

COMING HERE, BEING HERE



*A Canadian
Migration
Anthology*

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Migration
Anthology*



edited by
DONALD F. MULCAHY



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*Canadians are, after all,
as varied as pebbles on a beach.*



Coming To Canada — Age Twenty-One



The postcard said: COME BACK SOON
There was a mountain, a faded lake
with a waterfall and a brown
sun setting in a tan sky

Aunt Violet's Canadian honeymoon 1932
It was swell and she
always meant to go back
but her life got in the way

It was cool and quiet there
with a king and a queen
and people drinking tea
and being polite and clean
snow coming down
everywhere

It took years to happen:
for the lake to fill up with snow
for the mountain to disappear
for the sun to go down

and years before COME
BACK SOON changed to
here and now and home
the place I came to
the place I was from

(Carol Shields, from *Coming to Canada*, Carlton University Press,
Ottawa 1995, reproduced here with permission
from the Carol Shields Literary Trust).

*To all who came, are coming,
and will yet come to this incredible place;
to those among them whose goals remained,
or will forever remain elusive;
to those who needed to be here but never arrived;
to all who died trying to get to this safe haven called Canada.*



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Introduction



In early 2003 John McLay and I discussed the possibility of a prose anthology, devoted to a common theme. At the time he was working on a sequel to *On Mountaintop Rock* and would be unable to participate as co-editor. We both felt that *immigration* would be a worthy theme, but concluded little beyond that. By September however I had rediscovered two elementary letters among the belongings of my late mother-in-law, Elizabeth Jones, written to her by a teenage friend who had emigrated from Wales to Canada in the 1920s. The letters, reproduced verbatim here in 'Letters from Ceinwen,' brought to mind the myriad other stories that must exist in a country where it is claimed that twenty per cent or more of the population are foreign-born immigrants. At that juncture I decided that the common, unifying topic should indeed be the inseparable themes of *emigration* and *immigration*, relative to Canada.

Although the initial intention was to create a *literary* anthology of works by established immigrant writers, the project's mandate soon morphed from strictly literary to all-inclusive, an outcome that was dictated not only by the collection's ongoing need for more writers, but also by the assorted variety of writers who showed an interest in participating. I eventually concluded that a

more diverse roster of writers might well be seen as reflecting the diversity in Canadian society; might even be considered a metaphor of sorts for our complex multicultural population and its varied voices. Canadians are, after all, as varied as pebbles on a beach.

Despite everything, including my congenital pessimism, after three years the initial collection ultimately reached completion point—except insofar as the stories of immigration will never, ever be complete. The shared sagas of people coming here is sure to continue for as long as more are needed to populate this intriguing, gargantuan geographic space, that has become the final home and resting place for so many who have ventured here over the centuries.

I have served only as this anthology's coordinator. Credit for this volume must, naturally, be allocated to the publisher and the Guernica staff, for their belief in the project, and for their welcome refinements. But it is the authors themselves who created the very possibility of an immigration anthology, by placing the need for such a work above all material and other, less creative, more ego-centric concerns. This is *their* book.

I am deeply indebted to Guernica Editions, and especially to Michael Mirolla, for recognizing the need for a book of this type at this time; to John McLay, for helping me to *hatch* the concept of an immigration anthology in the first place; to Iris Kool, for sharing her amazing computer genius with me; to Susan Ouriou for her invaluable translations from the French, and to my wife and primary editor, Iris, for her grit, patience and understanding throughout the multi-year bout of my chronic anthology obsession.

—Don Mulcahy
Strathroy, Ontario
Jan 8th 2015



Coming Here



Come from Away in Newfoundland



Roberta Buchanan

(*Come from away*: a person “not from here,” i.e., Newfoundland)

I Leave England.



It was 1964, the year of Shakespeare’s quadricentennial. Here I was at the prestigious Shakespeare Institute, Birmingham University, where I had gone to do my Ph.D. After two years my fellowship ran out, and I still hadn’t finished my thesis. I was hired as a research assistant, then promoted to research associate at a stipend of fifty pounds a month. I was employed in the menial but necessary tasks of checking quotations and bibliographical references, proofreading the Institute’s publications, doing research for the Director, Professor Spencer; and, on one occasion, rewriting an article for *Shakespeare Survey*. When the librarian suddenly left, I was also asked to fill in her position, on a temporary basis. At the weekly seminars I made the tea and handed around the biscuits. For distinguished guests, wine and food were served. I bought the food, arranged tasty morsels on little crackers in an aesthetic way, and concocted porcupines of toothpicks bearing little pickled onions, olives, and cubes of cheese stuck into an apple. Mrs. Spencer told me I had a “talent” for this kind of work.

