

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

Chapter One

Granny Godfroy Makes Spaghetti

Letter to Papa, Somewhere on a Freight Train Heading West

Dear Papa,

You got to come and get me. Freddy can stay here with Granny Godfroy if he wants to, but you got to come and get me! She has purple hair!

Your daughter,

Francine Amalie Antoinette LeBlanc

P.S. This is what happened our first night at Granny Godfroy's. Mama had already left to take care of that rich family on Grosse Pointe. She isn't coming back until next Friday.

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Me and Freddy sat at Granny Godfroy's round, splintery wooden table. We looked at each other and Freddy lifted his eyebrow at me, like he always does when he's saying, "sei la vie, oh well, things could get worse." They are already as bad as they can get. Me and Freddy had to move out of our nice house in Detroit where I had my own bedroom and doll bed. We had to move to this place called Ecorse. It's a bunch of wooden houses along the Detroit River. Granny lives in one of those little houses, right next to a marsh. Something called the Depression came to America and it took everybody's money away. Mama had to go work for a rich family in Grosse Pointe way down the River in the other direction. She can only come home on weekends and Freddy and me have to live with Granny Godfroy.

"Who is Granny Godfroy?" I hollered at her when she told us.

"She's my Mama, like I'm your Mama."

"Then why haven't we ever visited her?"

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“Because she and my Papa didn’t want me to marry your Papa,” Mama said sadly. “And perhaps they were right. Your Papa did leave us to take the train west when Freddy was a baby and your were just three.”

I could remember a few things about being three, like singing Frere Jacques. The only thing I remembered about Papa was the way he burped after he drank his tea. I looked through our tiny wooden house on Godfrey Street in Detroit. That wasn’t hard to do. We lived in what Mama called a shotgun house. You could stand by the kitchen door and look straight through it. Now all I saw was a bare lonely house with a single scrap of paper huddled in a corner of the parlor. I hugged my doll Pierre up tight against my heart. The parlor furniture was all gone. Mama said she had gotten \$60.00 for our horsehair couch and chairs. Mama’s bedroom didn’t have any furniture in it, either, just a pile of blankets where Mama had slept for the past two nights. A wooden table and chairs still stood in our kitchen. Mama said that she agreed to leave the table and chairs there for the new owners. Me and Freddy slept in the other bedroom. We had divided it down the middle with an imaginary line like the equator. My side of the line was empty. Freddy’s had clothes and tinker toys scattered around it.

“Freddy, you have to come and clean your side of the bedroom,” I shouted.

Mama came up behind me. “He’s over at Jacob’s saying goodbye, Francine. He’ll do it later. Did you say goodbye to Mary?”

I tossed my head and hugged Pierre harder. “I said goodbye to her in school. I won’t miss her. I’ll make new friends in Ecorse.”

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“You’ll miss her and it’s wise to keep old friends,” Mama said smiling at me and touching my cheek lightly.

“Mama, why do we have to move?”

“Because, Francine, Mr. and Mrs. Benton moved from Detroit to Grosse Pointe and they asked me to move with them. They pay me too good of a wage for me not to go.”

“Why can’t we just stay here in our own house?”

“Because I can’t come home on the train every night and take it back every morning. I have to stay at the Bentons all week and you and Freddy can’t stay here alone.”

“We could manage, Mama. I can cook and clean and look after Freddy.”

“Francine, you two fight like cats and birds.”

“Mama, I promise we won’t fight if you let us stay home.”

Mama patted my shoulder. “Granny Godfroy offered to let you and Freddy live with her all week and go to school in Ecorse. It’s for the best Francine, and you’ll get used to it.”

“I never will,” I said, sobbing and holding Pierre.

Granny picked us up at our house in Detroit. Mama had sold our furniture at a moving sale. I sold my doll bed for a quarter, but I kept my doll Pierre. Pierre is a girl, but I named her after my grandfather Pierre. Grandpere Pierre came to Ecorse when the Indians still lived there. The Indians liked him so much that they gave him a farm by the River and he built a house on it. That’s where Granny Godfroy lives now. Mama got on

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the train to go to her job in Grosse Pointe. Granny kissed her and said, “I will see you on the weekend, dear Madeleine. Don’t worry about the children. I’ll take good care of them just like I took good care of you.. “Come children, it’s time to go,” she said.

I looked around, but I didn’t see a horse and buggy and I didn’t see a car.

“Are we going to walk to Ecorse?” Freddy asked her.

“Mon dieu, no,” Granny said, her purple hair quivering in the breeze. It is zigzagged around her head like blades of grass, with one tuft sticking up right in the center of her head. “We’re going to take the River.”

“How can we take the river?” I asked.

Freddy snickered. “Do we have to give it back?”

I glared at him, but he stuck out his tongue at me. Granny hitched her thumbs under her overall straps and pulled them up off the ground. Papa, did I tell you that she wears blue denim overalls and red and white checked shirts? Mama wears dresses and she has brown hair that wraps itself around her head

“Come along, chere, I’ll show you,” Granny Godfroy said. She took my hand, but I let go of her hand right away. She had dirt under her fingernails and she was holding a fishhook.

“I’m sorry, Francine. I forgot I went fishing before I came to pick up you and Freddy. Wait ‘til you see the fish I caught for supper.”

I wanted to wait, but Granny and Freddy wouldn’t let me. They dragged me down to the dock by the river. Someone had abandoned a rickety boat there. A tiny cabin jutted into the air like Freddy sticking out his tongue. The cabin had a crooked window with

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bed sheet curtains covering it. A rail curved around the deck like a snake and every other shingle on the cabin roof was missing.

“What an awful boat,” I said, hugging Pierre tighter.

“Thank you. This is the Frere Jacques. Come aboard,” Granny told me.

“Wow!” Freddy the traitor said. He down the dock, up the gangplank and got on that Frere Jacques. Granny and I went more slowly. “How do you make it run?” I asked her.

Granny moved her arms like Popeye the sailor. “You make it run with muscle power,” she said.

“Whose muscle?” I asked her suspiciously.

“Well, usually mine, but I thought maybe you and Freddy might like to help me row back to Ecorse.”

Freddy grabbed the oars and started working them. We went in circles for a few minutes before Granny finally stopped him and showed him how to pull the oars together so that we could get away from the dock and head down the river toward Ecorse. “Don’t row so hard,” I told Freddy. “You’re getting Pierre’s dress all wet.”

Freddy answered me by flipping a batch of water on me with an oar. I stood up ready to tackle him, but Granny reached over and firmly sat me down. “Sit down, Francine, before you tip us over,” she said. “We must practice your swimming tomorrow.”

“I already know how to swim. Mary’s father took us to the lake and taught us.”

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“You can teach me, Granny,” Freddy said. “I want to swim all of the way across the River.”

She smiled at us both. “Practice makes perfect,” she said. “We’ll have swimming practice every day until you can race the sturgeon and win.”

I wanted to know what a sturgeon was but I wouldn’t ask her. I just sat holding Pierre and wishing the trip would be over. I wanted Papa to come and rescue me. I wanted Mama.

Her voice broke into my wishes. “Come, Francine, it’s your turn to row.”

Instead of telling her that I had never rowed a boat before, I took the oars and put Pierre on my lap. I leaned forward and pulled at the oars. Pierre fell off my lap and the muscles in my shoulders pulled.

“Good start,” Granny said. “Keep pulling but make sure you keep the oars in the water. If you take them out you row choppy and uneven and you splash.”

I got a splinter in my finger and blisters on my hands before we reached Granny’s farm, but I rowed better than Freddy did. After Granny tied the boat up to her dock, I thought I saw her smiling at me, but I looked down at the splinter in my finger and hugged Pierre. I wanted to go home.

“This will be your home for as long as you want it to be,” Granny told us as she led us along a dirt path through the marsh. “Filled this in myself,” she said. “Took me a year or so, but I did it so visitors would have easy walking.” Next, we climbed a hill with grass and white birch trees growing on it, and then we came to a garden full of

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vegetables. Freddy ran ahead and picked a ripe, red tomato and some snap beans. He crunched on one and held out a tomato and some beans to me.

“Take a bite,” he said. “They’re good.”

I pushed them out of his hand. “Nothing here is as good as home,” I shouted.

Granny looked thoughtful, but she didn’t yell at me. She pointed up ahead where some apple and pear trees grew next to a log cabin.

“Does Pierre like pears?” she asked. “There are some delicious ripe pears growing on those pear trees.”

I hurried to the pear trees. Granny had been telling me the truth. The pears smelled and tasted as good as chocolate ice cream or tootsie rolls, my favorite candy. I stopped long enough from eating two of them to ask Pierre if she wanted a bite, but she took so long to answer I couldn’t wait. I ate those pears.

While I munched on pears, Granny took us to the other side of the cabin where there was a fenced in square. Weird noises came from inside the square. I could hear them over the sounds of me munching pears. “Harold, be quiet!” Granny shouted.

My words ran away from me again around bites of pear. “Who is Harold?” I asked Granny.

“Harold is my pet pig. He likes to make a lot of noise, but he’s gentle as a lamb,” Granny said. “And much smarter.”

I wrinkled my nose as we walked by Harold’s pen. “And much smellier too,” I said.

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“Nobody’s perfect,” Granny told us as she opened the door of the cabin. “Enter in peace,” she said. Harold followed us, so I didn’t enter in peace. I entered looked around.

I made Freddy go first, but I went in, because there was no room to run away and Pierre was hungry since she hadn’t gotten any of the pears. Granny showed us our rooms. Freddy’s was upstairs in the loft. He had to climb a ladder to get up there, but his bed slats were covered with a fluffy featherbed, feather pillows and three patchwork quilts. A wooden wardrobe stood in the corner. “Open the wardrobe,” Granny said.

Freddy ran over and opened the wardrobe. He pulled out a fishing pole. “Wow, Granny. Are we going fishing?”

“As often as we can,” Granny said. “I’ll teach you how to trap muskrat, too.”

She had Freddy, but she didn’t have me, not even when we climbed back down the ladder and she opened a store bought door and took us into a room with a doll bed in the corner. “I built that bed especially for Pierre. Why don’t you settle Pierre in her bed,” Granny asked me.

I hugged Pierre close to my heart. “She’s not ready for bed. She hasn’t had her supper, yet,” I said.

“Well, let’s have supper,” Granny said, leading us into the kitchen. A maple table and chair sat by the window close to the stove. Behind the stove lay a square of cloth, as large as one of Mama’s table cloths. On it lay some smaller squares, like placemats. I pointed to it. “What’s that?” I asked Granny.

“That’s Harold’s table and placemat.”

“In the kitchen?” I asked.

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“He’s cleaner than a lot of people,” Granny said.

“What are you cooking for supper?” Freddy asked.

“I’m cooking some fish and potatoes.”

I wrinkled my nose. “I don’t like fish,” I said, kicking Freddy.

Freddy didn’t say anything for a minute. I kicked him again. “I don’t like fish either,” he said.

“Then I’ll cook you some muskrat,” Granny said.

“I never had muskrat,” Freddy said. “What does it taste like?”

“I don’t like muskrat,” I said.

“Sit down. We’ll talk turkey,” Granny Godfroy said.

“I don’t like turkey either,” I told her, although it’s my favorite.

Granny pointed out a chair. “Sit down,” she said firmly.

Me and Freddy sat at Granny Godfroy’s round, splintery wooden table. Freddy raised his eyebrows like question marks. I knew that meant he was wondering about something, maybe about this living with Granny idea. Granny stood at the wood burning kitchen stove, twirling her iron skillet. “What should I cook in this skillet for supper?” she asked.

“We could have chocolate mouse,” I said, remembering a picture from Mama’s magazines.

“I don’t have any chocolate mice, just plain brown ones,” Granny said.

“We could have black licorice,” Freddy said.

“What would you like for supper then?” Granny asked.

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I looked at Granny's spiky purple hair and overalls and checked shirt. I closed my eyes and went through my list of favorite foods.. I chose the one that I thought Granny wouldn't know about. "Spaghetti," I said.

Granny smiled. "Spaghetti it is," she said. "Come and help me."

Granny filled a large kettle with water and put it on the stove. Granny stood still for a minute and scratched her chin. "What's spaghetti and how do you make it?"

"Mama boils water for spaghetti in one pan and then she makes sauce in another," I said. I pointed to some tomatoes in a basket by the sink. "You make sauce out of tomatoes and spices and sugar and vinegar."

"I see," Granny said. She threw three tomatoes into the pot of water on the stove. Granny rummaged in the cupboard and took out a bag of sugar and a bottle of vinegar. She threw them into the pot. Then she went inside the pantry and came back carrying a jar of pickles. She handed the jar to Freddy. "Open these please," she said.

Freddy grunted and groaned, but he couldn't get that jar of pickles open.

"Give it to me," I said. "Pierre and me will open it."

With one twist, we opened the jar.

Granny took it from me and dumped the entire jar of pickles in the spaghetti sauce pan on the stove. "Why did you name your doll Pierre?" she asked me.

"Mama said that her Papa's name was Pierre. I had named her Louis, after Papa, but Mama looked like she would cry every time I talked to my doll, so I changed her name to Pierre."

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“That was a thoughtful thing to do,” Granny Godfroy said, dumping four whole tomatoes into the sauce.

“Granny, you have to peel the tomatoes first,” Freddy said. “Mama always peels the tomatoes first.”

“You aren’t supposed to put the bag and bottle in the pot. You have to measure out the sugar and vinegar,” I told her.

“Too much bother,” Granny said, fishing out the bag and the bottle. “Cooking them together saves time and bother.”

Granny Godfroy handed me three platters. “Here are your plates.” She handed Freddy three soup ladles. “Here are your knives and forks. Now set the table children, while I finish the spaghetti.”

“You don’t have any spaghetti,” Freddy said.

“I’ll make some,” Granny said. “What does it look like?”

“Spaghetti looks like worms,” Freddy said.

Granny mixed some flour and water and salt and eggs. With her rolling pin she rolled out the noodles so skinny that they looked like worms. Granny twirled a spaghetti worm around her finger. “Like this?” she asked.

“Something like that,” Freddy said. “Only just a little bit skinnier.”

“Show me,” Granny said.

Freddy showed her.

Granny smiled. “Now you show me how you like your spaghetti noodles, Francine.”

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I closed my eyes. “I don’t like spaghetti,” I said.

“Let me cook it. You might change your mind,” Granny said.

Granny stirred and stirred. A tomato-sugar-vinegar smell floated around the room. The spaghetti and sauce cooked inside the pot so energetically that the pot danced back and forth on the stove. Granny danced around stirring it. “Alouette, gentile Alouette,” she sang in time to the pot dancing. That traitor Freddy danced and sang with her. I sat at the table, sniffing the air. The spaghetti smelled good, but I had watched Granny make it, so I wasn’t eating any of it.

The pot finally stopped dancing and Granny ladled spaghetti onto the platters. We sat down at the table. Freddy took a ladle bite of his spaghetti. Most of it dribbled down his chin. “Francine, it’s good. Try it!” he shouted.

“Mama always tells you not to shout at the table,” I said.

“This is Granny’s table,” Freddy said. “Look at her.” I stared at Granny. Granny had caught a clump of spaghetti in her ladle spoon and was slurping it into her mouth, noodle by noodle.

“Wow Granny! How did you do that?” Freddy asked her.

“It’s all in the pucker,” Granny said. “Watch me carefully.”

Freddy watched her. “Hooray!” he shouted. “Granny, you’re the best spaghetti puckerer I ever saw. You’re even better than Jake.”

Encouraged, Granny put some spaghetti on Harold’s plate and he slurped right along with her, making a horrible sucking noise. I buried my face in Pierre’s dress. The noise stopped so I looked to see why. Harold had tried to slurp three pieces of spaghetti

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all at once and they had wound around his nose and mouth and chin so tightly that he couldn't open his mouth. Laughing, Granny rescued him and the noise started up again. I wish Granny hadn't rescued him.

"Francine, aren't you going to finish your spaghetti?" Granny asked me.

I looked down at Pierre and smoothed her dress. "Pierre's tired. She's ready to go to bed," I told Granny.

We went to Freddy's room first. I sat in the chair in the corner and watched Granny turn down his bed and take out a pair of striped pajamas from the wardrobe. After Freddy washed in the water pitcher and ran back downstairs and outside to the outhouse and back up the ladder to the loft, he dove into that bed like it was a bed of black licorice that he loved so much. Granny tucked him in and then she settled back in the chair, cracked her knuckles, ran her fingers through her purple hair and said, "Now for the bedtime story. I'll tell you a story about Harold when he was young."

"How long have you had Harold?" Freddy asked her. He looked so comfortable leaning back against those snow white pillows with the patchwork quilts tucked up to his chin. I wanted to pull them off him. I would have done it too, if Granny had gone downstairs.

"I've had Harold for a twenty years. Pigs live a long time if you take good care of them," Granny said. "And I had Harold's father Herman as a pet before him. Do you want to hear a story about Harold's father Herman?"

"Can I go to my room?" I asked.

