

1963

The story of Aaron Denio.

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THE STORY OF AARON DENIO

JEANNE S. EHMANN

THE STORY OF AARON DENIO

by
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Presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
Master of Education Degree
School of Education
University of Massachusetts
1963

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is the provision of supplementary reading material to be used in a social studies or history unit for middle grade elementary school children.

The inspiration for this study came after an informal discussion of the state of history teaching in elementary grades by a group of elementary school teachers. The participants agreed that there was a sufficiency of historical materials for children in some historical periods, but a scarcity of suitable materials dealing with the colonial development of America between 1620 and 1776, that is, after the settlement of Plymouth and prior to the Revolutionary War. For example, Bobbs-Merrill Company's series, "Childhood of American Heroes" has six selections dealing with colonial heroes. Of these six, two are about the Pilgrims. This series has fourteen titles listed under the Revolutionary period, fifteen concerning the early nation, and twenty dealing with westward expansion. The Landmark Books list only three titles which deal with events in colonial America. They have fourteen books dealing with various phases of the westward expansion. When one considers the historical significance of the colonial period, it is evident that this is a period which should not be neglected.

At the end of this discussion the germ of an idea had been planted in the author's mind. The discussion would have accomplished nothing if the participants did nothing but agree that there was a gap to be filled in this particular area. It seemed the only positive contribution resulting from the discussion would be to do a book to help fill this gap.

Shortly after the above-mentioned discussion a brief article appeared in the Greenfield paper which stated that Mr. John W. Haigis had addressed the local P. T. A. on the neglect of use of the wealth of local historical material available in the Greenfield area. This article heightened the author's interest in doing a book to be used as historical supplementary reading material for elementary school children. The author decided to undertake the project.

Having decided to do something on colonial history, the author had to make some selections. For instance, the years 1620 to 1776 cover too great a period of time to present in one social studies unit. Therefore, the period of time had to be limited. Furthermore, in this era out country was so diverse geographically, politically and socially that the geographical area had to be narrowed to one section. Finally, the availability of original source material limited the area to western

Massachusetts. Mr. John W. Haigis of Greenfield was most helpful in this respect. In a personal interview he elaborated upon the range of sources and material available in this community. As Deerfield is rich, both in primary and secondary sources, it was selected as the locale of the author's project.

With the aforementioned in mind, and after reading the history of Deerfield, the story of Rene de Noyon was selected.

The story of Rene de Noyon deals with the years 1704 - 1714. It deals with historically and sociologically significant matters. The story of this boy illustrates the struggle between New France and New England for the allegiance of the early colonists of this country. It also illustrates the differences between the philosophies of the two nations and the resulting effect upon the lives of the settlers. The English had come here to build a permanent colony for themselves and future generations. They were establishing homes. They were more self-sufficient than the French.¹ The French

¹Rev. J. W. Harding, "The Civilizations Bordering Respectively upon the St. Lawrence and the Connecticut Rivers." History and Proceedings of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association. 1880 - 1889. Vol. II

(Deerfield, Mass.: Pub. by the Association, 1898), p. 205

were here to acquire possession of the land and its wealth of raw materials for France. The French settlements and forts were a means to this end.²

Rene's story provides a study in depth of one particular geographical area, Deerfield, rather than a generalized picture of all of colonial America. Deerfield represents the English settlements in Massachusetts. Prior to the establishment of Deerfield, Hadley had been the frontier outpost. The security and maintenance of Deerfield was a step in the expansion of the Colony of Massachusetts.

Deerfield illustrates the solidity of the English settlements upon this continent. The preservation of Deerfield as a frontier outpost, the welfare of the community as a whole, and the provision of life's necessities are illustrated in the story through action and conversation.

The story begins in the year 1714. But first a word of background is necessary. In 1704 the French swooped down upon the sleeping town of Deerfield. The entire family of John Stebbins, including his daughter,

²Thomas B. Costain, The White and the Gold.
(Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1954)
p. 275.

Abigail, along with her husband, Jacques de Noyon, were taken captive and the Stebbins' home was burned to the ground. The French took their captives to Chambly. Chambly was near the village of Boucherville in which Jacques de Noyon's mother, Marie de Noyon, lived. Abigail lived with Mme. de Noyon for a time. Jacques became a French soldier. He served under Alphonse de Tonti, the commander of the French fort at Detroit.³

John Stebbins, his wife, and one of his sons, John, were allowed to return to Deerfield. Time clouds the reason the rest of his family remained in Canada. The French may have prevented their returning. They may have stayed voluntarily. There are two clues upon which the latter speculation can be based. The first is found in the character of the Stebbins. When John and his brother, Benoni, were young men, they planned to run away to Canada and become adventurers but were prevented from doing so by the town fathers, who discovered their plans. The second clue is found in John Stebbins' will. He refused to leave more than a token of his property or goods to any children remaining in Canada. Abigail's portion was left to her son, Rene, and the rest went to

³C. Alice Baker, True Stories of New England Captives. (Greenfield, Mass.: L. A. Hall and Co., 1897) p. 218

his son, John, who had returned to Deerfield.

In 1714, when the story opens, Abigail had left the home of her mother-in-law and was living in her own home at Cote St. Joseph. Rene, the eldest of five living children of Abigail and Jacques de Noyon, was, at that time, about ten years old. Life must have been hard for Abigail and her children. Her husband was away a great deal of the time. Soldier's pay was irregular. Necessities of life were scarce.⁴

Comparing Rene's future in New France and New England, Abigail may have decided it would be better for him to go to live with his grandparents. Whether or not she intended having him remain with his grandparents cannot be determined. However, she did send him with a band of French and Indians who were engaged in illegal fur trade with the English.

They left him in Deerfield with his grandfather while they went on to dispose of their furs. Upon their return they could not find him. His grandfather had hidden Rene in a secret room which he had built into his house in case of another Indian raid. It is reported that the band of fur traders was very angry and

⁴Baker, op. cit. p. 220

remained in Deerfield for many days, searching for the boy.⁵

Rene's name was changed to Aaron Denio. His signature and a cooking pot that had belonged to him are preserved in the Deerfield Museum.

Aaron learned the trade of shoemaker (cordwainer) but became a tavern keeper in Greenfield. He served under Capt. Samuel Barnard in Father Rasle's war, was a corporal at Fort Massachusetts in 1748, and then served as an ensign in the Canadian campaign in 1756. In 1730 he married Anna Combs. They had twelve children.⁶

Rene de Noyon, the ten year old boy who adopted a new country and took a new name, served his country well. From the stories that were told about him, he must have found life full and satisfactory. From the correspondence between George Sheldon and Aaron Denio's descendants, preserved in the Denio drawer in the Deerfield Museum, one is inclined to conclude that his numerous descendants followed in his footsteps, both in their venturesome spirit and their patriotism.

⁵Baker, op. cit. p. 220

⁶George Sheldon, A History of Deerfield, Massachusetts Vol. I (Greenfield, Mass.: E. A. Hall & Co., 1895), p. 343

The books listed in the bibliography were studied for an overview of the history of the French and English in America, for the history of the town of Deerfield and its inhabitants, and for the details of colonial life in the community and the home.

Utensils and furnishings of this period were examined in the following museums: Deerfield Museum, the Chateau de Ramezay (Canadian Historical Museum), and Shelburne Village in Vermont. Utensils and furnishings of the following historical houses in Deerfield were also studied: the Dwight-Barnard house, the old Indian house, and the Frary house.

Material for the illustrations was assembled from various sources. Exterior scenes are based on sketches and photographs of the terrain between Montreal and Deerfield. Interior scenes are based on sketches of fireplaces in the museum of the Chateau de Ramezay and a Deerfield house, and of utensils and furnishings in the Deerfield Museum. Clothing was based on sketches and descriptions from Grace Lee Nute's The Voyageur⁷ and Edwin Tunis' Colonial Living.⁸ Doree Cox did the

⁷Grace Lee Nute, The Voyageur. (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1931) pp. 13, 24 - 27

⁸Edwin Tunis, Colonial Living. (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1957), pp. 37 - 43.

illustrations from rough sketches and verbal descriptions.

The route of Rene's trip to Deerfield is based upon Samuel Carter,⁹ Emma L. Coleman,¹⁰ and the narrative of Rev. Mr. Williams.¹¹

The names and occupations of Deerfield inhabitants appearing in the story were taken from the work of George Sheldon.¹²

An effort was made to tell the story of Rene as much as possible through conversation in an attempt to give it interest and readability. George Spache's and Rudolph Flesch's works on readability were studied and the formula of Rudolph Flesch¹³ was applied to assure reading ease and

⁹ Samuel Carter, "The Route of the French and Indian Army That Sacked Deerfield Feb. 29th, 1703 - 4 (O. S.) on Their Return March to Canada with the Captives." History and Proceedings of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association. 1880 - 1889. Vol. II. (Deerfield, Mass.: Published by the Association, 1898), pp. 126 - 151

¹⁰ Emma L. Coleman, New England Captives Carried to Canada, Vol. II. (Portland, Maine: The Southworth Press, 1925) pp. 43, 44

¹¹ Rev. Mr. John Williams, The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion. (New Haven: Printed by William W. Morse, 1802) pp. 12 - 33

¹² George Sheldon, A History of Deerfield, Massachusetts, Vol. II. (Greenfield, Mass.: E. A. Hall & Co., 1895) pp. 5 - 395

¹³ Rudolph Flesch, The Art of Readable Writing. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949) pp. 213 - 216

human interest. The Gates Reading Vocabulary for Primary Grades was used as a control and guide.

It is hoped that the story is readable and interesting to a middle grade elementary pupil. It was given to nine children, individually, who were in fourth grade. It is hoped that their favorable reactions were prompted by sincerity as well as courtesy.

THE STORY OF AARON DENIC

CHAPTER I
OFF TO DEERFIELD

CHAPTER I

Rene was excited. He was so excited he did not taste the bread he was nibbling.

Rene was supposed to be eating his breakfast. Instead he was listening for the sound of a footstep outside. He was watching the door. He was waiting for Pierre to knock.

Pierre would knock softly. He would not want to disturb Rene's brothers and sisters. They were still asleep. When the sun rose and they awoke, Rene would be gone.

Was that a noise outside? Was Pierre here?

Rene dropped his bread and ran to the door.

"Rene, Rene." His mother's voice was like a loving smile. "Come back and finish your breakfast. When Pierre gets here it will be too late to eat. It will be a long time before you stop to eat again."

Rene walked back to the table. "It is too early for breakfast."

"And you are too excited." His mother laughed softly. "Pretend you are going to be home all day. Think how you would gobble down your breakfast then."

Rene laughed. What his mother said was true. How he would enjoy this big breakfast on an ordinary day. Fried eels for breakfast! Suddenly he was hungry. He broke a chunk of bread from the loaf. He stopped watching the door. Now he tasted the food he was eating. It was good.

"How lucky I am," he thought. "I am having a breakfast

that is like a dinner. I am going on a trip with the fur traders. It is just as though I were a man."

None of his friends at Cote St. Joseph had ever gone on such a trip. None of them had ever been farther from home than Montreal. He was going all the way to Deerfield. All the way to the English colony of Massachusetts.

He thought of arriving there. He thought of meeting his grandfather. He thought of the words he had learned to say in English. He said them to himself. "Grandfather, I am Rene de Noyens. I am the son of your daughter, Abigail."

"Abigail." He said it aloud, very slowly and carefully.

"Why did they name you Abigail?" he asked his mother.

"It is such a difficult name to say."

"It is as easy for my people as Marguerite is for the French," his mother explained.

"For your people?" Rene asked. "But the French are your people."

"Yes, Rene," his mother answered softly. "The French are my people now. But the English will always be my people, too."

"Are you ever homesick, Mama? Like Aunt Therese was?"

"At first I was. Remember, I did not come here on a happy trip. It was frightening, being an Indian captive. It was a long, hard trip in bitter cold winter. Some of my people, too weak to march, were killed by the Indians. At

times all of us felt so tired and weak. We expected we would be killed, too. When we arrived, we could not choose where we would go. We were prisoners. The French took some of us. The Indians took others. Families were divided. We came in fear and sadness, Rene. You are going to visit your grandparents because you want to. You are free to go. You are free to return, if you wish."

Rene wiped the grease from the trencher onto a piece of bread. He ate the bread and brushed the crumbs from his hands. He pushed back the wooden trencher and went to stand by the fire.

The warm glow of the fire was the only light in the room.

Rene looked at the windows. "It isn't any lighter," he yawned.

"And it will not be until you have gone far," his mother said. She came to stand beside him. She held her hands over the fire to warm them.

Rene was not cold. He was dressed in heavy clothes, ready to leave. When Pierre came, he had only to put on his red woolen cap and walk out.

Thinking of the red woolen cap reminded Rene of the secret. He shivered.

"Are you cold, Rene?" his mother asked anxiously.

"No, Mama. Not cold. I had a dream last night. About our secret."

The dream had frightened him. He didn't want to frighten his mother. Yet he did want to tell her about it.

"Dreams are not real," his mother said gently. "When the sleep that brings them is gone, the dreams, too, should go. We do not keep our dreams with us when we are awake. Perhaps if you told me your dream, we could get rid of it together."

"I didn't want to frighten you. But I guess it won't," Rene decided.

"I dreamed I saw the Marquis de Vaudreuil. He was all dressed in fine silks with lace ruffles at the wrists. He wore a curled, powdered wig. He looked very grand. Only his face didn't. It was red and angry.

"He was in his coach. Men on horseback rode in front of him. They were shouting, 'Make way for the Marquis de Vaudreuil. Make way for the Governor-General of Canada.'

"It was a fete day. There was a big crowd. We stood with the others watching the coach go by. But it didn't go past us. When the Marquis looked out of his window he saw us. He shouted, 'After them.'

"We started to run. The coach followed us. We ran and ran. We were running such a long time. My legs felt heavy. They did not want to move. You were carrying baby Dorothee. You kept stumbling. Each time I thought we were safe you would stumble or little Francois would fall down. His short

little legs would not move fast enough.

"We could hear father calling us, 'Come to the river. I have a canoe. Come to the river.'

"The Marquis shouted, 'Keep them from the river. Drive them to the towers.'

"In my dream the two stone towers of the Grand Seminaire were a prison.

"That is all of my dream. But..." Rene hesitated.

"But what, Rene?"

"The governor-general would throw us in prison if he knew our secret, wouldn't he?"

"I don't know, Rene. He might. That is why you must never tell the secret to anyone except your grandfather. Then the Marquis de Vaudreuil will never know."

"But what about the fur traders? What about Pierre? The others? They will know, won't they?"