I was not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be, but one of the attendant lords, a useful tool, presumed to be deferential and glad to be of use, like T.S. Eliot’s Prufrock.

At Birmingham University, the social and academic hierarchy was rigidly maintained. I found myself in a kind of grey area. I was neither student nor faculty. I was not entitled to eat in the nice Faculty Club; my place was in the cafeteria with the staff. I had my lunches and my morning tea with the secretaries, all perfectly good and kind people. All the same, I was given the message that my status was somewhat lower than a faculty member. I could babysit their children, but I was not their social or intellectual equal. There seemed no prospect of advancement. Young male graduate students were “mentored,” as we say now, given some teaching experience; women students weren’t. In 1964, the term “glass ceiling” had not yet been invented. It was more like a concrete ceiling. Glass at least suggests that if persistent you could smash your way through it.

I was unhappy in Birmingham. It was an interesting city all right, with two theatres, two excellent art galleries, nice shops, and a lively market on Saturdays. But I had no friends, no boyfriends. I lived in a room in a dreary red brick terrace house on the Bourn Brook, just opposite the University, a polluted trickle garnished with rusting bicycles, old paint cans and other urban trash. The Bourn Brook valley always seemed to be shrouded in industrial smog. Every morning I walked up the hill past the university gates to the Shakespeare Institute, a large rather gloomy Victorian mansion. By the time I got there I was wheezing and gasping for breath. Sometimes I was so ill the secretary had to drive me home. I became more and more asthmatic, more and more depressed. I had to get away—but how? Desperation gave me courage.

I opened *The World of Learning*, a huge compendium of all academic institutions in the universe, and began at A. I sent a letter to the University of Alaska—the farthest possible spot from Birmingham—asking them if they had any openings in their English Department and enclosing my CV. I got a polite but negative response: “*Thank you for your interest in the University of Alaska ...*” I scrutinized

the weekly job ads in the *Times Literary Supplement*. Universities in Ghana, the Gold Coast, Khartoum, and Malta were looking for lecturers in English literature. I was interviewed for Malta, but the other candidate, a handsome young man from Oxford, got the job. Another ad: Memorial University of Newfoundland, in Canada. I sent off an application and my CV. One day a telegram arrived at the Stygian gloom of the dark-panelled Shakespeare Institute—immediate reply demanded, prepaid—offering me a job as lecturer in the English Department at the princely salary of \$6,500 per annum—\$500 above the minimum rate for lecturer. I was ecstatic and accepted immediately. “You’re just the kind of person we need in Canada,” said the young man interviewing me at Canada House for my immigration papers. I was staggered! I seemed to be superfluous in overcrowded England. As Professor Spencer so delicately put it at my farewell party at the Institute, I was part of the “*brain sewer*.”

I sailed on the *Empress of England* from Greenock (my parents lived in Scotland) to Montreal, with my immigrant’s suitcase—a heavy affair with a wooden frame and a tray inside. My journal at the time recorded my departure from the Old Country:

Bagpipes on the tender boat. Felt rather tearful, mainly because hadn't slept much last night, but went and had a lager and felt better. The virtues of alcohol proved once more. Ghastly feeling alone and knowing no one. Lots of smart Americans (Canadians, I suppose). Even the fattest-assed wears Bermuda(?) shorts—long shorts ending above the knee. Am in a cabin with three other ladies, all grandmothers. One is Irish and quiet, the other English and voluble, the 3rd Canadian, rather deaf and depressed and widowed with “a lovely little home.” Had tea with the English and Irish, after a horrible solitary lunch with 4 deadly Scottish girls who spoke only to each other, and a deaf old man who spoke only to the waiter. Superb food, however, like a 1st class

hotel, only more variety. Lackeys buzzing around the sauce boats like black bees. I wish I had gone on that cargo boat, however, with single cabin and "sharing private bath," and only 14 passengers [the Furness Withy Line to St John's; their passenger service ended that year]. One feels a bit lost among all these crowds, and no one speaking to each other. So tired I can hardly write. Canadian widow is dolling up in a chic écru knitted ribbon outfit. One dresses for dinner. It all seems rather archaic. (12 August 1964).

