

Dominique's Story

If Today Was Your Last Day

My name is Dominique Turgeon. It's kind of ironic that I was born on July the first. My parents tell me it was a warm, sunny day in Laval when I was born. And papa teases me that they missed Canada Day celebrations because of me. He says it jokingly, and I feel that they were happy with just what happened. My life has been pretty good. I've been fortunate with the things I have.

I remember when I was four, I announced I wanted to learn how to play the guitar. My uncle, Danielle, he went out and bought me a toy guitar. It had pretty crappy strings, and sounded tinny when you plucked them, but I didn't care. I'd sit in my room and pretend I was Bill Henderson from Chilliwack and belt out stuff like Whatcha Gonna Do When I'm Gone. I think I annoyed my parents more than anything. But I stuck with it, and

that toy guitar soon became real.

At first I went out and bought a used six string guitar. It was pretty beat up, but I learned how to take care of it, and tune it, and began practicing. My vain attempts at music with the toy guitar became musical success with this new, to me, six string. I was seven when I began with the six string. Four years later, my uncle Danielle came through again. On my eleventh birthday, he presented a brand new Fender Stratocaster. I went from the acoustics of the six string to thrashing out riffs on this beautiful instrument. At least I had learned the different cords and it didn't sound like noise. Mind you, mama would still shout up to my room to keep the racket down. Now I was suddenly wanting to be Joan Jett, cranking out hard guitar riffs from I Love Rock 'n Roll to I Hate Myself For Lovin' You.

I had become so immersed in my music that I almost forgot what had happened on that day when I was six years old. Almost forgot.

I didn't understand things as well when I was six

like I do now. When I was that young, I never heard of the October Crisis, had no clue who Pierre Elliot Trudeau was, and thought the Queen was just a nice lady who was like grand-mama, but lived in another country. And she never brought presents when she came to visit. Maybe it was why I was more interested in that old box in the attic I had found then the day I met the Queen in Montreal. I was six, the Queen never gave me a present, but my father did.

So when I found that old box in the attic, I hung onto my father's every word. He told me of the struggle in Quebec, the separation of thought. How people believed Quebec should become it's own nation and leave Canada behind. It had nothing to do with music, but it was something about papa. I hung onto every word. He showed me the uniform, tattered from storage, something he had not worn for years. The white had started to become grey and the red had begun to fade, but that maple leaf still shone brightly in my eyes. Here I was, six years old, and I just learned that my papa was a genuine superhero. Well, maybe not with superpowers like in

comic books, but he fought crime, and his name was in the papers. Or at least the name he had taken.

I remember laughing when he told me that mama jokingly suggested he call himself Canadiens after the Habs. It was a joke, but it stuck. A part of Canada, with a part of Quebec. My father became a symbol of hope, not just for Quebec, but for the entire country. And in a very Canadian way, he did it quietly. He told me how mama was the one who put together the uniform, how she sewed and designed the suit. How they talked about the decision to take this risk, and how papa decided that he would not tell anyone, except mama, that he would do this.

Well, as papa told me, uncle Danielle did find out. And there was a big fight in the apartment one night. Papa was very much in support of Canada and Quebec being a part of Canada. Uncle Danielle, on the other hand, sided with the separatists. Now, my uncle Danielle is not a small man. He's actually a professional wrestler. He did the wrestling circuit for years before landing in the big time with Stampede Wrestling in Calgary. He took the name the Montreal Mauler. After a few years, he joined

the World Wrestling Federation. So, mama was justified when she said she was scared that the argument would have turned physical. She knew that papa could handle himself, but Danielle was big and very strong. Papa was just a political science student at McGill, after all, and while physically fit, he did not train every single day like Uncle Danielle did.

So she decided to step in between them.

Try and picture it, my mama is five feet six, maybe seven inches tall. Maybe one hundred and twenty pounds. Papa was six foot two at the time, and about two hundred and twenty, solid muscle. Uncle Danielle was six foot five, and close to three hundred pounds, all of it muscle. The two of them are arguing, nose to nose, and my petite mama pushes in the middle of them. She said that she had enough, it was time to put her foot down. Family was more important than politics, after all. After some resistance, both papa and my uncle Danielle agreed. It turned out pretty good anyway, because uncle Danielle taught papa a few moves, how to prepare himself if someone hit him, things like that.

Not to say that papa didn't go out and get other training. He joined a dojo, the same one I train at now, actually. He told me, when I first started training, that the key wasn't to just beat up criminals. But it was to make sure to protect yourself and take down a criminal without injuring them severely. My papa is not a violent man, by any means. He's not quick to anger, and he doesn't raise his voice often. Unless me or Chloe really pushed him to the limit when we were younger. Me on the other hand, I picked up a lot from my mother. While my father was always calm and even, mama was fiery and creative. Which also meant that she had a bit of a temper, just like me.

