

Up In A Tree

Prologue:

I ran through the village as fast as my feet could carry me. It was happening. Right now. And currently, I was late.

You see, Captain Champlain was choosing a group of men to travel with him, to establish a relationship with the Indigenous people in this new land. They had visited the Huron tribe already before, but an official alliance hadn't been made. My family had been chosen to go from France to the new land and start colonies here. And now my Pa was possibly getting picked to go on a dangerous mission. And I was missing it.

As that thought flooded my brain, I pushed my legs to move faster. But I was looking ahead, not at the ground, and as I ate up the ground, an unnoticed root came up and tripped me.

I fell, practically head over heels and tumbled to a stop, getting scratched all along the way.

I lay there for a moment, and then realized that I could have missed the meeting completely!

I scrambled to my feet, but as I stood up, a searing pain shot through my legs and I yelped as my legs buckled and I fell right back over. Great, I thought, now I'll miss it for sure.

But then as I was sadly inspecting my cuts, footsteps approached, barely audible enough for me to hear. I whipped my head around and saw three Indigenous men coming toward me. I leaned into the trunk of the tree I was by and hoped they'd run right past me, but I thought wrong. They were heading straight at me!

And then... the most wonderful sound ever, in my opinion, was the sound of Pa and Charles, my older brother shouting. They had come to rescue me!

As Charles knelt down to help me stand, my Pa was conferring with the three other men on the other side of me.

"Hey," Charles said, "You okay?"

"Yeah. Who are those other men, Charles?" I said.

"Some indigenous men we are allied with. They must've not recognized you."

"Wait! D-did I miss the meeting? Tell me I didn't miss it." I asked urgently.

Charles didn't speak. He just looked down guiltily.

"WHAT! I missed it! I-is Pa going?" I pleaded, somehow knowing what the answer would be.

Warren whispered in a barely audible voice, "Yeah."

No. No, no, no. This can't be happening. NO!

"But... he can't! This isn't right! He ca-"

"Listen Hugo," Charles interrupted, "We all knew this would happen. He's the best we've got. Besides, he will have help. I-I'm going with them too." He sighed, as if glad to get it off his chest.

What! I thought. Pa and Charles going without me? I stood up straighter.

"NO."

"Excuse me?"

"No," I repeated. "You aren't going. Not unless I come too."

"Hugo," he reasoned, "You are far too young-"

But this time, it wasn't Charles who interrupted. Or me. Instead, not to my surprise, it was Pa.

"Listen." He paused, put his hand on my shoulder, and sighed, "I know this might be hard to grasp, but your brother is right."

I just glared at Charles, hoping my message came through.

"You are far too young but that isn't the only reason. Ma needs someone to help look after her and the farm."

"But if someone has to look after the farm, then why isn't Charles staying too? I am not old enough to look after the farm on my own!" I cried in despair.

"I am getting older so Charles is coming along to... well... protect me, so to speak. I cannot ignore the fact that I am getting older and weaker," Pa explained.

"Then why are you going!" I reasoned.

"I must go when duty calls."

"But...I'm always missing out on stuff like this! Just because I'm 14 and Warren is 17 that doesn't mean I have to miss out on everything!" I threw my hands up in despair, losing hope. "I just want to grow up and be a great adventurer, a legend, a traveller! Just like you." I said meekly.

Pa sighed. "Fine. but don't blame me if you aren't ready for this, or want to turn back. Because you can't," he clarified, "Not unless you tell me before we've been travelling for two days."

"Okay!" I spoke too loudly, "I mean, okay," as I tried to control the excitement in my voice.

Pa then turned to Charles to give him instructions, "Tell Ma we were all going. Have enough rations and supplies for the journey ready by sundown. We'd be leaving straight away in the morning."

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I squirmed my way through the portage of men towards Charles. As I squeezed up next to him, he looked over at me and half smiled, half grimaced at me.

“Hey,” he said.

“Hey,” I replied, “Umm, I was just wondering... y’know, who is looking after Ma and the farm while we’re gone?”

He looked at me with a smile. “Don’t worry kiddo. Pa got some of our neighbours to help, and you know Mr. and Mrs. Dupont will always be stoppin’ by to check on Ma.”

I breathed a sigh of relief, and all of the sudden, it felt like a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders. The guilt I was feeling about leaving Ma and the farm behind was a lot lighter than it was when we had set out nine hours ago.

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We had arrived. We were finally in the Huron/Algonquin’s tribe’s territory. After weeks since we had left, travelling by canoe and foot, I was so glad to finally be here. And after I had come this far, I felt as if I really did belong.

Champlain, Pa, and a couple of other men went to Chief Atironta’s tent to greet him, and hopefully acquire an alliance.

I lingered behind with the rest of our entourage to set up our camp.

The Natives were a little unsure of us for a while. But then, after they were accustomed to us, they gladly aided us with the task; showing us where to set up, and assisting us with whatever we needed. I’m sure we were all hoping for an alliance as it would benefit us both greatly.