The voyage to Montreal, which took five days, soon became tedious. There was nothing to do except walk up and down the deck. One evening I was leaning against the rail in my golden Cleopatra sandals and yellow stretch pants—the latest fashion, contemplating the path of moonlight on the sea, when a man approached me. At last a flirtation! He was the boatswain. Socializing between crew and passengers was strictly forbidden, which lent an air of intrigue to the encounter. I had to hover near the connecting door to the crew's quarters. When the coast was clear, the boatswain beckoned to me and we had to slink furtively through the corridors to his cabin. Once there, he plied me with "seduction doses of gin and rum" (I recorded in my journal) and I was soon "swallowing alcohol and flattery alike in large and willing draughts" while soft music played on his record player. As we sat side by side on his bunk, he told me how he had once rescued a girl from drowning. What a hero! I murmured appropriate admiration. He took my hand and placed it on his fly. I felt something large and swelling. I felt very nervous and said I had to go. After that he took up with an American woman of uncertain age and possibly freer morals. I wrote to my friend in London that I had a new swain—a boatswain, which she thought very witty. Despite this brave face I felt I had made a fool of myself.

Now I sit here, an object of ridicule in the writing room, with drunken dancers staggering through, writing, to crown it all, my

diary like a schoolgirl. Work is the only thing, and that I avoid like the plague. I must work and read. I am going to be pressed for time as it is when I arrive there [in St John's]. Yet my eternal frivolity, my vanity in my Cleopatra sandals, my avoidance of reality, e.g. at this moment, I don't even know the value of a dollar. Such is my ostrich-like ignoring of the Canadian realities soon to hit me. (Journal, 15 August)

We disembarked in Quebec for immigration. After our documents had been “sternly inspected” several times, “beaming officials” gave us tea or coffee in paper cups—“Rather Alice-in-Wonderland-ish.” On the walls were photographs showing immigrants of every conceivable nationality in “Worthwhile Jobs” (19 August). But I was impressed by their smiles and their welcome to Canada.

In the afternoon I took a tour of Quebec city. I was not impressed. The atmosphere struck me as repellent: ... *antagonistically French—Wolfe's statue taken down—the whole town seems dominated by a Plains-of-Abraham complex. Worst French aspects.*

On the other hand, Montreal delighted me:

... Most beautiful city I've seen—clean and spacious. A lot of the centre is very recent beautiful skyscrapers. But there is also the old French and international quarters. Went on 3 hour bus tour with a driver-guide not unlike a Richler character—very witty and amusing, and obviously very fond of his city. He pointed out details with loving care, and told us all about his marriage to an Irish woman, and how she made him leave the French outside: English inside, and how they adopted two children. I'm in love with Montreal completely. Re-read Duddy Kravitz. (Journal 19 August)

Mordecai Richler was one of the few Canadian writers to be found in English libraries.

I had to wait four hours at the CN station for my train. Here I

witnessed my first bit of Canadiana: people eating turkey sandwiches smothered in gravy, and with salad! I thought this was the funniest thing. The food was delicious—\$1.95 at the Buffet de la Gare for a Spanish omelette, chips, peas, salad, bread, coffee and wine. Thus fortified, I boarded the train that was to take me to the east coast. How superior the Canadian train seemed to the dirty, shabby, overcrowded trains of England.

The roomette turns out to be a toilet with a let-down bed in it! Very comfortable seat for day. Iced water. Fan. Basin, wardrobe, shoe-locker. It seems a bit unhygienic to use the toilet, but I suppose that's what it's for.

Everything is so convenient—the dial for heat, for the fan, bell for porter, thermos of iced water and paper cups, and even soap and matches! Negro porters, who come at a touch of the bell. (19 August)

Revelling in this luxury, I woke up in my new country:

... to find myself in a beautiful little town, with wooden houses painted turquoise and lovely rich pink, the fields with long islands of boulders in the middle—what they've cleared when ploughing I suppose. The untreated wooden fences—beautiful silver weathered timber. The feeling that there's plenty of land. The little river solid with logs. Tears come into my eyes when I think of Birmingham—I feel I shall wake up any minute out of this pleasant dream and find myself there again. What a comparison of filth and cleanness, crowdedness and space!