"No. They will suspect. But they will not know for sure. They will never be able to say anything."

"Doesn't it scare you, Mama?"

"No. It doesn't. When it is done, your grandfather will be with you. He is a strong man. It will not bother him. You see, Rene, you will not be doing it alone. Until it is done, it is not a big secret. It is only a little secret. You know something you can tell only to your grandfather. That is all. Now is that too much of a secret

for a ten year old boy?"

"No. Not when you think of it like that," Rene said thoughtfully. "I have had little secrets like that before."

Rene frowned, puzzled. "Mama, why did you say the fur traders would never be able to say anything? Do they have a secret, too? If they didn't, they would leave in the daylight. Wouldn't they? Do you know why we are leaving while it is dark?"

"I think it would be better if you asked your grandfather, Rene. Don't ask the men in the canoe. You will be more a man if you don't ask too many questions. Look and listen. It is a good way to learn. And.."

There was a soft tap on the door.

Pierre was here.

Rene hurried across the room. He lifted the bar and opened the door.

Pierre was no taller than Rene's mother. But his shoulders were broad.

Pierre did not come in. "Are you ready, Little Colt?" he whispered.

Rene didn't like the nickname, "Little Colt." He was called that because his legs had grown so long. He had been growing taller all year. He was taller than boys who were a year or two older than he. He didn't like his long legs. His English legs, he called them.

"Another year and your legs would be too long for a canoe," Pierre said. "You were wise to go this year."

Rene picked up his small sack of provisions and followed Pierre.

Rene's mother picked up his cap. "You will need this to keep you warm," she reminded him.

Rene felt guilty. He was glad it was dark. He could feel his face grow red and warm with shame. He was not doing well with the secret. He had almost forgotten the red woolen cap. And it was to be used as a message.

"He is so excited," his mother explained to Pierre as they walked toward the river.

"No wonder." Pierre smiled. "He is going on a trip like a man."

"And he is still a boy," Rene's mother added.

"You are not going to worry about him?" Pierre asked.

"I, Pierre, will watch over him as though he were my own. He will be as safe as he was when he was in his cradle, madame."

Rene heard Pierre. One minute he was a man. The next he was a baby.

"Wait until I show him how well I can get into a canoe," thought Rene. "How careful I can be. He will know then I've been in a canoe before."

Rene saw the canoe at the river's edge. He was surprised and disappointed. He had expected a large canoe. This one

Rene's mother handed him his cap.



was only half as big as he had expected.

Rene turned to kiss his mother. "Goodbye, Mama," he whispered.

"Give my love to your grandparents," she whispered. Her lips were close to his ear. "And do not be afraid. Just remember what I told you."

She straightened up. "Have a safe journey."

Pierre stepped in front of Rene. "On my back, Little Colt," he ordered.

"I can get in by myself."

"No. Jump up now. We carry all passengers to our canoe. Even grown men."

Instead of showing how well he could enter a canoe, Rene had to ride on Pierre's back. He had seen voyageurs carry grown men and women like this. But he had wanted to get in by himself. He knew how.

"There." Pierre had waded out. He put Rene into the canoe. "We take better care of the gum of our canoe than of our own skin," Pierre said to him with a smile.

Pierre was the steersman. He waded to the back of the canoe. It hardly moved as he sprang in and stood in his place.

The other men raised their short paddles. Pierre held his long paddle above the water. A low sound from Pierre and the paddles dipped into the river together.

Pierre began to hum softly. The other men made no sound. There was only the faint sound of the rhythm of the song and the dip, dip of the paddles. The canoe sped swiftly along the river.

Rene could hear only a little of the tune as Pierre hummed. He recognized the song. He had heard the words about the clear, running fountain for as long as he could remember. It had come drifting across the river, loudly and clearly from the crews of the big canoes. It had come more softly, but still clearly, from smaller canoes. Rene's father had sung it evenings around the fire at home.

Rene thought about his father, singing the song of the fountain. The firelight would shine on his dark hair. His dark eyes would crinkle at the corners as he smiled.

If only he had short legs like his father. Rene sighed.

"Well," he thought. "There is no help for my legs. They are going to grow. There is nothing to do about them. They will be too long to fit into a canoe. I can't be a voyageur when I am a man. But I can do my best to be a voyageur now. And," he thought, "it is partly because of my long legs that I am here now. So on this trip I will be a voyageur. Then, when I am a man, I will be something else."

So far Rene was doing very well at being a voyageur. He had not asked any questions. He had not asked why they were using a canoe much smaller than he had expected. He had not

asked why they had gone in the direction away from Montreal. And he was sitting as still as if he were part of the canoe. Rene had learned to sit still in a canoe when his father had paddled the family to Montreal.

But this was a much longer trip than the one to Montreal. And Rene was not used to sitting still. His legs began to ache.

"Perhaps we will stop at the Indian Camp below Sorel," he thought. "That is not too far to go before getting out."

Rene wiggled his toes. That only made him want even more to move his legs. He squeezed his legs with his hands. He didn't want any of the men to see him. He didn't want them to think he was too young to sit quietly.

He tried watching the shoreline. He thought it would help him forget how hard it was to sit still. But there was nothing to see. Everything was gray or black. Ahead the river was smooth, flat, and black. It was flowing black beside the canoe. The shore was a dark mass, touching the edge of the dark river. Even the trees were dark and shadowy.

Rene made up a game to play by himself. He pretended the fierce Iroquois were hiding behind the shadowy trees. He had to sit still so they wouldn't see him. But he was too old to pretend to himself. A year ago he could have made a game of it. But a year ago he would have been too young to come.

There were no Iroquois in this area. Rene knew it. He

knew he had to sit still only because he was in a canoe.

"Today it will be difficult," he told himself.

"Tomorrow it will be a little easier. By the time we reach Deerfield I will be used ot it."

It seemed a long time before they reached Sorel. Rene was surprised that they did not stop. He was surprised at how quiet the men were.

He did not have to ask questions about it. He knew the men did not want to be seen or heard.

Pierre had stopped humming. The paddles dipped quietly into the water.

The canoe turned to the right. They left the St. Lawrence. They were now on the Sorel River.

Farther down the river they passed the Indian village silently and swiftly.

When they were safely past the village the canoe pulled toward shore.

The Indian who sat behind Rene stepped into the river.

"Please," Rene whispered, "could I stand up on the shore?"

The Indian lifted him from the canoe.

He stood Rene on his feet near a clump of trees. "Stay here. Make no noise." The Indian turned and disappeared into the dark night.

Rene moved closer to the trees. It felt good to move

again. His legs prickled a little at first. But even that was better than sitting so straight and still.

Rene did not see the Indian return. One moment he was alone. The next, a hand touched his arm gently. The Indian was standing beside him. He gave Rene a pair of mocassins.

Rene looked at him questioningly.

"Your shoes will not last the trip."

"Thank you." Rene wondered how the Indian had seen the holes in the soles of his shoes. It was such a dark night.

The Indian turned. Rene climbed up on his back.

When Pierre first put him into the canoe, Rene had sat up straight like the paddlers. This time he leaned back a little. That way he could rest against the furs.

The canoe moved out. It continued down the Sorel.

This river was not so wide as the St. Lawrence. The shore on each side was closer. The trees did not look like such dark masses.

The sky grew lighter. Rene could see more. "The sun will soon be up," he thought. He looked toward the east.

He could see three mountains. "How odd they look," he thought. They made him think of the mud cakes his sister, Marie, made. She would pat them and mold them. Then she would set them on a flat place. These mountains looked as though they had been set upon the land. They sat there, all by themselves. They looked like giant sized mud cakes that

did not belong there at all.

His mother had talked about the beautiful mountains around Deerfield. "I'm sure these are mountains," Rene thought. "But they look odd, not beautiful."

He was so interested in the mountains he scarcely glanced at the small settlement of Chambly as they skimmed past it.

In the east a small cloud turned yellow. Below it the sky was a pale pink. The pink deepened and spread. The little cloud turned pink. Then it was fleecy white and the sun was up.

Pierre's voice deepened. One by one the crew joined him. The movement of their arms, the dip and lift of their paddles were part of the song.

It was a song Rene had never heard his father sing. Rene had heard bits of it, floating over the St. Lawrence. He had never heard all of it. He had never stopped playing to listen to this one. "It must be because it is about a girl," he thought.

Now there was nothing to do but listen.

"She is waiting for me.

She is so light.

She is so slender."

The same chorus was repeated after each new line.

"Her skin is made of the smoothest bark." When Rene

The [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]
 [unclear] [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]
 [unclear] [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]
 [unclear] [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]
 [unclear] [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]
 [unclear] [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]
 [unclear] [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]

Rene liked being in the canoe.



()

()

heard this line he knew the voyageurs were singing about their canoe. The song was not about a girl at all!

Once again the voyageurs sang the song of the clear, running fountain. Once again Rene thought of his father, singing the same song. He thought of the evenings around the fire. Then his eyes would grow heavy. His head would nod. The fire had been warm like the sun. It made him so sleepy.

Rene rested his head against the furs. He fell asleep.

Rene awoke with a start. For just a minute he didn't know where he was.

The sun was high in the sky. The canoe was rocking gently in the river.

It was time to eat. This time Rene was hungry. He ate quickly. So did the men.

In no time the men lifted their paddles again.

The canoe skimmed over the water as smoothly as an arrow flies through the air. Moving over the clear water, Rene felt close to the bright sky above.

He liked being in the canoe. But the best part of the trip would be camping for the night. Rene had heard of the stories the men told around the campfire.

He wondered if the Indians told any stories.

He thought about the mountains he had seen back at Chambly.

"If I were an Indian," Rene thought, "I'd say the Great

Spirit had some earth left over. He didn't want to carry it away. So he set it down in three piles. Then he walked away and left it. He left it in three nice, neat piles. That's what I'd think."

Rene hoped one of the Indians would tell about those mountains when they camped that night.

When they stopped for the night, Rene learned there was much to do.

First the canoe was beached. After Rene had been put on shore like a package, each man took his place along the sides of the canoe. Together they lifted it and carried it well up onto the shore. They set it down as carefully as a mother lays down a tiny baby.

After the canoe was made safe for the night, each man went about his own task. Two of the Indians and one of the Frenchmen disappeared into the forest. The other Indian walked down the bank of the river.

"You can help Jacques gather firewood," Pierre told Rene.

Rene was glad to be given a job to do. He followed Jacques.

"Here are some good small branches," Jacques told Rene.

"You can break them across your knee, like this. When you have an armful, carry them back. Pierre will show you where to put them."

Rene broke the small branches that would be used for

starting the fire. When he had an armful, he carried them to Pierre.

Rene went back to Jacques.

"These are too large to break," Jacques told him, "so I cut them for you."

Rene gathered an armful of the larger pieces and carried them back to the camp. He stacked them beside the smaller ones.

Before Rene had finished carrying and stacking the wood, one of the Indians was back. He walked past Rene, carrying three rabbits.

"We are going to have rabbit for dinner," Rene told Jacques when he went back for his next load.

"And if Sakso has any luck, we will also have fish." Jacques flashed Rene a smile.

"I hope he has very good luck, very quickly." Rene was hungry.

Pierre had the fire blazing by the time Rene stacked the last of the wood.

"We are having rabbit and fish for supper tonight," he said.

Rene opened his sack, "And bread if you wish."

"Bread." Pierre's teeth showed white against his dark skin as he smiled. "Your mother sent along a treat."

Jean Baptiste and the other Indian came up from the river.

Rene thought he had never tasted anything quite so good.



Rene had not seen them return. They carried more small game, all skinned and dressed, to the fire.

Sakso's fish were cooked before the rabbits were ready. Rene thought he had never tasted anything quite so good.

No one told Rene to go wash his face and hands. "I will do it in the morning," he thought. He felt so full and contented, lying there by the fire.

Rene was tired after carrying the wood. He lay down and stretched out. He would just rest while he waited for the storytelling to begin. He fell asleep.

Sakso covered Rene. Rene slept on.

CHAPTER II

SAKSO'S STORY OF THE DEERFIELD RAID

CHAPTER II

"Do you want to sleep all day?"

Rene opened his eyes. Pierre and Jean Baptiste were looking down at him. Pierre was chewing on a rabbit leg left over from last night.

Rene sat up. How his body ached! He felt as though he had been sleeping on a cold, damp rock. He was stiff from the back of his head to his feet.

"Sakso was up before all of us. He caught a fine mess of fish. Go, Little Colt, and eat. And walk around a little. Stretch those long legs while you have a chance. But don't go too far. We are almost ready to leave."

Rene had no trouble eating this morning. The fish tasted even better than last night.

Sakso handed him a cold piece of rabbit. Rene ate it as he walked over to look at the canoe. Last night he had hardly noticed it.

The canoe was painted red. It was decorated with blue circles. An Indian design was painted on in black.

Rene looked closely at the paddles. They, too, were painted red. Their tips and handles were painted blue.

This canoe wasn't as big as the Montreal canoes on the St. Lawrence. But it was the prettiest canoe Rene had ever seen.

When they reached Lake Champlain the sun was high in the sky. Rene had never seen a lake before. How the water

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sparkled. How wide it was and how long. Rene looked at the lake's surface, stretching ahead. "How flat it is, How even," he exclaimed.

Then he noticed how uneven the land had become. He was really in the mountains now. They seemed to form a bumpy, peaked circle around the lake. It looked as though they were holding the water in a basin. A giant basin.

Rene was more comfortable in the canoe today. He relaxed. He was content to look at the sky, the lake and especially the mountains. He was so interested in the mountains he didn't even notice the breeze stirring the tassel of his cap.

One minute he was feeling sleepy and lazy. The next he felt an air of excitement. "The Iroquois!" Rene thought in alarm. Frightened, he looked toward the shore. He could see nothing there. There were only the trees, bending their tops in the wind.

Rene raised his head and looked about the lake. No, there was no other canoe. There was only the water. But it looked different. It was no longer sparkling in the sun. There was a pattern on its surface. Odd little crosshatches of many lines were raised on its surface. They formed a design of lines and squares.

The men were paddling faster. The long, strong strokes of their paddles made the canoe surge ahead. Rene did not need to ask why. The answer was etched on the choppy surface

of the water. The trees, bending low in the wind, told him. The darkening western sky carried the message. A storm was coming.

The men were paddling furiously now. He knew they were headed for the shore.

"I never saw a storm come so quickly," Rene said.

No one heard him. The wind carried away the sound of his words.

The wind blew against the canoe. Waves swelled and rolled toward shore.

