handing Luc some full Tupperware containers. "Including some beef juices. For your next batch of poutine."

Now Luc was the one whose face lit up. With smiles and more thanks, the Carrivées made the short walk home.

Halfway to their front door, Luc stopped and turned to his father. "*Une telle tradition n'existe pas.* (There is no such tradition.)"

"*Non, il n'y en a pas. Mais il pourrait y en avoir. Tels sont les mystères de La Belle Province.* (No, there is not. But there *could* be. Such are the mysteries of La Belle Province.)"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Mr. Francis sat in the corner of the attic, faint light illuminating him and the box he held with great reverence. These were his soccer treasures, including newspaper clippings from the 1966 World Cup England victory, both Canadian and ones his brother had sent him from over 'ome. Once more, he regarded the ticket Mr. Carrivée had given him. Solemnly, he placed it with the other items, patting it with quiet solemnity, as if concluding a ceremony. In his head, he could hear the broadcast just as he had via shortwave radio six years previously, the crowd threatening to blot out the announcer. A spike of cheering broke through his remembrances, prodding him back to the present.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The noise came from outside; the kids were playing in the street; and for a second, Mr. Francis heard it as a cacophony just as loud as the memory. Part of it was that Mr. Carrivée was playing with them. A cigarette dangling from his mouth, he was having fun, setting up this kid, then that, deftness on stationary parade. Eyeing Adam standing on the sidewalk, he moved towards him. "And now," he announced, "entering the game, number twenty, Peter Mahovlich!" He forced the stick into Adam's hands and nudged him into the game.

The kids' reaction? Surprise...a group shrug...then back to the game.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Later on, Mr. Francis watched the television. The light went out in the kitchen, and Mrs. Francis entered the room. "Coming to bed, Luv?"

"Yes" her husband replied, distracted. "In a bit. I just want to watch..." Noting the screen's content, she left him to head upstairs. He continued to watch a news report about how the day's victory was going to impact work on Thursday, when Game Eight was to be played, emphasizing the speculation on the number of people expected to be absent from work. He considered all this a little differently than he otherwise might have mere weeks before. Change is often this way; it can seem to happen 'like that', the result of a finger-snap, when in fact it's been happening slowly. Slowly, but surely.

## Chapter Eighteen: A Proposal...and Permission

At Dayne, everyone was headed to one place on the shop floor. A congregation point. Mr. Francis began to speak, but Mr. Michie approached with a step-box, grinning as he placed it before Mr. Francis. "Good morning, lads. I've asked you here because of what's happening tomorrow. Game Eight in Moscow" His gaze swept through the surprised crowd. "Yesterday, we had the *second* accident this month. Now; I know that your sport is important to you, your ice hockey...this series..."

And the grumbling, the groaning and complaints began. "Here we go!" someone called from the back.

"...but safety, *your* safety, must come first. Therefore, there will be *no* radios allowed on the shop floor tomorrow."

"Then I'm booking off sick!"

"Which means you'll be docked a day's pay."

"At this rate, this is *definitely* not going to end well," Mr. Michie sighed.

"This isn't fair!"

"*This* is why we need a union," someone muttered.

"Gentlemen!" Mr. Michie called out. "Listen! Please!" He was barely able to tamp down all of rising his smile. "Hear the man out! Mr. Francis isn't finished."

Once everything had gone silent once more, Adam's father continued. "I have a *proposal* for you."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"...and so it has been decided that those students wishing to watch the game will be allowed to, in specially-selected classrooms," the principal explained over the p.a. system. "Those students *not* so inclined to watch, will be accommodated in other classrooms. The choice is yours...and that of your parents." The shock on the students' faces matched those of the Dayne workers.

As the principal made his announcement, teachers in various classrooms handed out pieces of white paper the size of a file card.

“Permission slips are being sent home with you,” the principal continued. “Do not forget to have yours signed if you want to watch this historic game. For everyone else, it will be a usual school day, more or less.”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

At dinner, Adam attempted to casually hand his mother his slip, but his father was too fast for him; he snagged it while still talking, still eating, tucking it in his shirt pocket without missing a beat.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Mr. Carrivée, Luc and Adam kicked around with sticks and a ball in the driveway...but eventually realized they didn't have it in them to distract themselves, and so sat. Neither did they have the energy required babble on about anything. So they became silent statues.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

“*Qu'est ce qui t'ennuie?* (What's bothering you?)” Mr. Carrivée asked his son later as they did the dishes and cleaned up the kitchen. “*Autre que votre anticipation?* (Other than your anticipation?)”