Just passed a pink house with a blue roof—fabulous. Churches like icing-sugar. (19 August)

At length I arrived in Newfoundland, via the ferry to Port-aux-Basques:

Everything so clean and pure-looking. Pure clean sands, utterly empty, bleached tree-trunks. Frame houses ptd heavenly pastel shades. Haystacks round as in Scotland with hairnets. Children's and animals' country—plenty of space to play and roam around in. Iodine-coloured streams. Not unlike Scotland but heavily wooded, bigger, more spacious.

Ferry—tho' sunny, pretty rough sea—dolphins—old lady being delicately sick in paper bag for “mal de l'air”—“motion sickness”—a peculiar way of putting it. Shocked by 2 teenage girls wearing curlers, in public, bobby-socks and trousers—the women not at all smart on the whole—tasteless clothes. Men have check shirts and unmatching ties—very far out. Close cropped hair—Beatles not caught on. Plenty of children, well treated. (Journal, “4th day in Canada”)

I boarded the “Newfie Bullet” for the two-day trip to St. John's. The train, with its narrow gauge, was very slow and jerky, making me feel rather sick.

Arriving in St. John's on 21st August, 1964, my new boss, Dr. Seary, and his wife Gwen met me at the station and drove me to the Kenmount Motel. I found them “*very English, considering they've been here 11 years.*” I had hardly ever stayed in a hotel before, and it seemed to me the height of luxury. I marvelled at the huge “*treble*” bed, all for me, and lovingly catalogued in my journal the features of my “*super room*”: two wooden walls and a wooden ceiling, “*very modern*”; my own private bathroom and toilet in one corner; towels, soap, matches, Kleenex, stationery and even a pen provided on the house; wall-to-wall carpeting, air conditioning, tourist information on Newfoundland, a picture of the landscape, and television.

I went downstairs to the dining-room, and had an expensive dinner of an enormous piece of fried salmon with *French fries*, which I carefully noted were chips. The waitresses were very funny-looking, dressed in white uniforms with white shoes, like

nurses, except that they had little yellow aprons. I overheard one of the tourists saying: *The first time I went tuna-fishing I was six*. There was an air of unreality. Was it all a dream? I was brought back to reality with a bump—by cash. I had a hundred dollars, which seemed to me a large sum, and was dismayed to read posted on the door of my motel room that it cost nine dollars a night plus 5% tax. It took no mathematical genius to calculate that if I spent ten nights, with even minimal eating, I would be broke. And my first pay cheque was due at the end of September.

I was 26. I was in a strange country where I knew no one. I had no teaching experience. I was scared. In honour of my new country, I had bought a large bottle of *Canadian Club*, a 40-ouncer, at the duty-free shop on board ship. I had a pack of cards. I sat on the floor of my room, played patience, watched tearjerkers on television, and drank rye and ginger ale.

So began my new life in Canada.

First Impressions of St. John's

The next day was Sunday. The hotel room began to get on my nerves. I saw a notice in the lobby about church services. I hadn't gone to a church in years—but what else could one do on a Sunday? I took the bus to the Anglican Cathedral. The people in hats, the asking forgiveness for one's sins "*for there is no health in me*" did not cheer me up. After the service I walked down to Water Street, where some men whistled and shouted unintelligible remarks as I passed. A shop grandly called *THE LONDON NEW YORK AND PARIS* had the oddest models in the window dressed in strange outdated 1940s' clothes and hairstyles. There was a chill wind, laced with a whiff of fish; not many people about except a few lonely-looking sailors. I caught the bus back to the Kenmount Motel and sought the artificial comfort of my whisky bottle.