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“Come along, Francine.” Granny Godfroy picked up a kerosene lamp and climbed back down the loft ladder and I followed her. Looking down at the top of her head made me feel like I was lost in a meadow of purple grass.

Granny led me to door behind the kitchen stove. She grabbed my hand and pulled me into a tiny room. I blinked. The room was painted a bright pink, the kind of pink you see in a sunrise. Even the curtains at the windows were pink. A pink patchwork quilt was spread over the bed. Granny lifted up the quilt. Underneath it was a pink featherbed and the pillows were also pink. “Took me a lot of dying Granny said, but you were worth it, Francine. I started working on it as soon as I found out you were coming to stay with me. She pulled open the door of the wooden wardrobe that stood in the corner. She threw me a flannel nightgown, pink of course, and a pink bathrobe. “Quick, put these on and we’ll go back up into Freddy’s room and finish the story,” she said.

Granny stood looking out the window while I put on my nightclothes. “The frogs are going on and on tonight,” she said. “We oughta go frog hunting tomorrow night.”

My stomach jumped like a frog at the thought, but to keep from answering Granny, I pulled on the night gown and robe.

Granny helped me tug the nightgown over my head. “Or we could knit in the parlor she said. Your Mama used to like to sit in the parlor with me and knit.”

I grabbed Pierre and stood in the middle of the braided rug beside the bed. “I want to go to my own home,” I said.

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“I know you do, Francine,” Granny said gently. “But you’ll just have to use this home for awhile until your Mama can get you another home. Are you ready to go back to Freddy’s room so we can have a bedtime story?”

I headed back toward the loft ladder without answering her. This time I climbed in front of her so I wouldn’t have to feel like I was drowning in a sea of purple grass.

Freddy was sitting up in bed waiting for us. “Are you going to tell us a story about Harold?” Freddy said as soon as we came into his room.

“I’m going to tell you a story about Harold,” Granny said laughing. She sat on Freddy’s bed and patted to a spot beside her. “Do you and Pierre want to sit down, Francine?”

“No, we can stand here,” I said.

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Chapter Two

Granny and Harold's Father Herman

Dear Papa, Somewhere on a Freight Train Heading West

I am desperate! Please come and rescue me! She is telling us bedtime stories about when she was young. She put me in a pink bedroom and you know how I hate pink. She built a bed for Pierre. And Papa, she kissed me goodnight when she knew I didn't want her to. I want Mama to be here to kiss me goodnight. I want you to tuck me in and talk to me Papa. Where are you? Why can't you come home?
Francine Amalie Antoinette LeBlanc

"Francine, why don't you lay beside Freddy and cover up with a quilt?" Granny asked me. "This is going to be a long story."

"I'll sit here and rock Pierre," I said, sitting in the rocking chair at the foot of the bed. Maybe if I rocked loud enough she'd cut her story short.

Granny ran her fingers through her purple hair – she was always doing that!- and started her story. "We were having a spring program at school and I had a speaking part in it," Granny said. "I didn't want the part, but the teacher decided that I would say a poem. Getting up in front of people and talking made me feel as quivery as a mess of jelly that I helped my Mama cook on the stove. I was scared but I couldn't tell anybody except Herman my pet pig. Herman understood me," Granny said, smiling at Pierre in my lap.

"Does Harold look like Herman?" Freddy asked her from deep in the feather pillows.

"Herman had a little pink beard," Granny said. "Otherwise they looked exactly alike."

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“Pigs don’t have pink beards,” I said.

“He had a little pink growth of hair under his chin,” Granny continued. “Every night I recited my piece of Herman and every night he listened patiently. I don’t remember when I decided to take him to school with me to stand beside me when I had to say the poem in front of everybody. But I decided that I needed Herman there or I couldn’t say my poem. So I did everything I needed to do to take Herman to school with me on recitation day.”

“What did you do?” Freddy asked her.

I hugged Pierre and rocked harder.

“I nailed together a wooden box for Herman. I filled a burlap bag full of corn and apples. That morning I sneaked the burlap bag under my coat and hurried out the door before my mother could get a good look at me. I went to the barn and put Herman in the box I had built and hurried down the path to school. Every minute I expected to hear mother calling me back, demanding to know what I had under my coat. She didn’t find me out.”

“What happened when you got to school?” I couldn’t believe the words in my head had gotten away from me before I could stop them.

Granny smiled. “My part in the program was to recite a poem about French ribbon farms so I decided that Herman was going to be part of my French ribbon farm story since he was and is a part of my French ribbon farm.”

I let my words get away from me again. “Why is your farm called a French Ribbon farm?”

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Granny smiled at me.

“A Frenchman named Cadillac and some of his friends founded Detroit and when he gave land to people he divided it up into long narrow, strips that fronted on the River,” Granny said.

“Why did he do that?” Freddy asked her.

“Because the River was the only way people could get around,” Granny said. “The woods were very thick and no roads ran through them. The River was and often still is, the best way to travel.”

“I see another reason,” I said.

“What do you see?” Freddy asked. “You don’t know anything, Francine.”

“I know more than you do,” I said. “Another reason is your neighbor is a lot closer if you live on a farm that isn’t very wide. If some Indians or other people attack you, you can get help quicker.”

Granny Godfroy jumped up and down on the bed so hard that her purple hair danced and the bed bounced. “You’re absolutely right, Francine. You understand.”

“What did your poem sound like? Do you remember it, Granny?” Freddy asked her.

“It went something like this,” Granny Godfroy said. “I made it up to the tune of ‘Old MacDonald had a farm.

I live on my father’s French ribbon farm,
On the Jefferson River Road,
His name was Alexander Campau and he was
Very, very old.
But he farmed the land that his father gave,
He planted crops both small and big,

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He rafted logs on the river and money he made
He bought me Herman my pig.

“Oh Granny, that’s funny poem. “ Freddy laughed so hard that he had to sit up in bed to keep from choking on his spit.

I couldn’t help it. I smiled.

My smile seemed to encourage Granny.. “As soon I said Herman my pig,” I pulled him out of his wooden box that I had hidden in the cloak room. By the time I had him catch a ball and count to five, everybody in my class loved Herman. Even my teacher Miss Brownlee laughed at his tricks. “Throw the ball for him, Miss Brownlee,” we all begged and Miss Brownlee threw the ball, right through the doorway of the classroom and out into the hall. Herman galloped out there after it and we could hear him bouncing it down the hallway. The principal came rushing out of his office. “Who’s bouncing the ball in the hallway?”

Nobody said anything. It was so quiet that all I could hear was Herman bouncing the ball. He had nosed the ball behind the classroom door and couldn’t see or hear the principal, so he kept bouncing the ball. I whispered for him to stop.. He kept bouncing . STOP BOUNCING THE BALL, HERMAN!” I shouted.

The principal came and stood in front of me. His eyes were like knitting needles. “Who’s Herman?” he demanded. “And where is he?”

“He’s behind the classroom door,” I told the principal.

The principal walked down the hall to our classroom. Suddenly, I couldn’t stand the thought of Herman trapped behind the door and that principal coming at him. I had to

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protect Herman. I ran out of my classroom and stood in front of the door with my arms outspread. I pushed the door back against Herman. He squealed. I squealed.

“Miss Campau, why are you squealing like a pig?” the principal asked.

I was so terrified, I couldn’t answer him. My mouth opened, but no words came out.

“Miss Brownlee, what is this all about?” he said. Miss Brownlee looked bewildered. “I don’t know, Mr. Emerson,” she said.

Herman squealed again.. I didn’t have any choice. I squealed again.

“I repeat, Miss Campau, why are you squealing like a pig?”

I still couldn’t answer him. I just stared at those knitting needle eyes.

Herman squealed again, and this time I didn’t squeal soon enough. The principal noticed my lips weren’t moving. “Miss Campau, stand aside,” he said. “I mean to see what’s behind that door.”

“I—I—can’t,” I stammered.

“Miss Brownlee, will you please remove your pupil from in front of the door?”

Miss Brownlee gently pushed me out from in front of the door. I firmly pushed myself back in front of the door. I had to protect Herman. After a few minutes of the door tug of war, Mr. Emerson had enough. He picked me up and set me firmly down in the front desk seat. Then he opened the door.

“What’s a pig doing here?” he asked.

“Herman’s my pet pig,” I said. “Please don’t hurt him.”

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Mr. Emerson smiled at me. “I don’t have any intention of hurting your pig, Miss Campau. I grew up on a farm and had a pet pig myself, so I know that you must love Herman. But why did you bring him to school?”

“We had to recite poems today and Herman always listens to me. I didn’t think I could do a good job without him.”

“Miss Campau, I am going to take Herman to my office and I’m going to hold him for ransom. The only way he can go home with you is if you recite your poem in front of your class. See to it, Miss Brownlee.”

Before I could move, Mr. Emerson bent over and whispered something to Herman. Herman followed him down the hall into his office. Mr. Emerson closed the door with a bang behind them.

Miss Brownlee told us all to sit down and called me to the front of the class. “You can hold on to my desk if you need to do so,” she said kindly. “Now, Griselda, recite your poem.”

I recited my poem, I shouted my poem, I said my poem to every kid in my class I wanted to take Herman home with me so bad. Well, it worked. The kids clapped and Miss Brownlee sent Byron to Mr. Emerson’s office with a note. He had just slid back into his seat when Mr. Emerson appeared at the door with Herman. As soon as Herman saw me he twisted out of Mr. Emerson’s arms and raced over to me, squealing his ‘I’m glad to see you,’ greeting. And that’s the story of the day I took Herman to school with me, Freddy.”

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As Granny Godfroy finished talking, I felt something cold and slimy lick my hand. I jumped out of my chair and looked down to see if it was a rat. It was Harold, licking my hand.

Granny saw him too. She leaned over and scratched Harold behind the ears. “Yes, Harold, I know you are so proud of your father for helping me and taking care of me. He was such a good piggy pet and you are too.”

I couldn’t believe it. Piggy pet!”

I edged over to the bed and poked Freddy. “Do you hear what she called him? Piggy Pet!”

I heard a snoring noise and sure enough, Freddy was snuggled in the pillows sound asleep. He started snoring loud enough for Granny to hear him. She smiled. “Let’s go on out and let Freddy sleep.” She picked up Harold and carried him out of Freddy’s bedroom. I followed, vowing to myself that I’d get even with him tomorrow for going to sleep and leaving me to cope with Granny and Harold.

After we climbed down the ladder and were sitting at the kitchen table drinking the cocoa that Granny had insisted on making, I asked her the question that had occurred to me as we climbed back down the ladder from Freddy’s room.

“Granny, how did Harold get up the ladder into Freddy’s room?”

Granny looked surprised at my question. “Why he climbed, of course,” she said.

“Harold knows how to climb ladders? Who taught him?”

“I did,” Granny said. “Harold, come here. Let me show you.”

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Quickly I yawned. “I’m so sleepy I can’t keep my eyes open any longer. Can you show me tomorrow, Granny?”

Granny hugged me. “I can show you tomorrow, Francine. Come along, I’ll tuck you into bed.”

“I’ll tuck myself in, Granny. You go along to bed.” I looked behind the stove for another bedroom door, but I didn’t see any. “Where is your bedroom, Granny?”

“I have a featherbed in the parlor,” Granny said. “It’s nice and comfy and warm, right next to the parlor stove.”

I went into the bedroom and Granny followed me in and turned down the covers and plumped the pillows. “Goodnight Francine,” Granny said. She hugged me. And turned around. “Come along, Harold,” she said.

Harold pattered out of the room after her.

I sank into that warm featherbed that felt like I was sinking into a bed or marshmallow crème. It didn’t take me very long to fall asleep, thinking of Mama and Papa. It took me one second to wake up with a start. I must have been dreaming about Granny’s bedtime story because I thought I heard a pig squealing. I woke up and sat up in bed, but I still heard the pig squealing. I put my feet over the edge of the bed and they touched something smooth and squirmy.

“Harold, what are you doing in here?” I said.

Harold seemed to think that this room and this bed belonged to him because as soon as I spoke to him he took a running start and jumped onto the bed. He settled on one

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of my feather pillows and closed his eyes. He started to snore, just like Freddy.

“Harold get down,” I hissed. “I refuse to sleep with a pig.”

Harold told me something. I couldn’t understand what he was saying, but it didn’t sound very nice to me. Granny must have heard us talking because suddenly she was standing beside the bed holding a lamp.

“What’s wrong, Francine?” Granny whispered.

I pointed to Harold.

“Oh, I’m sorry about him dear. He got used to sleeping in this bed, so he thinks it’s his bed.”

She reached over and scooped Harold off the pillow with one hand. She carried him out of the room and closed the door. “Goodnight dear,” she said.

“Goodnight, Granny.” Harold squirmed and managed to wriggle out of Granny’s arms. He ran for the bed and took a broad jump onto the quilt. He found an opening and squiggled and wiggled underneath it. I could see him moving like a mole in our lawn back home underneath the quilt.

“Harold! Come back here!” Granny Godfroy shouted.

Harold kept burrowing around under the quilt. Pretty soon he hit my feet and I jumped out of bed. “Harold can have the bed, Granny. I’ll sleep in the kitchen by the stove.”

“Francine, you will not give up so easily. I won’t let you. There is no reason why you and Harold can’t share the bed, but if you don’t wish to do that, Harold can sleep with me in my bed.”

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“But he’s a dirty pig, Granny.”

“Harold is a clean pig. If treated properly, pig’s are very clean animals, and Harold has been treated properly, so he is very clean.”

While I was talking to Granny I managed to get hold of Harold’s tail and pull him off from under the covers. I handed him to Granny. “I believe you, but I’m not ready to sleep with him yet,” I said.

Harold squealed off and on the rest of the night just to get even with me, I think. I heard him through the wall.

I had only been asleep for a hour when I heard Granny Godfroy knocking on my door. “It’s time to get up Francine. We have lot’s to accomplish this morning. “

I got out of bed and looked out the window. The sun was still so sleepy that it had just swept the sky with pink and blue.

“The sun’s not ready to get up yet,” I shouted to Granny through the door.

“But we are,” Granny shouted back.

I crawled back under the covers but the smell of bacon covered me until I had to get up. I didn’t know what to wear. Hoeing corn sounded like an overall job and so did looking at muskrat traps. Then I thought about Mama and her perfect hair and dainty black dresses with white collars. I put on a gingham school dress with a white collar. I dressed Pierre in her second best dress and we went into the kitchen. Granny was wearing another pair of overalls, this time, with a wide belt around the waist and a yellow shirt with blue daisies on it. She turned around with a spatula in her hand. “Good morning, Francine. Are you sure you’re dressed for this morning’s work?”

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“I’m sure,” I said sticking out my chin.

“You’re gonna get that dress all messy,” Freddy said as he came into the kitchen and sat down at the table. Harold didn’t care. He sat over on his table cloth snuffling for breakfast.

We finished eating and then Granny said, “Hoeing corn is first.”

We hoed corn all morning while Pierre watched us from the grass mat in the shade that I had made for her. I did mess up the dress when I swung the hoe , missed, and fell over in the dirt. Granny didn’t say anything for a minute. Then she leaned on her hoe and wiped her forehead with a large red handkerchief she pulled out of her pocket. “It’s time for a break,” she said. Why don’t you and Harold go back to the house for a minute. You can change into overalls and you can put some butter on Harold’s nose for him so it won’t get sunburned. A teaspoon should be plenty for him.”

I stared at her. “You want me to put butter on a pig’s nose?”

“Never mind,” I can do it,” Granny said.

“Naw, naw, naw, naw, naw, Freddy said. “Francine doesn’t know how to put butter on a pig’s nose!”

“I’ll do it,” I muttered, picking Pierre up from her shady spot. “I need to settle Pierre in for her nap, then I’ll butter Harold’s nose.”

I settled Pierre in her bed and pulled on a pair of overalls and one of Freddy’s old striped polo shirts. I was sorry I changed my clothes before I tried to butter Harold’s nose. I had to do it twice. By the time I had managed to smear a teaspoon of butter on Harold’s nose- twice, because the first time Harold licked most of it off and swallowed it.

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The second time Harold squirmed and wiggled so much that I got a lot of butter on my overalls. When his nose was finally covered with butter, I had almost as much on my overalls. I headed back to the corn patch, muttering about stubborn pigs. Harold followed behind me, muttering about butter and noses and humans. He plopped on the grass mat that I had made for Pierre, still mumbling. I picked up my hoe, still mumbling. We finally got the corn patch hoed.

Granny wiped her hands on her overalls. “Next we have a lunch, then this afternoon we check my muskrat traps and then we will go register you at school. Oui? Oui.”

I turned toward the house, but Granny said, “I thought it would be fun to have a marsh picnic. Come along with me.”

Me and Freddy didn’t have any choice. We followed her to strip of sandy beach between the marsh and the river. “Gather some wood,” Granny said pointing to the marsh. Just don’t go off the path. “

Freddy picked up lots of big branches and I picked up some smaller twigs and dry grass. We took them back to Granny and she piled them up inside of a circle of large stones that she had made while we were gone. Then she reached inside her overall pocket and pulled out some long wooden kitchen matches. She lit the fire and soon it was crackling like my rice krispies did at home.