I'll admit, sometimes I go off in a tangent, but I try to remember the things papa told me about. Everything must be balanced. Find the calm in every anger, find the center in a torrent of violence. Don't just be one of the combatants in a battle, but become the battle itself. Direct it, and you will win. Papa related it to music, which helped make sense of it all.

You ever have that moment in your life when you realize just how special someone is? That moment when you discover some secret about them that paints them in a different light, and you suddenly put that person on a pedestal, you respect them more for the things that they have done. I had that moment when I was six, when I found that box in the attic of our home in Laval. For years after, it was like my secret hideaway, a place to go and try and recapture some past glory about my parents. When Chloe was old enough, I asked mama and papa if I could show her. Together we would spend an entire afternoon in the attic and read all of the clippings and take a look at all the pictures. Okay, so I would read to Chloe for the first little while.

When I was ten, I remember going to Ottawa with my parents. It was January, and mama had bundled Chloe and me up in our winter jackets and scarves. We took our skates, because we got excited about skating on Rideau Canal. Before we skated, though, papa had a stop to make on Parliament Hill. Let's face it, I was ten, and the Parliament Buildings were boring, stuffy places where

men and women went to argue all day. That's how I saw it. Until I walked through the front doors.

It was like walking into a museum. Papa had some paperwork he had to deliver to the Minister of Foreign Affairs office, and we followed. Chloe and me just stared at the pictures and busts that filled the halls. When we were about to leave, papa quietly motioned for us to take a look at something.

At the time, I didn't know much about Canadian history. Like I said before, to me the Queen was like grandmama from another country. So I didn't know anything about the Order of Canada. Papa showed us a small display, which held a medal. There was a photograph, still vibrant and clear, that showed my papa, dressed in the uniform that I found in the attic, accepting a medal from the Queen. Papa explained to me it was the Cross of Valour, awarded to those who show bravery and courage.

Along with the medal and the photograph was a letter, signed by the Queen and Prime Minister Trudeau. It read "Presented to this man, known only as Canadiens,

for his actions during the month of October, 1970, and continued actions thereafter. May this serve as an example to all Canadians, present and future, so that all will know there will always be someone who will fight for the freedom and unity of the Dominion of Canada. As per request, this award will remain on Parliament Hill for all to see, and for all to be inspired to act in support of this great country of Canada.” It wasn't until we started to go home, that I finally asked papa why he didn't keep it with all of the clippings in the box back home.

“It's not something to hide away, Dominique,” I remember him telling me. “Newspaper clippings are one thing to hide away in a box in some dark corner. But the award was something which wasn't just mine. My actions were inspired by this nation. This nation recognized that, but I felt it would be a crime to lock the medal away. When I was told about the award, I talked with your mother for a long time. We both decided it would be better off being seen by others to help inspire them as well.” I remember him smiling as he added in a whisper. “Sort of like you playing the guitar. Music isn't something

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you lock away. It's something you share for everyone.”

Animal I Have Become

One thing I remember distinctly that papa always told me about being Canadiens. It's not about show, it's not about revenge, it's not about being a star. He said that life as Canadiens had to be kept separate from who I really am. Let me tell you, that is very, very hard. But at least I know what my father went through when he was Canadiens.

His stories of what he did hold true to me today. When he first donned the uniform, it was all about stopping crime during turbulent times, while creating a sense of identity for Quebecers, that we weren't just a distinct society, but a society that shared a greatness with the rest of Canada. His message was just as much political as it was about helping to defend the common citizen in this country. Not everything he did was taken quietly. Sometimes there were those that would attack him directly, both verbally and physically. Even papa said

that he responded to the taunts in violent ways.

He explained how during the height of the resistance movement, how he encountered a rather grizzly situation. An older couple was walking home, it was late in the evening. Papa was there when a couple of thugs decided to try and have some fun. Easy enough, papa would swing down, fight them off and call in the police. But one of the young men had a gun. Things became ugly very quickly. He told me that a shot rang out, and the old man was hit. Angry, papa still had the state of mind to remain at the scene with them as he tried to stop blood flow. Fortunately, there was a passerby who saw everything and called ambulance and police, then came out to help. When the ambulance arrived, and the older man was taken care of, papa dashed off in the direction the men had escaped.

It wasn't long and he found them. He heard one of them bragging about shooting Canadiens. Papa only relayed what he said in the darkness, so I can only imagine what it might have sounded like. He said he was angry, and revenge had taken a hold of his whole being. His past

exploits, dealings with the police, all of it was forgotten. Just so he could make sure this crook would not hurt anyone again. He said there was four, maybe five people. And all he saw was red. Papa said he can't completely recall the fight, but he did know at the end all five were beaten senseless by his own hands. That was one thing papa warned me about. Never take things to a level where you become just as ugly as those who would do harm to others.

