



A Historical Fiction for Young Readers 8-10

E-mail: richardprov1@netscape.net

www.wsprog.com/rp/

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THE LAD
FROM POINTE DE BUTE
By
Richard & Esther Provencher
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Acknowledgements:

This story, one day in the young life
of John Trenholm Jr. is written for Esther, my wife
born in Cape Spear, New Brunswick
to the family of Thornton Ogden and Dorothy (Allen)
on their 96 acre farm
along the shores of Northumberland Strait.

And in memory
of the Yorkshire Trenholm(e) family
and their descendents
John; sons, Edward, Matthew and John Jr.
who supposedly
sailed from Liverpool, England
March 16, 1772
on the Duke of York, arriving
in Canada (Acadia) May 21, 1772
settling in the
Cape Chignecto area of Nova Scotia
later called, New Brunswick.

Personal Diary of John (Johnny) Trenholm Jr.
Inverma Farm, Westmorland County
New Brunswick, January 3, 1827

...So long ago, the summer of my twelfth year, first day of July, year of our Lord, 1774 was filled with memories of a young boy hurrying to complete his regular morning chore.

That day, a magnificent blue sky, dotted with clouds like bits of peppermint remains locked in vivid detail within my thoughts. Carefree ramblings and the innocence of youth continue to leap with joy from the hidden spaces of my mind.

They allowed this aging and frail man many hours of joyful remembrance, and helped me to overcome difficult periods in my life. Often when I think of that enchanting day, I merely have to close this diary, lean back, shut my eyes. And...ah yes, remember.

Summer was surely a plan made in Heaven, and filled to fullness like a sail upon the wind. And such was my frame of mine on that most prosperous day of boyhood times.

It was a happy occasion to dally along and remember being in the center of a gathering of families, and listening to the latest tidbit of news. All came from the surrounding countryside to our home.

Da had much pleasure in his heart for those special occasions, as area farmers held high respect for his wisdom...and long speech. Yes, I still remember young Mattie standing by the oak tree. It was a blessing to have such a fine companion to share my thoughts. Someone who understood the adventures that ran rampant in my mind.

She was like a sister I never had. Yet, she was more than a sister. And my heart acted strangely around her. Little did I know I be courting her one-day. During those long ago memories, I did not realize how quickly I must begin to grow into a man. And that my world although full of imagination and childish moments, was preparing to roar like a lion.

There were times of distress, which caused that boy of my past to turn to loved-ones in order to overcome my heart-felt fears. I also learned much from my friend, Monsieur Robert Mercier how terrible the tragedy of the Seven Years War had on everyone.

He said, "Les Acadiens tried to hide wherever possible to avoid being rounded up for deportation." And after a period of exile, those that did return discovered English settlers on land Acadians had developed for over a century. It was a most difficult time to wonder if my home, Inverma Farm, was such a one, that we may occupy land once owned by others. Was it possible? I asked myself on many occasions back then.

But I must cease from my notations and carry on with this diary. That day from long ago began, when...

Fifty-four years ago:

ONE

Early morning chores were done and Da said not to be tardy.

He understood a boy's heart was filled with the thoughts of a furrowed sail, billowing in a restless wind. It was his wish my roots never be forgotten, far across the sea in Yorkshire, England.

Arriving in this new land May 21, 1772 with my Da and Mum and two older brothers, Edward and Matthew on the Duke of York was furthest on my mind right now. It was a usual habit that my day could not properly begin without the drift of salty air.

And thoughts of my plate harboring a large piece of freshly baked fish for my 'tum' hurried these bare-footed steps.

Smoke arising from home fires drifted shoreward. Swirls the color of tar curled into morning's early sky, lazy drifts seeking their own private paths in the sky. Open windows allowed pleasant odors to escape from a collection of buildings making up the tiny settlement of Pointe de Bute, Nova Scotia.

This is where our family took up residence these past two years. It was a difficult journey overland from Halifax to this distant land, awaiting a fresh batch of settlers.

We, all of us were eager to confront this new territory, and the many miles of forest blessed our wayward eyes. Now this commotion along the seashore was a familiar busy hive of activity. Boat hulls were receiving a coating of pitch. A dock was under repair and haying movements from busy scythes a-bustling in nearby green fields.

Each morn I trod this footpath used wisely by many from our fine community. It afforded any passer-by a golden view of happenings on the south shore. It was my own selfish desire to adopt this passage, with its brambles and sharp rocks, rather than take the longer, and not so interesting second path.

I could almost smell the muscled sweat from toiling men, and hear their heavy breathing of fatigue. Mum always chided Da if he did not freshen up prior to setting down to supper, and I understood the needs of my own growing body.

Today held a hefty bluster of wind, with strength enough to quickly coax any stubborn sloop to hasten a mooring against the shore's dock. And the white thrashing of waves stood aside as each prow raced to disgorge its hold of produce.

"Ahoy! Johnny!" one of the men shouted from a beached dory. "Ahoy...Monsieur Mercier!" was my own bubbling response to his cheerful good wishes.

The older gentleman had befriended me since my family first came to this new land. From my way of thinking he was still young, even if there was a tint of gray about his temples.

It was he who helped me seek out the best of each morning's fish-catch. So I may check the gills for freshness and avoid looking like a young fool in the selection.

His kindness included treats, such as the time he gifted me with a penknife. It continues to remain a prized possession, and at the moment nestled snugly in the side pocket of my trousers.

There have been many occasions when my limited skills allowed me to carve a whistle. And that too is a tool on a lace around my neck. At times it provides me with a pastime from the drudgery of some daily chores.

I heard it said on occasion during a meal at home, that the man was simply wise to take a young lad like me under his wing. Especially since he was earning wages for being our hired hand. And Da was away in the fields or on business on many occasions.

It was his solid instructions to look after this rambunctious boy so as not get into a hay-full of trouble. To me, Robert was simply Mr. Mercier, my friend.

TWO

Da first hired him to perform haying and other garden chores when there was need for extra help, on our farm named, Inverma. And Da felt there were opportunities in-between tasks for Mr. Mercier to use his skills to teach me about the ways of this land.

Monsieur Robert Mercier was one of a small number of French Acadians who remained in the area. “I lived many years, near this Northumberland shore,” he once stated.

Stories were spoken in hushed whispers about the man. It was said he hid from the British and lived secretly for many years in these lands.

“All these fertile farms along the shore once belonged to my family and friends,” Monsieur remarked one evening after having ‘supped’ at our home. But then, I always enjoyed the merriment of a good tale. Little did I know at the time, there was more truth in what seemed to be a good piece of fiction prior to my hurrying off to my bedside.

“Let not the ramblings of a displaced farmer turn your head boy,” Da had chided from the other side of the table.

He always chuckled heartily at what he called “light jabs,” but I was a little sad for our guest. He seemed to speak with a passion and his arms kept flaying at the air, as he spoke.

I compared his movements to the flies I try to scoot from back of my head when my friends and I hasten to the pond for a well-deserved swim.

‘Robert’ was also the name of my Grand Papa in England.

Da said Grand Papa had some fears about the long sea voyage and his health was very particular about coming to a strange land.

My stride this morning along the Atlantic shore was as usual, a delight. But I felt I must hurry and fetch the choicest fish for breakfast. Mum and Da were waiting.

For a short period of time, I watched Robert working with a group of the town lads on shore duties. Incoming boats required many willing hands to help prepare the community for the coming winter. Excitement fanned my cheeks into a bright red tinge as a Sloop brushed towards shore, its sails gathering in each huff of wind.

And preparations were being made to unload what was surely a hefty herring catch.

Shouting from some neighbors joined in the gathering as everyone rushed forward to welcome the approaching craft.

It was a scene that constantly stirred my imagination.

And it was natural for any boy to flush with excitement. Not too far a distance away, other lads were attending to their family’s needs as I. “Tommy!” I shouted trying to be heard above the melee. But it seemed my young friend was occupied with some task, listening intently to instructions from his uncle.

The wind pressed hard against my thick mop of brown hair amid the duties being displayed aside the shore. Such a delicious moment in the life of any boy had to be enjoyed to the full, as I gazed at their activity.