Next, Granny handed me a large net and handed one to Freddy too. “Walk along the edge of the water and drag these behind you,” she said. We did. I didn’t drag

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mine very long before I peeked to see what was in it. Tiny crayfish were crawling around inside of my net. Granny filled a pot with river water and set it on the fire to boil. Pretty soon I heard the water rolling and steaming. “Bring me your crayfish,” Granny said.

Freddy and me took her the nets full of crayfish and she put them in the pot of boiling water. She added some potatoes and carrots and tomatoes and some wild green stuff that she said was wild asparagus. Whatever she put in that crayfish stew, it sure smelled good. Granny cooked some cornbread ashcakes near the edge of the fire and boiled herself a pot of coffee. She pulled out a jug of milk for us, spread a table cloth on the grass and told us it was time to eat. Before I could sit by the table cloth, Harold sat right in the middle of it.

“No Harold, this is a picnic. This isn’t your place,” Granny told him. Harold got up and stalked off the table cloth. He came over and plunked down beside me.

“Serves you right,” I said under my breath.

Granny served us that crayfish stew and ash cakes and milk and all three of us, me and Freddy and Harold, ate it like it was going to get up and run away from us if we didn’t hurry. For desert, Granny showed us where to pick blackberries. They were warm and sweet from the sun and just melted in my mouth. Harold ate so many of them he burped every time he walked.

I helped Granny clear things away and throw water on the fire. Then I wanted to do what Harold was doing, stretch out and take a nap in the sun. “Next thing we have to do is visit my muskrat traps,” Granny said.

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Granny Godfroy made me and Freddy go into the marsh with her to visit her muskrat traps. We left Harold sleeping under a big white birch tree.

Freddy walked ahead of us, squishing and yelling with each step.

“Hush, Freddy. You’ll scare every animal within ten miles away,” Granny warned him.

“I hope he does,” I thought. I didn’t want to see any live animals.

I saw dead muskrats in Granny’s traps instead. Granny set her traps in the marsh so she could catch muskrats even when she wasn’t there. They were little wooden boxes with a door rigged so that it would drop when something tripped the trigger that she set with a wooden peg. The traps were set deep enough under water so that whatever was caught in them would drown.

We walked through the marsh for awhile. I saw a hawk circling in the sky and watched him swoop around like an acrobat. I wish I had wings like a hawk so I could fly out West and find Papa.

Suddenly, Granny stopped. She bent down in the water and pulled on a chain that was attached to one of her wooden traps. She pulled the trap out of the water and set it on the ground. “Looks like there’s something in it,” Granny said. She opened the trapdoor.

I couldn’t look. Freddy did. “Wow, that’s a big muskrat,” Freddy shouted loud enough for Mama in Grosse Pointe to hear him.

“We’ll skin him and eat him for supper,” Granny said.

“What do you do with his skin?” Freddy asked her.

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“Muskrat pelts bring a good price,” Granny said. “Good enough to buy us a winter’s worth of coal and groceries.

“I’d rather go to Fenton’s Grocery at home,” I said.

Granny looked at me, and then she said quietly, “It takes cash to shop at a grocery store, Francine. People have to eat whether they have cash or not.”

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Chapter Three

Granny Godfroy Fights the Fighting Island Sea Serpent

Letter to Papa, somewhere on a freight train heading West.

Dear Papa,

Things have gotten worse since I wrote you the first letter. Granny Godfroy gave Freddy and me our own rooms to sleep in but it's so noisy here. Papa, she has a pig named Harold and it tried to sleep in my bed with me! All night I heard the frogs croaking and something splashing in the River. When I woke Granny up a three o'clock this morning to ask her what was making the noise, she said muskrats and rolled over and went back to sleep. She didn't even hug me and tell me everything was going to be alright like you would if you were here. She says that today she's going to register us in school. Papa, please come! I don't want to go to school here. I know the kids will be horrible and I won't like it at all. Mama is coming to visit this weekend and I want all of us to go home. Please, Papa. I want to go home!

Your daughter,

Francine Amalie Antionette LeBlanc

P.S. Granny Godfroy says that she will make Muskrat Stew for supper. Please hurry back!

I was washing my hands in the river from our picnic and Granny Godfroy and Freddy were washing their hands from the muskrat traps when another strange boat came by us. It looked even stranger than the Frere Jacques. This boat had three sails that looked like they were hung on a clothesline with clothespins. They flapped in the wind like Mama's sheets used to do when she hung them on the clothesline in our backyard. They made me want to go home even more. "What is that?" I asked Granny Godfroy.

"That's my friend Captain Goldsmith,"

"What kind of boat is he in?" Freddy said.

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“It’s a scow. He calls it the *Nevermore* because he says there won’t nevermore be a scow like his.” Granny chuckled. “I think he might be right.”

The scow got closer and I got a good look at the Captain. He was dressed like a conductor on one of the street cars back home. His blue uniform had gold buttons as big as nickels and his hat had gold braid on it.

“Ahoy, there, Captain Oscar Goldsmith,” Granny hollered.

“Ahoy, there, Griselda Godfroy,” the Captain said. “I’ll pipe you and those young tars aboard.”

Before Granny Godfroy could say anything else, Captain Goldsmith took out a shiny brass whistle, puffed out his cheeks and blew it. The sound echoed over the river.

“You’re scaring all of the crayfish,” Freddy complained.

“If you want muskrat stuffed with crayfish for supper tonight, you need to stop blowing that whistle,” Granny Godfroy told him. “You’re scaring everything alive away.

The Captain looked surprised for a minute, then he put down his whistle. “Land lubbers, I forgot!” he said. Let’s sail down by Fighting Island. Maybe we’ll see the Fighting Island Sea Serpent.” He pushed ahead of us out into the river.

“Get on board,” Granny told me and Freddy and Harold. We did and before we sat down in our seats, Granny had shoved the Frere Jacques away from the dock and was following Captain Goldsmith down the River. The wind wasn’t blowing very hard so we had to row.

“Ahoy there, Oscar Goldsmith,” Granny called as we passed the *Nevermore*. The Captain wasn’t rowing at all. He just sat there as limp as his sail.

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“You have to row when the wind doesn’t blow,” Granny told the Captain as we drew alongside of him.

“Can you loan me one of your sailors to row my scow?” Captain Goldsmith asked.

“My sailors are my sailors,” Granny Godfroy said.

“You have to row when the wind doesn’t blow,” Freddy shouted to the Captain as we passed the *Nevermore*.

I looked back and I saw the Captain pick up his oars. It took him awhile, but he finally drew up alongside us. We had only been waiting for him about half an hour on the Fighting Island beach.

“Why don’t we look for the Sea Serpent?” Freddy asked.

Captain Goldsmith handed a pair of binoculars over the narrow space between the Frere Jacques and the *Nevermore*. Freddy looked through them. “I see a fish, but I don’t see a Sea Serpent.” He turned around in a circle looking through the binoculars. “What does a Sea Serpent look like?”

“Like a snake, stupid,” I said.

“That wasn’t such a stupid question,” Granny Godfroy looked sternly at me. “Sea Serpents come in all shapes and sizes, just like people do.”

“Ah, I well remember what the Sea Serpent looks like,” Captain Goldsmith said. “It has uh, uh, two tails and..”

I couldn’t keep quiet. “Two tails, huh! I don’t believe it.”

“What else?” asked Freddy.

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“It has teeth,” said the Captain.

“What about a mouth?” Freddy wondered.

“It had to have a mouth because it bellowed,” the Captain said.

“How about its nose?” Francine asked. “Does it have a big nose?”

“It has a nose as big as mine,” Captain Goldsmith said.

“Then it must have a big enough nose to smell all of Ecorse Township,” Granny said. “That’s 54 miles. That leaves lots of room for smelling.”

I couldn’t help it. I laughed. Granny looked at me so warmly that I thought she might put her arm around me. I moved closer to the edge of the *Frere Jacques*.

“What else does the Sea Serpent look like?” Freddy asked, circling with the glasses again.

Captain Goldsmith scratched his head. “He has a head like a barrel, two arms about five feet across, and two tails. He is green in color.”

“Wait a minute,” I said. “Why does the Sea Serpent have to be a he? A girl can make as good of a sea serpent as a boy!”

“When we see the Sea Serpent of Fighting Island, we can ask it if it is a boy or a girl,” Freddy said. He handed the glasses back to Captain Goldsmith. “Do you think it’s a boy or a girl?” he asked Captain Goldsmith.

The Captain raised the glasses and looked at the river. “Boy or girl, it is a fearsome creature,” said Captain Goldsmith. Just as he had finished saying ‘fearsome’ aloud OOOOGAHHHH! Disturbed their peaceful summer afternoon of crayfish dipping

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on the Detroit River. The water whipped into waves. The waves slapped against the slides of the two boats and banged them together. Soon several people lined the shore trying to see what all of the noise was about. “What’s going on out there?” they shouted.

“Nothing’s going on!” Captain Goldsmith shouted back to the people on shore. “See how peaceful Fighting Island looks? You can go back home now.”

The words just flew out of my mouth at Captain Goldsmith. I quick put my hand over my mouth, but it was too late. The words had already left. “Fighting Island looks peaceful? That sounds stupid,” I said.

“He means the Sea Serpent’s not here today,” Freddy said.

Captain Goldsmith swept the river again with his glasses but we didn’t hear the OOOOGAHHHHH again.

“I told you there wasn’t any Fighting Island Sea Serpent, boy or girl,” I told Freddy. Suddenly the scow and the Captain shot up in the air and when it came back down the mast was gone.

“The Fighting Island Sea Serpent!” Freddy and Captain Goldsmith shouted together.

More runaway words left my mouth. “Are you a boy or a girl?” I shouted at the Sea Serpent.

Granny grabbed the oars, creak and all, and rowed toward it. Captain Goldsmith grabbed his oars and rowed away from it toward shore. He went so fast I thought he would row up on shore. I stared at the water and I saw that the Sea Serpent had orange

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and purple spots on his back. “His purple spots match your hair,” I told Granny Godfroy.

She laughed. “He probably eats the same fish from the river that I do. “

“He’s got two wings instead of arms,” Freddy said.

I watched something orange and purple and green come out of the water like a mountain, then dive back into it. “It’s got a big green tail the size of our house,” I said.

“Our farmhouse is bigger than that,” Granny said.

“I meant OUR house, the house where Freddy and I live in Detroit.”

“Oh,” said Granny, looking sad.

“The Sea Serpent’s gone,” Freddy said. “It’s probably taking a nap at the bottom of the river.”

“If it was Sea Serpent,” I said. “It could be an escaped whale or something.”

“Escaped from where?” Freddy asked.

“The Belle Isle Aquarium. They have lots of fish in there.”

“Not that big,” Freddy said.

I didn’t bother to answer him. Instead I watched Captain Goldsmith rowing his scow back to the *Frere Jacques*. Granny Godfroy waited until the Captain was just about even with us, then she made a megaphone with her hands and shouted, “You can come back now, Oscar! The Sea Serpent’s gone!”

Captain Goldsmith cleared his throat. “Ahem, Ahum. Am I still invited to supper tonight? Can we discuss the Sea Serpent over a plate of roast muskrat stuffed with crayfish and mashed potatoes and wild celery and....”

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Granny Godfroy turned the boat around and started to row away. “Please Griselda Godfroy,” the Captain pleaded.

Granny stopped rowing. I grabbed an oar and tried to keep rowing, but I just made the boat go in a little circle.

“We can discuss the Sea Serpent over a plate of muskrat stew but no wild celery,” Granny said. “The ducks and other birds need it for food and if too many people start picking all of the celery will eventually be gone.”

“Who cares about some ducks,” I said. “You’re not worried about killing muskrats in traps.”

Granny stared at me. “I take only as many muskrat as I can use, just like the Huron and the Potawatomie who lived on this River used to do. Just like your great-great grandfather and your grandfather used to do. Your great-great grandfather Pierre loved and Indian woman and married her before she died and her married your great-great grandmother Sally. You have Indian blood in you, Francine. Think in that direction once in awhile.”

I wanted to shout at her that I’d never think in the same direction she did, but somehow I couldn’t. Too much kindness shone in her blue eyes when she looked at me—the blue eyes that clashed with that purple hair. Granny Godfroy turned away from me.

“Freddy, grab an oar so we can go faster. I don’t want to be late for our appointment at school.”

I wanted to be late, so late that we wouldn’t show up at all, or at least so late that the teacher would think we were bad children and not let us in their school. But Granny

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and Freddy rowed the boat to the Southfield Dock so fast that we were ten minutes early for our four o'clock appointment.

They have weird school names in Ecorse. Instead of making their brains work hard enough to name their schools, they just called them School One, School Two, and School Three. We went inside and the lady in the office told us to sit down for a minute. "Why do we have to go to a School named One?" I said. "Why can't we go to School Two?"

"Because they aren't finished building it yet, Granny said.

Then a man and two women walked into the office. The man's head was bald on top but his eyes reminded me of Mama's leather strap when we were naughty. The man came over and hugged Granny. "How are you, Griselda?" he asked.

"Tolerable, Mr. Emerson. Tolerable," Granny said. That's when I knew who he was. I was surprised that Harold didn't come in and shake his hand too since Mr. Emerson had known his father so well.

One of the ladies, the tall, thin, black haired one smiled at Freddy. "I'm Miss Ouelette, the third grade teacher. I'll be your teacher, Freddy. Welcome to School One."

Then she did the strangest thing. She walked over and hugged Granny Godfroy. "How are you, Griselda?"

Granny hugged Miss Ouelette back as she said. "Oh tolerably well, Mariettea, tolerably well. The rheumatism acts up every once in awhile, but otherwise I'm doing fine. I have the children now you know while Madeleine and Louis are working."

Miss Ouelette patted her shoulder. "That is so kind of you, Griselda."

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“We all have to work together,” Granny said patting my shoulder. I scrunched up my back to make my shoulders as hard as they could be.

The man with the leather strap eyes and the bald head in front looked at me. “I’m Gerald Emerson the sixth grade teacher and the principal of School One. You’ll be in my room, Miss LeBlanc.”

I unscrunched my shoulders. “Yes sir,” I said.

“Come along, then, I’ll show you your rooms,” Mr. Emerson said. We went along to our rooms. The sixth grade room was upstairs in the far right hand corner. I told my hand not to slide along the smooth wooden banister of the staircase, but it didn’t listen to me.

“Watch out for splinters,” Mr. Emerson said as he opened the door to the sixth grade room. I looked at the rows of empty desks and my heart fluttered like the sea gull I had seen earlier on the river. Tomorrow they would be filled the bodies and faces of kids I didn’t know. I felt my shoulders scrunch again, only this time I didn’t tell them to scrunch.

Mr. Emerson gave me a handful of books and a piece of paper with writing on it. “Here are you books and your homework assignments for tomorrow,” he said. “I’ll see you then. Welcome, to the sixth grade at School One, Francine.”

“Thhank you sir.” I took the books and paper and scurried out of the room. I wanted to slide down the banister to get back to Freddy and Granny, but I felt Mr. Emerson’s eyes, so I walked down the stairs and found Granny and Freddy waiting for me. I was almost glad to see Granny’s purple hair.

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Are you finished, Francine? Good. Come along then,” Granny said. “Captain Goldsmith is coming for a muskrat supper and I have to cook it.”

Later that night, as Granny cut slices of roast muskrat with onions on top for me and Freddy and Captain Goldsmith and finally herself, she asked him, “What makes you believe that the Fighting Island Sea Serpent ate your masts? You probably just hit a snag.”

A loud noise from the Detroit River interrupted her. It was just a boat whistle, but Granny Godfroy said that it was the Sea Serpent burping.

“That didn’t sound like a sea serpent burping,” I said.

Granny Godfroy looked steadily at me. “What does a sea serpent burp sound like?”

“Like Harold burps,” I said. “Burp Harold.”

Harold burped and Granny Godfroy laughed longer and harder than anybody else. But then she said, “That was a good burp Harold, but it didn’t sound like a sea serpent burp.

After supper I got up from my chair and quickly helped Granny clear the table and wash the dishes. When we were finished I said, “I have to do my homework for tomorrow.”

“I saw you finishing your homework this afternoon,” Granny said. “You told me you already covered those spelling words.”

“I have to practice them,” I said. “Besides, Pierre’s tired. She wants to go to bed early.”

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I tucked Pierre in her bed by the window, then I sat and looked out at the sunset over the River. Tears spilled out of my heart and onto my face. I put my head on my arms and put my arms on the window sill and cried. I wanted my home in Detroit where I couldn't see the sunset over the River but I could see my best friend Mary's house next door and the grocery store with the best penny candy in the world down the block. I wanted my old bedroom with the crack in the ceiling plaster and the scarred wooden floors. At least I knew where the crack was and I could trace each mark on the floor with my big toe. At school in Detroit I had friends that I knew and that I liked and that I knew liked me. I kept seeing Mary and picturing that penny candy, those tootsie rolls and licorice sticks, and candy dots and Mary Janes. I wanted my old school. I didn't want tomorrow to be my first day at a new school.