“*Nous ne regarderons pas ensemble. Demain.* (We won't be watching together. Tomorrow.)”

“*Tu as commencé ce voyage avec Adam. C'est juste que tu le complètes avec lui.* (You began this journey with Adam. It's only right that you complete it with him.)”

“*Mais il ne sait même pas si son père va le lui permettre!* (But he doesn't even know if his father will allow him!)”

“*J'ai foi en cet homme. Attends-toi. Prévoyez d'être à l'école, aux côtés d'Adam, quand Équipe Canada montrera à ces Soviétiques ce dont ils sont vraiment faits. Je serai là à vos côtés, en esprit.* (I have faith in that man. You just wait. Plan on being there in school, beside Adam, when Team Canada shows those Soviets what they're *really* made of. I'll be there beside you, in spirit.)”

Luc nodded, bringing out his Star of David from inside his shirt.

Smiling, his father touched it with the tips of his fingers. “*Bien. Alors votre mère et moi serons tous les deux avec toi.* (Good. Then your mother and I will *both* be with you.)”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

As Adam headed to bed, his father stopped by his room. "Good luck tomorrow."

"Luck...?"

"The mat-" His father caught himself. "The *game*." And with this, he handed Adam his signed permission slip. "Enjoy."

Now, some men are just not 'huggers'. Not much beyond the usual needs of their spouses. And twelve-year-old boys aren't particularly inclined to hug beyond the usual needs of their mothers. But sometimes, the tiniest of stars...maybe just the dust from these celestial beings...align and the unusual unfolds. And sometimes it's the unusual that moves us the most. And on this occasion, it did.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

As Mr. Carrivée and Luc headed upstairs, they checked at their stairwell window. They found Adam peering out, waving the slip, punctuating the message with two thumbs up.

## **Chapter Nineteen: Henderson Has Scored for Canada!**

### **September 28, Game Eight, Moscow: Canada 6 USSR 5**

At dawn, a pickup truck arrived at the Francis home. Mr. Michie hopped out, opened up the back, shaking his head with a chuckle.

Inside, Mr. Francis unplugged the television, disconnecting the antenna cable.

A very sleepy-headed Adam watched from the stairs, his mother in shock over her husband's actions. His father saw this. And winked.

And then, Mr. Francis and his co-worker loaded the television into the truck. But before entering the passenger side, Mr. Francis sprinted back to the house and kissed his wife. "Trust me," he told her. Then, looking to Adam, he said "Go you reds!" before landing a quick buss on his son's forehead, too.

"Dad, they both wear red!" Adam laughed.

Halfway across the lawn, Mr. Francis stopped, turning back to them. "Oh, right. Sorry, I was just-" He thought for a second. "Go Team Canada!"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The truck backed up slowly to the Dayne loading dock. Out of the pitch-black, the grand shipping door gradually rolled up, illuminating the truck, but little else, it was so dark.

Mr. Michie turned to get a better look at the revealed silhouettes that cut the light in half; when he looked to Mr. Francis again, he received a happy wink in acknowledgement.

The entire shift was there to help. Gathered in mute stupefaction, they resembled big kids, energies rising off them like steam. With Mr. Francis to guide them, they unloaded the television, moving it *very* carefully, with the utmost of tenderness to a place of honour up onto a stand, connected an ad hoc antenna...and then Mr. Francis turned, everyone cheered, and they flew off to their work stations. Mr. Francis regarded the clock, which showed 5am, then shook hands with Mr. Michie.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Adam tried to eat breakfast, but he was too nervous. "My stomach... Everything is moving around," he explained, his spoon tapping away on the table, his foot doing the same on the floor.

"Butterflies," Mrs. Francis smiled. "A perfectly normal reaction."

Adam was still unconvinced.

"Six years ago, while your father was waiting for the World Cup Final to begin, he threw up, he was so nervously excited. Excitedly nervous."

"He was? I don't remember that."

"Three times," she continued. "He called your uncle Denis twice during the lead-up. You look very much the same way he did."

Still not convinced of anything.

Mrs. Francis went to the phone and dialled a number.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Luc now sat with Adam at the Francis table, eating breakfast. Both looked far more relaxed. Mr. Carrivée stood at the counter, coffee in hand.

“Thieves broke into our home this morning,” Mrs. Francis said out of nowhere. “They stole our television.”

While the Carrivées paused in their shock, Adam merely smiled into his Corn Flakes.