Skipping happily along the shore, I was unmindful of the many broken pieces of clamshells sticking to the soles of my feet. It reminded me how much our new land was surrounded by such simple ocean treasures.

No matter which direction prevailed on this land, ocean water easily provided a greeting of crashing waves pushed along from strong gusts of wind.

My bare feet even accepted particles of coarse sand which announced themselves between these slender toes. This was such a perfect day for little boys to set their hearts by.

A blue sky was filled to overflowing with white clouds, some even taking the shape of sheep and cows, commodities of great abundance in this area.

And the clamor around me producing a tingle, that arose from growing heels to the billowing hairs on top of my head.

My sworn duty this precious day was to select the finest freshly caught mackerel and return home with our breakfast. And I was comfortable knowing Monsieur Mercier was nearby with assistance should the need arise.

“Hurry back lad,” Da had spoken earlier as he stacked our woodpile back of the farmhouse.

The twinkle in his eye knew of my joy in this early morning chore. Da taught me well to be reliant, and it was not my habit to tarry longer than I should. Now there began a race against time since I had given to gawking at the colorful images around me.

Our home, called Inverma Farm, was set off on the western side of the main road, from Aulac to Cape Tormentine. It was made up of 348 acres of marsh and upland. The hill adorned in lush hay sloped gently towards the Atlantic shore, giving a pleasant view of early sunlight.

It was said that Yorkshire men like my Da, were hardy and efficient farmers. I was properly pleased to be the son of such a respected man of the fields. It was a proper designation for any humble man.

As I trotted along the well-worn path, I could still see my Da as brightly as the Blue Jay that alighted on that nearby tree.

THREE

As Da leaned against the fireplace, pipe in hand my face was flushed from the welcome warmth of dancing flames.

Father was a large man of almost 300 pounds. He was called John Senior but myself, John Junior affectionately called him “Da.”

Instead of ‘John Jr.’ Da called me, “Johnny.” It was in honor of my great grandfather who now rested, bless his soul, back in England.

Da said his resting place was in a small cemetery on a rocky slope with a view of the sheep farms below. I loved to hear tidbits about the England we left behind. Memories from tales of Yorkshire farms stretching far and wide, and spacious, broken up only by rocky fences, still captured an excitement in my senses.

“Your father was a considerable scholar before taking up farming,” Mum proudly stated one night during a tucking-me-in.

“And you are so much like him, always scuttling about with mysterious intent.” I often held onto that thought during the years ahead.

It was a treat I relished, of her comparing me to Da. And as my carrying cloth bag rested across my left shoulder my mind was filled with interesting thoughts and questions.

Many times I had to endure a teasing since I often could be seen hiding like a shadow between the branches of my favorite oak tree. True enough I needed my own privacy, a hide-a-way to think, to plan and sometimes to sulk. “Up there,” I often related to Da and Mum, “I can hear everything around me, almost like being inside a Trojan horse.

And from beneath the branches, I am invisible.” Yes, I mused, ‘Johnny’ was quite acceptable for a boy with eleven years of residence on this good earth. I was pleased as a pickle with the name.

My good mate Tom, of the same age as I, also received an honorable mention. Everyone called him, "Tommy." I came to know that younger lad who also crossed the sea from Yorkshire on our same stalwart ship, the Duke of York. He was an orphan boy kindly brought to start a new life with his uncle.

My eyes always sparkled in that huge sitting room, the flicker of flames reflecting the eagerness of a young wolf captured in the bathing of bright moonlight. On a windy night such as then, I once observed a proud creature leading his mate into the shadows of trees just beyond our pasture.

Did those men who sat about in our large sitting room have memories of similar sightings? I wondered at the time. Continuing to stare out the window I remembered looking wistfully at the tall elm tree I was fond of climbing.

It was near the comfort of home, simply a short rush across an open field. It was a safe haven, easy to climb for a surefooted lad, and provided my proper escape from any frightening moment.

Once there, nothing could hide itself from my searching eyes, thus allowing me ample opportunity to wait patiently for any help. An occasion did occur last summer when a Coyote came too close and I was frightened. I did spend much time high up in the tree, in what I sometimes called the 'Masthead.'

And shouting commands to a make-believe crew of sea mates below, often occupied my mind.

The hideaway was my secret lookout, and watching from the farthest edge of a huge branch, I was able to observe any activity in the area. Chickens, cows, sheep and even an errant fox were unable to remain unannounced from my prying eyes.

And when I cupped my hands in the form of two circles, one atop the other, it created a most accurate child-like telescope.

Through these rounded fingers; and I quickly created that instrument once more, nothing escaped my vision. Around the room of visitors was a collection of whiskered faces, like Da.

The women wore bonnets and several children including my brothers had homespun clothes. My starched shirt always chafed my neck. But I was growing into a man, and it was dutiful not to complain about such a minor discomfort. Scratching the itch on my neck had me keeping a sharp eye out for mum.

FOUR

My broad hat always remained on a peg, when company arrived.

“Ye are not a child,” mum chastised one day.

“And so mind your manners, especially with ladies present.” And aye, I not forget her most fervent desire I grow up into a man abiding in good intentions. It was most noticeable that being in the company of men required a better standard of attire.

Da had addressed the assembled men, along with their wives and several young children in that largest room in the old house. It had six wooden chairs and an old sofa.

Mum received them as a most generous gift from Lady Williams who felt a sudden need to return to England. “She could not endure those infernal mosquitoes,” Mum had said with a smile, as she surveyed her newly acquired treasure.

My attention to the room conversation was easily distracted by the smell of tobacco. It assailed my senses, and I tried to disregard the foul scent by continuing to stare out the window. Hoping Da did not notice, but the glass was in need of a major wiping.

And that meant another chore to add to the many uncompleted tasks awaiting me during sunny days.

A ring-necked pheasant strutted back and forth across the yard. Its feathery tail drooped sufficiently in order to duck between the tall hay. I was certain it was the same bird Da kept trying to capture with his musket.

“Daa...?” I had tried vainly to get my father’s attention. But he quickly hushed my interruption with an impatient arm. And Da, whom the neighbors listened to with utmost respect, continued to speak.

Yes,” father had said.

“Dear friends and neighbors, thank you for assembling in this humble room. My family is most pleased to have you visit and share a word in fellowship.

Once again it is a blessing that we, all of us here, survived the wiles of the devil continuing in fair health to raise our families. This is a new, and ever harsh land, but it has the expectation of much promise.”

I marveled at how Da could speak such long sentences with barely an extra breath. My own was hard enough to gain once again, after my leap from an outstretched branch into the deepest part of the pond.

And Da continued, “It has been a fair time since we had the occasion to enter the Duke of York at Liverpool. Yet, a piece of my heart remains in Welby Parish, Yorkshire where I was born. And my father Robert, bless his dear soul remains there although eager to come and join us, soon as his health be reclaimed.”

“Amen” and “Speak it brother John,” were words of agreement spoken in the room. These Yorkshire men were staunch Wesleyan Methodists and they respected the wisdom of Da’s words.

“I am assured by my wife and three sons this adventure was a worthwhile undertaking. Those were dirty days, and the crossing some four weeks across the Atlantic a challenge to the soul,” my Da said.

Murmurings from men and women assented to the sickness and misery that mingled with the excitement of the voyage, just two short years ago. Again, I wondered how Da could hold his breath with such long sentences. During school lessons, mine were shorter as I stood and addressed mates in answer to my schoolmarm’s question.

The truth of the matter was that my strength of spirit was not in the tongue but in my wrist. I was the champion wrist-wrestler among lads my age. Schoolmarm, Susanna Dixon reminded me of the greatness of this land. And that everything I observed was majestic.

Even her speech, uttered through bold lips, had praises for all the goodness in this new world.

“Smell the freedom of opportunity,” she often said to our admiring class.

I knew a few of the older boys had a crush on her. But it was not my concern, since I had a good friend in Mattie. Miss Dixon said I was able to write stories with flair. “One

day, you will share great tales,” she confided to me one day. “Be proud of your heritage,” she too often spouted during morning lessons.

“And remember, you are the new generation of souls to tame this wilderness.”