“The MUN”

On Monday, I went to the bursar’s office to get a loan to tide me over until payday; they refused. (In England when one got a new job one could always get a salary advance). Here was a dilemma! How was I to manage? I must move out of the expensive Kenmount Motel at once. Most of the faculty were away for the summer, but fortunately I met a colleague in the English Department, Dr. Francis, a tall, red-bearded man (also English). He drove me around town and up Signal Hill in his red sports car, and told me I must *never* call *New-fin-land* *New-found-land*. Then he cooked me lunch in his apartment, and “*gave a long disquisition on the irrationality of women.*” I summed up his character in my journal:

He is very dogmatic, in that he does not expect dissent from his opinions. I argue a little, but not much as it (argument) seems ultimately futile—altho’ he thinks it changes all minds but women’s. (22 August)

Despite his odd opinions of women, Dr. Francis was kind and helpful. He found a widow who took in a respectable female boarder at a very reasonable price, breakfast and dinner included—more for the company, she told me, for she had been married to an American G.I. and had a generous pension. She showed me a room filled with an enormous double bed covered with a bright pink satin spread, and just enough space to cram in a large dressing table with mirror. I paid my “*astronomical*” bill of “*over twenty-seven dollars*” at the motel, and moved in immediately. (Afterwards I found out that Memorial would pay for my hotel as part of my moving expenses.)

Dr. Francis showed me around the university—“the MUN, as they call it here”—which seemed very small compared to Birmingham University. It was built on an exposed position on top of a hill

They Left Their Homes with Nothing, and Made a New Life with Hard Work

~
Dana Borcea

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the start of the arrival in Canada of refugees the world came to know as the “boat people.” In the years following the fall of Saigon, more than 60,000 Vietnamese refugees came to Canada. With help from the government and local groups, 6,000 settled in Edmonton. Here are some of their stories.



SITTING ON THE back porch of their north Edmonton home, Carol and Alan Kwok are sipping green tea and remembering a past they would rather forget. The couple are not usually mindful of anniversaries, but the weight of this one is too heavy to ignore. Twenty-five years ago, the Kwoks said goodbye to Saigon. Under the cover of darkness they climbed into a small crowded boat with their four children and a bag of clothes. So began their long search for a new home, a search that ended in Edmonton.

The journey across the South China Sea to a Malaysian refugee camp was supposed to last two days. Engine problems and poor navigation turned the voyage into a nine-day nightmare. “They told us we would have everything we needed on the boat,” Alan Kwok said. He remembered his shock at seeing the boat he had risked everything to buy passage on. The Kwoks shared the 15-metre vessel with more than 150 people, desperate to flee South Vietnam’s new Communist regime. They were among more than one million people from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos who fled the region from 1975 to the early 1990s. Tens of thousands died. Many more braved harrowing journeys across rough waters to seek temporary

refuge in camps inside Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Hong Kong, and Japan. They became the “boat people” and were known around the world.

“There was no space to lie down and everyone had to squeeze in close,” Carol Kwok said, bringing her legs up to her chest to demonstrate. There was little food and they soon ran out of water. Carol could do nothing when her children tugged at her sleeve and told her they were hungry. When it rained, they held a tarp above their heads and tried to wash themselves with the water. The stench in the boat was unbearable. Many boats got lost at sea and floated aimlessly for weeks, even months. In some cases, people who didn’t starve or drown fell prey to pirates. In the overcrowded Malaysian refugee camp, the Kwoks suffered from stifling heat and boredom.

“I was thinking about the future,” she says. “I didn’t have any control in that life. I was always worried. Even at night when I slept, I worried.”

When Canadian officials arrived in the camp a few months later, Carol began to hope. With a distant cousin studying in Saskatoon, she and her family were chosen to come to Canada as government-sponsored refugees.

When they arrived in Saskatchewan in May 1979, there was still snow on the ground. The children had never seen snow before, and loved it. Carol got a job in a factory and cleaned offices at night. Her husband found work in construction. They raised their children and studied English. Thirteen years ago, they moved to Edmonton and opened a convenience store downtown. Carol often worked 16 hours a day, seven days a week, but has since cut back a little. She works hard because she can. She likes the money and the security it brings her family. “If you want to come to a free country, you should do the right thing,” she says. “Work, save money, be honest.”

That work ethic was common among the boat people who settled in Canada, says Alice Colak, director of immigration and settlement services at Edmonton's Catholic Social Services. She was a front-line settlement worker during the late 1970s and early 1980s, when most boat people arrived in Canada.

"The research shows that the people who came in that period have contributed overwhelmingly to Canada, both economically as well as culturally," she says. "They have not been a burden on this society."

At the time, Colak heard complaints from people concerned about the large influx of refugees. "People were worried about the cost of allowing this many people to come," she says. "They worried about there not being enough jobs."