“My husband decided that it was the safe, prudent thing for the Dayne employees to be able to watch the game at work. So the shift went in *very* early to prepare things, and were going to work until the game began, at which point everything would come to a standstill, and they would pull up chairs in front of the television.”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The walk to school could have been a funeral procession, given the doleful faces, the a *very* sombre state. Oh, the number of stones kicked along the way! Easily enough to fill in a small quarry. Gloominess wafted around them, but they were also jazzed by their excitement, their apprehension. So confusing.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Teachers collected permission slips. Special tickets to a very special game. It was a treat for them to see the boys so genuinely electrified, but they showed it mostly in their eyes.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Students entered classrooms that had been set up for either viewers or non-viewers. The ones who wouldn't be watching the game were still thrilled in a small way by the novelty of the moment. The Team Canada fans were bubbling with anticipation while secretly wondering if they were going to throw up.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

At the appropriate time, Dayne Steel came to a halt, everyone gathering at the television. Including Mr. Francis. He stood before the television holding up a piece of paper. Nobody knew what was going on. “To Team Canada, Moscow. STOP We know you will do your best and do your country proud! STOP We're all pulling for you, cheering every step of the way! STOP Good luck! STOP From all the lads at Dayne Steel, Stoney Creek, Ontario, Canada. FULL STOP.” And then, into the stunned silence, Mr. Francis read out the names of all the employees.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The town's streets were empty; it felt like Good Friday, it was so quiet. Only a smattering of customers at the Royal Bank, in Mowbray's Hardware, at Millen's, even at the Dairy. Regardless, in all places in Stoney Creek, tension.

As the second period ended, the principal made an announcement.

Though there was a ton of grumbling, the frazzled students complied; they made their way to the playground. But nobody played: the students simply huddled around the doors, waiting to go back inside.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The action resumed, as did the fixation of all the spectators at their various locales. Grown men and children alike. Fidgety kids in Collegiate Avenue School classrooms. Dayne employees up off their chairs, pacing about, nerves on fire, heart rates ever accelerating. In offices, restaurants, supermarkets (the IGA had a small black & white television parked at the checkout), to solitary rink managers awash in prayers.

Finally, the scramble in front of Tretiak's net on the tv screen...

...and Foster Hewitt famously yelling "Henderson has scored for Canada!"

The school doors burst opened onto the playground as hundreds of kids were 'released', charging into the sunlight, *euphoric*. An orchestra of never-ending cheers, a frantic crescendo with no ending.

On the Dayne factory floor, a mass of ecstasy, men jumping up and down just like kids on Christmas morning night.

Alone, yet not alone, Mr. Carrivée wept.

Dealing with a customer, Mrs. Francis cried at her desk, giddy, capably juggling forms and cash and tears.

Mr. Francis cried with Mr. Michie, at first fighting his heartfelt reaction, then relenting. What popped into his head at the height of the hug was the thought of his son, joyous.

And Adam and Luc? They danced in the playground...shared a moment of exhausted clarity, shook off their shock, then resumed their jigging, this time skipping in a circle.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Zoë and Adam stand before the display of Henderson's goal. Eyes brimming. But in the most joyous way imaginable.

"My dad- He always said that the only time he'd been happier was when I was born."

"That sounds about right," Adam says. "Even with all those great Habs teams later in the 70s, and beyond."

Zoë stares at the display. "What an *amazing*..."

"Yup," Adam says. "All that and *then* some."

Zoë goes from this intensely emotional place...to somewhere even more so. "Oh my God! That's right! You- When Team Canada flew back, you went to the airport! And not the one in Toronto!"

"Now *that* was amazing. Even more than Henderson's goal, the victory..."

"Meeting them? The team? Getting autographs?"

"Yes...but- Maybe your dad never mentioned this, but there were *six* of us on that trip to Montréal. It was the most important gesture my father had made to me at that point. Beyond even the permission slip. We could have just driven to Toronto International, or take in the celebration at Nathan Phillips Square. But my dad would have no part of it; he said that the plane landing in Toronto wouldn't have the entire team. So we made the seven hour drive to Dorval and got to cheer the entire team in the arrivals."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The Dayne employees were queued-up, waiting for their turn at the food truck. All along the line-up, a single topic of conversation: the absence of Mr. Francis.

"He *never* takes days off!"

"The sign should read 'Number of days since last Francis vacation taken.'"

"Is he sick?"

"He had an errand to run," Mr. Michie offered.

"Must have been a pretty important one."

"You're sure he's not sick?"

“He’s driving to Montreal,” Mr. Michie explained.

“What’s in Montreal?”