How could I ever forget? I thought, with her constant reminding? Everyone said she had a favorite student and that it was I. Admittedly this distinction did not offer me offense, as it was indeed, in my estimation, an honor.

I tried giggling quietly, to no avail, as I noticed one of the fine gentlemen in the village, a Blacksmith, picking his nose. Poking Johnny with my elbow, I pointed at the man’s thick fingers stubbornly working at his right nostril.

“Hush, now boy,” Mum nudged, looking in the direction of my wandering eyes. I raised my head in obedience and feigned interest in Da’s words. They seem to fly about the room hither and yon, as a nest of escaping butterflies.

FIVE

“What about the war, John Senior?” asked Brother Dobson, Esquire who lived in a nearby farm.

His question brought grunts and a clearing of throats. “Hear...Hear,” came from a gaggle of voices that erupted in agreement.

This was an untidy question, even though it had often been discussed in the workplace. And it cut swiftly through the smoky room like a knife slicing off a brace of cheese. The men and their families had arrived, in great anticipation for a meal of potatoes, with tea, and salt pork accompanied with cabbage. My desire for cabbage was noticeably missing with closed eyes and tight lips, lest I speak up and insult Mum's preparation, and then be forced to accept another helping.

I acknowledge that Mum was a fine cook yet thinking about that portion of meal unsettled my tummy.

In my youthful understanding, I knew it was important for everyone to come together in friendship and hear Da speak. It was reminiscing to converse about our hardy voyage and the uncertain future facing brave souls.

And I was able to recount very well their words as I continued my journey by the shore. I eagerly watched the work-activity taking place around me. There were those in our home at the time eager to share their successes.

Some of those present tried to ignore the man's unruly question about the possibility of armed conflict, since that evening was a night to discuss achievement. I remember my ears perking as a rabbit in anticipation of their responses. And yet other voices spoke in earnest.

Once again the question was raised, and caused a silence to descend upon the boisterous murmurings. “John Sr. sir? What about the war? Speak to it, man.”

“Do not hasten with fearful speculation,” Da answered, with renewed vigor. “Skirmishes in the outlying districts are holdovers from the deportation of the Acadians in 1755. God forbid the events of those evil days ever revisit us. If so, then we will, all of us are swept into another maelstrom of violence. Thus we should be careful and not be held captive to any idle rumors.”

Da stood tall with his words of wisdom, yet he hesitated for a moment. “Please, let us tread slowly into calm waters whilst we come together in celebration of joyful abundance.”

Ever so gently the talk was led back to a more congenial area of discussion. “Behold my sons,” he had beamed.

“And pausing for a moment, I proudly hit my chest with a triumphant Ta-rah.

“Come Robert, Matthew and my little adventurer John Jr.” Da had called out. But, he preferred ‘Johnny.’

It was my fault for insisting on the retelling of tales regarding his beloved great grandfather during my bedtime hours.

“Come my young men, and serve our guests with your youthful chatter,” Da had insisted. Listening to Da’s words made me surge with pride. And soar as an eagle. Yes,

Johnny did suit me well. And if such a war-like situation did arise once again, I would rise to the occasion and protect my family. My observation post high in the tree would serve me well.

At the time of Da's new declaration for quiet talk, there was nothing in my repertoire to imagine such things as death and destruction.

To myself, the thought of war was more like a game, as in playing 'catch-me...if you can,' in the back pasture. Or having a hearty game of checkers with the lads, trying to capture each other's pieces.

At times we would tussle over someone's hasty move and debate the merits of their anger at a loss. By no means was there any spillage of blood, only the wrestling and tossing about of young limbs.

And often the ending of dispute was decided by some wrist wrestling. Thoughts of death and destruction were only active in our imaginations.

"Armed conflict," the phrase heard in the room by me meant riding a choice roan, or sitting high in the saddle, fitted with a fine uniform.

I could see myself in colorful attire as an Ensign with the local Militia. In my mind, I dared the 42nd Royal Highland Regiment in Halifax to try and send us away.

We would not allow ourselves to be as the banished Acadians who tilled the soil in this area before our arrival.

SIX

On Guard!” I suddenly spoke aloud in the quiet room, and broke into a trot within the circle of visitors.

Striking my bottom, it was to my delight to prance back and forth, a pair of Da’s old boots pounding on the wooden floor.

I was the savior of our community as I galloped towards each person, my imaginary sword pointing to a parade of ample bellies.

Loud guffaws and slapping of knees broke the tension. The men soon surrounded me, taking turns to lightly punch me on my shoulder, as a sign of their affection.

“Indeed, your son has mettle,” Sheriff Allan had said. “Do not hurry to strut in such a military fashion, my lad. Soon enough, you may feel the wind pass swiftly past your head from flying musket balls. That is, if the Yankees have their way. Words traveling ‘by and by’ tell of their desire to annex this Chignecto Isthmus land. That is, if everyone joins in rebellion against the British.”

“Hear! Hear!” a chorus of voices answered. “And our very own muskets will raise in defense of our farms and family,” the men vowed.

“May the will of King and country rise up!” others shouted.

“Hush with all this talk,” Sheriff Allan interrupted. “Remember, this is only a whisper in the wind. And do not allow your allegiance to this new country stand in the way of British interests. It is said His Majesty’s 40th Regiment Of Foot stationed at Annapolis stands ready to repeat the orders of expulsion of any dissidents, should the need arise.”

And this brought a sobering moment to the assembly. They had all heard of the terrible orders carried out most efficiently by the Officers with dedication and forbearance.

This was in spite of having married into Acadian families. Major Handfield’s sister-in-law, nephews and nieces and such, were also forced into ships since he was a military man obliged to fulfilling the orders of his King.

“No one will steal this land from beneath my feet! I’ll wager prime Yorkshire blood on that,” I heard my father vow.

“And I too will protect Inverma farm from any enemies!” My loud outburst surprised even myself as I added weight to Da’s words. Mum’s stern look glared from the doorway.

At the time I somehow sensed she did not admire this talk of strife in the farmland.

But, it was not her place to interfere with guests invited by her husband. She was simply concerned that I not get nightmares from this distressing conversation, about the risks of war. My ears had tired of all this talk about violence, and it began to finally dissolve like fog in the bay.

I remember being restless and placing my glance on Mary. She was the prettiest girl in Pointe de Bute, peeking from behind Mum's skirt, and looking directly at me.

Her hair was yellow as hay arising in God's glory beneath a sunny day. And a pleasant feeling continues to stir my heart, recalling happily how it trailed behind her as a kite each time we raced across the fields.

Everything we did together began by hurrying to our destination. Gasping from loss of breath each race demanded every portion of my muscles to reach their fullness of strength. And it was arguable as to which of us had the fastest set of bare feet.

Her face was filled with dusty flecks of brown, not unlike my own. And she was forever dressed in faded farm attire, ready to accept any task in the spit of a moment. She was a whole eleven years of age, and my best friend.

I called her "Mattie."

SEVEN

“Do you think there be some kind of war?” I asked Mattie a few days later.

Ever since Da uttered the possibility, it had been like a worm squirming around in my boot. Except, it became a living part of my imagination each night, like some dark shadow.

Or even a shroud when the possibility of death might take place. And that frightening thought was not pleasant, for a lad such as myself.

“No, not yet,” answered Mattie with the sureness and confidence that would normally bless a child older than her tender years.

“My own pappy says there are too many British regulars at Halifax, and they could be here in three days with enough cannon to blow a hole right through any Yankee top hat.”

Then she laughed with an abandon that I loved.

She could easily see the humor in anything, no matter how serious I became. I did not mind asking her the question, since I knew she would be direct with her answer. Like an arrow shot straight and true from the finest of quivers.

That was my fine Mattie.

“Why do young men always want to talk about war, and other sad things?” she had asked with a stamp of her foot on the moist grass. “I want to have a little less worry when we are together.”

Then she smiled with such vigor, it was almost like sunshine surrounding her face. And her beautiful teeth showed as white as those from a Chesire cat.

I felt honored to be referred to as a young man, since I was yet a boy.

“Are we to go fishing?” she asked. “Or have you come upon other plans?”