Rene could feel the waves under the canoe. Each wave would lift the canoe. It would rise. For a moment it would pause on the crest of the wave. Then it would plummet downward. Rene thought the rushing water would force the bow under. But each time the pull of the paddles took hold.

The men fought the waves and the wind. They kept the canoe from turning.

Then the rain came. Rene could see it coming across the lake. It was a sheet of driven water. He could hear the sound of it. He felt a few large drops on his face and hands. They were big and cold. Then came the downpour. Rene was drenched.

The canoe was close to shore. It stopped suddenly. The men leaped into the water. Sakso lifted Rene out. In one quick movement he half set, half threw Rene onto land.

Rene huddled under a tree while the men took care of the canoe. How quickly they unloaded it. How quickly they turned it over. Some of the men crouched under the canoe. Jean Baptiste and Sakso crawled under the furs.

"Come, boy," Sakso called.

Rene crawled in beside him.

The furs didn't smell very good. But how warm and good they felt after the cold rain.

"This makes me think of a storm years ago," Jean Baptiste said. "It was the first time I took furs to the English. It was the first time for all of us."

Jean Baptiste chuckled. Rene snuggled down, getting comfortable. At last he was going to hear a campfire story. A campfire story with no fire. "Well, that," thought Rene, "is more than I heard last night when there was a fire."

"Yes," mused Jean Baptiste. "It was the first time for all of us."

"And it was not like it is now. Oh," even under the furs Jean Baptiste shrugged, "we do not have exactly a loving smile from our Governor-General. But then it was more dangerous to take furs to the English. One had to be always on the alert. Besides watching for the soldiers of the Governor-General, there were the Iroquois."

"Well, we had one narrow escape. But we evaded the Governor-General's men. We were feeling safe when we reached

the lake. There were only the Iroquois to watch for. And we were so young, so strong. We knew we could outpaddle them.

"Were the Iroquois very fierce?" Rene whispered.

"Fierce!" Jean Baptiste exclaimed. "I would as soon find myself in the arms of a bear as in the company of an Iroquois."

A bear had given Jean Baptiste two scars. One ran the length of his forearm. The other ran from his eyebrow to his chin. Jean Baptiste was proud of those scars. How he had killed the bear was his favorite story.

"I'd hate to meet an Iroquois," Rene shivered.

"Oh, yes. The Iroquois." Jean Baptiste decided to save the bear story for another time.

"There we were on the lake. We were singing and paddling. How gay and happy we were.

"We were well down the lake. Farther than we are now. We stopped to rest. It was then Etienne turned his head. Far to the north, along the western shore, he saw something. It was moving on the water.

"'Iroquois,' Etienne shouted.

"We raised our paddles. How we pulled them. Our strokes were long and strong. Our canoe went over the water. It was like flying on a cloud.

"We did not notice the surface of the water. We did not see the swiftly moving clouds. We did not feel the wind.

"The storm came like today. Only the wind was stronger. We did not see the rock. My friend Rene was in the bow. He cried out. But it was too late. One moment our beautiful canoe was ours. The next she was torn and broken."

"Did the Iroquois come after you?"

"Ah, little one, we did not wait to find out. We saved our furs. We left the pieces of canoe. And then we walked. My legs know how far it is to Deerfield." Jean Baptiste chuckled softly.

"So do my mother's and father's. They walked all the way when they were taken captive."

"So did your friend, Sakso, here," Jean Baptiste remarked. "He was with them."

Rene forgot he had promised himself that he would ask no questions. He turned his head toward Sakso. "You were with my father and mother?" he asked excitedly. "You walked back to Canada with them?"

"Yes. I know your father well."

"Sakso once trapped furs with him," Jean Baptiste remarked.

"I didn't know my father ever trapped furs."

"It was when he was very young. Only one winter. But we spent many winters together trading furs. That was before he went to live among the English."

Rene was quiet. He wanted to think about what he had

just learned. Rene knew his father had been a fur trader once. His father must have traded with the English, just as these men were doing. It had been against the law then. It was still against the law. That was why Pierre had come for him during the night. That is why they had left Canada so quietly.

Now that Rene had all this clear in his mind, he thought again about Deerfield.

"Tell me about the raid on Deerfield," he begged.

"It was in the winter," Sakso began. "It was a winter of much snow. Long before the snow began there was talk of a raid on the English settlement. It was idle talk. There were whispers here and echoes there. But no one knew anything. While we were listening to the talk, winter came. The water froze. It locked the streams and closed the lake. Then the snow started. Day after day the sky was white with the snow it held. Day after day it spilled upon the ground. It became deeper and deeper. We stayed close to our homes. We forgot the talk about the raid.

"When one came from Montreal with talk of the raid we laughed. 'Who would walk so far?' we asked.

"'Wait until spring,' another suggested. 'When the ice is gone we can take down furs. We can make the raid on the way back.'

"Then another came from Montreal. He said the soldiers

were making preparations. Still we sat and laughed. Who would travel so far in the deep snow?

"I was gone from my village for many days. When I returned, there was great excitement. Hunting parties had brought in much meat for the women and children. Pouches were being filled. Snowshoes were being repaired."

"Why had the Indians changed their mind about the raid?" Rene asked.

"It was not that the Indians had changed their minds. It was that the French had decided. Why, I do not know. One said it was because the French and English were fighting across the ocean. Another said it was because the English held an important French prisoner in Boston - that the French wanted to capture an Englishman of importance to exchange for him."

"And it probably was all of those reasons," Jean Baptiste yawned.

"But who was important in Deerfield?" Rene asked.

"The Rev. Williams. We were told we would be allowed to keep any prisoners except him. He was to be taken alive. He was to be kept alive. He was an important man."

"Then that must have been the reason," Rene said.

"I do not know. Some said not. They said Deerfield was the farthest outpost of the English settlements. If we allowed it to remain, the English would only push closer and closer."

"The English are peculiar like that," Jean Baptiste remarked.

"What do you mean, Jean Baptiste?" Rene asked. "We French push farther and farther. My father says LaSalle pushed all the way to the mouth of the Mississippi. My father says Henri de Tonti was with him. Henri de Tonti was very brave. He had an iron hook in place of an arm he lost. He kept it covered with a glove. All along the Mississippi they tell of the blows he would strike with his iron hand. My father says so."

"Yes. That is all very true. But..."

"It is true," Rene interrupted. "And my father is serving under Alphonse de Tonti right now. Out at the fort at Detroit. Alphonse de Tonti is the younger brother of Henri. He, also, is very brave."

"We French have pushed farther than the English," Rene insisted.

"What you say is true, Rene. But that is not what I mean," Jean Baptiste answered. "It is true that we explore farther than the English. It is true that our forts are farther west than theirs. I even think it is true that the French King plans to control the country all along the Mississippi and from there to push the English back into the sea. It is a good plan, but I do not think it will work. You can squeeze and push something small. But the English

are not something small. They are very thick along the coast. When they move inland they do not jump far into the wilderness as we do. They build one village close to their other villages. Then they build another and another. It is as though they were growing inland."

"Yes, but they will never get as far west as Detroit," Rene objected.

"At least they will not get there first," Jean Baptiste laughed.

"But do you think they will ever get there?" Rene persisted.

"I think if they do, they will build cities and villages on their way."

"We are quicker and the English are slower. Is that why you said they are peculiar, Jean Baptiste?"

"No. That is a difference you see," Jean Baptiste answered. "But there are many others."

"All of us who are French," Jean Baptiste continued slowly, "know in our hearts that we will live all our lives here. We, and our children. We will live, die, and be buried here. Yet all of us hold a dream. We dream of going home. And home is always France."

"Now the English on this continent are home. They do not dream of returning to England. They are building here. They build for themselves and for their children. They are

very serious about it. They can see what they are working for.

"We know we will never go back to France so we are not so serious. We enjoy each day. We do not think so much about tomorrow as the English do."

Rene sighed. He did not understand all of what Jean Baptiste had said. Perhaps this was why the men had nicknamed him "the thinker." Maybe they didn't understand him either.

Rene turned to Sakso. "What do you think about it? Do you think the English are odd, too?"

Sakso did not smile when he answered. But his eyes looked as though he were laughing. "We Indians think all while men are odd. It is just that we like the way the French are odd. The French are our brothers." The look of laughter left his eyes. "The Iroquois are friends of the English."

"But the Indians at Sorel have adopted many of the English. They are part of your families."

"They are no longer English. We do not adopt them only with words. We adopt them with love."

"I guess for an Indian you are a thinker, too," Rene said.

Both Sakso and Jean Baptiste laughed.

For the first time since he had left home, Rene felt as though he belonged with the men. Pierre made him feel like such a small child. But Jean Baptiste and Sakso talked to him

as though he were a man. Of course, he didn't quite understand everything they said. But it made him feel good anyway.

"Maybe I should just go with you and not stop at Deerfield," Rene suggested.

"Are you afraid you will not like the English?" Jean Baptiste asked.

"I guess so."

"You won't be there long," Jean Baptiste promised. "Your mother would be disappointed if you did not stop. And, if I know anything about the English, you will eat well."

Rene wished Jean Baptiste had not mentioned food. He had been a little hungry very often at home. But he could never remember being quite so hungry as he was now. His stomach felt like a knot - a knot that was pressing for food.

To keep from thinking about it, he turned back to Sakso. "You just told about getting ready for the raid on Deerfield. You didn't tell about the raid, itself."

"It was a good raid," Sakso stated. "We had only one or two small storms on the way down. They detained us only long enough to rest. We had good luck at hunting so we were never hungry."

"It was still daylight when we neared Deerfield so we waited for night to come. All the time we were waiting, the snow was falling. The snow was like a great blanket. It covered the town and kept the people nestled under it."

"You know, many Indian raids have been spoiled by the English. The men ride horses from place to place frequently. More than once they have seen raiding parties. More than once they have escaped to warn their families and friends.

"But no one saw us. No one was riding out in the deep snow.

"Our scouts came back to tell us there was an easy way to enter the town. The men of the town had put up a wall of trees. They had made a fort of the town. But the snow helped us again. It had piled up against the north wall. One could walk right up to the top of the wall.

"We had only to wait for the town to go to sleep. After our long journey, we were glad to rest. Some slept while others watched. While we had a turn at watching we chewed on dried deer meat. Like this."

Sakso pulled out his pouch. He took out a piece of dried meat.

Rene sighed. "How good it must have tasted."

"It did," Sakso answered gravely. With his teeth and fingers he tore off a piece and handed it to Rene.

Rene put an edge of the dried meat between his teeth. He pulled and tugged until he had torn off a jagged piece. He handed it to Jean Baptiste.

The three of them chewed silently on the dried meat. Rene could picture the town of Deerfield, covered with snow.

He could see the families, gathered around the keeping room fireplaces. The little children, warm and drowsy, would be put to bed. The pine knot that had blazed by the fireplace would burn down. It would become smokier and smokier. At last, it would be pushed into the fire. The fire would be fixed for the night. It would be there in the morning, ready for fresh logs to make it burn again. Then the parents would go to bed.

"And finally everyone was asleep," Rene said aloud.

"Yes, and still we waited," Sakso continued.

"We waited for the whole town to be deep in sleep. Then we moved forward. We were as silent as the snow that was falling.

"We walked right to the top of the palisade. We walked right up that bank of snow.

"Inside that wall of trees the snow was not piled up so high. Still, it was only a short drop. It was almost like walking up a hill and down the other side.

"In all the town, there was only one man on watch. A poor watch he was. He was huddled under a window, asleep.

"We spread through the town. Then we attacked.

"One moment all was silence. The battering of hatchets broke the stillness. In the distance I heard a shot fired.

"Then there were more shots. There was the shouting and screaming of many voices.

"Each of us did what we must. Some houses were difficult. Some were easy. Some English escaped. A few were killed.

"We took our prisoners and wounded to one house. When we had done all we could, we started home.

"The French stayed behind. It was well they did.

"The English were foolish. They tried to follow us. But the French stopped them. So we were able to take our captives safely away."

"What about my father and mother?" Rene asked.

"Haven't they told you this before?"

"Yes, but it did not sound the same. You sound proud of it," Rene said resentfully.

"We did our job well," Sakso answered.

"People were killed," Rene objected.

"In war, people are always killed," Jean Baptiste told Rene. "But your mother and father weren't. Neither were your grandparents."

"I wonder what it will be like there. My mother told me so much about it."

"It will not be the same," Jean Baptiste warned.

"Remember she did not see the town after the raid. Much of it was burned. Anyway, you will soon see for yourself."

CHAPTER III
DEERFIELD AT LAST

CHAPTER III

The land along the river was low and flat. To the east a ridge of mountains cut a sharp, high line against the sky.

In the canoe, Rene shifted his weight a little. By this time he had learned how to change his position without upsetting the balance of the canoe. He was as comfortable at the end of the day as he was in the morning.

He looked again at the mountains. They did not look like mud cakes placed upon flat land. They were nothing at all like those first mountains back at Chambly. These were a part of the land. They rose from the valley. Their gentle slopes pushed the treetops toward the sky.

The men seemed especially gay today. It seemed almost as though they were excited about something.

Rene remembered the storm on Lake Champlain. He had felt something was going to happen before he knew what it was. He had a feeling like that today. Only this time the something was going to be good.

There was happiness in the lilt of the voyageurs' song. Rene joined them. He knew the words and the tune by this time.

Rene was surprised when the song ended abruptly and the canoe was stopped by the shore.

"Come, Rene," Pierre ordered.

"But why?" Rene asked, puzzled.

"We are by Deerfield."

"Then why don't we go on into Deerfield?"

"That is what we are going to do."

"I don't understand." Rene stood on the bank of the river, looking up at Pierre.

"You will never understand by standing there. Come along," Pierre said shortly.

"The English don't use the river for their main street," Jean Baptiste called from the canoe.

"No. They use mud instead," Andre laughed.

"What do they mean?" Rene asked as he followed Pierre.

"The English build their towns on a road. They travel by horse. We build along the edge of the river. We travel by canoe."

"Such strange people," Rene shook his head.

Up at the top of the river bank he turned. "Good-bye," he called to the men in the canoe.

"Come along," Pierre called impatiently.

"Can't Sakso come, too?" Rene asked.

"If anyone recognized him, he would be less than welcome," Pierre said.

"Because he was in the raid," Rene exclaimed.

"Yes. And even if no one recognized him...Well..."

Pierre shrugged.

"You mean just because he is an Abnaki?"

"You can't blame them. They don't like the French,

either, you know."

"But the Abnakis and Caughnawgas don't torture anyone. They are not cruel like the Iroquois. I don't see why anyone should hate..."

"Perhaps if you keep your ears and eyes open and your lips closed you will find out," Pierre suggested.