He says he still has visions of that night still coming to him, and how one mistake could have changed everything. The old man could have died, papa could have been shot and killed. Any number of things. Through some dumb luck, things turned out for the better, but they could always have been so much worse. This is the one thing he always tells me about being Canadiens.

Among other things, that is.

My father is political. You can't work for the government, even the Foreign Affairs office, and not be political. For papa, his heroes have all been political.

Although, there was that brief time he was Canadiens when he traveled with Team Canada to Russia during the '72 Summit Series. That would have been so cool to be there. He and mama both went, as tourists, but he made sure to watch over the players, even attending the last game secretly in uniform, cheering from some dark corner as Paul Henderson potted the goal that lifted Canada to victory.

Sorry, I'm getting off track. Papa's heroes.

He was a little older than I was when I first put on the uniform. Twenty, to be exact. I was eighteen. During papa's younger years, his heroes talked about a unified Canada. And the best speaker, the biggest advocate of a unified nation was Pierre Elliot Trudeau. To this day, he says this country hasn't had a Prime Minister with the charisma of Trudeau. Papa always described how he would listen to his speeches, hanging on to every word. Sometimes he didn't agree with what Trudeau said, but as papa had come to say, real heroes are ones that you can respect even when you don't agree with them.

It was more than just hearing the words from

eloquent speakers. As papa told me, it was living the words, believing in them. Until papa began teaching me, telling me about his past and what he learned, that I wanted only to be taken away by my music. But thanks to him, and my own curiosity, I learned about this nation and what it stands for. Not only from listening to my parents and Uncle Danielle, but by spending one summer traveling from coast to coast to coast. Sometimes we don't understand what someone in another part of the country believes until we see it with our own eyes. One thing I do know for certain, is that all our basic needs are the same. From the fishermen off the coast of Newfoundland, to the Bay Street lawyer in Toronto, to the farmer in Saskatchewan. I take all these experiences and write them down from time to time. And I take the words my father told me, and hold them dear.

Thanks to his history lessons, I've branched out and done research on my own. It actually helped me in high school, and I even pulled up my marks a lot. Having confidence in one area of learning helped in others. And, my martial arts training didn't hurt either.

Think about the way we communicate with each other today. How with a few clicks of a mouse we can explore the world, research information, or watch television programs. It's easy to stay connected and communicate with others, so it's no surprise that when I'm on the streets as Canadiens, I carry a Blackberry with me, along with my iPod, maybe a small scanning unit to monitor police signals and a small GPS unit. Papa said that if he would have mentioned carrying a Blackberry when he was Canadiens, they'd have locked him away in a looney bin or at the very least, given him the strange look one gives to a crazy person, slowly backing away from him.

As papa says, the way he and the police communicated was far different from what I have now. He had an old Radio Shack transistor radio, a police scanner that was slightly bigger than mine, and enough change to use a payphone if he needed to make a call. Mama also had him take a two way walkie talkie in case he needed to contact her right away. It was good for a

couple of kilometers, which was better than most. Papa said Radio Shack was a usual location for him in his day to day travels, and many people mistook him for an engineering student with his interest in gadgets.

The biggest difference was how the police got messages to papa. Now, I have a Google Mail account set up just for Canadiens, and two Montreal Metro police officers use that to contact me. For papa, the police chief would leave an ad in the classified section of the Montreal Gazette. Papa showed me several of them. The police chief was kind of poetic, actually. One of them read “Canadiens! Rue St. Deni, we'll have coffee or tea” which as papa explained was code for meeting beside a coffee house on Rue St. Deni. While most of the classified ads were in French, these ones were always in English, sort of a signal to papa that the police wanted to speak with him. Each morning, papa would look through the paper, scanning the classifieds. If he was at home, he could usually discuss things with mama, but if he was out in the street, taking the bus, or in one of the common areas on McGill campus, he'd make sure to flip to the cartoons. He

said that reading the comic strips helped calm him. Which I can see, because reading Blondie or Beetle Bailey is funny stuff.

Papa says in today's world, things seem faster, so much easier to contact and communicate with people than when he was my age. But he also says that it means it can also be that more dangerous. I've read about the different cells of the FLQ, how they communicated with each other and always kept one step ahead of the police, and I think what if that had happened now. It would be maddening. In a way it already has. The bombing of the Montreal Stock Exchange and the kidnapping of Cross and Laporte were horrific, but paled in comparison to September 11, 2001.