Her manner was direct, and it tickled my funny bone. Then she positioned herself for another run down the trail. I knew if she gathered even a short head start, it would be most difficult for me to win the race.

An answer to her remark required a proper response. I thought carefully. "Yes, I do wish to go fishing," I said. "In truth, yes." But I could not stop my worrying about my Da. Difficult thoughts entered my mind in an unfair manner.

Would I have to fight, if a war did come? And would my two older brothers have to join the militia? I heard it said at least one son could stay to help on a farm. Would one of my brothers be such a one, or be I?

"Are you coming, or Na?" she asked, impatient at my side.

I turned and looked at Mattie. How could anyone name her Margaret? I pondered. It was much too grown up for a little girl. Looking over her shoulder I noticed cows herding under the trees for a bit of shade.

The sun was indeed high, and my head was warming to the point of making me dizzy.

Yes, I did very much want to go fishing. It was always a joyous occasion, and a most pleasant passing of time now that chores were done.

Mattie was a child so full of laughter, and fun. And I desired to be near her, to watch her movements. And I did notice she held herself much different than boys in her manners. She was as boisterous as myself, yet delicate in her ways.

On our last outing, she reached too far over the brook trying to pluck a water lily, and fell into the cool water. On that occasion, her screams startled me.

But then she drew on resources within her soul, and calmly pulled me in when I passed her my arm to help.

Her excitement was melodious and soon had me splashing alongside in the water. This was the unexpected I came to know by having a friend like her. At times, I was sure she was crazy as a bullfrog trying to outrun a deer. That was my Mattie.

She usually caught the largest brook trout, and I was anxious to gain that prize today.

“It is my wish to fish now,” I said simply. And I pulled up my sleeves in a great display of intent, and prepared to launch my feet to rush forward.

Too often, the unexpected puts a hold on the planned adventures in a young boy’s life. The preparation of food intervened at a moment when I felt certain a school of fish was most anxious to test our bait.

“Junior! Junior!” The calling of my name was boisterous as a banshee rousting out the chickens. And my spirits sank lower than a Cormorant seeking a mackerel in the watery depths.

“Com...Coming!” was my answering shout. “I have to go now, Mattie,” I remember saying.

My eyes took in her disappointment, and the knowledge that our fishing escapade would have to wait for another period of time.

“I understand Johnny,” was all she said. Then she was gone, traipsing along the rutted road, leading back to her own farm. Mattie was happily singing a tune as I watched her go.

Then she swung around and returned a quick smile.

“Ta-Rah! I shouted, turning to my own path.

EIGHT

At times supper was a mountainous plate of potatoes, with salt pork sharing space with a high ledge of cabbage.

The latter delicacy always gave me a grievous stomach allowing gas to escape from my frame. And Mum would then give me the evil eye. Thankfully, tea helped digest my undesirable belching.

I happened upon many such unpleasant choices in my young life. And Da would belch along with me since he said it was the manly thing to do.

Fresh fruit was not always on the menu, since it was a rare commodity around our table. However, I could barely hold myself in place, forgetting to tell Mattie about the sheets of paper I found.

Was it part of a diary? I wondered. They were just words on a page, yet they stung like a hornet's sharp point. Was it possible we, or one of our neighbors robbed someone of their farm?

The question repeated itself once, then again. There was an odd feeling with a sameness of a pesky mosquito or two returning to a familiar place.

I could barely eat the remains on my plate before retiring to my room for the night. That day was most tiresome and a headache was coming on. After putting on my nightshirt, I lay in silence on my bed.

The words I read on those papers discovered earlier today turned and twisted inside my head.

“Les Anglais mean us harm. Mama and Papa say we must hide. Mais mon Dieu, dans quelle place? The English have muskets everywhere. They hunt Acadiens down like dogs. Pere Beauchamp is not able to have Mass for his people. He fears he will be found and arrested. We must abandon Inverma Farm, our ancestral home, and burn it.”

I wiped my sweaty brow with a dirty hand. It was not the gentlemanly thing to do. But it turned away the moisture before a river crossed my brow.

“Their ancestral home?” the words repeated in the dusty room.

“But it’s my home,” I said firmly, biting my lip. “And why abandon it? Robert had said Acadians usually burned down their farms, so they would not fall into other hands. It was confusing to my young mind, and I wished Monsieur Robert were here to give of his counsel.

After all, Inverma Farm our home was not burned. How could any person state this was their ‘Acadien’ home?

I remember my knees being scuffed from kneeling on the attic floor when my find was discovered. My curious nature had checked on why a loose floorboard in the attic was sufficient to trip me.

It was shortly after returning from my early morning privy visit that my discovery was made. Exploring a corner of the huge farmhouse each day before chores became a new pastime. A thick coating of dust provided an understanding no one had been in this location for some years.

My searching fingers found a ledge under the loose board, which I had the good fortune to pry open.

Imagine my surprise when rolled up sheets of papers were uncovered and then carefully read. The words were savored one at a time. I digested what looked like hastily formed letters. An excitement took hold of my tiny frame. In spite of choking earlier from the dusty floor, I could barely make out the month and day on the end of the first page.

But the year 1755 was clearly visible. When footsteps sounded on the front porch, I peered through the window. It was Da.

“Johnny? Johnny...lad!” he called, turning in several directions. Due to Da’s large frame, it was unusual for him to be walking about, except when riding his buggy.

I quickly replaced the papers under the floorboard, dusted off my trousers best I could then clambered down the stairs.

It would not do to have my Da know too soon about this treasure of information. My thoughts were quite perplexing. And I could barely contain myself as I turned the words over and over in my mind.

“Boy? Didn’t ye hear me calling?” Da asked.

“I was upstairs, exploring the remnants from previous tenants,” I answered lowering my head. It was my hope there was no cause for any reprimand.

“Understandable, lad,” Da had said. “In this land there is little time for a boy to be frivolous. And I not be upset with your rambling about.”

Then I became bold and playfully tried to reach around Da’s ample belly to give him a bear hug. But he roared with laughter and easily lifted my smaller frame until our faces almost touched.

“I know you better than that my mischievous one,” my father declared with a wisdom I hoped to inherit one day. “Trying to take my thoughts off your shenanigans, will you? You’ve a secret you’re not a-telling me this day. What do you think of that, my little conspirator?” my loving Da inquired.

I grinned and kissed him on the cheek. Ever so gently he let me down from what seemed like a journey to the stars.

And my own mind returned to that sheaf of papers. Quickly, I thought, I must find Mattie and tell her about the papers I found. She would place me through an inquisition, and I had better be prepared to fend off her questions.

I knew the words were important, with a meaning that was terribly important.

And I must also tell my friend, Monsieur Robert.

“Now go and fetch us six of the choicest mackerel from our Lord’s fine ocean waters!” Da had thundered.

And I did just that, in another trot down to the ocean shore. After which my daily chores captured the rest of my time. I barely hid my glee knowing the shining light that would come into Mattie’s eyes.

Her mouth would open wide then placing hands on both hips demand, “Why did ye not tell me before this, Johnny?” Yes, she would be pleased to be a part of this great mystery.

I waited patiently as Mattie walked sideways between rows of potatoes, careful not to step on their growing blossoms.

She appeared to be in a contemplative mood as she looked around, seemingly to search me out.

“Hurry!” I wanted to shout from behind my elm tree hideout. “I have great news to share. I found an old diary with worn and weathered pages, from long years ago.”

As words prepared to tumble from my lips, Mattie drew closer, then closer.

When she was almost upon me, I jumped up like a Jack-o-Lantern almost scaring her out of her wits. She gave me a playful shove and that sunshine smile sent my heart a-twittering.

Pumping my skinny arms, I began to race across the pasture towards the woods. “Follow me! Quickly!” I remember shouting.

Instead of listening to my command, Mattie sprinted towards the barn.

“How did ye ken that was my true destination?” I asked between mouthfuls of air. Now I changed my direction, trying to catch up.

“Shush,” Mattie managed to say as she seemingly galloped across the ground. “I know your trickster ways,” she quickly replied. “Now hush, or I’ll best you once more. And there will be no excuses from you, this time.”