Rene stopped still. He looked at Pierre in amazement. "You sound just like my mother," he exclaimed.

"Stop chattering and come along." Pierre jerked his head in a nod toward the buildings ahead. "Your mother is a wise woman," he added. He looked thoughtfully at Rene.

Rene's eyes grew wide. He looked down at the ground. He wondered if Pierre had guessed his secret. He had an uneasy feeling. What could he say if Pierre asked him about it? Without looking up, he knew Pierre was watching him. And so Rene walked along with his eyes down. Sometimes his mother seemed to know what he was thinking just by looking at him. He didn't want to risk having Pierre see his face.

Because he was walking with his head down, Rene's first close look at Deerfield was the trampled mud of its road.

Rene stopped walking. His eyes traveled down the track of mud. Then he lifted his head and looked at the town.

The few houses he saw were small, narrow and unpainted. "There is nothing but bare trees, bleak houses, and mud," he thought.

Rene blinked his eyes rapidly. A man does not cry. He did not want Pierre to see tears in his eyes. Pierre would laugh at him.

Rene shook his head sadly. These mean little houses on this muddy road were not the Deerfield he had pictured when his mother and Aunt Therese had talked of home. The town they had talked about had been one of warm fires. And there had always been fun, laughter, and happiness. There had been parties and dances. There had been the roast, swinging on the spit over the fire in the keeping room. There had been the big brass kettle, filled with maple sap. It had hung over a fire out of doors. There had been sugar parties when the sap was boiled. Deerfield had sounded like such a warm, happy place.

Rene shivered. He had been cold most of the trip. He had been hungry part of the trip. If he had stayed home he would have been hungry sometimes but, at least, he would have been warm.

"We will ask here where your grandfather's house is." Pierre led Rene inside a blacksmith's barn.

Rene walked as close to the fire as he dared. It was such a large fire. It felt so good and so warm. Rene hoped Pierre would have trouble understanding directions. At least enough trouble to keep them there awhile.

"Pardon, Monseieur," Pierre was as polite to the black-

smith as he had been to Rene's mother. "Could you direct me to the home of Joseph Stebbins?"

The blacksmith did not look at Pierre. He was holding something glowing red in a large black tongs.

Rene stared at the piece of red. He had never seen anything like it. When the embers of a log are glowing red, there is still the shape and look of the log about them. This piece of glowing red looked like liquid flame. It looked hotter than the fire.

The blacksmith plunged the piece into water. It sizzled and sissed.

Rene stepped closer as the smithy pulled it out.

He held it on a large iron block. Then he pounded it.

Rene was amazed. That glowing red thing looked so soft, so fluid. Yet as the smithy pounded, it moved only a little with each blow. Slowly it curved. And slowly, gradually it darkened. Finally it was cool and black.

Then the blacksmith looked up.

"Joseph Stebbins," Pierre repeated.

The blacksmith's face looked grim. His eyes looked hard and cold. Even his voice was cold as he answered.

Rene had heard his mother and Aunt Therese talk in English. Sometimes his mother spoke in English to him and his brother and sisters. But Rene could not understand a word the blacksmith said.

Then the blacksmith looked up.



Pierre took Rene by the hand and pulled him out of the barn.

When they were outside Rene asked, "You asked him where my grandfather lives, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Is that all you asked?"

"Yes."

"Why should that make him mad?"

"Because he doesn't like us French."

"Oh." Rene walked along in silence for a moment.

"Where does my grandfather live?"

"At the north end of town."

"He used so many words to say only that!" Rene exclaimed.

"He said to look for the only house that does not look new. Your grandfather's is near it."

"Rene cocked his head to one side. "But I heard him say in English, 'Thanks'. Why was he thanking you?"

Pierre laughed. "He said," Pierre explained, "he said 'Only one house is not new, thanks to you French.'"

"It isn't your fault," Rene protested. "You weren't even on the raid."

"No. But to him I represent the people who were."

"I don't see why he is still mad. The raid happened a long time ago. A very long time ago. Before I was born."

Rene was surprised to see Pierre's eyes look sad. "But

it is not all over for them, Little Colt. It changed their lives too sharply." Pierre saw that Rene did not understand. "Look over there," he pointed.

"At what? There is nothing there but ground. And a few clumps of bushes."

"Look again, Little Colt."

Rene looked again. He could make out the outline of a large rectangle. Even though old, dirty snow still covered some of it, Rene realized he was looking at the cellar hole of what had once been a house.

"That house by grandfather's," Rene said aloud. "It is the only house that is old because all the rest were burned."

He looked ahead and saw the house. There was something familiar about it. It was almost as though he had seen it before. Of course. It was the house his mother had told about. It was the home of her aunt and uncle. The Indians had not burned it because they used it. They had taken their captives there. They had held them prisoner there until they were ready to march.

"This must be the house of your grandfather," Pierre decided.

Rene had been looking over his shoulder at the house where the Indians had held their captives. It was the Sheldon house, he remembered.

Now he turned and looked at the house before him.

Pierre led him straight to the front door.

"Are you going to knock? Or am I?" Pierre asked.

CHAPTER IV
GRANDFATHER AND GRANDMOTHER

CHAPTER IV

Rene raised his hand. This was the house of his grandfather. His mother had taught him what to say. He should be the one to knock at the door.

With each rap Rene said to himself one of the words he had practiced. "I - am - the - " Rene's hand paused. What was that next word in English? He couldn't remember. Oh, yes. It sounded a little like a man's name. Like the name, Jean. Oh, yes. "Son." That was the word. "I am the son..."

The door opened before Rene had time to think of the rest of the words.

Rene had a surprise. He had expected to meet his grandfather. Instead, a little old lady stood inside the door. She had opened it only a crack. Rene could make out her white hair, her dress, and her apron. Her face was half hidden by the shadows. This must be his grandmother.

"Gran'mere?" he asked softly. He couldn't remember the English word for grandmother. "Gran'mere?" he asked again.

The lady just stood, staring at him.

Perhaps he should ask for his grandfather. "Gran' father?" he asked. That didn't sound right. "Gran - father - air?" he tried again.

The door closed. Rene was disappointed. He had come so far. He had been so frightened because of the secret. And now his grandmother had shut the door in his face. Surely, she must know who he was. She should be able to guess.

Didn't she know? Or didn't she want him?

Rene didn't know what to think. He didn't know what to do. He felt like sitting down and crying. But that wouldn't help anything. He looked at Pierre. Pierre would know what to do.

Pierre shrugged.

Rene knocked again. He must make her understand who he was. Then, if grandmother did not want him, he would go on with Pierre and the others. On the way back toward the canoe he would say, "I wouldn't have liked it there with the English anyway." Rene held his head high and stuck out his chin. This is how he would look when he said that to Pierre.

The door opened. Rene stepped back in surprise. This time a tall man opened the door.

The woman was talking. "A dirty faced French urchin..." she was saying.

Rene could not understand the words. Pierre did. He threw back his head and laughed.

The man glanced at the laughing Pierre. Then he grasped Rene by the shoulders. He turned Rene's face toward the light. "Could it be...?" he breathed softly.

"He is Rene de Noyon," Pierre announced.

At the sound of his own name, Rene's voice came back.

"I am Rene de Noyens. I am the son of your daughter, Abigail."

With a roar Grandfather lifted him high in the air. He

set him down inside the house. "Abigail's boy. Abigail's boy. Look at him, Dorothy. Look at him."

His grandmother kissed him. Then she smiled and put her hand on his shoulder. "I wonder what he looks like, under all this grime and grease."

Grandfather held open the door. "Come in. Come in," he said to Pierre.

"Thank you. But no. I must be on my way. I go in my canoe. When I come back, I will stop for the boy. Good-bye."

"When will you be back for him?" Grandfather called as Pierre walked away.

Pierre called back over his shoulder, "When my business is finished."

"Harumpf!" said Grandfather as he closed the door.

"Come, Boy. Let's go out into the keeping room where your grandmother can see you, too. She'll want to look at you. And she'll want to hear all about your mother. She'll want to hear all the news.

Rene followed his grandmother. His grandfather's hand pushed him along, guiding him. Rene wished he knew what his grandfather had said. He had not understood a word.

Grandfather sat on a settle beside the large keeping room fireplace. He pulled Rene down beside him.

"Now, talk, Boy. Tell me how you come to be here. And tell me, how is your mother? Is she well? And how is your

Aunt Thankful? And your Uncle Steven? Do you ever see him?"

Rene sighed. How could he tell grandfather to talk more slowly. He could not understand him.

Grandfather misunderstood the sigh. "But first of all, boy, what about you. The news can wait. Are you hungry?"

Grandmother sniffed. "Looks like he needs washing worse than anything. He's that dirty. I'll fetch some water."

"And she'll fetch something for you to eat, too."

Grandfather smiled.

"That I will," Grandmother agreed. "But first, boy, how is your mother?"

Grandmother stood in front of him a happy, expectant smile on her lips.

Rene looked at Grandfather. He, too, was smiling and waiting. He could think of no English - not a single word. Rene shook his head.

Grandmother gave a funny little cry. She put her hand to her throat. She looked frightened.

Rene reached out and touched her hand. He half understood what she was saying. He wanted to find a way to tell her everyone was well.

"Your Aunt Thankful?" Grandfather spoke slowly. "Your mother?"

Rene had to say something. He said it in French. "Mama va bien. Bien."

"Do you suppose something has happened to them?" she asked Grandfather. "Why doesn't he tell us?"

Grandfather put his hand under Rene's chin. "Do you understand me?" he asked. "Do you know English?" he asked very slowly.

"English," Rene echoed, pleased. Grandfather was asking him to speak English. Rene liked this grandfather of his. He knew his grandfather liked him. He wanted to please grandfather. Rene could remember many English words. He had heard them from his mother. But the English words he could say best were those he practiced. To please Grandfather he said, "I am the son of your daughter, Abigail. I am Rene de Noyens. English."

"Good." Grandfather nodded encouragingly. "Now." He spoke very slowly. "How is your mother? How is your Aunt Thankful?"

"Joseph," Grandmother looked thoughtfully at Grandfather. "Remember what John Sheldon said when he came back last time. He told us Thankful had married. He said she had been given a French name. What was it?"

"Therese," Grandfather remembered. "Therese. How is your Aunt Therese? How is your mother? Your mama?"

At last Rene understood. "Tres bien," he answered happily. "Tres bien."

Grandfather nodded. "They are well," he told Grandmother.

"That's good." Grandmother turned away. "Now that boy can wash himself."

She dipped some water from the kettle hanging over the fire. She poured in some cold water. She came back and took Rene by the hand.

He followed happily behind her. "This is good," Rene said to himself. "I am beginning to remember the English words."

Grandmother handed him a piece of soap and a cloth. "Wash," she said.

Rene took the soap. He dipped the cloth into the water and rubbed soap on it. Then he looked at Grandmother.

"Wash," she repeated.

Still Rene hesitated.

"Wash," Grandmother said firmly. She shook her finger.

Now Rene understood. Grandmother wanted him to help. He would show her. He would be a big help. He would work hard. With a big smile he dipped the cloth into the water. He knelt down and began to scrub the floor.

"Ho, ho, ho." Grandfather's laugh startled him. He looked up.

Grandfather took the cloth from him. Grandmother rinsed it out.

"Now," said Grandfather, "wash yourself." He wet the cloth and rubbed it on Rene's face.

"Tonight he shall have a bath and I'll wash his clothes,"

Grandmother said as she left the room.

When Rene was washed, Grandfather led him back to the settle.

"Do you know any English?" Grandfather asked. He spoke slowly.

Rene nodded. When Grandfather spoke slowly, Rene could understand most of what he said. But Rene couldn't speak English very well. He had listened to it back home. But he had always spoken French.

Grandfather held his hand in front of Rene. "Hand," he said. He repeated it, "Hand."

Rene understood what grandfather wanted. Rene's nose wrinkled, his eyes squinted. His mouth twisted.

"Hand," Grandfather repeated.

Rene opened his mouth wide. "'And." He held out his own hand. "'And."

You didn't say the H," Grandfather said. "Let's try again. Hand."

Once again Rene squinted his eyes. Again his nose wrinkled. His mouth opened wide. "'And." He sighed. That first letter was a new sound. The French had no sound like the letter H. But how could he tell Grandfather?

He didn't have to.

"Let's try something else. Maybe that is a hard word for you."

"Hand," Grandfather repeated.



Grandfather touched the table.

"Table."

"Ta-" Rene stopped and looked at Grandfather.

"Table," Grandfather repeated.

Rene tried again. Very slowly and very carefully he tried again.

"Table."

"That's fine, Boy." Grandfather smiled. "That's fine."

Grandfather placed his hand upon the wooden bench by the fire. "Settle," he called it.

Again Rene struggled. Again Grandfather repeated the word. And again Rene said it slowly and carefully.

Grandfather spoke slowly and distinctly. He moved from object to object. He would name the thing. Rene would repeat the name. Sometimes the words came easily. Sometimes Rene would try and try again to make the same sound as Grandfather. Sometimes Rene would remember the word from having heard his mother say it. Then it would come with no trouble.

And so Rene's English lesson began in front of the keeping room fire.

"Fireplace," said Grandfather.

"Fireplace," repeated Rene.

"Warming pan," Grandfather touched the brass pan.

"Warming pan," Rene repeated.

"Meat jack." Grandfather pointed to the chain and hook hanging from the lug pole in the fireplace.

"Meat jack." Rene had trouble with this word.

Next Grandfather touched a long handled, flat shovel.

"Bread peel."

"Bread peel." Rene repeated it again. "Bread peel."

And so they went around the room. Grandfather named objects. Rene repeated. At last they finished. They were back where they had started.

"What is this?" Grandfather asked.

"Fireplace." Rene named it correctly. That was a word his mother had used many times.

Rene pointed at the chain and hook hanging in the fireplace. "Warming pan," he said proudly.

Grandfather laughed. As he laughed, he squeezed Rene's hand. Rene knew he had made a mistake. He knew Grandfather was laughing at the mistake. Grandfather was not laughing at him.

"What?" Grandfather asked. "What is it?"

"Warming pan. No?"

"No. That is the meat jack. We'll make this a good lesson. Come with me."

Rene stood still, watching Grandfather.

"Come," Grandfather nodded toward the next room. It was the buttery where food and some dishes were stored.

Rene stood in the doorway and stared. He had never seen so much food in anyone's house. His grandfather must be very

rich.

Grandfather pulled a jackknife from his pocket. "Barlow knife," he called it.

"Barlow knife," Rene repeated.

"What are you doing?" Grandmother asked as she came in. "You are going to spoil that boy's dinner."