No one could have imagined the destruction that took place. The entire world stopped, and watched in horror. In Montreal, mama and Chloe and I were all frantic. Papa was part of a diplomatic entourage to New York. It took us hours to find anything out, and it wasn't until the evening when we finally heard papa's voice on the phone.

“I’m fine,” I remember hearing him say. “Mr. Day and I will be returning to Ottawa as soon as we can. The Prime Minister’s office has called back all diplomats, but all flights have been grounded for now.” We talked for another two hours, just glad we could hear papa’s voice.

We felt somewhat safer, but not completely. These weren’t terrorists from inside the country, like what had happened in October of 1970, but they came from another country on the other side of the world. People tried to convince themselves that no terrorists would attack cities in Canada. Until we began to hear the names that Muslim extremists called Canada. They called the United States the Big Devil. Canada was called the Little Devil. They saw no difference between us at all, save for the fact we were a different nation.

When papa returned home a few days later, it felt like a huge weight had been lifted off our shoulders. Even Mr. Day was there, as he promised papa he would personally make sure that we were all secure in the knowledge that papa was safe. This was a man from Alberta, and a lot of times there was always verbal battles

in politics between Alberta and Quebec. But I learned that day there was no language barrier when a man only wished to see the safety and unity of a family.

I was young, so I didn't fully understand Muslim beliefs. Papa had a few friends who were Muslim, I knew them very well. They seemed so normal, but with all the news coverage things began to change. Papa could tell I had questions, was confused by the whole thing. So one day, he sat me down and explained things to me.

“I notice you've been watching the news coverage from last month,” he said as he turned down the television. “I've also notice how ... timid you've seemed around Mr. Aariz.”

“Is... is he gonna do somet'ing?” I asked timidly. I was confused by all the news reports about Muslim faith and the recent attacks.

“No, Dominique,” he tried to reassure me. “No he won't. Mr. Aariz is Muslim, but that does not mean he is an extremist. He is just like me, he has a wife and children. He runs a successful market not far from here. And he is a good neighbour. Just because he may worship

differently than we do, does not mean that he wants to see harm come to us. What happened last month affected him too. Maybe more than it actually affected us.”

“Why is dat?”

Papa sighed as he sat back on the couch as he tried to explain things to me. “Because of the colour of his skin, and the faith he follows, many people become openly angry at him. Holding him responsible for the attacks. Just because he looks like the extremists that did this. It's no different than it was in the Second World War when the Canadian Government set up internment camps for Japanese Canadians. They were seen as the visible enemy, and while Canada was at war with Japan, these people had to be watched. There was a great deal of prejudice at the time, as your grandfather told me.

“It was similar when I was Canadiens,” he said as he gave me a comforting hug. “But instead of the colour of someone's skin, or the way they worshiped, it was about language. I could have grown angry and lashed out at English Canada for treating French Canadians as second citizens, but I worked harder to prove that there was no

difference. It was especially hard, considering the background we come from.”

“What background do we come from, papa?”

“We are Metis, Dominique,” he explained with a smile. “Your mother and I are both half French and half Mowhawk. So, that makes you half French and half Mowhawk as well. Same with Chloe.” This new knowledge made me smile. There was a classmate of mine who was full blood Mowhawk, and now I could take this information and tell him about it.

“If you were still Canadiens, would you defend the Muslims?”

“Yes, I would,” he said without hesitation. “Muslims who live in Canada, are Canadian citizens and have all the rights and freedoms that every Canadian has in this country. They may worship differently, they may look different, but we all share in the one thing that matters. That we are all Canadian.”

His words still hold true to me today, as they have shaped how I approach being Canadiens. Wearing that red and white uniform isn't about being a rock star, it's not

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about fame and fortune or even glory. It means so much more than all of that. Making a name in the newspapers isn't what any of it is about. It's about being a role model for everyone to aspire to become.

Even for the one wearing the uniform.

Follow The Waves

It's so hard sometimes to keep this dual life a secret. I had to tell Yves, Jacqueline and Michelle about being Canadiens because I trust them, and I have to have them trust me. It wasn't any different for papa. I mentioned before how papa and Uncle Danielle yelled at each other when my uncle found out about Canadiens. As Uncle Danielle explained to me, it wasn't so much that papa was fighting crime and promoting a unified nation, it was that he kept it secret from his family.

It wasn't just family that papa had to keep his dual life secret. It was the police as well. While the police appreciated the efforts papa did, there were those that felt a private citizen, especially one dressed in a costume, was not what was needed during those times of turmoil. Papa told me that there were several times Chief Inspector Maurice Lefevre tried to get papa to reveal his identity. But always, papa would shrug it off. He said the only

thing he mentioned was that he had a fiance and eventually wished to start a family.