“You wouldn’t believe me if I told you,” Mr. Michie grinned. “Even if I swore on a stack of bibles.”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Yes, the two families drove to Montréal: Adam, Luc, Mr. Carrivée, Mrs. Francis, Mr. Francis. Parking at the airport, they hurried to the Arrivals area. Excitement electrified the crowd; the anticipation, the press, the faces of the fans, the applause. Very quickly Luc’s uncles were found, producing a rousing reunion. Introductions were made, greetings offered...during which Mr. Francis was heard to offer “Bonjour.”

Mr. Carrivée spoke with a bystander. “*Nous avons conduit depuis l’Ontario.* (We drove all the way from Ontario.)”

“*L’Ontario? Que faites vous ici?!?* (Ontario? What are you doing *there?!?*)”

“Making a home,” Mr. Carrivée beamed.

## **Epilogue: Goodbye Surprise**

Adam and Zoë stand on Front Street before the discrete sculpture honouring the ‘72 Summit Series. “You know,” he says, “your father and grandfather were the reason I ended up a goalie who made it to the NHL draft.”

“Picked by the Nordiques of all teams!” Zoë enthused.

“But it was my father who got me to every practice and attended as many games as he was able. With my mom, of course. He went from being a hockey denier to a genuinely impassioned hockey-father.”

In the background, Zoë’s classmates are being marshalled to the bus.

“I’m glad you came,” he says. “I’m glad we finally met.”

"My dad would be happy."

"Come for a *real* visit next time," he tells her. "I've a daughter your age. Kendra. She's got a wicked wrist-shot."

"I'd like that."

"Here's my card...my email's right there."

"Thanks." Staring at the business card, she's thinking, wondering if she should ask the question she's wanted to have answered for the longest time. Finally, she takes a deep breath. "What happened between the two of you? I mean, your friendship? Was it more than just you going off to Minnesota?"

Now it's Adam's turn to breathe deep. "As is so often the case, there was a girl. Your father saw her on the first day of school and fell for her. Meanwhile, I'd had a crush on her since second grade. We didn't talk about it much at first, because neither your father nor I knew what to do with our feelings. And as twelve year olds, it's not like either one of us was going to actually make any sort of move.

"But then high school came. Same situation, two guys *still* crushin' on the same girl. He was the first to ask her out. I guess this would have been Grade 11. So they dated. By that point, I was really, really busy with hockey, playing for Saltfleet, as well as the progression of minor teams in the various divisions, tournaments and camps. There was only so much time available. And with your father having a girlfriend...one that I was still infatuated with, more than I let on to anyone other than my mom...we drifted apart towards the end of high school." He pauses. "Come to think of it, him finishing at Grade 12 while I continued to 13 iced it. No pun intended.

"I think what really finished things for good was an incident when I was really angry and frustrated, still the owner of this longstanding crush, yet still regarding Luc as my best friend. I said the wrong thing at the wrong time...and it was easier to just move away. Far enough away that I wouldn't have to deal with any of it."

"So Minnesota and your full ride scholarship. And then the west coast."

"Yup. I regret it all now. It was silly stuff. I wish I'd been able to cope. But I wasn't. Not even your father working for a while at Dayne could keep things together."

"The girl," Zoë finally says. "The one that caused the rift. What was her name?"

"Donna. Donna Snell."

"Did you ever see her after you'd left Stoney Creek?"

"No," Adam replies. And suddenly he's looking at Zoë through an entirely different lens. He blinks, as if to clarify what he's seeing, to focus the lens. He gazes at Zoë's teeth. Her two top teeth. They're distinct. Quite prominent. Affording her a slight 'buck-toothed' look. Reminiscent of...of...

It's not hard for Zoë to figure out what Adam is thinking as his head actually tilts to somehow see more clearly. "So I kinda, sorta look like my mom? Donna Carrivée? Maiden name 'Snell'?"

"Zoë!" a teacher calls out to her. Zoë gazes over to the bus and her classmates. Prompted by spying them passing memorabilia back and forth, she opens her knapsack, retrieving something. "I almost forgot; he wanted you to have this." She hands Adam an Esso Power Players album.

"Is this--"

"It's not the one you gave him. I still have it. This one's in--"

"En *français*," Adam says, moved, feeling the full effect of *everything* that happened that summer...especially the friend he'd made. "I don't know what to say." At her grin, Adam knows it's all OK. "You're going to have to come back for a proper tour, Zoë. You've hardly seen anything. You spent the whole time talking with me."

"I will," she replies. "I'll come back...and bring my grandfather with me."

The End

## **Acknowledgements**