I must have fallen asleep. I don't know how long I was sleeping. The next thing I remember is hearing scratching on my bedroom door. Harold was trying to get to HIS bed! I threw all of my weight against the door to make sure it was closed extra tight. Then I put on my pajamas and crawled into MY bed.

Granny's coffee perking woke up my nose the next morning and my nose woke me up. I scrunched under the covers and didn't answer Granny when she called me. Maybe if I pretended to be sound asleep she'd leave me alone in the bedroom all day. I heard the sound of the bedroom door being opened and Harold's nails skittering on the floor. Next, came the cold wet nose of a pig wanting to hog the blankets.

I threw them off and jumped out of bed. I put on my next best dress that Mama had made. "Stop hogging the blankets!" I shouted at Harold who had settled into a cozy

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lump for an extra nap before he had to get up and eat breakfast. I brushed my hair, wishing that I could make it look smooth and sleek the way Mama fixed it. All I could was blow it around my face in strings. I didn't wake Pierre because she wasn't going to school with me. She and Harold would have a restful morning sleeping in while I had to go to a strange school and all of those empty desks that I had seen yesterday would be filled with strange children. When I opened the bedroom door to go into the kitchen, Harold was snoring.

"That pig snores louder than Freddy," I said as I slid into my place at the table.

Granny set a bowl of hot oatmeal in front of me and pushed the freshly filled cream pitcher alongside it. "At least he's not burping," she grinned.

I couldn't help it, I laughed with her. Granny patted my hand. "Things will work out fine today, Francine. Just be your funny, bright self and they will work out fine."

"I do know how you feel," Granny Godfroy said, putting her arm around my shoulders. "Mauvaise- Bad. I was always shy and thought about things a little differently than the other kids. Then when I got older and started trapping muskrat I was really different."

"What did you do, Granny?"

"I kept trapping muskrat, Francine, because even if I had given up trapping muskrat because the other kids thought it was a weird thing to do, I still would want to trap them. You have to find friends that like you for what you are on the inside."

"Granny, they can't see inside me."

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“They can if they want to,” Granny said. “Pierre can see inside you and so can Harold. That’s why he wants to sleep under your quilt every night.”

Thanks to Granny I was smiling when I left her log farmhouse to go to school. It didn’t matter that I tripped in the marsh before I got to Jefferson Avenue and the wooden sidewalk and got the hem of my dress muddy. It didn’t matter that the mud on my hem dried and I left a trail of dried mud like Hansel and Gretel had left breadcrumbs as I walked down the wooden sidewalk the four blocks to school. It didn’t matter that as I walked up to the crossing walk that would take me across Jefferson to Labadie and school, a team got stuck in the muddy road and I stayed there for fifteen minutes talking to the horses and calming them while the driver dug the buggy out of the mud. None of this mattered until I got to school half an hour later. Then all of it mattered!

I stopped in the girl’s washroom to try to sponge the mud off of my dress. I managed to brush off some of the dried mud, but there were three big mud spots on the front of my dress that looked like Granny’s duck pond that wouldn’t move or shrink. I couldn’t spend any more time in the girl’s room. I had to get to class. I tiptoed up to the door of the Sixth Grade room. Yes, that was Mr. Emerson’s voice calling on different people in the class. It sounded like they were having a spelling bee. Timidly, I knocked on the door.

“Elephant,” Mr. Emerson was saying as I opened the door and walked into the room. Everybody laughed. “Her dress is gray like an elephant’s skin,” somebody said.

“Her nose is gray like an elephant’s nose,” somebody else said. Quickly, I rubbed my nose. I probably had wiped a streak of mud across it when I was trying to clean up.

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Everybody laughed. Mr. Emerson put down his book and pushed up his glasses which had fallen down on his nose. “Welcome to the Sixth Grade, Miss LeBlanc,” he said.

“Tth-ank you,” I stammered.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, this is Miss Francine LaBlanc. I would like you to give her a friendly welcome to the Sixth Grade at Ecorse School One.”

Everybody clapped. Mr. Emerson pointed to a front row seat to the right of his desk. “You may sit there for now, Miss LeBlanc.”

I almost ran to the seat and plunked into it. I forgot that I had my school bag on my back and sat back against it. That mistake created another wave of laughter until Mr. Emerson looked everybody into silence. His gaze lingered on a boy on the other side of the room with red hair and a cowlick like Alphalfa in the Little Rascals. The boy was doubled over in his seat laughing.

“Mr. Allen, would you like to tell Miss LeBlanc what you did on the playground last week?”

Mr. Allen slid down into his seat mumbling, “No sir.”

“Miss Ames, as I see you are not laughing at Miss LeBlanc, I appoint you to stay with her the rest of the day and acquaint her with the methods of our school that she needs to be acquainted with” Mr. Emerson said. “Now, let’s continue the spelling bee.”

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

My embarrassment died down a little bit when I spelled garlic and accommodate correctly in the spelling bee. I started to feel real good when I spelled down the class by spelling zephyr correctly. I felt good until Mr. Allen hissed at me when Mr. Emerson had turned his back to put away the spelling book. “Smarty pants know it all!”

At recess I stood in the corner of the playground under a tree all by myself because Miss Ames deserted me and her duties to play jump rope with the other girls in front of the school. Mr. Allen came up and punched me in the stomach. I did the same thing I did when Freddy punched me in the stomach. I punched him back, so hard that he doubled over. When he got his voice back he yelled, “LeBlanc’s a bully, LeBlanc’s a bully.”

The rest of the kids must have liked the way the words sounded, because they took up the cry and pretty soon the whole back playground was yelling, “LeBlanc’s a bully,” while the girls in the front chanted jump rope songs. Finally the bell rang and we all filed in the side door and up the stairs. Miss Ames hurried back to my side so she would be there when we got back upstairs in front of Mr. Emerson.

We got to the top of the stairs and there was Mr. Emerson standing by the door of the Sixth Grade room. “Did you have a pleasant recess, Miss LeBlanc?” he asked. “Did Miss Ames and the other girls treat you well?”

“They treated me mauvaise, I said, borrowing from Granny Godfroy. I knew that none of them understood French. I should have suspected that Mr. Emerson did.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

Chapter Four

Picking Mama Up at the Station

Letter to Papa, somewhere on a freight train heading west

Dear Papa,

Mama is coming for a visit next weekend. I can hardly wait I will be so glad to see her. On the way to the train depot Granny raced a horse. Did Granny ever make you any underwear out of burlap sacks? I miss you, Papa. I stand every day at the dock and watch for you Papa.

Your daughter,

Francine Amalie Antoinette LeBlanc

I smoothed Pierre's best dress out where it always bunched around her elbows and picked her up carefully. Her dress is blue with yellow daisies and I had made it from a scrap of material that Mama had left after she made a dress for me and for her out of the same material. Next, I smoothed out my dress that matched Pierre's. I didn't want to wrinkle it. Today, Saturday, Mama is coming for a visit. She can only stay until tomorrow night and tomorrow morning we must go to Mass at St. Francis Xavier, so time is short. I know Mama will want to have extra time with Pierre, so she is coming with us to the railroad station to meet Mama.

The train station is across Jefferson Avenue from the Southfield dock and there is a train twice every day from Grosse Pointe, one in the morning and one in the evening. Mama will come on the morning train and leave on the evening train. I didn't want Mama to leave. Maybe I could lock her in my bedroom and not let her out.

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The door rattled and shook like a train was going through the house. That was Granny Godfroy knocking to see if I was ready to go. As soon as I opened the door, Harold rushed in and jumped on the bed. I picked him up and threw him back on the floor. "Leave my bed alone," I told him.

Harold squealed something insulting at me and Granny took him off the bed. "He still thinks it's his bed." She sounded like she was sorry, but I didn't care. "I'm ready to go," I said, picking up Pierre. "Where's Freddy?"

"He's waiting outside," Granny said.

I couldn't believe that boy standing outside the back door was really Freddy. Freddy didn't wash more often than once a week if he could help it, but this Freddy had washed his ears and his face and even combed down his stick up hair with water. He on his best pair of knickers, the pair that Mama had made him wear the day we came, and that he had taken off as soon as we got to Granny's farm and she showed him his bedroom. He had on the cap that Papa had bought him for Christmas and he had on a pair of new high top shoes.

"Walk," I said.

He walked and the shoes squeaked.

"I thought so," I said. "They're still so new they squeal. Where did you get them?"

"Granny bought them for me yesterday," Freddy said. "While you and Pierre were upstairs in your room, we went to Detroit to the shoe store."

I didn't know what else to say, so I said again, "they squeal."

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“So does Harold and he isn’t new,” Freddy said, sticking out his tongue.

“Very funny, Freddy. The rest of you is clean but your shirt is dirty. I wasn’t just being nasty. His shirt was dirty. It was the same polo shirt with the blue and white stripes that he had worn yesterday when he was cleaning out the barn for Granny.

“Oh Bother,” said Granny. “I meant to wash that shirt last night. Do you have another clean one, Freddy?”

“My other one is in the wash basket too, Granny. I was playing football at school the other day.”

“Stay here. I’ll get you a clean shirt.” Granny marched back into the house and as she did I heard a clinking noise. She hadn’t taken off the golashes with tin latches that she wore to clean the barn and milk the cows. Granny was back in a blink holding a shirt that looked like it was made out of a burlap flower sack and dyed blue.

“I made this myself out of a Gurney feed sack for your Grandpa Godfroy,” Granny said. “It was his favorite shirt.”

“It won’t fit Freddy,” I said and it didn’t. It covered up his knickers and almost reached the ground it was so big for him. I reached over to pull it off of him but Freddy moved away from me. “I don’t care if it’s too big, I’ll wear it anyway because it was Grandpa’s.”

Granny dabbed her eyes with the corner of her shirt. “That pleases me Freddy. Your grandpere, he was such a person.”

“Aren’t you going to wear a dress too?” I asked Granny before I could feel bad that I saw a tear run down her nose.

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She pulled down her shirt sleeves that she usually kept rolled up above her elbows and hitched up her overall straps by hooking her thumbs underneath them. “I don’t know where I put my dress,” she said. “I thought maybe it was in the wardrobe in Freddy’s room, but I didn’t see it when I looked in it to get Grandpa Godfroy’s shirt.”

“But Granny, we going to meet Mama. She likes everything to be perfect. She won’t ever let me wear overalls,” I said.

Granny looked at me thoughtfully for a minute, then she put Harold in my arms right on top of Pierre and turned around and went back into the house. I started to put Harold on the ground as hard as I could but then I thought about how Granny put a napkin down and sat his bowl of food on it and how she washed him and slept with him and I just shuffled him under one arm and Pierre under the other. Harold snuffled and put his nose under my arm.

“Stop tickling me!” I told him.

Harold closed his eyes and went to sleep. I knew he was sleeping because I heard him snoring.

Freddy tugged my arm. “There’s somebody on Granny’s back porch,” he said. I looked where he was pointing. Granny stood there on her back porch, but she didn’t look like Granny. She looked like a Halloween witch.

“She looks like a Halloween witch,” I said.

“Gee, she does,” Freddy agreed with me for once. Granny had put her purple hair up in a bun that bobbed on the top her head like an apple every time she moved. She had

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on something that looked like a dress. It was black and the wind crept into the long cape that hung behind it and bellowed it out like a sail.

Granny hurried over to us. “I found my best black dress in the wardrobe in my-I mean your room,” Granny said. “I had it packed in mothballs so the moths wouldn’t eat it and then I tucked it away in the trunk under the bed. That’s why I forgot about it.”

I wrinkled my nose. “What’s that smell?”

“It’s the mothballs,” Granny said. “I put in some extra because I wanted to make sure my best dress didn’t get eaten. It took me a long time to make it. Come along, I’ll tell you how I made it while we walking to the train depot.”

Granny took Harold from under my arm and cuddled him in her arms. I know I saw him wrinkle up his nose when he smelled the mothball dress. We walked across the vegetable garden and the farm fields to Jefferson Avenue which I thought was a big name for a little dirt road, but I walked along holding Pierre and didn’t say anything. Granny did all of the talking as we walked along.

“Grandpa Godfroy and I lived good on the farm, but we didn’t have much cash money to buy things. We trapped muskrat and traded muskrat skins for sugar and flour and other stuff that we needed. I used the burlap flour sacks to make most of our clothes and I used the sugar sacks to make our underwear. They were like linen and they made the best underwear.”

“Did you make Grandpa’s under shorts out of linen?” Freddy asked.

I kicked him in the ankle. “You don’t want to know.”

Granny smiled at me. “Yes, I did, and they wore so well.”

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I had to get her to stop talking about underwear. “How did you make your dress black?” I asked her.

“Well, I brewed up some dye from berries and herbs and it worked so well it even dyed my hands black. It took a week’s fishing and washing to make all of the black go away.”

I looked more closely at Granny’s dress. The black looked blacker than the sky at night. I ran my fingers over it. It was smooth as Pierre’s skin on her cheek.”

“What did you do to the cloth to make it so smooth?” I asked Granny.

“I tore out all of the strands and rewove them smaller,” Granny said.

“I stared at her. “That must have taken forever.”

“It took me many nights in the rocking chair beside the kitchen stove,” Granny said. “But I was happy while I was doing it. Grandpa Gofroy sat at the kitchen table whittling and working on his wooden toys and Harold slept in his basket by the stove.”

“Basket? I didn’t see any basket by the stove.”

“Oh, I finally gave it to the barn cats after Harold decided that he preferred me and Grandpa’s bed.”

“You and Grandpa’s bed. But---“

Granny put her finger to her lips. “Never mind that now. There’s Jefferson Avenue and we need to get on the wooden sidewalk. “

We climbed about three steps leading to the sidewalk. It stretched into the distance like a moon path across the River. “Does the sidewalk go all of the way down to the train depot?” I asked Granny.

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She started to answer me, but a group of men and boys shouting and running down the middle of the muddy street drowned out her answer. “Runaway!” they were yelling. “There’s a runaway coming!”

Before I could think, Granny put Harold in my arms. She pushed me and Freddy against Grady’s Feed Store and shouted “Stay there!” Then she jumped out in the street and waited for the runaway what ever it was to appear. I got off the side of Grady’s Feet Store and ran to the edge of the sidewalk, clutching Harold in one arm, and Pierre in the other. A cloud of dust sped down the street, getting closer and closer to Granny, who stood alone in the middle of the street, watching it approach get closer and closer. The men and the boys got out of the way. I heard one of them yell to Granny, “Git out of the way, Mrs. Godroy. It’s Hiram Walker and he’s feeling mean today.”

Granny put her hands on her hips and waited. The cloud of dust turned into a brown horse with a white spot on his forehead. He was pulling a shiny black buggy behind him. It was empty. Granny put her hand in the pocket of her dress and walked over to the horse, holding out her hand. “Didn’t bring any apples with me Hiram because I didn’t know I was gonna run into you, but I have a lump of sugar left over from our last visit. Will that do?”

Hiram Walker gently nosed the lump of sugar from her hand. He moved his cheek muscles while it melted, then he whinnied to Granny Godfroy for more. She held out both hands. “I don’t have any more sugar, Hiram Walker.”

“I do Granny,” I said. I took a left over dew drop from my dress pocket. They were pure sugar and Mary and I usually got at least ten of them from the candy store.

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Somehow I had forgotten this one in the pocket of my Sunday dress. I handed it to Granny and she handed it to Hiram Walker. He accepted it and enjoyed it for at least five minutes. Then he whinnied to Granny again and tossed his head. “He’s inviting us to ride, Granny said. “You and Freddy and Pierre and Harold get in the buggy. I’ll drive him home. It’s on our way to the depot.”

We got in the shiny black buggy and rode down the middle of muddy Jefferson Avenue. I held Pierre firmly in my lap so she could see everything. Harold sat next to me on the seat. Freddy stood up so he could see everything better, but Granny quick put a stop to that by driving over a rut. Freddy sat down so hard that he bit his lip. “Ouch!” he yelled, but Granny didn’t hear him. She was too busy guiding Hiram Walker down Jefferson Avenue. Jefferson Avenue was full of ruts that jounced and bounced the buggy, but we kept going at a steady pace. A man riding a black horse that looked like he belonged on a merry-go-round jogged by. “Wanna race, Griselda?” he shouted.

I could see Granny’s hands twitching, but then she shot a glance at Freddy and me. “No, I got Harold with me,” she said. The man jounced on. The next challenger who came along was driving two horses pulling a cart painted bright red. The driver was a young man with a black moustache that curled up on both ends. He pulled up in front of Granny Godfroy. The twinkle in his eyes was friendly, but his words weren’t.

“You need to get off the road, old woman. You’re too slow,” he said to Granny Godfroy.

“Get out of my way!” Granny Godfroy said, slapping the reins across Hiram Walker’s back. Hiram Walker bolted down the street like someone had stuck him in the rump with a hatpin. I accused Freddy of doing that later, but he denied it! Anyway,

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Hiram Walker raced down Jefferson Avenue throwing clods of mud and sprays of water onto the people on the wooden sidewalks. I heard some of them say the same things I used to think about Harold, like dirty animals, they ought to be locked in the barn for life.

