

Proofreading #2 — Becoming Me

—Our family moved yet again; this time, to Godbout, on the North Shore of the St. Lawrence River. There was no schooling beyond Grade 5 in this isolated small village. My two older brothers were sent to a boarding school in the town of Matane, across the St. Lawrence River from Godbout; I stayed behind at my grandparents' home.

As well as my grandparents, the household consisted of ~~Aunts~~ aunts Luce and Andrée and ~~Uncles~~ uncles Jacques and Claude.

My grandfather was a lawyer and intellectual who had co-founded, with his father, *L'Éclaireur de Beauceville*, a local newspaper, and had served as its editor-in-chief for over twenty years. He also had been a member of the Assemblée Législative of the province of Québec. A diabetic, he was unwell, and mostly bedridden the year I lived with them. I suppose he did not mind my intrusion into the home, as he seemed to enjoy my presence while we listened to the radio's *Yvan L'Intrépide*, a preteen adventure series that was broadcast at four thirty p.m. and was followed by the five o'clock news. We would discuss the adventures of Yvan and then the news of the day. I suspect ~~that~~ he hoped to expand my horizons.

After she consulted with my mother, I found myself in yet another school; Alie Institute. Two years later, I graduated with a high school diploma and, with honours in mathematics and science. The new school had proven to be a better fit. Unfortunately, Canadian history, in primary school, consisted mostly of stories about the Jesuits' martyrs, ~~—Pères-pères~~ Bréboeuf and L'Allemand, ~~—and~~ the Iroquois, and a few important dates, such as 1492 and, Christopher Columbus, 1608, and Samuel de Champlain and the foundation of Québec City, and 1867; the Canadian Confederation. Unfortunately, I failed the provincial history exam. I

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didn't advertise my ignorance of world affairs and history, and carried on with my life.

~~The~~My family had moved to an upstairs duplex, where my mother's small office became my bedroom. She let me choose, from a few samples, a new wallpaper for the room. I chose one that pictured a large, white swan swimming on a bright blue background that was, dotted with small, snow-white clouds. It was my first adventure in home decorating, and it was a disaster.

The room was at the front of the house. It had a large window looking onto the balcony. It featured three doors; one faced the hallway, another opened onto the closet, and the third one accessed the outside balcony.

~~—~~The early days of our return to the Comox Valley were divided between peaceful and—yes—happy days.

~~—~~That first fall, we participated in the local fair. The older girls wanted their baby sister to be entered in the crawl race. They despaired, calling her name to urge her on, as halfway through the race, she sat down, smiling happily, and waved~~waving~~ her arms up and down as she watched~~and watching~~ the other toddlers pass her by. At the beauty contest, she acquired her nickname when one of the judges saw her red hair tied up with a pink ribbon on top of her head, and exclaimed: "Aren't you a real little Pebbles?!"

I remember sunny days on the beach with friends. One night, with Dot and Alick, Harry and Doreen, and their five boys, we went to the beach to harvest small silver fish, that glowed ~~glowing~~ in the moonlight. Dave, with spear in hand, was up to his waist in the water, chasing away the dogfish. I can still hear Dot's laughter as she watched Suzanne gather handfuls of the little fish, only to lose all but one or two, as she ran back to put them in the bucket.

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Summertime brought sunshine and hope. We cleaned the yard and planted a garden. I remember having to give away the too-many radishes that had ripened all at once, and lettuce that had shot up with the summer heat and gone to seed. As he had done years before, Alick brought dahlias to plant along the length of the fence, and in addition to along with the flowers, he doled out much advice on their cultivation—and life in general! It was a habit he had refined while working evenings as a bartender at the Elks' Club.

Commented [Ed1]: It's not clear if you also gave away the lettuce or whether it had just gone to seed.

Before the end of the summer, Dave's drinking resumed, and with it, the paranoia and abusive behaviour. I tried once more to get help from the military.

~~I tried once more to get help from the military.~~ I was asked, "What is your problem now, Mrs. Anderson?" I didn't know where else to turn to get help.

Commented [Ed2]: Does this work for you?

Coming home one evening after grocery shopping in Courtenay, and with the five children in the car, Dave, in a drunken ~~stupor~~ stupor, for the first time physically harmed one of the children. He dragged his three-year-old son by one leg and tossed him out of the car.

To get on the roof, I had to get the stepladder from the basement, take it to the second-floor solarium, climb up to the last rung, push open the trap door that seemed to weigh a half-tonne, set it to the side, —hoping it would not slide off the metal roof to crash to the yard, —and then elbow myself through the opening and somehow climb over to the roof —all the while, the girls crying out, "Mommy be careful!" and my ~~eight-year-old~~ eight-year-old son offering to help me do it.

It was pitch black up there, with the wind blowing and the rain lashing at my face. Like a blind woman, I felt my way to the edge of the roof and stepped over it and into what was maybe a foot-and-a-half ~~deep pool~~ of water. When I

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~~made~~~~Making~~ my way to the centre of the roof, ~~and~~ as predicted by the friendly fireman who had not offered to come and do this for me, there was a rubber ball blocking the drainage hole. The moment I removed it, the water rushed down the drain with a loud swishing and gurgling sound and I wondered silently, *Where does all this water go?*