But many more welcomed the refugees warmly. Diane Bessai was one of them. As a young, widowed mother of four, Bessai opened her home to a family of four Vietnamese refugees. Members of her church, St. George's Anglican, pooled their resources to sponsor the Lai family, who arrived in 1980.

The Laiss were among the tens of thousands of Indochinese refugees sponsored under the Immigration Act's new private sponsorship program. Under the new rules, any organization or group of five or more people could sponsor refugees by committing to their financial and personal support. Churches, ethnic associations, even bowling leagues across the country stepped forward in huge numbers. During this period, Canada accepted more Indochinese refugees per capita than any other country.

In her 30 years as a settlement worker, Colak has helped welcome waves of sponsored refugees from countries in Eastern Europe and Central America, and more recently from political hot spots such as Kosovo, Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Sudan. The numbers coming out of Vietnam were the largest she has seen. "To this day, there has been nothing like it," she says.

Like many other Canadians, Bessai remembers reacting strongly

to the images of overcrowded boats full of people willing to risk everything for a chance at a better life. “I didn’t have any money to contribute, but I had a big house and hospitality to offer,” Bessai says. The Lais stayed with her for six weeks. To this day, their two sons, who went on to open a successful cabinet-making business, still call her “mom.”

Hunched over a sewing machine in her cluttered dress shop, Tina Tong hemmed a pink taffeta bridesmaid’s dress and remembered her escape from Vietnam 15 years ago. “We wanted to find freedom,” Tong says—a frightened teenager when she and her brother said goodbye to her family to board a boat bound for Malaysia. “We wanted something good for the future and we didn’t see anything good there.”

Despite studying hard, Tong knew that with no money or government connections she would never be able to attend university in Vietnam. The night she left marked her third attempt. Her brother had already spent a year in prison for an earlier escape bid. After idling in a refugee camp for nearly a year, Tong and her brother were selected by Canadian officials to come to Edmonton, making them among the last of the boat people to settle in Canada as government-sponsored refugees.

They arrived in September, just in time to watch the leaves change colour. “All the trees were yellow and orange and I thought it was so beautiful,” Tong says. “I liked the weather then, too. It was just a little bit cold.”

The government provided Tong with a two-bedroom apartment downtown and free English classes. She soon felt lonely and estranged. “It was a sad time and a big life change,” Tong says. Her lack of English proved to be her biggest hurdle. “You don’t know how to write, how to talk or how to listen.” Her first job, baking

desserts in a mall bakery, forced her to learn. “It was my first job and very exciting. It was hard to understand my boss at first but he never got mad, even when I made mistakes. The customers were also very nice. It made me want to learn (English) faster.” Over the next decade, she worked various jobs and had four children. Her English improved.

Just over a year ago, Tong realized her dream of owning a business when she bought a dress shop on the corner of 105th Avenue and 97th Street. A Beautiful Angel Fashion is full of bright, modern fashions and traditional Asian dresses. Although she is still losing money on the store, Tong has always wanted to be an entrepreneur. In Vietnam, that wasn’t possible. “What’s yours is yours here,” she said. “You don’t have to worry about a knock on the door.” Tong often works late, doing alterations while her children play in the back of the shop. Many nights the phone rings constantly. Most of the calls are for her nine-year-old daughter. But Tong doesn’t seem to mind. She says she’s here for her children. “They can do anything they want now,” she says, handing her daughter the phone.

Prejudice



Anton Capri



I PICK MYSELF up and try to act unhurt. The bully, I still don't know his name, sneers at me. "You dumb fuckin' DP. Go back where you came from." I only understand some of what he is saying, but recognize my label: I'm a DP. My parents too are DP's, displaced persons, people without a country. But Canada has accepted us—my parents have been accepted as farm workers for a year. After that we can live anywhere in Canada, and after four more years become citizens. By 1954 we will be citizens, and will have a country.

After the harvest we move to Toronto. The farmer that my father works for says that he cannot pay him during the winter. We can stay on the farm, but we will have no money to live on. It's not legal for my father to work in the city. He's supposed to work on a farm for a year. My mother gets a job in a clothes factory.