It seemed like we had been running for hours, but a good while after Granny had outrun the young man, Granny stopped Hiram Walker. She wiped her forehead with the sleeve of her black dress, leaving a stripe of black across her forehead. “Whew! That was some race,” Granny said. “I’m glad I beat him so well, even if we are almost at the other end of Ecorse Township.”

Granny looked down at the seat. “Are you children alright? And Harold? What about Pierre?”

Harold wriggled out from under the seat where he had waited out the race and he squealed to Granny. I held Pierre so she could wave at Granny. “How long will it take us to get to the train station, Granny? Will we be late picking up Mama?”

“We won’t be too late,” Granny promised. “We’ll just take Hiram Walker home and the train station is right across the street. “

“That was fun, Granny. Do it again,” Freddy said.

Before I could say NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO, Granny turned around, slapped Hiram Walker’s back with the reins again and we were off. It seemed to me that we went even faster on the trip back down Jefferson Avenue from wherever we were-Trenton, I think Granny said – but I stuck out my tongue right along with Freddy when we passed the man with the moustache and his buggy sitting in the middle of Jefferson Avenue. He winked at me as we dashed past. “Good race, Granny!” he shouted.

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Granny Godfroy flicked her whip at him as we sped past. We parked Hiram Walker under the carriage port of his house by the river, explained to his grinning owner what happened and hurried back across the street.

“Has the train from Grosse Pointe got in yet?” Granny asked the station master.

“’Bout twenty minutes ago, Griselda,” the station master said. “Madeleine is waiting for you over there in the corner.”

For once Granny put Harold down and made him walk for himself. Pushing me and Freddy ahead of her, she hurried over to the corner of the depot where several chairs were arranged in a row. Mama was standing there tapping her foot impatiently. Even before she hugged me and Freddy, she said to Granny Godfroy in her snippy scissor voice, “Mama, you’re late once again.”

Granny Godfroy’s blue eyes snapped but she didn’t say anything. She just picked up Harold with one hand, Mama’s suitcase in the other and said, “It’s good to see you again, Madeleine. Come along children.”

We followed her. I knew everything was going to be alright. Mama had come for a visit. I watched her walk out of the train depot in front of us. Mama always walked like she was balancing a book on her head, her back as straight as a pencil, her shoulders not scrunched. My shoulders were so used to scrunching that they scrunched without me even telling them to scrunch.

“Mama, why do you have on your maid’s uniform?” I asked her as we walked down the wooden side walk that led back to Granny’s farm. Granny walked in front of us carrying Harold.

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“I was afraid that I would miss the train, so I didn’t take time to change my clothes,” Mama said. She glanced at Granny. “I wouldn’t have worried if I had known that Hiram Walker was still around town.”

Granny stared straight ahead. “Why wouldn’t he be, Madeleine? Mr. Jennings is still here. Hiram Walker won’t go anywhere without him.”

Mama didn’t answer Granny. She just kept walking, her head high. The wind played with the little cap she had pinned to her hair long enough to work it loose and blow it down the street. “Oh Freddy, please get my cap,” Mama said. The wind also worked her long black hair loose from its hairpins and blew it around her face like a cape.

Freddy chased the cap down the street. Mama stopped and untied the white ruffled apron that she had been wearing over her black dress. She folded it up and tucked it under her arm. Then she looked over at me. “How have you been, Francine?”

I stopped in the middle of the street, slung Pierre over one arm, and hugged Mama. I missed you so much,” I said.

Mama stopped worrying about her hair and hugged me back. “I missed you and Freddy very much.” She kissed me. “And you too, Mama,” she said to Granny Godfroy’s back. Granny turned around, her eyes snapping blue fire against her purple hair. “You’re not going back to that place, Madeleine.”

“What do you mean I’m not going back, Mama. I have to work. You know that. I want to buy another house and put my family back together under one roof again.”

“You don’t have to work there because you have your inheritance, Madeleine.”

“What are you talking about, Mama?”

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“I am talking about you have your inheritance. I give it to you now instead of after I die. That way you can stay here with your children. Your family will be back under one roof.”

“But Mama, you and Papa disowned me. “

“I didn’t disown you and neither did Papa. He just was hurt and disappointed when you eloped with Louis. He thought you might find a better man.”

“I might well have found a better man, Mama, but I loved Louis. I still do in spite of everything that’s happened.”

“I understand that, Madeleine. I still want you to stay here with your children. This is your home and it’s their home now.”

“But Mama, you and I don’t live well together. We are so different.”

“I know that Madeleine. We never lived well together, but we tolerated each other. Your daughter is much like you, but I love her. I love you too and I want you to stay here. You and Francine can have my room. She is already occupying it. I can live in the apartment above the barn. It is comfortable and I will be happy there, knowing that you are safe with your children in the house.”

“But, Mama---“

“But Madeleine, your children have been unhappy without you.”

“And I have been unhappy without them,” Mama said, hugging me. Freddy ran up just then with her hat and she hugged him too. “Silly, stupid hat, “ Mama said throwing it in the mud and stomping on it. She expertly pinned her hair back up so the wind couldn’t play with it any longer.

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“Mama, if I stay home I will look for a job in the village.”

“Maybe you can trap muskrat with me,” Granny said.

“Maybe,” Mama said.

I stared at her in horror. “Mama, you can’t. They look so horrible and limp when you take them out of the trap and Granny was telling us about skinning them. Oh, Mama, I never want to wear a fur coat as long as I live and Pierre isn’t going to wear one either!”

Mama smiled at me. “Don’t worry, little Francine. “I was not seriously considering trapping and skinning muskrat for a living. I will go into Ecorse village Monday while you and Freddy are at school. Theresa the Hatmaker likes the way I fix hair and make hats and she has always offered for me to work there. I will go in Monday and take her up on her offer. If we stay with Granny Godfroy, I can work for less wages.”

“Are we ever going to go home, Mama?”

“We can’t go back to the house in Detroit,” Mama said sadly. “It is sold to pay for things, but we’ll buy another house someday, Francine. I will make more money.”

“I don’t think I want to live at Granny Godfroy’s for very long,” I said.

“Your Granny Godfroy is a wonderful woman,” Mama said. “She is just as set in her ways as a muskrat trap and if you try to change them, she will bite you!”

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“I heard that remark, Madeleine,” Granny Godfroy shouted from behind us. “And I suppose you aren’t set in your ways as firmly as a hatpin holding down one of Theresa the Hatmaker’s hats.”

“I certainly am set in my ways, but I would rather set them with a hatpin than a muskrat trap,” Mama laughed.

Both Mama and Granny Godfroy chuckled together at Mama’s joke. I smiled and Freddy and Harold just walked along whistling.

Dinner that night didn’t turn out to be as happy as the walk home. Mama and Pierre took a nap in the bedroom. Harold tried to join them, but Mama shut him out just like I do. “I wouldn’t let you sleep with me when I lived here the first time and I’m not going to start now,” Mama said.

Granny just laughed and picked up Harold and put him in Freddy’s bedroom. Freddy didn’t care. He wasn’t in there and he never notices lumps under his blankets even when he is in bed with them. Granny fixed chicken for dinner. She had disappeared about an hour before dinner and when I asked Mama where she was, Mama said she was out getting dinner. I didn’t know what that meant until Granny put a platter of fried chicken on the table, along with two bowls of mashed potatoes, gravy, garden peas and apple pie. Mama and me and Freddy ate like that’s all we knew how to do. So did Harold. I heard him snuffling down mashed potatoes and smacking his lips over them. “Granny, make him stop!” I begged, after a particularly loud smack and snuffle.

“What’s Harold doing?” Freddy looked up from his plate, a dab of mashed potato on his nose.

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“It takes one to know one,” Mama said.

Granny laughed so hard at that one that she had to stop eating before she choked.

Freddy still didn’t get it. “It takes who to know who?” he said.

“She means you sleep and eat just like Freddy does, that why you don’t see anything wrong with the way he does things,” I said. “Isn’t that right, Granny.”

“That’s right,” Granny said.

Then Freddy got it. “I’m not a pig, but neither is Harold he said. Harold’s my friend and he can sleep with me whenever he wants to.”

“Good. Then he’ll stop crawling under my quilts,” I said.

Freddy stuck his tongue out at me. “LeBlanc’s a bully! LeBlanc’s a bully!” he said.

By the time I had finished explaining what had happened at school to Mama and Granny it was time for bed.

All of the time I thought he’d been playing inside with the other kindergartners and didn’t hear the noise on the playground. It didn’t occur to me until I was ready to go to sleep that I had to remind Freddy that LeBlanc is his last name too.

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Letter to Papa Somewhere on a Freight Train Heading West

Dear Papa,

I finally have some good news. Mama doesn't have to work as a maid in Grosse Pointe any more. Granny said that she had sold something for enough money so Mama could stay home with us. Will you come home too, Papa?

Your daughter,

Francine Amalie Antoinette LeBlanc

Chapter Five Mama Comes to Visit and Stays

So Mama stayed, and I was happy. Freddy was happy too because he and Harold spent most of their time by the river fishing. Mama and Granny Godfroy were happy some of the time but some of the other times they weren't happy. They didn't kick each other like Freddy and I do when we get mad at each other, but sometimes they acted like they each had a rope and were trying to win a race while pulling it in different directions. Mama liked to sleep late in the mornings. Granny Godfroy got up before the rooster had finished crowing in the barn. The first few weeks Mama was home, I tried to sleep late with her, but I couldn't. I had to get up to go to school on weekdays and on Saturday and Sunday the clock in my head kept running and I still got up in time to go to school.

"Francine, go back to sleep," Mama would mumble, throwing an arm over her eyes to keep out the morning light. I got so tired of laying next to her stiff as a board for four hours every weekend morning that I finally started saying, "I have to go to the outhouse, Mama." I'd get up and go out to the outhouse and not come back to bed. Mama didn't say anything, she just slept in.

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Granny Godfroy didn't say anything either, but the corners of her mouth got awful tight when Mama came out into the kitchen looking for breakfast while she was getting things ready for dinner or having her middle of the morning cup of coffee.

Every afternoon when I walked home from school I thought about how much I didn't want to go home, because Mama and Granny Godfroy would be in the kitchen setting plates on the table for dinner when they really wanted to start throwing them at each other.

Finally I got an idea from all of this extra thinking. The next night after school I went down to the river where Freddy and Harold were fishing. "We need to finish that room in the hayloft," I told Freddy. "We can do it. All we have to do is put down wood for the floor and move some furniture into it."

Freddy stared at me. "We're just kids. We can't do that, Francine."

"Yes we can. Come on, I'll show you what I mean."

Harold followed us into the barn and up the stairs to the hayloft. One corner of the hayloft was finished already and held a wood burning cookstove and a table and chairs just waiting for someone to use them. Long beams of wood were already laying across the skeleton of the floor. We just had to fill them in, a lot like Granny weaving. The planks were long and heavy but the two of us managed to drag a few across the framework and lay them over it. We ran on them to test them. They were solid, and even if we did fall through we'd land in the hay below.

Harold told on us. It had to be him because no one else knew what we were doing. A few nights later we were laying beams and doing a pretty good job. We had

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about half the floor done, when I heard Granny Godfroy say right next to my ear, “You need to move that a little to the right, Francine.”

I glared at Harold who was standing right beside her. “Tattle tale!”

Harold must have felt guilty because he hid in the corner and didn’t squeal a word.

“There, Granny said, thumping on the last plank we put into place. “That ought to hold a bed and chest of drawers and all of the walking back and forth I want to do.”

I stared at her. “Mama’s going to move out here, not you. “

“Yeah,” Freddy said. “We figured that if you and Mama could stay away from each other in the mornings you’d like each other better for the rest of the day.”

“I think that you mother will be happier with you and Francine in the house,”

Granny Godfroy said. “This is where your Grandpa and me used to sleep before he built the house, that’s why it was half finished already. We just took beams off as we needed them to build the house.”

My words did it to me again, and this time they got me into big trouble. “I want to sleep out here with you, Granny.”

She stared at me so hard that I thought her eyes would drop out. “Are you sure Francine? Harold sleeps with me too.”

“I like Harold,” I said. Harold came out of the corner and squealed with surprise that I had said such a thing. But something inside me kept saying that I should stay here with Granny and let Mama have a room and some privacy in the house.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“It’s alright with me if it’s alright with your Mama,” Granny Godfroy said. “But I can’t imagine Madeliene agreeing to let her only daughter and grand doll sleep in a hayloft,” Granny said smiling at Pierre.

“I can,” I said. “I kick a lot when I sleep and Pierre snores.”

“That’s not fair! I want to sleep out here too,” Freddy whined.

“We must talk to your Mama,” Granny said.

We went back to the house to talk to Mama. Mama was standing at the mirror pinning up her long black hair. It looked like the hair on the pictures of ladies in the Sears Catalogue. I talked to Mama and so did Freddy and Granny. Pierre looked at her soulfully and Harold squealed.

“You mean all three of you want to sleep in that apartment over the hayloft?” Mama asked. “Whatever for, when there are three perfectly good beds here.”

“You need your rest and I have to get up early and get ready for school.”

“So do I said Freddy,” Harold squealed in agreement.

Mama looked thoughtful for a minute, then she smiled. “Well, for now that will be alright if you sleep out here Francine and Freddy.”

“You and Papa can live in the house when he comes home,” I said, hugging Mama.

“When,” Granny snorted like Harold did when he thought something was funny.

“It’s settled then,” Granny said dusting off her skirts. “Let’s get back to work.”

By the end of the day Granny and Freddy and me with a little help from Harold had turned the boards above the hayloft into a cozy place to live. The beam floors were all

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

laid across the ribs of the second floor, and we carried a couch and chairs upstairs for the parlor. We carried dishes and curtains and rugs and featherbeds upstairs. I helped Granny dust and sweep and scrub and Freddy carried buckets of water up and down the stairs. Harold helped too when he wasn't busy stealing green peppers and tomatoes out of the garden.

By supper time that day the apartment above the hayloft smelled fresh and clean. Granny was cooking something for supper that smelled so good I wanted to eat as much as I could for as long as I could. I went over to the stove, sniffing the air. "What are you cooking, Granny?" "I had a horrible thought. "It's not roast muskrat, is it?" I asked, opening the oven door a crack.

"Close that oven door! It's not roast muskrat," Granny said. Captain Goldsmith isn't coming for supper. It's roast chicken with sage dressing and baked potatoes and carrots."

"MMMM," I said. Harold thought so too. He sniffed the air so hard that he danced around in circles. I followed him and Pierre followed me and Freddy came in from feeding the chickens and followed us all. Granny laughed so hard she almost dropped the roasting pan when she took it out of the oven.

"You children go and tell your Mama that supper is ready," Granny said.

"I'll tell her!" I ran to the house to get Mama, dragging Pierre by one arm behind me. Mama was sitting at the kitchen table, staring at Granny Godfroy's windmill picture above the stove. She looked like she didn't know what to do next. "What's wrong, Mama?" I asked, throwing myself into her lap and hugging her.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“It’s lonely here in this house all by myself,” Mama said. “I’m used to being around people all of the time.”

“You’ve only been here alone for two hours, Mama.”

“I like being with you and Freddy and Pierre,” Mama said, smiling.

“Granny told me to come and tell you that supper was ready.”

“It’s about time,” Mama said. “I’m hungry and it was so quiet here in the house that I was beginning to miss your Granny Godfroy!”

Mama came out to the apartment and ate supper with us. Then we played Checkers and a new game called Uncle Wiggley. Uncle Wiggley was a rabbit who lived in a luxurious burrow under a farmhouse and you had to travel with Uncle Wiggley from his burrow to the grocery store and back. You had to throw the dice to find out how many hops to take toward the farmhouse and you had to hope you didn’t land in a snare. If you did, you had to pick a card that would tell you what to do next. When I landed in the snare I just had to lose a turn, but when he landed in a snare Freddy had to go to the dog house and stay for two turns while he got the dogs ready to chase Uncle Wiggley. Mama and Granny didn’t even land on the snares. We had so much fun getting Uncle Wiggley to his burrow and back that we played for a long time. Pierre was taking her turn when Mama looked at the clock above the stove and said, “I can’t believe it’s already ten o’clock. You children need to go to bed or you’ll never get up for school tomorrow.”

“I don’t wanna go to bed,” Freddy whined.

“Can’t we play just one more game?” I begged Granny.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“Not tonight, Francine,” Granny said. “Now put on your nightgown and get into bed.”

I turned to Mama. “Can’t we play another game, Mama. Just one more.”

“I don’t see why we can’t play just one more game,” Mama said, looking at Granny.

Granny glared at Mama. “They won’t get up on time in the morning and they’ll be late for school, Madeleine.”

“But they’re my children and it’s my decision,” Mama said, her eyes flashing.

“They’re under my roof and so are you,” Granny Godfroy said.