I know what it's like to hide something from the police like a real name. I have to do that every day. Two of my contacts with Montreal Metro are a pair of police officers who have regular patrol beats. Constable Josette Frechette and Constable Robert Kowalsky. Both are really good police officers, and it took a while, but I eventually told them who I really was. The only other person outside of my family who knows happens to be a professor at McGill University. I don't take any of his classes, but I see him around campus. His name is Maxwell Running Cloud.

He also happens to be a costumed crime fighter, but one that the country knows. By that, I mean that they know Maxwell Running Cloud is also Hawk's Scream. There are moments in a person's life when everything becomes vivid in a memory, and the night Professor Running Cloud figured out about my dual life is extremely vivid.

I was trailing a group of suspects one evening, they

had been vandalizing different churches in the area of Montreal where my family lived. The night I caught up with them, I received some unexpected assistance. Usually in a fight, I can hold my own, mostly because criminals are a bunch of cowards and run at the first sign of an authority figure. Word had gotten around that I usually had a couple of police officers that followed me, so most crooks would break and run. But these guys decided to turn and fight. Fine by me, I usually can use the work out.

I'm pretty good in a fight, especially against two or three guys, but there were six in total. I figured that they'd try and rush me, so, as I learned from Uncle Danielle, I would have to use my environment to my advantage. The only problem is that these guys were working with the same plan. I managed to take a couple of them out, but the intensity of the fight was tiring, and I was slowing down. That was when I heard a ringing in my ears.

Professor Running Cloud would later explain it to me that the sonic amplification device he cobbled together works at ultra sonic frequency. A sound wave that can

take a person out of a fight if necessary, or even damage a wall. I was lucky that I covered my ears in time. The punks, they weren't so lucky. Two of them fell to their knees as they grabbed their ears, but a couple of others still had some fight in them. One lunged at me, but got swept away as a powerful arm seemed to come out of nowhere.

Professor Running Cloud isn't a small man to begin with. He's built, very tall and well muscled. Probably about the same size as my Uncle Danielle. But the gear he had, the wing harness and weapons belt. I just used my fists and karate moves, but Professor Running Cloud was armed to the teeth. Even with all that gear, he still took down criminals without hurting them. Much. He also had the advantage that the police had sanctioned him. I wasn't so lucky.

We fought the last two, nearly standing back to back. When it was all over, he just looked at me and nodded. I wondered if he was smiling underneath the mask he wore. He didn't say anything, but waited until the police arrived while we gathered up the six punks and

guarded them. When it was all done, he took to the sky.

The next day was when the revelation came.

“Morning, Miss Turgeon,” I heard Professor Running Cloud as I was walking through the halls of Schulich School. I was taken aback, because I knew that Professor Running Cloud was usually in the history department.

“Um... mornin', Professor Running Cloud.” He was the local celebrity on campus. A good looking guy from Saskatchewan, and a crime fighter to boot. There was more than one girl on campus that swooned around him. “What... what bring you 'round to de music school?”

“I was assisting one of the music history classes,” he explained in a calm voice, friendly even. “They were taking a portion of Native American music and how it was used to tell stories.” He smiled as I smiled and nodded, satisfied with the reason. He then leaned over and whispered. “By the way, you've got a mean left hook, but you might want to practice your foot work. If those punks had any fighting ability aside from swinging a lead pipe, they might have taken you down. The way you stand

makes you top heavy.” I just blinked, unable to speak, as he stood straight again. He smiled as he pushed up his glasses and said in a calm voice, “You have a good day, Miss Turgeon.”

I just stood there, unable to speak at all. Zombie like, I went to class, did my work as I needed to, and tried to study in the library. By late afternoon, I couldn't take it anymore. I had to know how Professor Running Cloud knew. So, I tracked him down. He was alone in one of the lecture halls in the Leacock Building where the anthropology department was housed. Professor Running Cloud didn't seem very surprised to see me.

“So,” I said with some nervousness as I entered the hall. Professor Running Cloud looked up from the paper work he was doing, and removed his glasses. His attention was completely focused on me. “How... exactly you know? I mean, you know what I'm talkin' 'bout, oui?”

“I believe so,” he said in his usual calm voice as he offered me a chair. I took the seat without hesitation as he began to speak. “Consider this a history lesson, Miss Turgeon. Something I'm very good at. But this is a bit

more personal.” He leaned back in his chair as he watched me with hawk like eyes. “I was ten years old, still living on the reserve near Saskatoon. I remember news reports had already mentioned Canadiens was seen in the city. And I remember wanting so badly to see him.

“I was young, and pretty stupid,” he said with a chuckle as he rose from his chair and moved to the front of his desk. He leaned on it carefully as he talked, never once in a demeaning manner toward me. “I managed to head up into the city with a couple of friends, just to see if we could catch a glimpse of him. And boy, did we ever. Saskatoon isn't known for it's heavy crime, it's a rather subdued city compared to others. But it happens from time to time. We were at a convenience store near the Exhibition grounds, just off Highway 219 into the city. A fight broke out, and one of the people involved pulled a knife. A rather big knife.