The race was close as we clambered through the open barn doors, thumped across the wooden floor and smacked the closest stall. Our many contests had a definite course with agreed upon boundaries.

Striking the side with our right hand signaled the race was over.

And Mattie won.

“My secret is over here,” said I in a hushed voice, leading her to the precise location.

“Beneath the third plank in the floor is where I placed it. Near that old table where the floor is worn from years of wear from animal hooves passing through,” I recited excitedly.

I could hardly contain myself, since it was to mysteries such as this my boyish imagination often wandered.

“Did some poor soul really think this was a good hiding place?” she asked with a shake of her head. “But Mattie,” I protested. “It was I who found this new hiding place. My prize was in the attic of our farmhouse. And changing its location will be helpful for us each time we want to look at the message.”

”But this is a smelly, forsaken barn!” Mattie complained. “And why would someone hide such a message in the house. What if someone had arrived and burned it down? If what you say is God’s truth, those words from the past are priceless,” she protested.

I began to understand her concerns. “Thankfully, it did not happen, Mattie. Monsieur Mercier had already spoken to me about ‘the burnings’ years ago.”

“Yes,” she answered more softly.

“You were kind to share those words. That was when the Acadians were hiding for fear of being expelled from the countryside. Farms were ‘fired’ so others could not use someone else’s hard toil.”

“It is noble that you remember,” I heard myself saying as we stood there in the silent barn.

And my father had also said the militia arrived swiftly and restored order to this area, in a horrendous fashion.

“And now Mattie, if what the words say are the gospel truth, then we are the benefactors of this well-tended farming property.”

“Our skills can now carry on the traditions of the displaced Acadians,” she answered.

“They use the expression, ‘Les Acadiens’ “ I corrected.

“Oh, you are so kind gentle sir,” she said in a mocking fashion.

“At least there is no danger of falling through the floorboards,” I said uneasily,” changing the subject. “Look how easily the board slides away.”

Her eyes grew wide as she carefully opened the stained diary and began to read. “Did they really think this was *their* farm?” Mattie asked. I could hardly speak. But I dare not say it was untrue. It wasn’t as if we had thieved these buildings and pastures.

And the woods where I spent many a fun-filled day were sights for another, I dared think.

I remember turning my head, as moisture seeped from my eyes. Chasing rabbits and searching for flighty grouse must have been here for a family before us. Even before... but I could not entertain any more thoughts. Was it possible a little boy or girl stared through our same barn door entrance towards the tree filled land beyond our fences?

“Methinks it is time to return home,” I said quickly. But not before we tramped carefully on the board, making it unnoticeable from a close distance.

To make sure it remained hidden, I bent down and pressed dust and bits of hubris along the cracks. This would ensure no one would harbor a glance down and notice anything amiss.

“We must not yet tell Da and Mum, about our findings,” I explained to Mattie. I wished to ponder these statements and discover whether or not I desired to remain on someone else’s property.

Thankfully, Mattie was noble as a Redcoat Soldier, nodding in agreement.

And so we did journey back to our own families. I watched Mattie until her retreating steps were simply a dot on the dusty roadway. I was unsettled and pondered my findings. It was painful to imagine Inverma Farm, where our family lived these past two years, belonged to someone else.

Perhaps right now their abode was in some wretched place, far from here. It was a thought to ponder if they would ever again see the tree I now leaned against.

TEN

Accurate news of the ship Hector was late in coming, and caused a stir among the farms.

A visitor who was a passenger had arrived in our community, and told of their difficult three-month passage, from England.

Da could barely contain his excitement, as he spoke about it during our sup. “189 Scots arrived in Pictou Harbor, September 15 of last year. It was good to hear more settlers were coming to this new country,” he said.

I knew Pictou was only several days journey away, on horseback.

“And we must visit there one day,” Da had said. It was more of an interest to me as to how many children were among families. I looked forward to the day we may visit and share stories of our good adventures and hardships.

“But all was not well during the voyage,” Da said.

“They encountered a fierce gale and it is said 18 of the passengers died of smallpox and dysentery, such a fierce journey for the small ships of our time. Memories from our own blessed journey across the gales that inhabit the Atlantic still haunt the memories within my mind.”

I watched Da mop his sun-browned face with a well-worn bandana.

“What manner of sicknesses are those?” I asked, confusion showing on my face.

Mum turned and held out her arms. I moved forward and nestled within the comfort of her embrace.

“My dear son,” she said, “they are the scourge of sicknesses. Without fresh water and fruit to strengthen our bodies, the most evil intentions can ravage a human. And there is no known cure, if proper care and medicine are scarce.”

I cowered deeper into her bosom, fearing for myself, yet thankful of my own needs being met. That night, as I lay comfortably in bed, I thought about death. It was once something far distant from the world I lived in.

Now it hovered around our home as a bat.

“What must it be like to no longer laugh at the sky?” I said aloud to myself. Or, run swiftly with the wind through cornfields, chasing after Mattie. Perhaps even cry, then return to the morn once again?

“Where did those new settlers provide for burials while aboard the ship Hector?” I suddenly wondered.

Those questions oft haunted my mind in the darkness of my room. Then I remembered Sheriff Allan had also spoken about death. He was sad in his expression one evening last week whilst the families had gathered in our home.

If war was about death, then it was my duty to protect my family. Beginning with the next sunrise, I promised myself to keep an extra vigil high up in my tree fortress. My imagination sought out all possibilities, and thought darkly about any enemy that might happen by.

Da said in one of his stories, “A thousand ships were launched to rescue Helen of Troy, in ancient historic times.”

Would such a horde of infantry one day try to invade our Inverma farm? I worried. And would I, a young boy, have the courage to rescue my Da and Mum, or even Mattie? Before my final closing of tired eyes, I knew I must discuss this matter with Mattie.

Da was so busy with family affairs, sometimes I wondered if he forgot I was about. I knew somehow the business of running a family was not so exciting. And somehow I knew he understand the necessity of boyhood such as I wished to be savored.

ELEVEN

Unknown to myself during my sleep, Da, John Trenholm Senior was wrestling with torments of his own.

And he was most disconcerting to read the headlines and review some of the events happening south, in the Thirteen Colonies.

It was his blessing though to receive the Nova Scotia Gazette from travelers coming by way of Halifax.

The news was a Godsend to keep him abreast of any happenings in this part of the world. As a leader of note in this community of Pointe de Bute, he had to be aware of events. It was an unspoken fact friends who could not read depended on him for information, some of which could prove most valuable.

He did not make a man feel any lesser to ask for this assistance.

Da must have squinted with apprehension as he read about the effect of the Tea Act passed by the British Parliament on April 27 of 1773. It was no surprise that a group of Americans banded together to throw the disliked cases of produce from a ship into Boston harbor.

And John Senior was no fool.

He understood the desire Americans had for their separation from British authority. After all, wasn't this why the Trenholm's left Yorkshire? They forsook everything to escape unjustified taxes and earn a living in an untamed world.

"Yes, most indeed," he would muse in the silence of the room.

John Senior placed the newspaper on the side table, and picked up another. He glanced at the Boston Observer a traveler had the occasion to pass around the village. Stories told of the need for everyone to speak against the tyranny being imposed on the population, in the south.

He yawned, stretched, and decided it was time for a nap. Should he have a talk with Johnny?

He revealed to me later, knowing perhaps it was time to chase some the foolishness from my mind. War was not a game. Men lost their lives in the anger of battle, and Da spent an occasion to remind me.

"And children too," he must have whispered to himself, with a sense of foreboding. His two older sons had the inclination to sign on with the military, not realizing how insignificant human life was on the battlefield. Should his sons return to Yorkshire with their Grand Papa until the boiling over of men's blood was settled? Indeed it was a proper question in his mind.

Yes, it was something he and Mum did discuss. He knew it would not go well with his offspring, who were already caught up in the events of this new land.

“We will fight for this new country,” was a battle cry all of us Trenholms held onto” We had uttered such a challenge the last time we spoke up as our family shared sup.

One worry held dear in Da’s mind. “Which side would be the proper one to fight for?” he asked us later.