About an hour later camp was all set up, and we were gathered around the campfire, just discussing and mingling with each other. Then, all of the sudden, Atironta hushed us all, and spoke.

“We have come to an agreement that in order to have a trade alliance, it must also be a military alliance,” the chief said.

The Natives and my fellow voyageurs cheered quietly, but I looked around nervously. A military alliance? Did that mean war? I hoped not.

But this was half expected. It was usual for a military alliance to go along with a trading alliance. Of course, I didn’t know that. Not in the least. So I was shocked when I heard it.

Thankfully there was no war. Not for a couple months or so. We profited from our alliance- both ways.

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In the spring we got troubling news. Atironta wanted to go to war with the Iroquois.

So a month later, we were headed down stream towards battle, using birch bark canoes the natives had made. There was a large number of natives and voyageurs travelling to fight the Iroquois, but many turned back in fear before we reached our destination.

I looked around me in awe; I had never been here and it was so beautiful.

But then I remembered I was heading off to my very first battle. I gulped. Was I really ready for this? Well, I was just about to find out because we were there.

We hopped out of the canoes, and tied them down on the river bank. We carefully made our way through the forest.

I got even more nervous as we got closer and closer. This was my first battle and I was so nervous. I didn't actually think we would end up doing anything war-related with our alliance with the Huron people.

Then we heard the Iroquois voices in the distance. As we got closer and closer, the voices started getting louder and louder.

As we approached them, we were greeted face to face. We were very outnumbered by a lot.

I started sweating. What was going to happen? Would Pa get killed? Or Charles? The Natives and Voyageurs? Would I get killed?

As these thoughts entered my mind, I started backing up. I wasn't ready for this yet. I felt something brush my shoulder. I jumped at least half a foot and spun around. *Phew*, I thought. It was only Charles, coming up from behind me.

The only Voyageurs left that didn't turn and flee were Champlain, Pa, Charles, and me, Hugo. At the front of the entourage was Captain Champlain, Pa, and Charles, who had now walked past me and joined them.

He spoke with Pa for a moment, and then turned back to me.

"Nervous?" he asked me.

"A-a little," I confessed.

"Pa thinks that you maybe should hang back a little. He doesn't want you to get hurt or-"

"Killed?" I finished for him.

"Ya," he said, "I also don't want you to die."

And for once, maybe for the first time in my life, I was glad that I was told I was too young to do something.

I nodded and wove my way back through the crowd. No one said a word, No one judged me. I guess everyone thought I was too young all along. But right now, I didn't care. I was getting out of here.

I placed my musket on the ground, and climbed up a tree to still have a view of the battle.

There were *SO* many Iroquois Natives facing us from what I could see from up in a tree. *I* was nervous and I wasn't even out there on the battlefield. I could tell there was unease between the Huron warriors as well. I was so proud of Charles, standing there so brave.

Then, it started.

Before anyone knew what was happening, Champlain raised his gun, and shot.

Champlain had put four bullets in his musket. He had killed two of their chiefs in one shot.

The Iroquois warriors were startled. They had never seen anything like this. Even the Natives on our side were shocked. This was a new contraption to them all.

But it was only the beginning of the battle. Arrows flew back and forth going both ways, some hitting their mark, while others missed.

I nearly fell backwards out the tree I was in as an arrow whizzed past my head, barely missing by an inch. I regained balance and focused on the battle before me once again.

There were many fallen on each side, but far more Iroquois had been hit. While they recovered from their shock of seeing a gun, the warriors sided with Captain Champlain took that as a chance to catch the enemy off guard. It worked, for the most part, until they regained their senses.

From there, it took a turn for the worse. I could definitely tell we were outnumbered.

But suddenly, it was over.

I looked and saw- Charles had shot the last of their chiefs.

The Iroquois Natives were fleeing out of fear. I didn't blame them. I would have run if our leaders- Champlain and Atironta- were both dead.

Then, my heart caught in my throat. If Charles had shot the third chief... Then where was Pa?

I frantically scrambled down the tree and rushed over to Charles.

"Pa!" I said breathlessly, "Where is he!"

Charles looked around, now just as frantic as me.

"I-I don't know!" he said worriedly. "Let's look around, okay?"

I nodded not knowing what else to say.

We searched around all the injured and dead bodies. Thankfully there were more injured than dead.

The healthy and unscarred would tend to those who had been pierced with arrows.

As I searched for Pa, I heard my name being called, just faintly, slightly to the left of me.

I turned and walked in the direction of the voice. It was Pa!

I ran over to him and knelt down next to him.

"Charles!" I cried, "Charles! Over here! I found Pa!"

As Charles ran over I gaped at what I saw.

“Oh Pa!” I gasped and covered my mouth, “Y-you’ve been hit!”