“My sister had come along with us, and all she wanted to do was make sure that I was okay.” He explained that his sister, Naomi had become a shield between Professor Running Cloud and the fight. And then

it happened.

“Somebody shouted out, I can't exactly remember what it was, but I saw what had dropped down to the pavement. That red and white uniform is hard to miss. He called out to the attackers, telling them to drop their weapons. One did so, but the other was so drunk he must have felt he was ten feet tall and bullet proof.” He stopped as he took a drink of water, something a few friends of mine said he did at important points in a lecture to keep the students attention focused. “I won't say the ensuing fight was epic, hardly so. He took down the assailant pretty quickly, though the attacker did get a couple of swipes in. One of which cut his mask.”

“Wait a minute,” I suddenly said, not meaning to interrupt but not able to stop myself..”Papa has a small scar over his left eye that go up his forehead. He never tell me 'bout dat. You sayin'...”

“Probably,” Professor Running Cloud stated with a nod. “It wasn't a deep cut, but it was enough to damage his mask. The police came, at any rate, took away the two, and then he turned his attention to us. He wanted to

make sure we were alright. I could see a glimpse of his face, thanks to the cut.” He moved back around his desk again and took his seat, putting his glasses back on. “I followed Canadiens' exploits until he retired. When I took this position here, your father was one of the members of the board for the university. He welcomed me. And I recognized the scar. I never said anything, but I'd already heard about the new Canadiens. I sort of put two and two together.”

“But... dat's a pretty long shot,” I said with a small chuckle.

“Yes, it is. But everyone on campus that spends the effort to observe knows who you are, and knows your father is Jean Pierre Turgeon. From my point of view, it also makes sense that his daughter would take up the mantle.”

“You say you follow his exploits,” I mentioned in a soft voice. “Why didn't you become Canadiens?”

Professor Running Cloud chuckled lightly before answering. “Two reasons. The first, well, I'm a Western Canadian. It would look odd if I did that, considering I

don't have any French ancestry and Canadiens is obviously a French name. Second, I didn't think it would honour the man who wore it before if I did. And I didn't know your father well enough to ask him.”

I nodded having been satisfied by the short history lesson. “So, you gonna be on patrol tonight?”

“Are you kidding,” he said with a smile. “I've got a ton of paperwork to do.”

I left him to his work, satisfied in a way. At least he wasn't one to try and blackmail me or become a rival, which would have been really weird. I found an ally, and learned a little bit about my father at the same time.

Red Flag

There's a connection with Haiti in Canada. Especially in Quebec, where there is a significant minority. I read that a survey in 2006 showed over 100,000 people in Quebec point to their Haitian heritage. It does make sense, as both Canada and Haiti are considered Francophone speaking nations. It should also be no surprise that there are many Canadians who are prominent in sport, culture and politics that are Haitian. Bruny Surin, George Laraque, Olivier Occean, Rudy Doliscat, and Samuel Dalembert are just a few of the athletes that came from Haiti who call Canada home. Even Canada's Governor General, Michaëlle Jean was born in Haiti. Of course, two of my best friends, Yves and Jacqueline Manderville, are both of Haitian descent, as they are both first generation Canadians. They're parents told me many things of what life was like in Haiti during the rule of Jean-Claude "Bébé Doc" Duvalier. As a matter

of fact, it was with the help of my father that they managed to secure refugee status in Canada. If that had never happened, then I more than likely would never have know them or Yves and Jacqueline.

You might ask, what does Haiti have to do with my father being Canadiens. Well, over ten years after he retired his uniform, Canadiens made one more appearance.

My father had established himself as a diplomat, and had been called upon more than once to assist in some international crisis. During the 1990's, Canada sent peace keeping troops to Haiti, in an effort to stabilize the country after so many violent clashes with the military and the people. Elections were marred with accusations of corruption, people were murdered at polling booths. In 1996, after years of political chaos, Brigadier General J.R.P Daigle took over as Force Commander for the peace keeping initiative. Chaos had ensued since 1993. My father was one of the members of a diplomatic mission to help make the transition from the chaos into peaceful times.

This had been years after I had found that box in the attic, so anything about Haiti would not be in there. Needless to say, mama and I did catch glimpses on the news from time to time. Reporters never really pointed out the red and white uniform. But far off in the background, we saw papa as he did what he could to help. While we did admire his conviction, mama was scared for his life. It was a dangerous place, after all.