“That’s what I’m afraid of,” Mama said, tears falling in her voice. “You will never let us go free, Mama and you always want to be boss!”

“Not me!” Granny Godfroy said, but she walked over to the corner by the stove and stood with her face to the wall for a few minutes. I know it was a few minutes because I counted to twenty before she turned around. She walked over and hugged Mama. “I am sorry Madeleine. I was being too bossy. Francine and Freddy are your children and you are the one to tell them what they can or can’t do, not me.”

Mama stared at Granny Godfroy. “You’ve never said you were sorry before, Mama.”

“I have to keep reminding myself that you are no longer my little girl, Madeleine and that you have a little girl and little boy of your own.”

“Don’t forget Pierre,” I said, holding her up on my arm.

“Two little girls,” Granny said smiling.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“I’m not little any more, Granny. Pierre is younger than me!”

“One little girl,” Granny said, patting Pierre’s arm. She patted Mama’s arm too.

“Madeliene, after you put the children to bed why don’t we have a cup of tea and talk?”

Mama nodded. “Come on children, it’s bedtime.”

Mama tucked me and Pierre and Freddy in our new beds, and read us a bedtime story. She said our prayers with us in French and kissed us goodnight. I heard the scrape of wooden chairs on the wooden kitchen floor as Mama and Granny Godfroy sat down at the kitchen table to drink their tea and talk. The rise and fall of their voices soothed me to sleep.

The next morning when I woke up and tiptoed across the living room to the stairs on my way to the outhouse, I saw Mama sleeping on the couch that I had helped Granny make from a wooden frame and cushions. On my way back from the outhouse I tiptoed over and kissed Mama’s cheek. She stirred and opened her eyes. “Good morning, Francine.”

“Good morning, Mama. Why didn’t you come in and sleep in my bed with me? There’s enough room for me and you and Pierre.”

“I didn’t want to disturb you,” Mama said.

Granny got up then and started a fire in the stove. She and Mama cooked breakfast while Freddy and I got ready for school. Pierre stayed in bed and so did Harold. Not even the bacon frying got him up and into the kitchen. “Is Harold sick?” I asked Granny, peering into her bedroom. He’s still sleeping.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

I could see him snuggled under the wool blankets. “Why doesn’t he have to get up and go to school?” I grumbled.

“I’ll get him up,” Granny said. “Now you children had better get to school.”

“Yes, it’s time,” Mama said, handing us our lunch boxes.

“What are you going to do today, Mama?” I asked her.

“I’m going to walk into Ecorse this afternoon and see if Lilly will give me a small job at her hat shop. I could work there in the mornings and be at the front door waiting for you when you get home from school.”

Granny Godfroy frowned. “Madeleine, there’s no need to get a job.”

“Mama, I thought you told me that you respected my feelings, finally!”

Granny walked to the corner behind the stove again and faced the wall. This time I could only count to ten before she turned around. “I did tell you that, Madeleine. If you want to take a job, please do so. I’ll do whatever I can to help.”

“We’ll talk more about it later, Mama.”

Freddy and I walked through the meadow and the marsh to Jefferson Avenue, then down the wooden sidewalk to school. “I don’t want to go to school,” I complained to Freddy. I wanted to complain to Pierre, but Granny wouldn’t let her go to school with me, so she slept late in the mornings now. Freddy was the only one left to complain to.

“We don’t have to go to school,” Freddy said. “We can go fishing instead. If we catch some good fish for supper, Granny won’t be mad at us.”

“But Mama might,” I said, “and Mama’s in charge of us now that she doesn’t work in Grosse Ile any more.”

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“Mama can’t complain too much if we catch some fish for supper, can she?”

“She really likes fish,” I said, remembering all of the times we had fished in the Detroit River when we lived in Detroit and brought the perch that we caught home to Mama for dinner.

“Then, we need to go fishing,” Freddy said.

I looked down at my dress and then at Freddy’s good knickers and shirt. “We have on our school clothes and we don’t have our fishing poles,” I said.

“We can go get them,” Freddy told me. “Granny is probably out checking her muskrat traps and Mama said that she was going to town, so we can go home and change clothes and get our fishing poles. We’ll be out of the house before Granny and Mama get back to the house.”

And we were. The morning air felt freer because we weren’t pushing through it to get to school. We hurried back home, changed into our overalls and shirts and grabbed our fishing poles. I dropped the fish bucket with a thud on the barn floor and we listened fearfully to hear if Granny had heard the noise, but she didn’t appear in the doorway with her hands riding her hips demanding to know what we were doing. We grabbed our fishing poles and our fishing buckets and were walking toward the wooden Jefferson Avenue sidewalk toward the Southfield Dock before it was time for arithmetic at school.

Suddenly I stopped walking and pulled on Freddy’s arm to make him stop walking. “Shhh, I thought I heard someone behind us.”

Freddy looked over his shoulder. “There isn’t anyone there.”

“Do you think Granny’s following us?” I said as we continued walking.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“How could she follow us when she doesn’t know that we’re not in school?”

Freddy asked me.

I shivered. “Somehow I think she knows,” I said.

“Girls are crazy,” Freddy answered. “Let’s just go fishing.”

We got down to the dock and cast our lines in the water. I still didn’t feel any easier, even when I caught a bigger fish than Freddy. I kept seeing something just beyond the corner of my eye and something kept staring straight into my back. I turned around quick, but whatever it was jumped under the dock and hid. “I want to go home,” I told Freddy.

He didn’t even look up from his fishing. “I’m not going home until I catch a fish as big as yours” he said. “And I want to catch two more so we have plenty for Mama and Granny Godfroy.”

“But something’s watching us,” I said. “I heard it follow us down the wooden sidewalk and now it’s here at the dock watching us. It’s hiding under the dock right now, Freddy. I can hear it breathing!”

Freddy finally looked up from his fishing. “I don’t hear anything, Francine.”

“Listen, Freddy! It’s breathing right under our feet. Do you think the Fighting Island Sea Serpent came back without Captain Goldsmith?”

“I think it’s Harold,” Freddy said.

“Why would Harold get up early and follow us?”

“I don’t know, but you can ask him. He’s right here,” Freddy said, pointing to the place where his fishing pole went into the water.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

I stared at the spot where Freddy was pointing and sure enough, Harold's pink snout stuck out of the water and he splashed a wave toward me. "What are you doing here, Harold?" I asked him.

For an answer, Harold dove into the water.

"I didn't know pigs could swim," Freddy said.

"Some pigs probably can't swim, but I think Harold can do anything," I said.

Just as I said that Harold burst out of the water with a fish in his mouth. The fish flopped and flip flopped, but Harold held it tightly in his teeth. "Bring the fish up on dock, Harold. Granny Godfroy will really love fixing that big fish for our supper."

Harold swam to the dock with the fish in his mouth. I reached down with the net and scooped him up in it, fish and all. When I took the net off Harold, he was still holding the fish. The fish looked like a musky and it felt like it weighed at least two pounds. It was heavy. I eased Harold out of the net then closed it over the fish. "Harold, that is a huge fish. Wait until Granny sees it!"

Freddy and me stuck around the dock fishing for another hour or so, but we didn't catch anything near to matching that musky. I caught a few little perch and Freddy caught a bass and a carp. We walked along the board sidewalk stretching the length of Jefferson Avenue from the Southfield Dock to the grocery store in front of the dirt road leading to Granny Godfroy's farm. I carried the bucket with the small fish in it and Freddy carried the net with the musky in it. Harold strutted along in front of us his tail wagging back and forth like a dog's when the dog is saying, "look what I did!" Harold's tail said the same thing, only louder.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

By the time we got through town, we had a string of four cats following us. Those fish must have smelled like licorice or chocolate candy to them because they followed the fish smell with their noses right up to the pail and the fish net. Even when Freddy and me turned around and yelled at them and stomped our feet, they just kept following us and meowing for a bite.

“We’re going to get in trouble, Freddy. Those cats are making so much noise that everyone’s looking at us. Someone’s going to tell Granny and Mama we skipped school.”

It turns out that nobody had to tell Mama. We ran right smack into her. We were so busy watching the cats that we didn’t look up when we got to the dirt trail that ran into the marsh. We just turned down it and kept walking – right into Mama!

Freddy dropped his net. I sloshed water out of the fish pail, but managed to sit it down without dumping the fish.. Harold said “Offff!” and sat down by the net with his fish in it.

“Why aren’t you two in school?” Mama asked after we all caught our breath. “What’s that smell?” was her next question.

“ We were catching some fish for supper,” I said. “I wanted to make sure Granny didn’t make muskrat or spaghetti.”

Mama smiled. “I can understand your concern, but you need to be in school Francine and you too Freddy.”

“We need to get these fish home to Granny before they get warm and dry,” I said.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

I picked up the pail and started off down the dirt trail leading to Granny's farm. Freddy picked up the net with Harold's fish in it and Harold trotted alongside of him. Mama followed us, still scolding us about school.

When we got near the house, Harold ran ahead squealing for Granny to come and see what he was bringing home. Granny didn't come. Harold squealed louder, so loud that two of the ducks in the marsh answered him, but still Granny didn't come.

"Mama, where is Granny?" Freddy said.

"We'll find her," Mama told him.

I walked into the barn hollering Granny's name. I had to holler pretty loud over Harold's squealing, and finally I heard a faint, "I'm over here, Francine. Why are you yelling so loud?"

I followed the sound of Granny's voice and there she was in the corner of the barn by one of the haystacks. She had a pitchfork in her hand and was throwing a forkful of hay on top of the pile.

"What are you doing, Granny?"

"Hello, Francine. I was just stacking some hay for the cow."

I stared at her. "We don't have a cow, Granny."

She laughed and it sounded more like oops! "Did I say cow? Of course we don't have a cow. I meant to say chickens."

"But Granny, chickens don't eat hay."

"They scratch around in it," Granny said.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“When it’s in a haystack like that? Don’t they just scratch a few pieces of it around in the dirt looking for bugs?”

“That they do,” Granny said like she was trying hard and fast to think of what to say next.

“Harold needs a bed in the barn,” Granny said. “Sometimes he gets tired of sleeping with me. I thought I’d fix him a bed here in the haystack.”

“On top of it?” I asked over Harold’s alarmed squeals.

Granny craned her neck to look up t the top of the haystack. “Maybe not on top of it,” she said.

“What about in the middle?” I asked. I ran straight into the side of the haystack, expecting to land on soft, prickly hay. Instead I ran into something solid that bumped my ribs. “Owww! What’s that?” I howled.

Granny pulled me out of the side of the haystack. “Just never you mind what it is,” she said. “Are you alright?”

“My ribs hurt, but I’m alright,” I told her.

“I have a surprise buried in the haystack and I want it to stay buried in the haystack,” Granny said. “Can you keep a secret Francine, or do I have to find somewhere else to hide it?”

“I can keep a secret, Granny. Harold can too if you give him an extra treat every evening.”

Harold squealed in agreement and Granny looked down at him like she had forgotten that he was there.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“What kind of extra treat are we talking about, Harold? An extra cookie a night?”

Harold squealed and shook his head back and forth.

“No? What about some black and red jelly beans?”

Harold shook his head up and down.

“Yes, then it’s a deal.” Harold put his leg out and Granny took his foot and shook it. I just shook my head. I couldn’t believe she had just made a deal with a pig, even a smart one like Harold.

“Now we’ll talk, Francine,” Granny said to me. She raked together enough hay to make a bale and squished it together so we could sit down. She leaned the rake against the barn wall. “Sit down,” she said. I sat. “Francine, do you know how much I wanted your Mama to stay home with us?”

“More than anything,” I said, because that’s how much I wanted Mama to stay here with us instead of going to Grosse Pointe to work as a maid all week.

“I made a deal that some people might consider a bad one, but I made it for your Mama,” Granny Godfroy said. She pointed to the hay. Underneath that hay is ten cases of bootleg whiskey and ten cases of home brewed beer in bottles. You know that selling it is against the law, Francine, but keeping it in your barn isn’t, as long as you yourself don’t drink it. I’m not drinking any of it and neither is your mother or Freddy or you. The gentleman is coming to pick up his cargo in a week and he will pay me \$200 for keeping it here for him all week. That \$200 will allow your mother to stay home with us. But you have to keep this a secret, Francine. You can’t tell anybody because if the sheriff finds out he’ll come and get the cargo and we won’t get the money.”

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“I want us to get the money Granny, but isn’t keeping the beer and whisky in our barn against the law?”

“Nobody around here agrees with the law,” Granny said looking over her shoulder like she felt guilty about something. “I don’t. I make wine out of the grapes that grow beside the house, you know that Francine.”

“I know Granny.”

“Then, let’s keep it a secret,” Granny said.

But Granny made a serious mistake. She forgot to swear Harold to secrecy. She bribed him with black and red jelly beans, but she forgot to make him promise not to lead anyone about the cargo in the barn. I made a serious mistake by telling that bootlegger how to get to Harold.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

Letter to Papa, Somewhere on a Train Heading West

Dear Papa,

Granny had a secret cargo of whiskey in the barn. I promised not to tell and I didn't, Harold knows about it. Granny gave him a whole bag of red and black jelly beans not to tell, but he's eaten almost all of them and I don't know what he'll do after that. I think I'll take him to school with me tomorrow just to keep an eye on him. I'll let you know what happens.

Your daughter,

Francine Amalie Antoinette LeBlanc

Chapter Six

I Take Harold to School and Get to Know Betsy

Harold finally got around to telling everyone about the fish and Granny and Mama got busy cleaning it. "I smelled the fish as soon as you brought it in the barn," Granny said. But we were busy with other things."

"I'll cook the fish if you would like a chance to clean up," Mama said to Granny Godfroy.

"That would be a good idea, Madeliene," Granny said. "Why don't we eat here in my apartment?"

Mama hesitated for a minute. "Do you really want me to stay, Mama?"

"Certainly I want you to stay, Madeliene," Granny said, pushing Mama ahead of her up the stairs. "Let's clean fish."

All of us including Harold climbed the stairs to Granny's apartment. I walked alongside of Harold so I could talk to him alone. "Harold, how would you like to follow in your father's footsteps?" I asked him.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

Harold stopped munching black jellybeans long enough to point his snout at me, his way of asking me what I was talking about.

“I mean Harold that you can come to school with me tomorrow and meet Mr. Emerson who knew your father. You’ll meet lots of nice kids, too. Kids with jelly beans.”

Harold snuffled his agreement . “I’ll tell Granny you’re going to sleep with me. That way we can leave early in the morning and no one will see us.”

“Why all of a sudden do you want to let Harold sleep with you?” Granny Godfroy asked me suspiciously as she cut up fish for supper. Mama

Mama stared at Harold, then she stared at me. “You two look like you’re up to something, “ she said.

I worked my face muscles trying to make them look innocent. “I must have done a good job because Mama went to help Granny fry fish without asking me any more questions.

After supper Mama, Granny, Freddy, Harold and me went for a walk in the woods behind the barn. Harold ran ahead snuffing and poking his nose into bushes and running around trees. A squirrel ran in front of us and Harold chased after it.

“Harold, come back here!” Granny Godfroy shouted.

Harold kept chasing the squirrel and I chased after Harold before Granny could tell me to stop. We struggled through some thorn bushes and finally ended up in the marsh by the river. I stumbled over a nest of duck eggs and sank down on my knees beside it. Harold stood over it guarding it like a dog a bone.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

Its strange that the Mama and Papa ducks aren't here, I said. "One of them usually guards the nest."

Before I finished my sentence the mother duck burst out of the reeds at the rivers edge. She few straight for Harold and grabbed his tail.

I don't fee a bit sorry for you, I told Harold. You should have listened to Granny when she called you.

Harold didn't argue with me. He was too busy licking his sore tail and trying to get the mother duck to let go of it. I went over to the duck and shouted, "shoo, shoo, get away!"

Finally the duck et go of Harold's tail and few away. Harold squealed so loud that Granny and Mama and Freddy ran straight to us. Harold squealed a of the way home and Granny scolded him a of the way home. Granny filled an iron tub with cold water and sat Harold in it. She made him soak for a few minutes then she handed him a towel. Get out and dry yourself off," she told him. Granny uncapped a jar full of something green and put it on her finger. "Hold still Harold. I'm going to put some of this on your tail," Granny said.

"What is it?" I asked Granny.

"Its my green save," Granny said. "It's made of ingredients from France, with just a dash of American pepper thrown in. It cures anything from poison ivy to arthritis, and including a pig's tail pulled by an angry duck. I helped Granny sap some of the salve on Harold's tail.

"Ahhhchooo!" Harold and I sneezed together.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“My, my,” Granny Godfroy said. “I must have put in too much pepper.”

Harold sneezed through the rest of the evening and when ever he sneezed my noise tickled in sympathy and I sneezed too.

Finally Mama jumped out of her armchair by the fire. She handed me a handkerchief and said, “Use this hanky, Francine and stop sneezing!”

“I’m going to bed to finish reading my English story,” I said after I had sneezed into the handkerchief a few times. I grabbed my book and went upstairs. “Goodnight, Mama. Are you sleeping here tonight or are you sleeping in the main house/?”