TWELVE

A boy must become a man before he can truly be a boy.

It does sound roundabout, however I discovered a truth within this thought.

And my tears did not shame me the day I cried as I listened to Monsieur Robert Mercier’s. I was treated like a man when my older friend shared the sad tale about his family.

What torment he must have carried all those years. It was a most frightful experience to hear his words of sorrow.

Yet, it was my glory to have been able to be told these things, helping me understand the new land to which I was now firmly rooted.

And I was pleased that Da trusted this man to have an honest statement for a boy to digest. The older man spoke about the burnings, and had even showed me where some buildings once stood. I closed my eyes to that sadness when I visited old foundations and clumps of blackened beams.

Many of them were overgrown with willows and clumps of brush. It seemed a fitting way to hide memories of anger from the past.

It was a strain to think how proudly some of the farms must have stood so long ago. And I wondered how Les Acadiens felt to have wasted that work of many years.

“Mr. Mercier,” I had asked, “exactly what happened to your family?”

“War is not very pleasant, mon garcon,” he replied. “I was just a simple farmer and not interested in...how you say, politics?” I motioned my head to the side as tears fell upon my cheeks. How

“You feel my pain, little one?” the man asked, placing an arm around my shoulder. Da had never given me a hug, feeling it was also not manly to shed tears nor act as a wee little child.

But, I was a child, not yet thirteen and watching two brothers ride to somewhere, perhaps a distant part of the land. We had come here to settle in a new country.

And now they were off to be trained for war.

My adult friend was telling me about a time when there was an abundance of much unhappiness.

Would such times return once more? Was a painful thought my mind had to contain.

“This is a land of peace and prosperity,” Da had said. He spoke those fine words to visiting families in our very own Inverma Farm. The same one we had taken, no ‘stolen’ from someone else.

I now knew the truth of the matter. And it was a shaking of my inner self to realize we were thieves.

Yes, an Acadian family once lived here and then barely had time to run for their lives. Everything they had worked for had to be abandoned. Or they would forfeit their very existence? And to think those rounded up were placed on ships and sent to different parts of the world.

How could any human beings do such sad things? I wondered. The spiteful idea almost burst my head. But, it was good to hear of these events from my friend. If only Da could understand the tender heart of his youngest young son.

Perhaps this was the reason he wanted this man to act as a guardian and to teach me about the history of this land.

After a few moments of time, I brushed off moistened eyes and looked squarely at Monsieur Robert Mercier.

Once again I asked, “What happened to the rest of your family?” And I knew it was a bold thrust, as a sword blade to the midsection.

“You must tell me. Did they have to go on a ship too? How come you never talk about them?” My questions shot forward as cannon balls firing from a Man-o-War.

But the man simply stood up, brushing off his shirt and trousers.

“I must go soon,” he said quietly from our back yard. I was certain my friend wiped tears from his own eyes, as he prepared to leave. “It is my will to return to the village while there is still a shaft of light. There are things I must do,” he had said.

If only Monsieur Mercier could understand how truly sorry I felt.

I was just a boy, yet his words did grieve my spirit to the very marrow of my bones.

Da surely understood the need for this older man to talk to such a young lad as I. Perhaps he already heard the tale about Monsieur Robert Mercier and knowing the man had a need to share his past with me.

“Perhaps you remind Robert of his son, Bastien,” Da whispered to me one late night.

It was a heavy burden to accept those tragic words from Monsieur Robert as I leaned against my favorite tree. Then the man sobbed quietly, retelling more tales from his troubled past.

“I was blinded by a need to escape,” he said. “To run away, anywhere there was a place to hide from English muskets.”

Listening carefully, I learned much more about the man's son.

"Bastien was his name and just ten years of age when he died. I held him close to me as we tried to escape the soldiers," Monsieur Mercier said.

"But then I turned, as my wife and daughter cried out in despair. I knew the musket ball had hit the boy, since he suddenly slumped in my arms. His blood was sweet tasting as it splashed against my face and down the front of my shirt."

My pounding heart could barely listen and I had to turn away for a moment. Did Bastien even look like me? I wondered.

"What became of your wife and little girl?" I dared to ask.

Monsieur Mercier's voice could barely be heard, as he cried out in despair. "I discovered from friends years later, my dear femme and child passed away during the ship's long journey to Louisiana. It was dysentery, they said."

"What a terrible hardship for you," I cried out.

For a few moments, my tears came as a sky emptying itself of rain. Then Monsieur gently lifted my chin and wiped my eyes with his bandana.

"On this farm, I buried my son," he said. "And when it was completed, I quickly made my escape."

“Where...where did you bury your boy?” I inquired.

“One day, I promise to tell you, petit garçon,” Monsieur Mercier said. Then he stood up, waved and strode quickly towards the woods.

“Ta-Rah!” I called loudly as he disappeared from sight.

I knew there was a very old path in that direction now used mostly by deer. My daring feet had tramped the same good earth where wily hooves covered the damp ground. It could be the burial ground where Bastien lay, I surmised.

Mattie and I must explore that area, I promised myself.

And we did have a long talk about this matter.

THIRTEEN

The thought that Inverma farm once belonged to my friend Robert was almost unbearable.

It was a burden of information that must be shared with Da and Mum. Would Da believe the details of what Monsieur Mercier spoke to me? Did Bastien even watch from the edge of this property line and gaze fondly at the trees as I?

I pretended to be that boy, not much younger than myself. He probably leaned on this log fence, feeling the wood brace roughly against his chest.

Summer was passing slowly, and soon it would be Autumn-time. Then red and yellow maple leaves would curl up and windy currents toss the branches to and fro.

I watched a daring Finch bobbing, much like a cork on the ocean waves, its tiny feet grasping a slim branch. I began to feel a chill. Perhaps our family should not remain here before October arrived.

If this was not meant to be our true home, then we should leave before we are tempted by the beauty of a Fall day. I was indeed struck by the magnificence of this land.

Should we mayhap return to Yorkshire? And grow up wondering how different a life might I have in this new land. What about Mattie?" I wondered. There was a chill in the air and knew I should return home and retrieve a warm coat. I brushed away a few pesky mosquitoes trying to make my life worse than miserable.

Yes, if we are to remain in this land for a while longer, Mattie and I must begin our defenses.

It was not my wish to have any British soldier try and separate my family. We have to help Da and Mum. I knew that my tree hideout was a proper observation post that would serve us well. It would provide sufficient space to cast our eyes and notice any uncommon sights. Plans had to be made.

And so I left the shadows of the back yard and returned to Inverma Farm. Mum and Da greeted me with an understanding look. Little did I know how swiftly events would overtake even the best intentions and desires of myself, along with my friend.

Again I asked myself, where had Monsieur Mercier buried the son he cherished? It was a lasting thought as my head rested on my pillow after which the moon shone with a brightness that affected my sleep.

And my dreams were not a comfort to me...

...Tossing about in a frenzy of unsettlement this night, I dreamed about a snowfall as thunderous as crashing waves upon the shore.

The covering of hills with whiteness could still be seen from a far distance.

Like a huge treat of whipped cream piled higher and higher, reaching far into the sky.

Someone held my hand tightly. Was it Mum? I dared not awaken, as I continued to dream.

Then, I was being pulled along, me having difficulty lifting one foot higher than the next. The snow was very deep. After pushing forward, my next raised step dropped ever deeper, leaving behind a huge hole. It looked large enough for a fox to hide in and claim it as his home. It seemed as a sky full of white clouds had fallen upon the earth.

The snowstorm covered everything. Wherever Mum and I searched, people poked heads through the crust, like beaver from beneath the lake surface.

Except on this occasion everything seemed turned upside down. As I felt the pangs of hunger, I seemed foolish in my thinking.

“When are we going to have some porridge,” I dared asked Mum as we trudged along.

Then darker thoughts entered my head.

“A Company of enemy soldiers advancing on Inverma Farm.” I could see them in my mind’s eye from the lofty protection of my tree. It was a most unpleasant notion to enter my head before I thankfully fell asleep on my pillow.

“I must protect Da...” were my very last words.

FOURTEEN

In my next day at school-time, I found myself not so popular with questions from my mates.