When he returned home in June, after the diplomatic mission had finished, both my parents sat down and had a very long talk. I remember, because I sat in on it too. Mama had some obvious concerns, especially considering the situation in Haiti. Things were still very volatile, very violent.

Papa tried to ease our concerns, we've always known he's been rather outspoken with regard to several different issues, which many observers have said that he is lucky he has always retained his position during changes in government. As he said, he just couldn't sit by and do nothing.

He told us of a situation one night when he decided

to secretly patrol and help anyone he could. Wearing jeans and his combat boots, he found a Tee-shirt with a maple leaf, and used an old flag for a mask. He ran into a small group of boys, doing what boys will sometimes do. As papa said, children will mimic their parents, and that's exactly what these ones were doing.

But instead of hauling them off, and putting them in custody of the temporary police force, he talked to them. He said he talked to them for about an hour, and while he got across his point, he learned a great deal of what was going on in Haiti. I really wouldn't understand until years later.

With the most recent disaster that took place in Haiti, it was obvious both Yves and Jacqueline were worried. They still had family in Haiti. So, Michelle and I did what we thought was right. Turned out it was, because it helped both of them to ease their fears, but at the same time it brought about such sadness.

The four of us went through the necessary paperwork to join relief efforts in Haiti. Part of our trip

was not to take an airplane through Air Canada. We were placed on board a Canadian Armed Forces Hercules transport. Our military liaison was Lieutenant Naomi Simonson, who showed us the transport, explained what we'd see, and tried to prepare us for what was to come. On the trip down, Lieutenant Simonson was open with us about her history, she'd been involved in military actions in Haiti, Somalia and Afghanistan. Her first experience was in Quebec during the Oka Crisis. That must have been difficult for her, because it was more than obvious she was First Nation. To be military personnel and face off in a tense situation against people who, as she explained, called her a traitor.

I did not mull this over too much, because by the time we got into conversations about her own history, we were touching down in a temporary base in Haiti. We didn't have much time to look around, as we were ushered through check points. Yves and Jacqueline were taken to a separate area to inquire about family. Michelle and I were taken to Red Cross facilities.

The day was long, and tiring. We helped with

medical needs, which included band aids mostly. Any medicine was carried out by certified nurses. Michelle and I could at least help with food and other necessities, and we even tried our best to keep spirits up. When evening came around, we were thankful when we were given a Spartan room, and small beds.

But, I couldn't sleep.

I managed to bring my uniform with me. So, when Michelle finally went to sleep, I went out. The patrol was heartbreaking, it gave me a different perspective of the world. In Montreal, we have nothing like this. Sure, there was the ice storms in the past, but we have always gotten back to life as we know it. This was completely different. This was total destruction beyond what an ice storm could do.

With such things as an earthquake, there was also the looting. I steeled myself for it in case I ran into looters, hoping that I would not. Sometimes, I can be too opportunistic. There were three of them, all young men. They were coming out of a broken down building carrying a few boxes of food. I couldn't very well stop them, but I

could at least try to get them to go to the aid station. I saw a lot of people there in my first day, but I never remembered any of these three.

“You know, there's another way than this,” I called out after watching them for a moment. I didn't perch up higher than them, I just walked into their line of view. “Dat food is probably spoiled, you get sick off o' dat.”

One of the men began to step forward, menacingly. But another reached out and held him back. There was a look in his eyes, one of recognition. “So what are we gonna do? We've got families to feed, an' dey 'ave no food.”

I took out a piece of paper and a pen from my jacket and began to write. “Take dis to de aid station. Ask for Evelyn Carlton. She's in charge of de civilian personnel dat are working dere. She can 'elp you. Maybe get you some clean clothes, a bed to sleep in. It might be a cot, but at least it be clean for you.”

The man nodded to the others and they began to walk in the direction of the aid station. He began to walk, but stopped and looked back to me. “I was six when he

came, you know.”

I looked at him for a moment, and suddenly, everything my papa told me all those years ago came back. “You were one of de boys?” I asked after a moments thought. “De man you met... wore a maple leaf? Like me?” The man nodded without saying a word. “He is my papa. He tol' me 'bout dat night. You probably de same age as me, den.”

The man smiled, and turned to join his friends. It wasn't a long conversation, but for a brief moment, we shared something. Among all that disaster, something hopeful and good took place. I thought on that for a few minutes, and was completely taken by surprised when I heard someone's voice.

“Maxie said you could fight,” I heard the woman say. “But he never mentioned anything about diplomatic skills.” I turned to look in the direction of the voice. A very tall woman, and I could not recognize her in the darkness. But she wore a military uniform, and the most startling thing. She wore a pair of metallic wings. And then it hit me. In Ottawa, a vigilante had begun patrolling

who went by the name Grey Kestrel. It was common knowledge that she was also Naomi Simonson.