“I think I’ll sleep here tonight,” Mama said. “I like being near you and Freddy.”

“Harold turned around on the stairs and squealed at Mama. “You too, Harold,” Mama said.

Mama smiled at Granny Godfroy. “You too, Maman,” she said.

“Really Madeleine, you don’t have to worry about hurting my feelings,” Granny Godfroy said, her purple hair quivering.

“Mama, I like being with you too,” Mama said.

I stared at Granny Godfroy. I saw a tear row down her nose . She quickly flicked it into her purple hair. Blue tears, purple hair, I thought. It sounds like poetry, but Granny Godfroy isn’t a poetry person. She’s more of a making oatmeal for breakfast before you go to the barn to do the chores person. Mama ran over and hugged Granny Godfroy and said something to her in French. It sounded like amor which I know means love.

Granny, will you teach me how to speak French?” I asked her. “Mr. Emerson says we can only speak English in school but I want to speak French too.”

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“You can learn it from your Mama,” Granny said.

“I have learned some words from Mama, but she has always had to work hard all day and when she comes home from work at night she is too tired for French lessons.

Can you teach me, Granny?”

“I’ll teach you,” Granny said. “I will have to watch my choice of French words a little more carefully if I am going to teach you what they mean.”

Freddy couldn’t stand to be left out any longer. He came over from the table where he had been doing his homework and begged Granny, “Will you teach me French too, Granny?”

“We’ll start French lessons tomorrow,” Granny promised. “Now it’s time for bed.

I danced up the stairs in front of Freddy and stuck my tongue out at him. We had a satisfying fight before I crawled into bed. Harold was already there, draped across a pillow. We fought back and forth for ten minutes before he finally huffed off to his own bed and left me alone. When Mama came up to tuck us in, he was snoring.. I heard Freddy snoring from his room next door. Mama heard my prayers and kissed me goodnight. I listened to her go back downstairs and then I listened to the rise and fall of her and Granny’s voices. Then Harold’s snoring drowned everything out. The bedroom sounded like the inside of Raupp’s saw mill down by Southfield dock. Finally I couldn’t stand the noise any longer. I got up and went over to Harold’s bed and shook him.

“Harold, wake up!” I shouted. “You have to wake up and stop snoring.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

Harold made more buzz saw noises and rolled over. My head started to spin from the noise. I saw big red ZZZZZZs dancing in front of my eyes. Harold snored louder and the red turned to purple.

“Harold, I’ve got to get some sleep and I can’t get any sleep with you snoring! Stop it!”

Harold rowed over and snored louder. I had to act. I couldn’t help it. I dove into my wardrobe and got out the flour sack that I used for Pierre’s clothes. I emptied out her clothes in a heap and took the empty sack to the bed. I fitted the sack over Harold’s head and pulled it down over him until he was completely in the sack. The sack muffled his snoring, so much so that I could lay down and go to sleep. I had a funny dream. I dreamed that Granny Godfroy and Mama came in and stood by the bed. Granny Godfroy’s purple hair quivered she laughed so hard. “That’s the real meaning of being in the sack,” she said.

Mama laughed too and threw her arms around Granny. That’s how I knew it was a dream because Mama never threw her arms around Granny while I was awake.

The next morning Harold was sleeping in his bed with his head on his pillow and Pierre’s burlap sack stood in its place in the wardrobe bulging with her clothes. I emptied the burlap sack again because I had an idea about what to do with Harold once we got to school and Miss Ouelette’s room. I stuffed the sack into my school bag under my books so sharp eyed Mama and equally sharp eyed granny wouldn’t spot it, and I hurried downstairs to breakfast. I forgot about Freddy and his big mouth. As I slid my school bag

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

under my seat, Freddy said right under Granny Godfroy's nose, "Francine, why are you taking Pierre's clothes bag to school?"

I kicked him, but it was too late. The words were already out of his mouth and in Granny's ear. Her eyebrows climbed to question marks as she looked at me.

"We have a science project and Miss Outlette needs a burlap sack," I said. It wasn't too much of a lie.

Granny didn't question me any more and Freddy and I started off for school. Harold always walked us to the gate, so Granny didn't think anything of it when he followed us down the front sidewalk. Freddy thought something was going on when I grabbed Harold and stuffed him into Pierre's burlap sack, but after I gave him a tootsie roll and a big wad of bubble gum to keep quiet. At least they kept him quiet until we got to school. Then he ran around the playground telling everyone that I had a pig in a sack. They all crowded around to stare at my lumpy sack which by now was jumping up and down with Harold's efforts to escape. Just then Miss Ouelette rang the bell and it was time to go in. I had to think fast. Harold was thrashing around so hard inside of that sack that Miss Ouelette would be sure to notice something. I had to keep him quiet.

"Freddy, give me your bubblegum," I demanded.

Freddy took it out of his mouth. "What are you going to do with it?"

"I need it," I said. "Hand it over."

Freddy handed it over and I shoved it inside Harold's mouth. Harold started chewing right away. He likes bubble gum, especially cinnamon and luckily I had bought cinnamon gum. The sack stopped jumping up and down and I went into Miss Ouelette's

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

room and sat down. I carefully put the sack holding Harold busily chewing gum under my desk.

The gum lasted for at least an hour before Harold started to make noise again. He must have gotten tired from all of that gum chewing because he decided to take a nap. The only trouble with Harold taking a nap is the same trouble with Harold sleeping in my bed at night. Harold snores and snores and snores. Loud sawing noises started coming from the sack and Miss Ouelette started to look my way more often. The kids that sat around me started giggling because the sack began to jump and jiggle and make loud buzzing noises.

Betsy Kincaid who sat right behind me whispered, “Francine, whatever you have in that sack is about ready to leave. I see a leg sticking out. What is it?”

“He’s Harold, Granny Godfroy’s pet pig,” I whispered back.

“Why did you bring him to school?” she asked me when Miss Ouelette was talking to one of the boys in the back row.

“Because Granny Godfroy brought his father to school and Harold wants to follow the tradition,” I explained.

“What’s so important about that tradition?” Betsey asked.

“Well, tradition-“ I began then suddenly Miss Ouelette stood next to my desk.

“Continue with what you were saying,” Francine,” Miss Ouelette said. “What about tradition? What is tradition and why is it important?”

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“The way Granny Godfroy explains it tradition is a thread that connects your grandmother and your mother and you. It can be a quilt or a pig,” I said, nudging the sack with my foot and willing Harold to be quiet.

“How can a pig be part of a tradition?” Miss Ouelette asked.

Betsy raised her hand. “It can do things that its mother or father started,” she said. “Just like people.”

I stared at her. She did understand. Betsy understood.

“That’s correct, Betsy,” Miss Ouelette said. “Something that grandmother did and teaches your mother to do and then your mother teaches you to do it is called a tradition. I think that could be true of pigs as well, don’t you Francine?”

“It’s true of Harold,” I said. He came to school just like his father did. And Granny Godfroy said that his father had a bed and his own table and chairs and dishes and passed them down to Harold.”

“ZzzzzzTT!” Harold gave a largely loud snore at this point and Pierre’s burlap suitcase shook.

“Why don’t you take Harold out of the sack and make him comfortable?” Miss Ouelette asked. “His snoring is disrupting the spelling lesson.”

I opened the sack and lifted Harold out. He opened one sleepy eye and looked at me. “You’re interrupting the spelling lesson,” I told him. “Can you snore a little more quietly?”

Harold opened both eyes, stretched and yawned and got slowly to his feet. By this time everyone had crowded around my desk to get a good look at him.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“Harold, why don’t you come up to the front of the room and sit so everyone can see you and you and Francine can answer their questions?” Miss Ouelette suggested.

Harold and I walked up to the front of the classroom and we spent about twenty minutes up there talking about Granny Godfroy and our lives together. Then we answered questions from the other kids. Things went really good until Jack Jenkins asked Harold if he had ever heard of pork chops.”

Harold just gave him his “what are you talking about?” look. Then Wilbur Long explained, “Pork chops come from pigs, just like you Harold. People like to eat pork chops. My grandfather liked to eat pork chops and he taught my father to eat pork chops. My father taught me to eat pork chops and I like to eat pork chops That’s a tradition.”

Wilbur’s definition of the pork chop tradition jolted Harold out of his safe, comfortable world. His eyes rolled in shock and he bolted out of the classroom door before I could even think about catching him. Before I chased after Harold I punched Wilbur Long such a good one in the nose that he bled all over Judy Hill’s spelling paper.

“You deserve double that, but I have to find Harold,” I shouted over my shoulder as I dashed out of the classroom after Harold. The recess bell was ringing as I ran across the school yard, down to Southfield and then left on Southfield to Jefferson. I didn’t realize Freddy was behind me until I heard heavy breathing and someone gasped, “Francine, wait up for me.”

I whirled around. “Freddy, there’s no sense in both of us being in trouble. Why don’t you just go back to school. How did you find out about Harold anyway?”

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“Betsy told me what happened at recess.”

I put my hands on my hips and got in his face as best I could. “Freddy, forget it and go back to school. I’ll take care of it.”

Freddy put his hands on his hips and got in my face right back. “I know that Granny Godfroy gave him a bag of jelly beans to keep him quiet about the whiskey in the barn,” Freddy said.

My mouth fell open. It’s a good thing I didn’t have any bubble gum in it. “How did you find out? I never told anybody!”

“I was hiding out in the barn when the bootleggers came and I heard her promise Harold all of the jelly beans he can eat if he keeps his mouth shut,” Freddy explained.

“That’s the answer, Freddy,” I said. “Jelly beans are the answer. Let’s go home and get enough money out of my piggy bank to buy a bag of jelly beans. We can scatter them around the barn yard and Harold will come out of wherever he’s hiding to eat the jelly beans.”

“How do you know he’ll be hiding?” Freddy asked. “Granny will be out looking for him by now. She’ll probably find him.”

“We’d better get home quick,” I said. We raced down Jefferson Avenue and across the marsh that led to our house. I kept a lookout for Harold but I didn’t see him. I didn’t see anybody but old Mr. Campau sitting on the porch in front of the Polar Bear Café down by the Detroit River. He sat there every day, including Saturday and Sunday after Mass at St. Francis Church, so that was nothing unusual. What happened next was

unusual. Old Mr. Campau slowly got up, shook out his long white beard, and beckoned to me and Freddy. “You two kids come here,” he said. “I have something to tell you.”

“W-what do you want to tell us?” Freddy asked. His voice shook and I could see him starting to edge away from Old Mr. Campau.

“Come on Freddy. I stepped on Freddy’s big toe and moved closer to the front porch of the Polar Bear Café. “What do you want to tell us Old Mr. Campau?” I asked.

He leaned so close to my face that his beard tickled my cheek. “Tell your granny that she has to roost her chickens somewhere else because the fox is approaching the hen house..”

“What?” Freddy asked.

Old Mr. Campau put a finger to his lips. “Shhh!”

“I heard what he said, Freddy. Come on, we have to get home quick, for two reasons now.” I pulled him away from the front porch of the Polar Bear Café and down Jefferson Avenue toward home.

“What two reasons?” Freddy demanded.

“You know the first and the second is to give Granny Godfroy Old Mr. Campau’s message.

“What’s the first reason, Francine?”

“The first reason is Harold. We have to find out where Harold is.”

“And what’s the second?”

“The second is to tell Granny to get her whiskey out of the barn before the police come and take it.”

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“I knew that,” Freddy said. “I was just testing you to see if you knew. Come on, we can run.” He started running down Jefferson Avenue, kicking up circles of dirt with his shoes.

I ran after Freddy, but he can still run faster than I can even though I can figure things out faster than he can. By the time I got to the front porch of Granny Godfroy’s house, puffing and panting, Freddy was already inside shouting the whole story of Harold to Granny.

“Francine child, is that you out there?” Granny hollered.

“It’s me, Granny.”

Immediately Granny appeared on the porch, her arms folded and her eyes flashing. “What did you do to Harold, Francine Amalie Antoinette LaBlanc?”

“I didn’t do anything to him. He ran out of school when Wilbur Long told him about the pork chop tradition in his family.”

“That was cruel, Francine. I never told Harold about the bad parts of being a pig.”

“You never told me about the bad parts of living with you and the bad parts about you and Maman either, Granny Godfroy. And that too is cruel!”

“Wow are you in for a whipping,” Freddy said. “I’ll bet Granny takes you to the woodshed and uses her razor strap on you.”

Instead of reaching for her razor strap, Granny Godfroy looked thoughtful. “You may be right, Francine. Part of the truth is like part of a jelly bean. You have to have the entire thing to appreciate it.”

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“I punched Wilbur in the nose,” I said. “When I left he was bleeding all over Judy Hill’s spelling paper and her desk as well.”

Granny Godfroy hugged me so hard her purple hair blew around like a windstorm. “Good for you, Francine. You did me proud.”

I couldn’t help it. Granny Godfroy’s words left a warm glow in my heart, such a warm one that I felt like I belonged there and that her home was now my home. I was enjoying the feeling so much that I almost forgot to tell her what Old Mr. Campau had told me to tell her.

“Francine, are you going to tell Granny what Old Man Campau said?” Freddy said.

I scowled at him. “Granny, Old Mr. Campau said that you had to find another roost for your chickens because the fox is approaching the hen house. And, Granny, I have to go get my piggy bank so I can buy some black jelly beans to put outside. Harold will follow a jelly bean trail anywhere. We’ll be able to find him that way.”

“Don’t worry about Harold,” Granny said. “He’s here at home. I found him in the marsh sobbing rivers of water and squealing.

“Did you explain to him that not all people have a pork chop tradition?” I asked her.

“I tried, but he’s still upset. “

“Me and Freddy are going to the candy store to buy him some black jelly beans,” I informed Granny.

“You and Freddy need to go back to school,” Granny said.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“Granny, it’s not fair if you send us back to school. It’s almost time for school to let out. And we know what Old Man, I mean Old Mr. Campau’s message means. Me and Freddy can help you move the whiskey out of the barn and I can help you bribe Harold with jelly beans. I have enough money in my piggy bank to buy two pounds of them from the candy store.”

Granny Godfroy sat down on the steps like her legs were tired. “Francine, Freddy, I wanted your Mama to be able to stay here with us and not have to stay in Grosse Pointe all week working as a maid. That’s why I told the bootleggers they could store their whiskey in the barn. We needed the money to keep our family together.”

“Me and Freddy can help and so can Harold. If he doesn’t want to be pork chop tradition he can help us without the black jelly beans. Where is he?”

“He’s taking a nap and recovering from his horrible morning,” Granny said. “He enjoyed going to school like his father did, but he didn’t enjoy hearing about pork chops.”

“He’ll survive,” I said. “I do even though Papa will never come back from making his fortune in the west.”

Granny patted my arm. “You have to keep believing that he will, Francine just like Harold has to keep believing that I don’t have the same pork chop tradition that Wilbur has.”

“What are we going to do about the whiskey in the barn?” Freddy said. “Where can we hide it from the Fed agents?”

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“I don’t think that it’s honest to hide it,” Granny said thoughtfully. “I think we ought to put it right out in the open for them to see. I have a plan.”

“What do you mean, Granny?” Freddy wondered.

“I’ll bet I know what it is,” I said. “We put the bootleg whiskey into Mason jars and put it in with the other canned stuff in the root cellar in the barn. That way, it’s hidden in plain sight.”

Granny smiled. “You read my mind, Francine,” she said. “It is surprising how much alike we are. You and Freddy can help me and I think your Mama will help too.”

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

Letter to Papa Somewhere on a Train Heading West:

Dear Papa,

I told you I'd let you know what happened to Granny and her whiskey in the barn. I try to keep my promises so I am writing this letter. Granny and Mama and Freddy and Harold and me put all of the bootleg whiskey in Mason jars to hid it from the Fed agents. It worked in a way, but what happened afterwards was a surprise. This will be my last letter to you.

Your daughter,

Francine Amalie Antoinette LeBlanc

Chapter Seven

As soon as Mama came home from her job at the beauty parlor Granny Godfroy told her our plan about what to do with the bootleg whiskey. "Did Old man Campau give you any idea when the Feds were planning to raid us?" Mama asked.

"He didn't give a date but I would guess it will be tonight or tomorrow night," Granny Godfroy said. "I heard tell in town that they were really raiding places in Ecorse."

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

Mama banged her fist down on the table. “Why don’t they leave us alone? We have to live too,” she said. “If they don’t want people to bootleg to get money to feed their families why don’t the president give us some jobs?”

“Maybe the next one will,” Granny Godfroy said. “But Mr. Hoover doesn’t see the poor people lining up for food and sleeping in doorways or in the woods.”

“He lives in a White House,” I said “But Mama, shouldn’t Papa have gotten to the west by now and found his job? He should have come home a long time ago.”

“He is working to earn enough money to buy us another house,” Mama said.

“Madeliene, it’s time to tell the child the truth,” Granny Godfroy said. “Pierre is probably not coming back.”