"I think there is no danger of that," Grandfather said softly. "See how thin he is. He looks to me like a hungry boy. Like a boy who had been hungry often. I wonder if Abigail and her children are in need."

Rene stood with the slice of meat in his hand. He wondered what Grandmother and Grandfather had said. They talked so fast that he had not been able to understand. He had caught his mother's English name. But what else had they said? Perhaps they didn't want him to eat the meat. Maybe Grandmother didn't want him to. Maybe that is why Grandfather looked so sad.

The meat looked so good. Rene wished he had eaten it before Grandmother came into the room. Now he would have to put it back. He didn't want to do anything to make Grandfather sad. He put the slice of meat back. "I...I," Rene made himself think hard. What was the word he needed? Then he remembered. When he was little and took something he shouldn't have his Aunt Therese would say, "Put it down." "I down it put," Rene said.

Grandfather laughed. He understood. "No, Boy. Grandmother wants you to have it."

"Oh, yes." Grandmother handed it back to Rene.

Grandfather laughed. "Eat it."

Rene laughed, too. He was so happy.

Then Grandfather explained to Grandmother, "The boy called the meat jack a warming pan. I'm going to show him the difference."

Grandfather sliced another piece from the roast. "Meat."

"Meat," repeated Rene.

While he was eating it, Rene was pushed back into the keeping room. Grandfather led him to the fireplace. Pointing at the chain and hock, he named it again. "Meat jack." Then Grandfather showed him how the meat jack worked.

When Grandfather had finished Rene understood. The raw meat was placed on the hook. Then the jack was raised and turned while the meat roasted over the fire.

Next Grandfather picked up the warming pan. "Warming pan."

"warming pan." Rene nodded.

Grandfather took down some tongs. They hung under the tobacco shelf. "Smoking tongs."

"Smoking tongs," Rene said after him.

With the tongs Grandfather lifted a hot coal from the fire. He placed the coal in the warming pan. The cover of the warming pan was pierced with many tiny holes. Grandfather

fastened down the cover.

Once again he led Rene out of the keeping room. This time they went into a room opposite the buttery. It was a bedroom.

Grandfather lifted the blankets. He thrust the warming pan between the sheets.

"Oh," Rene exclaimed. Then he started to laugh. How funny it would be to put the meat jack into bed. How funny it would be to try to roast meat in the warming pan. Now he knew why Grandfather had laughed.

They went back to the keeping room.

Rene looked at the table in amazement. So much food for three people. Rene thought of the fete days back home. He thought of the days his father had come home from Detroit. Even on those special days he had never seen so much food. Never before had he seen so many different things to eat. No, not even on the biggest, most important fete days.

He forgot Grandfather and Grandmother. Slowly he walked around the table. He looked and he sniffed. How he wanted to dip his fingers in and taste!

Rene stopped in front of a dish of light, brown syrup. It smelled sweet. He almost bent over to put his nose close to it. Before he did, he looked across the table. Grandmother and Grandfather were watching him. Rene backed away from the table. He knew it was bad manners to do what he had done.

Grandfather put his hand on Rene's shoulder. It felt warm and strong and good. It felt as though Grandfather were saying he understood. Rene looked up.

"It's all right, Boy. Your grandmother will enjoy filling you up while you are here."

Grandfather spoke too fast for Rene. He did not understand everything Grandfather had said. But he knew Grandfather was telling him it was all right.

Rene looked again at the table. There were two wooden trenchers. Grandmother and Grandfather would share one. Did that mean he was to have a trencher of his own? But, no. There were four pewter spoons. There were four drinking mugs. Three were made of wood. One was of leather. There was no doubt about it. The table was set for four.

While Rene was wondering who the fourth person was, the door opened.

"I hear we have company," the man said as he came into the room. He held out his hand. "Hello, Rene."

"This is your Uncle John," Grandfather told Rene.

Rene nodded. His mother had told him about his Uncle John. Of all the family who had been captured, only Grandmother, Grandfather and Uncle John had been allowed to return.

Rene looked soberly at his uncle. Uncle John looked a lot like Grandmother. Rene looked thoughtfully at Grandfather. Grandfather's eyes were just like his mother's. Rene thought

they were the kindest eyes and the bluest eyes he had ever seen.

"Come. Let's eat." Grandfather showed Rene where to stand. "This meal is called dinner," he explained.

Rene and his Uncle John shared a trencher. But each had his own spoon.

Grandfather, Grandmother and Uncle John each bowed his head. Rene looked quickly at each of them. He bowed his head.

Grandfather asked the blessing. Then Grandmother ladled the hot meat and vegetables into the two trenchers.

Rene ate. He tasted everything. There was a food so sour it made his mouth pucker. He wrinkled his nose and shook his head. Everyone laughed. Rene laughed, too.

Grandmother named each food as she passed it to Rene. The sour things were called pickled radish pods. Rene did not try to remember what they were called. The sweet smelling syrup was maple syrup. The best food was the applesauce. It was made of apples and quinces. It was sweetened with molasses.

Everything was so good. But best of all was the way Grandmother acted. She kept passing Rene more and more. He did not have to save some for another meal. At home, even when there had been plenty on the table, no one ate all he wanted. Something had to be saved for the next meal.

When they had finished, Grandfather handed Rene a trencher. "You help your grandmother."

Rene understood. He helped Grandmother as well as he could. He did not always understand what he was to do. Grandmother had to stop what she was doing to show him.

Finally she pushed him toward the loft. She pointed up and gave him a little shove. This Rene understood. He could hear pounding up there. Grandfather was building something.

Grandfather was finishing a bedroom. It was nearly done. The walls were made of matched boards. Grandfather was a carpenter by trade. He was a good carpenter. The room showed that.

Helping Grandfather was easier than helping Grandmother. He could hand Grandfather a tool or a peg. It took only a nod of Grandfather's head and Rene knew what Grandfather wanted.

Rene felt happier than he had ever been before. He had eaten so much that day. He had been so excited. Best of all, his grandparents liked him. And he liked them. "Uncle John, too," he thought.

Supper was over. Uncle John had pulled Grandmother's spinning wheel close to the fireplace. Grandmother was using it. Rene watched the way her arms moved. He saw the shadows cast on the wall. They moved together.

Grandfather was carving a wooden mug. The inside looked as though it had been burned out.

Uncle John had gone out for the evening.

Rene felt his cheeks growing red. He felt his eyes

growing heavy.

"The boy is falling asleep," Grandfather said. "Come, Rene, I'll show you to your bed."

Grandfather pulled Rene to his feet. Sleepily Rene started to follow. Suddenly he remembered his red cap. Where had he put it?

He pulled away from Grandfather and looked all around the room. He kept looking at the settle. He had put it there when he came. He must have.

Rene was so excited he forgot Grandfather could not understand French. Excitedly he began to jabber about his cap.

"Slow down, Boy." Grandfather spoke gently but firmly.

"Now show me what you want."

Rene stopped jabbering. He knew what Grandfather meant. With his hands Rene pretended to put on a cap. With his hands he pretended to pull it off and toss it on the settle.

"You want to know where your cap is?" Grandfather asked.

"Cap. Yes." Rene nodded, all smiles.

"I washed it. It was dirty," Grandmother told them.

"Where did you put it?" Grandfather asked.

"It is hanging in the buttery. When I wash his other clothes I will put them all in front of the fire."

"Come, Boy. Let's go to bed."

"Cap?" Rene asked.

"Why in the world does he want to see it? Doesn't he

trust us?" Grandmother asked impatiently.

"I don't know. But it won't do any harm to show it to him."

Rene was satisfied when he saw his cap. He touched it and smiled.

Then Grandfather lighted a candle and showed Rene to the loft.

He gave Rene a shirt of Uncle John's. He took Rene's clothes down to Grandmother to wash.

Rene slept.

CHAPTER V

A NEW WAY OF LIFE

CHAPTER V

The days were warmer than when Rene had first come.

He and Grandfather were walking down the street. Grandfather took long strides. Rene had to take two steps to every one of Grandfather's. As Grandfather strode along, Rene bounced beside him. Rene would be a step ahead of him, a step behind. Or Rene would be over to one side to look at a bush.

"See, Grandfather," he would call. "This one is beginning to bud."

Or Rene would be over on the other side to kick at a stone.

Wherever he was, on one side or the other, Rene was talking.

"I think you learned English too well," Grandfather remarked. "Now that you have started talking it, you never stop." Grandfather chuckled.

"No, Grandfather. I don't think so." Rene was serious. "I don't feel as though I learned English. I feel as though I knew it once and it came back."

"Your mother and your Aunt Thankful must have spoken it."

"Yes. Sometimes Mother spoke it to us children, too. She and father spoke it when they didn't want us to understand. We learned to understand though. But it all seems very far away."

"What does?" Grandfather asked.

"Living anywhere but here with you."

"Do you like it here, Aaron?"

"Yes, all but being called Aaron."

"Child, I told you why."

"Yes. I know, Grandfather." Rene sighed. "I can understand it. Back in Canada they changed my mother's name from Abigail to Marguerite. Aunt Thankful is now called Therese. The same thing."

"What do you mean, the same thing?" Grandfather asked.

"Everything has its own name in its own language. Everything from a chair to a person. I don't mind my new name. It is easy to say. It is only my ears that are giving me trouble. They hear you say Aaron. They don't pay attention. They are waiting to hear you say Rene. Then they remember that Aaron means me. Each day I am a little more Aaron. But there has not been time enough yet to lose Rene."

"What would you think about losing Rene completely?"

They were in front of Grandfather's house now. Grandfather stopped walking. He looked soberly down at Rene.

Rene looked all around. No one could hear them. They were alone.

"You mean to stay here with you? Not go back?"

"Yes."

"Mama and I talked about it before I came."

"What did she say?"

"She said many things."

"I can imagine." Grandfather smiled. "She used to talk all the time. Even more than you do."

"I talk because there is so much to say. But, Grandfather, I have kept still about this."

"You have," Grandfather agreed. "Now what did your mother say?"

"She said I might not like it here. In that case I should return. She said your children are all in Canada except for Uncle John. She said if I stayed, you would have more of a family. She said I would be a help to you. She said I would have more of a future."

"You see," Rene explained, "in Canada for boys like me there are two choices. One can become a voyageur. My legs are growing so fast they will probably be too long for a canoe. The other choice is to be a soldier like papa. But soldiers are not well paid. The seigneurs wish boys to grow to work the land. They say to raise cows, not horses. But that is a poor existence, too."

"Here it is so different. Here one can live in his own home. Here one can learn a trade."

"Why can't you do that in Canada?" Grandfather asked.

"I am not sure. I think there are many reasons. My father is a soldier. So I would be a soldier, too."

"Of course, there are some trades in Montreal. But the ships from France bring most of what is needed. The voyageurs trade their furs for the goods they want."

"The soldiers get paid in money that the ship brings."

Then they buy goods that also came on the ship. Then the ship returns to France with the money it brought over."

"Are you two going to stand there all evening?" Grandmother had come to the front door to call them.

"Come on, Boy. Let's go in to supper."

While Grandfather scraped his boots, Grandmother came to the back door. She handed Rene the bucket.

It was Rene's job to bring in the water. It was a job he liked. He liked it much better than scouring the pewter. But he liked any job better than that.

Rene sang to himself as he loosed the well sweep. He whistled as he walked back to the house. He set down the bucket and scraped his mocassins. Inside, he carried the bucket carefully. He didn't spill any water on the floor.

"If I stayed here," he thought, "I would have a fine pair of boots like Grandfather some day. I might even be able to work at making boots. For every two pairs I made for others, I would make myself a pair. I would like being a cordwainer. I would be a good cordwainer. I would make good boots."

"Close the door," Grandmother called. "You are the funniest boy. You forget what you are doing half the time. Yet I think you never miss anything that is going on."

"I was thinking while I was scraping the mud from my mocassins," Rene explained to his grandmother. "I was thinking I would like to be a cordwainer."

"Why not a carpenter like your grandfather?" Uncle John asked.

"I would rather make boots than houses."

"You would probably be your own best customer," Uncle John laughed.

"I would like to be," Rene grinned.

Rene shook the water from his hands and reached for the towel. He saw Grandmother watching him. He remembered he had not washed his face. Grandmother wanted everything so clean. Just like his mother. He scowled as he washed his face.

"That's better," Grandmother smiled. "I thought for a minute that you were going to forget to wash it."

Rene emptied the water and the family went to the table. Supper, as usual, was bread and cheese. The apple cider was half cider, half water. Grandmother had explained once that they would soon have milk instead of cider. In summer there was always plenty of milk.

The family bowed their heads. Grandfather asked the blessing. They ate in silence.

For the first time since he had come, Rene was anxious for the meal to end. He had kept his secret so long. Now it was out. Tonight, after supper, he would help Grandmother clear the table. As usual, he would help her with the dishes. They would sit around the fire. Then they would decide

whether he would stay or return to Canada. Rene was glad to have his secret out in the open. He was anxious to have it settled.

CHAPTER VI

RENE'S SECRET IS TOLD

CHAPTER VI

But Rene was in for a surprise.

When they had finished eating Grandfather took his place beside the fire. He took out his Barlow knife. He began whittling. Uncle John did not leave tonight. He sat opposite Grandfather. He, too, took out his Barlow knife. He, too, began whittling a peg.

Rene helped Grandmother.

When the last dish was put away, Rene pulled out Grandmother's spinning wheel for her. Then he sat down beside Grandfather.

He was impatient to talk about staying. But he did not know how to begin. He wished Grandfather would say something.

Maybe Grandmother wouldn't want him. Maybe he made too much work for her. Or maybe Uncle John didn't want him to stay. Maybe Uncle John was afraid it would be dangerous.

For himself, Rene would not be afraid. He looked at his grandfather. He loved Grandfather so much. He could not bring danger to him. He thought of his mother. She was so far away. He could not do anything to bring danger to her.

"I had better return," Rene blurted.

Grandfather was surprised. He stopped whittling and looked thoughtfully at Rene.

The smooth whirring sound of Grandmother's spinning wheel stopped. She looked sharply at Rene.

Only Uncle John did not look up. He kept on whittling.

"Miss your mother?" he asked.

"But, of course," Rene answered. "But..." Rene shrugged. He could not tell the real reason. Everyone would say, "Oh, don't worry about me. I'm not afraid."

"It can't be that you don't like Grandmother's cooking," Uncle John teased.

"It's the best food in the world." Rene laughed. "You know," he continued, "when I first came here it was so funny. That very first day I thought it was a fete."

"A fete?" Grandfather asked.