“Only in the leg,” he said, insisting he was fine. He groaned. “Okay maybe it does hurt a little.”

When he saw Pa, Charles ripped off a section of his shirt and clogged the wound to stop the bleeding.

“We need to get him back to camp,” he said. “Now.”

We all worked together to get everyone safely in the canoes, and headed upstream to camp.

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When we reached camp, we made sure everyone got what they needed to become healthy and strong again. Tents were filled and the Shaman went around, handing out medicine and tending to wounds.

Charles and I never left Pa’s side until he was better once again. After he could walk again, the three Dubois men took a brisk walk in the nearby forest.

Pa looked back and forth between me and Charles for a moment, and then stopped in his tracks.

“You know boys, I have never been prouder than you in my entire life, than right now.”

Charles puffed out his chest and gladly took the compliment, but I just hung my head. I didn’t deserve this praise, after all, I just hid up in a tree. Why was Pa proud of me?

“I really don’t think I did anything,” I said.

“But you did *everything* my boy. You were brave enough to travel to camp even through the dangers, and you didn’t turn around in the river on our way to the battle, and you were strong enough to carry a weapon. That is quite brave for a fourteen-year-old. ”

“Really?”

“Really.”

And this joyous moment ended in a warm, heartfelt hug, and a memory to last a lifetime.

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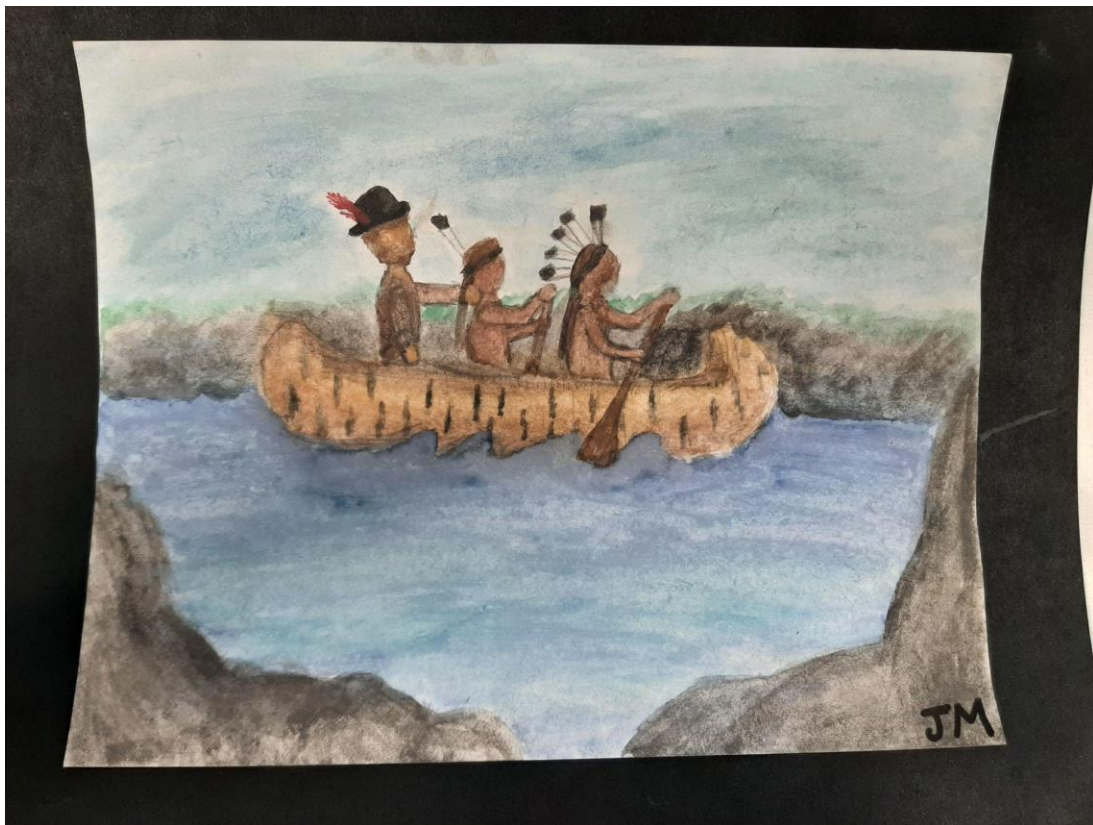
Epilogue:

After a few more weeks of full recovery and the Huron camp, Pa, Charles, and Hugo set off for home.

The family had a warm reunion with Ma (In which she scolded Pa for being so “careless” and getting shot with an arrow), and then the Dubois family had a large meal to celebrate the homecoming of the three men.

Their farm and home flourished with happiness and wealth, until British rule took over, and they were forced to flee Acadia to Quebec.

The Huron rejoiced in their victory against the Iroquois, but it didn't last long. The Iroquois became angry at their loss, and allied with the British. The war between the two tribes led to the near extinction of the Huron people.





Works Cited

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