“Um... excuse me?” I could only manage to mutter as Naomi dropped down to my level.

“Maxie,” she repeated. “I suppose it stands to reason, you never asked me about my last name. Why would a Native American have the last name of Simonson which is very Finnish. My husband,” she said, pausing only a moment. I could tell in the pitch of her voice that when she spoke of her husband that he had died, possibly in some military action. “Was Peter Simonson. My maiden name is Running Cloud.”

I smiled, and slowly it became a grin, nodding as I began to understand. “So, you decided to patrol too?”

“I have my orders to patrol the perimeters to the best of my abilities,” she explained to me. “But I don't think that you have that afforded to you. Maybe, for the remainder of your time here, you should stick to the aid station. I'm sure there are those who appreciate what you do.” As she said this she looked in the direction of the young men, well out of sight by now. “But, there might

be those that would not appreciate your appearance.”

She was right, of course. This wasn't like patrolling in Montreal. There was much more danger here. At least I managed to do one thing for a young man that my father had helped so many years before.

Fifty Mission Cap

I think it's safe to say that there is a huge difference between what it was like for my father and what it's like for me now to be wearing this uniform. There are still some of the same dangers, but this time it's not only from within the country, but from outside it as well. Sure, we had our fears with the Russians during the 1970's as well, but now we have other people who target us. And we cannot simply say that we are Canadian, so we are different than the Americans. The new terrorists don't see a difference. It's up to us to show them.

Part of that will also include being a role model, not just for other nations but for our own people within this country. I've grown a lot since I began wearing this uniform and I've learned it's more than just fighting crime. There are certain things that go along with it.

Papa said that sometimes politics cannot get in the way, but politics is exactly why Canadiens exists. In my

father's day, it was about stopping a terrorist organization from within the country, stopping them from destroying this nation. Now, it's about unifying ourselves, work harder to make sure that all the points in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms are upheld for every Canadian. Black, white, First Nation, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, gay, lesbian, man and woman. From east to west and into the Arctic Circle.

We are the caretakers of our people and we are the caretakers of our country. We have to understand that as we move forward, Our nation is precious, a natural wonderland filled with awe and splendor. That, along with the rights of Canada's citizens, needs to be protected. Do not forget our history, even if it was a smudge against our character, because we can learn from the mistakes we have made, and celebrate the victories.

And who knows. Along the way, maybe, just maybe, we'll create a new anthem which embodies all of us in one chorus. And a massive guitar riff, of course.

Dominique leaned against the squad car, her arms

cross over her chest as the rain began to fall. Her red and white uniform was in stark contrast to the blues of the police officers. Those officers being Robert Kowalsky and Josette Frechette. Kowalsky handed Dominique a Styrofoam cup with hot coffee, a small comfort against the wet and muggy weather. Frechette and Kowalsky hung close to Dominique as they listened to her story.

“That's pretty trusting, Dominique,” Kowalsky said as he pulled his rain slicker on. Frechette pulled an extra slicker from the cruiser and handed it to Dom.

“I 'ave to trust someone when I'm doin' dis,” she said with a shrug as she slipped into the rain slicker. She pulled in around herself with one hand as she held onto her coffee. “An you know you guys can call me Dom, right?”

Frechette nodded and smiled as she rolled the name over her tongue. “One thing, it easier den callin' you Canadiens all the time.” The three chuckled over the comment, and looked to the sky as a loud thunder clap crashed overhead. “We better get inside soon.” Dom nodded and piled into the cruiser as Kowalsky held the

door open for her.

“So, Dom,” Kowalsky began as he slipped into the passenger seat. “How long do you plan on doing this?”

Again, she shrugged. “I don' know. At first I t'ought it were because I wanted to find de guys who beat up Yves, but now.” She paused a moment as she considered her career thus far. “Let's just say I've met people who've told me dat their own lives were changed just b'cause o' somet'ing I did.” She took a sip of her coffee and sat back in her seat as she watched the rain run down the window of the cruiser. “You know, I wasn't even sure you guys trusted me at first.”

“Oh we, did wanna take you in when you first show up,” Frechette said with a chuckle. “But you actually help us a lotta times. So we decided to cut you some slack.” More laughter, proving that this relationship had gone from very strained to much more trusting in the course of three years.

“I jus',” began before pausing for a moment to clearly formulate what she wanted to say. “I just want to thank you for a lot of de t'ings you done. Stuff you show

me. It's helped a lot.”

Frechette looked over to Kowalsky and smiled. “Maybe some day, you'll consider working for the force, or even going to Academy in Regina.”

Dom laughed a bit as she shook her head. “Maybe, some day. Bu' right now, de true 'eroes are ones wearin' uniform like your 'ave. Me, I jus' wanna be a rock star.”