“But Pierre is here,” I cried. I ran to my bed to make sure that Pierre was still sleeping on the pillow. She was. Harold was sleeping on the other pillow and he opened one eye and winked at me before he started snoring again. I ran back to the kitchen.

“Mama, Granny Godfroy, my doll Pierre is in our bedroom asleep. Papa Pierre is the one who isn’t there.”

“Maybe you should give your doll a new name,” Freddy said.

“I called her Pierre because I thought Papa was coming back,” I said. “But now I will give her a new name because I know that Papa isn’t coming back.”

“How do you know that?” Mama asked me, looking sad.

“Because he has been gone for many years and he never answers my letters.”

I said.

“I still have faith he is coming back,” Mama said.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“If you must give Pierre a new name, why don’t you call her Faith?”

Granny Godfroy said. “You must have faith that you can do your best no matter what happens.”

“Or you could call her hope,” Mama said. “I still hope your Papa is coming back.

“I have faith that you will always do the right thing, Francine,” Granny Godfroy said. “I have faith in you.”

I smiled at Granny. I couldn’t believe that just two months ago I didn’t even want to live with her. Now I didn’t want to live anywhere else.

“I’ll call her Faith Hope LeBlanc instead of Pierre,” I said.

“We must get to our work,” Granny said. “It’s getting late and if the Fed agents plan to raid our barn it will be soon.”

We all helped Granny Godfroy dump the bootleg whiskey from the jugs that the bootleggers had stored it in into Mason jars. We screwed the caps on tightly and set them in with the other canning jars in the root cellar in the barn. We even put labels on them. Some of the labels said pickles and others said pickled beets and others said vinegar. When we finished I counted all of the jars. There were 150 jars of whiskey and canned fruit and vegetables. I wrinkled my nose. That whiskey sure smelled strong. My head felt a little dizzy from breathing it for so long. There was a little bit of whiskey left in our last jug and Freddy and me helped Granny Godfroy dump it into some root beer pop bottles that we had left standing on the root cellars shelves.

“That should do it,” Granny said, dusting off her hands. “Now all we have to do is bury the jugs in the orchard and we’re ready for the Fed agents if they come.”

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

The Fed agents came just after we had finished the supper dishes. Harold was snuffling around the root cellar. He probably thought the whiskey in the jars was candy or soda pop. Harold loves soda pop almost as much as he loves black and red jelly beans. I was chasing him out of the root cellar when three men carrying long poles and axes appeared in the barn door.

“Uh, uh, “ I whispered to Harold. “You’d better go get Granny Godfroy.”

The men didn’t notice Harold tiptoeing around them. They were too busy looking around the barn. “We heard you had some bootleg whiskey in his barn, girl,” they said. “Is that true?”

“Look around you. Do you see any?” I said.

The men poked their poles in the hay and into the dark, hidden corners of the barn. They glanced into the root cellar but didn’t bother lifting up each jar to inspect it. They were probing the horse trough when Granny Godfroy and Mama and Freddy and Harold burst into the barn.

“Just what do you mean by barging into my barn like this?” Granny Godfroy demanded. She planted herself in front of one of the men. “Is that you Carl Owens? What are you doing working with the Fed agents?”

“Gotta feed my family just like you do, Griselda, “ the man said. “I’m sorry to inconvenience you. We’ll be going in just a minute.”

The men poked around for a few more minutes, then the man that Granny Godfroy had called Carl said, “Come on fellas. We ain’t gonna find anything here.”

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“Try the Polar Bear Café,” Granny said. “I hear tell there’s a lot of boot leg whiskey changing hands there.”

“We’ll do that, Griselda,” Carl Owens told her. “I don’t see any bootleg whiskey. If you have any, you have it stashed pretty good.”

I winked at Granny and she got the funniest look on her face, like she felt guilty about something.

“Carl, you know most of the folks around here that do bootlegging do it so they can have money to eat and keep a roof over their heads,” Granny said.

“I know that,” Carl Owens said. “But it’s still against the law. Do you want Ecorse to be run by the Detroit and Chicago gangster law or do you want it to be run by United States Constitution law?”

“Since you put it that way,” Granny said, “maybe I should tell you something.”

“Should I tell him, Granny? I will if you want me to?” I looked at her.

“Are you ready for the consequences, Francine?”

“I’ll go to jail with you, Granny. I love you.”

Granny surprised us all by sitting down on top of a pitchfork in the corner and bursting into tears. Mama pulled a spotless handkerchief out of her pocket and handed it to Granny. “Here Mama. “

Granny Godfroy blew her nose with a loud HONK, HURUMPH!

“Mama, are you sure you want to do this?” Mama asked Granny Godfroy.

“Madeleine, how can I be worthy of Francine and Freddy’s love and respect if I don’t. Not to mention Harold.”

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

I don't think Freddy or Harold were much worried about the bootleg whiskey in the Mason jars. Freddy was looking at the gun that Carl Owens had in his holster and Harold was sniffing at the Mason jars. I decided to take matters into my own hands.

"I put all of the bootleg whiskey into the Mason jars," I said. "It's my fault. You can take me to jail. It doesn't matter, because my Papa isn't coming back from out west."

I held out my wrists. "Do you want to handcuff me now?"

Carl Owens put down his hatchet and his pole. He knelt down and looked into my eyes. "I'm not taking you to jail, Francine. I understand why your Granny agreed to let the bootleggers store their whiskey in their barn. It was to let your Mama stay here in Ecorse and work, wasn't it?"

I nodded yes.

He looked at Granny. "I know why you did it, Griselda. I've known you and your family for years. Why didn't you think I would understand?" He looked at Mama and smiled. "How is the job at Theresa's going, Madeliene?"

"It's going well," Mama told him.

At this point Harold decided to get into the picture. He scurried over to the root beer bottles that we had filled with whiskey and knocked one of them over. Whiskey fumes floated toward us like motes of dust in the sunlit window of the hayloft.

"Is all of the bootleg whiskey you have in those root beer bottles?" one of the other men asked.

"No," I said.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“I refuse to let you put my granddaughter on the spot any longer,” Granny Godfroy said, her purple hair quivering. “There is 30 quarts of bootleg whiskey in the mason jars in the root cellar,” Granny said. “I mixed them in with the fruit and vegetables. I’ll dump them out for you.”

Before any of us could move to stop or help her, Granny had dashed into the root cellar and grabbed two mason jars of whiskey. I guessed they were whiskey and I knew for sure when she dumped them out and the fumes started to fill the barn. I ran to help Granny and so did Freddy and Mama. Harold was the only one in our family who didn’t help. He was too busy lapping the whiskey from the root beer bottle. The Fed agents stood and watched us empty out all of the mason jars, including some that had fruit and vegetables in them. That got Harold’s interest and pretty soon he was lapping up the pickles and tomato sauce and pears that had ended up together on the barn floor.

“That’s a good honest resolution to the problem,” Carl Owens told Granny. “And nobody needs to be handcuffed or go to jail,” he added, smiling at me. “Now we can go to the Polar Bear Café and find some real criminals.”

The Fed agents left for the Polar Bear Café and it took Granny and me and Mama and Freddy the rest of the afternoon to clean up that mess in the barn. Some of Granny’s other pigs showed up and started nuzzling the root beer bottles. Harold had probably told his relatives about the root beer bottles, but at least they helped clean up some of the mess from the floor.

“What will the bootleggers do when they find out the Fed agents raided their whiskey?” I asked Granny Godfroy.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“They know that’s a risk they take when they ask people to store it in their barns,” Granny said.

“Are you sorry that we told the truth?” I asked her, half afraid of what she’d answer. I wanted her to still have faith in me.

“I’m so proud of you for doing the right thing and helping me do the right thing,” Granny said, hugging me.

We finally finished and went into the house. Mama made us some tea and Granny brought out some of the chocolate cookies that she saved for special occasions. Harold came in with us, but he didn’t want any of the cookies or tea. Granny gave him an ice bag to put on his head and he went to bed. Granny said he didn’t feel very good and I believe it. He ate and drank way too much, even for Harold.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

Chapter Eight

Papa Comes Home

Letter to Papa, Somewhere on a Freight Train Heading West

Dear Papa,

This will be my last letter to you. I so wanted to know you that I have written to you for all of the years that I have been able to write. Even before that I made the alphabet letters for you and colored and drew drawing for you before that. You never looked at any of them. You were never here to talk about them. I no longer need you to come home. I am grown up now.

Francine AmalieAntoinette LeBlanc

Age 9

“Can you come and help with the spring cleaning? Then we can gather duck eggs in the marsh and collect feathers for feather pillows.” I wanted Betsy to come so much I felt like grabbing her and throwing her in the rowboat.

“That’s little kid stuff,” Betsy said. “My mother is helping me sew a dress for the school dance. It will take us all weekend to finish it.”

“We could sew it together.

“I just can’t come,” Betsy said.

I was so quiet when she did her homework by the light of the kerosene lantern that night that Granny Godfroy asked, “What’s wrong Francine?”

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“Betsy’s acting funny.” Lately I hadn’t been worrying about my words when I talked to Granny Godfroy.

“What do you mean, funny, Francine?”

“I asked her to spend the weekend with us and she said that she has to sew her dress for the school dance. How can a school dance be more fun than rowing in the marshes by the Detroit River?” I honestly didn’t understand.

Granny Godfroy smiled. “Just a few months back you didn’t feel that way,” she said. “Everything happens in its own time. Be patient with Betsy.”

I was patient with Betsy for two weeks. Then I lost her patience and asked Betsy to come and spend the weekend. I asked four times and finally Betsy said yes she would come. She said she would come, but she had to bring her almost finished dress with her. “I have to finish the buttonholes,” she explained.

Saturday morning dawned sunny but cold and waves rode up and down the river as I rowed to Grassy Island to pick up Betsy. Betsy had packed a carpet bag and she and the carpet bag were waiting for me beside the front door of the light house. Betsy’s Papa got up from his rocking chair by the stove. “Hello there young Francine. Tell your Granny Godfroy I said hello.”

“I’ll tell her,” I promised him.

As they were going out the door, Betsy’s Papa said, “Take good care girls.”

“We’ll take good care,” Betsy and me said together. Laughing, we slung Betsy’s suitcase into the rowboat and climbed in after it. I sat in the middle seat and pulled at the oars. I had to row carefully like Granny Godfroy taught me because the waves on the

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

river were climbing higher and higher. We had just pulled even with the Ecorse shore and were about a mile from Granny Godfroy's farm when Betsy dropped her hands from holding her shawl so she could point at something in the water. "There's a man floating out there!" she said.

"A man! What would a man be doing floating in the river not a mile from Granny Godfroy's farm?" I asked her.

"It's a man and he's yelling for help," Betsy said.

"Then we'd better row over and see if we can help him," I said.

Waves slammed against the boat as I rowed over to the man.

Betsy rummaged around under the seat. "We don't have any extra life jackets," she said.

"We can't leave him here in the River in this high water," I told her.

I reached under the seat and pulled out length of rope. "Throw it out to him and we can pull him in to the boat."

Betsy threw out the rope to the man struggling in the water. He grabbed it and me and Betsy pulled him into the rowboat. We tugged and pulled at the man to get him into the water. Finally we inched him over the side and he collapsed across the seat. "Thank you," he whispered so faintly that we could hardly hear him.

The man shivered so hard that I took off my wool jacket and Betsy took off her coat and we covered up the shivering man. "Don't worry, you're safe now," Betsy told him.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“Don’t worry. We’ll take you to Granny Godfroy and she’ll give you some hot tea,” I told the man as I turned the rowboat around and headed back to shore.

The sun was setting as I tied the boat to Granny Godfroy’s dock, but I couldn’t take time to enjoy the sunset colors melting together in the sky over the River. Me and Betsy half dragged the man down the marsh path and pulled and tugged him up the hill to Granny Godfroys’ farm house.

“You’d better run and let her know we’re coming,” I told Betsy.

Betsy was already halfway cross the farmyard. I heard Harold squealing a welcome from his house in the pigpen. The man shivered so hard against my arm that I shook too. “Are you doing alright?” I asked him.

His hair was starting to dry and water wasn’t pouring off his clothes any more, but he was shivering hard enough to cause a thunder storm. “I—I---I’m drying out he chattered.

The back door of the farmhouse sprang open and suddenly Granny Godfroy, Freddy, Betsy and Harold were standing beside us. Granny gave a start like she was surprised or shocked about something when she saw the man, but she didn’t say anything. Freddy grabbed the man’s other arm and Betsy grabbed on next to me. Harold grabbed hold of his pant leg and pulled. Granny held his shoulders. Together we got the man into Granny Godfroy’s farm kitchen. She sat him in the chair by the stove and piled three wool blankets on him. He shivered off the blankets. She quickly poured him a cup of hot tea. “Drink this,” she ordered.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

“I don’t-“ he started to say, but she didn’t give him a chance. She poured the tea down his throat and he choked and spluttered for a full five minutes. But he stopped shivering. Granny put her washtub on the stove and filled it full of water. Harold jumped on his lap and settled in. I started to pick him off, but the man said faintly, “Leave him there. He’s warm.”

“You need dry clothes,” Granny told the man. “Wait here,” she ordered. She climbed the loft ladder and I heard her rummaging in Freddy’s wardrobe.

“What can she be doing?” Betsy asked.

“She’s doing, I said. That’s the most important thing.”

Granny came back down the ladder with a pair of trousers and a red flannel shirt in her arms. She also had a folded up towel. She reached inside the towel and pulled out a pair of black and white wool socks. She threw them at the man. The man didn’t catch them, but Harold did in his mouth. “Good catch, Harold,” she said. Harold handed Granny the socks and she handed them to the man. She handed him the towel.

“What’s in the towel, Granny,” Freddy asked.

“Never you mind,” Granny said.

“These clothes belonged to my late son-in-law,” Granny told the man. “The water in the tub should be warm by now. We will leave you to take a warm bath and put on these dry clothes.”

Granny herded us out of the room into her parlor, firmly shutting the parlor door behind us. We took turns sitting on the horsehair sofa and playing the Victrola until the man knocked on the door. “I’m fit to receive company now,” he said. The shirt was too

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

small to button completely in front, but he had managed to button it down to the middle button. But some of his chest hung out between the middle button and the bottom button of the shirt. The trousers stopped at his ankles so he had to pull the long black and white striped wool socks up to meet the trousers. But he looked warm and he looked happy.

Then he hugged me and then he hugged Betsy. "Thank you for saving my life," he said. He shook Granny's hand. "And thank you." Harold held out his paw to be shaken, and the man shook Harold's paw too. "Thank you everybody," he said.

We all went out into the kitchen and sat around the warm stove. Granny made hot chocolate for everybody. She put Harold's in his saucer on his woven mat and Harold drank his hot chocolate like Mama did, carefully and with the precision of a curled pinky finger. Then somebody burped and I sat up straight in my chair. I had heard that burp before. "Did you burp?" I asked the man.

"Yes, I did. Please excuse me," the man said.

"My Papa used to burp like that," I said.

The man looked at me. Now that he was drying out I could tell a little more about what he looked like. He had dark brown hair like Freddy's and green eyes a little like mine. They had the same flashes in them that Granny said looked like a light house beacon.

"Where did you come from?" I asked the man.

Before I could answer I heard a gasp from the doorway. "Harold, go outside and be sick," I said without turning around. "It's your own fault for making such a pig of yourself over the mason jars."

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

But it was Mama's voice that said, "Pierre, you're back!"

The man struggled to his feet with Granny's tea cup still in his hand. "Madeliene, you know me after all these years?"

"I know you," Mama said.

I jumped up out of my chair, upsetting the pot of tea that Granny had made. "Where have you been?" I shouted. "Where ever you were, go back! We don't need you!"

Granny handed me a crayon drawing that I had made for Papa before I was old enough to go to School One, one of the drawings I had told him about in one of my letters. "Think about this, Francine," she said.

I couldn't think about the feelings that blew at me like a storm wind from every side, making me feel like I was a row boat rocking on the waves. I couldn't think about what it meant that Mama was hugging that man and saying his name over and over like a prayer. "Pierre, Pierre," she kept saying.

I ran out to the barn and threw myself into the hay mow. Even up there a few stray whiskey fumes tickled my nose. Maybe I could be like Harold and drink the whiskey from the root beer bottles. I feel good for a little while before I got sick. But I didn't want to crawl on my hands and knees lapping whiskey from the straw on Granny Godfroy's barn floor. I knew she had faith that I had better sense than that. There had to be another way to deal with Pierre-Papa coming back.

Granny Godfroy Grows Up

I lay back in the hay mow, the straw tickling my toes and the sun streaming through the small window high up on the wall. I had been there a few hours when Harold came out. He still had Granny Godfroy's ice bag on his head, but he looked a little better. He walked a little straighter too.

"What are you doing here?" I asked him.

He grunted and flopped down in the hay beside me. Pretty soon his snores reached the window and floated through to the tree tops outside. I got up and went over to the Granny apartment to get a pencil and paper. I had a letter to write.

Letter To Papa whom we rescued from the Detroit River

Dear Papa:

Welcome home.

Francine