In Toronto the school is much bigger, and already my English is quite good, although when I speak everybody can still tell that I'm a DP. But I now have a friend, Dave. It is spring now and this is my first game of baseball. When it's my turn to hit the ball I go and stand on the plate, but the boy throwing the ball throws it straight at me. Then Dave comes up to me and explains that I have to stand

beside the plate and the pitcher will throw the ball over the plate. Everybody, except Dave, laughs at me. This is how we become friends. I want to play well, so I watch how the other players run hard and slide into the bases. Later I hit the ball and slide into first base. Again, everybody except Dave laughs, and he comes over to me and explains that I don't need to slide into first base. Now I know that you can run past first base and that this is faster than sliding.

Dave has these really tight little curls that he keeps cut very short. I get a brush cut that's as close as I can get to what his hair looks like, but it doesn't look as good. His hair looks neat even when it's ready to be cut. I wish I had hair like that. I also wish I had dark skin like him.

Dave's mother is dead and his father travels a lot, talking to groups of people. I haven't quite understood what he tells these people even though Dave has tried to tell me. It has to do with something called *prejudice*, which is a word I don't yet know, and Dave doesn't bother to explain it to me in a detailed way. But my English is getting better all the time. Dave lives with some people who are not related to him and he comes to our house quite often. At first my mother, who doesn't earn very much in the clothes factory, is not too happy that Dave comes for supper, but she is happy that I have a friend. Later, she gets to not mind at all. My father doesn't pay much attention to us and reads the paper all the time when he is home. He says he is trying to improve his English, but I notice that he is always looking at the part of the paper where jobs are offered. He doesn't have his unemployment book yet because we haven't been here for a year. When he gets a job he works until they ask for his unemployment book. After that they will allow him to find another job. This is all very hard on him.

One day I see something that makes me feel less unhappy about being a DP. I'm on the Queen Street streetcar near the rear exit and a couple of men in heavy coveralls and boots covered with mud stand beside me, speaking English with strong accents. That

is when another man says in a very loud voice, so that everyone can hear: "Those goddamn DP's. We won the war, now they come here and take our jobs. Why the hell don't they go back where they came from?" One of the two men becomes a little flushed, but says nothing. At the next stop he steps on the stair, so that the door opens, then he reaches in and grabs the loudmouth by the jacket and lifts him right out of the streetcar. He then steps off the stair, the door closes and the streetcar moves on. I notice that quite a lot of the people in the streetcar are smiling.

Dave is my best friend. He is helping me in school with all the subjects except math. I am quite a bit ahead of everyone in math, as I had learned a lot about it at the school in the DP camp. Dave has also got me to join the Glee Club. He has a beautiful voice. It's funny, when I sing I don't have much of an accent. We travel to some of the other schools in Toronto and sing there. Next week we will be going to a festival in Kingston. We'll be there all weekend. Dave and I are going to share a room.

The festival is great. Our school comes second, but I notice that the other boys, and especially the girls, don't like to sit with Dave and me. I think it's because I'm a DP and he's my best friend. I'm beginning to understand the meaning of *prejudice* now. Maybe if I lose a bit more of my accent they won't have this prejudice, and then Dave won't be hurt for being my friend.

I'm getting quite good at baseball. I usually get to play right field and the other day I caught a very long fly ball for an important out and I also hit the ball very hard. Some of the other boys actually came over afterwards and slapped me on the back. I haven't been called a DP for quite some time now.

I finally get to meet Dave's dad. He's back home again, and this time he's giving a talk in a church, and even though it's not a Catholic church I go with Dave. I don't tell my parents. There are a lot of people there, and I think I'm the only DP, because everybody else seems like a real Canadian. It's easy to tell because they're all

coloured. Dave's dad talks about their brothers in the south and the day when they will all be free, when there will be no more prejudice, and people will live as brothers. There is a lot more that I do not understand. Later Dave introduces me to his dad and I shake his hand. "So, you're the young man who has befriended my son. I'm very pleased to meet you. Dave has told me many times about you and your family." I don't know what to say. Surely it's Dave who had befriended me, not the other way around. So I just say: "Yes, sir. I'm very pleased to meet you, sir."

Later I ask Dave what his dad had meant. "After all, Dave, you are the one who became my friend when nobody else wanted to have anything to do with me because I'm a DP." Dave looks at me long and hard before he answers: "I'm coloured."

I know that. It's obvious. "Yes, you're coloured."

"Well, that's it. Now, you're accepted, your accent is almost gone, and pretty soon nobody will be calling you a DP any more. But me—I'm going to be coloured for my whole life."

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