To my dismay, others did not wish to be reminded of the past. Fitfully I had spoken to Da about my concerns.

“Many of these farms were purchased from Planters wishing to return to the Thirteen Colonies,” he remarked. “Try not take too much stock in what the man said,” he scolded. “You should be filled with the ramblings of youth, and let these serious matters occupy the minds of your elders.”

Then looking deep into my eyes, Da said very solemnly, “Johnny, Inverma is our farm. Let that not be a question for you to consider.” Then he did something special that I often bring to mind.

Da took me into his arms and gave me a fatherly hug. I remember that moment, keeping my eyes to the ground, ashamed of wanting to leave my beloved home. I could see the looks on some of the men as they watched Da lumber about as a proud bull.

Yes he was a huge man but not fatty like some may have thought. To me he was simply my Da, a big man. And I loved him.

“Now hasten to your chores,” Da quickly added before returning to his own duties.

“Ta-Rah” I called after him.

Then I looked in my carrying bag, wondering what Mum had made for my lunch. All this talk was enough to turn my head. And I was still unsettled from my chat with Monsieur Robert.

As I turned into the chicken coop, I knew something was amiss.

Feathers lay everywhere and the hens cowered in one corner. Their usual greeting was simply a nervous shuffling of wings. Across the floor lay the remains of several carcasses. And there were others from Mum's prize brood that had been carried off by foxes. It was my challenge to secure the fencing.

This beast from the forest was too often a bother. I saw where a hole had been chewed out. They were becoming more than a nuisance, since it meant less money for needful items, when Mum traded her eggs.

Indeed, it was my task to protect the hens.

I murmured a silent vow to use double strands of wire. Sad moments surrounded me, as I gazed about. My duties included protecting the hens, and I had failed in this most important task.

Eggs were also a proper meal for our family and the loss would be felt in days to come.

I had terrible images about what I would like to do to that fox. And if accompanied by his family, they should also pay for this thieving.

At that moment cold chills ran races across the bare skin of my back. It frightened me to think about how easily this turmoil of rage had arisen.

Would I make a good soldier in the face of battle? I wondered.

Just then a face poked its sunless face from between the thick pine. I knew it was Tommy. He was a pesky lad, and for some strange reason, wanting to follow me of late.

Perhaps his desire was the need for an older brother. And I was the chosen one. Or he simply desired company and become my friend. But I have the good company of one, I surmised.

Mattie's friendship was sufficient for me. And yet, there arose a thought that beat against my skull. What if Mattie and I took him into our confidence? And swore him to secrecy? Then there would be three of us to observe whether any foreign person invaded Inverma Farm.

I must share these thoughts with Mattie. At the time I thought the idea had merit.

Military stories now became a source of much speculation in the local communities.

It was said the 42nd Highlanders sent from England in 1773 were to provide additional strength for an assembly of forces. Everyone knew it was to confront the Thirteen Colonies and that a Revolutionary War was at hand. But the certainty of conflict was only whispered in quiet corners.

I learned to listen intently when the men spoke in hushed tones, sharing tidbits of news with Da. We came to know supplies began to arrive at Halifax harbor in a furious succession of ships.

Halberts, drums, firelocks, bayonets and cartridge boxes were to supply the 55th Regiment of Foot, under the command of Captain Johnny Taylor.

As the cadence of war approached, men from the farms and villages were in fear for their children. That their young sons would be drawn into choosing sides in battle.

“It is not uncommon for growing boys and able bodied men to be pressed into military service,” Da said. Heads of families, men of valor from their own wars in England, also cringed as they spoke of this in their own homes.

What they had been desperate to leave behind now followed them to this new wilderness land.

Mattie was such a good friend, always on the lookout for my good health. She had come upon me quite suddenly by my tree fort, as I pondered.

“You’re in enough trouble Johnny,” she scolded. “Now you are in rebellion against your father’s wishes.” She looked furiously beautiful as she stood one hand on her hip, a scowl crossing her face.

Yet she smiled, and aye, when she did the thoughts of war or the scolding from a young lady simply allowed me to regroup.

“And I do not want ye to leave,” she whispered.

“But it is not my intention to listen to my father on this subject!” I stamped my foot in a haughtiness that surprised me. I desired not to return to Yorkshire.

“This is the land I wish to live on.” was my rant.

I knew somehow I must convince Da, not to send me away from the dangers that lurk like a tiger in this area.”

“You too have a taste of painful times. How does your father come about?” I dared to change the direction of our talk, asking about his condition since the accident.

“They did take his arm off in Halifax.” Mattie’s voice spoke so softly, Johnny had to lean far forward to hear.

“Which arm was it?” was the second question from my lips. I knew the man was friendly in his ways, always shaking everyone’s hand and slapping friends on shoulders. This affliction would now be bothersome. And I wondered if it was his...

Closing my eyes, I wished with all my heart it were not his right hand, the strongest one. It had proven to be hardy among the villagers more than once in hand wrestling contests.

“It *was* the right arm,” Mattie said quickly. Then she left me standing by the tree, and turned to return to her own farm.

“I thought you were going to help me seek out enemy soldiers,” I complained. “We have to do this together Mattie,” I said, shrugging my shoulders helplessly.

I knew it best to be soon checking the hen house, making sure the fencing was holding fast. And I was shy with my poor concerns about her father. But then so many things were a twirl about my person.

“Tomorrow,” she answered. “I’ll be here tomorrow. And I promise to have a more cheerful attire, my good friend Johnny.”

Those spoken words now brought a smile of delight my face. Then Mattie left quickly as if preparing for another race across the field. Her hearty laughter carried a long way, as she ran towards home.

“Ta-rah,” I said softly since I missed having her friendship at this moment. With heavy heart I don’t know how I managed to climb the tower. It was done with a sure step, one at a time. It was with difficulty I recalled our spoken words these last few moments.

Did I tread on a sorry wound? What else could I ask, about her father’s hand? I was simply curious.

But then she did say, “My good friend.” And suddenly the day did bring about some extra sunshine.

Now where was Tommy? I inquired, looking about.

The lad did not understand how bothersome he could be. He was always spying on me and trying to catch my eye from the woods, or silent upon the field like a curious mouse. I wished the boy were here right now. He was a helpful ally in our small force.

“I must inquire if he is capable of climbing a tall tree and hanging on for dear life in the raging wind,” were words spoken from the past.

The thought brought on a smile.

My eyes searched all around. It was now left up to myself to take charge from my observation post. And I must make sure no enemy troops are assembled in the grounds next to the woods at the edge of our farm.

If any horse movements or cannon were to be pulled in this direction, I could claim my shouts of, “Their arrival is upon us!”

As a boy, I was not realizing the game was far more serious than this child-like plan of mine. Unknown to me during those boyhood moments, men would die in coming engagements. And then become far more real than my imaginary quest to be a protector of our farm.

“Hail to the Protectors of Inverma Farm!” I shouted for the moment. I was determined to do my duty. “TA-RAH!” was my shout of vainglory and that call crossed the grassland, entered a narrow valley and returned louder than the last exclamation.

After raising a shout I would climb down and join the defenders of our honor. But now my tum was grumbling. Surely it must be time to eat.

As I carefully climbed down the ladder from my outpost, a tumble of thoughts crossed my mind. I promised to be more patient with Johnny who indeed needed a good mate. And to my mind Mattie was a bonny girl.

I vowed to ask Mum if both of us could share sup on the morrow.

Another adventure had awaited me as I stood before a cave.

Monsieur Mercier suggested we come, and his manner at the time was most mysterious. He said he changed the resting place of his son a week after the wee lad was laid to rest. And it had caused him much grief.

I surmised he was taking me to Bastien's second resting place, excitement taken a hold of me.

Yet it was not an occasion to glory about.

In the nearby woods, on many a silent night British Marines may have stood to watch for their prey. Johnny imagined the patience they would have to endure, and not find their man.

"Yes," Monsieur Robert had said, as if reading my confused mind. "British soldiers did wait patiently many nights for someone to visit the freshly dug grave they found. They knew I, the father would come back. But I did not so long as those soldiers stood close by."