"Yes. You see, at home we have many fete days. They are holidays. The church says there will be one. And almost every week there is. Sometimes there are two in a week. No one works on fete days. If the woman of the house can manage it, there is something special to eat.

"That first day I was here I kept waiting for the fun to begin. I could not believe you ate like that every day. By the end of the first week, I was sure you were going to run out of food."

"Do you ever run out back home?" Uncle John asked. He went on whittling as though he were not really interested in Rene's answer.

"No. There is always a little bread. We do not go without eating. Only sometimes we do not eat very much."

"And do you miss the fetes?"

"They were fun. But I think most of all I miss having friends. This Deerfield is a strange village. There are old people. There are very few young children and babies. There is no one my age."

Uncle John looked angry. His eyes flashed and his face darkened. Grandmother caught her breath sharply. Rene knew he had said something wrong. He looked at Grandfather. Grandfather always helped him.

Grandfather's jaw jutted out. His lips were a thin, hard line.

"I am sorry," Rene blurted. "I am not complaining. I just miss having friends my own age. But that is not important. I do not miss them that much. Really, I was not complaining."

"Rene," Grandfather's voice sounded strained. "Do you know why there are no children your age?"

Rene was puzzled. "No. There just are none."

"There are none because of the massacre. We lost more than our houses when the French destroyed Deerfield. A burned house can be replaced. But a family is not built so easily. The french and Indians destroyed families. Some were killed. Some were separated. Only a few escaped unharmed."

Grandfather was silent. A burning log crackled. There was no other sound in the room. Uncle John had stopped whittling. The flames of the fire flickered, falling and rising.

Grandfather's voice sounded hushed and still. It was though the words he was saying hurt him.

"The raid was a night of terror. It was a night of blood and fire. It was pain and death. But it did not end when the sun rose. It did not end when the fires had died to ashes. It was not over at the end of the long march to Canada. It is still with us, Rene. It always will be."

Grandfather began to whittle again. Uncle John's knife moved. Thin slivers of wood fell on the hearth. The whir of the spinning wheel started once more.

"But why did people come back here, Grandfather? Why didn't you go to Hadley? Why didn't you go some place where there was a village?"

"We had to come back, Rene. A man must take what he has and build from that."

"What do you mean, Grandfather?"

"When we returned from Canada we had nothing. Nothing except the land we owned. We had no cattle, no sheep. We had no money with which to buy new land. We had only the land and the help that was given us.

"You see, Rene, we had to come back here. Deerfield is the outpost of our settlements. We could not allow the French to push us back. If we did, they would only attack the next town and then the next.

"So our government helped us rebuild here. Our government

and our neighbors from near-by towns."

"You have built a very good life for yourselves, Grandfather," Rene said soberly.

"Do you like it here, Rene?" Grandfather asked.

"Oh, yes. I like it so very much."

"Why?" Uncle John asked without looking up.

"I like all of you."

"But you like your mother, your brother, and sisters."

"Yes, and my father when he is home. But there are so many of them. They all have each other. You have no children here. And there is more."

"What do you mean, Rene?"

"It is hard to say. I think..." Rene hesitated.

"Yes?"

"You can get much of what you want by working for it. You know how." Rene bit his lip and looked around the room.

"Like that," he pointed.

"You and Grandfather made that chest. You knew how to make it. You are home so you can make it. Back home at Cote St. Joseph the men are soldiers or voyageurs. They are not home long enough to make such a fine chest. And in the chest is Grandmother's linen table cloth. You do not have to be rich. You do not have to wait for your king to send you linen."

"We do not have a king, Rene. Queen Anne is the ruler of

England and the colonies."

Rene shrugged. King or queen, it did not matter. "But you made it yourself."

"It is not easy to make things yourself, Rene. Your Grandmother raised the flax to make that linen cloth. Flax is not easy to raise. The young plants are very tender. They must be weeded carefully. When it is ripe, it is pulled by the roots. Then it is rippled. The seed must be saved as it is combed out. It is a strange plant. From a tender beginning, it grows to be very tough. Much more is done before it is ready for spinning. You see, it is a long process, to make a table cloth."

"It is difficult but it is worth it. It is a good feeling to do hard things and have something fine for one's trouble."

"If you feel this way, why are you going back?" Uncle John stopped whittling. He looked directly at Rene.

"Pierre would not allow me to stay."

"I would not ask Pierre for permission to keep my own grandson," Grandfather snorted.

"But what would you do?"

"I can take care of Pierre, if you stay."

Rene looked around the room. He knew. He wanted to stay. He wanted it more than he had ever wanted anything. He wanted to be with his grandfather.

His grandfather knew it. "You want to stay, don't you, Boy?"

Rene nodded. "But I am afraid," he whispered.

"Of what?" Uncle John asked impatiently. "You are not a coward, Rene."

Grandfather answered for Rene. He watched Rene's face as he spoke. "No, you are not afraid for yourself. You are afraid for another reason. But is there anything to be afraid of?"

"Monsieur de Vaudreiul." Rene remembered his dream. "He has put people into prison for less."

"Who could be put into prison? You couldn't. You would be safe here. He couldn't come down here and get any of us. And what of your mother and your family back there?"

Rene nodded. He was afraid for them.

"Did your brother and sisters know you were coming?"

"No. I left while they were sleeping. They did not know I was going."

"Did your mother say anything about your staying here?"

"Yes. It was such a big secret. She told me you would help me to decide."

"She loves you very much, Rene."

"I know. She promised she would come to visit some day if I stay. And she will."

"Then she is not planning to put herself in any danger if

you stay."

"How can she help but be?" Rene asked.

"I think it is like this," Grandfather explained. "It is against the law for Pierre to bring his furs here to trade."

"I think so, too. That is why he left Canada so quietly," Rene agreed.

"Yes. So if he returns without you he can say nothing. He cannot complain to the authorities. He cannot admit he was here."

"But he will be furious. He would not allow me to stay."

"He will have nothing to say about it. And let him be furious."

"But what will he do to my mother?" Rene was worried.

"Did your mother act worried? Did she say anything about it?"

Rene looked at his red woolen cap. It hung on a peg by the door. "All she said was to try to return my red cap," he explained. "I don't know why. It is a little small. Perhaps she wants it for my brother."

Much to his surprise his grandparents and uncle burst into laughter.

"Can't you see her!" Grandfather was roaring with laughter. He slapped his hand against his knee. "Can't you see her!"

"Can't you hear her!" Uncle John's words were choked with

laughter. Uncle John stood up. He put one hand on his chest. He made his voice high, like a woman's. "What is this? I trust you with my son. And all you bring back is his cap. What have you done with him?" Uncle John laughed so hard tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Poor Pierre," Grandfather laughed.

"That's just what Abigail would do," Grandmother laughed.

"Poor Pierre," Grandfather repeated. He straightened his face. He said very soberly to Rene, "If you are afraid for anyone, you should be afraid for Pierre. When your mother gets through with him..." Grandfather broke into laughter again.

Now Rene understood. No one would be in danger if he stayed. He was so excited. He ran over and took Grandmother's hand. "Do you want me to stay? I'm not too much trouble? I'm not too much work for you, Grandmother?"

Everyone stopped laughing. Rene looked at his grandfather. Then he looked at his uncle.

Rene dropped grandmother's hand. Perhaps he was too much trouble.

Grandmother reached out and took Rene's hand. "You are not too much trouble, child. You are a good boy and you are a big help. It isn't that."

It was Grandfather who told him. "First we had to be sure you wanted to stay. Now we are sure of that.

"A few minutes ago you said we can have anything we want

here. That is, if we work for it. I'm afraid it isn't quite that easy. We want you to stay. We believe it would not endanger anyone if you did. But, first, we must make sure. I must take it up with the selectmen. They have to consider the good of the whole town.

"You have heard how Mr. Sheldon has gone to Canada to ransom our people? Yes, I thought you had. Mr. Stoddard and Mr. Williams are going to Canada soon. They will bring back as many as they can. You will be allowed to stay if it would not spoil their mission. That is why I must ask the selectmen."

"When?" Rene's voice caught in his throat. The one word grated. His voice did not sound as though it belonged to him.

"Tonight," Grandfather replied. "Pierre will be coming for you soon."

Grandfather rose. "Here, Boy." He held out his Barlow knife. "How would you like to try my knife?"

"Oh, thank you, Grandfather." Ever since he had seen Grandfather whittling Rene had wanted to try using that fine knife. But now he didn't care so much about the knife. He only wanted to know what the selectmen would say.

Rene watched Grandfather go out the door. He wanted to run over and ask to go along. But he couldn't. If Grandfather could take him, he would.

The door closed behind Grandfather and the waiting began. Uncle John selected a piece of wood and handed it to Rene.

Carefully Rene pressed the blade of the knife against it. He pushed it down. The knife went in too deeply and a piece of wood splintered. Rene tried again. It had looked so easy when Grandfather and Uncle John did it.

Rene tried to move the knife quickly and lightly. A little at a time. He didn't know he was scowling at the wood as he tried again and again. He didn't see Uncle John glance over and smile.

Finally he had made a rough peg. "Maybe you'd better finish it, Uncle John."

"No. You'll never learn if I do it for you."

"But I may spoil it."

"I spoiled my first one. And cut my finger, too."

Rene went back to whittling. He tried to shave the peg carefully to make it smooth.

Finally it was finished. Rene put down the knife and looked at the fire. Making that one peg had been harder than scouring all of Grandmother's powder.

Rene felt restless. He wished he could go out and walk. He sighed. Whittling a peg was better than doing nothing. And he wasn't sleepy. It was past his bedtime but no one told him to go to bed.

"Would it be all right if I tried to make another?" he asked Uncle John.

Uncle John handed him another piece of wood. Rene

whittled and whittled. He thought Grandfather would never come home.

When Grandfather came it was very late.

Grandfather's face was grave.

"You may stay, Aaron. Your name will be Aaron Denio.

"Now go to bed. I have something to show you but it must wait until morning."

In the morning Rene dressed quickly. Grandfather had something to show him. Rene wondered what it could be.

He wasn't long in finding out.

He hurried down from the loft. Everyone was in the keeping room. Rene started to pick up the empty water bucket.

"I'll take it this morning." Uncle John took the bucket from him. He stepped out into the grey light of early morning. Once outside, he turned and called softly, "All right."

"Come here, Boy." Rene went to Grandfather by the fireplace.

"We have made a place to hide you when Pierre comes. I made it to hide from the Indians in case of another raid."

Grandfather reached into the fireplace with his left hand. His right hand was against the paneling beside the fireplace.

Rene's mouth opened in surprise. The panel moved. Behind it was a small, dark room with four stairs that stopped. They didn't go anyplace.

"In case of an Indian raid, all of us could squeeze in

here," Grandfather explained. "One of us could sit on each step.

"When Pierre comes, this is where you must hide. If you are alone in the house you must open it, get in, and close it. Now this is how it works.

"Bend down and look up under the fireplace. You must lift up on this piece. Push it over as far as it will go. Then press against the panel right here under my tobacco shelf. That's right."

Grandfather closed the panel. "Now you do it. No, push up more. That's it. Now over. All the way. There. You have it."

Grandfather lighted a candle. "Now come inside."

Inside, Grandfather showed Rene how to close it. "Push here," he said, pushing against the back of the panel. "Now the bolt must be pushed back. Then pull this end down and push again. Now try the wall. Press against it. If it doesn't open you have the bolt fastened correctly."

Grandfather opened the panel. He stepped back. "Try it."

Rene pushed the panel closed. He pushed the bolt back. Then down. Push again. It was easy. He did it again and again until he could get it in place quickly.

"You must go there and hide when Pierre comes," Grandfather repeated. "And you must not come out. Remember your name is Aaron. If I call anything to Rene, I am not calling

Rene went inside the secret room.



you. Rene is the boy who came with Pierre. But Rene is no longer here."

Rene understood. His new name would serve two purposes. It would be easier for the English to pronounce. It would help to deceive Pierre if it were needed. This would all be very simple.

But Rene was soon to find out it was not quite so simple.

Before he closed the door Grandfather placed a few things in the secret room. "You may have to sleep here. You may be here for two or three days," he warned.

The last thing Grandfather did was to set the candle on the mantle.

"If you have time, light it and take it in. Then you can see what you are doing when you fasten the bolt. But be sure to blow it out. We don't want any light shining through a crack."

When they were finished, Grandmother went to the door. She opened it and called, "John, we are waiting for the water."

"I'll be right there, Mother," Uncle John called.

Now Rene knew why Uncle John had gone after the water. He had been keeping watch. He had made sure no one was around.

Again that evening Uncle John got the water while Rene practiced opening and closing the panel. This time he practiced without the candle. He might not have time to light it before going into the room.

When he had finished, Grandfather warned again, "You must not come out. I will let you out. You are no longer Rene. You do not answer to that name. And you know, you must tell no one about the secret room."

Rene nodded. Everything seemed so good. It would surely work. Only one thing bothered Rene. "What are you going to tell Pierre?" he asked.

"I will take care of that. It will depend."

Rene was sure Grandfather had a plan.

CHAPTER VII
RENE DISAPPEARS

CHAPTER VII

When Grandmother baked she put a fresh loaf of bread in the secret room. Then she took out the one that was kept there.

Rene thought a great deal about the secret room. He wished he could spend a night there. But he did not ask to. He knew it was there for a serious purpose. It was not a place to play.

At first Rene did not answer when he was called Aaron. No one called him Rene any more. In a few days he got used to his new name.

It was a beautiful afternoon. A cool breeze was blowing but the sun was warm. Rene was anxious to get outside. He was helping Grandmother with the dinner dishes.

"I may be able to finish John's coat this afternoon," Grandmother was talking as much to herself as she was to Rene. "I do hope so."

Grandmother was making Uncle John a new coat. He was to wear it when he was married. Rene was glad Uncle John would soon be married. Then Grandmother would have a woman to help with the dishes. Then he would not have to do so many household chores.

He was impatient to get the dishes finished now. Out in the back yard he was burning and scraping a burl to make a new trencher. It would be a wedding present for his uncle.

Suddenly there was the sound of hoof beats. Someone had

ridden right to the back door.

Grandmother pushed Rene into the buttery. Rene had never seen her move so fast.

A heavy fist pounded against the door. "Mrs. Stebbins. Mrs. Stebbins. It's Daniel Arms. Open up."

Grandmother threw back the bolt.

"Hide the boy. A band of French and Indians is approaching."

The door closed. Mr. Arms rode out of the yard.

"Hurry," Grandmother called to Rene. She had the panel open by the time he reached the fireplace.

"I'll close it," she said as he stepped inside.