My head shook in agony as I listened to the tale.

Then he paused and wiped his brow. "After a period of time, they gave up. And I took the occasion to move my son's burial ground."

Was it to this location the man and boy was now making haste?

Johnny remembered how Monsieur Robert helped him over some fallen rocks. They had rolled up their trouser legs and sloshed along the shore for some time. Then ahead, along the rocky outline of shore, darkness hid the cave. And he clambered after his friend who began to climb.

The first thing the boy saw farther back within the cave, in open view on a shelf was a small skull.

Did this really belong to Bastien, the boy from the diary? It was a scary thought that hurried through the mind of Johnny.

“No,” Monsieur Robert said. “This child’s skull does not belong to my son. But I wanted you to know how desperate we were in those days of escape. This child must surely have hidden in fear, separated from family and starving himself rather than be captured by the soldiers. Years ago, the rest of his bones were on a lower shelf. But the sea had arisen even higher over the years. And I thought it best to respect this cave as the boy’s burial ground.”

I clasped my hands and covered my eyes at first, afraid to shame this poor soul, not even having the goodness of soil to cover his soul. And it was most difficult to hold my tongue. Wait until I bring Mattie to this location?

He was sure Mum and Da would understand why their son embarked on this adventure to clear up some nagging questions. He knew it was his duty to find out the truth.

“Many years have I suffered,” Monsieur Mercier said, shuffling about. “And my children, my family, all gone these long years. I was a young farmer then, now such an old man.”

Johnny had watched, fascinated by the tears that began in the corner of the older man’s eyes. He really didn’t wish to stay and watch the proud man cry in front of him. *Men do cry* was a roaring through Johnny’s brain. He wiped a dry finger across his own moist face.

Like a Trembling Aspen Robert had wept openly until tears became a waterfall, down cracked skin. And he lowered his head even further.

The boy felt a twitch jab one of his legs. Arising from a crouched position Johnny moved toward his friend. Astonished at his bold action, he laid a hand of comfort on the man’s shoulder. Now they were bonded.

“It’s okay,” the boy heard himself murmur.

Then he kept his silence. It did not seem proper to interrupt this moment. Above, clouds seemed to wrestle across the sky, as a pinpoint of light shone through, signaling dusk’s arrival.

Johnny knew he should be scooting home.

Mum's voice carried across the wind. Sup was waiting.

Da was kept busy on our farm that day growing wheat, barley, oats, hay and potatoes. And I was of most use watching out for our three pigs, herding cattle and feeding the chickens. He came aside me as I whistled a happy tune to overcome the sadness of Mr. Mercier. But then, I knew it was his pleasure to speak the tale aloud to one who reminded him of his own dear son.

And it pleased me that I was such a one.

On Saturday night, baked beans with molasses along with a piece of salt pork, was a feast. The abundance of this meal was evident in the second helping, even I requested. As was my usual custom, my vest earned several spots of spilled beans I tried to scrub off with my thumbnail, making a more noticeable mess. Now it matched the caked mud on the lower leg of my pants.

A cup of tea brought my mind back to the table, and quickly drinking it, excused myself in a hurry to visit the privy.

I couldn't even think of my brothers laying in their own blood, green grass stained and soaking up their young lives. And what about the bones of Bastien? Did it take long for his skin to rot off? These thoughts were most unpleasant for a young boy, but not for a stalwart soldier in the defense of his home.

A Planter's Wart was most annoying and after that hearty meal, my painful expression brought on attention I did not wish.

And the recipe for its disappearance was even the more difficult for me. Mum had to mash cloves and garlic then cover the offending part of my foot.

Each night I had to keep on the dressing, and for the next two weeks it was most regretful, with my anxious tossing about. Somehow the offending part under my skin was taken away and I was able to skip around the farm without irritation.

SIXTEEN

All of those thoughts and incidents continued to occupy my mind as I skipped along the trail aside the men working on the ocean shore.

Looking about, I was pleased to see only a few crows heard my oft spoken aloud words.

Shouting warnings should anything be amiss seemed like a mountain of responsibility for Mattie, Johnny and I.

But then, these were hardy times. And while we made plans to protect my family members, I wondered if soldiers housed in their barracks were preparing for battle.

That thought was most unpleasant and I was determined to plunge it from my mind. The day ahead promised to be one filled with delightful things for a young boy. All this was taking place, and I not yet twelve years of age.

Such a tender age, and yet for a boy growing up on a farm in a new land, it was the beginning of my manhood.

I was in a happy mood as I skipped back home after the purchase of morning's breakfast, now able to skip along with two healthy feet. And I pushed away those thoughts from days behind me.

Along morning's shore, the misty fog gathered as a blanket, then silently, disappeared allowing such as I to once more scan the sea.

It was proper to gaze across the waters upon more of Nova Scotia's fertile land that stretched as a finger on the far side of Baie Verte. When the advancing tide arrived upon our side of this vast Bay, a safe swimming place was formed beside a large shelf of rock.

It was here where lads from Pointe de Bute and surrounding farms came together after chores for a good exchange of swimming. And as the tide withdrew, clam digging was a pastime of furious movement.

On one such occasion, I cut my right thumb digging furiously after a retreating Razor Clam.

Along the traveled road to Cape Tormentine were other settlements. Jolicure, Baie Verte, Port Elgin, Upper Cape and Cape Spear were additional memories. They too had similar collections of buildings and families working together, as my own place of residence at Pointe de Bute.

Horses pulling wagons with common folk were a sight, ambling along the roadway.

They came upon us as constant reminders of the hardy business needed to supply our communities. Most were farmers, like Da, and our acreage was proper for a family at the time.

My footsteps soon returned to the farm where Mum was properly anxious to serve breakfast.

A tune escaped my lips as I toured the world around our Inverma farmland with a boy's satisfied gaze. Seagulls above, the wind tossing my mop of hair, and the strength of my arm firmly grasped my wrapped newspaper package.

Our home awaited me with its shades of weathered wood, along with fertile fields, a fence to climb, and my favorite tree.

Nearby our workhorse patiently awaited new instructions. All these sights were a part of my boyhood journey.

“Ta-Rah” was my statement to that young boy being left behind.

Now this purchased fish would be most suitable to serve at our table along with a cup of steaming tea.

Loudly I called, “Da! Mum!” I be here.”

I remembered the day that myself, Johnny Trenholm, son of John Senior made a proper defense to abide in this country, and on Inverma farm.

It was my good fortune to allay Da’s concern about my safety. And not be a passenger on a ship returning to England in the company of a good neighbor. “Hurrah!” I was to remain on the land my father claimed.

“Aye,” Inverma Farm is our land, and no longer threatened by the British,” Da said solemnly.

“The men from Yorkshire are now friends and allies of the British.” Somehow I rearranged my mind and forgave those poor soldiers who had taken part in the calamity long ago. Now we were united in kind agreement to protect our kin, our lands and our country from any foreign invaders.

I remember racing Mattie across the meadow with my news and our happy voices joining the clouds above. My bare feet were unmindful of thistles or any bees rummaging among the berries.

And I was unconcerned about sharp pricks or other insect bites. I wanted to remember everything about that moment. Mattie's hair fluttered behind her shaking head, as the wind captured each strand and flung it about. It resembled the tail end of a kite.

The joy within her frame matched the brightness of sun that breathed warmth upon the Maple leaves. Their own splendor created a myriad of color this Autumn-day. Johnny, me, was so pleased to be staying in this new country.

And so it was with Mattie.

EPILOGUE

And it came to pass that not so far south of this country area, storm clouds crowded together in busy turmoil.

Colonel Jonathan Eddy, a “Planter” from New England was full of ideas. He desired this area of Nova Scotia join the Americans in throwing off British rule, and becoming their fourteenth colony.

It was also notable that a soldier-politician named George Washington was strongly encouraging him. In the backrooms of smoke-filled rooms, plans were being carefully discussed.

They were to have an effect on every family in the Isthmus of Chignecto. Unknown to these former residents of Yorkshire, the inhabitants of Pointe de Bute were situated in the middle of the coming melee.

And Johnny soon came to learn about war in his new country.

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