Rene sat down to wait. Alone in the dark little room, Rene could hear the sound of his own breathing. He could hear the sound of his heart pounding in his chest. He was afraid to move.

He could hear sounds in the keeping room. There was a steady rhythm to them. Grandmother was not sewing. But what was she doing? Rene listened.

Finally he knew. That sound was the batten as it whacked against the warp threads. The duller sound was the foot pedal. Grandmother was working at the big loom. She had said she was going to sew. But she was weaving instead. She was doing it for him. Sewing was too quiet. Grandmother was doing something to make noise.

Gradually Rene's eyes were getting used to the dark. He could see pale streaks of light. They filtered through the cracks.

He heard pounding at the door. Pierre was here. Rene's throat felt dry.

He heard grandmother throw open the bolt of the door.

Then he heard a man's voice. It sounded like Uncle John.
"Aaron. Come out."

Rene was puzzled, but he didn't move. Grandfather had told him to stay.

Rene could hear the bolt of the secret room moving. The panel swung open.

"Aaron. Hurry. Get out."

Rene stepped out. He blinked. The room seemed so bright. After the darkness he could hardly see.

"Listen." Uncle John grabbed his shoulder. "Grandfather sent me. You must do just as I say.

"There is a band of French and Indians. They are walking through town. Grandfather says you are to join them. Call and wave to anyone you see on the street. You are to walk beyond town with them. Then, when no one from town can see you, turn back. Come as far as the clump of willows at the north end. You know the place?"

"Yes, Uncle John."

"Stay there. When it is dark, I'll come for you."

"Why?" Rene asked.

"We are going to tell Pierre you left with these men.

Now hurry. Run along. Remember to act very gay and be noisy."

Rene snatched his red cap from the peg by the door and ran out.

When he got to the street, the men were almost in front of Grandfather's.

Rene ran to meet them. He did not have to act gay. He felt gay. It would be good to hear French spoken again.

He ran up to the men. Soon he was chatting happily with them. He saw Ebenezer Fields, the blacksmith. He waved to him. "Hello, Mr. Fields. Hello," he called.

Mr. Fields stared at him but did not answer. Rene was not surprised. He knew how Mr. Fields hated the French.

A little farther up the street they passed three of the soldiers stationed at Deerfield. Rene recognized Edmund Grandy and called to him. "Hello, Sergeant. Hello Sergeant Grandy."

The three soldiers turned to watch them as they passed. Rene heard one ask, "Who's that?"

"Joseph Stebbins' grandson. His father's a Frenchman."

Rene's ears turned red but he kept going.

The leader of these men was called Albert.

"Have you seen Pierre?" Rene asked.

"Oh. So that's who you are! The boy Pierre brought

down. Yes, I have seen him. He should be along any day now."

"Did he sell all his furs?"

"Did he sell all his furs?" The man laughed. "Such fine furs. How could he help but sell them! The English grabbed them. They were beautiful. Yes. He sold all his furs. He will soon be along for you. I'll bet you'll be glad to see him. The English," Albert shrugged. "They are all right to visit, I suppose. But," he shrugged again, "they are not French. But you know. How did you like your visit? How do you like sitting all day Sunday in their church? Won't you be glad to get home?"

Rene did not want to lie to Albert. Instead of answering him he said, "I miss my mother."

"Of course you miss your mother. I'll bet she misses you, too, eh? Your mother. I know her. She is like a she bear with her young. She is like all the English. They worry too much. I am surprised she let you come."

"Pierre promised he would return me safely. My father knows Pierre well. Pierre is a man of his word. My mother trusts him."

"If Pierre promised he would get you home safely, he will. Your mother was right to trust him.

"Your English friends didn't think much of seeing you with us. They didn't like it, did they?"

"They do not understand," Rene said stiffly.

"Oh, they understand, all right. They just don't like us. And we don't like them. There is reason on both sides. Although, we are gentlemen. And our Indians. Their Indian allies are savages." There was scorn in Albert's voice.

"They think our Indians are savages, too."

Albert stopped and looked angrily at Rene. "Are you getting to think like the English, too? Did you ever hear of a Caughnawaga or Abnaki who was cruel like the Iroquois? Do they torture prisoners like the Iroquois?"

"No, but the English didn't like getting killed by them."

"They were killed with mercy." Albert walked with long strides. He was angry.

"You had better return to your English village, Boy," he said shortly.

Rene didn't want to leave Albert angry. "Please could I walk just a little farther with you? My ears are happy from hearing French. They get tired of trying to catch the English words."

That made Albert laugh. He pinched Rene's ear playfully. "So your ears like French better than English. Ah, they are good ears." Albert brushed his hand up. It knocked off Rene's cap.

Rene reached down and picked it up. "My ears fit better than my cap," he laughed. "My cap will soon fit my younger brother."

"Ah, yes. But now you had better return. Ears or no ears. We are nearly out of sight of town."

"All right. But just let me walk a little farther. See, one can still see the town. And I wanted to ask you about Pierre."

"What about Pierre? I already told you all I know. He has sold his furs. He will be here for you soon."

"I couldn't return with you?" Rene asked. He was sure the answer would be no.

"Return with me! Just walk away. Pouf. Like that. Indeed not. What would your grandparents think? No one would know where you had gone. When Pierre came for you, what would he do?"

"He would go on home. Then when he went to my mother's I would be there to surprise him."

"Oh. Just like that. Do you know what Pierre would do? I can tell you. He would not believe that you had gone. He would think the English were hiding you. He would turn that town inside out, looking for you. He would probably turn every man in that town inside out, too. Oh, what a rage he would be in. And when he returned to Canada, what would he say to me? I do not like to think of it. And when he walked up to your mother's and saw you standing there. Oh, little boy. I would not want to be inside your trousers! No, Boy. You go back now."

"But there is one more thing. Then I will go back. I promise." Rene skipped on ahead.

"Do you think I cannot find my way back?" he asked. "Do you think I am a baby? I am the son of Jacques de Noyens. I am not going to get lost in my grandfather's back yard."

Albert walked on. "All right. What else do you want to ask me about Pierre?"

"Did Pierre sell his canoe, too? Will he be walking back?"

At this all of the men laughed. "A very important question, that," one of them said.

"Don't you like walking, Boy?" another asked.

"I think I should make you wait and find out," Albert teased.

"Please tell me," Rene said.

Albert looked back. Deerfield was no longer in sight.

"No, he did not sell his canoe. Now turn around and go back."

"All right. Goodbye," Rene called.

He walked slowly in the direction of the town.

This was fun. Rene took his time walking. He did not want to be seen by anyone in town. He did not want to have the men see him going west of town.

Finally he reached the clump of willows. He sat in the sun with his back against a tree. It was very pleasant there.

As the sun went down the evening grew cold. Rene wished he had a blanket with him. He found a sheltered place inside

the clump of trees. Hiding in the cold without any supper wasn't so much fun. Rene was glad to see his uncle when he finally came.

CHAPTER VIII

RENE BECOMES AARON

CHAPTER VIII

The next morning when Rene awoke his head ached. His throat felt stiff and dry. He felt cold all over. He wished he could stay in bed all day.

"Well, Aaron," Uncle John said, "I'm surprised. Usually you wake me. What are you doing, sleeping like this?"

Rene sneezed.

"That's a fine answer," Uncle John said.

Rene sneezed again.

"What's the matter?" Uncle John stopped teasing. He sounded worried.

"It is nothing," Rene said. He got out of bed.

"I'm getting the water for you," Uncle John told him.

"You must stay inside from now on."

"All the time?" Rene asked.

"All the time."

Rene hadn't thought about that. Disappearing had sounded like an adventure. Staying inside with Grandmother wouldn't be very exciting.

Uncle John was coming in with the water when Rene went down. He was glad he didn't have to go out in the cold, damp morning air. He was so cold in the house that he was almost shivering.

For the first time since he had come, Rene wasn't hungry.

Grandmother was the first to notice.

"Why aren't you eating?" she asked sharply.

"My throat hurts."

Grandmother frowned. Before Rene had time to wonder whether she was angry she was beside him. For such a little old lady, Grandmother moved very quickly.

She put her hand on his forehead. Then she pressed her lips against it.

"Your head isn't hot. You probably took a chill last night," she decided.

"It was cold and damp after the sun went down," Rene explained. "It is nothing to worry about though. I have felt like this before." He sneezed again.

Rene watched Grandmother as she put some dried leaves into a small pot. She took it to the fireplace and poured boiling water on them. After a few minutes she tasted the liquid. Then she held back the leaves with a spoon while she poured the brown liquid into a mug.

"Drink it." She handed it to Rene.

Rene tasted it. He wrinkled his nose. It smelled awful and tasted worse.

"All of it," Grandmother said sternly.

Rene wriggled and made a face. But he drank all of it.

"Now you get into Grandfather's bed and cover up."

"I have felt like this before," Rene protested.

"Do as your grandmother says," Grandfather told him.

"You don't want to take a sneeze into the secret room, do you?"

Rene hadn't thought of that. Obediently, he went to bed.

Rene spent the next three days in bed. The third day he wanted to stay up, but Grandmother wouldn't let him.

On the fourth day, even though he was still coughing a little, she let him up. Even then, she made him sit on the settle and keep his feet off the floor.

Grandmother gave him a few simple tasks to do. They weren't fun. Rene was bored.

When he heard Uncle John at the door, he rushed over to open it.

"I thought you were never coming home for supper tonight," he said.

To his surprise, Uncle John looked very angry.

"How did you know it was I?" Uncle John asked.

"Well, I didn't know," Rene admitted. "I thought it was Grandfather. But I'm glad to see you."

"You should be. You should be thankful, too. You are just lucky. Lucky that it wasn't your friends, coming to take you back to Canada."

"Oh, I never thought of that."

"You'd better think about it," Uncle John told him.

"You'd better not forget it for a minute."

"But someone will tell us when Pierre comes," Rene said.

"If we can. If we can't, it will be up to you, Aaron. It is easy to grow careless. It is also dangerous."

"Yes, Uncle John. I promise to be more careful." Rene meant to keep his promise.

The next night when he heard Grandfather and Uncle John come home, he ran and hid in the secret room.

He had to hide there again that evening when someone knocked at the door.

It was only a neighbor. Rene got sleepy, waiting for him to go. Finally the man left and Grandfather opened the panel.

"Come, Aaron. We're all ready for bed," Grandfather yawned.

The next morning Grandmother went up to the loft. "You may come up when you finish scouring the platter," she told Rene.

Grandmother had only three pieces of pewter. "We had more than this, before the raid," she had told Rene.

Rene was glad she didn't have any more now. He hated scouring that pewter. And Grandmother wanted it so shiny.

Back and forth he pushed the reed. "Rub and rub. Back and forth. Back and forth," he said to himself.

Rene rubbed until his fingers ached. There was still a dark place on one side. Rene put down the reeds with a sigh. His hand was tired. He made a fist. He spread his fingers wide. He made a fist again, stretched his fingers again. He started to pick up the reeds. Then he saw Grandfather's knife, lying on the settle.

He ran over to make sure. Yes, it was Grandfather's knife. He had left it there last night. If only he could take it to Grandfather. How pleasant it would be to go out. Of course he couldn't. But he could tell Grandmother.

He ran to the stairs.

"Grandmother," he called. "Grandmother."

Grandmother came running to the stairs. "What is it, Aaron? What is it?"

"Grandfather forgot his knife."

"Oh, is that all! Aaron, you must not shout. You know that."

He must not shout. He could not go out. This waiting was no fun at all.

There was a loud rapping at the door.

"There's Grandfather now," Rene called happily. "He has come back for his knife."

Rene started toward the door.

"Aaron," Grandmother's voice was anxious. But Rene did not notice. "Aaron," she called more sharply. She was half-way down the stairs.

Rene was almost to the door. He stopped.

"Aaron, hide," Grandmother warned.

"But it's only Grandfather, come for his knife," Rene objected.

"Hurry," Grandmother pushed him.

Then Rene remembered his promise to Uncle John.

He opened the panel and stepped inside. Maybe if he left it open a crack he could step out and say hello to Grandfather.

The knock at the door was louder. Rene pulled the panel closed. He was surprised to hear the bolt slip into place. He heard Grandmother's voice on the other side. "I'm coming," she called.

Rene put his hand on the bolt. As soon as he heard Grandfather's voice he would open the panel. Grandmother didn't realize how it felt to be kept in all day long.

Rene leaned against the panel. He wished she would hurry and let Grandfather in.

"I'm sorry to have kept you waiting," he heard Grandmother say. Rene's hand tightened on the bolt. Now Grandfather would say, "Where were you and where is the boy?" Then he would push on the bolt and call, "Here I am."

And Grandfather would say, "Right where you should be," and he would laugh.

But it wasn't Grandfather's voice he heard. Rene was so startled he almost jumped. It was Pierre. And there he was, leaning against the panel with the bolt down, ready to push it open. Rene froze.

"Ah, madame," he heard Pierre say. "I trust you are in good health. And the boy. Where is that Rene? I expected to see him playing out on the street."

"Who would he play with?" Grandmother asked softly.

"Who? I do not know, madame," Pierre laughed.

"No, of course you would not know. Because of you and your Indians there are no children his age in Deerfield."

"So?" In his mind Rene could see Pierre shrug. "So he is playing alone. But where, madame?"

"I do not know."

"We'll find him. I'll bring him back to say farewell."

"I'm afraid you won't."

"What do you mean, madame?" Pierre was still polite, but his voice was cold.

"I mean you will have to leave without him."

"But my dear madame, that is impossible. He is a French citizen and he must return with me."

"He is not here to return with you."

"What do you mean, he is not here?" Pierre asked angrily.

"He was last seen with some French and Indians on his way north."

"What?" Pierre roared.

"If you don't believe me, ask anyone in town."

"I will. And I may not believe them either."

The voices were silent but Rene did not hear the outer door close. He was so tired from standing so still. Next time he would not lean against the panel and push the bolt down. Next time he would fasten the bolt and sit on the step.

"Well, are you going?" he heard Grandmother ask.

"With Madame's permission, I will first look inside."

"No. I will not have those Indians in my house."

Rene could hear Pierre's voice. He was speaking French. He was telling the Indians to wait outside. He told the Franchmen to come in.

"As you wish, madame," he said in English. "The Indians will remain outside. I am sorry, Madame, but I must insist."

"I prefer to wait until my husband is home."

"I am sorry," Pierre repeated. "But that would give you time to hide the boy. We must enter now."

Rene was trembling. He was afraid the bolt would rattle. Slowly, carefully, he pushed it in place.

"Look upstairs. Do not miss any hiding place." Pierre was talking again in French.

"Wait." Grandmother almost shouted. "I will not have all that mud tracked in here. Have your men use the boot scraper. And use it yourself, if you please."

"So the boy can hide better?" Pierre asked.

"So you will not track in mud." Grandmother said firmly.

"Very well. We do not wish to cause you work." Pierre called to the Indians to surround the house. "We don't want the boy slipping out a window," he said. "I heard voices when I came to the door," he told the men.

Rene moved away from the panel and sat on the step. He

shouldn't have called to Grandmother when he found Grandfather's knife. He shouldn't have argued with her about taking it to Grandfather. But it was too late now to think about that.

Rene could hear Pierre ordering the men to search the house. He sent Jean Baptiste into the bedroom.

Rene was surprised at how frightened he was. He had thought he would feel so safe in the secret room. But it was not at all like he had thought it would be. He could hear the anger in Pierre's voice. He could hear heavy footsteps as Andre walked on the floor above his head. Andre stopped right over him. "Now I have been discovered," Rene thought. His heart was pounding so hard he could feel it in his head. If Pierre were to throw open the panel and order him to step out, Rene thought he could not. His legs felt as much like jelly as a mess of frog's eggs. He sat with his eyes closed, afraid to move. He wanted to look up but was afraid he would see Andre's eye, pressed to the crack above his head. Finally Andre walked on.

Rene heard Pierre calling to one of the Indians. "Did you see the boy come out?" he asked.

Pierre came back in and closed the outside door. Rene could hear the door close. He could hear Pierre's voice again. "Did you look everywhere?" Pierre asked.

"There is a pallet on the floor upstairs," he heard Andre tell Pierre.

Rene was glad Grandmother made him take his bed apart every day before he came down.

"Do you live here alone with your husband?" Pierre asked Grandmother.

"My son, John, lives with us. He is the only one of my children you have allowed to return," Grandmother answered.

"Search the house again," Pierre ordered. "I know I heard voices when I came to the door."

"Did you hear the boy's?" Jean Baptiste asked.

"I couldn't be sure."

"Are you sure you heard voices?" Jean Baptiste asked.

"I would almost swear to it."

Once again there were footsteps above Rene. Once again they stopped above him. And again they moved on.

"Look for anything that might belong to the boy. Perhaps he is outside, playing, and has been warned to hide," Pierre suggested.

This time the search took even longer. It was still going on when Rene heard Grandfather's voice.

"What is the meaning of this?" he roared.

"We are ready to return to Canada with your grandson."

"Then you are a little late," Grandfather answered. "You will not find him by turning my house into a mess. Do you think he is hiding inside the chest? under my wife's cloak as it hangs on its peg? or perhaps you think he is inside her

bonnet?" Grandfather's voice rose in anger. "This is an outrage."

"You are hiding him somewhere," Pierre accused.

"Then find him and take him," Grandfather challenged.

"I intend to," Pierre answered.

"What are you doing with my wife's cloak?" Grandfather roared.

"They are looking to see if anything belonging to the boy is here."

"They can save themselves the trouble. He ran off without his cap. When you are ready to go, you may take it. We have no use for it."

"He would have forgotten his cap when he left home," Pierre said in French. "His mother had to remind him to wear it."

"I wonder," Rene heard Jean Baptiste reply.

"Now what is this story about the boy's leaving with someone?" Pierre asked in English.

"A short time ago a group of fur traders passed through town. The boy ran out to meet them. Hearing French spoken again made him homesick. He left with them."

"They would not take him."

"They did."

Pierre spoke very rapidly in French. "I do not think they would bother with him."

"I do not think so either," Andre agreed.

"I do not know," Jean Baptiste said slowly. "I, too, do not think they would bother."

"Even if they had, they would have left us a message," Pierre decided.

"Who in this town would give us a message? They do not like us here."

"That is very true," Pierre agreed. "But still I think I heard voices," he added. "I feel that something is very strange here."

"I, too," Jean Baptiste agreed.

"I would not feel easy, returning without him. When he is missed, there would be too many questions asked."

"Who would miss a boy?" Andre asked. "If he stayed and his mother knew it, she would not object. So who would ask questions?"

"The parish priest," Pierre answered.

"Ah, yes. And he would be very angry."

"And he might complain to the government. Then we would be in trouble," Jean Baptiste remarked.

"We must find him," Pierre decided.

"He is not in this house," Andre said.

"You are sure you missed no hiding place?" Pierre asked.

"I am sure. But why don't you look while I stay here?"

Jean Baptiste suggested.

"I will."

"Monsieur Stebbins," Pierre said, "I am sorry, but I must ask your permission to search your house again."

"Again?" Grandfather roared.

"How else will I know the boy is not here?"

"Very well," Grandfather agreed.

By this time Rene's eyes were used to the darkness inside the secret room. He moved as close to the inside wall as he could. He watched the little crack above him as the footsteps approached it. He could even see a shadow as a man walked over it. He looked down. He did not know why, but he was afraid Pierre would see him if he looked up.

Rene had been in the room for what seemed like a very long time. He had never stayed in here so long before. After all this time it seemed stuffy. The air felt dusty in his nose and throat. It made him feel like coughing. The more Rene thought about it, the more he felt as though he had to cough. "I am just nervous," he told himself. "My cold is nearly gone. I do not need to cough." He tried to think of something else. He tried to think about where Uncle John was. But still the cough tickled in his throat.

Rene opened his mouth. He breathed in. He tried to swallow. He closed his lips. He could feel his cheeks bulge. He knew if he could see himself, he would see that his face was red. Holding down that tickle of a cough and holding his

breath made his ears buzz. He couldn't cough. He couldn't. Not with those footsteps so close over his head.

Finally the footsteps went down the stairs. Rene cleared his throat.

He heard Grandfather cough. Grandfather must be sitting on the settle by the fireplace.

"Are you satisfied?" That was Grandfather's voice.

"I cannot find him. But I am not satisfied," Pierre answered.

"What are we going to do?" The question was in French. Rene could not be sure who asked it.

He heard a low murmur in reply but he could not make out what was being said.

Then he heard, "I think we should ask around the town, anyway." That was Andre.

"Post the Indians around this house and..." Whoever was speaking moved farther away and Rene could not hear the rest.

He heard a low murmur. It sounded as though English was spoken. Then he heard a sharp, "I insist." That had been Pierre.

The door closed with a bang. All was silence.

Rene wondered what had happened. He could not tell. He thought he heard some sound, but he could not be sure.

Then he heard Grandmother's voice. She sounded strange.

"Your knife is on the settle, Mr. Stebbins."

"I thank you, Mrs. Stebbins," Grandfather answered. "I may as well turn out a few pegs. I miss the boy. If he had stayed long enough he would have learned how to do this for me."

Rene listened thoughtfully. When they were alone, Grandfather called Grandmother "Dorothy." And Grandfather spoke as though he had really gone. Someone must have stayed behind. Rene wondered who was in the room with them. Pierre wouldn't be. He would want to question other people himself. He wouldn't leave Andre. Pierre would be afraid Andre would miss something. He would leave Jean Baptiste. Jean Baptiste would not miss anything.

He had been in the secret room such a long time. It must be time for dinner. Rene was beginning to get hungry.

He was right. It was time for dinner. He could hear Uncle John's voice.

"What's this?" Uncle John almost shouted. He must have just come in. Sure enough. Rene had not heard the door open but he heard it close.

Rene heard a low murmur of voices. Then Uncle John said, "That's ridiculous. The boy isn't here."

Then Rene was certain one of the Frenchmen was in the keeping room.

Rene heard noises at the fireplace. Grandmother would be fixing dinner.

She was. "I'm afraid dinner will be a little late, John,"

she said.

"I will just heat up this spoon meat. It will not need to cook. I am sorry to keep you waiting."

Rene could picture Grandmother, hanging the kettle of spoon meat over the fire.

That spoon meat had tasted good yesterday. There had been punkin bread with it. Rene had helped Grandmother mash the pumpkin for it. He watched while she mixed it with the corn meal.

Cautiously Rene reached for the loaf of bread he had put on the step the day before. He was afraid to break off a piece. It might make too much noise. Hungry as he was, Rene didn't even dare take a big bite. He nibbled at the hard crust. It took Rene a long time to eat enough to satisfy his hunger.

As he nibbled, Rene pictured the family at the table. Grandfather would be sitting at the end in his chair. Grandmother would be on the bench beside him. Uncle John would be on the other side of the bench. How Rene wished he were in his usual place, standing beside Uncle John. Uncle John was a good person. He shared his trencher fairly. He never grabbed the biggest pieces of meat when they were on Rene's side.

Rene leaned back on his elbows and waited. This waiting was tiresome. It was worse than staying out of sight in the

[Faint, illegible handwriting, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side of the page]

Grandmother had baked pumpkin bread.



house all day long.

After the excitement of the morning, Rene was tired. Finally he curled up on the floor below the step and went to sleep.

"Rene. Rene." Rene woke with a start. He bumped his head against the wall. For a minute he couldn't remember where he was. Oh, yes. Now he know. He rubbed his eyes.

"Rene. Rene." That was Grandfather's voice. Why would Grandfather be calling him? Grandfather knew where he was.

"Rene. Rene."

Still half asleep, Rene pushed down on the bolt. What had gone on, he wondered, while he had been sleeping.

If Rene had not fallen asleep, he would have heard Pierre return. He would have heard Pierre insist that Grandfather step outside with him.

Rene would not have heard what Pierre and Grandfather had said outside.

Pierre was still convinced he had heard voices inside that morning. That was why he asked Grandfather to step outside.

Pierre had closed the door. He and Grandfather had walked away from the house.

"Mr. Stebbins," Pierre had said, "I think you are hiding the boy inside the house."

"Have you talked with the town people?" Grandfather had

asked.

"Yes. They all tell the same story. But I think it is that, only a story."

Grandfather had said nothing.

"If you are not hiding the boy in the house, you can prove it."

"Haven't I already allowed you to search my house?"

Grandfather asked.

"You could be hiding the boy someplace my men could not discover," Pierre said. "If you are not, you should not be afraid to call the boy. Call him and tell him to come out."

"I don't know why I should." Grandfather had turned and started back toward the house.

"I know why," Pierre followed Grandfather. "Because if you called him, he would come out. That is why. You are keeping me here. I want to be on my way."

"You are free to leave," Grandfather answered.

"Not without the boy," Pierre replied. "I must stay until you call him. I have no choice."

"And if I call him you will leave?" Grandfather asked.

"If you call him, he will come out of his hiding place. Then I will leave."

"Very well. I will call him." Grandfather started toward the house again.

"Wait, Monsieur. You will not talk to me when you go

back in. You will call him by name. You will tell him to come out. You will tell him I have gone."

Grandfather had nodded curtly and gone back into the house.

He had called Rene.

And Rene had pushed down the bolt.

"Rene. Rene."

Slowly Rene pushed the bolt over. He was still half asleep. He shook his head a little. Something was wrong. But what?

"Rene. Rene. I am calling you to come out, Rene."

Rene froze. That was it. That was what was wrong. Grandfather was calling him Rene. And Grandfather had said that Rene was gone. He was Aaron now.

"Rene," his grandfather began calling again. As he heard his grandfather's voice, Rene carefully pushed the bolt back into place.

"Rene. Come out. Pierre is gone. Come out, Rene. Come out."

Rene settled back on the step. He was trembling. His hands were wet and icy cold.

That was too close. He had almost walked out into a trap. How disappointed Grandfather would have been. How unpleasant the trip back would have been. Pierre would have been very unkind.

Rene thought of the good life here. How he would miss it.

He would have to be more careful.

After Grandfather stopped calling, Rene heard no more voices. He heard the door close three or four times. He knew people were coming and going, but he had no idea who they were.

He lost all idea of time. He couldn't tell when it was supper time. When he was hungry he nibbled at the bread.

Finally he heard Uncle John's voice, "Well, we didn't get much done today."

"No, but you could not say it had been a bad day," Grandfather answered. Then there was a long silence.

They must be eating, Rene thought. The only time anyone had spoken at the table was the morning Grandmother had asked him why he wasn't eating. The morning he had the sore throat.

Rene was right. They were eating.

Rene thought he could hear Grandfather push back his chair. There was a slight scraping noise on the other side of the panel. That would be Grandfather, taking down his tobacco.

"Aaron. Can you hear me? Whisper if you can."

"Yes, Grandfather," Rene whispered.

"They are still watching the house. Sleep in there tonight.

"Goodnight, Aaron. Do not come out until I open the panel."

Rene spent two more days and nights in the secret room.

He would lose track of time until night, when Grandfather would go to the tobacco shelf. Nothing more exciting happened. There was just one dark hour after another. Rene could tell when it was morning because he could hear Uncle John putting fresh logs on the fire.

He could hear Grandmother cooking dinner at noon.

At night Grandfather would whisper to him.

For the third night in a row, Grandfather had whispered goodnight. For the third night, Rene had curled up on the floor of the secret room to sleep. He did not sleep through until morning.

Rene awoke to hear loud noises. "Another raid," he thought. There was a terrible pounding on the door.

Rene could hear Grandfather and Grandmother. He heard Uncle John running down the stairs.

Then he heard French and English being shouted at the same time. Footsteps ran through the house and up the stairs. Above all the noise and confusion, Rene heard Grandfather's voice.

"Get your men out of my house or I will throw them out myself."

Rene had never heard Grandfather so angry.

"And do it now. Get out."

Pierre sounded just as angry. "Give me the boy."

"Give you nothing," Grandfather shouted. "I have given

Rene could hear angry voices.



you more than you deserved already."

Footsteps stomped across the floor.

"And while you are going you can take this," Grandfather was still shouting. "You upset my household for three days. I was courteous to you. I allowed you to come and go. Then you rouse my family from their sleep. For what? For a boy who is not here. For a boy who is already gone. Here, take this. Give it to my daughter and tell her to teach her son to be more careful with his belongings. And now, get out."

The door slammed.

"Do you think they will come back?" Rene heard Grandmother ask. Her voice was so close he knew she must be standing near the fireplace.

"I don't know." Grandfather sounded tired. "When John and I leave in the morning, bolt the door. Don't let them in if they come back."

Pierre did not return.

A week later Rene was skipping along beside Grandfather as he walked down the street.

"Hello, Aaron," Sergeant Grandy called.

"Hello," Rene called back.

Even Mr. Fields, the blacksmith, nodded to him.

"I like living with you, Grandfather. I like belonging to you. I like being English. I like being Aaron Denio."

Rene skipped on ahead. "And someday," he called back

over his shoulder, "my mother will come here to visit. She promised."

Many years later she kept her promise.

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DATE

April 3, 1963

